

Youth Experiences Through the Journey of Resiliency

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Abstract

Amid the global COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an innumerable amount of distress on the lives of others. Among the many populations impacted are students of color who have experienced many difficulties with balancing their personal lives and education. This study is dedicated to exploring the experiences of students of color in an institution of higher education (HBCU) Historically, young people of color have been regarded as a marginalized population in the realm of education. Therefore, this chapter provides an in-depth view using qualitative methodology to: (a) better understand the complexity and challenges faced during the pandemic for this population; and (b) gain insight into their overall lived experiences. As students of color in higher education, preliminary analysis shows that many have had to face a myriad of obstacles including, but not limited to, adjustments in academic learning technological challenges, experiences of family casualties, personal bouts with surviving COVID-19, and economic challenges to name a few. Despite these aforementioned barriers contributing to the unbalanced impact of COVID-19 as it relates to issues of equity and justice for communities of color, many students demonstrated a level of resilience that should be immensely commended. Therefore, when sampling students of color at HBCUs impacted by the global pandemic, emphasis is placed on their stories of resiliencies and unprecedented experiences, post COVID-19 instructional experiences, as well as personal life experiences. This study is deemed important because learning takes place over a lifespan and in the field of academia, despite challenges, the word “resilience” should be at the forefront and in the minds of our students of color as it relates to the unbalanced impact of the global pandemic. .

Keywords: Global Pandemic, Covid-19, Resilience, Students of Color, Higher Education, Unbalanced Impact

Roadmap to Resiliency

Roadmaps are typically used as a method of navigation to arrive at the desired destination. This chapter emphasizes the importance of not only the need for a roadmap, but ways to navigate through life with resilience, no matter the direction headed. Resilience is merely defined as the ability to bounce back from adversity or trauma. In essence, resilience can promote a sense of thriving and well-being. However, being resilient is not something we're born with, it's simply constructed over time based on our unique, yet traumatic experiences. When you think about the term resilience amid the global pandemic, also respectfully referred to as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), many thoughts may come to mind, specifically in the minds of students of color in higher education. Many students are terrified about the uncertainty of their futures as it relates to not only their overall well-being, but also their opportunities for academic success, and the state of the world. The pandemic has intensified the need for resiliency, not only for students but for all persons involved in the provision of quality educational

experiences in higher education [1]. Typically, instructors serve as student guides by providing them with a roadmap to success within their programs of study; however, during COVID, instructors needed a roadmap of their own. Instructors needed a roadmap to help them navigate through the adversity of the challenges they too faced. Many instructors faced challenges due to immediate demands for online instruction from traditional brick-and-mortar courses. These difficulties were further confounded by the introduction of hybrid models which also included remote learning components. This transition left many educators doubtful at tackling the seemingly impossible task at times [2]. Due to the impact of the abrupt changes, anxiety levels were heightened for both students and faculty; therefore, the term resilience is destined to be at the forefront of this journey in an effort for students of color to be successful, specifically in the sector of higher education.

The Journey Begins

The year 2020 was a very complex and challenging year for the higher education sector (Johnson, Seaman, & Veletsianos, 2021). By all accounts, life appeared to be normal for most people until the world transformed that dreadful year after the World Health Organization's (WHO) declaration of a worldwide outbreak of COVID-19. Needless to say, life felt like a tsunami that no one saw coming, which changed the trajectory for all, especially in the middle of the Spring 2020 academic semester. The pandemic has proven to be very disruptive in the lives of several in an unprecedented manner. One of the disruptions involved challenges in the higher education arena and the impact it had on its students, specifically students of color (OECD, 2020). Despite many students of being familiar with economic hardship, systematic racism, and educational and social injustice disparities, the environmental stressors of the pandemic, however, have proven to be traumatic for this population [3].

At the onset of the pandemic, and without identifying the actual term, resiliency was demonstrated by both students of color and instructors. Both populations had to adjust to a considerable degree to changes in a limited and sensitive timeframe. Some of the changes involved training, transferring course materials, and modification of instruction styles to accommodate strictly online instruction within a narrow span of as little as a two-day turnaround. These abrupt transitions caused an influx of emotional responses that ranged from panic to sadness. Many of these responses were regarding partial school openings, campus lockdowns, suspension of campus activities including athletics, increases in COVID cases, issues of sanitation, and CDC-mandated masks requirements. Other challenges included financial hardships, shortages of household disinfectants, which were reportedly needed to slow the spread of the virus, need for educational support materials. Schools were in immediate need of laptops, personal protection equipment, and campus-wide testing and tracking protocols. Due to the immediate need for online instruction, technology concerns arose as many students and instructors had limited to no access to internet services. Issues of social isolation were rampant as individuals were immediately separated from co-workers, friends, peers, and family members whom they were accustomed to having unlimited contact. The most profound of the COVID-19 pandemic was that of death, for many lives were lost, including those of faculty members amid the onset of the global pandemic. At one institution, the news of the death of an instructor left students with increased fear of the unknown, causing many to speak out about their concerns [4].

