Review of the Book Black Males in Postsecondary Education: Examining Their Experiences in Diverse Institutional Contexts, by A. A. Hilton, J. L. Wood, & C. W. Lewis (Eds.)

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Available at: http://works.bepress.com/donaldmitchelljr/56/
trailer court for housing (p. 104); Gene E. McKissic, Sr., in the late 1960s on how Black students protested the playing of “Dixie” at sports events even as White fans at the game pelted them with bottles and rocks (p. 108); Vernon Murphy in the early 1970s recounting how the Razorback’s football team would run the ball down “with a Black player and they would give the ball to the White player at the five-yard line” (p. 121); Edward Duffy in the 1970s having his tires slashed and the “N” word scrawled across his windshield for parking in a fraternity parking lot and then having his White roommate pack up and walk out when he realized Duffy was assigned to the same room (p. 150); Lynda Jackson Browne in the late seventies and early eighties exposing a ballot fixing scheme that kept African Americans from cheerleading spots (p. 175); Merike Manley in 1982 becoming the first Black homecoming queen but then having the traditional parade cancelled because she had won (p. 226); Karen Mathis Mongo in 1988 being told to “know everything” when she approached her graduate advisor on what she should focus on for her comprehensive exams when the other White students were all given tips on what areas to study for (p. 230); Kevin Dedner in the late 1990s pushing to have Black sororities and fraternities included in the RUSH handbook (p. 247); and William Jeffrey “Giovannie” Flanigan also in the late 1990s watching from the inside of student government as White students stripped a Black student of the presidency of student government on the technicality of someone campaigning on his behalf too close to a polling station—and then appealing the ruling until it was overturned and the initial election results were upheld (p. 249).

If the remembrances in this volume are often sobering, they are also often laced with a subversive humor, such as the time when the African American student George Mays and his Black friend wanted to see a movie at a theatre in town that prohibited Blacks from attending. To fool the doorkeepers, they placed a dot in the middle of their foreheads and turbans on their heads and acted as if they could not speak American English well (p. 27). They were able to see the movie. George ends the interview by characterizing his time at the University of Arkansas with what could also have also been an apt subtitle for this volume: “Best of times, worst of times.”

Alumni of the university will find this oral history fascinating, but historians of race as well as critical race scholars and students in African American studies will find original source materials here to help explain how institutions and individuals reciprocally form and reform each other. I found the sometimes raw reflections from individuals struggling to right wrongs from the underside of a racialized university system to be in themselves worth the read. But as someone who teaches in the area of Whiteness studies, I found just as informative the descriptions of how those defending the White power structure at the core of an historically White school like the University of Arkansas operated, and I learned at what moments the pressure points brought to bear by protesting Blacks at the university became greater than the rewards garnered in maintaining the status quo. Therefore, Remembrances in Black, like all oral narratives that give the silenced their voices, reads as a simple collection of memories even as its casts alternative and subversive characterizations that serve to weaken the power of White normative institutional narratives and self-serving myths of organizational heroes and origins.

REFERENCES


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As an African American male who persisted through the Ph.D., I often wonder, what are the salient supports that influenced my postsecondary experience that other African American males need as approximately two-thirds—who even make it to college—drop out? Is it faith, family and friends, mentors, peers, institutional choice, self-motivation, or engagement? Adriel A. Hilton, J. Luke Wood, and Chance W. Lewis, explored these same issues in their edited volume, Black Males in Postsecondary Education: Examining Their Experiences in Diverse Institutional Contexts. The text is composed of eleven chapters, each exploring the experiences of African American males who attend diverse institutional types.

Lewis, in Chapter one, noted that scholarship examining the experiences of African American males in higher education has virtually ignored the impact of institutional context and culture. He concluded the chapter with an overview of the remaining 10 chapters.

In Chapter two, Wood and Hilton conducted a meta-synthesis of the literature on Black males at community colleges over the past 40 years. They stated that three types of factors influence the experiences of Black males at community colleges: (a) economic, (b) academic, and (c) external. They concluded with policy recommendations included in the literature, presenting them by levels or groups (i.e., high school, institutional, state, federal), and called for additional research noting (at the time) that only eight peer-reviewed journal articles were published on Black males at community colleges in the past 40 years.

Chapter three, written by Fountaine, included a literature review and overview of for-profit colleges and the access they provide African Americans. For example, Fountaine noted the University of Phoenix-Online Campus was the top producer of Black associates, bachelor’s, and master’s degrees. Because literature concerning African American males at for-profit colleges is narrow, at best, she concentrated on African American trends, generally. However, her overview of for-profit institutions was extraordinary as research and scholarship on these institutions is limited.

