"Scholaring" While Black: Discourses on Race, Gender, and the Tenure Track

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Abstract: *Although the percentage of Black faculty members has grown over the past decade, Black professors remain a conspicuous minority population within the academy. While existing literature documents differences between faculty members of different races and of different genders, there are few studies contrasting the experiences of Black male and female professors. Such an intersectional analysis allows us to examine how racial and gendered experiences inflect intellectual representation. Through the collaborative autoethnographic method, this article analyzes data collected by the authors during the summer following their first year as tenure-track professors at predominantly White institutions. The analysis underscores four primary themes: trailblazing, conspicuousness, positioning, and 'paying it forward'. We include suggestions for institutional policy and practice.*

KEYWORDS: discourse, race, gender, tenure track, Black faculty, autoethnography

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Introduction

According to the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2016), there are approximately 1.5 million faculty at degree-granting postsecondary institutions. Of note, four percent of all assistant professors are Black females and three percent are Black males. Though there have been limited studies that have addressed the issues of persisting as a Black scholar and navigating challenges related to gender while on the tenure track (Griffin, Bennett, & Harris, 2011; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2008); there is a dearth of studies related to the experiences of first-year Black faculty members specifically addressing the ways in which they navigate issues of race and gender at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs).

This paper will utilize literature that addresses race and gender to shed light on the ways in which these issues may be understood, experienced, and discussed by two Black first year faculty members on the tenure track. As existing literature demonstrates, male and female professors typically face different expectations—both from their students and from their supervisors (Dever & Morrison, 2009; Griffin, Bennett, & Harris, 2011). While existing literature documents differences between faculty members of different races and of different genders, there are few studies contrasting the experiences of Black male and female professors (Carna, Jorge, & Peña, 2016; Christian, 2012; Nadler, Berry, & Stockdale, 2013). The purpose of this collaborative autoethnography is to explore the similarities and differences in experiences between two African-American faculty members, one male and one female, who have each served one year in tenure-track positions at PWIs. The study will be guided by the following research question: How do race and gender inflect the academic and professional experiences of Black tenure-track faculty in a collaborative autoethnographic case study?

Background

History of Black Faculty in the United States

Despite the modern American cultural sensitivity to racial issues (especially as reflected by the notion of political correctness), empirical data show that Black faculty are still underrepresented in academia. Drawing on the data retrieved from the U.S. Census Bureau (2015) website, Blacks comprise over 12.6% of the United States population.

However, they represent approximately 6% of college faculty (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Of that 6%, a large segment of that population serves at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

Just as Black faculty are now underrepresented in higher education employment, they are also represented differently in terms of career progress. Modica and Mamiseishvili (2010) note that while Black faculty are more likely to be on a tenure-track than their White peers, White faculty are more likely to have achieved tenure. Black faculty are also more likely to be hired for non-tenure-track positions. Additionally, Black faculty are exceedingly rare in particular disciplines that have been historically populated by White males. According to Williams' life history study of Black mathematics faculty, Blacks (and women) have been frequently steered away from disciplines perceived as difficult or highly intellectual, such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). This has resulted, of course, in drastic underrepresentation of Black (and female) faculty in the "hard" sciences (2000).

In a recent article in the Washington *Post*, Dr. Marybeth Gasman (2016) wrote that the reason that most PWI faculty are not diverse is because their faculty and administrations do not want them to be. She provides five reasons institutions are not diversifying their faculties:

> • The term "quality" is used to assert that faculty of color, particularly Black faculty, do not meet the same academic standards of their White counterparts;

> • The excuse is given that there are not enough qualified individuals to assume certain faculty positions;

> • It is said that the institution cannot be flexible and must "play by the rules" when hiring and retaining faculty, even when exceptions are made for White faculty;

> • Faculty search committees are not trained in recruitment and do not understand how to watch out for bias in the selection process;

• Lastly, PWIs do not ask Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) how they recruit and develop top talent for their institutions.

Thus, one of the primary challenges found to be an impediment to Black faculty success has been institutional culture. Much of the literature has supported the notion that Black faculty who have persisted within PWIs have done so despite institutional culture, not because the environment was supportive (Christian, 2012; Jacob, Cintron, & Canton 2002; Matthews, 2016; Rockquemore & Lasloffy, 2008). In their ground-breaking study, Turner, Gonzalez, and Wood (2008) report that faculty of color more broadly have perpetually been challenged with issues such as tokenism, perceptions that they have only gotten their positions because of affirmative action, and a lack of inclusive standards for judging faculty yearly performance. Yet even with the persistent historical and current problems of underrepresentation and significant systemic disadvantages on all important measures in comparisons to White faculty (Allen, Epps, Guillory, Suh, & Bonous-Hammarth, 2000), Black faculty have found strategies to be successful at research-focused PWIs. These strategies include collaboration (working with other colleagues), collegiality (interacting and supporting likeminded colleagues), and community (engaging in activities and services beyond the academy; Butner, Burley, & Marbley, 2000).

