

ARTICLE

The long-term effects of youth mentoring on student mentors' civic engagement attitudes and behavior

Limor Goldner | Daphna Golan

University of Haifa

Correspondence

Email: limor.goldner@gmail.com

Abstract

The current study was designed to explore the delayed effect of participating in youth mentoring programs, training in civic engagement, and activism on a sample of 337 Israelis 5 to 10 years after serving as student mentors. Qualitative and quantitative findings showed that these former mentors' perception of the contribution of mentoring was correlated with their current civic engagement attitudes and activism. Further, the perceived quality of training during mentoring was correlated with the overall perceived contribution of mentoring and current civic engagement attitudes. A mediation model showed that the perceived quality of training was correlated with the former mentors' perceived mentoring contribution. This in turn was correlated with current civic engagement attitudes, which themselves were correlated with their current civic engagement activism. The former mentors' narratives revealed their attainment of new skills and abilities, including an increased ability to relate to and understand young children and disadvantaged populations.

1 | INTRODUCTION

1.1 | Youth mentoring and benefits to former mentors

Children's and adolescents' development is closely linked to the support they receive from nonparental adult figures such as mentors (Cavell, Meehan, Heffer, & Holladay, 2002; Klaw & Rhodes, 1995). Half to more than three quarters of all American youth report having a meaningful relationship with a nonparental adult figure (Beam, Chen, & Greenberger, 2002; DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; Zimmermann, Bingenheimer, & Notaro, 2002). Studies suggest that this relationship serves as a protective and empowering mechanism in the lives of children and adolescents by reducing behavioral problems and promoting academic competence, well-being, and healthy behavior (Ahrens, Dubois, Richardson, Fan, & Lozano, 2008; DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005).

However, at the same time, data from a recent national survey of a representative sample of eighth graders in the United States indicated that 22.9% of these eighth graders did not have at least one nonparental adult figure with

whom they could talk. Furthermore, a disturbing subgroup of youth comprising about 10% of the sample reported that there were no adults in their life from whom they could get help (DuBois & Karcher, 2013). Researchers ascribe this lack to the dramatic weakening of the social fabric in recent years especially in urban centers characterized by the disengagement and departure of middle-class social networks, and the decrease in natural adult figures in many youngsters' lives (Rhodes, Bogat, Roffman, Edelman, & Galasso, 2002).

Given this troubling tendency, interventions that pair children and adolescents with formal mentors have seen immense growth in the past three decades. Estimates suggest there are millions of civic engaged volunteers in mentoring programs around the world (Goldner & Scharf, 2013). Ample data including longitudinal research and random assigned trials supported by meta-analysis evaluations (e.g., DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002; DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011) indicate that formal mentoring can have a positive effect on children's and adolescents' socioemotional (e.g., Cavell et al., 2002; Cavell, Elledge, Malcolm, Faith, & Hughes, 2009; Thomson & Zand, 2010), academic (e.g., Rhodes, Grossman, & Resch, 2000), and behavioral (e.g., Cavell & Hughes, 2000, Cavell, Elledge, Malcolm, Faith, & Hughes, 2009) progress.

Youth mentoring as a form of empowerment and supportive intervention provided by the community has attracted considerable attention in the field of community psychology because it provides a window on the nature and availability of social support in young people's networks and the extent of adults' civic engagement in promoting youth development (Liang, Spencer, West, & Rappaport, 2013; Lerner Johnson, Wang, Ferris, & Hershberg, 2015). Thus, the current study examined the long-term effect of a youth mentoring program on volunteers' civic engagement attitudes and behavior.

1.2 | Civic engagement

Civic engagement refers to the ways in which individual and collective actions aimed at identifying and addressing issues of public concern are undertaken to improve conditions for others and/or help shape a community's future. Engagement of this type can lead to a sense of connection, interrelatedness, and commitment towards the community at large (Adler & Goggin, 2005). Engagement can take many forms, from individual volunteering to organizational involvement to voting. It can include efforts to directly address an issue, work with others in a community to solve a problem, or interact with institutions of representative democracy (Adler & Goggin, 2005). Although this term has primarily been used in the context of younger people, in the past 20 years there have been concerted attempts to promote greater civic engagement among adults.

