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My brother's keeper: two Black men navigating the tenure-track experience

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the tenure-track experiences of two junior faculty Black men in higher education, while growing still remains vastly unexplored in higher education. Using an autoethnography approach with a critical race theory lens, the authors explore how race and institutional expectations shape their experiences along the primary components of the tenure process: research, teaching and service. While one author is beginning their tenure journey while the other is ending, findings highlight commonalities along teaching and service experiences are being mediated by their identities as Black men. Their research experiences are distinct from one another given the different research expectations of their respective institutions. The authors suggest recommendations for faculty, staff, and institutional leadership to support Black men who seek tenure and promotion in higher education.

We write this scholarly work as two Black men, who decided that education would be how we would change our context and global society. Our approach in this autoethnographic article is to expand on existing literature by sharing our experiences and as we often share, giving the game to those who may need to read it. As such, we acknowledge that the experiences of Black people in education environments are becoming more prominent in contemporary literature (Brooms 2020; Ford 2020). More specifically, in the context of higher education, the experience of doctoral students and faculty members is being documented at higher levels than ever before (Chambers and Freeman 2020; Haynes et al. 2020). While marked by issues of isolation, tokenism, and racism, the experiences of Black students, faculty, and staff have existed and increased in higher education literature since the 1970s (Carrington and Sedlacek 1976). While Black faculty and graduate students were on college campuses before the 1970s and institutional data on admissions and degree completion was available, there is a lack of information on the experiences of Black graduate students and junior faculty prior to the 1970s (Carrington and Sedlacek 1976). While some literature exists to fill this gap, more is needed to develop a narrative around the experiences of Black men in junior faculty positions. The goal of this research is to add to the current body of knowledge about Black men in junior academic positions and provide recommendations to support this nuanced population

through our work as educators, faculty members and two Black men who are trying to give the game to others seeking to navigate tenure-track roles.

Despite the lack of documentation on Black people, faculty numbers in higher education are steadily increasing. These statistics are constantly increasing; however, they vary depending on racial and gender backgrounds. In terms of racial diversity, Black men account for only 2.6% of all doctoral degree recipients and less than 30% of all Black doctoral students (US Department of Education, 2018), while these figures do not indicate an increase in faculty, completing a doctoral degree is generally a prerequisite for entering the professoriate. While the national demographic statistics from the United States Census Bureau indicate that the country is getting more diverse, there has yet to be a major increase in the number of People of Color with postgraduate degrees and academic jobs.

Specifically, Faculty of Color in the United States comprises 184,941 faculty at higher education institutions (US Department of Education, 2018). Of that, Black men represent 184,941, 2.33% or 19,351. The depiction of Black men falls to .5% within the full professor, associate, and assistant ranks but remains roughly below .3% % in all other ranks (instructor, and lecture) (US Department of Education, 2018). The changes in these numbers are even more telling. In 2017, there were 19,432 Black men in the professoriate, but that number dropped to 19,351 within a year (US Department of Education, 2018). The narratives of Black men tell a compelling story about the daily struggles of being a Black professor in higher education (Smith 2004). These difficulties are exacerbated for Black men in junior academic positions, who confront a variety of problems because of their race, gender, and lack of tenure.

As junior faculty, we approach understanding the experience of Black men in junior faculty roles through self-reflection. We frame this body of scholarship in the context of an autoethnography to understand how personal experiences are centered within understanding these underexplored roles. Additionally, we rely on counter-storytelling, as a form of critical race theory to anchor this work. Our critical hope is that this scholarship's methodological framing tells the story of two Black men as we offer insights as two Black men at different junctions of our careers as junior faculty members at two different institution types. This form of storytelling as a method allows us to share more nuanced perspectives as scholars and educators. We will explore current literature on the Black faculty in higher education to anchor our work. We offer our narratives to strengthen the understanding of how Black men experience the academy as junior faculty. We will conclude by offering recommendations for other Black men preparing for the professoriate.

Literature review

Black faculty, while not dominant in contemporary research, are starting to become more prominent in higher education literature (Chambers and Freeman 2020; Ford 2020, 2022; Haynes et al. 2020; Mobley, Taylor, and Haynes 2020; Moore, Hines-Martin, and Gattis 2020). As scholarship increases, more studies are starting to unpack the nuances of being Black in the academy. This knapsack of experiences is vital to exposing the historical challenges such as racism, sexism, and inequalities for Black faculty in higher education spaces (Anderson 1988; Harper, Patton, and Wooden 2009). These barriers are often

connected to the challenges of being Black at a historically white institution (Smith 2004) as Black scholars face racial challenges navigating the academy. The hurdles of Black faculty in higher education can be summarized by facing issues of Black taxation (Griffin and Reddick 2011), racism (Pittman 2012), racial microaggressions (Ford 2022), and socialization into academia (Griffin, Bennett, and Harris 2013).