Speed Bumps Ahead: “the voices within”

There are times when traveling using a roadmap to navigate your way through life, you come across speed bumps in the road that force you to slow down and reassess your course of direction. Reportedly, college-aged students often rely heavily on social media, though less likely to be inaccurate, which caused many to become frantic about what they had seen or heard about the pandemic. However, in the case of COVID, many students of color were

faced with several speedbumps and were very open about how they felt about the obstacles or challenges they faced during the pandemic [5]. There is an authenticity that can be captured by the narratives of others. Listening to the lived experiences of students helped breathe life into their realities, causing others to look at their perceptions through a different lens. As with any information provided by others, particularly students, responses were solely dependent on the emotional mindset of the person at the time that their experiences were shared. Also, due to the small convenient sample size, the information obtained herein may have limited implications for the general population [6]. When asked to share their experiences, HBCU students responded as follows:

According to Shereunda: *Having to do education online, is considered an essential worker, losing loved ones, and being away from my family were some of the challenges I faced when COVID-19 was in place. Being hundred percent online for education was a little more difficult and something I had to get used to. Being an essential worker was extremely stressful; I was either dealing with unpleasant customers who were furious because we didn't have certain products in stock, or I was afraid that I would catch covid-19 and be unable to work and pay my bills. The most recent challenge I faced was the loss of loved ones and the inability to see my family. Due to this virus, I lost three loved ones, and not seeing my family as much was heartbreaking,*

Another student Michael reported their speedbumps and lived experience as the following: Living in a rural area with poor WIFI connections was literally a nightmare. At times I had to drive to a neighboring county and sit in the library parking lot in order to attend class, so I would not get behind.

Katherine eschewed her experience as thus: *I faced a lot of challenges during this COVID-19 Pandemic. What started it off was me getting fired from my job, the CEO came around to all his locations of the store and told each head manager they had to let someone go due to selling rates becoming low. Since I was young, black, and now I was the first one let go. Shortly after that my grandmother passed away on my dad's side. I still cry about it to this day, not being able to attend her funeral, not seeing her one last time I just can't seem to face it. Also, when I went to the Doctor's office, she stated I had COVID. That crushed me because then I instantly thought about my daughter and how I could not see her until I got well. I didn't see my baby for 3 weeks I felt like “shit”. Going through all of this and I was still in school and not excelling because I'm not face to face with my teachers, they can't physically see what is going on with me, it's either do all this work and make an A or fail and I was not my best at all throughout these semesters and it was killing me because all I want to do is make a better life for my daughter and me.*

Tanya explained her lived experiences as the following, *personally speaking, I and my immediate family have been tremendously blessed during this pandemic. My heart has been saddened by those who have lost loved ones and suffered economic hardships,*

but as a family, we have remained virus-free thus far. I did lose a niece and a first cousin unexpectedly to COVID-19. The hardship that was created was that I normally would have attended their funerals, but I chose not to because of COVID-19. I do like traveling, and I have limited essentially all travel since March 2020. While this has cramped my style, I have adjusted. As for my academic life, the online learning was not new for me, nor did it present any major challenges. I can't say that I enjoyed them, but my basic needs were met and I have accomplished all of my academic goals thus far.

Genevra's story seemed to have had several speedbumps in the road that appeared to be somewhat different from her other peers, and they are as follows: *The pandemic began in the last semester of my undergraduate year. However, that did not delay receiving my degree. Although, it did delay the graduation ceremony by about seven months. Going virtual, as a result of the pandemic, allowed me the opportunity to find a job that allows me the opportunity to work from home 2-3 days a week. Virtual learning limited my interactions with other people, but it also decreased my chances of contracting COVID-19. I have had close family members become extremely ill from COVID, and they continue to have lasting side effects months later. However, they all seem to be recovering, and they do not seem to be at risk. As for other illnesses and deaths, I had one uncle who died suddenly, not of COVID-19, at the beginning of 2021. My uncle's death was a shock, and since that was during the time most of the world had lockdowns and restrictions, the family had to have a small graveside funeral. We also had to limit our interactions with each other when we'd normally spend more time together, especially under the circumstances. Lastly, my grandmother was hospitalized twice during the pandemic for issues unrelated to COVID-19. My grandmother's hospitalization did limit the interaction we would typically have with her making it more challenging to cope with her being there. At the same time, she only spent three days in the hospital each time, and once she came home, life resumed as normal.*

