3-2018

Trends in Volunteer Mentoring in the United States: Analysis of a Decade of Census Survey Data

Elizabeth B. Raposa
College of William and Mary, ebraposa@wm.edu

Nathan Dietz

Jean E. Rhodes
jean.rhodes@umb.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wm.edu/aspubs

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Trends in Volunteer Mentoring in the United States: Analysis of a Decade of Census Survey Data

Elizabeth B. Raposa,[1] Nathan Dietz,[2] and Jean E. Rhodes[3]

Abstract Over the past decade, considerable resources have been devoted to recruiting volunteer mentors and expanding mentoring programs. It is unclear whether these efforts have helped to counter the broader national trends of declining volunteer rates. The current study uses data from the Volunteering Supplement of the Current Population Survey (CPS), sponsored by the U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, to explore population-level trends in mentoring over the past decade. Results suggest that mentoring rates have remained relatively stable over the past decade, but that the population of mentors has changed somewhat in terms of age, ethnicity, educational background, and region of the United States. In addition, certain sectors of the mentor population show higher rates of attrition from 1 year to the next. Findings have important implications for the development of recruitment, training, and mentor support practices within mentoring organizations, as well as policies designed to meet the needs of at-risk youth in the U.S.

Keywords Mentoring · Census · United States · Population trends

✉ Jean E. Rhodes
jean.rhodes@umb.edu

[1] Department of Psychology, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA, USA

[2] Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy, Urban Institute, Washington, DC, USA

[3] Department of Psychology, University of Massachusetts, Boston, MA, USA

Introduction

The national volunteer rate among American adults declined significantly between the years 2006 and 2015, with significant drops in each of the past 2 years (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). Over the past decade, however, considerable resources have been devoted to recruiting volunteer mentors and expanding mentoring programs. It is unclear whether these efforts have helped to counter the national trends in volunteerism, as well as influence the commitment and characteristics of volunteer mentors. In this study, we drew on the Volunteering Supplement of the Current Population Survey (CPS, 2006–2015), sponsored by the U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, to explore population-level trends in mentoring over the past decade.

Mentoring programs can vary widely, but most share the goal of pairing children and adolescents with volunteers who are trained to provide support and guidance. A close and trusting relationship between a youth and mentor is thought to shape the youth's socio-emotional, cognitive, and identity development in ways that promote positive outcomes across a range of academic and psychosocial domains (Rhodes, Spencer, Keller, Liang, & Noam, 2006). Beginning in the mid-1990s, enthusiasm grew for this approach to youth intervention. There are many sociopolitical influences that contributed to this enthusiasm, but one important factor was the publication of an impact study of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA), conducted by researchers at Public/Private Ventures in Philadelphia in the mid-1990s (Grossman & Tierney, 1998). The report summarizing the results of this study, and the widespread publicity that it received, was an impetus for what flourished into a wider mentoring movement. Although the treatment effects were modest,

the findings in this report provided scientific justification for policy makers and practitioners from across the political spectrum to promote mentoring (DuBois & Karcher, 2014; Rhodes & Dubois, 2006). An early example of the promotion of mentoring at the policy-level involved the President's Summit on Citizen Service, which included powerful constituents whose goal of creating two million mentor relationships by the year 2000 drew national attention. Mentoring was also a key rationale for establishing America's Promise—The Alliance for Youth, which helped fuel the work of the One to One Partnership (later renamed MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership), also founded in 2000. MENTOR has since established a network of 28 statewide mentoring partnerships, which provide technical assistance and training to local mentoring programs and lead efforts to engage volunteers, corporations, and other leaders at the state and local level.

Resulting, in part, from these organizations' vigorous advocacy, as well as the early evaluation findings, increased funding for mentoring programs was made available through an array of federal, state, and private sources (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2015; Rhodes & Dubois, 2006). At the federal level, Congress has backed multiple pieces of legislation that support structured mentoring programs for vulnerable youth, largely carried out by the Department of Justice (DOJ). The first wave of funding for mentoring efforts came from the Department of Justice's Juvenile Mentoring Program (JUMP), a program implemented in 1994 to provide mentoring for at-risk youth ages 5–20. Since JUMP, the federal government has supported large initiatives, including the Mentoring Children of Prisoners (MCP) program, the Department of Education's Student Mentoring, and the Safe and Drug Free Schools (SDFS) program, as well as shorter-term grants and initiatives (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2015). Altogether, DOJ funding for mentoring programs has seen a six-fold increase, with annual appropriations increasing from about $15 million in 2005 to about $78 million in recent years (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2015). What remains unclear, however, is whether the substantial efforts to fund and expand mentoring programs have affected national volunteer mentoring rates, and helped to counter the declines in the national adult volunteer rate that have been documented in the last few years (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016).

It is also unclear whether these efforts have resulted in the kind of intensive, sustained mentoring that is generally considered most effective. This is an important question, given that the predominant model of youth mentoring requires a relatively substantial commitment from volunteer mentors. Forging an ongoing relationship with a child, particularly one who may be struggling with the effects of poverty or trauma, requires a more substantial

investment of time and self than more typical episodic volunteer activities. In particular, considerable research has substantiated a model, first developed by BBBSA, which requires a commitment of one academic year (36 weeks) or one calendar year, during which volunteers meet with their mentees for, on average, one hour per week. Research on this model has consistently shown a relationship between match length and consistency and mentoring outcomes, as well as the negative consequences of premature match termination (Dubois, Neville, Parra, & Pugh-Lilly, 2002; Grossman, Chan, Schwartz, & Rhodes, 2012; Slicker & Palmer, 1993; Spencer, 2006). This link between match length and outcomes likely relates to the interpersonal nature of volunteer mentoring, and its reliance on relationships as the tool of change. Mentoring relationships have been linked to improvements in children's and adolescents' perceptions of their parent, peer, and teacher relationships, including levels of intimacy, communication, and trust, and these social improvements, in turn, are associated with positive changes in a wide array of developmental outcomes (Chan et al., 2013; Karcher, Davis, & Powell, 2002; Rhodes, Grossman, & Resch, 2000; Rhodes, Reddy, & Grossman, 2005). Such processes are complex, and in some cases involve changes in the ways that adolescents think about and approach other relationships. As such, it makes sense that the benefits of mentoring accrue over time. Minimum 36-week commitments have therefore been recommended in the widely distributed practice guidelines put forth by MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership's Elements of Effective Practice.

