

Cracking the Academic Code: Navigating the Higher Education Landscape as Black Male Faculty

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Abstract

This study explored the experiences of Black male faculty in navigating the higher education landscape. Grounded in Resilience Theory, the research examined how these faculty members confront and overcome systemic challenges such as racial microaggressions, stereotype threat, and institutional barriers. Through qualitative interviews, the study highlights the strategies employed by Black male faculty to foster resilience and thrive in academic environments that often marginalize them. The findings underscore the importance of mentorship, professional networks, and institutional support in promoting their success. This research contributes to the broader discourse on diversity, equity, and inclusion in academia by providing actionable insights into how higher education institutions can create more supportive environments for Black male faculty, ultimately advancing the goals of equity and inclusion. The study calls for systemic change to reduce the reliance on individual resilience for academic success.

Keywords: *African American males, higher education, equity, inclusion, faculty*

Introduction

In the landscape of U.S. higher education, Black male faculty members occupy a unique and often marginalized position. While academia prides itself on principles of diversity and inclusion, the experiences of Black male scholars within the academy reveal a more complex reality. Despite advancements in diversity initiatives, Black male faculty members continue to face systemic barriers, racial microaggressions, and stereotypes that shape their academic trajectories and professional experiences (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Haynes et al., 2020; Mobley et al., 2020). The intersection of race and gender compounds these challenges, further influencing their interactions with colleagues, students, and institutional structures (Wood & Palmer, 2014).

Research on Black male faculty experiences expanded in recent years, yet there remains a significant gap in understanding the nuanced ways in which they navigate and negotiate their positions within the academy (Griffin et al., 2011; Wood & Palmer, 2014). Existing literature often focuses on the underrepresentation of Black male faculty members in higher education and the systemic barriers they face in career advancement (Dancy & Jean-Marie, 2014; Turner et al., 2008). Recent studies that explored the experiences of queer Black men as faculty in higher education (Mobley et al., 2020) and the well-being of Black male faculty (Ellis & Moss, 2024) show that there is still a pressing need to delve deeper into the lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and strategies for success employed by Black male faculty members as they navigate the complexities of academia.

This exploratory qualitative research study seeks to address this gap by exploring the multifaceted and complex experiences of Black male faculty members in higher education settings. Drawing on resilience theory, we aim to uncover the lived realities of Black male scholars, shedding light on the challenges they face, the strategies they employ to navigate these challenges, and the support networks that facilitate their success. By centering the voices and experiences of Black male faculty members, we seek to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the academic landscape and inform efforts to foster inclusive and equitable environments for all scholars. Through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, this study endeavors to illuminate the ways in which race, gender, and identity intersect to shape the experiences of Black male faculty members in academia. By amplifying their voices and perspectives, we hope to inform institutional practices, policies, and initiatives aimed at promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion within higher education.

Background and significance of the study

The underrepresentation of Black male faculty in higher education, particularly within predominantly white institutions (PWIs), has been a longstanding issue that reflects broader systemic inequities in academia. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Black male faculty make up only three percent of all faculty in higher education compared to thirty seven percent for White males (NCES, 2023). Black men are disproportionately underrepresented in tenured faculty positions, and those who do secure academic appointments often face unique challenges that hinder their professional growth and well-being (Ellis, 2023; Poll-Hunter et al., 2022). These challenges include racial discrimination, microaggressions, stereotype threat, and a lack of institutional support (Ellis & Moss, 2024; Griffin, 2013; Harper, 2012; Mobley et al., 2020).

This study is grounded in the theoretical framework of resilience, which examines how individuals and groups adapt to and overcome adversity (Masten, 2001). By focusing on the

resilience of Black male faculty, this research seeks to highlight the strategies and coping mechanisms these individuals employ to thrive in an often exclusionary and challenging academic landscape. Understanding these resilience strategies is crucial for developing more effective support systems and institutional policies that foster the success and well-being of Black male faculty members.

This study is significant because it seeks to uncover the resilience strategies of Black male faculty in higher education, providing critical insights into how institutions can better support their success (Harper, 2012). By addressing the intersectional challenges of race and gender, this research has the potential to contribute to more equitable and inclusive academic environments, ultimately advancing the goals of diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education. In this study we ask the following questions: (1) What are the lived experiences of Black male faculty members navigating academia? (2) How do systemic barriers, racial microaggressions, and stereotypes impact the academic trajectories and professional experiences of Black male faculty members? and (3) What coping mechanisms, strategies for success, and support networks do Black male faculty members employ to navigate and negotiate their positions within the academy?

Literature Review

The experiences of Black men in academia have been the subject of increasing scholarly attention, particularly considering their underrepresentation and the unique challenges they face within predominantly white institutions (PWIs; Naylor et al., 2015; Scott & Sharp, 2019; Spencer, 2024). Research has consistently highlighted the systemic barriers that Black male faculty encounter, including racial discrimination, isolation, and a lack of mentorship opportunities. Harper (2012) identified these barriers as significant obstacles that contribute to the underrepresentation of Black men in faculty positions, particularly in tenured roles. The literature also points to the cumulative impact of these challenges on the career trajectories of Black male academics, often leading to higher rates of attrition and lower levels of job satisfaction compared to their white counterparts.

Racial microaggressions

A recurring theme in the research is the experience of racial microaggressions, which are subtle, often unintentional, discriminatory comments or actions directed at individuals based on their race (Sue et al., 2007). For Black male faculty, these microaggressions manifest in various forms, including being mistaken for janitorial staff, having their intellectual capabilities questioned, or being excluded from important networking opportunities (Smith et al., 2007). These experiences contribute to a hostile work environment that can undermine both the psychological well-being and professional success of Black men in academia. Additionally, harmful stereotypes about Black men contribute to a hostile work environment, fostering feelings of isolation and invisibility. For instance, Black nursing faculty report that negative portrayals in social media shape their professional interactions, thus reinforcing exclusionary dynamics (Iheduru-Anderson, 2020). Broader research on Black men in predominantly white academic spaces further reveals that entrenched stereotypes hinder their academic engagement and success (Harper, 2015; Ottley & Ellis, 2019). As a result, Black men in academia often find themselves in “lone ranger” roles, lacking mentors and support systems that are essential for career progression (Sparkman, 2021).