Gender differnces between faculty members

When investigating the issues of the experiences of Black faculty members, it is important to ensure that they are not viewed through a monolithic lens (Christian, 2012). Black men and women faculty have been found to have similar, yet distinct experiences within the academy (Griffin, Bennett, & Harris, 2011; Gregory, 2001). Scholars such as Jones, Hwang, & Bustamante (2015) report that women pursuing tenure often experience various levels of ridicule, marginalization, alienation, isolation, and lack of information. Additionally, Harley (2008) shares that "individually and collectively African American women at PWIs suffer from a form of race fatigue as a result of being over extended, undervalued…and [required to] assume [additional] service, teaching, and research as a result of being the numerical minority" (p. 19). Similarly, Griffin, Bennett, and Harris (2011) reported that Black women faculty, who tend to feel a greater burden of obligation to make personal investments in the lives of their students, are often expected to be heavily

involved in university service related to race and diversity. However, Williams and Williams (2006) share that Black males often lack African American male senior faculty mentors, receive unclear expectations for tenure and promotion, experience a lack of respect for their research and scholarship, and have heavier service expectations.

According to Cama, Jorge, and Peña (2016), there are also substantial differences between male and female faculty members in terms of salary, representation, and positions of leadership, although these differences are not frequently the subject of academic attention. Dever and Morrison (2009) also noted that there are different expectations of male and female professors—namely, that "women are required to do more teaching and pastoral care than their male colleagues on similar appointment levels," (pg. 66) even though research is more highly prized as a means of "climbing the tenure ladder" (2016, p. 66).

Challenges of new faculty

New faculty members may well struggle with their roles and the accompanying expectations of their students, colleagues, and supervisors. Many of these specific struggles are detailed in Jonita Henry's (2010) focus group study of new university faculty members. As the primary points of contact with students, the professors who participated in Henry's study expressed many student-related needs: clarification of student policies (that is, policies governing course registration, attendance, and reporting stolen items), technological education for students (such as Blackboard tutorials), and support in enforcing policies related to students.

However, Henry's (2010) study uncovered a plethora of other new faculty needs, both academic and otherwise. In addition to their needs for experienced mentors who could assist them in research, publishing, and guidance through professional activities, study participants expressed a desire for access to existing classroom technology (or training in the use of it). They also needed explanations of general policies and protocol regarding equipment and supplies. Some participants even explained that they knew of others at their institutions who needed assistance navigating typical Human Resources concerns, such as retirement benefits.

Walzer and Trower (2010), likewise, drew attention to common tensions new faculty members feel. These authors noted that new faculty members, when faced with ambiguous tenure qualifications and requirements, may over-extend themselves in an effort to do whatever may be necessary to advance. This can lead to a host of consequences, such as health problems, burnout, and lack of adequate communication with family members. Beyond the personal problems it may cause, ambiguity in academia is particularly problematic as it relates to the research, publications, and service of non-tenured faculty: "Vagueness and rigidity about what 'counts' in personnel decisions increases stress for new faculty" (2010, p. 38). Overlapping with and adding to these sources of pressure, Li (1998) distinguished seven different categories of stress affecting junior faculty members: collegial relations, balancing work and personal life, student interaction, role overload, role ambiguity, reward and recognition, and multiple performance and expectations.

Thus, new faculty of any race or gender are expected to work harmoniously with their colleagues; teach, mentor, and guide their students; perform important research; publish their work; perform service in their disciplines and within their institutions; decipher unclear expectations regarding their performance; and manage this incredible load of responsibility without underperforming in any vital area (while, of course, determining what the vital areas are; Griffin, 2012). Faculty of color must, weather additional challenges, including marginalization, over-extension, and a lack of scholarly respect; such challenges may be manifested differently according to the gender of affected faculty (Griffin et al., 2011; Harley, 2008; Williams, 2006).

Though there is little literature specifically documenting the experiences of new faculty of color within the academe, Cole, McGowan, & Zerquera (2017) begin the conversation by reporting the similar struggles faced by faculty members from minority groups, including tensions between their scholarly identities and perceived institutional purposes, and sources of strength, including support from their institutions and colleagues (both formal and informal.) However, the work of Cole, McGowan & Zerquera does not differentiate the experiences of new faculty members by race, gender, field of study, or academic rank. The purpose of this present study, therefore, is to provide a more specifically focused analysis of the experiences of new minority faculty, specifically focusing on the differences between Black male and

female faculty (while accounting for differences in academic rank and experience.)