These and other recommendations have, in some cases, been at odds with the strategies employed by programs that are seeking to expand their reach. Despite research to the contrary, programs often put their limited resources into launching new matches rather than fully supporting existing ones with adequate staff-mentor ratios and evidence-based training (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). Moreover, since volunteer recruitment is often the rate-limiting factor in program growth, many programs have relaxed minimum volunteer screening, commitment, and training requirements. These trends have reduced the burden that is placed on agencies and volunteers, but are inconsistent with the types of practices that are likely needed to establish and sustain high-quality mentoring relationships (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002; DuBois & Karcher, 2005). Funding agencies play a role in reinforcing this tendency, often using the number of new matches, as opposed to their longevity, as the measure of program success.

This emphasis on growth has also led to the deployment of a greater proportion of high school and college student mentors, who are often seen as a rich pool of

potential volunteers (Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, & McMaken, 2011). In general, student mentors tend to have fluctuations in their available time and interests, and may have more self-focused motivations for volunteering (e.g., course credit, resume building) than older adults (Allen, 2003). Perhaps as a result of these issues, student mentors have been linked to less robust mentoring outcomes (Herrera et al., 2011). In addition to shifting the typical age of mentors, various initiatives have attempted to recruit additional volunteer mentors from diverse ethnic or religious backgrounds over the past decade. For example, New York City's Young Men's Initiative (YMI) was launched in 2011 to recruit men of color to serve as volunteer mentors. This and similar state and local efforts aligned with the White House's "My Brother's Keeper" initiative in 2014, which established a federally funded program to address the challenges faced by young men of color, with an emphasis on recruiting male mentors of color to work with male youth. However, there has been little empirical research on whether such efforts have resulted in changes in the demographic characteristics of the volunteer mentor pool.

Purpose of the Present Study

To address these issues, we explored population-level trends in mentoring over the past decade. Analyses tested trends in the number and types of American adults who have served as volunteer mentors through formal organizations, as well as the retention of volunteers in youth mentoring programs. Our analyses were based on the Volunteering Supplement of the Current Population Survey (CPS) sponsored by the U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, which has been collecting detailed data about volunteering behavior from thousands of U.S. citizens each September since 2002. Importantly, the CPS also distinguishes between episodic (e.g., one-time) volunteering and the more sustained engagement that is characteristic of most mentoring programs. In light of our interest in traditional mentoring programs, the analyses focus the latter.

Methods

Participants and Procedure

The CPS, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics, is the source of the official government statistics on employment and unemployment. Each month, for over fifty years, the CPS collects data from about 100,000 adults in about 56,000 households across the United States. The CPS sample of households is scientifically selected on the basis of area of residence to represent the nation as a whole, individual states, and other specified areas. The data are weighted to account for the sample design, response to the baseline labor force survey, and responses to the volunteer supplement. The CPS weights are adjusted periodically so that the totals match population benchmarks at the state and national level.

Households from all 50 states and the District of Columbia participate in the survey on a rolling basis. Household members participate in the survey for four consecutive months, then are excluded from surveys for 8 months, and finally participate in surveys for another 4 months before leaving the sample permanently. This design ensures a high degree of continuity from 1 month to the next (as well as over the year) and allows the constant replenishment of the sample without excessive burden to respondents. The current analyses utilize data from 2006, the first year that activities such as tutoring and mentoring were specified, through 2015 from the annual September CPS Volunteer Supplements. Unless otherwise specified, the sample for each analysis is based on all adults age 16 and over.

Measures

For the purposes of the CPS, volunteers were defined as individuals who performed unpaid volunteer activities through or for an organization. The survey was introduced as follows:

> This month, we are interested in volunteer activities, that is, activities for which people are not paid, except perhaps expenses. We only want you to include volunteer activities that you did through or for an organization, even if you only did them once in a while.

Individuals were classified as volunteers if they answered "yes" to either of the following questions: (a) "Since September 1 of last year, have you done any volunteer activities through or for an organization?" or (b) "Sometimes people don't think of activities they do infrequently or activities they do for children's schools or youth organizations as volunteer activities. Since September 1 of last year, have you done any of these types of volunteer activities?" Individuals who reported volunteering over the past year were asked additional questions about the type of organizations they worked with, the activities they performed, and the frequency and intensity of their volunteering. For the present study, individuals were classified as *volunteer mentors* if 1) their main activity (at their main volunteer organization) was mentoring, and 2) they served

36 h or more within the past year at this organization. As noted, this dosage filter aligns with the standards of effective practice (Garringer, Kupersmidt, Rhodes, Stelter, & Tai, 2015) and represents the minimum time commitment required by most mentoring programs, essentially corresponding to one time per week for at least one academic year (9 months).

The CPS panel design also permits the measurement of volunteer and mentor *retention* from 1 year to the next. Each September, half of all households that participate in the CPS are scheduled to participate the following September; the other half have responded to the previous September's Volunteer Supplement. Typically, about 90% of CPS respondents who answer the questions about volunteering in the first year also answer the volunteering questions in the second year. Overall, the CPS Volunteer Supplement tends to yield a higher response rate than other surveys that collect data on volunteering and civic engagement. Nonresponse rates typically range from 10% to 15% at the household level, and between 10% and 15% at the individual level, for the supplementary questions on volunteering.

Analytic Procedure

Ordinary linear regression was used to test the number and proportion of adults serving as volunteer mentors over time from 2006 to 2015. Changes in demographic characteristics of volunteer mentors in 2006 versus 2015, as well as changes in the state-level and region-level proportions of volunteer mentors, were analyzed using two-sided p-values from Fisher's Exact tests.

For analyses of mentor retention, each pair of consecutive years was examined to see whether mentors from the first year also reported mentoring in the second year. Mentors were coded as retained ("1" on a dichotomous retention variable) if they continued to mentor in the second year, and as not retained ("0" on a dichotomous retention variable) if they no longer reported mentoring in the second year. A multivariate, probit regression model was then run predicting the dichotomous retention variable from a series of year-1 mentor characteristics. Predicted probabilities were therefore calculated for each category of every independent variable, holding all the other variables constant at their means.

