Influence of Society’s Perceptions and Stereotypes on African American Women Administrators’ Leadership Practices

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Richard Green Scholar Presentation
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Dr. Richard Green (1936-1989)

Educator: teacher, principal

Superintendent:
• First Black Superintendent of Minneapolis Public Schools
• First Black Chancellor of New York Public Schools

“If you can believe it. You can achieve it. If it is to be, its up to me.”
-Dr. Richard Green
Old Newtonian physics claimed that things have an objective reality separate from our perception of them. Quantum physics, and particularly Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, reveal that, as perception of an object changes, the object itself literally changes. -Williamson, 1996
Question:

Does society’s perceptions about African American women literally impact their own perceptions about themselves and how they need to interact with the world?
The purpose and rationale of this study was to examine how society’s perceptions and stereotypes about African American women impacted African American women educational leadership practices.
Importance of This Study

Absence of African American women’s voices in the field of educational administration

Foster and Gooden (2005) - studies reveal that African American educators exhibit sensitivity and consciousness of the challenges facing African American students

Dantely (2005) - suggest that African American educators contribute to the professional learning community of other educators by bringing race into the educational discourse of schools

Tillman (2004) - found African American principals implemented alternative forms of decision-making that not only would benefit students but would also offer alternative definitions of organizational effectiveness on schools
Background - Social Identity

Reed and Evans (2008) describes social identity as the way a person or group is socially defined and positioned in society.

Verkuyten (2005) social identity is the relationship between the individual and the environment.

The manner in which a person is identified plays a critical role in how others perceive that person and how he or she perceives him or herself.
Theoretical Frameworks

Howard-Hamilton (2003) Development and socialization of African American women have been molded and understood within the frameworks of perceptions and agendas of members of the dominant society.

Black Feminist Thought (BFT)

Collins (2000) BFT - theory represents the standpoint of and for African American women

1. Framework is shaped and produced by the experiences of Black women
2. Each story is unique, but have intersections of experiences between and among Black women
Theoretical Frameworks

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Delgado and Stefancic (2012) legal movement that seeks to transform the relationship among race, racism and power

Yosso (2005) CRT is a framework that can be used to theorize, examine, and challenge the ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly impact social structure, practices and discourse

Tenants

A. Permanence of Race
B. Counterstories
C. Critique of Liberalism
D. Interest Convergence
E. Revisionist History
Theme 1: History of African American Women in Leadership

Alston (2005) 18th century teaching profession dominated by men, illegal for Blacks to attend college until 19th century

Murtadha and Watts (2005)
- African Americans linked struggle for education with social justice
- Black women built educational institutions, helped build communities (Nannie Helen Burroughs, Mary McLeod Bethune).
- Multiple identities attached to Black women (civic leader, educator, freedom fighter)

Scheme 2: Role of Females in Leadership

Coleman (2002) Male leaders seen as norm, women seen as outside the norm

Reed (2012) Men and women see leadership as a male trait, view influences women see themselves as leaders and how others perceive their leadership

Schmuck (1996)- female social roles and expectations- women must rise above social expectations of being a female in order to become the socially prescribed role of leader
Theme 3: Effective Leadership Practices

Definition of Leadership:
1. Bass (2008) depends on the specific aspects of leadership of interest to the individual
   A. Process whereby an individual(s) succeed in attempting to frame and define the reality of others
   B. Leadership is a social phenomena; socially constructed through interaction
Effective Leadership Practices

Self-Awareness
1. Showry and Mansa (2014) ability to evaluate one’s own personality and understand how perceived as a leader

Transformational Leadership
1. Burns (1978) Bass (1985) raise awareness of individuals to work toward common goals; motivator, inspirational

Servant Leadership
1. Greenleaf (1978) Leaders make sure individuals highest needs are met; serve others
Research Questions

Research Questions:

1. What race/gender issues do select African American women school administrators who work in Minnesota report have impacted their leadership practices?

2. What strategies do select African American women educational administrators who work in Minnesota report they have identified or implemented to address race/gender issues in their administrative practices?

3. How have identified strategies of select African American women educational administrators who work in Minnesota assisted them in developing their leadership practices?
Research Design

Qualitative approach, using a phenomenological approach.

Phenomenology Merriam (2009): The researcher seeks to understand the lived experiences of persons about a phenomenon.