Critical race theory and tenure-track experiences for black faculty

Delgado and Stefancic (2017) assert 'the CRT movement is a collection of activists and scholars engaged in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism and power' (p. 3) CRT arose in the 1970s as lawyers, activists, and legal scholars in the US noticed the regression of the advances of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement and came together to strategize how to combat covert racism and discrimination. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2017), CRT has four central tenets: (1) the notion that racism is ordinary and not aberrational; (2) the idea of an interest convergence; (3) the social construction of race; (4) the voice of color thesis. These basic tenets of CRT inform how CRT practitioners understand how the salience of race and racism in America is maintained through its culture, economics, and laws.

CRT has been applied to higher education in many contexts: racism and its impact on the retention of Black faculty and students (Johnson 2013; Writer and Watson 2019), racial microaggressions in STEM fields (Burt, Knight, and Roberson 2017; Jett, 2019), and HBCU experiences (Williams et al. 2019). Although this is not an exhaustive list, it demonstrates the widespread use of CRT in higher education literature, including student, faculty, institution, and policy. Guillaume & Apodaca (2020) assert that '[faculty workloads and the processes that lead to promotion and tenure in the U.S. higher education system are discriminatory towards ethnic minorities' (p.5). Moreover, Padilla (1994) notes that Faculty of Color assumed to be 'good citizens' of their institutions as ethnic representatives but this does materialize into anything tangible for their career advancement. Black faculty members are expected to serve multiple roles at their institution and this idea is shared among students, administration, and even community members (Allen et al. 2000), which is not the experience of white faculty. CRTs relevance as a methodological tool and unit of analysis will broaden our insight as higher education expands its reach in grasping the lived experiences of Black people. CRT acknowledges a history of racial exclusion of marginalization in academia which directly impacts Black faculty's trajectory on the tenure track. For this autoethnography, CRT frames higher education as a system that has structures that present unique barriers for Black faculty as they pursue tenure: racial battle fatigue, cultural taxation, and pressure of service work for students and institutions.

Racism & racial battle fatigue in higher education

Often not, except the experiences of cultural taxation, Black faculty also experience challenges of racism in the academy. Historically, racism has impacted the experiences of all non-dominant racial groups. Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) define racism as the belief that one is inherently superior, has power over another group, and has a direct impact across multiple racial and ethnic groups. Woven into the very fabric of American society, racism is directly tied to how People of Color and subsequently, Black people

experience education in the United States. Existing research positions racism against Black men in undergraduate education (Smith, Allen, and Danley 2007), graduate school (Burt, 2020), and faculty roles (Ford 2020, 2022) across higher education. As such, the impact of racism is connected to how Black men make-meaning of their experiences in educational environments.

While racism is often seen and acknowledged in the greater context of American society, it often occurs in the form of racial microaggressions in educational spaces (Ford 2020).Microaggressions are defined as 'everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership' (Solorzano, et al., 2000). For Black faculty, microaggressions led to the formation of racialized stress and racial battle fatigue (Smith 2004). Racial battle fatigue, coined by Smith (2004) is used to explain the impact of continuous microaggressions and the race-related stress responses that form for them. Race-related stress responses include psychological (e.g. frustration, worry, hopelessness, nervousness), emotional/behavioral (e.g. poor school/job performance, binge eating or decreased appetite, procrastination, elevated usage of alcohol and drugs), and physiological (e.g. high blood pressure, insomnia, pounding heart, and headache). These race-related stressors are associated with the challenges facing Black men in education (Burt, Knight, and Roberson 2017, Burt, 2020; Ingram 2013) and their socialization experiences in academia (Ford 2020; Platt 2015).

Cultural taxation

Many Black faculty often face challenges internally and externally within higher education. While both cause stress and impact the tenure and promotion of Black faculty, the internal struggle often is tied to balancing their socially constructed identities of being both Black and a faculty member (Griffin 2012; Griffin et al. 2011). As such, Black faculty are often asked to meet the same standards, which does not account for the intersecting identities of being Black in academic environments. For Black faculty, an additional obligation is placed on the agenda along with research, service, and teaching. Banks (1984) states,

> for a number of reasons, Black students on predominantly white campuses seek out Black professors and enroll in their classes. Often, they do so because they assume that a student's race will not be a negative factor in the evaluation of that student's work. (p. 329)

As a result, the collective involvement of Black faculty in the curation of knowledge has increased student success and learning outcomes (Closson, Bowman, and Merriweather 2014), but has not yielded increasing numbers of faculty in higher education (Smith 2015). As college campuses continue to diversify with more Black students enrolling, the demands of Black faculty are not decreasing. The increased amount of support needed to enhance the experiences of Black students, and subsequently other Students of Color, leads to what scholars have deemed Black cultural taxation.

Cultural taxation is defined as the assumption that Academics of Color are expected to participate in departmental and institutional race and diversity issues (Padilla, 1994). Griffin et al., (2011) highlight this as hidden service agenda. Griffin et al. (2011) expand on Brayboy's hidden service agenda by adding that this

includes requirements to serve as the token voice of color or the fixer of problems related to race and ethnicity and take primary responsibility for teaching diversity courses. Students of color also often have high expectations, seeking black faculty as advisors and mentors who understand their unique experiences as people of color in higher education (p. 43–44).