Devante' reported his lived experiences as the following: *Students faced financial challenges that put their education in jeopardy, had new living arrangements that made learning difficult, and often lacked the resources necessary to even log onto class online. Colleges invested time and money to rotate classes, activities, and services online in a matter of days and at once suffered the loss of essential tuition and additional income. I just wish and pray that the COVID-19 will end.*

On the other hand, **Jordyn**, reports that his lived experience included the following: *During the COVID-19 pandemic I faced challenges with going home. Being at home was comfortable because I have a nice house and no shelter struggles. However, I missed being away at school in my on-campus environment. Being able to experience what it's like to have your own space that you take care of as a young adult is fun. So, I had feelings of sadness from not being able to be at school with friends and my social life. Academically there was a better opportunity for me to get assign-*

ments completed, although the workload was heavier. I was able to take more time to each assignment. The downfall of the virtual classes is access to your professors, other staff, and advisors. It was difficult to maintain a quick contact between them since there was no official to go to.

Although several students communicated their lived experiences and captured what they felt immensely impacted them the most, the level of severity and range within the context of their happenstance varied. One student's story is illustrative of such variance:

Lindsey: *I knew the day my father tested positive for COVID; it would be hard for him. Vaccines hadn't hit the shelf yet, so he was depending on his body to fight for him. Every day he fought, I would mask up and throw some gloves on and walk into the danger zone to take his vital signs. Days went by and his oxygen saturations were declining, and I knew he needed to get to a hospital. Thanksgiving morning of 2020 is a day I will never forget. I walked my father into the hospital and knew the possibility of never seeing him again. The common thing of someone walking into the hospital with COVID was that they wouldn't come out. Fear ruled my life every single day. For 13 days, it was text after text asking him for pictures of his board to get his nurse's information. There was the heartbreaking reality of seeing him on FaceTime calls with him wearing a rebreather mask and he still had trouble breathing. Once he was admitted to the hospital the nurses and doctors explained everything to me and assured me, he was in good hands, which he was because the staff was amazing. I held his hand for one last time and rubbed his head, I didn't want COVID to take my dad. As I left, I prayed I wouldn't have to make that drive again. I went home and slept and spent every second I could with my mom and siblings. Hours later, it happened. He was gone. His body was tired and couldn't take it anymore. His lungs were tired. His heart was tired. God called my daddy home. Our world was shattered. Facing the reality that my father was gone, was hard." My world felt like it was closing in, I had to walk out of class. Mentally I was drained. I was watching my mom hurt because she lost her husband and best friend, my siblings being so young and mourning the death of their father, and me not being able to believe he was gone.*

Listening to the foregoing stories of students of color in higher education enabled instructors to play a huge role in aiding students with anxiety and trauma surrounding this global pandemic, which is essentially an unbalanced and traumatic experience [2]. The nature of trauma lies greatly with the rapid increase in the number of reported COVID cases—over 60 million cases, averaging more than 400,000 cases per day since January 1, 2020, and over 800,000 deaths reported in the U.S. [7].

Detour, or Straight Ahead, that is the Question?

At this point amid the COVID journey, many students may ask the question, should I take a detour or continue straight on my journey, based solely on their lived experiences? Continuing straight on the journey means having a greater understanding of the complexity and challenges faced during the pandemic. This includes amassing

a plethora of knowledge about the Global Pandemic of COVID-19 as a precaution in hopes of decreasing the likelihood of the spread of the virus. In addition to the startling impact that COVID-19 has had on the general population, the growing number of cases poses a constant and considerable risk in the field of academia specifically as it relates to students of color in higher education [5]. Their accounts of lived experiences give an undertone to what we know to be considered trauma. Trauma is used to describe experiences or situations that are emotionally painful and distressing, and that typically overwhelm people's ability to cope; therefore, leaving

them feeling powerless [8]. Typically, a trauma response involves an emotional response of sort requiring emotion-regulation to persevere. In addition to an emotional response, an attempt to identify and understand the emotions you feel, at times may result in a physiological response and has a direct impact on your body causing what many would say are health problems. The combination of both emotional and physiological responses can be summarized in five stages as part of the framework of grievance and learning to live with the loss of a significant other as well as the loss of a way of life (Figure 1).