Investigating the First-Year Experineces of Black Faculty on the Tenure-Track

Approach

The following analysis is based on data collected by the authors via autoethnographic method during the summer following our first year as tenure-track professors at large, public, PWIs. As an approach, autoethnography requires that authors describe and analyze their own personal experiences in an effort to better understand broader cultural experience (see e.g., Ellis, 2004, Ellis et al., 2011, Holman Jones, 2005). To this end, an autoetnography has two essential components: (1) autobiographical data, and (2) interpretation that is situated in sociocultural context (Anderson, 2006; Bochner & Ellis, 2002; Chang et al., 2013; Denzin, 1997; Ellis, 2004; Pichon, 2010; Reed-Danahay, 1997). Although, as in the case of autobiography, autoethnography situates self as a central subject of study and requires authors to reflect on past personal experiences (e.g., Freeman, 2004; Pichon, 2010), autoethnography positions personal experiences as a window to broader sociocultural context (Chang, 2008, 2011). As these personal experiences direct the reader to a broader social context, the social context also helps to infuse the author's experiences and perspective with meaning (Chang et al., 2013; Pichon, 2010).

Although autoethnography is in its strictest interpretation an analysis that a single individual conducts of him or herself, various studies over the past two decades have presented the case for a more robust and collaborative approach to autoethnography. The collaborative approach to autoethnography has taken many labels: duoethnography; co-ethnography; collective autoetnography; and collaborative autoethnography (Kalmbach Phillips et al., 2009; Rose, 2008). In each case, two or more researchers collaborate to address a shared research problem; and the two person autoethnography partnership is the most common approach (Chang et al., 2013). In these collaborative autoethnography partnerships, the combination of multiple voices creates a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

Although the collaborative approach to autoethnography has many benefits, it is not without its challenges. Because the analysis relies on personal experiences, the process demands vulnerability and trustworthiness. As we sought to analyze the racial and gendered experiences of Black faculty in the academy, we had to share personal experiences—both positive and negative. Thus, rapport was essential to preserving the quality of the data that we would produce. Collaborative autoethnography also presents logistical challenges that can be magnified when the collaboration takes place across institutions, regions, and time zones. In such cases, researchers must avail themselves of technology (e.g., web-conferencing, email, telephone) to facilitate the analysis. Moreover, in collaborative efforts, researchers must continually commit to the highest standards of ethics and confidentiality for all parties to the analysis (Chang et al., 2013).

In this study, we use collaborative autoethnography to analyze what our experiences as Black male and Black female faculty members contributes to ongoing conversations regarding the presence and experience of Black faculty in the academy. The collaborative autoethnographic approach is particularly suited to an examination of race, gender, and experience in the academy because it allows us to explore specific experiences, assumptions, values and beliefs and to connect these personal experiences with those of Black faculty more generally.

Participants

The participants in this study are the authors, Sydney and Eva, both tenure-track professors who at the time of the study had just completed their first academic year teaching at their respective institutions. As is often the case in collaborative autoethnographic analysis, the present project stems from an existing relationship—in our case, that of colleagues and former classmates (e.g., Cann & DeMeulenaere, 2010; Chang et al., 2013; Ellis & Bochner, 1992; Sawyer & Norris, 2004; Stephens & Delamont, 2006). The professional and personal rapport that developed from our existing relationship enriches our stories and allows us to be transparent with each other during the research process (Chang et al., 2013). We initially met as undergraduate students at a religiously affiliated HBCU in Alabama. After our HBCU experience, we pursued distinct career paths that ultimately converged when, at 30 years old,

respectively, we began teaching as tenure-track faculty members at large, public, peer-research, PWIs. After completing the first year at our respective institutions, we reflect on our shared experiences and on how our positioning as a Black man and a Black woman may have inflected these experiences.

Sydney, an associate professor at a large state university in Idaho, graduated with a PhD in Educational Leadership from Auburn Univeristy in 2011. Prior to assuming his role at the university in Idaho, Sydney worked as Director of Teaching and Learning in the College of Veterinary Medicine, Nursing, and Allied Mental Health at Tuskegee University. Although Sydney is the first in his family to pursue a career in academia, he has a network of peers and mentors from whom he may seek counsel. Sydney, a Black male originally from New Jersey, describes himself as "unapologetically Black", wears his hair in dreadlocs and is involved with events and programs on campus that affect Black faculty, staff, and students.

