



Building relationships between mentors and youth: development of the TRICS model

Key Details

KEY WORDS

Mentors; Relationship Formation; Positive Youth Development; Support; Adolescents; Mentorship

POPULATION GROUP

Racialized Youth; Youth Workers

STEPPING UP THEMES

Strong, Supportive Friends & Families

RESEARCH ORIGIN

USA

SOURCE

Academic

“High-quality mentor-mentee relationships have the potential to promote positive youth development... the TRICS model can serve as a guide... to help mentors connect with youth, and promote lasting, positive outcomes in their lives” (p. 394).

1. What is the research about?

This research is about how meaningful relationships between youth mentors and mentees develop within group models (i.e. one mentor working with many youth). Successful mentoring relationships have been shown to help youth do better at school, and improve their self-esteem and emotional wellbeing. Yet most research so far has focused on general principles of relationship building in youth mentorship, usually in one-on-one relationships. So this study focused on the practical strategies and day-to-day tools mentors use to build relationships with youth who come from diverse backgrounds and have a variety of needs.

2. Where did the research take place?

This research took place in an organization called the Youth Development Program (YDP), located in the United States.

3. Who is this research about?

19 youth (aged 11-18) participated in this research, as well as their mentors and other YDP program staff (some had previously worked as mentors). The majority of participants identified as African American.

4. How was the research done?

Researchers did nine focus groups (guided group discussions that are tape recorded and transcribed). In the focus groups, researchers had a list of questions about forming mentoring relationships but allowed the conversation between group members to flow naturally. The first six focus groups were completed and transcribed (written down word for word), and researchers read through looking for common themes. From there, similar ideas were grouped together to produce initial findings. Then three more focus groups were conducted. The data from the first round of focus groups was presented to participants for their review and approval, which produced the final key findings and the development of the TRICS model.

5. What are the key findings?

The researchers developed a five-part model about successful relationship building between mentors and youth called TRICS (The Right Who, Respect, Information Gathering, Community, and Support).

- **The Right Who:** both adults and youth agreed that specific characteristics made some people better mentors than others, including: having shared experiences;

being a veteran youth worker; being open to new experiences; being personally invested and passionate; possessing leadership skills; being recharged by youth; and modelling good behaviours.

- **Respect:** being authentic and meeting youth where they are.
- **Information Gathering:** learning about youth's living situation, peer groups, interests, etc., to create a foundation for relationships.
- **Consistency:** being present on a regular basis in multiple contexts.
- **Support:** connecting with resources, emotional support, and feedback.

Researchers also note that establishing trust over time with mentees is key. When this happens, mentors gain access to additional ways of engaging in the above strategies.

6. Why does it matter for youth work?

This research provides a framework for understanding how mentors develop meaningful, high-quality relationships with youth. Moreover, it shows that one mentor can work with many youth at one time and be successful, as long as there is an appropriate level of support for mentors in place. In the case of YDP, mentors are able to devote a lot of time to mentees, since it is their full-time job, and there are specific hiring practices, training, and supports in place to help mentors succeed. Finally, the article provides specific examples from youth and mentees, outlining how each component of the TRICS model was achieved in their own lives to provide reference for those currently in the field.



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