Mentoring and the Passion for Propagation: Narratives of Two Black Male Faculty Members Who Emerged From Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership

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Mentoring is one of the most effective and popular approaches to aid professional development in higher education. This study uses Scholarly Personal Narrative (SPN) to explore the mentoring experiences of two Black male faculty members employed at large predominantly White research universities. Prior to their current stations, both men worked within student affairs and university administration. They describe the necessity of mentoring in their professional trajectories and assert that without mentoring they would not inherently possess the social or professional capital to be successful. Concurrently, they fervently espouse that it is the responsibility of senior Black faculty members to mentor the newer Black faculty who enter the field. Through this study an emic view of their experiences shed light on the arduous journeys that Black men endure in higher education, and the pivotal role mentoring can play in making the journey successful. The study has the potential to start conversations for university administrators, department heads, and faculty development professionals about the role of mentoring in the retention and success of Black male faculty members.

Keywords: *Black males; mentoring; black faculty*

Mentoring has been one of the most useful tools for developing individuals and fostering success. Hopson, Sobehart, and Turocy, (2015) state "the process of mentoring, with its benefits in terms of the successful education and career development of young professionals, has long been used in professions from education to business" (p. 145). Especially with respect to minority populations, mentoring can be pivotal element in an individual's success.

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Strayhorn and Terrell (2007) state that a mentor is "role model, teacher, advisor, guide, and resource" (p. 70). These attributes become important to protégés who are seeking self-development as well as academic and professional success. For Black students, graduate students, and professionals, a mentor can indeed be a significant experience. The purpose of this study was to delve into the experiences of two Black male faculty members' experiences with their mentors and reflecting on how those interactions shaped their success. Unique to this study was that both faculty members transitioned from student affairs professional roles to their current academic roles as tenure track faculty members at large public research universities. An aspiration of the authors was to provide additional work to, or in some circles commence, the discourse on Black male faculty experiences in the American Academy.

Student Affairs to Faculty Pipeline?

Although not many studies have examined the path of student affairs professionals to the faculty realms, there are some works that give an indication into such trajectories. Cook (2012) states from his study with the American Council on Education

> The most common career path to the presidency has remained unchanged since 1986. The [Chief Academic Officer] continues to be the most frequently cited immediate prior position for college presidents in 2011; more than one in three current presidents were CAOs prior to their current positions…Not only have the majority of college presidents spent their professional lives in higher education, an overwhelming majority have served as full-time faculty members at some point in their career. (para. 9-10).

Utilizing this information, coupled with the American College President Survey which reported less than 5% of all college presidents have student affairs leadership experience (American Council on Education, 2017), one may initially glean that the bridge from student affairs to faculty life is not very robust. A study by Haley and Jaeger (2012) explored women entering the faculty ranks from various experiences. However, 14 of the 18 participants possessed some level of student affairs experience and the authors share that "all participants at some point came to the conclusion that they were capable of doing the work of faculty" (p. 14). Thus, there seems to be some connection to student affairs, pursuing a terminal degree and entering the professoriate. Patton and Catchings (2009) conducted a qualitative study which included 13 African American Student Affairs faculty, regarding experiences related to instruction in U.S. based programs. Although the study did not disaggregate between the differences between male and female responses, the researchers found that there is still an absence of a critical mass of Black faculty serving in the field. And recommended that student affairs graduate programs along with senior level practitioners work together to expose to and encourage graduate students to pursue this as a career option. Although this current piece does not address all the nuances and demographics involved in the student affairs to faculty trajectory, the authors believe that the lack of representation of Black men within the faculty ranks, the uniqueness of the student affairs track to faculty life and their experiences with cross-cultural mentoring make a compelling story and possible start towards a deeper exploration of the experiences of this subpopulation.

Black faculty in the American Academy

Black faculty members are significantly underrepresented in the American Academy. They make up only 6% of the total full-time instructional faculty, whereas Whites comprise 79% (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). For full-time professors the picture is even more skewed; 84% of full-time professors are White while 4% are Black (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Concurrent to these heavily lopsided numbers, research shows Black faculty members experience institutional racism, microaggressions, and marginalization at predominantly-White institutions (Allen, Epps, Guillony, Suh, & Bonous-Hammanth, 2000; Fraizer, 2011; Padilla, 1994). Lower academic status, comparably lower salaries, stunted advancement, and heavier workloads are some of the major imbalances experienced by Black faculty members. Black faculty members are frequently presented with campus service opportunities which usually involve advising minority students including student organizations, and serving on multicultural committees (Allen et al., 2001; Constantine, Smith, Redington, & Owens, 2008). Beyond the psycho-social impact these experiences have on Black faculty members; their productivity is negatively impacted simply because of having less time to focus on research and scholarly publications.

