Shattering the Glass Ceiling: The Leadership Development of African American Women in Higher Education

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Abstract

The purpose of this research study was to explore the intersectionality of race and gender for African American women through their lived experiences of how they developed as leaders. This qualitative study aimed to research the implications of race and gender for African American women in academia. A phenomenological research method was employed to capture the essence of the participants' stories and to fully understand their common experiences. Results show that the women in the study confirmed that race and gender informed their development as leaders in academia. Five themes were generated from their stories. In general, most of them described how the intersection of race and gender affected their leadership development and career trajectories. In spite of the barriers they encountered, these women perform skillfully in an environment where inequities, negative assumptions and doubts are prevalent. Even through adversity, they carry out their responsibilities but often in an atmosphere where they constantly have to prove themselves. Yet, these African American female leaders have persevered and continue to demonstrate their ability to rise above and perform with tenacity.

Full Text:

PDF

DOI: https://doi.org/10.18738/awl.v35i0.125

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that African American women face in their leadership development. Therefore, articulating how racial and gendered identities inform the leadership development experiences of African American women in academia is needed to challenge the traditional discourse.