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Guest Editors Foreword

Shawn A. Robinson
Independent Scholar

Richard Gregory
Director, Center for Study of Black Students

Howard Spearman
Rock Valley College

Corey L. Thompson
Cardinal Stritch University

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Guest Editors Foreword



COMMENTARY

Guest Editors

Shawn Anthony Robinson, Independent Scholar
Richard McGregory, Center for Study of Black Students
Howard Spearman, Rock Valley College.
Corey Thompson, Cardinal Stritch University

Foreword

Consequently, African American males with LD are still significantly less than their White counterparts to matriculate through the post-secondary system and receive a college degree. (Newman et al., 2011). Banks and Gibson (2016) asserted “the underrepresentation of AA college students with disabilities in 4-year institutions underscores the need for systematic examination of school and non-school variables that influence students’ transition to college and retention during the college years.” (p. 71). However, the limited scholarship on the subject continues to leave many unanswered questions related to theory and experiential knowledge regarding AA males with LD in higher education (Robinson, Ford, Ellis, & Hartlep, 2016).

In this issue’s first article, “*Black Exceptionality in Academia: A Sociocultural Re-conceptualization of Black Male Students with Learning Disabilities in Higher Education*,” authors Love, Ko, and Bal address the underrepresentation of Black male students identified with LD in postsecondary education, which is a problem across the United States. First, they conduct a review of literature which examines systematic barriers facing this population. The literature review covers topics including: access to effective academic support services; denying the unique knowledge these students bring to the classroom; and hegemonic organization of higher education (Yosso, 2005). Next, the authors explore various themes and apply Vygotskian cultural-historical activity theory and critical pedagogies, which are critical for understanding this population. Finally, the authors present concepts which may be used to investigate future and present academic and social challenges, before offering solutions for AA males with LD.

In the second article, “*An In-Depth Case Study of a Prospective Black Male Teacher Candidate with an Undisclosed Disability at an HBCU*,” authors Davis, Long, Crawford, Green, & Blackwood offer a case study of an AA male with LD. First, Davis, et al., present an in-depth analysis of this student with an undisclosed LD, who is pursuing a degree in education. Second, the authors provide insight into their experiences trying to identify the student's academic strengths and challenges related to his LD, while simultaneously supporting him academically and socially. Third, they share their experiences trying to determine if the LD will impact the student’s academic success. Finally, the authors present recommendations for academically advancing this population as well as preparing faculty to better support AA males with LD. The work of these authors is similar to the scholarship of Banks and Gibson (2016).

In the third article, “*Increasing the success of African American males with learning disabilities attending the California Community Colleges*,” authors Abbott and Martinez identify strategies to increase access, progress, and success for AA males with LD attending the California Community College system. The authors begin by discussing how to address various barriers facing this population across the community college environment. Next, the authors provide best (or high impact practices), which include Umoja, Adult Education Block Grant, and

internship programs are intended to disrupt academic attrition among this population. The ultimate goals of these programs are for AA males to: find safe spaces on campus where they can voice their concerns and limitations; and learn strategies they can employ to reduce the impact of their LD during their college careers.

In the fourth article, “*Resilient Scholar: A High Achieving African American male with a Learning Disability*,” Robinson offers a conceptual piece from a larger autoethnographic study (Robinson, 2016). First, to counteract the limited literature on this specific population, which is evident from the previous analysis, the author provides an account which explores the culturally rich lived experiences of a high achieving AA male with LD (i.e., dyslexia) within the contexts of higher education. Second, the author uses critical disability theory as the foundation of his personal vignette, which is conceptualized through relevant literature. Next, the article explores themes connected to Bonner’s (2001) phenomenological study of AA college students. The article ends with a brief discussion and recommendations for disability services.

Given the focus of this special issue, we believe dialogue about PreK-12 teacher preparation is critical to enhancing graduation rates of AA males with LD in public schools (Goings & Bianco, 2016) as well as Schools of Education at the post-secondary level (Bristol, 2015). Therefore, in the fifth article, “*Black-White Earnings and Employment Differences in the K-12 Teaching Labor Market – Potential Impact on Black Males with Learning Disabilities*”, Dantzler tackles one possible barrier to more AA males with LD moving through the educational pipeline – the dearth of AA teachers. In an effort to examine how potential labor market inefficiencies impact the capacity of public schools to scaffold AA males with LD, the article builds on previous work analyzing racial earnings and employment differences in the PK-12 teaching labor market in the United States (Dantzler et al., 2014). Dantzler discovers scholars cannot rule out the possibility of racial disparities in the PK-12 teaching labor market or the need for targeted AA teacher recruitment and retention strategies to enhance the capacity of schools to better serve students such as AA males with LD.

In the sixth and final article, “*A Qualitative Interview Study: How Northeastern Illinois University’s College of Education Program Successfully Prepares Black Males with a Previous Individualized Learning Plan to Become Teachers*,” Ali discusses the importance of universities’ teacher college programs in attracting, retaining, and graduating AA males to become PK-12 teachers. Many administrators at various colleges and universities across the country are exploring ways to develop best (or high impact) practices which develop and sustain strategies for increasing the representation of Pk-12 AA male teachers. As such, the article employs a qualitative approach to explore how a specific teacher college program applied external and internal mechanisms to engage AA males interest in becoming a Pk-12 teacher. Moreover, the article highlights various programs this specific university utilized to improve the academic skills of AA males as they matriculate through the teacher education program.

As guest editors, we are pleased to share this set of readings with the hope the articles are used to help retain AA males with LD in higher education. This student group has not received the attention from scholars needed to advance a robust and cohesive agenda for their success. Although we are aware this special issue neither fills *all* voids nor meets *all* needs, the collection of articles presented has much to offer scholars and practitioners in higher education and disabilities services.

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