Characteristics of qualitative research rely heavily on social constructs.
Research Design

Criterion Purposeful Sampling

A. Criteria:
1. African American women school administrators currently practicing or have worked in pre-K-12 school districts in Minneapolis, St. Paul or surrounding suburbs
2. At least 3 years experience as an educational administrator serving in the role of principal, assistant principal, assistant superintendent or superintendent

Small Sample Size: 4

Each participant interviewed - 16 questions
Information on Participants

Four participants

Administrator #1: 7 years experience as a principal, 4 years @ high school, 3 years @ middle school, and 3 years as assistant superintendent

Administrator #2: 10 years experience as a principal, 10 years @ middle/high school

Administrator #3: 20 years as a principal, 20 years at elementary level

Administrator #4: 17 years as principal, 15 years @ elementary/junior high, 2 years @ high school
What race/gender issues do select African American women school administrators who work in Minnesota report have impacted their leadership practices?

Being challenged by staff and colleagues when making decisions in their administrative roles as an African American and a female.

“I'll tell you, I was challenged when I tried to release a non-tenured teacher within my first second year here, if I would have been a male principal, she would have not have challenged me.”

“I was trying really hard not to think it was race, but I haven’t seen anyone else go through any of the white males, none of the white females, so I believe that it’s about authority. I believe it’s about people who have thought that I don’t mind my place.”
Coming into a building where they’ve never had a person of color as a leader, or a female leader, as a principal, has been very unique and challenging. Having to have conversations with white men has been very challenging, being a person of color. It was quite interesting because he thought that I was too assertive, too abrasive, he didn’t like how I addressed him; he didn’t like the way I approached him.”

“Cause I can’t be that angry. I can’t be—who is it? ABW? I can’t be the ABW. I can’t be the angry Black women, cause even if I were white I could be angry.”
need to change who they were in order to appease others

I could only be so much me before they’d say, Oh, you’re just this angry Black woman, “so
intentional. It was like, No, maybe, maybe not, “but as I got older I said, “Forget it. I’m so
me,” it was about what white folk were saying, what the staff was saying, and I needed to
change who I needed to be to make sure they felt good about who they were.”

what I found, especially my first year here, that in that particular building—and not just
that building, but even in other schools that I’ve been in when dealing with white folks, you have
put—I hate to use the word “code switch” or change who you are in terms of how you word
ass an issue just to appease them.”
The need to have to prove themselves in their roles as African American women educational administrators:

"Yeah, we have to be better than most. I mean, we have to be 10% more, 10% more, and we have to produce more in order to prove that, yeah, we’re better than the rest."

I feel that as an African American I was raised that life will be twice as hard, so just deal with it, and what I mean by that is that I need to be on my p’s and q’s. I need to make sure I’m educated, have experiences.”
Research Question One - Results

Literature supports the results:

Intersectionality: Beale, 1970; Collins, 2000, 2009


Working with Social Justice: Murtadha and Watts, 2005
Research Question Two

What strategies do select African American women educational administrators who work in Minnesota report they have identified or implemented to address race/gender issues in their administrative practices?

1. Be upfront with your vision and expectations
2. In your work, make sure you stay ahead of everyone else
3. Make sure you are transparent
4. Ensure communication is clear and frequent
5. Make people aware when a conversation is going to be about race
6. Rely on self-reflection and meditation techniques
7. Connect with someone else in the business who looks like them
Research Question Two

How have identified strategies of select African American women educational administrators who work in Minnesota assisted them in developing their leadership practices?

Decision-making process used: Collaborative

Leadership Style Results- findings support literature

• Transformational- Bass, 1985
  a. authentic
  b. Passionate
  c. Change-agent
  d. Motivator

• Servant Leadership- Greenleaf, 1970
  a. Empower Others

• Self-Awareness- Showry and Mansa, 2014
  a. Reflective of self and perspectives of others on leadership
Recommendations for Professional Practice

- Professional development for staff in educational institutions on Critical Race Theory
- Diversity training on how to work with staff members not of the dominant race
- Self-Awareness leadership training, Showry and Mansa, 2014
- Mentorship program/affinity groups
Recommendation for Further Study

Additional research studies can be conducted using a larger sample group and demographic area.

Additional research studies can be conducted using other racial/ethnic groups.

Additional research studies can be conducted on the relational dynamics between white women and black educators to see how each influences/impacts each other in their roles as educational administrators.

Additional research studies should be conducted on the working relationships between African American educational administrators and its influence on African American women’s leadership practices.

Additional research studies can be conducted on how school districts address race/gender issues in their efforts to support women administrators of color.
QUESTIONS???
Thank you for attending this session and thanks to the Cunningham Architect Group.