This hidden agenda is propelled by a 'common assumption that Faculty of Color are not only culturally competent [experts on diversity and should be the diversity spokesperson]' (Writer and Watson 2019, 27). Consequently, Writer and Watson (2019) argue that *go* (their emphasis) to faculty to sponsor student organizations of color, attend diversity events, and be present at and responsible for all things related to diversity. This 'diversity expert' tax, which is limited in the research on Faculty of Color, is often unspoken and goes unnoticed by non-Black colleagues and is compiled by the racism experienced by Black faculty in higher education.

This cultural taxation often burdens Faculty of Color to be 'caretakers of diversity in their department, school or college, exempting others from that responsibility' (Haynes et al., 2019, p. 28). Cooke (2014) discusses hypervisibility as being overcommitted to committees and service efforts for the purpose of 'diverse perspectives' . . . [with the] minority faculty becoming a beacon for any and all students of color, even for those outside of their discipline" (p. 43). This reduces Faculty of Color to mere 'custodians of diversity' at their institution and this invisible labor goes unnoticed and unrewarded. More importantly, it is an unwritten rule of expectation for Faculty of Color to engage in this service work and their absence is more noticeable than their white counterparts (Writer and Watson 2019). Diversity efforts on the outside are laudable but there are ramifications (i.e. cultural taxation) that the academy still needs to grasp that weighs on the shoulders of Faculty of Color.

Service work as hazing for tenure-track black faculty

Challenges related to navigating the academy are important to highlight given that tenure-track faculty must perform well in the three primary pillars of the academy: scholarship, teaching, and research, to earn tenure and promotion (Rockquemore and Laszloffy 2008). Tenure generally guarantees a faculty member permanent job status, elevated social status as a faculty member of the institution's academic community, and the ability to cover 'controversial' topics without fear of compromising their faculty position. The journey to earning tenure and promotion begins as a new faculty member begins their tenure-track position at their institution and this "path can be facilitated or hindered by the support and resources made available '' (Moore, Hines-Martin, and Gattis 2020, 149). Stanley (2006) states coming up for tenure can be viewed as 'hazing' by Faculty of Color. Hazing is any act or collection of acts inflicted upon an individual or group by another individual or group to produce physical and/or mental discomfort. These actions tend to function to induce social control and conformity of the hazed to establish the dominance of the hazers.Hazing is understood as a ritual put on by senior faculty as they assess the 'worthiness' of a early career faculty member to be respected as an 'equal'. Given that tenure-track faculty are at the mercy of their senior faculty with this rite of passage, tenure, and promotion can be viewed as a 'tool of fear' and a 'moving target' (Urrieta, Méndez, and Rodríguez 2015). Even after being granted tenure, faculty face the feeling of not being a 'full' member of the tenured faculty (Urrieta, Méndez, and Rodríguez 2015), and are still vulnerable and at risk because tenure does not 'protect

against the inherent injustices of racism' (Rockquemore and Laszloffy 2008, 193). The tenure and promotion is presented as objective, neutral, and fair but rarely is the process ever openly disclosed or fully transparent (Urrieta, Méndez, and Rodríguez 2015).

The service work that Black faculty engage in, whether it deals with students or their employer, can be considered a form of hazing as they work toward tenure. Particularly, Faculty of Color, given the cultural taxation, are by default, thrust into being conduits of creating and sustaining a sense of belonging for both students of color and their employers. Guillaume and Apodaca (2020) note that mentoring and advising of Students of Color is overtly directed towards Faculty of Color is discriminatory. This would also extend to the pressures of Faculty of Color to serve on committees and administrative work around diversity compared to White faculty (Guillaume and Apodaca 2020). Stanley (2006, 704) asserts there are 'hidden or unwritten rules when it comes to tenure and promotion' and for black faculty, service work is subsumed before they ever get to a faculty position (Guillaume and Apodaca 2020). These unwritten rules bring about an undue burden on tenure-track Faculty of Color who may not feel confident to say 'no' to service work out of fear of upsetting their supervisors who also may influence their tenure decisions. The other side of the coin is that Faculty of Color feel compelled to help Students of Color with advising and/or mentoring because they relate to these students or they feel these students would not receive any help if they do not intervene (Guillaume and Apodaca 2020). Faculty of Color are perpetually caught negotiating time between service work towards students and their employer and their own research interests.