The concept of stereotype threat also plays a significant role in the academic experiences of Black men. Steele and Aronson (1995) defined stereotype threat as the risk of confirming negative stereotypes about one's racial group, which can lead to anxiety and reduced performance. For Black male faculty, the pressure to disprove stereotypes about intellectual inferiority can be overwhelming, affecting their teaching, research, and interactions with colleagues and students (Steele, 2011). This pressure is often exacerbated by the expectation that Black male faculty will serve as role models for Black students, adding another layer of responsibility and stress.

Mentorship in academia

Mentorship has been identified as a crucial factor in supporting the success of Black male faculty, yet it still remains scarce for Black men, limiting their professional networks and advancement prospects (Burns et al., 2024; Sparkman, 2021). The absence of role models in tenure-track positions further compounds this isolation, discouraging Black men from pursuing long-term academic careers (Wood & Newman, 2015). Studies have shown that the presence of strong mentorship relationships can mitigate some of the negative effects of racial discrimination and provide critical support for career advancement (Griffin, 2013; Louis & Freeman, 2018). However, the literature also notes that Black men are less likely to have access to mentorship opportunities compared to their white peers, particularly in PWIs where there are fewer senior Black faculty members to provide guidance (Patton, 2009). Addressing these disparities requires creating inclusive academic environments that provide mentorship and support tailored to the distinct challenges Black men face in higher education. This lack of mentorship is often compounded by the additional service burdens placed on Black male faculty, who are frequently called upon to serve on diversity committees or mentor minority students, further limiting their time for research and professional development.

Resilience

Despite these challenges, resilience remains a key theme in the literature on Black men in academia. Resilience is the capacity to adapt and thrive despite adversity, and it is a critical factor in the success of Black men in academia (Masten, 2001; Mobley et al., 2020). Many Black male faculty members develop strategies to cope with and overcome the systemic barriers they face, including building supportive networks, engaging in self-advocacy, and maintaining a strong sense of purpose and commitment to social justice (Brown, 2008). The resilience of Black men in academia is often tied to their ability to navigate the complex dynamics of race, gender, and power within the academic environment, and their determination to succeed despite the odds (Griffin, 2013). This resilience is not just a personal trait but is also fostered by the collective support of mentors, peers, and communities that share their experiences and challenges. Institutions that actively promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) can create environments that support the resilience of Black male faculty by recognizing and addressing the unique challenges they face (Louis & Freeman, 2018). This includes implementing policies that reduce the burden of racial microaggressions, providing resources for professional development, and fostering a culture of respect and belonging. When institutions fail to do this, the onus of resilience falls disproportionately on Black male faculty, who must navigate these challenges largely on their own.

The literature shows the complex interplay between racial microaggressions, stereotype threat, and the lack of mentorship that collectively shape the experiences of Black male faculty in higher education. However, we see that faculty members demonstrate remarkable resilience in the face of adversity either by going at feeling like the lone ranger (Sparkman, 2024) or finding communities of supports (Ellis & Moss, 2024; Mobley et al., 2020). Although we agree that there is a clear need for structural changes within academic institutions to better support their success and well-being, this paper explores more in depth what types of resilient strategies Black male faculty embody throughout their academic journey.

Theoretical framework

This study draws upon resilience to examine the experiences of Black male faculty navigating the higher education landscape. Resilience Theory provides a framework for understanding how individuals and groups adapt to and overcome adversity, emerging stronger in the face of challenges (Masten, 2001, 2007). Originally developed within the field of developmental psychology, resilience theory has expanded to encompass a wide range of disciplines, including education, sociology, and organizational studies (Aburn et al., 2016; Alonso-Tapia et al., 2013; Luthar et al., 2016; Masten & Monn, 2015). We draw on this theory because it helps inform the experiences of Black male faculty in higher education, who often navigate multiple forms of systemic oppression and institutional barriers.

Resilience is defined as the capacity to recover from difficulties and maintain or regain psychological well-being despite adverse conditions (Masten, 2001, 2007). In the context of higher education, resilience involves not only the ability to withstand the pressures of academic life but also the capacity to adapt to the unique challenges faced by Black male faculty, such as racial discrimination, microaggressions, and isolation within predominantly white institutions (Smith et al., 2007). Research on resilience has identified several key factors that contribute to an individual's ability to cope with adversity. These factors include personal attributes such as optimism, self-efficacy, and problem-solving skills, as well as external support systems like mentorship, community connections, and institutional resources (Ungar, 2008). For Black male faculty, the development of resilience is often bolstered by strong professional networks and mentorship relationships that provide both emotional support and practical guidance in navigating the complexities of academic life (Griffin, 2013).

Resilience theory emphasizes the importance of agency and empowerment in the face of adversity. According to Ungar (2008), resilience is not merely a passive trait but an active process that involves individuals engaging with their environment and leveraging available resources to overcome challenges. For Black male faculty, this means actively seeking out supportive relationships, advocating for structural changes within their institutions, and maintaining a strong sense of purpose and commitment to their academic and personal goals (Louis & Freeman, 2018).

Masten et al. (2021) offered a multilevel systems perspective to resilience as a theory. The authors suggested that resilience is not solely dependent on individual traits such as self-efficacy, optimism but is also defined by the relational dynamics and resources available within these systems. The way systems at various levels, community, family, individual, and institutional, interact and influence each other can enhance or create a hindrance to resilience. In our study, we expect then that Black male faculty made not always adapt positively to adversity in the academy and as such may decide which battles to fight. In other words, their resilience is likely to depend

on the relationships they have with different individuals and groups at the various levels in the systems (Hartlep & Ball, 2019).

The application of resilience theory to the experiences of Black male faculty highlights the dynamic interplay between individual agency and systemic factors. While resilience enables these faculty members to persist and succeed despite adversity, it also underscores the need for institutional change to reduce the barriers that necessitate such resilience in the first place (Masten, 2001). This dual focus on individual and structural dimensions of resilience makes it a powerful framework for understanding the strategies employed by Black male faculty to navigate and thrive in higher education.

Methodology

Data Collection

This qualitative research study explored the lived experiences of Black male faculty members navigating academia. In-depth interviews serve as the primary data collection method, providing a rich and nuanced understanding of the multifaceted nature of Black male faculty members' academic journeys. These interviews allowed for in-depth exploration of the subjective experiences and perspectives of participants, enabling researchers to uncover the underlying meanings and essences of their lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

We come to this study as four Black male faculty who have a combined forty-six years in higher education across various PWIs and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Our positionality as researchers influenced our interpretive lens and analytical decisions, but our use of peer debriefing abated potential bias (Hayes et al., 2019; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Furthermore, our employment as faculty varies by institutional context. This positioned us as researchers to provide unique perspectives in the analysis when considering how the various constructs of resilience theory apply to our different work environments.