Eva, an assistant professor at a large state university in New Mexico, graduated with a PhD in Hispanic Languages and Literatures from the University of Califormia, Santa Barbara (UCSB) in 2015. Prior to completing her graduate coursework at UCSB, Eva graduated with a JD from New York Univeristy School of Law and practiced commercial litigation in Los Angeles. Eva describes her peer network as predominantly leaning toward other professional careers such as medicine, dentistry and law. Because her mother holds a PhD and teaches courses in psychology, she is the second generation in her family to pursue a career in academia. Eva, a Black female originally from California, wears her hair natural and also participates in events and programs on campus that involve Black cultural awareness and mentorship of Black students.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data analyzed in this study are personal memories and recollections collected during a multi-phase interview process. The initial impetus for the study emerged from a conversation between the authors about our experiences during our first year on the tenure track. We had not spoken about our experiences or about the project during the first year, and this initial exchange was filled with rich information. As we spoke, we

engaged one another's perspective and discovered some initial similarities and differences in our first-year experience. Because we were intrigued by the potential ways in which race and gender had inflected these experiences, we agreed to explore this question further through written interview questions. This conversation served as the initial group sharing and probing that characteristically begins a collaborative autoethnography project (e.g., Chang et al., 2013).

After our initial conversation, the authors separately drafted five to ten interview questions that we would both answer relating to our first-year experience on the tenure track. We formulated interview questions that would allow us to reflect on a broad range of experiences, including: our evolution as scholars, our intersectional identities in the academy, our peer and mentor networks, our transition from HBCUs to PWIs, our interactions with colleagues and students, our most important lessons learned, and other positive and negative experiences that we faced. Consistent with our concurrent approach to collaboration, we separately reflected on and wrote individual responses to the research questions. Once both participants had drafted written responses to the questions, we exchanged these responses via email.

Upon reviewing the written responses, we met via videoconferencing to discuss the responses and engage in group meaning-making and an initial theme search (e.g., Chang et al., 2013). During this conversation, the theme of conspicuousness was the first to emerge. Specifically, we discussed how the conspicuousness of African-American faculty at PWIs complicates our position of relative invisibility. We explored the different ways that we had confronted and described our positioning as the first generation in our careers (in Sydney's case) and disciplines (in Eva's case). Sydney spoke about blazing a trail, while Eva suggested the notion of charting new territory. This prompted us to consider whether our language could reveal something about the way that gender was working in our experiences. After this conversation and our initial round of meaning-making, we turned to reviewing and coding the data.

To discover what was going on in the data, we individually reviewed the written interview responses and noted salient themes. In this process, we segmented the data into relevant sections, coded these segments thematically (e.g., Saldaña, 2009), and regrouped the data

according to emerging themes. As we exchanged our individual analyses, we found common themes and reconnected with the data. At the end of this process, we organized the data into a master document that aligned the interview questions with quotes from both participants, thematic codes, and notes. Although many themes emerged from our responses, the following themes appeared to most saliently frame the conversation: trailblazing and charting new territory, conspicuousness and its accompanying responsibility, scholarly and professional positioning, and notions of 'paying it forward'.

Results and Discussion

The collaborative autoethnography explored in this study focuses on the intersectional identities and experiences of two new Black tenure-track professors at two different PWIs. Although similarly situated in some respects—such as racial identity, undergraduate alma mater, advanced degrees, and tenure-track positions at Carnegie-classified peer research institutions, our experiences as scholars have also been unique. In this context, we contemplate our place and experiences as tenure-track faculty and as conspicuous minorities.

On Trailblazing and Charing New Territory

The first theme that emerges from the analysis is the idea of what it means to be a first-generation Black faculty member on the tenure-track at a predominantly white institution. For Eva, the experience may best be characterized as 'charting new territory'. As she explores this new position and its requirements, she speaks about discipline-specific learning, navigating the process, and relying on mentors and peers to assist in her mastery of the discipline's norms. Although she is not the first in her family to pursue a career in academia, Eva discussed the discipline-specific learning with which family members in other fields have not been able to assist. In graduate school, this meant crafting a research agenda, learning best pedagogical practices in the field, and preparing for master's and doctoral examinations. As described in the literature that addresses tenure-track faculty success, Eva believed that mentoring has been a key component to her professional development (Christian, 2012; Matthew, 2016; Thompson, et al., 2016; Rockquemore & Lasloffy, 2008; & Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008). As she navigated (and continues to navigate) this process, Eva recounted how

she has relied heavily on mentors and peers to assist in her mastery of the position and the process.