Ultimately, Green (2008) claims that in the current higher education landscape, service has increasingly become less influential in promotion and tenure decisions. Service work can have a negative effect on tenure and promotion given the 'time taken from valuable research and writing time' (Guillaume and Apodaca 2020, 3). Writer and Watson (2019) note that beyond lack of support and accusations of 'fit' with institutions, too much service can be connected to the denial of tenure. Even so, Black faculty spend a lot of time invested in this work as they come up for tenure (Rockquemore and Laszloffy 2008). Moore et al. (2020) detail the importance of knowing both the written and unwritten rules are equally important to successfully navigate the tenure process at any institution. While Black faculty may be well aware of the written and unwritten rules, they are still susceptible to conform to cultural expectations of their institution by taking on service work while reducing commitment to other areas (Allen et al. 2000). CRT helps unpack how certain elements of the tenure-track process, in particular service work, is racialized in its propensity to engage in cultural taxation and precipitate racial battle fatigue shape Black faculty experiences in higher education.

Methodology

This study utilizes the methodological approach of autoethnography. Autoethnography is a qualitative research method that combines the characteristics of autobiography and ethnography. Specifically, "an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 739). Researchers use autoethnography, through reflection and interpretation, as a means of understanding their personal experiences and interactions with

others within a larger social, cultural, and political context. Autoethnography as a method allows the researcher to position themselves as participants in the research (Ngunjiri, Hernandez, and Chang 2010). Autoethnographic studies generally have a narrative format written in a first-person style in the form of a novel or short story (Bartleet 2009; Ellis 2004).

Along with autoethnography, this study will use CRT to analyze the experiences of the two Black faculty members. Previous studies used the pairing of CRT and autoethnography to highlight the social experiences of Black faculty in the academy (Baxley 2012; Writer and Watson 2019). CRT, based on its tenets, provides a lens to highlight how Black faculty are racialized in the academy and how they, as subjects of racialization, cope with this experience as they navigate the higher education terrain. The methodology of autoethnography meshes well with the theoretical framework of CRT given both deal with centering the voices and experiences of the marginalized, the focus on the power dynamics of social context, and the use of counter-storytelling to disrupt the dominant systems of control in order to change it.

Counter-storytelling is essential because it provides 'engaging stories that can help us understand what life is like for others and invite the reader into a new and unfamiliar world' (Delgado and Stefancic 2017, 49). Specifically, the experiences of Black faculty through the medium of storytelling illuminate for non-Black folks what it is like to be Black in the academy. Delgado and Stefancic (2017, 49) assert storytelling becomes a 'cure for silencing' of the voices of color and evokes a reminder of shared common humanity:

> Stories also serve as a powerful function for minority communities. Many victims of racial discrimination suffer in silence or blame themselves for their predicament. . .Stories can give them a voice and reveal that others have similar experiences. Stories can name a type of discrimination; once named it can be combated. . .Powerfully written stories and narratives may begin a process of adjustment in our system of beliefs and categories by calling attention to neglected evidence and reminding readers of our common humanity. (p. 51)

Our stories directly address Stanley (2006) concern regarding how many Faculty of Color experience a 'silenced state [in] a burdensome cycle that is rarely broken' (p. 701). In this paper, we use autoethnography as a form of counter-storytelling, a CRT tenet, illuminating their experiences as tenure-track Black men in the academy. Our personal narratives regarding our respective experiences engaging all facets of the academy through our blackmaleness should serve as an explicit reminder of our common humanity.

Positionality

The inspiration for this paper comes about, as Jesse was interested in writing about how our relationship began, as Danny was a research participant in Jesse's dissertation. As Jesse was in the middle of landing a tenure-track position, Danny was preparing his tenure packet as he was up for tenure the next academic year. Both were in 'turning points' in the academy and discussed the highs and lows of their respective journeys around being Black men in the academy and how to 'play the game' without losing their integrity.

Out of our talks on the phone, text messages, and email, we decided to develop a paper discussing the various obstacles that Black males on the tenure-track face. Danny had been in the trenches for several years and Jesse was just beginning as he landed a tenure-track position. Following the format of Warren-Gordon and Mayes (2017), after we discussed themes around the topic, we independently wrote our experiences and then came together to review the findings and drafted a conclusion.

We are both Black men at different points in our careers. Danny is at a private liberal arts university where teaching and service are emphasized much more than research and scholarly production and beginning his 6th year while Jesse is a first-year faculty member at Research II institution where scholarly production with respect to publications and conference presentations is much more vital to earning tenure than service commitments. Additionally, Jesse's institution is classified as a minority-serving institution. Many of the students at the institution self-identify as first-generation and hold marginalized identities. For example, 104 out of 1138 faculty at the institution self-identify as Black. Of that 104, currently 36 self-identify as Black men. Danny is in the social science department and Jesse is in the higher education department. The racial demographics of Danny's institution with respect to students is about 40% non-white with about 30% being Black with a student population of just under 1,200. When it comes to 60 tenured and tenure-track faculty, Danny's institution's Black faculty constituted 5%. Another non-white faculty constituted 5% of the faculty. Danny has teaching duties at the undergraduate and graduate level while Jesse only teaches the graduate level. Danny's contracted teaching load is four courses per semester while Jesse's teaches two courses per semester. While our tenure and promotion requirements are quite different, our experience navigating the academy has produced similarities that are worthwhile unpacking.