The focus of this research on Black male faculty members navigating the higher education landscape required the selection of individuals who have direct experiences and insights into the unique challenges and opportunities present in this context. To achieve this, the inclusion criteria for participants were as follows: (1) identifying as Black male faculty members, (2) holding a full-time or part-time academic position at a college or university, and (3) having at least three years of experience in higher education.

We began initial interviews by reaching out to Black faculty we knew through professional networks, academic conferences, and organizations dedicated to supporting Black scholars, such as the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Black and Brown Special Interest Group (SIG), the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), and the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE). We then asked participants to refer us to other faculty who fit our criteria and would be interested in sharing their experience navigating academia with us. The snowball sampling technique allowed us to recruit a diverse sample of Black male faculty members from various academic fields and institutional contexts in terms of academic discipline, career stage, institution type, and geographic location (Patton, 2014), including both HBCUs and PWIs.

Potential participants were contacted via email and invited to participate in the study, with informed consent obtained prior to the commencement of interviews. A total of seven participants who self-identified as cisgender Black men were selected for this study. For the purposes of this

research, “Black” refers to individuals who identify as having African ancestry, whether they are African American, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latinx, or of other African diasporic backgrounds. “Male” in this study is defined as cisgender men, meaning individuals who were assigned male at birth and continue to identify as men. While this study does not include transgender men, future research should explore the experiences of Black transgender and non-binary faculty members in higher education. Among the participants, two are currently employed at HBCUs and five work at PWIs. Additionally, four participants have experience working at both HBCUs and PWIs throughout their careers. Table 1 describes our participants for this study.

Table 1: Participants

Pseudonym	Position	Years of Experience in Academia	Institutions Worked At
John	Professor	29	HBCU and PWI
Michael	Assistant Professor	7	HBCU and PWI
Antwan	Associate Professor	12	HBCU
Christopher	Assistant Professor	11	PWI
Fred	Assistant Professor	18	PWI
David	Assistant Professor	26	HBCU
Kenneth	Assistant Professor	4	PWI

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant, allowing for flexibility and spontaneity in the conversation while ensuring that key topics and themes were explored in depth (Mason, 2010; Merriam, 2009). The interview protocol included open-ended questions designed to elicit rich narrative accounts of participants’ experiences navigating academia as Black male scholars (See Appendix for a sample of interview questions). Interviews were audio-recorded with participants’ permission and transcribed verbatim for subsequent analysis.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns, themes, and narratives across the data, enabling researchers to understand how participants adapted or coped with the different adversities they experienced in higher education (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method allowed for a systematic examination of faculty members’ lived experiences, highlighting the structural challenges, coping mechanisms, and strategies they employed to navigate academia. The iterative nature of thematic analysis ensured that emerging themes were rooted in participants’ narratives, providing a rich, nuanced interpretation of their realities. By centering the voices of Black male faculty, this approach illuminated the ways in which institutional barriers and resilience strategies intersect in shaping their professional trajectories.

To enhance the rigor of the analysis, the research team conducted three rounds of coding, where each researcher independently coded the interview transcripts. This process was interspersed with data conversations in which codes were confirmed, disconfirmed, and triangulated to ensure consistency and validity in theme development (Guest et al., 2006; Hayes et al., 2019). Through this collaborative approach, the research team worked to minimize individual biases and ensure that the themes reflected the collective experiences of the participants. The use of multiple coders allowed for a deeper interrogation of the data, as differing perspectives enriched the interpretation of the findings, reinforcing the credibility of the study (Patton, 2014).

Member checking was employed as a validation strategy to confirm or disconfirm the research team's interpretation of the findings. Participants were invited to review the preliminary themes and provide feedback on whether these accurately captured their lived experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This process not only enhanced the trustworthiness of the study but also empowered participants by allowing them to affirm or challenge the way their narratives were represented. In several cases, participants expanded upon their initial responses, providing additional insights that led to refinements in the thematic framework. By engaging participants in this way, the study maintained its commitment to an ethical and collaborative research process (Birt et al., 2016).

Finally, the identified themes were synthesized into a coherent narrative that directly addressed the research questions and contributed to the broader discourse on the challenges and strategies employed by Black male faculty in higher education. The themes were examined through the lens of Resilience Theory (Masten, 2001), offering a comprehensive understanding of both systemic inequities and the ways Black male faculty resist and persist within academic institutions. This approach ensured that the findings not only provided insight into participants' experiences but also offered meaningful implications for policy, institutional support, and future research aimed at fostering equity and inclusion in academia.

Integrating Resilience Theory into Data Analysis

Resilience Theory (Masten, 2015) provided a critical lens for understanding how Black male faculty navigate and respond to structural and institutional challenges in higher education. Resilience Theory focuses on individuals' capacity to adapt, recover, and persist in the face of adversity, which was essential for analyzing how participants coped with systemic barriers, microaggressions, and professional isolation. Through our three rounds of coding, we examined not only the adversities experienced by participants but also the adaptive strategies, coping mechanisms, and sources of strength that enabled them to persist in their academic careers. This approach allowed us to co-construct themes that highlighted acts of resilience, such as mentorship networks, community support, identity affirmation, and self-advocacy. During member checking, we sought participants' reflections on the resilience-based interpretations of their narratives, ensuring that their lived experiences aligned with the emergent themes. By integrating Resilience Theory into our analytical process, we provide a nuanced understanding of not only the challenges faced by Black male faculty but also the strategies they employ to thrive within higher education institutions. The findings below illustrate these themes, highlighting both the systemic barriers participants encountered and the ways in which resilience shaped their responses to adversity.

Thematic Findings

This study explored the lived experiences of Black male faculty members as they navigated academia, centering their voices within the broader discourse on race, equity, and institutional belonging. The research questions guiding this study sought to understand (1) how Black male faculty members experience and navigate academia, (2) how systemic barriers, racial microaggressions, and stereotypes shape their professional trajectories, and (3) what coping mechanisms, strategies for success, and support networks they employ to persist in the academy. Through a thematic analysis of participant narratives, this study reveals the deeply entrenched racialized experiences Black men face, as well as the agency they exercise in response to these

challenges. Findings from the study are organized into four interrelated themes, each addressing different aspects of the research questions.

