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No Child Left Behind: Barriers for Youth Aging out of Foster Care

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No Child Left Behind

Barriers for Youth Aging out of Foster Care
Presented by: Dr. Wanda Davidson and
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Purpose of Presentation

- To address the barriers to educational success for youth aging out of foster care.
- Explore the research that suggests that older youth and youth of color are vulnerable to systemic issues which may hinder educational success.
- Review roles of DCS, social workers, teachers and the department of education.
- Importance of participating in an Independent Living Program for youth in foster care.

Review of Literature

- Wilderman & Emmanuel (2014) characterize foster care placement as among the most tragic experiences faced by a child because the placement frequently introduces instability to a child's already chaotic life.
- Frequent Placement changes may hinder educational progress.
- Children in care often have fragmented educational experiences.

Review of Literature

- In 2013, Child Welfare Information Gateway reported that as of September 30, 2012, there was an estimated 399,546 children in foster care with 26% being African American. (2015 – 428,000 with 23% AA)

- According to the US Census Bureau data (2014), the percentage of African Americans in the United States is at 13.1%, (2015-13.3%) which clearly indicates the disproportionate number of African American children in foster care.

Review of Literature

- Of the 500,000 youth in foster care in the United States, only 50% graduate high school, 10% to 20% enroll in college and less than 5% graduate (Corwin, 2008).

- 75% report earning less than $5,000 year and 90% report earning less than $10,000.
  - (Corwin, 2008) (Hahnel and Van Zile, 2012).

Review of Literature

- Three major obstacles to educational success:
- Youth experience lack of residential stability and often class time and credits as placement and school changes.
- Youth suffer when the child welfare and education systems fail to effectively collaborate.
- Youth may lack a parental figure in their lives; therefore they are often impaired by lack of educational advocacy (Hahnel & Van Zile, 2012)

Review of Literature

- Rios (2008) conducted a study to explore, describe and explain the perceptions of college students who had lived in foster care regarding the external and internal influences that impacted their academic achievement.

- External influences included interactions with multiple nonrelative guardians and case workers, relatives, siblings, mentors, teachers, school administrators and school counselors.

Review of Literature Rios Study

- Internal influences included the barriers of anger and bad behavior or attitude and newly identified set of internal characteristics, termed success strengths by the researcher, that promote academic achievement and college attainment.

- Implications of this study suggest importance of school interactions; should mandate awareness training for educators, social workers & other adults that work with youth who have aged out of care; and increase professionals' awareness of barriers faced by these young people.

Review of Literature

- There are great disparities in the academic achievement and success between African Americans and Caucasians (Lynn, 2006).

- African American youth in foster care are particularly vulnerable to harmful systemic impacts in educational success (Lynn, 2006).

- Despite our knowledge of poor educational outcomes, the literature on methods or models for addressing the needs remains extremely limited (Tyre, 2012).

Review of Literature

- Teaching students from different cultural backgrounds is a challenge that requires multicultural educators to handle.

- It is important to understand the cultural difference of students from their own culture perspective.

- Without such an understanding, teachers may risk employing culturally inappropriate strategies to motivate students to learn.
  - (Salili and Hoosain, 2001).

Review of Literature

- Harper and Davis, III (2012) study explored what compels African American male students to care about education, despite what is consistently reported in the literature regarding their gradual disinvestment in school. Participants in the study include 304 African American males. Study based largely on a 650 word essay.

Review of Literature Harper & Davis Study

- Findings showed that AA male participants maintained a firm belief in the liberating potential of education, despite their recognition of how post-secondary institutions and policies unfairly disadvantage them and others in their community.

- Participants indicated that they had few AA teachers.

- However, though disadvantaged they could be empowered and recruited to make improvements.

Review of Literature

- It is reported that racial biases in teacher's perceptions and expectations of behavior of AA male students may account for their disproportionate reports of behavioral problems in the classroom.