Stage	Function	Symptoms
I. Denial	Denial helps us minimize the overwhelming pain of loss, as we try to absorb and understand what is happening.	You reflect on your shared experiences (memories) with your loved one who died and struggle to find ways to move forward. Life makes no sense to you. You go numb. You wonder how you can go on, if you can go on, why you should go on. You will try to find a way to simply get through each day.
II. Anger	Anger helps adjust to new reality by discharging emotions without (or with less) fear of judgment or rejection.	Feelings of desertion and abandonment. Your anger can extend to your friends, the doctors, your family, yourself, and your loved one who died. You may ask, "Where is God in this?" "Why did it happen to me?" Anger shows the intensity of your love.
III. Bargaining	Bargaining, usually with higher or supernatural power, helps overcome our feelings of helplessness.	It happens before and after a loss. Before loss, you want to do anything for sparing your loved one. You may say, "Please God, I will never be angry at my wife again if you just let her live." Or you may tell the doctor, "It doesn't matter how much it cost. I will pay if you save my loved one and I will be indebted to you. I will tell all my friends you are genius." After loss, bargaining may take some form of truce. "If I continue to pray and do some charitable activities for humanity, God will give happiness to my loved one in Heaven." Such feelings help you to cope with situation.
IV. Depression	Depression is typically dysfunctional and can have serious physical and mental health issues, if left untreated.	The loss of loved one is a very depressing situation; hence, depression is a normal and meaningful response to the loss. As you struggle with transition to present, empty feelings may appear in deeper level—causing you to withdraw from life. You may wonder "What is the point in going on alone?" Depression after a loss is usually seen as unnatural—a state to be fixed and something to snap out of. On the contrary, not to experience depression after the death of a loved one would be unusual.
V. Acceptance	Acceptance helps face reality.	You finally realize that you cannot change the course nor turn the clock backwards. You may find a way of rationalizing and convincing yourself by thinking that, "God know what is best for her, I can't be selfish;" "At least she is not suffering anymore;" "She is still with me. I can feel her though I cannot see her" and so on. Finally, you will readjust to living in the world where your loved one is missing—by making new connections, new meaningful relationships, and new interdependencies.

Figure 1: Five-Stages of Grief and Grieving

Source: Compiled from Kubler-Ross, E. & Kessler, D. (2005) [9]. *On Grief and Grieving*. Retrieved from <https://grief.com/images/pdf/5%20Stages%20of%20Grief.pdf>; and Clarke, J. (2021, February 12). *The Five Stages of Grief: Learning about emotions after loss can help us heal*. Retrieved from <https://www.verywellmind.com/five-stages-of-grief-4175361>.

The above stages are only to help us understand the dynamics of grief and coping mechanisms. They do not necessarily occur in a

linear fashion, nor do they occur in a fixed time interval. You may go through a stage, then another, and then revisit an earlier stage. Individuals can progress to and through the various stages at different rates. For example, someone might stay in one stage for a long time and not so long in the other. Many people dwell in one or more of the stages of grief and loss, which may result in a person either giving up or learning ways to be resilient to overcome the massive emotional response they are struggling with. With the uncertainty of the global pandemic during the current state of the world, what you feel and the impact it made on your life typically

determines your level of motivation towards resiliency. Resilience during COVID-19 is an integral part of the healing process and understanding such a process will aid success amid the journey of resiliency.

We have arrived!!! A stress resilience blueprint

"Plop, Plop, Fizz, Fizz, Oh What a Relief it Is!"— an Alka Seltzer's ad slogan (that aided with upset stomach and acid indigestion) once echoed in 1976 across the airways in many households in America. As with such stomach disorders, the impact of COVID-19 frequently mirrors trauma and grief, which if left untreated, could result in a physiological response in your body. As with any other type of physiological ailment in the body, most people resort to either over-the-counter or prescription medications as a method of curing their discomfort. Nevertheless, traumatic experiences as depicted by the shared lived experiences of students of color can cause stress. This stress is a contributing factor to the unbalanced impact caused by having to overcome barriers of achieving academic goals amid the global pandemic. Unlike a physiological condition (e.g., body aches or pain), stress-evoking issues (such as COVID-19) must be viewed through a psychological lens, particularly as it relates to understanding and learning the importance of resiliency to gain positive mental wellness [10].

