



You can MAKE Better Mentors

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Many low-income youth and youth of color experience inequity in schools, neighborhoods and other communities. This may be

MENTOR



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attributable to adult biases toward youth.

We examined the role of two separate social justice trainings on adults’ cultural competence and self-efficacy for race equity. Both trainings covered topics related to systemic oppression, privilege, and racial identity development.

We surveyed 44 adults from youth-serving organizations who participated in a training about social justice issues and race equity issues faced by youth. We also surveyed 72 mentors who participated in a training tailored to support Black young men and boys with racial identity development, and race/gendered experiences.

attributable to adult biases within these settings. These biases may be heightened when the adult and youth do not share similar social identities, such as ethnicity, gender, or socio-economic status. Given the potential influence of adults on youth outcomes, it is necessary for adults to support youth in a way that acknowledges potential differences and biases. Our findings provide evidence for social justice trainings to address

“Analyses of pre–post surveys from two separate trainings suggest that social justice trainings may facilitate the development of sociopolitical awareness, cultural sensitivity, and self-efficacy for race equity among adults at youth-serving organizations. Further analyses indicate that such trainings may be more beneficial for adults who do not share the same social identities as the youth they serve.”

Highlights

Social justice training to improve a mentor’s cultural humility and their confidence in mentoring on issues of race and ethnicity, may improve their mentoring relationships and the lives of their mentees.

Methods

Social justice training attendees were invited to complete surveys before and after the training. We analyzed whether there were changes in adults' cultural competence (i.e., sociopolitical awareness, cultural sensitivity, and cultural competence skills), self-efficacy for race equity issues (i.e., confidence in ability related to race equity issues facing mentee and within the youth-serving organization) and racial self-efficacy to support their mentee (i.e., confidence in ability to support mentee on issues related to race and ethnicity). We also examined whether these changes varied by social identity, namely whether adults who had a different social identity (e.g., race, gender, socio-economic status) than the youth they served. Did adults from different backgrounds than the youth exhibit more change than adults from similar backgrounds?

Results

- Across both studies, adults exhibited increased sociopolitical awareness and cultural sensitivity after participating in a social justice training.
- Adults exhibited increased self-efficacy for race equity issues after participating in a social justice training.
- There was an increase in self-efficacy to support mentees around race after participating in a social justice training.
- Social justice trainings are important to develop the self-efficacy of mentors of non-shared cultural and/or gender identities who support young Black men and boys.

What Does This Mean for Practice?

Although mentors who have a similar-identity as youth benefit from participating in social justice trainings, mentors who have different identities based on race, gender or class may benefit more from participating in such trainings. Given the influence of program practices on mentoring relationships and youth outcomes, more efforts should be focused on improving mentor trainings.

HOW DID A COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY PERSPECTIVE INFORM YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE ISSUES, RESULTS, AND IMPLICATIONS?

Community psychology values of social justice and prevention informed the present research. Namely, low-income and youth of color experience inequities that may not be fully understood, and even perpetrated, by the adults in their lives. By examining social justice trainings as a mode to better support adults mentoring youth, we hope to understand how to prevent the negative effects of adults' biases on youth outcomes. Through social justice trainings, adults can learn to support youth in a manner that best appreciates their unique experiences across systems and their communities.

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