- They may be judged by their movement styles and cultural expressions (Thomas, Coard, Stevenson, Bentley, & Zamel, 2009)

Review of Literature Thomas et al Study

- 148 AA male youth participated in study to investigate the predictive influence of students' reactive emotional coping and racial socialization experiences on teachers' perception of classroom behavior adjustment problems.

- Findings showed that rejection sensitivity, anger expression, and racial socialization were all important determinants for teacher perceptions of behavior of AA males.

Review of Literature Thomas et al study

- Findings suggest that participants who were better able to suppress their anger resulted in teachers having more favorable impressions of their classroom behaviors.

- Study implies a need for more research to examine the interplay between individual emotional coping strategies, racial socialization processes, and the behavior options chosen by AA students.

Review of Literature Thomas et al study

- Teachers are not immune from being influence by overgeneralizations based on culture differences.

- Teachers are also susceptible to bringing their cultural beliefs and preconceived notions concerning the misinterpretation of the anger of AA males with them to the classroom.

Review of Literature

- Other issues that had an impact on youth aging out of the system was related to participation in an Independent Living Program.

- Prieto (2008) conducted a study with former foster youth between 18-25 to explore key factors that impacted their success.

- Findings revealed that most respondents acquired skills from participating in an IL Program which helped prepare them to live on their own.

Review of Literature

- It was also noted that these young people were able to connect with at least one adult while in foster care that served as their support system (Prieto, 2008)

- The study also revealed that all respondents had experience traumatic life changing events, but were able to overcome (Prieto, 2008).

- An understanding of how these youth make sense of who they are, their experiences, and where they belong in society can further an understanding of their social, educational, and occupational outcomes (Atukpawn, 2009).

Theoretical Framework

- Albert Bandura' Social Learning Theory
- Three core concepts:
  - People can learn through observation.
  - Internal mental states are an essential part of learning. External environment reinforcement was not the only factor to influence behavior.
  - Not all behaviors are learned effectively; just because something has been learned does not mean that it will result in a change of behavior.
  - (Cherry, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

- Erick Erickson's Theory of Psychosocial Development. Three features:
  - › Theory addresses growth across the life span. Identifies and distinguish issues of central importance from infancy through old age.
  - › People are not at the total mercy of biological and environmental influences. People integrate, organize and conceptualize their own experiences in such a way as to protect themselves.
  - › Consideration of the active contribution of culture to individual growth.
  - › (Newman and Newman, 1991).

Purpose of Study Methodology

- Study to measure the degree of importance of education of youth aging out of foster care.

- Conducted survey of 137 youth ages 14-20 that were in foster care at Alabama's 2014 Annual Independent Living Conference

- Instrumentation: Questionnaire

Questionnaire

- Students marked whether they agreed or disagreed to the following statements:
- I believe schools are important for the communities.
- I believe education is important.
- I plan to go to college.
- I feel good about furthering my education.

Demographic Profile

- The typical respondent of the study was an African American female, between the ages of 16-17 years, in high school, had been in foster care more than 3 years, resided in a foster home and had 5 or more siblings.

Research Question

- Is there a relationship between valuing schools in the community and furthering my education among youth who were likely to age of foster care in the state of Alabama?

Findings

- 94% agreed that schools were important and felt good about furthering their education.

- 62% of the respondents were African American and 28.5% of those were African American Males.

- A majority of the African Americans, 57.7%, agreed that education was important.

Limitations of Study

- Limited number of participants .
- Youth with any type of behavioral or medical issues were not available to participate in study.
- Questionnaire has not been used before because it was designed by the principle investigator.

Conclusion

- Though the respondents indicated that education was important, only 16.1% were high school graduates, 2.9% had obtained a GED and 6.6% had some college.

- Of respondents, 50.4% were between the ages of 16-17 and 26.3% were between the ages of 18-20 indicating a portion of the respondents were not on grade level.

Recommendations

- More research on barriers to educational success for this population.
- More states should offer tuition waiver for foster youth.
- Social Workers need to advocate for youth.
- Social Workers need to collaborate with educators.
- More emphasis on ILP by Child Welfare Agencies.

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