As part of these attempts, institutions of higher learning have become increasingly interested in university-community partnerships that encourage service learning and diversity (Adler & Goggin, 2005; Hurtado, 2003; Occoner, 2006). This stems from the goal of many educators to not only foster the development of students' intellectual skills but also influence their personal growth (Reed, Jernstedt, Hawley, Reber, & DuBois, 2005). Educators have drawn on social role theory to suggest that taking part in service learning may produce character-related changes within students in at least four areas: (a) social responsibility, (b) awareness of social problems, (c) meaningfulness of college life, and (d) commitment to future civic engagement (Reed et al., 2005).

Quantitative and qualitative studies support this claim and have shown that student involvement in civic engagement activities during their school years is associated with increased self-competence, leadership and interpersonal skills, the choice of a service career, commitment to activism after college (Astin & Astin, 2000; Astin & Sax, 1998; Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000), the development of a pluralistic attitude and a decline in prejudice (Golan & Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2014), greater commitment to future civic (Austin et al., 2000; Nishishiba, Nelson, & Shinn, 2005; Sax, 2000), and/or political (Beaumont, Colby, Ehrlich, & Torney-Purta, 2006) involvement.

Although the most common way to enhance college students' exposure to diversity is –community partnerships, another important but undervalued and under-investigated venue is organized youth mentoring. Because youth mentoring is viewed as a beneficial developmental context for both mentors and mentees (Eby, Lockwood, & Butts, 2005; Ragins & Verbos, 2007), researchers have suggested that when filling the role of helper in mentoring situations (Fresko, 1999), mentors may also expand and enrich their helping attitudes and behaviors. These attitudes and behaviors may

be a launch pad for their future civic engagement attitudes and activism as young adults. In particular, researchers have posited that becoming part of a close helping–caretaking youth mentoring relationship that involves the provision of nurturance, care, and concern (Goldner & Maysless, 2008; Rhodes, 1994; Rhodes, Spencer, Keller, Liang, & Noam, 2006) in addition to exposure to the mentees' environment may encourage mentors to reflect on the meaning of social interventions and weigh their own personal contribution to disadvantaged populations (Evans, 2005; Fresko, 1999; Philip & Hendry, 2000).

Nevertheless, despite the reciprocal nature of the mentoring relationship and the claims deriving from social role theory, as far as we know, only a few studies have explored the effect of mentoring on student mentors on their civic engagement attitudes demonstrating the development of cultural tolerance and a better understanding of children and disadvantaged communities (Fresko & Wertheim, 2001, 2006; Hughes, Boyd, & Dykstra, 2010; Jackson, 2002; Schmidt, Marks, & Derrico, 2004). However, these studies did not examine the long-term effects of mentoring on civic engagement behaviors. To help fill this gap, the current study examined the long-term effects of involvement in a youth mentoring program among student mentors 5 to 10 years later, as regards their personal growth, civic engagement attitudes, and behavior.

1.3 | The importance of mentors' training for mentors' growth

A meta-analysis of youth mentoring program effects (DuBois et al., 2002), supported by random assignment studies (Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, Feldman, & McMaken, 2007), highlighted the importance of training and ongoing support to mentors' sense of self-efficacy, retention, and better youth outcomes (Parra, DuBois, Neville, Pugh-Lilly, & Povinelli, 2002). However, less is known about the effect of mentors' training and ongoing supervision as regards the mentors' benefits and growth (Fresko & Wertheim, 2006).

Preliminary findings from a retrospective study on preservice teachers in Israel indicated an association between training from college staff members and level of professional benefits from the mentoring experience. These benefits included increased sensitivity toward children, improvement in communication skills, and enhanced professional confidence as a teacher. Specifically, students who received integrative training that associated their college curriculum with mentoring activity tended to report greater career development at the end of mentoring (Fresko & Wertheim, 2006). Similarly, staff members in after-school programs who took part in professional development training and had adequate supervision and support were more likely to express intentions to continue working in the field of youth development (Hartje, Evans, Killian, & Brown, 2008).

Given these preliminary results showing the importance of training for mentors' functioning, in the current study, the relationship between the quality of training as perceived by the former mentors and the contribution of mentoring to their current civic engagement attitudes and behavior was explored. Applying a mediation path analysis, a regression model was tested in which the former mentors' self-perceived mentoring contribution was posited to mediate the association between the perceived quality of training throughout the mentoring intervention and their current civic engagement attitudes, which in turn was predicted to mediate the association between the former mentors' self-perceived mentoring contribution and their current civic engagement behavior.