Black male faculty in higher education

There is an underrepresentation of Black male faculty members in postsecondary education. According to the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2015), the total percentage of Black male full-time faculty members was 3% compared to White males representing 43% of full-time positions during the fall 2013 semester. Some research has shed some light on underrepresented faculty populations' unique and challenging experiences in academia. These experiences include the following: feelings of invisibility and isolation, being subjected to blatant and or subtle racism and discrimination, dealing with the imbalances of academic responsibilities (research, teaching, and service), having their scholarship and credentials doubted, and not advancing in the academic hierarchy (Allen et al. 2001; Constantine et al. , 2008; Flowers, Wilson, Gonzalez, & Banks, 2008; Griffin, Ward, & Phillips, 2013; Hendrix, 1995; Lewis-Giggetts, 2015; Louis, Rawls, Jackson-Smith, Chambers, Phillips, & Louis, 2016; Pittman, 2010, 2012; and Stanley, 2006).

Constantine et al. (2008) identified a common theme of "alternating feelings of invisibility/marginalization and hypervisibility" for faculty members of color. This theme relates to the presence of faculty members of color being "invisible" to White faculty members and administrators until their expertise is actually needed. For instance, a Black male faculty member reported "being ignored in public so many times before by White colleagues" (Griffin et al., 2013, p. 1360). A Black male faculty member in Stanley's (2006) study also described feeling invisible after attending an award event for one of his colleagues in the department. The Black faculty member and another White colleague were the only two to attend the event; however, the dean only acknowledged the White colleague's attendance to the chairperson. Although feelings of invisibility among White colleagues are apparent for faculty members of color, faculty members of color also become hypervisible. Constantine et al. (2008) refers hypervisibility to faculty members of color being noticed or selected for their expertise, especially regarding racial/diversity issues, during a time of need (i.e. recruiting students of color or serving on a diversity committee).

Research has also demonstrated that faculty members of color also experience an imbalance of academic responsibility in teaching, research, and scholarship (Allen et al., 2000; Constantine et al. 2008; Griffin et al. 2013; and Stanley, 2006). One Black male faculty member reported receiving a "large amount of undergraduate student traffic (including several students who never enrolled in his class), sits as a 'token' on two campus diversity committees, oversees two student groups, and serves as a liaison" for the campus' Office of Diversity (Griffin et al., 2013, p. 1359). Faculty members of color have expressed taking on additional mentoring/service roles for students of color or student groups of color due to underrepresentation of faculty members of color on campus. Administrators seek out faculty of color to serve on diversity or minority initiative committees. Having more service-oriented roles hinder faculty members of color's progression in scholarship; their time is limited to produce research. Administrators do not expect white colleagues to take on such roles; thus, White colleagues do not take additional mentoring roles due to an underrepresentation of White faculty members on campus.

Scholarship productivity plays a major role in the promotion and success of faculty members. Since faculty members of color are unable to dedicate more time to research, they are oftentimes unable to qualify for the tenure process in an institutionally expected manner (Allen et al, 2001). Additionally, administrators and other colleagues also undervalue the research interests of faculty members of color. One Black male faculty member reported having to defend his research such that his research is too focused on "Black culture" (Griffin et al., 2013, p. 1365).

Black males in student affairs and higher education administration

Very little is known specifically about Black male faculty who study higher education as a field. The literature is virtually non-existent in this area as previous scholarship related to race and gender in this area has primarily focused on the intersectionality of Black women that study in this field (Croom, 2017; Croom & Patton, 2012). Based on a thorough search utilizing Rumbley, Stanfield, Shimmi, de Gavardon and Chan's (2014) inventory to identify higher education graduate programs in the United States, over 200 programs and more than 400 full-time higher education faculty were identified. The authors of this current piece identified less than 35 faculty members who could be visually identified as Black or African American.

Although there has been virtually nothing written about Black male faculty in the field, there are a few exemplary individuals that have contributed to the growth of the field that we will highlight. One such person is Michael Nettles, former Professor of Higher Education at the University of Michigan, who was the first African American to lead the preeminent higher education research association, the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) (Nettles, 1995). In the area of student affairs, Dr. Michael Cuyjet has distinguished himself through his more than 100 publications in the areas of Black males in college, student government leadership, and minority college student experiences (University of Louisville, 2016). M. Christopher Brown, is another scholar who has positioned himself as a trailblazer in the field by earning the rank of full professor by his early 30's. His scholarship centers on the history and advancement of Historically Black Colleges and Universities. He has gone on to serve as a dean of a college of education, Provost, and university president all before the age of 39 (WLOX, 2010).

In the more recent cohort of Black male scholars that have made a tremendous contribution to the field are men such as James T. Minor, who conducted groundbreaking scholarship in the areas of higher education governance as a tenured faculty member at Michigan State University and served under the Obama Administration as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Higher Education Programs in the Office of Postsecondary Education (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). More recently, scholars such as Terrell Strayhorn have made a major impact across the field with research in the area of Black males in higher education and STEM (Center for Higher Education Enterprise, 2016). And one of the most recent is Shaun Harper who is the founder of the Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education and is the second African American male to serve as the immediate past president of ASHE (Penn GSE, 2016).

