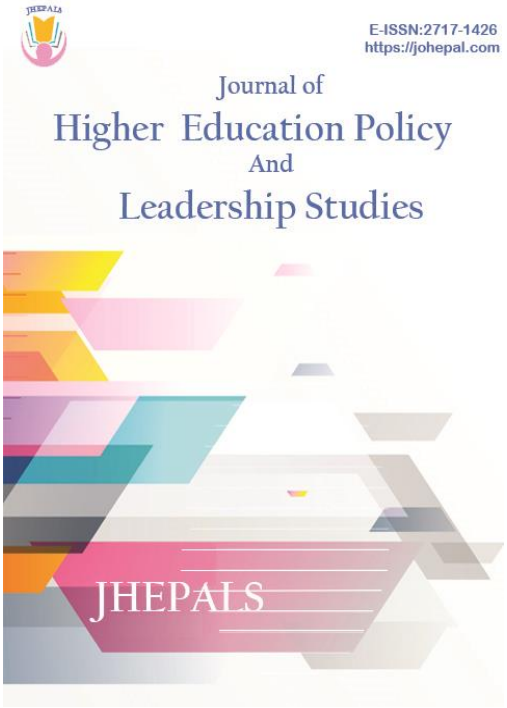
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Book Review: **Engaging Black Men in College Through Leadership Learning**

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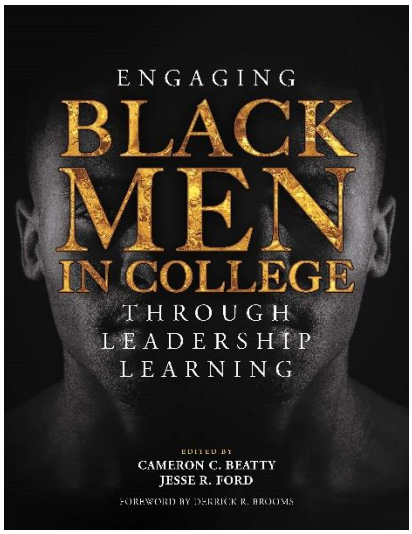
Book Review

Engaging Black Men in College Through Leadership Learning

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Engaging Black Men in College Through Leadership Learning (Beatty & Ford, 2023) the tenth volume of the Contemporary Perspectives on Leadership Learning series offers a vast yet immersive overview of perspectives, recommendations, and stories detailing the experiences of Black men and their relationships to college leadership.

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The text offers first-hand encounters and relatable diction that keeps the reader intrigued, from real-world concepts and contexts that are both eye-opening and appealing to any and all readers. Whether the reader is a higher education practitioner or a Black man engaging in leadership opportunities, the text provides supplemental understandings and contextual knowledge that is critical of what collegiate spaces have created.

Analysis of Work

This volume, *Engaging Black Men in College Through Leadership Learning,* is a tribute to leadership development and commitment to social justice. Each section amplifies the latter by offering a clear vision and an essential guide for readers to follow along. Each section is structured to its own dedicated theme highlighting the importance of Black men's lived experiences and engaging Black men in college through leadership learning.

Section I dedicates three chapters to the introduction as well as the theoretical findings that arbitrate the significance of analysis, capacity, navigation, and why context matters. Chapters 1 through 3 emphasize that, based on theoretical findings and data analysis, one can suggest that a considerable focus on Black men engaging in leadership learning is a driving force for more than campus involvement alone. Readers are introduced to the culturally relevant leadership learning model (Bertrand Jones et al., 2016; Beatty & Guthrie, 2021) in the book's introduction as an emphasis of what contributes to shaping a "leader" and attributes to shaping the leadership process. The purpose of the culturally relevant leadership learning model is more than a developmental guide, but in such ways, the model provides leadership educators and learners with critical domains to operationalize leadership learning. The CRLL model addresses the deeply rooted complexities in the leadership process, as antiquated leadership practices and norms have negatively impacted leadership development. Additionally, CRLL offers a unique perspective on understanding the leadership process as it relates to environmental, psychological, behavioral, and historical influences that also impact leadership experiences and development.