The following four hypotheses were formulated:

- H1:** High levels of self-perceived mentoring contribution should be associated with higher levels of civic engagement attitudes and behavior.
- H2:** Higher levels of civic engagement attitudes should be associated with higher levels of civic engagement behavior.
- H3:** The former mentors' greater perceived quality of training should be associated with higher levels of self-perceived mentoring contribution, civic engagement attitudes, and behavior.
- H4:** The former mentors' self-perceived mentoring contribution should mediate the relationship between their perceived quality of training throughout the mentoring intervention and their current civic engagement attitudes. In turn, these attitudes should mediate the relationship between the self-perceived mentoring contribution and current civic engagement behavior.

2 | METHOD

2.1 | Setting

The participants were young adults who had served as student mentors in Perach (the Hebrew word for “flower” and also the acronym of the mentoring and tutoring project), the Israeli community-based formal mentoring program. The program matches approximately 22,000 university and college students every year with at-risk elementary school children from second to sixth grades. Children are chosen from schools earmarked for the program by the Ministry of Education. These schools are selected according to the socioeconomic status of the students in general, based on several criteria such as average parental income, parents’ education, and the average ratio between number of children in the family and the number of rooms in the family home.

After the schools are chosen, specific children are referred to the program by their homeroom teachers according to their level of adjustment (e.g., low levels of welfare and well-being, social detachedness, behavioral and discipline problems, and poor academic performance) and families’ needs. Teachers are guided to select children who can benefit from a close relationship with a nonprofessional university student to enhance their level of adjustment in one or more areas. The matching of mentors and protégés is usually based on similar areas of interests and temperament, as well as the protégé’s socioemotional needs and the mentor’s ability to address them.

The intervention is relatively structured and short term and lasts for the duration of the academic year from November until the end of June, a total of 8 months. Protégés receive four contact hours per week in their natural surroundings (usually their home). The mentors’ activity is based on the notion of “developmental mentoring,” in which the primary focus is on facilitating the relationship between themselves and the protégé as a way of promoting child development. This reflects the assumption that mentoring influences social, emotional, and academic development through the creation of a supportive relationship (Karcher, Kuperminc, Portwood, Sipe, & Tylor, 2006).

Mentors receive monthly guidance from Perach coordinators on specific issues such as the mentor’s role, qualities of positive mentoring relationships, typical phases, periods and difficulties during the relationship, and preparation for the planned separation. In these meetings, the mentor and coordinator defines a specific plan including goals and activities for each protégé, which serves as a guide for the mentors. In addition, mentors are provided with written materials, organized meetings with the protégé’s teachers, and professional counseling by educational counselors when needed.

2.2 | Participants

A total of 377 young adults ($N = 377$) who served as student mentors in college between 2005 and 2010 participated in the study, 30% ($n = 127$) of which were males and the remainder ($n = 250$) were females. The mean age was 30.06 years (range 25–61; standard deviation [SD] = 9.33). Most were Jewish ($n = 354$, 94%) and the remainder were Arabs ($n = 23$, 6%); 85% were born in Israel ($n = 319$) and the others were immigrants mainly from the Former Soviet Union ($n = 58$, 15%). Of the participants, 58% were married ($n = 220$) and the others were single ($n = 157$, 42%). Regarding studies, 27% majored in the social sciences ($n = 103$); 25% the arts and humanities ($n = 94$); 19% ($n = 70$) medicine, health sciences, and social work; 26% ($n = 99$) engineering and the exact and life sciences; and the rest majored in education ($n = 11$, 3%). More than half of the participants had a bachelor’s degree ($n = 203$, 54%) and the remainder had a master’s degree ($n = 161$, 43%) or a technical degree ($n = 13$, 3%).

Of the graduates, 68% ($n = 256$) mentored 1 year during their college career, 21% ($n = 81$) 2 years and the remainder (11%, $n = 40$) 3 years. Most of the graduates (47%, $n = 177$) had stopped mentoring 5 years before the study, 19% ($n = 72$) 6 years previously, 16% ($n = 60$) 7 years previously, 8% ($n = 30$) 8 years previously, 6% ($n = 23$) 9 years previously, and 4% ($n = 15$) 10 years previously. The distribution of the former mentors’ gender, field of study, and years of mentoring aligned with the typical distribution of the Perach population (personal communication, March 29, 2016). Pearson correlations did not reveal any associations between the period of time that had elapsed since the end of mentoring or the duration of mentoring and the study outcome variables.