We sought to highlight a few Black males that have contributed significantly to the field of higher education and student affairs as scholars. However, we know little about the challenges that such men have faced and overcome to succeed in this field of study. Particularly, there is no scholarship that addresses the role of mentoring in the field of higher education for Black men.

Importance of mentoring Black male faculty

According to Nalls (2014) study of tenured Black male faculty at the University of North Carolina, mentoring can serve several important purposes, transcending the expected benefits to the careers of the faculty members who are mentored. Nalls discovered that

> . . . respondents' mentoring relationship resulted in the mentee having empowered action, self-in relation esteem, new knowledge and a desire for more connection with the mentor"; mentoring also beneficially impacted ". . . mentees' relational competence, personal/professional learning growth and development. (p. 87)

However, the career benefits of being mentored were also prominently featured in Nalls' (2014) study. Several of Nalls' (2014) respondents indicated that their mentors had assisted or influenced them to publish, a vital step toward tenure. Several of the respondents also indicated that their mentors had written multiple letters of recommendation for them, an important aspect of upward mobility.

Similarly, Waller's (2008) study demonstrated that new tenure-track faculty at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were greatly benefitted by being mentored. However, Waller (2008) noted that the existing mentoring systems at the two HBCUs where research was conducted left room for improvement. Although study participants indicated that they needed help navigating the pathway to tenure, they were sometimes mentored by other junior faculty who had not yet achieved tenure themselves and, thus, were unable to provide authoritative advice. Participants particularly valued assistance from tenured colleagues, as these knowledgeable professors could provide "support and clear guidelines" throughout the process (p. 105).

Waller's (2008) study also drew attention to the other needs of junior faculty—the need for research support, time management assistance, and social networking opportunities. While some of these needs were perceived to be inadequately met by the existing mentorship processes at the two HBCUs studied, this could be attributed to a need for greater emphasis on mentorship,

particularly mentorship of a more formal type. Despite the imperfections of the mentoring they received, the junior faculty study participants indicated that they valued the experience of being mentored and found it beneficial; indeed, "All participants agreed that there was a strong need for a formal mentoring program to facilitate new faculty members' transition to tenured positions" (Waller, 2008, pp. 103-104).

There is also a correlation between mentorship and job satisfaction for college faculty. According to Bilimoria, Perry, Liang, Stoller, Higgins, and Taylor (2006), faculty members of a private research institution reported that their job satisfaction was positively influenced by two major factors: relational support and access to academic resources. For the men involved in this study, job satisfaction was equally influenced by the availability of relational support and by access to academic resources. Mentoring was found to play an important role in establishing relational support for both male faculty members (although it was shown to be even more effective for female faculty members.

Mentoring faculty can also play a crucial role in the long-term career goals of ambitious professors. According to Freeman and Gasman (2014), it is quite common for presidents of HBCUs to groom protégés for future college presidencies. Since college presidents are typically recruited from inside academia, mentoring members of the college faculty may well prepare the next generation of administrators.

It is interesting to note, as well, that mentoring seems to occur most often between mentors and mentees of the same race. According to Kabfleisch and Davies (1991), Black mentors tend to select Black mentees; members of other racial groups are less involved in the mentoring of African-American protégés. Although this phenomenon may be related to cultural bias (that is, members of other races are more likely to select individuals of their own race to mentor, thus leaving Black mentees to Black mentors) it also seems to provide an opportunity for successful Black professionals to serve as role models for the next generation of successful Black professionals.

Social capital and its acquisition

According to Godechot (2016), social capital is widely believed—and empirically demonstrated to be—responsible, at least in some measure, for an individual's success at obtaining career positions. Data from a university hiring committee in France show that when a hiring committee member evaluates his or her former PhD advisee, the chances of that candidate ultimately winning the desired position are doubled. It is clear, therefore, that there is ". . . strong evidence that social capital matters for academic recruitment" (p. 61).

Niehaus and O'Meara (2015), similarly, link social capital with the success of university faculty. However, these researchers connect social capital to career advancement, rather than job acquisition. Better connected professors, they write, are sooner informed of career-advancing opportunities (such as editorships and funding opportunities.) Niehaus and O'Meara (2015) point to off-campus professional networks as particularly helpful, though they describe the work of professional networks in general as "providing information, influence, and allies that grow social capital" (p. 160).

Social capital, according to Temple (2009), is constructed (and acquired) like many workplace cultures are. Although employees may hail from diverse backgrounds and cultures, they unify around the unwritten organizational procedures unique to their institutions. These procedures are shared informally via internal networks. These networks, then, are responsible

for the distribution of insider information; employees who have access to the network are able to learn from it what they need to be successful in their workplace environment.

