

JUST SIX
QUESTIONS

RESEARCH
SUMMARY



Reducing risk for youth violence by promoting healthy development with pyramid mentoring: a proposal for a culturally centred group mentoring

Key Details

KEY WORDS

African American; Suicide; Interpersonal Violence; Culturally Centred; Youth; Intervention; Healthy Youth Development; Intergenerational Mentorship; Mentorship; Elders

POPULATION GROUP

Racialized Youth; Youth Workers

STEPPING UP THEMES

Strong, Supportive Friends & Families

RESEARCH ORIGIN

USA

SOURCE

Academic

“There must be frequent group opportunities for elders to...model healthy coping strategies used to develop thinking and behaviour patterns that are healthy responses to pain, frustrating experiences, thoughts, and emotions” (p. 652).

1. What is the research about?

This research is about a model for supporting the healthy development of young Black men based on Afrocentric principles and multi-generational mentoring, where unrelated elders play a key role. Many young people of colour live in communities that experience higher rates of violence and are often exposed to violence themselves, which can lead to post-traumatic stress, higher rates of suicide, and violent behaviour. Young Black men also experience systemic oppression, including large numbers being unjustly put in prison, and negative images in the media that portray Black men as aggressive and irresponsible. To challenge these issues, the authors suggest educating young people about how oppression works, as well as teaching them about their cultural heritage, based on the lifetime of knowledge and strength acquired by Black elders. This type of mentoring has been shown to promote healthy development in young people, as well as benefit the larger community.

2. Where did the research take place?

This research is based in the United States.

3. Who is this research about?

This is a theoretical research article about ways to support marginalized, young Black men through mentorship from elders within their community.

4. How was the research done?

The authors of this study looked at existing research in order to create a model for mentoring young Black men. They focused on including African-centred rites of passage and Nguza Saba (Seven Principles), which are meant to provide African Americans with guidelines for healthy living. Information from this research process was collected into a model, presented as the key findings.

5. What are the key findings?

The proposed model has three objectives:

- Training and continually supporting Black men who are empathic and culturally conscious to be elders; these elders work to develop meaningful, trusting relationships with youth.
- Providing a safe group setting where youth can practice culturally-relevant life skills, including emotional coping and critical thinking, to promote healthy development.

- Developing a stable mentoring network that grows over time, becoming a central community resource accessible to all youth.

The model itself is a pyramid, with young men being mentored at the top and supported by junior elders (mentors in training). Senior elders (with more experience) support both the junior elders and young men. Elders model healthy Black manhood and work with youth to challenge unhelpful ways of thinking and encourage them to become educated about social issues and their cultural heritage. Getting multiple generations of men involved within this pyramid gives youth the opportunity to see multiple perspectives on healthy manhood.

6. Why does it matter for youth work?

This research provides guidelines for multi-generational mentorship to support young Black men. It brings to light existing wisdom on the importance of multi-generational mentorship within Black communities and the social benefits. Moreover, it encourages mentorship programs to include components of cultural education, including honest discussions of oppression, racism, positive coping strategies, and ways of connecting with one's cultural identity.



Washington, G., Barnes, D., & Watts, R.J. (2014). Reducing risk for youth violence by promoting healthy development with pyramid mentoring: A proposal for a culturally centred group mentoring. *Journal of Human Behaviour in the Social Environment*, 24(6), 646-657. DOI: 10.1080/10911359.2014.922789

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