2.3 | Procedure

A retrospective study design was used that employed validated questionnaires as well as questionnaires developed for the present study. Three translators who are experts in the field of mentoring and developmental psychology and native speakers of Hebrew, independently translated the validated scales into Hebrew. They compared their translations, discussed areas of disagreement, and then constructed a final version. Approval was obtained from the University Ethics Committee for Research on Human Subjects.

The former mentors were recruited by e-mail, which was sent via the Perach online system on the part of the researchers to the former mentors' old e-mail addresses found in Perach's computerized system. The e-mail provided information about the goals of the study and asked for their consent to take part in the study. In addition, an advertisement was placed on the Perach website for approximately a month, asking former mentors to take part in the study. The respondents who agreed were asked to sign an electronic consent form and open an online link and answer the questionnaire electronically. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. The response rate was 8.37% (the e-mail was sent to 4,501 graduates). This response rate aligns with the 5%–20% rate typical of online surveys, which can be affected by numerous potential influences such as the length of the survey, unfamiliarity with the survey administrator, the salience of the research topic to the respondents, and the combination of closed and open types of questions (Sheehan, 2001). There were no missing data.

2.4 | Measures

2.4.1 | Civic engagement attitudes

Civic engagement attitudes and beliefs were assessed on three subscales of the Bobek, Zaff, Li, and Lerner (2009) Civic Identity/Civic Engagement Scale: civic knowledge and skills, civic duty, and civic participation. The civic knowledge and skills subscales assess participants' ability to be involved in civil society and democracy and their expertise (six items; sample item: "What is your ability to sign an e-mail or written petition"; $\alpha = .91$). The civic duty scale assesses participants' pro-civic attitudes and the desire and mindset to get involved with others to make positive contributions to society (12 items; sample item: "I believe I can make a difference in my community"; $\alpha = .85$). The civic participation scale assesses participants' opportunities for collective action (nine items; sample item: "[How often do you] help make your city or town a better place for people to live?"; $\alpha = .89$). Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale. Higher scores indicated a higher sense of ability, more positive attitudes, and greater involvement.

The original study demonstrated convergent and discriminant validity and revealed a higher order factor model for these subscales, which was replicated in Bowman and Denson's (2011) study. Similarly, the three-factor model was validated in the current study by performing a structural equation modeling (SEM) confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using the AMOS statistical package. The hypothesized model had a good fit with the data: $\chi^2/\text{degree of freedom [df]}$ is 2.28; CFI (comparative fit index) = .93; GFI (goodness of fit index) = .90; and RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation) = .06.

The scale was previously administered to college students, with internal reliabilities (Cronbach's alphas) ranging from .73 to .91 (Bowman & Denson, 2011; Voight & Torney-Purta, 2013). In the current study, the Cronbach's alphas were .84 for the civic knowledge and skills subscale, .90 for the civic duty subscale, and .74 for the civic participation subscale.

2.4.2 | The self-perceived mentoring contribution questionnaire

The scale was designed specifically for this study. The construction of the scale was inspired by the volunteer functions inventory (Clary et al., 1998), which has been used in the field of youth mentoring (Karcher, Nakkula, & Harris, 2005). According to the functional approach, involvement in volunteering and prosocial behaviors can reflect motivations related to both the self and others. In some cases, civic engagement is driven by a desire to improve the welfare of others by actualizing social values, while in other cases, generous and altruistic acts are driven by self-concerns, including the avoidance of loss or unpleasant feelings such as shame and guilt, anticipated praise, and maintaining or

enhancing self-esteem (Clary et al., 1998; Finkelstein, 2008). In the original scale, volunteers expressed their agreement with reasons for volunteerism on six subscales that covered values, understanding, enhancement, career, social, and protection. The original scale demonstrated good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .80 to .89 as well as a test-retest reliability of 4 weeks (Clary et al., 1998).

In the current study, we replaced these motivations by notions of self-perceived benefits in five of the above domains. The values contribution subscale was related to the former mentors' expressions of altruistic and humanitarian concerns for others (seven items; sample item: "I felt it was important to help others"; $\alpha = .86$). The understanding contribution subscale dealt with the extent to which they took advantage of the opportunity to use skills that might otherwise have gone unused and to acquire new skills and knowledge (three items; sample item: "mentoring let me learn through direct, hands-on experience"; $\alpha = .76$). The enhancement contribution subscale dealt with positive strivings of the ego and psychological growth (five items; sample item: "mentoring made me feel better about myself"; $\alpha = .84$). The career contribution subscale dealt with career exploration and enhancement (five items; sample item: "mentoring helped me get my foot in the door in a place where I wanted to work"; $\alpha = .90$). The protection subscale assessed the drop in former mentors' feelings of guilt associated with their own fortunate circumstances during the mentoring intervention (three items; sample item: "mentoring was a good escape from my own troubles"; $\alpha = .78$).

