



Men of Color in Higher Education: New Foundations for Developing Models for Success

Williams, Ronald A. and Hrabowski, Freeman A.
Stylus Publishing, Llc., 2014

Book Review

Tags: diverse learners | diversity | racial and ethnic diversity

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Date Reviewed: November 30, -0001

The title of this volume alone, *Men of Color in Higher Education: New Foundations for Developing Models of Success*, inspires intrigue in educators and administrators who are concerned about the relative dearth of men of color in higher education. The absence of men of color in higher education and the regular portrayal of their poor academic performance has been propelled by deficit discourse contending that men of color are defective and inadequately suited for the academy. This volume interrogates this perspective and counters studies and programs that have largely been guided by the presumption of men of color's academic "deficiency." It intimates that college and university approaches (or lack thereof) to educating men of color are habitually insufficient and offers compelling evidence that supports "a strengths-based approach" (xi) as a model for success for academic institutions that aspire to effectively educate Black, Native American, Latino, and Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) men.

This timely investigation was prompted by consideration of the inadequate educational progress of Black men, but pushes beyond "the two most politically visible groups" (xiii), namely African American and Latino men, toward a more inclusive depiction of men of color in higher education. Although culturally distinct, Williams contends that there are conspicuous social continuities between men of color that can be leveraged for the work of developing models of success that are responsive to their educational needs. Intersectionality, the ways in which men of color's lives connect and overlap based on shared experiences of gendered power relations and social marginalization, is the guiding framework of the project. It is propelled by black feminist standpoint theory that highlights the "problem of patriarchy" and racial gender roles as social dilemmas that not only negatively affect the lives of women, but

are also severely detrimental to men of color.

The volume's engagement with AAPI intersectionality, the Native American experience of ahistoricism, and Latino masculinity was revelatory in its presentation of damning statistics that unveil the educational deprivation of men of color across racial/ethnic designations, shatter model minority social mythologies that characteristically position AAPI men as overwhelmingly successful in higher education, and most importantly uncover the underperformance of academic institutions in relationship to men of color. The most convincing aspect of the argument is found in its exploration of the effects of racialized gender roles and its assertion of action steps that point toward models of success for teaching and learning in higher education, but that are dependent upon naming social realities and "(re)setting" an educational agenda that is responsive to the heterogeneity of minoritized college men.

Even as intersectionality theory emphasizes the double/triple jeopardies of racialized gender identities, there is no doubt that men of color have historically been gender-privileged in theological education as opposed to their female counterparts of color, precisely because of the status quo favorability of cisnormative male religious leadership. In fact, the emergence and marginalization of feminist and womanist theological and ethical inquiry offers evidence of women's continued subordination in the church and theological academy. Reading *Men of Color in Higher Education* as a Black womanist theological ethicist who is driven by a traditionally communal ethic concerned with the flourishing of all people - male, female, and non-gender conforming - but who is also clear about how patriarchy compromises Black men's theological burgeoning in the church and the classroom, the black feminist framework that drives the volume's argument is particularly exciting. Its wrestling with the interplay of patriarchy and racial gender roles uncovers how even in spaces where men of color are demographically dominant to women of color their success is still threatened by the limits of patriarchy that often call them to perform communally death-dealing and sometimes even self-cannibalizing masculinities. In other words, although the gender demography of many theological schools is much different from colleges and universities, the core argument of the book concerning men of color and success in higher education is relevant and compels theological educators toward critical questions about effective teaching and learning for men of color.

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