Findings

It's in the game: written and unwritten rules of being black faculty

Teach, don't preach

Danny: Teaching is the biggest component of my job and half of my tenure is based on my 'teaching effectiveness'. Being at a liberal arts institution, I teach A LOT! 4/4 load on a good semester and I am in both the sociology and criminology programs. Courses I teach such as 'Race, Class and Criminal Justice', 'Sociology of W.E.B DuBois' and 'Intergroup Relations' have concepts such as race, racialization, and racism which are central to both sociological and criminological perspectives and analyses of society. While students tend to be receptive to sociological takes on their social reality, when concepts such as racism and white supremacy arise, there is an uneasiness amongst students, regardless of their racial background. I remember when the Colin Kaepernick kneeling situation was happening and I was teaching a special topics course: Sports, Crime, and Society, and students were split on how they felt about Kaepernick kneeling. Students who did not agree with the act stated he needed to 'respect the flag'. Well, I then asked them if they were familiar with the Flag Codes of 1924. They were not so I showed them the codes and they found out that just about everyone disrespects the flag so why is there attention on Kaepernick? The students had no comeback for the facts. I did this to show them that this is not about 'respect for the flag'. Then we get to the broader

conversation about athletes and activism in a world where racism and police brutality is happening. Teaching effectiveness is assessed by reviewing student course evaluations, teaching pedagogy, and teaching statements. Of course, I keep all of this in mind when I am in the classroom. When it comes to teaching content, my experiences have been positive for the most part. As a teacher and a Black man from an urban area, it is imperative that I represent myself in the most authentic way to humanize those who come from those spaces and are not always welcomed in the academy. I use African American Vernacular English (AAVE) from time to time to demystify stereotypes associated with individuals or groups who use it to communicate. It is tough for a student to claim I sound 'unintelligent" when they are learning course content from an expert in a field they are interested in. This also validates the experiences of students who come from a community like mine but often feel invisible and the pressures to conform in order to be accepted. For me, a part of teaching is not just teaching content, but teaching life as Dr. W.E.B. DuBois once said.

Jesse: Teaching is a major component of what I do. For me, I teach a 2/2 teaching load, which means I teach two classes in the fall semester and two classes in the spring semester. I teach in higher education programs, where we often infuse concepts such as race, gender, and critical race theory within many of the concepts explored. While none of my courses directly name concepts of race and racism in their titles, as a scholar who studies race and racism, these concepts are often at the forefront of my teachings. My courses are aimed to educate graduate students and are designed to equip them with theory-based skills that will enable them to operate in workplace environments, specifically to work with college students. While I have never been told I was a terrible teacher, being the only Black faculty member in my department sometimes leads to feelings of insecurity. Students appear to love my classes, but due to my uncertainties as a new faculty member, I frequently invest a significant amount of time in lesson planning and teaching strategies. I make every effort to ensure that what I teach in class is both impactful and developmental in order to maximize student success. I frequently include current events in my lessons to enhance my teaching methods and give real-life scenarios for my students. Classroom discussions often lead to race and racism within conversations in my courses that do not focus on these themes are influenced by the ability to incorporate these concepts. Students' comments leave me to think that these conversations are uncommon in other learning spaces and it shows that race and racism are prevalent in all areas of American life, both directly and indirectly. The killings of George Floyd, Eric Garner, Trayvon Martin, Philando Castile, Freddie Gray, Tamir Rice, Michael Brown, and others have become a battlefield for students to think about ways to support various communities as our world continues to evolve. In many ways, my classroom has become a location where students can advocate for communities that are misunderstood and underrepresented in academic settings. I try to train my students to be Tempered Radicals, as Meyerson (2001) describes them. This attitude encourages leaders to fight for change while remaining visible within the organization. This concept has motivated me to improve my students' advocacy skills in my classroom. This idea has prompted me to incorporate student advocacy abilities into my teaching methods, as this will be their reality as college administrators in the future.

Going above and beyond: research productivity matters

Danny: Research, while a pillar of academia, is encouraged but not required for tenure or promotion at my institution. I remember when I was recruited, one faculty member told me that I would be involved in so much teaching and service that I would not have time to do research. Also, given that our institution was teaching-centered, we did not have to worry about the 'publish or perish' mentality that exists at many research-intensive institutions. Teaching a 4/4 load along with service commitments does make research and publishing a challenge. While these claims may be true, my academic training took place at a Research I institution so research is a part of what makes me an academic. I actively made time during my career to publish peer-reviewed manuscripts, which demonstrated going beyond my institution's expectations as an early career faculty member. As a Black scholar, I know the standards are different for me in that I have to work twice as hard to get half the credit as my white counterparts. Beyond my personal research, I actively mentor undergraduate and graduate students to research and present their work. I thoroughly enjoy watching students get the 'research bug' and take off with their projects. I recently published with one of my former students. With respect to the tenure process, my publications are acknowledged, but they are not required to earn tenure at my institution. My ability to research and publish keeps me current in my field and makes me a better scholar and teacher.