In addition, we also assessed the contribution of mentoring to the former mentors' interpersonal domain (six items; sample item: "mentoring allowed me to improve my communication skills with adults and become a better romantic partner"; $\alpha = .80$). Participants rated the items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*do not agree*) to 5 (*fully agree*). Higher scores indicated a higher sense of contribution. Because of the high intercorrelations between the subscales (r s ranging from .36 to .76), we used a composite contribution score dubbed "general contribution" (Cronbach alpha = .96). The selection of the one-factor solution was validated using a SEM CFA, $\chi^2/df = 2.08$, CFI = .98, GFI = .99, and RMSEA = .05.

2.4.3 | The behavioral questionnaire

The current civic engagement behavior of the former mentors in the political (five items), volunteer (five items), and ecological (five items) domains were measured using 16 items. Respondents were asked to state whether they had adopted certain behaviors over the previous year or at a certain time. Sample items are as follows: "wrote a comment on political issues in posts/talkback/publications on social networks or websites"; "donated money to a person who is not a relative or a friend"; and "reported environmental hazards." Answers were summed separately for each domain. Higher scores on each domain indicated a higher number of behaviors. Previous studies have used a similar questionnaire to collect information on the frequency and type of volunteer involvement (e.g., Overdevest, Orr, & Stepenuck, 2004; Zaff, Malanchuk, & Eccles, 2008).

The three-factor construct was validated using a SEM CFA, $\chi^2/df = 2.21$, CFI = .91, GFI = .93, and RMSEA = .06. Additionally, the three-factor solution was compared to a one-factor solution using the Akaike information criterion (AIC) (Akaike, 1987), a measure of fit used to compare models, with lower values indicating a better fit than higher values. The results of the AIC index indicated that the three-factor model showed better fit (the AIC of the three-factor model was 298.60 compared to 342.56 for the one-factor model).

2.4.4 | Self-perceived quality of training on mentoring youth

Three items designed for the current study were used to assess the perceived quality of the training ("the training for the program enhanced my role as a mentor"; $\alpha = .82$).

Finally, the graduates were asked to summarize their participation in the mentoring program and to state whether they were currently involved in civic engagement activities. The responses on the experience of mentoring were coded as positive, negative, or mixed. The inter-rater agreement between coders based on 211 reports was 95%, $\chi^2(4) = 248.66$, $p < .001$; $kappa = .80$, $p < .001$. Disagreements between coders were resolved by consensus.

TABLE 1 Correlations Between the Study Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Quality of guidance	1							
<u>Attitudes and beliefs</u>								
2 Knowledge and skills	.18***	1						
3 Civic duty	.16***	.43***	1					
4 Civic participation	.18***	.56***	.39***	1				
5 Mentoring contribution	.50***	.45***	.22***	.39***	1			
<u>Behaviors</u>								
6 Political	.03	.35***	.17***	.24***	.14***	1		
7 Volunteer	.03	.35***	.17***	.42***	.19***	.40***	1	
8 Ecological	.05	.29***	.24***	.22***	.10*	.43***	.46***	1
M	2.87	2.85	4.05	2.52	2.56	2.84	3.79	2.71
SD	1.13	.64	.58	.97	.77	1.27	1.44	1.44

Note. $N = 377$. The correlations between mentoring contribution and the study variables are partial Pearson correlations controlling for gender and ethnicity. The correlations between gradulators' attitudes and beliefs and the study variables are partial Pearson correlations controlling for ethnicity.

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

3 | RESULTS

3.1 | Preliminary analysis

3.1.1 | Descriptive statistics

Of the former mentors, 82% ($n = 309$) described the mentoring experience as positive, 8% ($n = 29$) described the experience as negative, and the remainder described it as mixed ($n = 39$, 10%). The mean scores for the contribution variables indicated that the former mentors perceived their participation in the mentoring intervention as having moderately contributed to their civic engagement (see Table 1). Twenty-nine percent ($n = 108$) stated that they currently took an active part in civic engagement activities.