Results

Analyses first examined overall rates of mentoring, and the trends in these rates over the past decade. Each year, a substantial portion of volunteers report having some form of involvement with mentoring – in most cases,

episodic involvement –at their main volunteer organization. In 2015, about 2.59 million individuals, representing approximately 1% of the general population, met the definition of a volunteer mentor (i.e., least 36 h of mentoring within the past year). As Fig. 1 shows, the number of volunteer mentors appears to have stayed remarkably stable over the past decade, usually varying between 2 and 2.5 million. In general, about 1% of adults can be classified as mentors each year. Despite relatively stable figures, between 2006 and 2015, the proportion of individuals mentoring increased at a small, but statistically significant rate: the linear trend line in Fig. 1 has a significant positive slope ($R^2 = .40$, $p < .05$).

Demographic Trends

Figure 2a–d provide descriptive information about the gender, race, age and educational attainment of mentors, and how these demographics have changed over the past 10 years. As Fig. 2a shows, the majority of mentors are female, with gender proportions remaining relatively consistent over the past decade: 59.7% female in 2006, compared to 56.5% female in 2015 ($p > .05$). Analyses that examined changes in rates of mentoring by gender showed that in 2015, about 1.1% of adult women were mentors, which is significantly larger than the 2006 rate of 1.0% ($p < .05$). However, the increase in mentoring rates has been slightly larger among men: 0.7% in 2006 versus 0.9% in 2015 ($p < .001$).

Figure 2b shows that the most common age range for mentors has tended to be 35–44 years (25.7% of all mentors in 2015), followed by ages 45–54 (23.1%) and then ages 25–34 (19.6%). When analyses examined changes in mentoring rates by age group between 2006 and 2015,
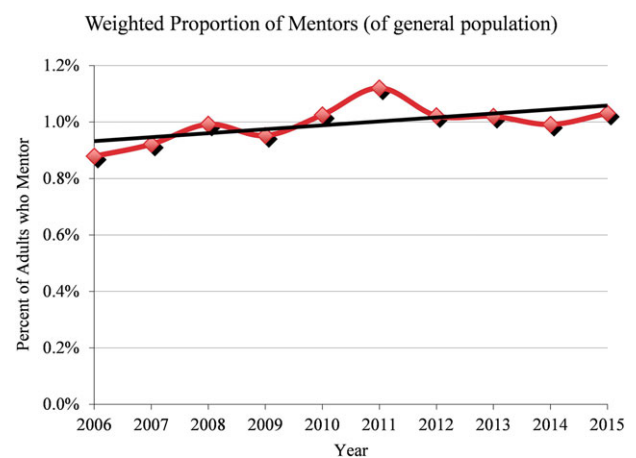

Fig. 1 Proportion of the general population of adults in the United States who served as volunteer mentors in each year from 2006 to 2015 ($R^2 = .40$, $p < .05$) [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]
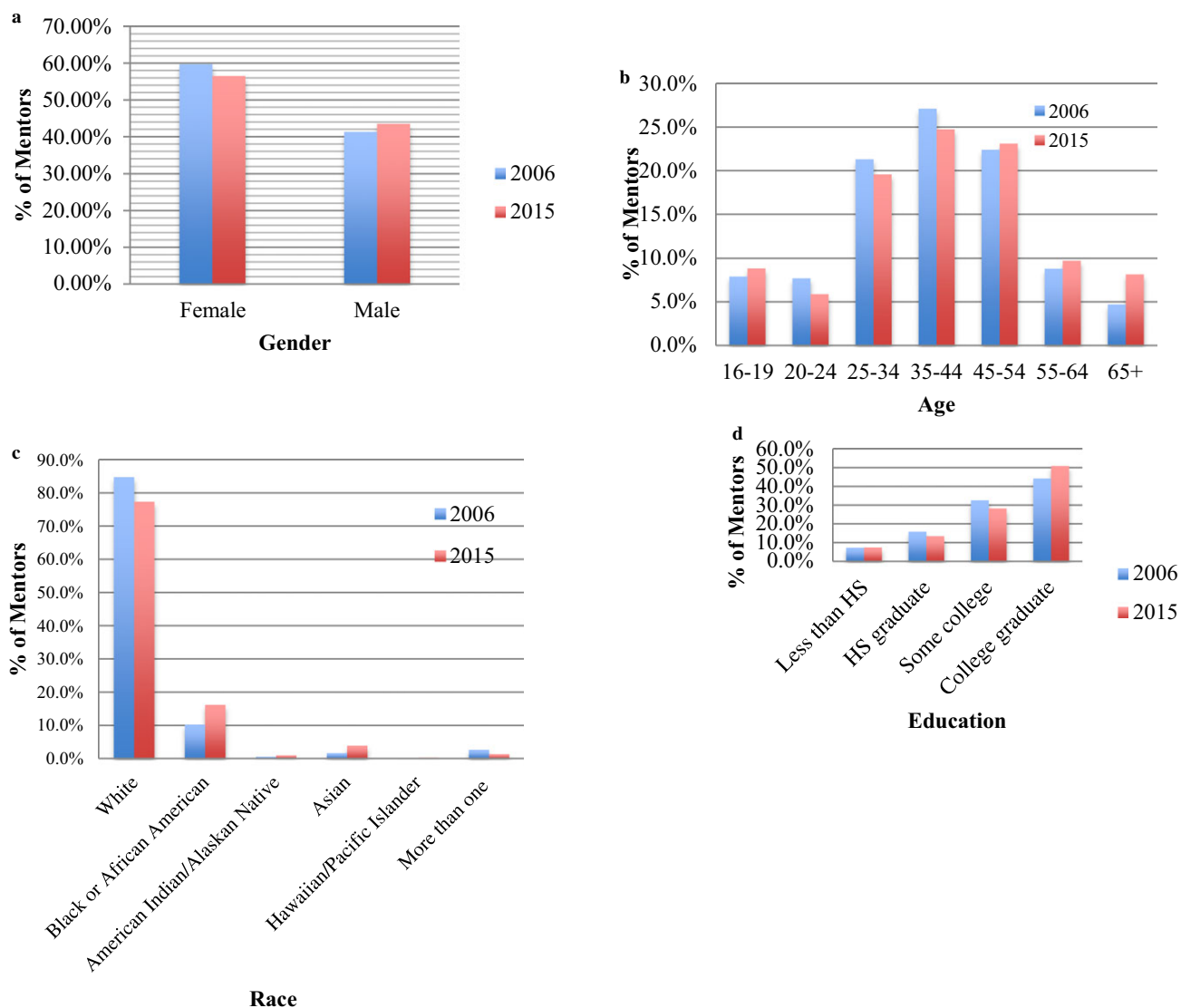
Fig. 2 The percentage of mentors who fell into each category by gender (a), age (b), race (c), and educational background (d) in 2006 and 2015 [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