Seibert, Kraimer, and Liden (2001) stress the importance of maintaining a balance between "weak ties" and "strong ties" in one's professional network. The authors describe "weak ties" as contacts who one does not know very well, but who can provide large amounts of "social resources." "Strong ties," conversely, are described as contacts one knows very well—those who can provide "information and social support" (p. 232).

Conceptual Framework

The counter-story telling (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) aspect of Critical Race Theory (CRT) was the driving force behind these scholarly narratives. Understanding the voices of the generally unheard, marginalized, and/or minority populations is crucial in the development of a full understanding about any landscape, especially higher education in which White hegemony and White spaces persist (Anderson, 2015). The major assertion of CRT is that race is indeed a social construction, and its place in society results in differential experience within the same social environment; hence ethnic and racial groups experience differential racialization and realities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Thus, White faculty members in American higher education have a more varied experience than their Black counterparts; and this underscores the necessity to explore the experiences of Black faculty members. The use of Scholarly Personal Narrative (Nash, 2004) allows for the voices of the individuals to fully develop, analyze, and give meaning to their stories. Another tenet of CRT states that it is necessary for people of color to share their experiences, so the dominant society would develop a greater awareness of the marginalization and oppression they experience. Concurrently, CRT addresses the idea that people of color are exceptionally qualified to speak from their experiences and storytelling is an apt avenue of that expression (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). The researchers concluded the importance of counter-story telling in CRT and Scholarly Personal Narrative (SPN), an approach which uses the narratives of individuals to explore and make meaning of their experiences, created an ideal platform for this current study.

Methods

The purpose of this SPN study was to explore the experiences of two Black male faculty member experiences with their journey through the Academy, mentoring, and cross-cultural mentoring. The participants reflected and developed narratives that showcased their experiences with mentoring and its role in their personal and professional development as faculty members. A constructivist approach was utilized since meaningfulness of the experiences was derived directly from the participants' narratives and interpretation of these experiences. The narratives, and subsequent analysis, provide a context of the experiences of Black male faculty members with cross-cultural mentoring during a period where theirs are very few Black males faculty members and many times their mentors may not reflect their culture, ethnicity, and/or belief system.

Scholarly Personal Narrative

Scholarly Personal Narrative (SPN) is a form of qualitative inquiry that utilizes personal storytelling and deep reflection to drive the meaningfulness of experiences. SPN distinguishes itself from many other qualitative methodologies specifically because the scholar places the experiences and perspectives of self as the primary emphasis for analysis (Nash, 2004). This approach utilizes first-person voice and requires rigorous framing in order to cultivate, garner, disaggregate, and analyze the most relevant information from the experiences of the individual in order to effectively tell a story. Although like all qualitative research, generalities cannot be deduced from the result, with SPN, Nash (2004) states that from the analysis of the stories researchers can draw larger implications which can inform any given field. For this particular study, the information gathered can inform the field of higher education on the experiences of Black male faculty members with mentoring.

Participants & Positionality

Bourke (2014) espouses "Not only do [researchers] have to be mindful about the influence [their] positionality has on the process, but [they] have to be forthright in communicating [their] positionality" (p. 7). Thus, the researchers of this SPN study provided positionality statements as are crucial to truly grasp and comprehend the perspectives expressed. Their positionalities address the social construction and constructivist criteria by acknowledging their bias.

Gibson identifies as an African-American millennial man who from his senior year in college aspired to earn his PhD and to become a president of a higher education institution. He began his career in housing as a night dean, with the responsibility of supervising various male dormitory facilities. He went on to serve in various administrative staff capacities in the areas of enrollment management and recruitment, advancement and development, assessment and evaluation, and research program development and grants. The diversity of experiences shapes his views of himself as a scholar-practitioner. He also was named to the board of directors of a national association in higher education and was honored with a leadership award within the same professional society. Attending a large predominantly White institution (PWI) for his graduate studies, he had several Black male mentors. However, none of his mentors had pursued study in his chosen field of higher education. He has garnered success early in his academic career as he earned his PhD by the age of 26. He credits much of his success to his willingness to be mentored. However, many of his mentors who have invested significant time with him have been individuals who have been of another race or gender.

Stephen is a Black faculty member who spent over eleven years in university administration prior to entering the faculty ranks. He is a third-generation educator and, as a child, aspired to earn his doctorate. He enjoys the privilege and perspective of earning his bachelor's degree from an HBCU and both his graduate degrees from predominantly White research universities (PWI). He is currently a faculty member at a PWI. He attributes his success not only to his parents, but to the mentors he had at each stage of his education. Before entering faculty life, he spent numerous years in student affairs roles at an HBCU and at a large PWI.

Procedure and Analysis

The idea for this study was developed as a result of ongoing conversations between two Black male faculty members at predominantly white institutions (PWIs). The conversations entailed their experiences with mentoring and also their own navigation of the higher education environment. Both decided after listening to each other's' stories that these shared experiences should be given a closer examination and explored. Although the limitations of only two participants may be a factor, it does shed some light on the experiences of other Black male faculty members, and provide a platform for further research and discussion.