The core aspects of the CRLL model being identity, capacity and efficacy are the cornerstones of development in a leader and continuous interactions are needed for leadership learning to occur. Contextual bias undermines the experiences of Black college men and overlooks insights that allude to societal partiality. Each chapter concludes with recommendations and reflection questions for practice. This book is more than a collection of experiences, but a call to action. Leadership learning is *crucial* to a Black man's growth, progression, and direction in higher education, thus, giving a nod towards curricular and co-curricular programs and the changing policies as the forefront for reflection and cultivating leadership knowledge. Arguably, this opens vast avenues of conversations to begin. Section I pinpoints educational spaces for Black men's intersecting identities. These spaces are formed to be inclusive yet can hinder Black men's sense of self if the environment is not welcoming and affirming to the diverse intersections of Black men's social identities This section identifies leadership as a frequent topic in the field of higher education but is vastly understudied and overlooked. A distinct focus on Black men engaging in leadership learning is paramount to breaking barriers and furthering opportunities. Representation and inclusion are two fundamental steps to turning barriers into entries, thus causing a ripple effect of growth and development.

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Section II is separated into three subsections that examine how identity, environmental factors, and opportunities are underpinnings for leadership learning for Black men in collegiate spaces. Section IIa dedicates six chapters to social identities that a Black man in college may associate with, whether visible or invisible. The authors emphasize the importance of identity as compared to other barriers that Black men in college encounter. These chapters contain vignettes, which illustrate experiences of the chapter's specific identities. Chapter 4 focuses on Black queer men and highlights not only a perspective, but the imperative nature of how Black queer men navigate spaces on a college campus and beyond. This chapter reiterates that identities are formed in spaces of growth, yet a Black man's microcosm involves self and environment. Leadership learning is habitual in nature and the context of the environment is important for Black men engaging in leadership spaces. The question still remains. What makes an environment habitual? Elements of belonging, comfort, and transformation are the key to liberation, but stability has to be given the proper foundation. For Black men, this is dire as it is explicitly imperative that leadership spaces provide impactful environments as they will be responsible for Black men's experiences in higher education. The idea of impact versus intent is imperative when considering all aspects and factors when creating leadership spaces for Black men. In chapter 6 the authors identified that Black male students who navigate through the foster-care system can be described as an invisible identity but also contributes to how they learn in leadership spaces.

The book continues forward towards physical disabilities and socioeconomic status. Health and wealth can serve as catalysts for a growth mindset or a mechanism for withdrawal. One may notice the direct correlation of both physical disabilities and socioeconomic status require Black male students to be poured into more, as they could be at a significant disadvantage than their peers. The perspectives and stories from Section IIa outlines the lack of attention Black men receive and as a countermeasure what administrators of these scholars do to make sure they are provided support. Even when holding leadership positions, conflicting identity experiences take precedence. Authors take a deeper dive into this by providing a contextual understanding of race leadership. As Black men explore their identities in the multitude of leadership spaces, their most salient identity takes priority. This was prevalent throughout this section's chapters as the vignettes highlighted student identities ranging from sexual orientation to physical ability status. Thus, having their Black scholars distinguish which salient identity they would like to bring to the forefront in select leadership spaces.

Section IIb dedicates four chapters to the environmental factors and its relation to the aid and hindrance of Black men in their college leadership journey, Authors complement each chapter by referencing previous sections. The environmental factor that is highlighted is institution type. Whether it is a predominately White public institutions, historically Black colleges and universities, Hispanic-Serving institutions, community colleges, or private institutions, leadership educators must ask how these environments enable capacity for community and enable the expansion for cultural capital. Authors begin Section IIb in chapter 10 with a vignette of a community college student. Their experience, like the many others attending the varied types of institutions, heavily relies on peer support and family as their driving force. The content in this subsection centers on holistic development with

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concentrations of awareness and advocacy. Aligning and prompting the reader to focus their lens on the overarching theme of the subsection. The author's motivation stems from historical proceedings and contexts that have limited students of color primarily and subsequently were Black men. The reader may conclude that regardless of institution type, disparities are impartial and may begin to question where Black men can find their sense of belonging and sense of community.