Jesse: I, too, was groomed and trained as a researcher and scholar at a large Research 1 university, just like Danny. As an academic, I value research, the process of conducting it, and contributing to the development of new knowledge. While research is a vital part of my scholarly identity and development as a scholar, it is viewed as equal to or even more significant than teaching. I do not believe I am in a 'publish or perish' situation, but I do believe I need to excel in all aspects of my academic responsibilities, including research. As such, I have become involved with a lot of writing projects early in my career and have made it a habit to always be writing and generating new areas of scholarship. I conduct the kind of research I want to, which is nice. I do the work that I deem important and will serve the communities that I think need it the most. As a new early career scholar, I write every day, Monday – Friday, with a core group of scholars who are also early career scholars. We work to make sure that the 'publish or perish' feeling does not become a reality. This space devoted to writing has become critical to my development, as we are all early career scholars trying to add new knowledge and advance scholarship beyond its current existence. In addition to this space, I spend a lot of time working with students to develop their scholarly identities as young masters and doctoral students. This development, while not a part of my job, has become vital to how I understand and make meaning of building new scholars. Ubuntu, or I am because we are, is something I believe in. I work to provide these opportunities because they were given to me.

Coin of no cash value: service token

Danny: Service is definitely a pillar of academia that I am knee-deep in given that I am at a teaching university and service is a big component of earning tenure. The message was 'be seen' often so people know that you are committed to the institution. Early and often, I served on committees for the university including a chair position on a faculty senate committee as a second-year faculty member. Outside of general committees, I am tapped to serve on university-wide initiatives and panels dealing with diversity and inclusion efforts, which usually involve race. I am also the faculty advisor of a student organization where Black male retention issues are one of its central focuses. As the only Black male faculty and one of two Black tenure-track faculty, you try to be 'everything for everybody' and 'do more with less' to help the university. The emotional labor is exhaustive when you extend yourself to so many efforts across the university. While all of this work is 'appreciated', there is no quantifiable measure of my efforts in the tenure process. The written rule is that you have to do service to earn tenure, but there is so much subjectivity on the minimum amount and the quality of service. The unwritten rule is that being Black means you are tailor-made for service geared towards the Black community and will be the spokesperson for all race matters.

Jesse: 'You will select some of the battles you fight, but make sure you are prepared to fight them', my mother and father would constantly remind me. This is a quote that keeps resonating in my thoughts and, as a result, in my understanding with service. Thus far, most of the service responsibilities I have are things I choose to do. While these service obligations vary by national, local, institutional, school, and departmental levels, many of them are chosen based on my interests, allowing me to be selective in the committees I participate in, particularly those related to my institution and organizations. Like Danny, I was told to 'be seen' often and to make sure that I was always seen working. As a new faculty member, I learned a great deal about 'unpaid labor' or 'Black tax', as many Black scholars refer to it. I enjoy my profession, but I underestimated the toll it would have on me. I had no idea how much students would seek me out to speak about their research interests, aspirations, dreams, and experiences. Many institutions overlook and undervalue this service, but it serves as a fundamental unwritten rule and service that I provide for the institution, as Danny mentioned. Apart from wanting to help all students, I feel a special sense of duty towards Students of Color because of my upbringing as a Black man, which was based on the African philosophy of Ubuntu, which means 'I am because we are'. My commitment to Students of Color and my service to the university are intertwined, but not all parties regard them equally. I believe that my personal commitment to serving Students of Color takes precedence over all other forms of service. As such, this service or mentorship for Students of Color will always be significant to me, and it is the most salient part of my scholar identity.

Ain't nothin but a little bit of straightenin': managing conflict and self respect

Danny: Managing conflict resolution is necessary for the academy. To be an assertive Black man in this society is to be perceived as a 'problem'. This academy works no differently in my experience, and this is expressed both explicitly and implicitly. I had one experience that was definitely a racial microaggression and I had to be strategic about how to respond with my integrity intact. I was leaving a Faculty Senate meeting and walking with an older white colleague discussing my speaking up at the meeting. I expressed that I know it is risky being an untenured early career faculty member but I have integrity so if something is amiss, I am going to speak up. This faculty member proceeded to say, 'Well, if that does not work, you can always use the race card'. I knew exactly what this faculty was trying to do by baiting me with a discussion about race where it was not warranted. Instead of falling for the bait, I challenged the faculty member on the statement and asked when I have ever discussed race when it came to university matters. They sidestepped the question and said, 'Well, you know there are race hustlers out there'. I continued to press the issue: when have you heard of me doing anything like that? More importantly, there are real issues of race in this country, and 'race hustlers' are not the norm. Then after they saw that I was not going to budge, they backpedaled and said 'Oh, I was just testing you. You did not get emotional about it'. I felt no need to respond because I knew what they were doing and they failed. The idea of bringing up race where it was irrelevant and trying to get a rise out of me was nothing more than a 'game'. Also, this racial microaggression attempts to delegitimize my justification for speaking up which is a microinvalidation. The written rule is that white colleagues feel entitled to 'test' you at any moment about race even when the subject does not involve race. The unwritten rule is that these 'tests' are games used to 'feel you out' on matters of race and if your reaction is deemed 'irrational' in their eyes, you become stereotyped as the 'angry black man'.