The researchers developed prompts which were used to guide the narratives. These prompts collectively provided the instrument for the study. The instrument was distributed to other faculty colleagues with the express purpose for gaining feedback on the construction of the prompts. After receiving the feedback and editing the instrument the researcher-participants independently developed their individualized narratives.

Once both narratives were complete and transcribed, they were initially analyzed using open-coding to garner the initial themes and categories. Every line, phrase, and word of the narratives was analyzed (Punch, 2009; Creswell, 2014). Once these initial themes were identified, axial-coding was used to interconnect main categories or themes that arose in the open-coding process. The primary purpose of the data analysis process of this study was to recognize "patterns, coherent themes, meaningful categories, and new ideas and in general uncover a better understanding of a phenomenon or process" (Suter, 2006, p. 327). Both narratives were collected and coded by hand.

Limitations

The study involved only two participants from two large public predominantly White research universities. Both individuals were both involved in university administration prior to entering faculty life, thus they possess perspectives that may differ from individuals who are solely experienced administration or solely faculty life. As an SPN study, the author-participants shared their experiences, backgrounds, and specific positionality; this must be fully considered by the reader to determine transferability. The conversations between the participants prior to the exploration may have assisted in establishing trust, genuineness, and candidness when developing the narratives.

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Results

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Four emergent themes were generated from the narratives. The first theme was "mentors as sources of social capital." Both participants reported at length that their mentors were individuals who provided a very field specific knowledge base that went beyond the classroom. The idea of understanding the relevance of being a graduate student, the value of a graduate assistantship, and even as the participants became professors it was their mentors who were showing them the proverbial ropes of the field. The second theme that emerged was "accessibility" of mentors. Both participants lauded the accomplishments of both of their mentors but spoke about the accessibility and openness they provided for them. The third theme was "surprising development of cross-cultural mentoring relationship". The original expectations of the mentors and the protégés can many times go unknown as the relationship

evolves. However, both participants discussed their perception of their mentors', who were of differing ethnicity, surprise at the level of depth and evolution of the mentoring relationship. The fourth and last theme was the "importance to mentor Black males". The participants expressed a deep and crucial need to mentor Black males in their respective fields. They expressed an understanding of the landscape of higher education as it pertains to Black males and believed it was their duty to provide guidance to other Black male professionals.

Themes 1: Mentors Providing Social Capital

Both participants explained extensively about their mentors as individuals who described the landscape of their field, including what it meant to be a doctoral student. The nuances and meanings of the different aspects of graduate and professional life was clarified by their mentors and this elucidation allowed them to garner a greater understanding of self, comprehension of the professional field, and equipped them with knowledge and confidence to be successful. Gibson shared,

> When I arrived at [the PWI] as a first-generation masters student I was unaware of the nuances of graduate study. She helped guide me through the hidden curriculum of the academy. For an example, I did not know what a graduate assistantship was. She explained it to me and provided me with the opportunity to have an assistantship throughout my tenure as a graduate student.

This obliviousness of the manner in which things operated in the graduate program was also echoed by Stephen. Stephen also addressed the value that mentors bring via their explanation of graduate life. He stated:

> There were so many aspects of being a doctoral student, and even a faculty member today, that my mentor taught me. I would not be able to navigate this environment if she didn't explain the nuances of my actions professionally and personally. I was truly clueless. She explained to me the importance of being active and present at professional conferences, the importance of writing and publishing, the importance of having a clean yet thorough research agenda… and she explained the "whys" and that was so very crucial to my lens as a faculty member and development as graduate student. Her counsel definitely made my progression through the ranks palatable.

Thus, both participants attribute their success as a result of their mentors explaining unwritten rules and unspoken mores of their respective fields.

Participants also described situations where mentor worked closely with them on projects such as articles and books chapters with the intent of teaching them the nuts-and-bolts of the professoriate. Gibson spoke about mentors who worked with him on books and taught him the intricacies of writing academic texts, while Stephen spoke about co-authoring book chapters and refining his research agenda.

Theme 2: Accessibility of mentors

The mentors of the participants were described as very accomplished and extremely busy individuals who are very successful and renowned in their respective fields. However, both participants were equally adamant about the level of availability both mentors had for their protégés. Stephen shared,

It doesn't matter the time of day or the crunch period she may be in, Agnes (pseudonym) was always willing to "be there". She's called me late at night to give me advice on a potential maneuver in my position or to ensure that I have all the information on a particular issue I'm working with… She is there hands down, morning, noon, or night. Now, I know she is extremely busy, so I have to also be respectful of her crazy schedule. But whenever it is on the line, Agnes is there! Being supportive, being a realistic sounding board, and guiding me through. I couldn't ask for a better mentor. She is always there, always.