Section IIc dedicates eight chapters to the opportunities and challenges seen in spaces where many Black men have engaged in countless leadership learning experiences. From a network of support in Black male initiative programs, to receptive transfer student culture, and finally to spaces supportive of identity exploration, one may notice a trend of positive correlations yet, similar to perception, that is also relative. The common theme throughout each chapter in Section IIc is the idea of culture. What exactly defines culture and who in turn creates it for Black men? This question is both a call to action and reflection question for those reading the text, including practitioners and researchers and for the millions of Black men wanting to engage in leadership learning. A motivator for culture is reimagining community on a college campus. In such spaces, there must be a requirement for identity development, understanding emotions, and accountability to ensue. Authors emphasize this by highlighting relatable experiences that dictate one of the three requirements. By doing so, readers may understand the textual relevance to their own experiences or experiences like those around them. Chapter 16 recognizes and signifies the importance of accountability when toxic masculinity presents itself in Black men's fraternity leadership. As Black men participate in these experiences and more importantly occupy these spaces, it is vital to consider how they can effectively navigate them.

Section III dedicates four chapters to the culmination of the book. The authors utilize the closing chapters as an acknowledgment to the leadership learning process and frameworks. As the purpose and goal is fruitful and vital to engaging Black men in leadership learning, a common term is repeated in the last chapters implying the importance of the development models and financial support. The key term being "critical" is coined as it is imperative to center Black college men in leadership development. Leadership development models and frameworks used in chapters 22 through 25 highlight a core synthesis of reflection, community, and efficacy as tenets of growth. Additionally, authors identify institutions and programs that align with the intent to foster engaging Black men through leadership learning. Relevance is essential and providing financial support is critical to creating and supporting meaningful engagement opportunities for future black leaders. By providing such spaces and placing significance on centering Black men in leadership, barriers become step stools and alleviate any other existing pressure. The advancement of this signifies that "putting your money where your mouth" is more than a common phrase but an emphasis on pushing a goal to its fruition.

Conclusion

Engaging Black Men in College Through Leadership Learning serves as a guide, a worksheet for current or future practitioners, researchers, policy makers, institutions, and most importantly, Black college men engaging in leadership learning. The text instills the importance of curricular and co-curricular programming models and theoretical findings that highlight the accountability of Black men's retention, enrollment, and graduation

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through the lens of leadership learning. This text is more than words on a page or a relatable experience. The text illustrates the forgotten, the left-behind, and the pushed-to-the side Black man that is deserving of the same equitable opportunities. Editors Dr. Cameron C. Beatty and Dr. Jesse R. Ford explicitly co-created a call to action that speaks on a variety of identities that Black men may carry day in and day out. Readers must take heed to the recommendations made in every chapter's conclusion as it prepares one to serve and bring new knowledge to their institution and community. As a Black man who shares many of the experiences listed in the book's chapters, the purpose is clear, the goal is clear but most importantly, the call to action is clear.

Areas of Growth

Engaging Black Men in College through Leadership Learning is a comprehensive workbook created with intentionality and robust perspectives and knowledge that not only highlights vast inequities but opportunities for growth in leadership spaces. As one's perspective on this text is a call-to-action, there are a few areas that should be highlighted in future editions and volumes. First global perspectives of Black men engaging in leadership spaces. Chapter 18 shares how impactful studying abroad experiences are but, experiences from Black men in other countries would contribute a new perspective. This could highlight practices or policies indifferent from various countries when compared to institutions in the United States. Thus, bringing a global world view of all experiences of Black men in college leadership spaces.

Additionally, another area that the editors could highlight in this book is leadership spaces for Black men engaging with the intersecting identity of religion and spirituality. As a reader, I shared affinity to many of the chapters and experiences in the text. With the understanding that religion is a cornerstone for many Black men in college, by outlining how college itself is a melting pot of identities and how leadership spaces offer a space of internal reflection in one's culmination self when determining what a "leader" looks like.

Lastly, another area that could be highlighted in future editions is policy implementation. As readers walk through the text with the current political climate in context, one may consider how future policies may impact leadership spaces for Black men engaging in college. Many may consider these spaces feeling more constrictive due to policies that eliminate dynamics of support as important training such as unconscious bias training, cultural competency and inclusive leadership training. Policies that eliminate these training are bridges to marginality and oppression. Thus, emphasizing this can be important for readers immersing themselves in the text.

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Use of Generative AI/ AI-assisted Technologies Statement

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