The first theme, systemic barriers and discrimination, addresses the ways in which participants experience racialized scrutiny, exclusion, and inequitable institutional practices. Many faculty members reported facing biased hiring and promotion processes, tokenization, and an ongoing need to prove their competence within predominantly white institutions. These findings directly respond to the second research question by illustrating how systemic barriers and stereotypes constrain career advancement, professional opportunities, and overall workplace experiences (Solórzano et al., 2000).

The second theme, challenges in diverse institutional settings, responds to the first research question by examining the complexities of working in both Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). While PWIs often present challenges related to isolation, racialized scrutiny, and exclusion from informal professional networks, HBCUs, though providing cultural familiarity, can impose significant service burdens, such as increased mentorship responsibilities and administrative duties. These findings highlight the nuanced experiences of Black men across institutional contexts, demonstrating that structural barriers persist regardless of institutional type.

The third theme, mentorship and support networks, responds to the third research question by examining how Black male faculty navigate adversity through strategic relationship-building. Participants emphasized the importance of mentorship, sponsorship, and peer networks in facilitating professional development and providing emotional and intellectual support. Many described seeking out mentors who could guide them through institutional politics, advocate for their career advancement, and offer critical advice on securing tenure and promotion. These support systems served as key coping mechanisms for mitigating the effects of institutional racism and professional isolation (Palmer, 2019).

Finally, the fourth theme, resilience and self-advocacy, further addresses the third research question by highlighting how participants actively resist marginalization and cultivate spaces of affirmation within academia. Strategies such as engaging in culturally responsive scholarship, prioritizing self-care, and leveraging institutional resources emerged as essential for their persistence. These findings align with Resilience Theory (Masten, 2001), illustrating how Black male faculty members enact resilience by drawing upon personal, professional, and community-based resources to sustain themselves in higher education.

Together, these themes provide a comprehensive understanding of both the barriers Black male faculty face and the strategies they employ to persist and thrive. The following section begins with an exploration of systemic barriers and discrimination, setting the stage for a deeper discussion of the structural forces shaping Black men's experiences in academia.

Systemic Barriers and Discrimination

The theme of systemic barriers and discrimination is prevalent in the experiences of Black male faculty members navigating academia. The narratives provided by the participants underscore the significant impact of racial microaggressions, biases, and institutional racism on their professional trajectories and personal lives. John discussed the pervasive racism and sexism he encountered in the field of math education, noting, "I was often the only Black man in professional spaces. My contributions were frequently dismissed, sometimes even by Black female colleagues." This dismissal of contributions is a common experience for Black faculty, reflecting

broader systemic biases that undermine their expertise and professional legitimacy (Allen, 1992; Smith et al., 2020; Turner, 2002). The consistent undervaluation of Black faculty's work highlights the need for systemic change in recognizing and respecting diverse scholarly contributions.

Racial microaggressions and stereotypes profoundly affect Black male faculty's interactions with students and colleagues. Michael describes how white students at predominantly white institutions often bypass direct communication with Black faculty, preferring to escalate issues to higher authorities. He shared:

There's this consistent pattern where white students seem hesitant to approach me directly when they have a concern or issue. Instead of coming to me first, they often escalate it to higher authorities, like the department chair or even the dean. It feels like they don't see me as having the same authority or credibility as my white colleagues, which is frustrating and alienating. This avoidance creates a barrier in building trust and open communication in the classroom.

This behavior exemplifies a "white savior complex" that undermines faculty authority and autonomy. Such dynamics not only reflect racial biases but also perpetuate a hostile work environment for Black faculty (Springer, 2002). The narratives also reveal significant biases in tenure and promotion processes. John faced attempts to block his tenure and promotion based on baseless accusations, a common issue where racial biases influence the evaluation of Black faculty's performance. Similarly, Kenneth encountered inconsistent application of policies at an HBCU, noting, "If the administration likes you, they bend the rules in your favor; if not, they apply them strictly." These experiences underscore the structural inequities in academic institutions that disproportionately affect Black faculty (Ellis & Moss 2024; Patton, 2009). The intersection of racial and gender identities further complicates the professional experiences of Black male faculty. Fred highlighted the additional layer of discrimination faced by faculty with disabilities, emphasizing that marginalizing people based on race, gender, or disability is "equally as harmful." He explained:

As a Black faculty member with a disability, I experience discrimination on multiple fronts. It's not just about race or disability separately, it's the intersection of these identities that creates an additional burden. People often overlook the fact that marginalizing someone based on their race, gender, or disability is equally as harmful. It's frustrating to constantly prove my competence, not only because I'm Black but also because of my disability, and this adds an extra layer of difficulty in an already challenging academic landscape.

The compounded discrimination based on multiple identities requires a nuanced understanding of how different forms of bias intersect and exacerbate challenges for Black male faculty (Collins, 2000; Lincoln & Stanley, 2021).

Despite these systemic barriers, Black male faculty demonstrated resilience and strategic navigation of their professional environments. Michael reflected on the transition from teaching undergraduates to training teachers, emphasizing the need to address challenges such as heavy course loads and unclear policies at an HBCU. He stated:

Moving from teaching undergraduates to training teachers has been both rewarding and challenging. At an HBCU, you're not just dealing with the typical demands of academia;

you're also navigating heavy course loads and dealing with policies that are often unclear or inconsistently applied. These challenges can make it difficult to provide the level of mentorship and support that our students need, especially when you're trying to equip them to become educators themselves. Addressing these institutional issues is crucial if we're going to prepare the next generation of teachers effectively.

His ability to navigate these challenges and improve conditions highlights the importance of resilience and adaptability in overcoming institutional barriers (Griffin et al., 2011). The lack of institutional support is a recurring theme. Fred discussed feeling micromanaged and surveilled, particularly by a department chair with less experience, stating "I constantly felt like I was being watched, not supported. Every decision I made was second-guessed, not because it was wrong, but because it didn't fit someone else's limited view of what leadership should look like. It was exhausting having to prove myself over and over, especially to someone with less experience but more institutional power." The lack of trust and respect for Black faculty's professional expertise contributes to a toxic work environment, leading to decisions such as leaving tenure-track positions for more supportive roles. The narratives suggest a need for institutions to foster environments that genuinely support and value Black faculty's contributions (Ellis & Moss, 2024).

