

## Chapter 15

# A Blueprint for Developing Black Male Leader Identity, Capacity, and Efficacy Through Leadership Learning

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Developing future leaders has always been an important part of postsecondary education, as seen currently in many institutional mission statements. This chapter explores the development of leader identity, capacity, and efficacy of Black men through an academic course at Florida State University. Building on the foundations of the leadership learning framework and the culturally relevant leadership learning model, the Black Male Leadership course was intentionally developed and is taught each semester. The authors provide an overview of the course, report course participants' perceptions of the course, and lessons learned in the course development and implementation process. This chapter hopefully provides a blueprint for institutions to develop and implement such a course.*

Black men face challenges, tribulations, and inequities in many parts of U.S. society, and higher education is no exception. Comparatively, Black male college students are frequently less academically prepared than their counterparts (Lundy-Wagner & Gasman, 2011; Palmer, Davis, & Hilton, 2009). Throughout all types of postsecondary education, the degree attainment of Black men is disturbingly, and disproportionately, low (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). In fact, when looking across all racial and ethnic groups, including members of all sexes in higher education in the U.S., Black men have the lowest graduation rates (Strayhorn, 2010). Furthermore, Black male undergraduate's achievements and sense of

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-5345-9.ch015

belonging are undermined by the stereotypes and racial microaggressions regularly encountered within predominantly White institutions (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Smith, Yosso, & Solórzano, 2007).

Black men are less involved in campus activities and tend to hold fewer leadership positions on campus than otherwise comparable Black women (Harper, Carini, Bridges, & Hayek, 2004). However, it is important to acknowledge the Black men in higher education who persist because they are academically strong, actively engaged in- and out-of-the-classroom, and as a result, are graduating and continuing to graduate and professional academic programs (Harper, 2012). Identity-based leadership courses and educational programs can support and engage more Black men in higher education by focusing on identity development and capacity building. Focusing on assets of Black men, rather than deficits, can lead to better outcomes for Black men in their higher education journeys. To this end, this chapter explores the significance of providing leadership learning opportunities for Black male college students. Specifically, we review the opportunities and challenges of developing and teaching a Black Male Leadership course, as well as lessons learned in the process. This chapter also provides theoretical underpinnings in leadership learning, culturally relevant leadership learning, specifics on the focal course, findings from data collected on students' perceptions of experience taking such a course, as well as the implications for teaching, student affairs practice, and campus climate.

## **LEADERSHIP LEARNING, LEADERSHIP EDUCATION, AND HIGHER EDUCATION**

Leadership has been deemed an important outcome of higher education (Chunoo & Osteen, 2016). Institutions of higher education provide students opportunities to enhance their leadership skills (Pascarella & Terenzini 2005). Colleges and universities are charged with developing competent leaders with strong character (Nohria & Khurana, 2010). Students' leadership development is associated with growth in other important areas, such as academic performance, self-efficacy, personal development, and civic engagement (Komives, Longersbeam, Owen, Mainella, & Osteen, 2006). These factors, coupled with higher education's value of the intersections between diversity and leadership development (Guthrie, Bertrand Jones, Osteen, & Hu, 2013), stress the imperative for a comprehensive understanding of how Black male student leaders develop, understand, and experience leadership in college.

As the U.S. becomes increasingly more diverse (Colby & Ortman, 2015) and students of color are enrolling in institutions of higher learning at some of the highest rates in history (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2017), these students expect colleges and universities to address their basic learning needs. Students of color deserve inclusive classrooms and curricula. Being engaged in classrooms that foster leadership learning, while simultaneously accounting for social inequities, may be one answer to building leader identity, capacity, and efficacy for Black men; perhaps even increasing their persistence to degrees in higher education. This chapter discusses the need for Black male leadership courses, focusing on developing leader identity, capacity, and efficacy. First we discuss the leadership learning framework, the culturally relevant leadership learning model, and how both of these influence the development and delivery of a Black male leadership courses, concentrating on the perspectives, experiences, triumphs, and challenges of being a Black male in America.

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