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Review of Schooling for resilience: Improving the life trajectories of African-American and Latino Males

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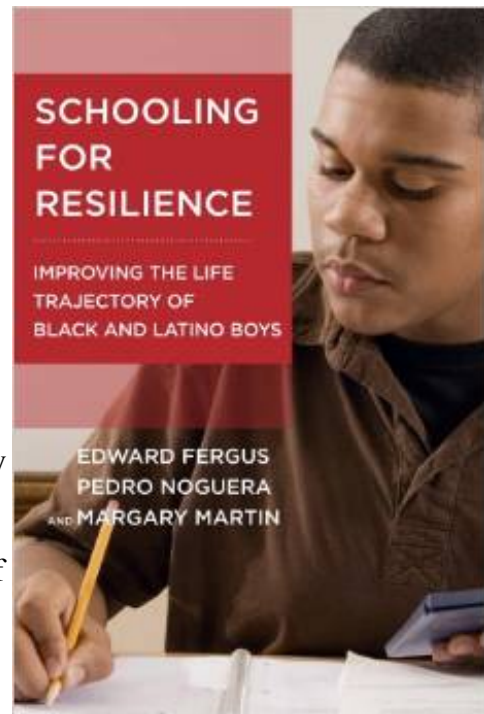
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Schooling for Resilience: Improving the Life Trajectory of Black and Latino Boys should be a required reading for all future educators (kindergarten-graduate school), all future child, school, clinical, counseling psychologists and social workers. Inclusion of this book in the curriculum of various education and psychology programs may assist in ensuring that future practitioners better understand many of the challenges some multi-cultural children (particularly those from families having lower socio-economic status) face when attempting to attain a quality education; specifically, Black and Latino boys. This work also informs readers of the challenges of elementary, middle and high schools attempting to not only pinpoint but also implement academic and behavioral interventions that could positively improve the educational and overall life trajectory of these young boys. Inclusion of this text for various practitioners is imperative because so many therapeutic and academic supports are needed to instill and sustain resilience in these populations.

According to Fergus and Noguera, nationally, African-American and Latino males are more likely than any other group to be suspended and expelled from school.



Though such facts are disheartening, if proper interventions are not put in place to help lessen or even prevent such occurrences, more devastating consequences arise. According to the Schott Foundation (2010), in most American cities, dropout rates for African-American and Latino males are above 50%, and they're less likely to enroll in or graduate from college than any other group. The authors of this text, Edward Fergus, Pedro Noguera and Margary Martin have brilliantly and effectively conveyed the importance of preventing such trajectories while providing strategies to not only improve educational gains for males of color but also provide objectives that may allow them to live better lives. The chapters of this book flow easily, providing details on the study performed within single-sex schools as well as including several engaging, reflective, and heart-warming statements from administrators, teachers and students about their experiences within these schools on how they have been positive environments, on areas where they can improve and the differences they have presented in comparison to other schools these students have attended. This text has great meaningfulness, legitimacy, and utility in education and psychology. It is passionate and allows the audience to take the stance of an activist to influence efforts to improve the achievement and life outcomes of Black and Latino boys not only by opinion, but with support of research findings. It also serves as an easy-read textbook that informs laypersons and novice professionals of the steps these single-sex schools take in creating effective curriculums and safe school environments for educating and retaining Black and Latino boys through graduation of high school and beyond.

The book opens by immediately educating the audience on terminology relevant to following the text and the purpose and history of single-sex schools. The opening chapter also makes readers aware of how much of a disparity exists between Black and Latino males and their White counterparts when academic achievement is considered more specifically focusing on the "achievement gap." Further the text makes it clear there is a dearth in the literature and a lack in studies that truly support the benefits of single-sex education. The authors make it clear that the aim of the text is to conduct a study that helps to explore both the limits and benefits of single-sex education. As the entry chapter continues, a description of the study is given including the length of the study (three years), the use of

documents and artifacts from seven schools, in-depth interviews, focus groups composed of three hundred students, parents, and school staff in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the single-sex schools. An in-depth description of all of the schools was given and most important, a review on the research on the risks faced by boys of color is explored.

In some ways, the text has the qualities of a traditional book explaining a research model; however, the powerful element explored here is that as the book progresses the audience is given raw insights of school administrators and students which not only allows them to tell their stories, such as the benefits of the educational climate being provided, and the differences in their schools and others, but also explores the ideas that could be improved, better developed and better suited for boys of color making this text far from traditional. These stories add an element that gives educators and practitioners insight on the intense thoughts and feelings of those actually involved tying the research to real-life view, which is invaluable. Of note, the audience is made aware of how these schools are designed to “save” boys of color through an extensive theory (Theory of Change). Psychologists (more specifically school and child psychologists), counselors and social workers will find valuable knowledge in the sections addressing ways to meet both the socio-emotional and educational needs of Black and Latino boys. Highlights include ways to redefine masculinity to place more emphasis on the importance of education with teacher insight, ways to expose young men to positive role models, helping Black and Latino boys to become more academically oriented, obstacles posed by past school experiences, ways to create a positive peer culture, and ways to develop future leaders. All of these elements were combined to describe the ultimate positive direction in saving boys of color through resilience-building programs.