A personal favorite, Chapter four by Berhanu and Jackson qualitatively investigated the experiences of two African American males who attended an Ivy League institution for master’s degrees using an aspiration theoretical framework. The authors found that the males chose their institution because of prestige, they were engaged partly to deconstruct stereotypes about African American males, and faced issues of race and racism on the campus.

Gasman, Lundy-Wagner, and Commodore, in Chapter five, wrote about experiences of Black males studying at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). The authors reviewed literature, and provided a descriptive overview of Black males at HBCUs using the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS, see https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds). They noted that Black males make up the majority of students at two-year HBCUs, and HBCUs are vital for Black males who transfer from two-year to four-year colleges.

In Chapter six, Newman, Mmeje, and Allen explored the experiences of African American males at predominantly White institutions (PWIs), analyzing existing literature and exploring trends at the “top 50 national universities.” They noted that Rice University had the highest graduation rate for African American students and California Institute of Technology had the highest percentage of males among African American students (81.8%). Newman, Mmeje, and Allen provided the most detailed list of recommendations for practice in the volume.

Strayhorn, Tillman-Kelly, Suddeth, and Williams, in Chapter seven, qualitatively examined the experiences of three Black males at a religiously affiliated institution using a constructivist approach. They found that the males chose the institution because of reputation, not religion. Additionally, the males shared that they struggled academically and socially, but supports, which included self, family and friends, support groups, and religion or spirituality, were important in their postsecondary experiences.

In Chapter eight, Billie and Carter qualitatively explored the experiences of gifted African American males at a research-intensive institution. The chapter included four males studying at a...
research-intensive HBCU. Themes that emerged were that the males struggled with language barriers with professors, they found student support services inadequate, and they believed campus policies were inconsistently enforced. The authors concluded that environment also affects high-achievers.

Chapter nine has Marks, Carey-Butler, and Mitchell quantitatively examining the experiences of African American males at private, non-profit colleges. The authors conducted a cross-sectional analysis of 514 survey responses from freshmen and seniors. They found that positive interaction with faculty, academic and intellectual development, and engagement decreased at significant levels (i.e., seniors’ means were lower than freshmen’s means) after controlling for institutional variables. I found Chapter nine to include the most comprehensive and useful findings for future research and practice.

Reddick, Heilig, and Valdez highlighted the experiences of Black males at Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) in Chapter ten, conducting a focus group with four males using a framework blending educational, institutional, and human capital. They reported that the males believed there were benefits in Hispanic–Black relations on campus, but they noted that HSIs are still PWIs, since they are predominantly White, and they highlighted that there were a small number of Black males on the campus.

The book concluded with Wood, Hilton, and Lewis (Chapter eleven) highlighting recurrent recommendations for research, policies, and practices across the eleven chapters.

I recommend the text for academic courses that explore race and gender, doctoral or master’s students working on capstone projects, and higher education professionals who want to learn more about the experiences of Black males in higher education. The book included a range of research methodologies and conceptual analyses; it also synthesized and expanded on the foundational scholarship related to African American males in higher education. Nevertheless, I was most surprised with the knowledge I gained about institutional types and contexts. More attention to implications and recommendations for practice, policy, and research would have been useful. Additionally, I thought some chapters would have examined the experiences of African American male faculty, staff, and administrators. I also wondered how broadly “Black” or “African American” was defined. Nevertheless, I consider Hilton, Wood, and Lewis’ volume a necessary, timely, and invaluable text as scholars, practitioners, and lawmakers seeking to improve the experiences of African American males at the diverse—and ever-evolving—postsecondary institutions in the United States.

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Reviewed by Hugo A. Garcia and Nancy Ramirez, Claremont Graduate University.

In Why Race and Culture Matters in Schools: Closing the Achievement Gap in America’s Classrooms, Tyrone C. Howard, Associate Professor of Education of Urban Schooling and Director of Center X in the Graduate School of Education & Information Studies at UCLA, discusses the gaps in the academic achievement of low-income minority students in American schools. Howard provides an informative and insightful discussion of how culture and race continues to play a powerful role in influencing teaching and learning outcomes of students of color. This book is timely and stimulates the ongoing conversation and recent debates in K-12 regarding appropriately measuring student learning outcomes and closing the achievement gap...