> *In some ways, it was helpful to have the benefit of [my mother's] experience when I was a graduate student, and while I was on the job market. In other ways, however, I was charting new territory, and I relied heavily on other mentors and peers to help me to navigate the process of developing a research agenda, teaching classes, preparing for master's and doctoral exams, etc.*

Although Sydney also highlighted the importance of having a network of mentors, he specifically invoked the broader significance of his presence as a Black male in academia. Because of the uniqueness of his positioning—as an Associate Professor in his first year on the tenure track, at times the senior Black faculty member on campus, and also the youngest and newest member on the team—Sydney recognized that his peer network might not always be situated to offer advice (Williams & Williams, 2006). In this context, Sydney described himself as a trailblazer—someone who will open doors for those who follow in his footsteps. The fact that Sydney is among the highest ranking Black faculty members on his campus is salient in a rurally isolated setting such as Idaho where diverse images of Black masculinity are not abundant:

> *I do have friends that are professors that I seek counsel from. But in many ways I know I am a trailblazer. I am currently one of the highest ranking Black faculty member on my campus. Although I have colleagues from other institutions that have low numbers of Black faculty members on their campus they have not served in a rurally isolated environment like Idaho.*

Sydney 's comments about his visibility and responsibility as a Black male professor in a rural academic setting foreshadow the themes of conspicuousness and responsibility that emerge from both of our responses.

Conspicousness and Accompanying Responsibiliy

The second theme that emerged from the analysis is a consideration of conspicuousness in the academy and the accompanying responsibility.

Although we described our approach to the academy in unique ways, our responses revealed that we inhabit conspicuousness as a shared space. As members of a group that is small at the national level (< 6% of instructional faculty) and even smaller in the regions where our institutions are located (1% of instructional faculty), we are conspicuously in the minority. While Eva is the only Black faculty member in her department and one of fewer than a dozen at the institution, Sydney is one of the only Black faculty members on his campus. He is also among the highest ranked Black faculty members across his institution's five campuses. In some respects, the degree of our conspicuousness is self-determined. Rather than blend into the landscape, we both consciously choose to wear Afro-centric hairstyles, express our cultural identity, and remain plugged into institutional events and programs affecting Black faculty, staff, and students. This does not belie the fact that we would be conspicuous in our respective spaces even if we were to make different choices regarding aesthetics and positioning. Nevertheless, our choice to boldly inhabit our blackness in predominantly White spaces shapes our approach to and experiences in our respective settings. Thus, we have also considered the responsibility that accompanies this conspicuousness: staying on top of your game, scholarly and professional positioning, and paying it forward.

Staying on top of your game

Our responses reveal a perception that conspicuous minority status compels us to stay on top of our game—to work harder and to do more to be seen on a level playing field. Sydney discussed this responsibility in the context of choosing to present himself as "unapologetically Black". In response to an interview question regarding the things he is unwilling to change to fit into the institutional (and regional) culture, Sydney talked about his conscious choice to represent himself as unapologetically Black:

> *What I don't change is presenting myself as unapologetically Black. Meaning I still have my dreadlocs and I still associate with things on campus that affect Black people. I have hired Black people to work for me in my role and I mentor several professionals on campus. However if you do this, you must do work that is above average and with excellence.*

This presentation is physical—manifested through his Afro-centric choice of hairstyle—and also ideological—as demonstrated by his commitment to being involved in campus programs and events that affect Black people and in his hiring and mentorship practices. Here, Sydney talked about the responsibilities that accompany a decision to be conspicuously and unapologetically Black in a predominantly White space. If you choose to boldly inhabit this cultural identity, then your professional work must meet a higher standard. For Sydney, this meant publishing five peer-reviewed articles and a monograph, writing five grants, establishing two academic journals, and mentoring an international scholar, all during his first year. For Eva, this meant submitting three peer-reviewed articles, writing and receiving five grants, presenting at national and international conferences, and serving as faculty advisor for a supplementary major in Latin American Studies and on the executive board of the Center for Latin American and Border Studies.

As studies such as Mamiseishvili (2010) indicate that White faculty are more likely to achieve tenure than their Black counterparts, Black faculty may feel pressure to combat this underrepresentation by working harder to ensure that they have not only met but exceeded all expectations for tenure. When status as a new faculty member is added to the mix, the potential for faculty members to over-extend themselves in an effort to meet ambiguous tenure requirements intensifies (Walzer & Trower, 2010). To this point, both of us discussed our aggressive approach to publishing, writing grants, presenting at conferences, mentoring, and serving on executive boards during our first year on the tenure track. Although our academic and professional experiences bolster our current positions, we work hard to ensure that our professional record allows no room for doubt. Although our specific standards for excellence may be self-determined, they stem from discourses in academia asserting that Black faculty do not meet the same standards of "quality" as their white counterparts (Gasman, 2016). For both participants, the notion of "staying on top of your game" emerges from our professional positioning and the way in which we reconcile individual and group identities. Although not described as such by the participants, we are experiencing what Rockquemore and Lasloffy (2008) coined as "joining a 'society of one' requiring the payment of a 'race tax,' special attention to issues of representation and the careful negotiation of diplomatic relations" (p. 14).