there were significant increases in the proportion of adolescents (ages 16–19) who mentored (0.96% in 2006 vs. 1.38% in 2015, $p < .01$). There were also increases in the proportion of adults ages 35–44 (1.28% in 2006 vs. 1.61% in 2015, $p < .001$) and ages 45–54 (1.05% in 2006 vs. 1.41% in 2015, $p < .001$) who mentored. Finally, there was an increase in the proportion of older adults ages 65 and older (0.27% in 2006 vs. 0.45% in 2015, $p < .001$) who mentored. The proportion of individuals in other age brackets reporting participation in mentoring dropped somewhat, but these decreases were not statistically significant.

Overall, as Fig. 2c shows, white Americans tend to constitute the vast majority of volunteer mentors (77.4% of all mentors in 2015). Between 2006 and 2015, there was a significant increase in the proportion of White (up

from 0.92% in 2006 to 1.02% in 2015, $p < .05$), Black or African American (0.76% in 2006 vs. 1.33% in 2015, $p < .001$), and Asian American (0.33% in 2006 vs. 0.69% in 2015, $p < .01$) mentors. There were no statistically significant changes in mentoring for other reported racial and ethnic groups. Finally, as seen in Fig. 2d, about half of mentors were college graduates (50.9% of all mentors ages 16 and over in 2015). Between 2006 and 2015, there were significant increases in the mentoring rates for individuals with less than a high school education (up from 0.35% in 2006 to 0.54% in 2015, $p < .01$), which is consistent with the increases in high-school age mentors reported above. There were also increases in the proportion of college graduates (up from 1.55% in 2006 to 1.76% in 2015, $p < .05$) who reported mentoring.

Regional Trends

In addition to demographic characteristics, analyses also examined how rates of mentoring changed in various regions of the United States (see Table 1a). The CPS classifies gathered information into four major regions of the United States: the Midwest, Northeast, South, and West. From 2006 to 2015, there were significant increases in the proportion of mentors in the South (0.8% in 2006 to 1.0% in 2015; $p < .001$) and West (0.9% in 2006 to 1.1% in 2015; $p < .01$). In both 2006 and 2015, all of the regional mentoring rates were quite similar to the national average of 1%.

Consistent with regional findings, many of the states with the largest increases in mentoring rates are located in the South and West regions (see Table 1b). Given that MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership has sought to advance volunteer mentoring through its partnerships in 28 states, we also compared mentoring rates in states with and without these partnerships. Overall, in 2015, about 70% of all mentors were residents of states that have mentoring partnerships; 0.96% of the adult population of those states reported serving as mentors. This proportion increased by a significant amount in the last 10 years (from 0.86% in 2006; $p < .05$), but the proportion of adults who mentor increased by an even larger amount in states that do not have partnerships with MENTOR. In those states, which contain a smaller share of the adult population, 1.26% of adults reported serving as mentors in 2015, up from 0.92% in 2006 ($p < .001$).

Mentor Retention

One of the most distinctive and important features of the CPS study design is the 50% overlap in the national sample of households between surveys conducted twelve months apart. This overlap provides a large, nationally representative sample that can be used to measure volunteer retention – and also mentoring retention: the proportion of year-1 mentors (defined as above) who return to serve as mentors the following year. As seen in Fig. 3, there was a statistically significant downward trend in mentor retention between 2006–2007 and 2014–2015, with the retention rate decreasing, on average, by 0.18% per year.

Given the importance of this outcome for sustained mentoring relationships, we used data from the 3073 year-1 mentors from 2006 through 2014 to estimate a multivariate model of mentoring retention. The model contained demographic variables for the mentors as well as characteristics of the volunteering – including, but not limited to, mentoring – they performed during year 1.

Table 1 Regional (a) and state-level (b) mentoring rates (percentage of the overall population) in 2006 and 2015, ordered by 2015 mentoring rate

	2006 (%)	2015 (%)
(a) Region		
Midwest	0.80	0.80
Northeast	1.00	1.10
South[a]	0.80	1.00
West[a]	0.90	1.10
United States	0.90	1.00
(b) State		
Utah	2.62	2.75
Idaho	1.83	2.12
South Dakota	1.07	2.03
Nebraska[b]	1.18	1.93
Kansas[b]	1.05	1.89
Arizona[a]	1.01	1.77
New Mexico	0.70	1.58
Wyoming	1.88	1.52
North Dakota	0.67	1.50
Wisconsin	0.95	1.46
Mississippi[a]	0.38	1.36
Colorado[b]	0.93	1.35
Alabama	0.83	1.32
Oregon[b]	0.93	1.28
Michigan[b]	1.06	1.28
Oklahoma[a]	0.46	1.27
Nevada	0.84	1.26
Georgia	0.96	1.25
Maryland	1.07	1.22
Pennsylvania[b]	0.93	1.20
Minnesota[b]	1.57	1.18
District of Columbia	0.96	1.17
Tennessee[b]	0.96	1.15
Arkansas	1.00	1.11
Vermont[b]	1.69	1.10
Iowa[b]	1.14	1.07
West Virginia	0.76	1.06
Ohio[b]	1.09	1.03
Kentucky	0.83	1.03
North Carolina[b]	0.45	1.02
Florida[b]	0.74	1.01
New Hampshire	1.19	0.97
Indiana[b]	0.79	0.96
Missouri	0.64	0.94
Texas[b]	1.08	0.93
Delaware	1.05	0.92
Alaska	1.39	0.90
Montana	1.17	0.88
California[b]	0.80	0.87
Maine	1.21	0.86
Illinois[b]	0.86	0.79
South Carolina[a]	1.45	0.79
New Jersey[b]	0.92	0.78
Washington[b]	0.67	0.74
Louisiana[a]	0.10	0.73
Virginia[b]	0.63	0.71
Rhode Island[b]	0.63	0.67
New York[b]	0.55	0.66
Massachusetts[b]	0.63	0.65
Connecticut[ab]	1.09	0.44
Hawaii	0.48	0.26
United States	0.88	1.03