Despite the challenges faced during the global pandemic of COVID-19, students were able to demonstrate resiliency development through the adoption of a strength-based lens and was able to describe a resiliency plan that aided them in their efforts to work through some of the issues and uncertainty while dealing with COVID-19. The following student participant responses may be illustrative of such efforts.

According to **Lindsey**: *Over a period of time, I kept talking to my instructors which helped a lot. The feeling of comfort I got from being able to talk to them was amazing. Weeks later, I found myself booking an appointment for therapy. Therapy helped me manage my feelings and process the grief that I was running away from. The stigma behind therapy makes it hard for people to want to try it, but it's honestly a saving grace. My best advice is to put your mental health first. Our mental health is the base of coping and handling situations, you must take care of that before anything. Even when the world felt like it was ending, I had to keep in mind that time would heal. Also realizing that grief is a lifelong process, I knew how important it was to express what I was feeling inside and not keep it in.*

On the other hand, **Tanya**, describes her resiliency planning efforts as the following: *While I consider myself a risk-taker in most areas of my life, I have not been willing to risk exposure to COVID-19. I have purposely avoided large gatherings since March 2020, and I limit contact with people I don't know. My resiliency is based on my willingness to be compliant with government requests regarding information on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19. I have also believed in the power of prayer and divine protection.*

Katherine relied on her spiritual strength: *I got down on my knees and prayed. I am slipping away of becoming closer with my God and when things started to get difficult and hard, I knew the only person that could pull me out was my God. Being a single mother with no mom or no dad to help with anything gets very hard at times, times I just cried all day because I didn't see no way out. I had to realize that my God wouldn't give me ANYTHING that I can't handle. One thing I would suggest to any student, professor, or parent is to just keep going! Today you could give up and tomorrow probably would be the day that blessing that you were praying for would come your way, but you would never know because you didn't keep going. Trust me I am a witness, don't ever give up.*

Geneara articulated how her level of resiliency proved to be beneficial to academic success. *Despite Covid-19 affecting many plans related to employment, school, and socialization, I recognized the benefits of being on lockdown and having to do things virtually. For example, having the opportunity to work from home helped me complete graduate course assignments promptly and maintain a 4.0 average. Although it does become frustrating to have to limit places I attend, for fear of Covid-19, I cope by recognizing the pandemic as a benefiting factor that contributed to furthering my education and career goals with less stress than it would've been had the pandemic never occurred.*

Herbes et. al. (2021) pointed out that variations in individuals' capacities to adapt may demonstrate the level of resiliency displayed when responding to psychosocial stressors [11]. In spite of the disparities among *students of color*, many families of color have maintained long-held values, morals, and level of importance of the "will-to-live," "exist-to-live," and more importantly the "will-to-survive." These ideologies have been and imparted on their youth as part of an existentialistic view and resiliency [12]. The recipe that many families ascribe to cope with stress and resiliency included the following:

1. Have Faith (Believe in GOD or a higher power)
2. Be honest
3. Go to Church
4. Pray
5. Do not trust anyone but family
6. Work Hard (Keep food on the table, and a roof over your head)
7. Go to School and Study, then study harder
8. Take care of yourself
9. Treat others with respect even if they don't respect you
10. Protect yourself "fight back" if you fear harm

Due to the compassion for the mental wellness of all persons in general many scholars (clinical and non-clinical) have attempted to gain deeper insight into ways to reduce stress which may have long-lasting implications for being resilient. To cite a recent example, Blackett (2021) placed emphasis on the importance of integrating biofeedback and neurofeedback for effective stress management [13]. His "Stress Resilience Blueprint" is a three-

pronged process: (1) knowledge and understanding about what exactly stress management means to you; i.e., the goal, the problem, the triggers, how stress works, etc.; (2) skills and resources part, which is heart of the matter, is about the required skillset and inner resources to aid in the rapid recovery from stress and build resiliency. The core competencies required to this end, termed as “Mind-Body Skills” involve five core skills:

- a) Mind-body awareness – calls for awareness of body responses and mental processes including feelings and thinking, and crucially how these two relate to each other; that is, awareness of how the mind-body connection plays out in practice.
- b) Attention – covers flexibility and stability of focus. It might not always be obvious how this is key to resilience and overall emotional well-being.
- c) Letting go part 1 (Physical) - This means being able to calm the body – reducing physiological arousal and letting go of tension.
- d) Letting go part 2: Mental. This means being able to separate yourself a little from your own thinking – differentiating your thoughts and beliefs about the world from the world in itself. It means acceptance – letting go of mental struggle.
- e) Accessing & sustaining positive emotion – it's not enough to get rid of negative emotions (and that's ultimately not possible anyway).

