Purpose

The purpose of this proposal is to analyze and highlight the educational resilience of a marginalized group who is often depicted as academically inferior when compared to Caucasian (and all) students. Researchers have provided an assortment of definitions on behalf of the term resilience. Among the various definitions researchers have provided, the overcoming of a traumatic or significant challenge faced is a commonality embedded in each of their definitions (Bryan, 2005; Yeager & Dweck, 2012). More specifically, Bryan (2005) defines educational resilience as “the ability of children to succeed academically despite risk factors that make it difficult for them to succeed” (p. 220). Using an ecological model, risk factors which complicate the academic success of Black males will be recognized.

Educational Resilience

William & Bryan (2013) argue the home, school, and community environment significantly contributes to the educational resilience of Black male students in inner-cities. Numerous prominent scholars in the field of education concur with their findings (Randle, 2012; Task Force, 2008). O’Conner (1997) conducted a case study using six resilient Black high school students in Chicago. She discovered the students embracing their race to be a major factor and constant emerging theme. Williams & Bryan (2013) in their study, discovered ten common factors students articulated as contributing to their educational resilience: (1) School-related parenting practices, (2) positive mother-child relationships, (3) personal stories of hardship, (4) extend family networks, (5) supportive school-based relationships, (6) school-oriented peer culture, (7) good teaching, (8) extracurricular school activities, (9) social support networks, and (10) out-of-school time activities. In both studies, students did share commonalities regarding family, community, and hardships growing up in poverty. Many of those common factors contributed to student’s resilience.

Theoretical Framework

The ecological theory of human development reflects on the multi-layers of environmental factors impacting the growth and improvement of a child (Bronfenbrenner, 1975; Stewart, 2007; Ungar, Ghazinour, and Richter, 2013). Bronfenbrenner (1977) defines the ecology of human “as the person’s evolving conception of the ecological environment, and his [sic] relation to it, as well as the person’s growing capacity to discover, sustain, or alter its properties” (p. 9). There are five systems associated with the assessing of environmental impacts which the ecology theory of human development uses. It is critically imperative for schools to comprehend the direct and indirect impact of ecological systems on Black males in urban areas to improve their educational outcomes. The five systems and their contextual influences at each level are noted as:

- Microsystem- friends, family, peers, school, afterschool programs
- Mesosystem- home, school, community centers, neighborhood
- Exosystem- extended family, parental workplace, health and social service agencies
- Macrosystem- dominant beliefs, cultural values, attitudes, ideologies
• Chronosystem – the influence of time both in the individual’s life trajectory (developmental phases) and historical context.

When analyzing Black males’ education in inner-cities, it is vital to have awareness of their community, socio-economic status, and the intellectual climate of the home. To this end, Ungar (2013) lament a child’s academic growth and resilience must be measured in relation to the challenges faced and the environment in which they are presented. Livingston and Nahimana (2006) explain “success with young Black males requires understanding the social context in which they exist” (p. 210).

Implications

Literature on successfully educating young Black males in urban areas, with an ecological approach (Livingston & Nahimana, 2006; King, 2011), has been proven to be effective. This research indicates it is critical to take into consideration the environmental factors many Black males face outside and inside the school which impacts their education. By having knowledge of the obstacles many Black males face, allows for the development of strategies to help counter their impediments and foster resilience. Critical attention should be directed toward success narratives regarding Blacks males’ education to prevent the deficit model (Ford, 2011) way of thinking as it pertains to Black males.

Recommendation

It is recommended that teachers, school leaders, and educational policy makers have an understanding of the environmental factors at the home, community, and school that impacts Black males and their academic performance. Then, develop teaching strategies and educational intervention to help foster resilience and increase graduation rates of Black males.

References