[a] Designates states with significant increases in mentoring rates from 2006 to 2015.
[b] Designates a state with a National Mentoring Partnership.
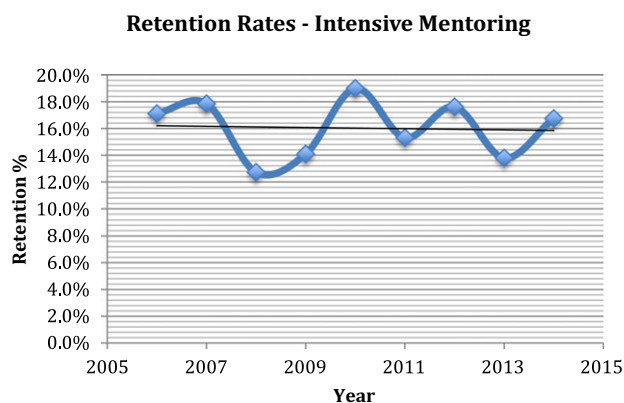
Retention Rates - Intensive Mentoring

Fig. 3 Changes over time from 2006 to 2015 in the proportion of mentors who are retained from 1 year to the next. Overall linear trend: $y = -.0004x + 1.04$; $R^2 = .003$ [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Table 2 contains the probit coefficient estimates and predicted probabilities for each variable, as well as 95% confidence intervals around each estimate.

Although the model had a statistically significant amount of explanatory power (model $\chi^2 = 159.08$, $df = 67$; $p < .001$), only a few of the independent variables seemed to be individually associated with mentoring retention, controlling for other variables. When co-varying for all other demographic and volunteering characteristics, female mentors were significantly less likely to return the following year than male mentors ($b = -.21$, $SE = .07$, $p < .01$). In addition, unemployed mentors were significantly less likely to continue mentoring the next year, relative to those employed full-time and those not in the labor force at all ($b = -.49$, $SE = .23$, $p < .05$; no differences in retention for part-time workers). Finally, mentors who volunteered 12 or more weeks at their main organization were significantly more likely to return the next year, relative to those who, while still volunteering at least 36 h, spent 2 weeks or less volunteering with the organization ($b = .55$, $SE = .19$, $p < .01$). Age, race, educational attainment, and region of the United States were not significantly associated with mentor retention, over and above the influence of other measurable variables.

Discussion

Concurrent with periodic declines in rates of volunteerism in the United States, including significant decreases in recent years (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016), there has been a concerted effort, supported by funding from the federal government and non-profit organizations, to expand youth mentoring programs. The current study drew on a large, nationally representative data set collected by the U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics to explore trends in youth mentoring from 2006 to 2015. In particular, we examined trends and predictors related to the likelihood of sustained, meaningful mentoring relationships, which are most likely to meet best practice recommendations for effective mentoring.

Results showed that, in contrast to rates of volunteering, the proportion of individuals involved specifically in mentoring has shown a modest positive trend over the past decade. Thus, the publicity and funding initiatives surrounding youth mentoring in recent years may have protected mentoring organizations from the loss of volunteer mentors, to some extent. These findings might also speak to the powerful, interpersonal nature of volunteering as a youth mentor. That is, volunteering that involves forging a close and caring relationship with a child might be less vulnerable to the social and economic forces driving more episodic, less intensive forms of volunteering.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that, although rates of mentoring have shown statistically significant growth, this growth has been modest. Numbers of volunteer mentors have remained remarkably stable—around 2.5 million adults per year on average—with none of the large increases that might be expected to accompany funding and federal recruitment efforts. This suggests that recent efforts to increase mentoring rates have been attenuated by the overall trends away from volunteerism, and that mentor recruitment and retention are likely to remain a challenge. Economic trends may be one factor that could help to explain these and related trends in the volunteer mentor pool, with the economic recession and its aftermath dissuading some college graduates from volunteer opportunities. It is also possible that the shift toward online communities and social interaction and activism, especially among adolescents and young adults (Best, Manktelow, & Taylor, 2014; Duggan & Brenner, 2013), could contribute to lower rates of more time-intensive, in-person volunteerism.

Analyses of demographic trends in mentors revealed that most mentors are from vastly different backgrounds, both in terms of gender and race, than the youth they are mentoring. The majority of mentors are white (77%) and female (57%), while many of the youth who are referred to formal mentoring organization are male and from minority backgrounds (Grossman & Tierney, 1998; Herrera et al., 2011). It is promising that the proportions of African American and Asian American mentors have increased over the past decade. This trend might relate to the coordinated launch of several targeted initiatives, including the federal My Brother's Keeper initiative in 2014, which led to generous investments aimed at improving the outcomes of boys and young men of color. Nevertheless, given the ongoing gender and ethnicity mismatches between mentors and youth, it will be crucial for