Jesse: At an early age, 'playing the game' or navigating spaces as a Black man where I had to strive to not be seen as threatening became a common place for me in educational spaces. This was not new for me as I entered the professoriate, or the trenches as I call it, as I had worked to exist in spaces not designed for my Blackness to exist since my birth. As a new faculty member, untenured, and unsure of the institutional climate, I have always been careful to do my job, do it well, and stay out of the way of others. As a new faculty member, microaggressions for me look different. I cannot say I have experienced many on my campus, but they often happen to work with other colleagues from other institutions. The idea that because I am Black, it is easier for me to have conversations around race has always been a farfetched idea. 'You should be glad to teach diversity' or 'students will respond positively if you teach these courses' are phrases that irritate me. True, I adore these topics and enjoy teaching them; nevertheless, I bring more to the table than my teaching ability. While not always harmful, these microaggressions remind me of what other scholars have documented as their experiences in the academy, and they frequently make me wonder if these will be my experiences as well. Regardless of the difficulties, I 'play the game' and accept occasional microaggressions as a necessary part of the work.

Two brothers' takes on the game

The use of counter-storytelling allows us to voice our thoughts on their respective experiences on the tenure track to 'call attention to neglected evidence and reminding readers of our common humanity' (Delgado and Stefancic 2017, 51).

Teaching is the biggest area of tenure evaluation for us despite institutional types. We have course content that directly deals with race and racism in America and discusses how to engage students when these topics arise. Also, we recognize that "it often is our Blackness and maleness (or Blackmaleness) that challenges students' expectations about race, gender, education, and power in the classroom" (Brooms and Brice 2017, 3). As social justice and racially conscious scholars, we use current events to connect course content for their students, a practice used to stimulate student thinking and connections with out-of-the-classroom examples. Furthermore, we are the sole Black faculty members in their respective departments and Jesse acknowledges some insecurity with that fact, as he is also a new faculty member. Although this remains a challenging part of his experience, he also expresses his commitment to providing an impactful experience for his students where he is not only teaching content but also developing competency in advocacy practice for his students.

Danny highlights his teaching from a place of authenticity with an acknowledgment of his use of AAVE to destigmatize the English dialect while also humanizing those who use the dialect. As Brooms and Brice (2017) note the importance of cultivating a rich learning environment for students is dependent upon building authentic relationships on various levels. Furthermore, Danny is aware of his position as a professor and the ability to challenge his students using the sociological content, he is teaching them. Tenure evaluation when it comes to teaching is usually assessed with student evaluation along with supervisor evaluations and the faculty member's one reflection on their teaching.

We both highlight the importance of making time to research, working with students, and being active scholars. Jesse has a committed group of scholars whom he writes that keeps him accountable, a practice he finds valuable as a new scholar. Jesse also works closely with masters and doctoral students helping them hone their research skills, something he highlights as being a critical part of his development as a scholar. Danny does not have a writing group and his mentorship with research is primarily with undergraduates. Neither of us has mentors at their campus when it comes to research. Mentorship is a large component of success when it comes to tenure-track Faculty of Color (Stanley 2006).

When it comes to service, we expressed a tension between a desire to engage in diversity efforts on their campus while also acknowledging the emotional labor involved in this service. Moreover, the time commitment for these services takes away time to engage in scholarly work, which can harm tenure-track faculty upon tenure evaluation. The academy should recognize their role in creating barriers to success with their tenure-track Faculty of Color by making them the 'diversity fixer' on campus by having them lead efforts on diversity while also asking them to teach a standard load and publish while non-minoritized faculty members escape such assumed responsibilities.

The discussion of managing conflict and self-respect is where there is not much overlap between us. Danny clearly dealt with an instance of racial microaggression and actively combatted the action by challenging his colleague to back their statement up. Danny did not report this racial microaggression to his supervisor because he felt addressed the offending party appropriately. However, the lack of documentation means no paper trail to keep the offender accountable in the event of another situation. Danny's awareness of the situation and the perception of him by others of his response provides insight into the difficulty of being a Black male faculty member dealing with conflict with colleagues. He kept the conflict between himself and the offender, which contained the knowledge of the incident compared to the possibility of others finding out if he reported the matter. Jesse states he has yet to face racial microaggressions on his campus but acknowledges that many scholars of color do experience them. Moreover, these microaggressions are 'a part of the game' for the academy. The academy should be more adamant about addressing cultural issues that allow racial microaggressions to be viewed as 'normal' for Faculty of Color.