Finally, the third point of arrival for youth along the journey of resiliency, involves the right mindset or set of beliefs and attitudes that filter how you perceive, respond, and cope to stressful situations. Depending on the situation, one may overcome stress through a growth mindset (that you can learn and develop), positive mindset (that you can overcome the challenge and not succumb to threat), or willingness to tackle the problem in a piecemeal fashion. Despite the level of distress regarding any issue that a person may face, particularly students in the midst of COVID-19, some of these resiliency tools may prove worthy of consideration.

Table 1: symptoms of anxiety or depression, help received, and help needed by race and ethnicity (survey conducted between january 2020 and february 2021).

Race/Ethnicity	Symptoms of anxiety or depression during 7 days	Took prescription for mental health or received counseling during past 4 weeks	Needed but did not receive counseling or therapy during past 4 weeks
Hispanic/Latino	47.1%	19.5%	12.8%
White, non-Hispanic	39.8%	28.1%	11.7%
Black, non-Hispanic	44.5%	18.7%	12.2%
Asian, non-Hispanic	37.4%	12.9%	5.8%

Source: Colombini, S. (2021, November 18) [19]. The pandemic strained mental health for Black Americans: it’s also amplifying calls for change. *HealthNews Florida*. Retrieved from The pandemic strained mental health for Black Americans. It’s also amplifying calls for change | Health News Florida (usf.edu)

This problem is further compounded when accounting for structural racism experiences by minority youth for the following reasons: (1) Youth of color frequently spend most of their formative and ad-

Conclusion

Resilience is a dynamic, multi-dimensional construct that requires interaction between individuals and their social milieu (family, peer, teacher, school, community, and society). Resilience to a disaster (e.g., COVID-19) is determined by the vulnerabilities within a community. These vulnerabilities for the youth of color lie in their poverty and the circumstances that are exacerbated by such poverty. These circumstances include lack of caregivers at home, disabilities and health problems, lack of adaptability to changes in colleges and methods of teaching, and lack of access to technology. Moreover, grief and mourning of losing a loved one to COVID-19 and death is another traumatic stressor [12]. Stated differently, resilience exists in the context of real or perceived adversity [14-18]. Coping with such an unprecedented series of events requires a strong intrinsic will to bounce back, regulate, master, and mobilize all inner and outer resources that one can tap into. Resilience-based strategies can help reduce stress, anxiety, and other adversary health conditions while promoting chances of academic success among the youth of color in higher education by building on strengths in the individual, family, school, and community. But, as the founder of *Well for Life*, LaDonna Butler said “Assumptions about that resilience can perpetuate stigma about mental health and creates a gap in care... when people believe you are so strong they often don’t create systems or strategies that will allow you to seek help with the great pride that you have. And when people don’t feel seen, heard or respected, they are less likely to get help” [19]. It is well noted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that significant increases in mental health concerns prevailed throughout the pandemic but also that a higher likelihood of need existed among Black and Hispanic Americans and yet they were less likely to have received treatment, when compared to non-Hispanic whites [Table 1].

olescent years in high-risk situations with systemic and structural barriers (e.g., neighborhood, family, school and associated interactions) for their success; and, (2) Youth of color have to simultaneously face challenges stemming from their (hostile) interactions with larger social, economic, and political forces in the nation (that tend to characterize youth of color “as non-normative or pathological”. See for more discussion on this Spencer et al., 2006, p. 630) [17]. These conditions as such have the potential to increase stress, but the stress increases even more rapidly in disastrous

situations like COVID-19 and/or the loss of a loved one, which in turn decreases one's ability to cope and manifest in behavioral and emotional problems. The prevailing perpetual deficit-oriented perceptions tend to overlook the resilience demonstrated by the youth of color while encountering several existing and new challenges. This chapter's significance stems from providing empirical evidence of the student participants' lived experiences and the resilience they demonstrated amid the global pandemic.

In the end, serious changes are yet to take place at the societal level as to how we perceive each other, how we perceive our youth of color, and how we deliver health, educational, and other services to those in need of help—all of which require greater attention and commitment on the part of policymakers, academic, economic, political, health, and other community leaders to make them more equitable.

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