The participants' experiences highlight the critical need for structural changes within academic institutions. Antwan emphasizes the importance of advocating for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) principles, noting that exclusionary practices must be called out and addressed. He remarked, "If we don't call out exclusionary practices when we see them, we are complicit in allowing them to persist. It's imperative that we address these issues head-on, not just for ourselves, but for the future generations of scholars who will follow in our footsteps."

This advocacy is essential for creating an inclusive environment that supports the success of all faculty members, particularly those from marginalized groups (Misra et al., 2024). The systemic barriers and discrimination faced by Black male faculty members in academia significantly impact their professional experiences and trajectories. These barriers manifest in various forms, including racial microaggressions, biases in tenure and promotion processes, and lack of institutional support. Despite these challenges, Black male faculty exhibit remarkable resilience and self-advocacy, navigating and negotiating their positions within the academy. Their experiences underscore the need for systemic reforms to create more equitable and supportive environments that recognize and value the contributions of Black faculty.

Challenges in Diverse Institutional Settings

The experiences of Black male faculty members navigating higher education reveal significant challenges that vary across different institutional settings, such as HBCUs and PWIs. This theme explores these challenges, highlighting systemic barriers, microaggressions, and disparities in resources and support.

Kenneth shared that despite his qualifications and dedication, he contends that he "faced systemic racism and sexism within the academic environment" at PWIs. His contributions were often dismissed and he encountered significant resistance in professional spaces where he was typically the only Black man. This aligns with existing literature that emphasizes the persistent discrimination faced by Black faculty in higher education, which can severely impact their career progression and professional experiences (Stanley, 2006; Turner et al., 2008). Michael's experiences at an HBCU and a PWI underscored stark differences in student engagement and

institutional support. At an HBCU, the familial connection with students and a deeper understanding of their backgrounds fostered a supportive environment. Conversely, at a PWI, a sense of entitlement among students and bureaucratic challenges hindered effective teaching. He shared:

At the HBCU, there was a strong familial connection with the students; they understood that I came from a similar background, which fostered a deeply supportive and engaged learning environment. In contrast, at the PWI, I encountered a sense of entitlement among the students, coupled with bureaucratic obstacles that made it difficult to teach effectively. The difference in institutional culture is stark, with the PWI often feeling more like navigating a complex system than being part of a community dedicated to education and growth.

This disparity highlights the unique challenges Black male faculty face in adapting to diverse institutional cultures (Ford, 2023). Michael also noted that at PWIs, white students often bypassed direct communication with him, escalating issues to higher authorities. This pattern, described as a “white savior complex,” complicates faculty-student interactions and reinforces racial hierarchies. Microaggressions and such bypassing behaviors are well-documented in the literature as contributing factors to a hostile work environment for Black faculty (Pittman, 2012; Sue et al., 2007).

The contrast in resources between HBCUs and PWIs was highlighted by Michael, who noted that PWIs offered ample resources for professional development, mentorship, and interdisciplinary work, unlike HBCUs where resources were limited. This disparity necessitated creative solutions for basic needs at HBCUs, impacting the quality of education and support provided to students. The literature corroborates this, indicating that resource limitations at HBCUs often require faculty to go above and beyond to meet their professional and academic responsibilities (Gasman, 2013). David described inconsistencies in policy application at an HBCU, where favoritism influenced tenure decisions. Such inconsistencies reflect broader issues within academic institutions that can undermine the professional advancement of Black faculty. This inconsistency is also documented in the literature, which emphasizes the need for transparent and equitable evaluation processes in academia (Turner et al., 2008).

Fred’s experiences highlight the intersectionality of race and disability in academia. His disability presented significant barriers during job interviews and required strong advocacy for accommodations. Despite these challenges, affinity groups and professional associations provided crucial support. The literature on intersectionality underscores that multiple forms of discrimination can intersect to create compounded barriers for individuals (Baez, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991). Participants described evolving stressors from systemic challenges and lack of resources to current issues such as student dynamics and maintaining anti-racist programs. Coping strategies included keeping the big picture in mind, detaching when necessary, and collaborating with colleagues. This reflects the adaptive strategies Black faculty employ to navigate and mitigate the impact of these challenges. The literature suggests that resilience and strategic networking are critical for the success of Black faculty in higher education (King & Upadhyay, 2022).

The experiences of the participants underscore the diverse and complex challenges Black male faculty face across different institutional settings. These challenges include systemic racism, resource disparities, microaggressions, and policy inconsistencies, which collectively impact their professional experiences and academic trajectories. Addressing these challenges requires a

nuanced understanding of the unique dynamics at HBCUs and PWIs and concerted efforts to create more inclusive and supportive academic environments.

Mentorship and Support Networks

The experiences of Black male faculty members in academia underscore the critical role of mentorship and support networks in their professional development and personal resilience. This theme explores the various ways these support systems contribute to navigating systemic challenges, fostering a sense of community, and advancing career trajectories. Mentorship plays a pivotal role in the career advancement of Black male faculty members, providing guidance, support, and advocacy. John highlighted the support from his major professor during a health crisis, illustrating how mentorship can be vital in overcoming personal and professional hurdles. He recounted:

When I faced a serious health crisis, my major professor stepped in not just as a mentor, but as a true advocate. She helped me navigate the institutional policies, provided emotional support, and ensured that I didn't fall behind in my work. That kind of mentorship is invaluable, it's not just about career advancement, but about having someone in your corner who genuinely cares about your well-being and success, both personally and professionally.

The literature corroborates that effective mentorship is associated with higher career satisfaction and progression, particularly for faculty of color (Griffin & Reddick, 2011; Stanley, 2006). Antwan emphasized the distinction between mentors and advocates, noting that “while mentors provide guidance and opportunities, advocates speak up for individuals in their absence.” This dual support system is essential for Black male faculty, who often face systemic barriers and microaggressions. Advocacy ensures that their contributions are recognized and valued within academic institutions, a concept supported by Turner et al. (2008), who found that faculty of color benefit significantly from having advocates in leadership positions.