Implications and conclusion

The two narratives positioned within this research present two different, but complex experiences of Black men in the academy. Similar to the findings of Wheeler and Freeman (2018), this scholarship shows that Black faculty members are not monolithic, yet share some similar experiences due to race. We anchor this work in CRT and counter-storytelling as this scholarship is framed to challenge the dominant narratives and refocus traditional academic ways of thinking around the faculty experience. As Black men scholars and faculty members, we acknowledge the challenges associated with being both Black and men, while working to secure tenure at our respective institutions. Tenure, an ongoing conversation for all early career faculty, can be seen as isolating, taxing, and a daunting task for Black men, who, as shared by us, experience the academy very differently than their counterparts, yet is consistent in the existing literature on Black faculty (Ford 2020; Griffin and Reddick 2011; Smith 2004). Historically, as high-lighted in the literature review, our identities influence every part of the process and impact how we see, view, and make-meaning of our experiences as Black men in the academy. As such, we offer the following points of consideration for other Black men navigating the academy.

Teaching should be current, relatable, and futuristic

We understand the need to push students to see the world as it is and ask them to envision the world, as it should be. Building on our respective narratives, Black men in faculty roles should engage students using current events, which we found useful, despite always being seen as the professors who teach race-related and race-specific content. As highlighted by one of the findings of this work, we make it a point to give students the game. Our experiences and realities are nested in our perspectives. Our identities enhance our classroom spaces and an additional layer and depth to our teaching strategies. An example of this could be classroom debates based on current racial events in the US or one on one conversations with students to understand the political context.

As such, we encourage institutional leadership, deans, department heads, and peers to consider these methods of teaching and learning as value-added to the academic space as the unique identities of being both Black, men, and faculty add a unique view to many of these current events.

Research productivity matters, not only to the institution but also to the individual

While we are in different stages of our journeys, we share a common theme related to conducting research. commitment to advancing their respective fields of study, despite their institutional requirements, goes beyond the need to gain tenure. We have a responsibility to advance not only the field of higher education but our communities. We encourage Black men to explore ways to include their respective peers, both academic and non-academic peers as collaborators within their scholarship. For Black faculty, we push you to consider collaboration with others, both at your institution, at other institutions, and across disciplines. Collaboration can be seen as a method to strengthen publications and rich data presented in manuscripts. While the relationship formed between us was not initially thought to be maintained beyond this point, the building of community, networks, and friendship has led to a mentorship and research relationship between both scholars. The formation of mini professional and social enclaves in the academy is vital for Black men who carry the burden of being both Black and a man.

Managing service and expectations

Service loads for us are highlighted as major components of our work. Moreover, our commitment to students is seen as a taxing, yet important, honor in the uplifting of communities and building of new scholars and practitioners in their respective fields, which has been highlighted in literature (Griffin 2012). We encourage department chairs, deans, provosts, and other leadership to explore ways to engage Black men, who are faculty members, into service that moves beyond issues of race and racism. Moreover, consider the needs of Black faculty, who often have invisible service, which includes supporting and working with Students of Color.

   Building on these three areas, we ask faculty, staff, students, and departmental leadership to consider these points when working with Black men. Additionally, race-related microaggressions remain a critical part of the conversation on Black men in early career faculty roles (Ford 2020). The findings of this work amplify this within all three sub-areas of the findings presented in this work. As such, we challenge leadership at all levels of an institution to assess how their culture may contribute to Black faculty feeling the burden of service at the expense of research. Our narratives are unique to us as Black men faculty members serve as highlights of the lives of Black men in early career faculty roles and the unique challenges they face.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear that CRT is a framework that highlights marginalized voices that are while also exposing "unwritten rules" and practices that potentially create negative experiences for Black faculty on the tenure track. Furthermore, CRT has a practical

function that informs how Danny and Jesse use counter-storytelling in their teaching style and content to cultivate opportunities to offer transformative educational experiences through their academic institutions. The use of autoethnography allowed us to unpack our respective journeys where, for example, how Danny expressed how a racial microaggression served to remind him that colleagues can still find ways to invalidate your convictions.

Both of us acknowledge that service work creates an additional we encourage institutions to use this scholarship as a starting point to start conversations with Black men in early career faculty roles. There is a need to move beyond performative acts to improve diversity (Ahmed 2012), and to improve the conditions for Black men in academic spaces. Accountability, to support Faculty of Color, should be ingrained into the fabric of the institution, not an afterthought of departments seeking to hire faculty to meet diversity quotas (Smith 2015). Our narratives point to the challenges facing Black men in two different academic fields of study. While Black men are not a monolith, the challenge of being both Black and man starts with having conversations with your Black faculty to find out what they are experiencing, how they are experiencing it, and what can be done to improve it. We do not offer these questions to say that everything is wrong at your institution but to get institutions to evaluate their practices and support this marginalized population. We offer this scholarship to advance the field of education and how early career faculty are socialized to understand their place in the academy.

Disclosure statement

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