Scholarly and professional positioning

In the context of this study, positioning refers to the ways in which we choose to affiliate ourselves and our interests. This positioning is cultural and ideological and inflects our identity as scholars and as teachers. This positioning emerges from our reconciliation of individual and group identities and began, quite paradoxically, with the conscious avoidance of race in our scholarly work.

On the topic of reconciling individual and group identities, both of us suggested that our roles as individuals are never fully separate from our roles as representatives of our respective groups. Eva's responses speak to a hyperawareness of the "white gaze" of professors and classmates and a conscious shaping of narrative. For Eva, the tension between her identity as an individual and as a representative of a group was most salient when she transitioned from an HBCU undergraduate institution to a PWI law school. Regarding this transition, she states, "I felt the weight of my race on my shoulders, as if I was no longer an individual but rather a representative of the Black delegation." This response suggests a sense that individual identity is subordinated to group identity in this space. This awareness translates to a deliberate effort to manage the perceptions of those who would see only the group identity. As Eva talked about her tentative relationship with her law school's Black Allied Law Students Association, she states, "I was constantly thinking about the optics of being 'too black' in this new space." This response suggested the perception that affiliating too strongly with a minority culture might have negative consequences. In the law school setting, these consequences derived from negative discourses regarding Affirmative Action programs and the perception that racial and ethnic minorities had not earned their place at the institution.

As she reflected on her experience on the tenure track at a PWI nearly a decade after her law school experience, Eva stated that she continued to reconcile individual and group identities and to manage external perceptions. As a young, Black woman in the academy, Eva framed this intersectional 'balancing act' as a weight that she constantly bears:

> *As I manage the different aspects of my identity, I often feel the weight of my race or my gender or my youth on my shoulders. That is to say, I feel that my actions will be perceived not as my own individual choices but as representative of some demographic of which I am a part.*

As she continued, Eva explained that the way she presents her individual and group identities has implications that could affect the attitudes that other Black faculty might face in the future. On this point, she stated, "I still struggle with the balancing act, between how much of what I do is for me and how much is managing the narrative on what people like me can and should be capable of." Thus, in addition to meeting the professional expectations of her position, Eva felt pressure to manage the larger narrative on, and perceptions of, young, Black, and female faculty. This perception then shaped Eva's attitude toward taking risks in this new territory. Because she sensed that her decisions may have direct consequences for the attitudes that other Black faculty may face in the future, Eva is measured and cautious and described a constantly balancing act between personal decisions and decisions made for the group. These experiences are in conversation with Harley (2008) on the notion of "race fatigue" among African-American female professors at PWIs.

Sydney's responses, likewise, spoke to an awareness of external perceptions and the potentially far-reaching consequences of his individual decisions. At the same time, he reiterated the responsibility of his position as a trailblazer who will open doors for others to follow in his footsteps. He described his approach as bold, purposeful, and relentlessly forward. As such, Sydney also described a more open attitude toward taking risks in this space:

> *I try to navigate my identity in this space by giving myself room to fail. I know I have a smaller margin of error because I am Black and male but I recognize that to become great you must be willing to take strategic risk. And I know that I [am] trailblazing the way for other future Black academics so I must represent our community well as much as possible.*

Sydney revealed his awareness of group-level expectations and potential consequences when he states that as a Black male in a PWI space he has

a smaller margin of error for failure. At the same time, he emphasizes that his professional decisions allow for the assumption of some strategic risk in an effort to consistently become better and to eventually become great. For Sydney, taking these risks and seeing their return can also have the positive outcome of casting both himself as an individual as well as the broader community of Black academics in a positive light. What Sydney and Eva experienced is what Banks (1984) called "The Burden of Symbolism." Which he describes as the "notion that Blacks have a special responsibility to be exemplars, literal representatives of the race (p. 335).

This discussion also highlighted the complicated relationship of gender in the experiences of minority faculty members. Although, in this case, both Sydney and Eva described an awareness of the expectations and the responsibilities that follow our respective positions as minority faculty members, Eva specifically described the constant burden of shouldering this obligation. Furthermore, as Eva approached the situation with a certain degree of risk aversion, Sydney assumes strategic risk without subordinating his individual identity to group membership. Gender differences in risk aversion have been explored broadly in the literature and suggest that women generally tend to be more risk averse than men (e.g., Byrnes, et al., 1999; Daruvala, 2007; Jianakoplos & Bernasek, 1998). Although neither participant expressly connected their attitudes toward risk to our gender, the narratives suggested that our respective attitudes are consistent with those represented in the literature.

