

PREFATORY

The Minority Male Experience in Higher Education

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This special issue of the Journal of African American Males in Education (JAAME) on “The Minority Male Experience in Higher Education” emerged from the 2012 Association for the Study of Higher Education Council on Ethnic Participation (ASHE-CEP) Pre-Conference Forum. CEP, a standing committee of ASHE, partnered with the Journal of African American Males in Education (JAAME) to offer a publication opportunity for authors of papers accepted for presentation at the 2012 Forum. All manuscripts submitted by CEP presenters underwent the full peer review process of JAAME. Forum research papers engaged issues of race/ethnicity, equity and diversity, as well as topics related to historically underrepresented, underserved, or marginalized populations in higher education. The work of researchers presented here promotes critical examination of the experience of minority male students within various education institutional types. These research papers make unique contributions toward the expansion of a literature that furthers the understanding of minority male student experiences in higher education. The authors conclude their manuscripts with recommendations for policy makers to consider as they work toward the creation of a learning environment designed to meet the needs of minority male students.

Keywords: males of color, diversity, higher education, underrepresentation

The articles presented here address the overall theme of “The Minority Male Experience in Higher Education” within various higher education contexts. As challenges to diversity in academe persist, scholars describe the situation for males of color in academe as reaching crisis proportions. Investigating disparities in educational attainment within African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian American and Native American communities, a College Board study (2010) reports the existence of a significant education achievement gap between males and females. Males of color from these racial/ethnic groups are described as “vanishing” from the landscape of higher education (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009).

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In “Latino Males in Texas Community Colleges: A Phenomenological Study of Masculinity Constructs and their Effect on College Experiences,” Saenz, Bukoski, Lu, and Rodriguez, using male gender role conflict as a framework, examine the experiences of Latino male community college students. This is a very important topic within an institutional type recently highlighted by President Obama (2009) as critical to the economic welfare of the nation. In their study, Saenz et al. suggest that “pride, or *machismo*, triggers men to admit emotionality only in rigid ways, that pride and fear can prevent men from seeking academic help and support when needed, and that cultural and familial expectations of getting a job and earning money as a marker of manhood all serve to “pull” Latino men away from their studies and make dropping out the easier and more viable option.” They conclude with three policy recommendations: 1) Re-framing programs and services with men in mind, 2) Greater integration of career and academic pathways, and 3) Messaging to Latino males and their families. The work of Saenz et al. advances higher education’s knowledge of the experience of Latino males in a community college context, an area where little research has been conducted (Harris III & Wood, 2013).

In “Black and Male on Campus: An Autoethnographic Account,” Royel Johnson, the autobiographer, writes in first person, using Critical Race Theory (CRT) “to explore the ways in which race and racism coalesce in shaping the college experiences of Black men [in Predominantly White Institutions, PWIs], using the reflections of one to shed light on others who share aspects of his reality.” Pointing out that his story is not meant to represent the experiences of all Black men at PWIs, Johnson hopes that his personalized narrative might reveal insights that illuminate not only his experiences, but also those of other Black men in higher education. He shares several findings as vignettes emerging from his study titled: 1) “*The Grit That He Daily Shows*,” 2) “*Double Consciousness*,” and 3) “*Racial Symbolism on Campus*.” Johnson suggests that campus decision-makers include Black men in the development of policies to address the specific needs of these students. Johnson also underscores the value of CRT for researchers interested in understanding the racial experiences of Black men at PWIs, and promotes the use of the autoethnographic method to uncover various strategies used by these men to cope with racism. Johnson’s research urges the reader to work toward deeper understandings of challenges faced by students and to identify policies and practices that continue to promote, rather than dismantle racism on campus.

In “Black in the Rainbow: ‘Quaring’ The Black Gay Male Student Experience at Historically Black Universities,” Darris R. Means and Audrey J. Jaeger, citing several previous studies, contend that queer theory can make salient identities, such as race, gender, and class, invisible. To address this limitation, Means and Jaeger use the quare theory framework, an alternative framework to queer theory, which addresses the intersection of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation to guide their study of the collegiate experiences of four Black gay men at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Their research methods include the use of photovoice and semi-structured interviews. Themes emerging from their study include: 1) Finding a home at an HBCU, 2) Quares’ successes and challenges making connections, 3) Quares finding support in a LGBT student organization?, and 4) Quaring the closet. Means and Jaeger make recommendations for practice including: 1) Providing programs and services to inform campus communities about sexual orientation and gender expression, toward reducing myths and stereotypes, 2) Encouraging student affairs professionals at HBCUs (and PWIs) to go beyond LGBT student organizations in offering student support, and 3) Urging student affairs and fraternity/sorority professionals to become safe-zone trained. This study provides important

insights to theory and practice, adding an important contribution to the literature on the collegiate experience of Black gay men.

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