Support networks are crucial for building resilience among Black male faculty. Michael discussed the role of these networks in navigating institutional challenges and maintaining professional standards. He explained:

These networks are essential for Black male faculty, not just for the camaraderie, but for the strategic advice and guidance they offer. When institutional challenges arise, whether it's dealing with ambiguous policies or maintaining professional integrity in a challenging environment, having a network of colleagues who understand your unique experiences can make all the difference. It's about more than just surviving; it's about thriving in a space that often wasn't designed with us in mind.

Such networks provide emotional and professional support, helping faculty manage the stress associated with systemic racism and discrimination. The concept of “cultural taxation,” where faculty of color are burdened with additional service responsibilities, further underscores the need for robust support networks (Misra et al., 2024; Padilla, 1994). Fred highlighted the importance of affinity groups, which “offer a safe space for Black male faculty to share experiences and advice.” These groups provide a sense of belonging and mutual support, essential for navigating

predominantly white academic environments. The literature suggests that affinity groups can mitigate feelings of isolation and alienation, promoting a more inclusive and supportive academic culture (Harper, 2012).

Participants noted differences in mentorship experiences between HBCUs and PWIs. Michael described the supportive, familial environment at an HBCU, contrasting it with the more challenging atmosphere at a PWI. He remarked, “At an HBCU, the mentorship felt like being part of a family, where support and guidance were deeply rooted in a shared understanding of our backgrounds and challenges. In contrast, at a PWI, the environment was more isolating and often felt like navigating a maze of challenges without the same level of support or connection.”

This disparity reflects broader institutional differences in how mentorship and support are structured and perceived. Mentorship at HBCUs often extends beyond professional development to include personal and emotional support, aligning with findings by Gasman (2013). Despite the acknowledged importance of mentorship, participants also faced challenges in finding effective mentors. David described the lack of Black faculty members in senior positions who could provide mentorship, a common issue in many academic institutions. This scarcity can limit the availability of culturally relevant mentorship, making it harder for Black male faculty to find mentors who understand their unique challenges. The literature highlights the need for intentional mentorship programs that address this gap (Ellis & Moss, 2024; Tillman, 2001).

The experiences and perspectives of Black male faculty members contribute significantly to a deeper understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion within higher education. Effective mentorship and support networks not only aid their personal and professional growth but also enhance their ability to advocate for systemic change. Christopher’s emphasis on DEI principles and his role in fostering an inclusive environment illustrates how mentorship can empower Black male faculty to become leaders in promoting equity and inclusion. He shared:

Mentorship has been key in helping me navigate the complexities of academia, particularly when it comes to advocating for DEI principles. My mentors not only provided guidance but also empowered me to take on leadership roles in fostering an inclusive environment. This support has been crucial in enabling me to challenge exclusionary practices and work towards creating a more equitable academic landscape for everyone.

Christopher’s remark about mentorship aligns with research by Patton (2009), which underscores the transformative impact of Black faculty in advancing institutional diversity goals. The experiences of Black male faculty members highlight the critical role of mentorship and support networks in navigating the complex landscape of higher education. These support systems are essential for overcoming systemic barriers, building resilience, and fostering a sense of community. By addressing the unique needs of Black male faculty, mentorship and support networks can contribute to a more inclusive and equitable academic environment.

Resilience and Self-Advocacy

The experiences of Black male faculty members navigating academia reveal a profound resilience and a persistent practice of self-advocacy. This theme explores how these faculty members overcome systemic barriers, personal challenges, and professional obstacles through a combination of self-determination and strategic action. John’s narrative highlights the resilience required to navigate systemic racism and sexism within academia. He reflected, “To survive and

thrive in this environment, you have to develop a thick skin and an unshakeable belief in your worth, despite the constant microaggressions and institutional barriers. It's a daily battle, but it's also what strengthens your resolve to continue pushing for change and equity in these spaces." Despite facing discrimination and personal life challenges, he maintained strong student evaluations and effective teaching methods. His journey underscores the necessity of a resilient mindset to withstand and overcome the numerous obstacles presented by systemic barriers in academic environments (Bonner & Fred, 2004; Ford, 2023).

The balance between personal responsibilities and professional aspirations was a recurring theme in the data. John's prioritization of his children, even at the cost of his career advancement, exemplifies the difficult choices Black male faculty must often make. He explained:

There were times when I had to make a choice between attending an important academic conference or being there for my children's milestones. For me, family always comes first, even if it means sacrificing career advancement opportunities. It's a constant balancing act, and while I've had to pass up on opportunities that could have propelled my career forward, I know that being present for my children is what truly matters in the long run.

This balance is critical for mental health and overall well-being, reflecting the broader challenges faced by many faculty members in balancing work and family life (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). Participants consistently reported experiences of racial microaggressions and biases that impeded their professional progress. David's experience at an HBCU, where "inconsistent application of policies reflected broader institutional issues, highlights the need for self-advocacy." By collecting data and presenting a strong case, he managed to address injustices effectively. This aligns with existing research on the importance of self-advocacy in overcoming institutional biases (King & Upadhyay, 2022).

Participants emphasized the importance of maintaining a strong sense of self amidst challenges. John spoke of overcoming impostor syndrome and remembering the sacrifices of ancestors. This sense of historical and personal identity is crucial for resilience, providing a foundation upon which to build confidence and perseverance. Literature supports the idea that a strong sense of identity is critical for faculty of color to navigate and succeed in predominantly white institutions (Griffin et al., 2011). Michael's transition from teaching undergraduates to training teachers and his move from an HBCU to a PWI were strategic decisions aimed at reducing burnout and finding a supportive work environment. This strategic navigation is essential for career sustainability and success. Making informed decisions about career moves and institutional fit can significantly impact the professional trajectory and satisfaction of Black male faculty (Turner et al., 2011).

Coping mechanisms such as detaching when necessary, focusing on the big picture, and seeking support from mentors and colleagues are vital. Antwan mentioned the importance of having two or three trusted mentors to navigate higher education. These coping strategies are supported by research indicating that having a strong support system and effective stress management techniques are crucial for faculty resilience (Ellis & Moss, 2024).

Participants also stressed the importance of advocating for structural changes within their institutions. Christopher's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) principles and his active role in calling out exclusionary practices highlight the role of self-advocacy in promoting a more inclusive environment. He stated:

Advocating for DEI is not just about holding a title or participating in committees; it's about actively challenging exclusionary practices wherever they occur. I've made it a point to call out these practices, even when it's uncomfortable, because I know that real change requires us to push back against the status quo. By advocating for structural changes, I'm not only supporting my own career but also paving the way for future Black faculty and students to thrive in a more inclusive environment.