3.2 | Unadjusted models of civic engagement and behavior

3.2.1 | Associations with the former mentors' background variables

A correlational analysis of the former mentors' background variables and the study variables revealed gender and ethnicity effects. Women expressed a higher level of self-perceived general contribution, $t(375) = 3.21$, $p < .05$; the mean difference was .28, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .103 to .430 (mean [M]_{men} = 2.38, $SD = .76$; M _{women} = 2.65, $SD = .76$). Similarly, Arabs indicated a higher level of self-perceived general contribution, $t(375) = -2.37$, $p < .05$; the mean difference was $-.39$, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from $-.717$ to $-.067$ (M _{Jewish} = 2.53, $SD = .77$; M _{Arabs} = 2.92, $SD = .76$).

In addition, Arabs had a higher level of civic knowledge and skills, $t(375) = -3.50$, $p < .01$; the mean difference was $-.47$, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from $-.741$ to $-.208$ (M _{Jewish} = 2.82, $SD = .77$; M _{Arabs} = 3.29, $SD = .76$). Finally, Arabs had a higher level of civic participation, $t(375) = -4.22$, $p < .001$; the mean difference was $-.86$, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -1.265 to $-.460$ (M _{Jewish} = 2.47, $SD = .96$; M _{Arabs} = 3.33, $SD = .79$). Hence, we controlled for gender and ethnicity effects when examining our hypotheses.

3.2.2 | Associations between the self-perceived mentoring contribution and civic engagement attitudes and behavior

As shown in Table 1, the former mentors' self-perceived general contribution was significantly correlated with their current civic knowledge and skills, civic duty, and civic participation scores. The former mentors' self-perceived general contribution was significantly correlated with their current civic engagement behavior in the political, volunteer, and ecological domains. Finally, the former mentors' level of self-perceived general mentoring contribution was significantly correlated with their statements on taking an active role in current civic-engagement behavior, $\chi^2(96) = 124.91$, $p < .001$.

3.2.3 | Associations between the former mentors' current civic engagement attitudes and current civic engagement behavior

As shown in Table 1, the former mentors' knowledge and skills, civic duty, and civic participation were significantly correlated with their current civic engagement behavior in the political, volunteer, and ecological domains (see Table 1). The former mentors' knowledge and skills, $\chi^2(40) = 90.62$, $p < .001$, and civic participation, $\chi^2(23) = 136.57$, $p < .001$, were also significantly correlated with their statements concerning their current role in civic engagement behavior.

3.2.4 | Associations between the former mentors' self-perceived quality of training and self-perceived mentoring contribution, current civic engagement attitudes, and behavior

As shown in Table 1, the former mentors' self-perceived quality of training on mentoring youth was significantly correlated with their self-perceived general mentoring contribution, knowledge and skills, civic duty, and civic participation, but not with their current behavior or with their statements regarding their role in civic engagement activities.

3.3 | The mediating role of the former mentors' self-perceived mentoring contribution and civic engagement attitudes

To test the fourth hypothesis of the study, we applied SEM using AMOS followed by bootstrap analyses (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). To build the model, for the predictor variable one observed exogenous variable (self-perceived quality of training on mentoring youth) was used. In addition, one observed endogenous variable (general contribution) and one latent endogenous variable (former mentors' current civic engagement attitudes) were used as the mediator variables. The variable of former mentors' current civic engagement attitudes was constructed using the knowledge and skills, civic duty, and civic behavior subscales. Finally, for the predicted variable, one latent exogenous variable (former mentors' current civic engagement behavior) comprised the three observed scales of behavior (political, volunteer, and ecological behavior).

A regression model was estimated in which the former mentors' self-perceived quality of training on mentoring youth predicted their current civic engagement attitudes via the mediator of their general self-perceived mentoring contribution, which in turn predicted their current civic engagement behavior through the mediator of their current civic engagement attitudes. In addition, all the direct paths from the former mentors' self-perceived mentoring contribution and current civic engagement attitudes to the explained variable were estimated. Finally, gender and ethnicity were included in the model as control variables (for intercorrelations see Table 1).

The model provided a fairly good fit with the data, $\chi^2/df = 1.43$, CFI = .98, GFI = .97, SMRS = .04, and RMSEA = .02, and is presented in Figure 1, which includes the significant standardized estimates of the parameters in the structural model. Estimates of this model showed that former mentors' self-perceived quality of training on mentoring youth was associated with their self-perceived mentoring contribution ($\beta = .50$, $p < .001$). This in turn was significantly correlated with their current civic engagement attitudes ($\beta = .50$, $p < .001$), which itself was also significantly correlated with current civic engagement behavior ($\beta = .61$, $p < .001$).