As both participants continue to discuss reconciling individual and group identities, our narratives coincide as we describe our attitudes toward putting race at the forefront of our academic work. This initial avoidance stemmed from our awareness of our conspicuous status, and persistent management of the narrative on Black faculty. Moreover, as faculty who had also been educated at predominantly white institutions, we understood the hegemonic discourses on the types of work that are valued in the academy. Even after moving past this initial aversion, the majority of Sydney's academic work does not specifically invoke race or gender. This is a conscious decision that stems from a desire that his work not be disregarded or relegated to a secondary position (Williams & Williams, 2006). On this point he stated, "The large majority of my academic work is not racialized or gendered. This is purposeful as I am conscious of my work being 'ghettoized' and underappreciated." As he

continuesd however, Sydney stated that the volume of his work and the breadth of his research agenda allowed him to explore a range of topics, including some that are explicitly informed by race. For example, one stream of his research investigates leadership preparation at HBCUs.

Regarding the conscious avoidance of race in her academic work, Eva's responses describe a similar positioning to Sydney's. As she began graduate studies at a large PWI in California, Eva stated that she tried to consciously avoid race because she did not want racialized work to make her conspicuous. However, Eva also described a transition during which she learned how to interrogate race, identity and racism from an academic standpoint and stated that this experience changed her attitude on the role of race in her research. She stated that the questions and potential answers that emerged from discussions in this setting were so compelling that she eventually dedicated a large portion of her research agenda to race and identity.

The approach that we took is similar to the bi-cultural stance that Johnrud and Sadao (1998) found worked for faculty of color in their study. They described biculturalism as "individuals learning how to maintain their dominant culture while increasing an awareness of another cultural set of values and norms" (p. 324). We found our bicultural approach to be very similar to the approach of their study participants as we did not fully acculturate to our new environment but continued to fully and unashamedly embrace our Blackness, albeit in different ways. At the same time that we consider the challenges, responsibilities, triumphs, and evolution of our scholarly and professional positioning, our responses also contemplate what it means to pay forward the benefits that we have received and the lessons we have learned.

Paying it forward

The third theme that emerged from the analysis is our positioning toward "paying forward" the mentorship, experiences, and opportunities from which we have benefited. For both participants, the notion of paying it forward is holistic and infuses our teaching, mentorship, and research. Moreover, the notion motivates us to collaborate and to create communities (Butner et al., 2000). For Sydney, mentorship was a prominent part of his work as both a teacher and a scholar. He described

how one of his courses laid the foundation for a cohort of graduate students to become a vibrant and active research group:

> *For instance, I have a team of wonderful doctoral students that I work with that started out as a regular class and they organically turned into a research group and are publishing research and being featured in the local media.*

This experience spoke to the way that Sydney's investment in his teaching has blossomed and transformed into an investment in his students' scholarly and professional development. Likewise, for Eva, mentorship plays an important role in her work. At her university, she has teamed up with other African-American female faculty in an organization called Sister Circle of Scholars that connected faculty with African-American female students in mentoring interactions. Regarding her involvement with the mentoring program, Eva stated, "I ultimately hope to be able to 'pay it forward,' and serve as a resource for the next generation of scholars and citizens."

Regarding the notion of paying it forward in teaching interactions, both participants discuss how we approach the students and the material and how we incorporate student feedback into our courses. Eva's responses reveal that her students have generally evaluated her courses and her instruction positively. Her students highlight her enthusiasm and her attitude toward the students as notable strengths and suggested that improvements could be made to increase student perception of fair and impartial grading. Eva continued to invest in her students by preparing engaging classes and fostering an atmosphere of mutual respect, and she has incorporated student feedback by making grading practices as transparent as possible and consistently reminding students of key course policies. Similarly, Sydney's responses indicated that students evaluated his courses very positively. He talked about his desire to reach every single student and the sting that could come from receiving negative comments. Although presently teaching courses outside of his primary field, Sydney looked forward to engaging students through the full breadth of his expertise when his program fully launches.