Gibson echoed similar sentiments,

Jennifer's (pseudonym) mentorship has been valuable in many of the same ways. One of the hallmarks of her character is that she'll tell you how she sees things, but she is generally accessible. There are many people that ascend to the highest levels of our field that become more inaccessible the more prominence that they gain. Jennifer is someone that I can reach at any time if I had a question.

Both participants valued their mentors' availability. Yet there was the overarching realization of the mentors' busy schedules and that their time was limited but they were willing to be constant supporters.

Theme 3: Surprised by the Development of Cross-cultural Mentoring Relationship

When engaged in cross-cultural, and in both cases cross-ethnic, mentoring dyad the participants expressed their perception that the mentors experienced surprise or shock about the positive development of the relationship. Both participants reflected upon the idea that their White mentors may not have envisioned their Black protégés as having such significant roles professionally. Gibson shared,

I don't think that he imagined that the student that would ultimately extend his legacy through writing in scholarship would be a millennial who is Black and has dreads down his back. However, I showed that I respected and honored his work and was persistent in showing that I was committed to the same ideals as he was. From there he took me under his wing.

Stephen described his cross-cultural mentoring dyad as one that took some extensive time to develop yet it blossomed in a very unpredictable manner. He shared,

> He [my supervisor and mentor] was so shocked… I remember the day he said "I want you to be my successor" the look on his face was one of pride, friendship, but one of disbelief about where our professional relationship took us. Charles (pseudonym) and I started teaching years before, and we had a great relationship. He knew my work and he mentored me. I trusted him and all he had ever been was open and supportive, but I don't think he saw this development where he wanted me to be his successor. There were other individuals who were White and had been around him longer, but for some reason he trusted me and believed in my ability. It was priceless, the manner and evolution of our mentoring relationship, but I honestly think from my assessment of his reaction that he was surprised at where the relationship had brought us. And yes, I think the differing ethnicity played a part, a minor part as it may be, in his surprise.

Thus, both participants had positive and fruitful cross-cultural mentoring experiences as a protégé; and both expressed the surprise of the mentor on the level and development of the relationship.

Theme 4: Importance of Black Male mentoring of other Black Males within the Field:

Mentoring other Black individuals, specifically males, was expressed by both participants. They reflected on the important role that mentoring played in their own personal and professional development; and believed based upon their current station and experience that they should play a role in imparting the knowledge they have gained. Gibson states

> I think it is deeply important that we mentor Black men in the field of higher education. As someone who specifically studies the history and current status of the field I have a particular sensitivity to this topic… I found that less than 35 Black men serve in tenure-track faculty positions out of the more than 400 positions around the country. So, although we may seem larger in number, it is probably because we know each other and engage in the same circles. However, this number is too small in my opinion and we as Black male faculty members should be helping groom the next generation of potential Black male faculty members and administrators.

Reflecting on his own journey, Stephen shared,

> There is no way I did this alone… there have been so many individuals that have been a part of my journey, and my mentors have played a pivotal role. I understand that there are very few Black males in higher ed, and that is indeed a factor why I believe I can be a mentor. However, I truly believe that I will not connect with every Black man that I encounter in the field. Therefore, I will do what I can with people I encounter and be open to anyone who thinks I can be of value to them. But, yes, I do feel a special affinity to Black men in higher ed, and I know I would probably go the extra mile for them because I know from experience the cluelessness that occurs being a doc student or new faculty and also being the only one of color in the department. I was that clueless doc student… I was that sole Black male faculty in a department of program. It's lonely; and an advocate even from another institution can be a level of support.

The finding of the importance of the theme "Black male mentoring of other Black males within the field" was one of the most personal and challenging results of the study. Both authors/participants spoke with fondness of the support, guidance, and mentorship that particular Black males provided them throughout their careers. However, each also acknowledge that the support was generally infrequent and generally was initiated by them as the mentee. Generally, there were no formal structure that ensured the sustainability of the mentoring relationships. For instance, Gibson did not have a Black male higher education or student affairs faculty member who served in his program. He often had to rely on meeting Black male faculty members at national conferences once a year. Although it is a great time to network and make introductions, ongoing sustainable relationships were hard to develop.

Few studies specifically address the issue of Black male faculty members mentoring each other. Most studies have focused on Black male faculty mentoring Black male students through the K-20 academic pipeline. This theme left the author/participants asking the following questions:

1. What are the expectations of Black male mentees for their Black male mentors and themselves in the mentoring relationship?
2. What are the mentor's expectations for themselves and the mentee?
3. What should each reasonably expect of each other depending on proximity to one another (e.g. they both are at the same institution).
4. Does perception of possible reciprocity and status play a role in the willingness to engage in the relationship (e.g. mentor may be willing to mentor a student based on the status of the institutional affiliation of a student or based on the student's desired professional trajectory of serving as a practitioner or faculty member).
5. And should Black male faculty members be expected to mentor other Black males (faculty or students) because they are Black?