Table 2 Predictors of mentor retention from 1 year to the next

Variable	Category	Coefficient	95% CI	95% CI for predicted probability
Survey year (year 1)	2006	Reference category		.12, .21
	2007	.06	−.2, .33	.14, .23
	2008	−.20	−.47, .07	.09, .16
	2009	−.14	−.41, .13	.1, .18
	2010	.11	−.16, .38	.15, .24
	2011	−.06	−.33, .2	.11, .2
	2012	.04	−.23, .31	.13, .22
	2013	−.12	−.4, .16	.1, .18
	2014	−.04	−.32, .23	.11, .2
Gender	Male	Reference category		.16, .21
	Female	−.21**	−.34, −.08	.12, .16
Race	Race: White	Reference category		.14, .17
	Race: Black	.01	−.24, .26	.11, .22
	Race: American Indian, Alaskan Native	Reference category		.14, .17
	Race: Asian	−.21	−.63, .22	.04, .19
	Race: Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	.18	−.92, 1.28	−.08, .49
	More than one race category	.43	−.06, .91	.13, .42
Ethnicity (Latino Origin)	Latino	−.15	−.45, .15	.07, .19
	Non-Latino	Reference category		.15, .18
Educational attainment	Educ: Less than HS Diploma	Reference category		.07, .19
	Educ: HS Grad	−.04	−.38, .31	.09, .16
	Educ: Some college	.15	−.18, .47	.13, .19
	Educ: College grad +	.20	−.14, .54	.15, .2
Family income	Income: Missing	−.24	−.64, .17	.05, .17
	Income: <$35,000	Reference category		.12, .2
	Income: Between $35 and $50,000	−.10	−.37, .18	.09, .18
	Income: Between $50 and $75,000	.04	−.18, .26	.13, .2
	Income: $75,000 and over	.04	−.17, .25	.14, .19
Own children under 18	No own children under 18	Reference category		.13, .17
	Own children under 18	.08	−.08, .24	.14, .19
Marital status	Never been married	−.14	−.39, .11	.09, .18
	Married - spouse present	Reference category		.15, .19
	Other marital status	.02	−.21, .24	.12, .22
Labor force participation	Employed, full-time	Reference category		.14, .17
	Employed, part-time	.16	−.01, .34	.15, .23
	Unemployed	−.49*	−.94, −.05	.02, .13
	Not in labor force	Reference category		.15, .18
Region of the USA	Region: East	Reference category		.12, .19
	Region: Midwest	.08	−.12, .28	.14, .2
	Region: South	−.07	−.27, .14	.11, .17
	Region: West	.07	−.13, .28	.14, .2
Age groups	Ages 16–24	−.19	−.93, .55	.1, .23
	Age 25–34	−.07	−.77, .64	.16, .23
	Age 35–44	−.19	−.9, .51	.14, .2
	Age 45–54	−.25	−.94, .44	.12, .18
	Age 55–64	−.39	−1.09, .31	.08, .16
	Age 65–74	−.60	−1.37, .17	.03, .15
	Age 75 and over	Reference category		.03, .4
Volunteer activities	Coach, referee, supervise sports team	−.16	−.43, .12	.08, .18
	Tutor or teach	.23*	.03, .43	.16, .24
	Mentor youth	Reference category		0, 0
	Be an usher, greeter, or minister	−.37**	−.62, −.12	.06, .13
	Collect, prepare, distribute, or serve food	−.04	−.27, .19	.11, .19
	Collect, make, or distribute clothing	−.05	−.28, .18	.11, .19
	Fundraise or sell items to raise money	.13	−.08, .33	.14, .22
	Provide counseling, medical care, other services	−.03	−.27, .2	.1, .2
	Provide general office services	.16	−.07, .4	.14, .25
	Provide professional or management assistance	−.03	−.25, .18	.11, .19
	Engage in music, performance, or other activities	.03	−.2, .26	.12, .21
	Engage in general labor or transportation	.18	−.05, .41	.14, .24
	Any other type of activity	Reference category		.15, .17

Table 2. Continued

Variable	Category	Coefficient	95% CI	95% CI for predicted probability
Main organization	Civic, political, professional, or international	.14	−.45, .72	.08, .23
	Educational or youth service	.17	−.33, .66	.14, .19
	Environmental or animal care	Reference category		.03, .22
	Hospital or other health	.09	−.64, .83	.03, .26
	Public safety	Reference category		.03, .22
	Religious	.11	−.39, .6	.13, .17
	Social or community service	.37	−.16, .9	.16, .27
	Sport, hobby, cultural, or arts	−.26	−1.17, .65	−.03, .19
	Other	Reference category		.03, .22
	Not determined	Reference category		.03, .22
Annual hours volunteered (all organizations)	Hours not reported	Reference category		.11, .21
	1–14 h	Reference category		.11, .21
	15–49 h	−.28	−.61, .04	.06, .14
	50–99 h	−.01	−.26, .25	.13, .18
	100–499 h	.06	−.17, .29	.15, .19
	500 or more hours			.11, .21
Number of organizations	One organization	Reference category		.15, .19
	Two organizations	−.15	−.31, 0	.11, .16
	Three organizations	−.11	−.34, .11	.1, .19
	Four organizations	−.06	−.37, .25	.09, .22
	Five or more organizations	−.12	−.54, .3	.06, .23
	Not reporting number of organizations	Reference category		.15, .19
Number of activities (at main organization)	No volunteer activities	Reference category		.12, .21
	One volunteer activity	Reference category		.12, .21
	Two volunteer activities	.28**	.07, .49	.18, .29
	Three volunteer activities	−.25	−.55, .05	.07, .15
	Four volunteer activities	−.06	−.44, .31	.1, .2
	Five or more volunteer activities	−.14	−.69, .41	.06, .21
Weeks per year (main organization)	Non-volunteer	Reference category		.03, .12
	0–2 weeks/year (episodic volunteer)	Reference category		.03, .12
	3–11 weeks/year (occasional volunteer)	.05	−.39, .48	.04, .11
	12 or more weeks/year (regular volunteer)	.55**	.18, .91	.16, .19
How R became acquainted with main Org	Approached the organization	.06	−.08, .19	.15, .19
	Was asked by someone	Reference category		.13, .18
	Some other way	−.07	−.27, .13	.11, .18
	Not determined	Reference category		.13, .18
Constant	Constant	−1.51**	−2.53, −.49	0, 0

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$. Overall model results ($N = 3073$): Log-likelihood, constrained: −3,299,914.3; log-likelihood, unconstrained: −3,050,831.1; Pseudo-R^2 = .08, df = 67, Wald = 159.08, $p < .001$.

researchers to continue to explore the impact of these differences on mentoring relationships and outcomes, particularly given conflicting evidence about this issue in previous studies (Blake-Beard, Bayne, Crosby, & Muller, 2011; Kanchewa, Rhodes, Schwartz, & Olsho, 2014). Training that addresses mentors' sensitivity to racial and economic differences is also needed to manage mentors' expectations and mentoring approach (Kupersmidt & Rhodes, 2013).

Another concerning demographic trend involves the age of mentors. There has been a substantial increase in the proportion of high school-aged mentors (ages 16–19) over the past decade. Evidence suggests that student mentors are associated with less robust youth outcomes (Herrera et al., 2011), perhaps in part because of frequent fluctuations in their time and commitment to volunteering (Rhodes & Dubois, 2006). Although additional research

in this area is needed, it is possible that this demographic shift is a problematic response to the decade-long emphasis on mentor recruitment and program expansion, sometimes at the expense of the support of relationships and retention of mentors (Rhodes & Dubois, 2006). In addition to increases in younger mentors, there have also been increases in middle-aged (ages 35–54) and older adult (over age 65) mentors. The rise in life expectancy and improved health in older age (Kinsella & He, 2008) likely contribute, at least in part, to these mentoring trends. Future research should examine other factors that have influenced mentoring participation in these age groups, and how to best retain mentors from these stages of life.