In addition to mentorship and teaching, both participants also discussed how drawing on other intersectional identities has enriched their research and bolstered representation and inclusion in the academy. Eva described

how her intersectional experiences as a researcher, a woman, and an African American motivated her to research complex questions in new ways. She emphasized that this approach is not merely an intellectual exercise, but rather a position that grows out of deep connections to lived experiences in the communities that she researches:

> *That said, my experience as a Black woman motivates me [to] investigate the nuances of racial categories and racial discourse in a way that was not prevalent in the literature when I began my graduate program. My personal experience with the communities that I research—such as the Dominican Republic— make my research something that is highly analytical, but also lived and deeply personal.*

Along the same lines, Sydney described how the intersectional lens that he brought to his work and his position as a gatekeeper ensure that research in his field is representative and inclusive. To illustrate this point, he described an incident that allowed him to put this position into practice:

> *But one of the things that I do that I think is very important is that I bring an intersectional lens to mainstream scholarship in my field. For instance, when I collaborated on my first book with several of my colleagues a history of our field was being written. However, the leading historian of our field failed to acknowledge the contributions of African Americans and Hispanics to the canonical work in the field. As the lead editor, I was able to use my knowledge and positionality to ensure that information was included*

These responses revealed that the participants view diversity and representation as something that is not purely about physical presence. In these responses, intersectional racial, cultural and gendered experiences also inflected intellectual representation—the perspectives that are heard within the academy and the voices that are allowed to join and enrich the conversation.

Finally, as the participants discuss advice for other scholars of color, our responses converge on the importance of building relationships, finding community, and having a life outside of the

university. Sydney encourages other scholars to build relationships with various groups of people and to engage students and campus organizations. Eva advises other scholars to be open-minded yet judicious in accepting opportunities, to learn the ins and outs of their departments, to form good relationships, and to invest in professional development and self-care.

Implications

The collaborative autoethnographic approach employed in this study has allowed us to explore specific experience, assumptions, values and beliefs and to connect these personal experiences with those of Black faculty more generally. One of the first implications of this research is that the experiences of Black faculty are not monolithic (Christian, 2012). This fact is relevant for institutions interested in investigating and meeting the needs of this diverse group (Gordon, 2004). Beyond this general idea, however, the analysis reveals specific ways in which experiences may be different—one primary way stems from the role of gender in these experiences (Gregory, 2001; Harley, 2008). As institutions and scholars consider "Black faculty" in the academy, we must remain aware that several intersectional identities may be at play within this larger group. This awareness of complex experiences will allow administrators and researchers to fully explore potential burdens on faculty, potential enrichment of the university community, and potential avenues to inclusion and success for future generations of scholars and educators. Moreover, given that such rich data have emerged from the analysis of the experiences of two professors, future studies may explore these same questions with a larger number of participants.

        A second implication of this research is the nature of diversity at the institutional level. Our analysis reveals that diversity and representation are not purely about physical presence. Rather, diversity is a commitment that must be lived—in the classroom, in connections to campus organizations, in research focus and methodology, in mentorship, and in inclusion. A truly diverse faculty ensures the broadest possible intellectual representation at all levels of the university. However, to build a diverse faculty, administrators and decision makers must understand the types of diverse experiences that faculty bring to the table and how to foster and value these diverse perspectives.

The default position of institutional leaders is often to treat everyone the same, but this approach does not always address the unique needs of Black male and female faculty. We recommend that administrators and university leaders educate themselves regarding the experiences and needs of diverse faculty at the institution—generally and specifically. Generally, they may review existing literature on the subject (e.g., Thompson & Louque, 2005; Jackson & Johnson, 2011; Bonner et al., 2014). Specifically, they may fund collaborative autoethnographies or surveys or schedule regular conversations to understand the experiences of diverse faculty at the institution.

Conclusion

Although existing literature documents differences between faculty members of different races and of different genders, there are few studies contrasting the intersection of these diverse identities. Thus, this study contributes a perspective that explores the similarities and differences in experiences between two African-American faculty members, one male and one female, who have each served one year in tenure-track positions. Such an intersectional analysis allows us to examine racial and gendered experiences and how these experiences ultimately inflect intellectual representation. Through collaborative autoethnographic analysis, the study has addressed broader themes such as gender and attitude toward risk, the ripple effects of conspicuousness in an academic setting, scholarly and professional positioning, and notions of paying it forward. This analysis of the experiences of two diverse professors underscores the fact that the experiences of Black faculty are not monolithic and that diversity is more than the physical presence of diverse bodies. The emerging literature on the intersectional experiences of Black faculty in the academy should inform institutional policy and practice and ultimately broaden the scope of intellectual representation in the academy. It is a privilege to earn one of the most coveted positions in the country. However, many times these positions are located at institutions that have little experience with hiring and retaining diverse faculty. It is important for faculty members and institutional leaders to prepare themselves for the learning curve. On this point, we offer the following advice: extend grace and seek understanding.

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