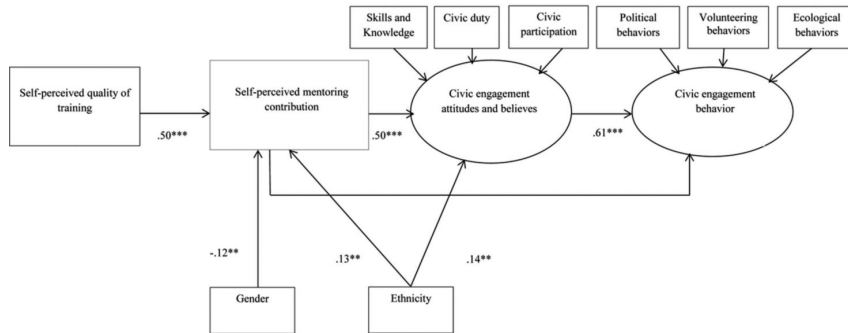


FIGURE 1 The mediation model

Note. $N = 377$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Furthermore, the direct paths between the former mentors' self-perceived quality of training on mentoring youth or self-perceived mentoring contribution and their current civic engagement behavior were not significantly correlated. This implies that the former mentors' self-perceived mentoring contribution fully mediated the association between self-perceived quality of training on mentoring youth and their current civic engagement behavior through current civic engagement attitudes. Results from 2,000 bootstrap sample computations (which were all unstandardized) showed that the 95% confidence interval (CI) for the indirect effects did not include zero, indicating that the indirect effect was statistically significant (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Specifically, the bias-corrected bootstrap estimate of the indirect effect between former mentors' self-perceived quality of training on mentoring youth and their current civic engagement behavior had a 95% CI of .02 to .12.

3.4 | Former mentors' narratives on the contribution of the mentoring intervention

To better understand the former mentors' sense of the contribution of mentoring, we asked the participants to summarize their experiences. Below we present a few illustrative narratives to illustrate the perceived benefits. Several former mentors reported the acquisition of new skills and abilities, including their increased ability to relate with and understand young children and disadvantaged populations. For instance, one of the women wrote: "The mentoring activity changed my personality, how to cope with young children and guide them ... to know how create an emotional bond with young children." Another woman wrote: "I realized that I had the patience and the ability to explain things to young children." A third woman wrote: "I learned to see the other, to understand what preoccupies, concerns, and challenges other people; it influenced my attitudes and my ability to relate to other people."

For most of the sample, mentoring provided emotional satisfaction and was their first opportunity to become familiarized with people from minority communities. The former mentors frequently used the verb "to get to know" to describe their encounters with these communities. They were often surprised and overwhelmed by the living conditions of their mentees, and the encounter with the mentees and their families apparently left a profound impression and served as a self-defining experience:

"It was an empowering experience of giving and taking" (a female former mentor).

"Great satisfaction" (a male former mentor).

"I learned that my mentee is better than me. I was impressed with her, and it gave me the sense that she and her family were more admirable than me" (a female former mentor).

"I got to know a new culture," "I was exposed to and learned about disadvantaged communities" (a male former mentor).

"I became familiar with very different families than those I knew" (a male former mentor).

"I really became acquainted with Israeli society; you are a part of a whole, not just you and your family and friends" (a former female mentor).

"I learned to know and understand the difficulties of the periphery" (a male former mentor).

"I was exposed to life in poverty, a large family and only a few rooms, having the electricity shut off, and a rickety house" (a female former mentor).

4 | DISCUSSION

The current study examined the contribution of youth mentoring programs to former mentors' perceived personal growth, and their civic engagement and activism 5 to 10 years after serving as mentors. Embracing a social perspective, the overarching goal was to encourage and better understand the mechanisms that promote this engagement.

In general, the analyses suggested that the former mentors perceived the mentoring activity as a positive and beneficial experience, and this recollection may have translated into their present-day positive attitudes and greater civic engagement. Because the former mentors were assessed 5 to 10 years after the mentoring experience, these findings suggest that there may be long-term effects of mentoring on later civic activism. This is consistent with findings that highlight the relationship between students' involvement in civic engagement activities and higher levels of self-competence, personal growth, leadership and interpersonal skills, a better understanding of the lives of high-risk youth and commitment to social activity after college (Astin & Astin, 2000; Astin et al., 2000; Fresko & Wertheim 2001, 2006).