However, throughout the narratives and with subsequent conversations, questions, and discussion it was obvious that regardless of other possible outcomes of the study that the importance of Black males mentoring other Black males in higher education was a core component of their experiences, dialogue throughout the research process and professional philosophy as faculty members.

Discussion

The results of this narrative study address two important aspects about the perceptions of the Black male faculty and their mentoring experiences even when they have experienced a White mentor and possess the knowledge of both the student affairs life and faculty life. The first is that there are parallels to these two participants' experiences with the greater research addressing the experiences of minority and minoritized faculty in the Academy. The second important aspect is that in the twenty-first century (a) there is still a social need expressed by the participants to address issues pertaining to the dearth of Black males in higher education and (b) that even with greater openness to cross-cultural mentoring there seems to be instances where Whites are still surprised by the progress of some Blacks even though they are advocates and allies of equity.

The first theme echoes the sentiments of Niehaus and O'Meara (2015) whereby success seems to be the result of social capital acquisition. Mentors for the two participants provided insight and translation of the intangibles and unwritten aspects of their field; therefore, the Black male protégés were able to navigate the higher education environment more successfully. Accessibility was one of the key factors for successful mentoring as reported by Siple, Hopson, Sobehart, and Turocy, (2015). Both participants lauded the level of accessibility of their mentors and the value that brought to their relationship. It also made the participants (a) aware of the hectic schedules of their mentors and (b) provided an increased level of respect for the mentors' commitment to their development.

Louis and Michel (2013) state that any individual who engages in cross-cultural mentoring will encounter levels of discomfort and sometimes arduousness; and this seems to be the case for the White mentors to the Black protégés. Therefore, both the protégé and the mentor must be aware of their own biases, whether inherent or learned. In both cases provided by the participants the mentors seemed to be surprised of the evolution, although positive, of the mentoring dyad. It was apparent to both protégés the level of surprise; maybe it may be incumbent upon protégés involved in cross-cultural mentoring to assist mentors with cultural shock.

Both Waller (2008) and Freeman and Gasman (2014) address the benefits of mentoring new members of the higher education community. The Black male faculty members in this narrative study openly expressed that they enjoyed the benefit of mentors, yet saw the necessity for them to be mentors as they rise through the ranks. The both articulated a need to respond to the call and bolster what mentoring is already being done. In essence, they realized that one of the unwritten duties of success, especially for Black males in higher education, is propagation through mentoring.

The authors believe that this reflective study can contribute to the body of literature on Black male faculty by providing a counternarrative to the discussion of mentorship, particularly cross-gender and cross-cultural mentoring. Both authors acknowledged that each had a White female mentor that supported and guided them through their graduate education and professional careers as higher education and student affairs administrators and continues to do so as faculty. And this study also provides a unique contribution through the theme of "Black male mentoring of other Black males within the field", by beginning the conversation of further exploration of Black males supporting each other throughout their graduate education and careers as administrators and faculty members.

This study also sheds light on the multifaceted manner in which Black faculty members seek and attain social capital and professional skills from mentors. It shows that their experiences are not in a Black cultural vacuum but that it is necessary to gain insight and support from individuals who may not possess the same ethnic or cultural background. In many ways this study reinforces the notion that Black males in higher education embrace interactions with all people from all walks and bring that perspective as an asset as a faculty colleague. Concurrently, this current study reinforces the ideas that many times Black individuals in higher education must intentionally piece together their network to provide support. From the narratives and the results, it was clear that both individuals had to actively build relationships, seek insight, develop a cadre of advocates and meld them into a support network. Although this may be commonplace for any individual or group, working from a minoritized standpoint there are socio-cultural barriers that must be overcome and may at times take its toll psychologically and professionally.

Our experience as both leaders in higher education and student affairs has had a formative effect on the ways in which we approach our work. We both are very student centered in our teaching, research, service, and outreach. What we believe enhances our work is that we not only are passionate about students, but we are formally trained and prepared to engage in the work that we do. We are very familiar with the best practices in the field and stay current given our engagement with the development of scholarly work. Our experiences as front-line academic and student administrators grounds our research and provides balance to scholarly hypothesis and propositions that may be a part of our work. And our work has only been enhanced by the support of mentors who have both been higher education and student affairs practitioners and faculty members.

Future Research

Future research needs to be conducted that specifically reviews the experiences of Black males that receive formal training in the higher education as a field of study and student affairs. There is virtually no literature that specifically investigates how these males are recruited, trained, persist, and mentored in the field. This study can serve as an initial point to address this gap in the literature. Such scholarship would be informative to both Black male practitioners and scholars alike. So, the examples that we provide in the classroom are not only theoretically sound but is grounded appropriately in praxis.

