

ABSTRACT

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE AND IMPEDE AFRICAN AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL LEADERS' PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL LIVES

This study was conducted to fill a gap of knowledge and document personal and professional strategies employed by successful African American educational leaders. Moreover, this study attempted to explore the current dearth of African American school leaders. The study endeavored to isolate the specific factors that allow some African Americans to *climb the corporate ladder*. The study also attempted to isolate issues that serve as *road blocks* for aspiring African American educational leaders and methods that were employed to mitigate them. As importantly, this study attempted to examine the methods used by leaders to balance their professional and personal responsibilities. This study allowed the researcher the opportunity to explore three African American educational leaders in their own environments as related to the following three questions: 1) the factors that influenced them in becoming educational leaders; 2) the factors that served as impediments towards achieving success as an African American educational leader; and 3) the strategies used to acquire success and how they balance the demands of their professional and personal lives.

The three African American educational leaders were purposefully selected to provide information rich cases (Patton, 1990). All three participants agreed to an in-depth interview, an observation, and to sharing of any pertinent documents.

The issues experienced by African American leaders were examined against the backdrop of how race, class, and gender impacted these leaders and

their pursuit of a meaningful and fulfilling life and career. This examination was done by delving deeply into how three individuals viewed and understood the cultural context they found themselves in and by linking that information to the important theories and terms used in this study. The primary theories used in this study were Critical Race Theory, microaggressions, and, subdominant and dominant populations. Issues around race, class, and occasionally gender seemed to permeate most aspects of their professional roles in education. Class issues for the most part were primarily focused around the communities in which they served.

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