Regional data suggest that mentoring rates are fairly equal across regions of the United States. This regional similarity has been achieved through recent increases in mentoring in the Southern and Western regions, which

had lower proportions of mentors in 2006. However, state data suggest that some parts of the United States might have fewer mentors than are necessary to address relatively high levels of need. For example, several Northeastern states with urban areas typically characterized by higher than average rates of poverty and violence (e.g., Massachusetts, New York) are among the states with the lowest volunteer mentoring rates, substantially below the national average. Further research is therefore needed at the state and city levels to identify and address high-need areas where youth are currently underserved. In addition, the field of mentoring should continue to test adaptations of formal mentoring that can better serve larger numbers of youth across both urban and rural areas, including interventions that help youth to recruit their own mentors or expand their existing social networks (e.g., Schwartz, Kanchewa, Rhodes, Cutler, & Cunningham, 2016; Schwartz, Rhodes, Spencer, & Grossman, 2013).

The unique design of the CPS also allowed us to examine mentor retention across years, an important indicator of the length, quality, and effectiveness of mentors' relationships with youth (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Grossman et al., 2012). Results suggested that, mentor retention has been steadily declining over the past decade. This near decade-long drop in mentor retention could relate to the economic recession, which may have reduced the capacity of volunteer organizations to effectively engage and manage volunteers. The rise in popularity of school-based mentoring programs might also have played an inadvertent role in the decreases in mentoring retention over the past decade (Rhodes & Dubois, 2006). School-based mentoring programs typically require a 9-month commitment from mentors and youth, with a substantial number of matches ending before or after the summer break from school. As a result, some school-based programs are now requiring a 2-year minimum commitment from mentors.

Analyses also identified several predictors of poorer mentor retention. Female mentors were less likely to continue mentoring from one year to the next than male mentors. This result is somewhat consistent with at least one previous finding that female mentors were marginally more likely to terminate their relationships with youth prematurely, although it should be noted that the study included only same-gender matches (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). It is possible that some female volunteers are less likely to continue mentoring as a result of the demographic mismatch discussed above. This would again speak to the need to provide adequate training to mentors, including education and resources to manage their expectations about the mentoring relationship. Unemployment also contributed to lower retention rates, although it is important to note that employment status in year one might have changed for some individuals in year two (e.g., some unemployed individuals might have found part-time or full-time work over the 2-year period). There are thus limitations to predicting mentor retention from potentially transient indicators like employment. Nevertheless, it is possible that mentors who have been recently unemployed face difficulties with fluctuations in availability as they look for and resume work.

Mentors who volunteered for larger parts of the year were more likely to return as mentors the next year, indicating that a deeper commitment to mentoring is associated with mentor retention. As mentioned above, relative to other, more episodic forms of volunteerism (e.g., occasional help in a classroom), mentoring is a relatively time-intensive volunteering pursuit that often involves an emotional bond with a child. Particularly given the differential trends, it may be the case that, adults who are willing to commit to serving as mentors are more resistant to the pressures that dissuade other volunteers. This may be particularly true for those who make the strongest initial commitment.

Although the current study provides a unique opportunity for better understanding population-level trends in youth mentoring, it also has several limitations. First, because the data were collected from such a large sample, assessment questions were necessarily brief. As a result, we can only infer the specific influences and mechanisms accounting for changes over time. Moreover, there is likely significant heterogeneity within the group of mentors studied, both in terms of time commitment to mentoring and the programs through which they volunteered. Future studies should examine how mentors' motivations for volunteering and the depth of their involvement vary across demographic groups, as well as how these factors influence mentor retention over time. A second limitation involves the fact that information was collected only from mentors, not from the youth served by mentoring organizations. Thus, although we can draw conclusions about changes over time in the population of mentors within the United States, we cannot determine how these changes influence outcomes in the population of youth served, or the effectiveness of the programs overall.

Finally, the present analyses focused on demographic trends in volunteer mentors for formal mentoring programs. Nevertheless, there is growing evidence that naturally occurring relationships with caring non-parental adults, or natural mentoring relationships, are also vital for youth development and well-being. Youth who can identify at least one natural mentor within their social networks have improved resilience across a range of important academic, vocational, behavioral, and health domains (e.g., Erickson, McDonald, & Elder, 2009; Hurd, Tan, & Loeb, 2016; McDonald & Lambert, 2014;

Miranda-Chan, Fruiht, Dubon, & Wray-Lake, 2016). Natural mentoring relationships address some of the difficulties encountered by formal mentoring programs. Natural mentoring relationships are more prevalent and reach far more youth than formal mentoring programs, with approximately 75% to 80% of youth endorsing such a relationship (McDonald, Erickson, Johnson, & Elder, 2007). Moreover, because these supportive relationships emerge from youth's existing social networks, natural mentors are often more similar to youth with respect to ethnicity and socioeconomic background (Hurd et al., 2016), and the relationships may be more enduring than formal mentoring relationships. Future research should therefore examine the ways in which the reach of formal mentoring programs can be broadened by programs designed to encourage the formation of natural mentoring relationships (Schwartz & Rhodes, 2016).

Taken together, the present findings provide important information about population-level trends in volunteering mentoring over the past decade. To our knowledge, this is the first population-wide audit of volunteer mentoring, at a time when there has been a proliferation of reports, often conflicting, about the prevalence and effectiveness of youth mentoring in the literature. These findings have important policy implications for advocates of youth mentoring, particularly when considering how best to allocate resources with respect to mentor recruitment and retention. Although recent advocacy efforts have been associated with stable rates in mentoring over the past decade, more needs to be done in order to meet the relational needs of our nation's youth. Future research efforts, in collaboration with mentoring organizations, should attempt to identify training and support practices that could help to build and maintain a committed base of volunteer mentors, well-equipped to handle the needs of youth exposed to high levels of stress and/or poverty. In addition, research should continue to explore avenues for supporting youth in building healthy social networks that include supportive non-parental adults.

References

Allen, T.D. (2003). Mentoring others: A dispositional and motivational approach. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 62, 134–154.

Best, P., Manktelow, R., & Taylor, B.J. (2014). Online communication, social networking and adolescent wellbeing: A systematic narrative review. *Children and Youth Services Review.*, 41, 27–36.