Recommendations

We would like to offer a few recommendations to department chairs and deans that are committed to the success of Black male students and faculty. We strongly suggest that leadership play a hands-on role in the mentoring of these men. For instance, Gibson received ongoing mentorship in the form of learning how to develop peer-reviewed articles by collaborating one-on-one with the dean of his college as a graduate student. He has also received similar mentoring opportunities as a faculty member through formal and informal conversations when engaging in collaborative research projects with both his current dean and chair. It is important that these men be provided with mentors who are sensitive to the needs of people of color and have a proven track record of successful mentoring.

Providing ongoing communication and holistic conversations about the faculty journey would be a key action for department chairs and senior faculty with which to engage Black male faculty. Discussions, formal and informal, pertaining to the nature of the tenure process, publication expectations and grant writing opportunities would be valuable to enhancing the experiences of Black male faculty so they have a concrete understanding about their role. This is not to allude that Black male faculty do not have knowledge of these elements of faculty life, however, because of the dearth of other Black male peers to constantly discuss these issues it would benefit these men. This could possibly go hand-in-hand with the theme of Black male faculty mentoring other Black male faculty, because the charge given by the department chairs and senior faculty could be to pay it forward by sharing the information with their peers. This passing on of valuable information on the professoriate can act as a platform to develop networks with other faculty and other Black faculty at other institutions.

It can be daunting for higher education and student affairs practitioners to transition into a tenure-track faculty position given that the rewards system is different (e.g. focus on peer-

reviewed research). However, we recommend that new faculty develop mentoring relationships beyond their academic unit and use their scholarly expertise and experiences to conduct research that is relevant to their campus. It is important for new faculty to identify mentors but to manage the relationship appropriately. We suggest that new faculty should look at these relationships as reciprocal. It is important to ensure that mentors feel that you care about their success also. When engaging in conversation with the mentor, it is important to find ways that you may be able to enhance their career, (e.g. collaboration on publications, sharing of new instructional techniques, etc.). Also new faculty should be clear about the needs of their mentors and how they, as mentees, can potentially help. Getting a sense of the time commitment that a person is willing to make is also important. Whether interactions with the mentor is generally formal or informal is important. Some people are more time conscious then others and it is important to take that into consideration.

One very positive aspect of one's former life as a student affairs professional that translates into faculty life is the idea of getting to know your students. In the student affairs realm getting to know your students is critical to success (Robsham, 2016). The same applies to faculty members getting to know their students. Although the realms of academic life and student affairs life may be different, knowing your students becomes key in your classroom delivery, connecting course material with relevant topics to your student and/or simply developing trust with your students. The skills brought from student affairs are transferable in one's faculty repertoire and new Black male faculty members previously in student affairs should tap into those professional skills.

Conversely, the authors provide recommendations to faculty mentoring Black male faculty. Firstly, Black male faculty can often feel isolated in academic departments because often there are many times only one Black male within a department. So, it is important to be a supportive and non-judgmental. Second, as a mentor one should be clear and upfront regarding how they would like or be able to mentor the person. The mentor should share what they believe are their particular strengths (e.g. grant writing, teaching, etc.) and be open and willing to assist in times of need. Lastly, mentors must be affirming but not patronizing. Black male faculty often experience various forms of microaggressions daily, specifically challenges to their intelligence and fitness for the position. It is important that they are affirmed and encouraged but also are provided with honest and candid feedback. It is particularly, important that they be provided with the "hidden curriculum" or unspoken rules for success within their particular field and institutional context.

Conclusion: Lifting as We Climb, Now that We are the Mentors

This current study provides an in-depth analysis of our experiences as scholars and practitioners. Indeed, it provides a context not only for other Black male faculty but for faculty development professionals, White faculty peers, department chairs, deans and any other individual who has any interest in the complete higher education landscape. The piece also brings into the focus the solitary world in which Black male faculty find themselves, and the manner in which mentoring can enhance their experience. The absolute value for diversity is also reinforced in this reflective piece, since the author/participants shared that their success would not have occurred without the support of individuals outside of their culture and gender. It is a testimony that success is a collaborative effort.

In the responses the author/participants provided personal accounts that display their vulnerability to provide important insights for Black men who may be attempting to navigate the uncomfortable terrain of the academy. Both individuals have recently transitioned to the mid-career status as associate professors, however, they both believe that they are still responsible for seeking mentorship but are equally as adamant that they must provide mentorship to junior faculty members as well. As the first theme of the findings acknowledges, mentoring provides social capital and it is incumbent upon Black scholars to "reach as they climb". They also learned from the analysis that mentors need to be accessible. As it currently stands neither knows of any collective that specifically focusses on Black male scholars that study the field of higher education. Although informal collectives of males exist who interact with each other at professional society meetings, it may be important for a semi-formalized group to facilitate such an initiative. And although the authors advocate for the advancement of same-gender/race mentoring, there is also a recognition that cross-cultural mentorship has been invaluable in their development as professionals. It should be a part of the mix of mentoring opportunities provided for young Black male scholars and professionals.

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