Schooling for Resilience remains far from a typical text as it explores more of the benefits and pitfalls some of these single-sex schools encounter while tailoring curriculum and instruction for boys of color and striving to attain great rigor and relevance. The authors take great leaps in explaining the difficulties encountered when attempting to meet the educational needs of Black and Latino boys. Further, the daily stressors of those in this population are explained, including gaps in their academic skills development and why those may exist (pp. 58-60).

Interestingly, the text expounds on some of the ways these boys are being prepared for college, which span beyond book knowledge to include teaching proper ways to dress, speak and work with fellow students, thereby raising expectations to push students to achieve higher academic goals. The importance of making curriculum and instruction culturally relevant, which many teachers have attempted in order to best support “real world application” of skills that are taught to the students, is also emphasized. Educators would find this information important as the authors include results (positive and negative) on the student responses to instruction implemented, indicators of teacher quality, the frequency of instructional actions, specific literacy activities linked to college preparation, and even relevancy and real world applicability. This work shares some of the flaws that are so often present when educators attempt to make curricula that are “culturally relevant.” It was also asserted that though much Black and Latino history references were made and hip-hop culture was often referenced in instruction, it was not made clear whether students were truly academically pushed to their full potential.

Of great interest for both educators and mental health professionals are the ways in which climates that support resilience within the schools are being established. Most powerful were findings from survey data collected by the author in which 91.8% of student respondents answered that education is the key to success in the future. These schools seek to build communities that foster high regard for education. Even with those efforts, the authors also address the issue that many students don't always feel “college ready” and may desire more support from both teachers and peers. To further develop the socio-emotional piece, readers are exposed to how out of school time is used to build a positive school climate including academic, sports and social clubs. Beyond this type of camaraderie, the authors went deeper and researched out how school personnel sought to promote caring relationships between students and staff, addressed issues of self-esteem, and assisted in building a sense of brotherhood amongst students. Most enjoyable here is how teachers within the school shared situations where they used their own experiences from clubs, fraternities and groups they belonged to in school in order to mimic support systems within the single-sex school systems. These were all systems discussed in depth and could possibly be used by

readers eager to try some of the systems reported to make positive gains in relationships within the school climate.

All readers of this book will be left with greater empathy for Black and Latino boys and the negative situations this population often must encounter in order to fight for their education. The authors provide a great deal of information necessary to take such a journey when they address the reconstructing of social identities, such as race, ethnicity and gender (i.e. Chapter 5). This chapter addresses everything from racial segregation and federal mandates of desegregation to overall racial isolation. This chapter sought to allow readers to look closely at how students identified themselves racially. Most eye opening was when students were asked what being Black and/or Latino meant to them. Many expressed that through their schools they were able to learn their history, feel empowered and important, and develop more positive racial identities. The authors even collected data before and after President Barack Obama was elected president in 2008, and provided some of the comments of students who felt that his election would help to show that people of color are able to excel academically, but also that it may not change the negative view some people hold true about people of color). Survey data collected from the students further extend the view of what Black and Latino boys believe to be true about themselves and what they assert others think of them including students' views on stereotype (pp. 155), students' views on masculine honor (pp. 157), students' views on emotional stoicism (pp. 158), and students' views on gender nonconformity (pp. 159).

Schooling for Resilience also provides educators with some specific findings on what Black and Latino boys felt to be the most supportive of attitudes and practices that positively influence their academic and behavioral performance (i.e., Chapter 6). From various survey data gathered many assertions were made. More specifically, survey data provided insight on factors that affected the degree to which students conform to behavioral expectations of their schools, the degree to which students are intellectually interested in school, the degree to which students feel their educators support them, and the degree to which students felt supported by their peers. This data can be used by educators and mental health professionals to create educational communities that foster high levels of academic performance and cognitive engagement.

Overall, the authors provide a sense of hope throughout the text, offer survey and focus group data from school officials, students and parents that provide a positive feeling and sense of hope in determining if single-sex schools truly provide an answer to the difficulty of building strength and resiliency in Black and Latino boys more specifically when it comes to education and positive life trajectory. What readers will find is that the question cannot be answered definitively. Instead of that specific answer, the authors felt that their study focused more on understanding how practitioners sought to create protective environments for boys of color and more how they sought to understand and address structural and cultural realities confronting such populations. Readers will feel empowered but may be left feeling that some of those efforts were in vain as several of the schools were closed due to lack of performance by the end of the study. Further, readers find that according to the data collected, the findings of the authors do not suggest that single sex schools should be necessarily embraced as models for educational intervention. The authors leave readers with some direction for critical educational reform and suggest that those who are truly advocates of single-sex schools learn from past educational reforms. Perhaps a bit more information could have been added to expound on the direction that these schools should take, and why (though they don't seem to be great educational interventions), they should continue to be attended and cultivated. Nevertheless, very beneficial information is offered for readers and *Schooling for Resilience* certainly raises excellent information about purpose and function of single-sex education and foster hope in the future of Black and Latino boys.

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