In addition, the analyses suggest that training may serve as an important vehicle in perceiving greater benefits from mentoring and in creating positive civic engagement attitudes and engagement. These results extend findings in the field of youth mentoring regarding the importance of mentors' training for their own as well as mentees' development. Training that orients mentors toward the goals of the mentoring and provides essential tools on how to be effective mentors appears to have increased these mentors' sense of the contribution of mentoring (Faith, Fiala, Cavell, & Hughes, 2011; Hughes et al., 2010) and enhanced their self-efficacy as active members in society.

The paths of mediation may shed light on the way civic engagement behavior develops in young adults who served as student mentors while in school. In general, the young adults who were involved in a helping-mentoring relationship and perceived this involvement as beneficial appear to have embraced helping attitudes and behavior. The role of self-perceived mentoring contribution is especially interesting given the full mediation model and the lack of direct association between the former mentors' self-perceived quality of training on mentoring youth during mentoring and later civic engagement behavior. Thus, the self-perceived mentoring contribution can be considered to have shaped the mentors' future civic involvement. This suggests that mentors should be aware of the potential inherent to the mentoring relationship for not only mentees' development but also their own self-enhancement.

In addition, the participants' gender and ethnicity affected the results. The greater perceived contributions by women are in line with studies reporting higher levels of social engagement and volunteering in young women compared to men (Marcelo, Lopez & Kirby, 2007). The greater perceived contributions by women are also consistent with claims that involvement in social activities afford women an area for self-realization and development where they can express their commitment to social change (Jenkins, 2005; Rosenthal, 1998), unlike men whose self-realization is mainly expressed in the labor market. In addition, women's greater social action reflects a normative developmental trajectory, which underscores aspects of caregiving (Gilligan, 1982).

In terms of ethnicity, the findings suggest that former Arab mentors perceived the mentoring intervention as making a greater contribution and more beneficial than former Jewish mentors, especially in terms of career development and expressing social values. These findings run counter to previous reports regarding minorities in the United States, which point to a lower level of civic involvement and volunteerism among Blacks and minorities who do not speak English compared to Whites and people born in the United States (Foster-Bey, 2008). Similar to women, it appears that the mentoring relationship provided Arab mentors with a platform for personal growth, especially in terms of career goals, and offered an arena in which to practice civic engagement behavior and social activism.

4.1 | Implications

These results also have practical implications because they can provide guidelines for enhancing civic engagement attitudes and behavior in young adults who serve as mentors while in an academic setting. Specifically, it points to the

importance of training the perceived benefits of mentoring and, by extension, the development of positive civic engagement attitudes and engagement. For this reason, field practitioners should be aware of the potential role of mentors' training as a springboard for reflection that can lead to greater social awareness, self-appreciation, and civic responsibility when supervising mentor–mentee relationships. Youth mentoring may thus be a good mechanism to promote social activism and interconnectedness, social responsibility, and involvement.

4.2 | Limitations and future directions

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, this study was based on a retrospective cross-sectional research design without a control group. Second, the response rate was relatively low and the sampling of the research population was not random; therefore, it did not necessarily represent the entire Perach population and the results might reflect participants' desire for self-enhancement rather than perceived better training or the follow-up contributions of the mentoring. Furthermore, the analyses and the SEM were based on correlational data and thus preclude causal relationships. Future studies should include longitudinal data to examine the long-term effects and mechanisms of former mentors' changes compared to a control group.

Third, the study was limited to self-reports and some of the measures were designed for the current study. Future studies could benefit from including mentees' reports to eliminate possible self-report biases and additional validated measures. Fourth, the effect sizes of the correlations with regard to the former mentors' current behavior were rather moderate according to Cohen's conventions (1988), indicating that other factors could account for some of the variations in the findings such as other mentoring and civic engaging experiences in the previous 5 to 10 years or current family or job status. Finally, the current study explored the contribution of participants' general perception of training to explain their later civic engagement attitudes and behavior. Future studies should explore the contribution of specific aspects of mentors' training such as youth development, relational strategies, cultural sensitivity, critical social thinking, and social awareness.

4.3 | Conclusion

In conclusion, despite these limitations, the findings stress the benefits in adulthood of participating in youth mentoring in engendering a positive attitude toward civic engagement and active citizenship underscoring the place of guidance to this adaptation.

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