This advocacy for promoting a more inclusive institutional environment not only benefits the individual but also contributes to broader institutional change, reflecting the dual role of faculty members as both educators and change agents (Patton, 2009; Taylor & Colet, 2023). The resilience and self-advocacy of Black male faculty members are essential in navigating the higher education landscape. These attributes enable them to overcome systemic barriers, balance personal and professional responsibilities, and advocate for necessary institutional changes. By maintaining a strong sense of self and developing strategic coping mechanisms, these faculty members not only advance their own careers but also contribute to a deeper understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion within higher education.

The experiences of the participants illustrate the pervasive nature of systemic barriers and discrimination faced by Black male faculty in higher education. These barriers manifest in various forms, including racism, sexism, microaggressions, and institutional inconsistencies, which collectively hinder their academic trajectories and professional experiences. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive understanding of the structural inequities within academic institutions and concerted efforts to create more inclusive and supportive environments for Black male faculty.

Discussion

The intersection of race and gender profoundly shapes the academic experiences of Black male faculty members. Participants in this study consistently reported that their racial and gender identities intersected to create unique challenges and barriers in their professional lives. John described his dual experiences with racism and sexism, noting, "I was often the only Black man in professional spaces, and my contributions were frequently dismissed." This dismissal reflects a broader societal pattern where Black men are often perceived through a lens of negative stereotypes, affecting their professional interactions and opportunities (Crenshaw, 1991).

Michael highlighted how these intersecting identities influenced his interactions with students and colleagues. He observed that white students often escalated issues to higher authorities instead of addressing them directly with him, a dynamic he attributed to both racial and gender biases. This behavior not only undermines the authority of Black male faculty but also perpetuates a culture where their expertise is questioned and their professional roles are marginalized (Collins, 2000).

The findings from this study underscore the need for higher education institutions to recognize and address the unique challenges faced by Black male faculty. One critical area for intervention is the tenure and promotion process, which several participants identified as being influenced by racial biases. David's experience at an HBCU, where he noted that "policies are inconsistently applied," highlights the necessity for transparent and equitable evaluation criteria. Institutions must implement policies that mitigate bias and ensure that Black faculty are assessed

fairly based on their contributions and achievements (Lincoln & Stanley, 2021; Turner et al., 2008).

Additionally, there is a need for targeted support systems that address the specific needs of Black male faculty. Fred emphasized the importance of mentorship, stating, “Connecting with like-minded colleagues who have my best interest at heart has been most effective for me.” Establishing formal mentorship programs and networks that connect Black male faculty with senior mentors can provide crucial support and guidance, enhancing their professional development and retention (Stanley, 2006). To foster more inclusive academic environments, higher education institutions must adopt comprehensive strategies that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. One recommendation is the implementation of mandatory anti-racist training for all faculty and staff. Antwan stressed the importance of maintaining an “anti-racist focus” in academic programs to address and mitigate racial dynamics that impact faculty and students alike. Such training can help create a more understanding and supportive environment for Black male faculty and other marginalized groups (Ellis & Moss, 2024).

Institutions should prioritize the recruitment and retention of Black male faculty by offering competitive salaries, research opportunities, and professional development resources. Michael’s transition to a PWI with “ample resources” highlights how access to institutional support can significantly impact the professional satisfaction and success of Black faculty. Providing equitable resources across different types of institutions can help level the playing field and promote a more diverse faculty body (Gasman, 2013). Building supportive networks and communities within institutions is crucial for the well-being and success of Black male faculty. Fred described the importance of affinity groups, stating, “I found communities that existed far before I entered higher education.” Institutions should facilitate the formation and operation of such groups, which can serve as safe spaces for Black faculty to share experiences, offer support, and advocate for systemic changes (Griffin & Reddick, 2011).

Institutions should also encourage collaboration and solidarity among Black male faculty and other underrepresented groups. David noted the value of mentorship from senior Black scholars, saying, “These mentors provide advice, recommendations, and opportunities to publish with them.” By fostering an environment of mutual support and collaboration, institutions can help Black male faculty navigate the complexities of academia and achieve their professional goals (Patton, 2009; Manchanda et al., 2024). Systemic barriers and discrimination remain significant challenges for Black male faculty, as evidenced by the participants’ experiences. Institutions must actively work to dismantle these barriers by enforcing policies that promote equity and inclusion. John’s experience with unfounded accusations and biases during his tenure process illustrates the need for robust mechanisms to protect faculty from discriminatory practices. Implementing clear, unbiased, and transparent evaluation processes is essential for fostering a fair academic environment (Harper, 2012).

Increasing the representation of Black male faculty in leadership and administrative positions is another critical step toward creating inclusive academic environments. Christopher emphasized the importance of promoting Black men to administrative roles, advocating for “greater equity in academia.” Institutions should implement initiatives to identify and develop leadership potential among Black faculty, providing them with the necessary training and opportunities to assume leadership roles. This can help diversify decision-making processes and ensure that diverse perspectives are represented at the highest levels of academia (Stanley, 2006).

Enhancing institutional support and resources is vital for the professional development and success of Black male faculty. Michael’s positive experience with professional development

budgets and mentorship structures at his current institution highlights the impact of adequate support on faculty satisfaction and productivity. Institutions should allocate sufficient resources to support the research, teaching, and professional growth of Black faculty, ensuring they have the tools and opportunities needed to thrive (Gasman, 2013; McGowan et al., 2016). Encouraging inclusive pedagogical practices can also contribute to a more supportive and equitable academic environment. Fred's experience as a K-12 practitioner highlights the importance of valuing teaching alongside research. Institutions should recognize and reward excellence in teaching, particularly in ways that engage and support diverse student populations. Adopting inclusive pedagogical strategies can enhance the learning experience for all students and reinforce the value of diversity in academia (Gay, 2018).