Blake-Beard, S., Bayne, M.L., Crosby, F.J., & Muller, C.B. (2011). Matching by race and gender in mentoring relationships:

Keeping our eyes on the prize. *Journal of Social Issues*, 67, 622–643.

Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016). Volunteering in the United States—2015. Available from: http://www.bls.gov/news.release/volun.nr0.htm [last accessed November 15 2016].

Chan, C.S., Rhodes, J.E., Howard, W.J., Lowe, S.R., Schwartz, S.E.O., & Herrera, C. (2013). Pathways of influence in school-based mentoring: The mediating role of parent and teacher relationships. *Journal of School Psychology*, 51, 129–142.

Current Population Survey. (2006–2015). September 2006 through September 2015: Volunteer Supplement machine-readable data file. Conducted by the Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Washington: Bureau of the Census.

DuBois, D.L., Holloway, B.E., Valentine, J.C., & Cooper, H. (2002). Effectiveness of mentoring programs for youth: A meta-analytic review. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 30, 157–197.

DuBois, D.L., & Karcher, M.J. (2005). Youth mentoring: Theory, research and practice. (pp. 2–12). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

DuBois, D.L., & Karcher, M.J. (2014). Youth mentoring in contemporary perspective. *The handbook of youth mentoring II*, pp. 3–13. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dubois, D.L., Neville, H.A., Parra, G.R., & Pugh-Lilly, A.O. (2002). Testing a new model of mentoring. *New Directions for Youth Development*, 2002, 21–57.

Duggan, M., & Brenner, J. (2013). *The Demographics of Social Media Users, 2012*, vol 14. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project.

Erickson, L.D., McDonald, S., & Elder, G.H. (2009). Informal mentors and education: Complementary or compensatory resources? *Sociological Education*, 82, 344–367.

Fernandes-Alcantara, A.L. (2015). *Vulnerable youth: Federal mentoring programs and issues (CRS Report R34306)*. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service.

Garringer, M., Kupersmidt, J., Rhodes, J., Stelter, R., & Tai, T. (2015). *Elements of effective practice for mentoring* (4th edn). Boston: Mentor: The National Mentoring Partnership.

Grossman, J.B., Chan, C.S., Schwartz, S.E., & Rhodes, J.E. (2012). The test of time in school-based mentoring: The role of relationship duration and re-matching on academic outcomes. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 49, 43–54.

Grossman, J.B., & Rhodes, J.E. (2002). The test of time: Predictors and effects of duration in youth mentoring relationships. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 30, 199–219.

Grossman, J.B., & Tierney, J.P. (1998). Does mentoring work? An impact study of the Big Brothers Big Sisters program. *Evaluation Review*, 22, 403–426.

Herrera, C., Grossman, J.B., Kauh, T.J., & McMaken, J. (2011). Mentoring in schools: An impact study of Big Brothers Big Sisters school-based mentoring. *Child Development*, 82, 346–361.

Hurd, N.M., Tan, J.S., & Loeb, E.L. (2016). Natural mentoring relationships and the adjustment to college among underrepresented students. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 57, 330–341.

Kanchewa, S.S., Rhodes, J.E., Schwartz, S.E.O., & Olsho, L.E.W. (2014). An investigation of same- versus cross-gender matching for boys in formal school-based mentoring programs. *Applied Developmental Science*, 18, 31–45.

Karcher, M.J., Davis, C. III, & Powell, B. (2002). The effects of developmental mentoring on connectedness and academic achievement. *School Community Journal*, 12, 35–50.

Kinsella, K., & He, W. (2008). *An Aging World: 2008*. Washington, DC: National Institute on Aging and U.S. Census Bureau.

Kupersmidt, J., & Rhodes, J. (2013). Mentor training. In D.L. DuBois & M. Karcher (Eds.), *Handbook of youth mentoring* (2nd edn). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

McDonald, S., Erickson, L.D., Johnson, M.K., & Elder, G.H. (2007). Informal mentoring and young adult employment. *Social Science Research*, *36*, 1328–1347.

McDonald, S., & Lambert, J. (2014). The long arm of mentoring: A counterfactual analysis of natural youth mentoring and employment outcomes in early careers. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *54*, 262–273.

Miranda-Chan, T., Fruiht, V., Dubon, V., & Wray-Lake, L. (2016). The functions and longitudinal outcomes of adolescents' naturally occurring mentorships. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *57*, 47–59.

Rhodes, J.E., & Dubois, D.L. (2006). Understanding and facilitating the youth mentoring movement. In L. Sherrod (Ed.), *Social policy report: Giving child and youth development knowledge away.* (Volume XX, Number III, pp. 3–19). *Society for Research in Child Development Social Policy Report.*

Rhodes, J.E., & DuBois, D.L. (2008). Mentoring relationships and programs for youth. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *17*, 254–258.

Rhodes, J.E., Grossman, J.B., & Resch, N.L. (2000). Agents of change: Pathways through which mentoring relationships influence adolescents' academic adjustment. *Child Development*, *71*, 1662–1671.

Rhodes, J.E., Reddy, R., & Grossman, J.B. (2005). The protective influence of mentoring on adolescents substance use: Direct and indirect pathways. *Applied Developmental Science*, *9*, 31–47.

Rhodes, J.E., Spencer, R., Keller, T.E., Liang, B., & Noam, G. (2006). A model for the influence of mentoring relationships on youth development. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *34*, 691–707.

Schwartz, S.E., Kanchewa, S.S., Rhodes, J.E., Cutler, E., & Cunningham, J.L. (2016). "I didn't know you could just ask:" Empowering underrepresented college-bound students to recruit academic and career mentors. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *64*, 51–59.

Schwartz, S.E., & Rhodes, J.E. (2016). From treatment to empowerment: New approaches to youth mentoring. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *58*, 150–157.

Schwartz, S.E., Rhodes, J.E., Spencer, R., & Grossman, J.B. (2013). Youth initiated mentoring: Investigating a new approach to working with vulnerable adolescents. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *52*, 155–169.

Slicker, E.K., & Palmer, D.J. (1993). Mentoring at-risk high school students: Evaluation of a school-based program. *The School Counselor*, *40*, 327–334.

Spencer, R. (2006). Understanding the mentoring process between adolescents and adults. *Youth and Society*, *37*, 287–315.