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Increasing Retention in Male Students of Color Through Student Leadership Experiences

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ABSTRACT
This study explores the implications of leadership experiences on undergraduate male students of color and its impact on their sense of belonging at a private, religious, Predominantly White Institution through in-depth one-on-one interviews. Findings included insight on the interrelated concepts of retention, campus climate, staff and faculty support, sense of belonging, and servant leadership for the participants of this study. Recommendations will allow both faculty and staff to identify the benefits of cultivating environments where male students of color are encouraged to seek out and actively participate in student leadership roles on campus where they feel their differences are welcomed, valued and supported.

BACKGROUND
How do male students of color define student leadership experiences on college campuses?
Do male students of color believe their campus involvement connects them to the larger campus community?
What effect does student leadership experiences have on retention in male students of color at Predominantly White Institutions?

METHODS
- Qualitative study using referral-sampling method
- One-on-one, semi-structured interviews
- Interviews were recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed for themes on leadership, campus involvement, racial campus climate, retention, and staff support

PARTICIPANTS
- **Participants:** Six male students of color
- **Racial Identity:** three African-American participants, two Latino participants, and one Asian/Pacific Islander participant
- **Class ranking:** three juniors and three graduating seniors

FINDINGS
- Role models encouraged active leadership participation
- Identified responsibility to be a role model to younger male students
- Responsibility to help other members of color
- Duty to portray male students of color in positive light through campus involvement
- Views leadership as means to give back to others
- Involvement in 3+ leadership experiences
- Experiences met different needs
- Engaged in multicultural and campus-wide organizations
- Belief that leadership experiences positively impacts campus community
- Leadership experiences opened doors for even other campus-wide opportunities
- Recognizes and utilizes offices, faculty, and staff members as support
- Organizations support enrollment at University
- Desire to establish legacy as a leader supports retention of male students of color

CONCLUSIONS
- Perceptions of leadership based on servant leadership and giving back to communities.
- Male students of color feel a strong responsibility to their organizations and races.
- The leadership experiences support their feeling of connectedness to their institution.
- Male students of color rely heavily on faculty, staff, and their peers for support.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS
- Views of leadership in multicultural organizations and campus-wide organizations
- Future research on the experiences of female student leaders of color
- Intentional marketing of leadership experiences to male students of color on predominantly White campuses
- Develop structures of support for male student leaders of color to process experiences

SELECT REFERENCES

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