Creating a culture of respect and recognition for Black male faculty is essential for their retention and success. Antwan's focus on resilience and self-advocacy underscores the importance of acknowledging and valuing the contributions of Black faculty. Institutions should establish recognition programs that celebrate the achievements of Black faculty and highlight their impact on the academic community. Such initiatives can help build a sense of belonging and validate the professional identity of Black faculty (Griffin & Reddick, 2011). The experiences of Black male faculty navigating the higher education landscape reveal the profound impact of race and gender on their academic trajectories. Addressing the unique challenges they face requires comprehensive strategies that promote equity, support, and inclusion. By implementing targeted policies, enhancing institutional support, fostering inclusive environments, and recognizing the contributions of Black male faculty, higher education institutions can create a more equitable and supportive academic landscape. These efforts are essential for not only improving the experiences of Black male faculty but also enriching the broader academic community with diverse perspectives and expertise.

Conclusion

This research study explored the lived experiences of Black male faculty members navigating the higher education landscape, with a focus on the intersectionality of race and gender, the impact of systemic barriers and racial microaggressions, and the coping mechanisms employed by these faculty members. The findings reveal that Black male faculty face significant challenges related to discrimination, professional marginalization, and limited support. Participants consistently reported experiencing racism and sexism, often being the only Black men in professional settings and having their contributions dismissed. The disparities between Historically Black Colleges and Universities and predominantly white institutions were also highlighted, with resources and support being notably different.

The study also uncovered the crucial role of mentorship, advocacy, and community in fostering resilience among Black male faculty. Participants emphasized the importance of having mentors and support networks that understand and address their unique challenges. Additionally, the participants' experiences underscored the need for systemic reforms to create more inclusive and equitable academic environments.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has several limitations that should be considered. Firstly, the sample size was relatively small, consisting of only six participants, which may limit the generalizability of the

findings. Future research should aim to include a larger and more diverse sample of Black male faculty across various academic disciplines and institutional types to provide a more comprehensive understanding of their experiences. Secondly, the study relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to bias and inaccuracies. Future studies could benefit from incorporating multiple data sources, such as institutional records, peer evaluations, and student feedback, to triangulate the findings and provide a more robust analysis. While this study focused on the experiences of Black male faculty, it would be valuable to explore the experiences of other underrepresented groups in academia, including Black women, other people of color, and LGBTQ+ faculty. Comparative studies that examine the similarities and differences across these groups could offer deeper insights into the intersectionality of identity in higher education.

Call to Action for Promoting Equity and Social Justice in Higher Education

To promote equity and social justice in higher education, institutions must take deliberate and sustained actions. Firstly, there is a need for comprehensive and mandatory anti-racist training for all faculty, staff, and administrators. This training should address implicit biases, microaggressions, and systemic racism to foster a more inclusive and respectful academic environment. Institutions should also prioritize the recruitment, retention, and promotion of Black male faculty and other underrepresented groups. This includes implementing transparent and equitable hiring practices, providing competitive salaries and resources, and ensuring fair and unbiased evaluation processes. Establishing formal mentorship programs that connect Black male faculty with senior mentors can provide essential support and guidance, enhancing their professional development and career progression.

Creating and maintaining supportive networks and affinity groups within institutions can help build a sense of community and belonging for Black male faculty. These networks can serve as safe spaces for sharing experiences, offering mutual support, and advocating for systemic changes. Finally, institutions must commit to ongoing assessment and accountability measures to evaluate the effectiveness of their diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. This includes collecting and analyzing data on faculty demographics, retention rates, and experiences, as well as regularly reviewing and updating policies and practices to address emerging challenges and opportunities.

Promoting equity and social justice in higher education requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders. By addressing the unique challenges faced by Black male faculty and implementing systemic reforms, institutions can create more inclusive and supportive academic environments that benefit all members of the academic community. This commitment to equity and social justice is not only a moral imperative but also essential for fostering a diverse and vibrant higher education landscape.

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Appendix

Sample Interview Questions:

1. Introduction and Background:
 - a. Tell me a bit about your journey into academia?
 - b. What motivated you to pursue a career in higher education?
 - c. How would you describe your identity and its impact on your professional path?
2. Navigating Barriers:
 - a. What are some significant barriers you have faced in your career progression in academia?
 - b. How have you addressed or overcome these challenges?
 - c. Have there been any institutional policies or practices that you found particularly challenging or obstructive?
 - d. How did you manage these challenges?
3. Promotion and Professional Development:
 - a. Tell me a bit about your experiences with the promotion process within your institution.
 - b. What challenges, if any, did you face, and how did you overcome them?
 - c. What strategies have you found most effective in advancing your career in academia?
4. Experiences with Racism and Microaggressions:
 - a. Tell me a story about any instance of racism or microaggressions you have encountered in your academic career.
 - b. How did these experiences affect you personally and professionally?
 - c. In what ways do you think race has impacted your interactions with colleagues and students within the institution?
5. Support Systems and Coping Mechanisms:
 - a. What support systems or resources have been most beneficial for you in navigating the challenges of academia?
 - b. How do you cope with the stresses and pressures associated with academic life, particularly as they relate to racial dynamics?
6. How has your identity as a Black man shaped your experience and challenges in higher education? Do you even think about your identity?
7. Building Community and Finding Mentorship:

- a. How have you built a community within your field and institution?
 - b. What role has this community played in your academic and personal life?
 - c. Talk a bit about your experiences finding and interacting with mentors. How have these relationships influenced your career and personal growth?
8. Vision and Change:
- a. Looking forward, what changes would you like to see in the academic environment to better support Black male faculty?
 - b. How do you see your role in fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion within your institution?
 - c. How does your institution or peers view you in terms of fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion within your institution?
9. Personal Reflections and Advice:
- a. What advice would you give to young Black men considering a career in academia?
 - b. Reflecting on your experiences, what are you most proud of, and what hopes or aspirations do you have for the future?

Author Bios

Dr. Antonio L. Ellis is a Senior Professorial Lecturer in the School of Education at American University, where he trains future special education teachers and leads research on disability studies, equity, and justice in education. He is the Director of the American University Summer Institute on Education Equity and Justice. His scholarship centers on the intersections of race, disability, and educational opportunity, with a focus on culturally responsive and justice-centered practices for marginalized students, particularly Black male students with disabilities and individuals who stutter.

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Dr. Justin Lamar Bryant is an Assistant Professor of Education at Prairie View A&M University. His research examines how race, class, gender, and power shape the experiences and outcomes of students, staff, and faculty from historically marginalized communities across varied institutional contexts. He also studies teacher preparation and history education standards, with particular attention to how laws, policy, and instructional practice influence the organization of schooling and the distribution of educational opportunity.

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