

## First-Year Faculty of Color: Narratives about Entering the Academy

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### ABSTRACT

The experiences of first-year, tenure-track faculty have been missing in the literature about new or junior faculty. Furthermore, the extant literature about new faculty does not offer a critical outlook on how oppressive institutional structures shape how first-year faculty of color approach faculty work. Drawing from analytical narratives, the authors reframe how doctoral student socialization and new-faculty support systems are discussed, especially pertaining to first-year faculty of color. In doing so, and utilizing narrative inquiry as a methodological framework, the authors draw out the distinct voices of new faculty of color. The implications offered are important for scholars who study faculty experiences and for faculty advisors to doctoral students interested in the professoriate.

Our interest in social justice-focused teaching and research started as students in the same doctoral program. There, as students of color at a predominately-White university, our perspectives on scholarship oftentimes conflicted with institutional norms. As a result, we found each other as a key source of support in cultivating our interests. As emerging scholars, research on graduate students of color was insightful, and it validated our approach to create a community of support (see Brown, Davis, & McClendon, 1999; Gay, 2004). However, our transition from doctoral students directly into tenure-track faculty roles was abrupt. We sought support from each other—former classmates who had moved on to faculty positions at different institutions during the same academic year. Together, we first searched for an understanding of our new role as captured in the literature. We drew from the research to better understand the general undercurrents of the faculty of color experience, which is generally marked by unwelcoming college environments, relatively greater service demands, and the marginalization of our scholarly contributions (e.g., Antonio, Astin, & Cress, 2000; Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Diggs, Garrison-Wade, Estrada, & Galindo, 2009; Jayakumar, Howard, Allen, & Han, 2009; Stanley, 2006).

We collectively grappled with similar struggles as new scholars of color. Yet, each of us acknowledged that research on first-year faculty experiences, particularly for faculty of color, was absent. Although consumed by our tenure-track duties of teaching, research, and service, the most productive activities we engaged in during that first year centered on learning: regularly realizing aspects of faculty life we had not previously recognized; hours spent making sense of our doctoral training; and identifying what from that training was most appropriate at our new institutions. Thus, it is within these experiences, needs, and this gap in the literature that our work is situated: to provide a new branch in a growing conversation surrounding how to better support student-to-faculty transitions as scholars of color in the academy. To do so, we developed narratives of our experiences from our first year, which address the limitations in the literature by bringing in our own voices and perspectives to provide new ways of thinking about supporting first-year faculty of color and the nuances of faculty life at the start of one's academic career.

## Theoretical and conceptual perspectives

Our work is an effort to examine the experiences of first-year faculty of color within the academy, building on the growing body of work centered on new faculty of color. We situate this study within the broader literature on faculty issues and faculty life through a critical lens to theoretically ground our study and offer critical insights regarding the institutions that have shaped our experiences. Key highlights from these bodies of work are discussed below.

### *Socialization into faculty members*

Much research on faculty has considered the socialization process of graduate students in preparation for faculty roles (e.g., Austin & McDaniels, 2006; Gaff & Lambert, 1996; Gardner, 2010; Gardner & Mendoza, 2012; Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001). Theories of socialization have mainly focused on understanding socialization as a rational, assimilative process of learning the norms of the academy (e.g., Antony, 2002). Austin (2003) noted that this process is primarily shaped by casual observation of faculty by graduate students as opposed to intentional structures for preparation. In particular, graduate students observe the dimensions of the faculty role, as in how time is spent as a faculty member and what is valued in the academy (Austin, 2003).

However, not much attention has been given to the continued socialization processes once former doctoral students transition into faculty roles. As significant work within this area, Tierney and Rhoads (1994) consider a cultural perspective of faculty socialization, typifying processes involved during graduate school and into the faculty role. They highlight the formal and informal ways these values are taught and indoctrinated into new faculty and the conflict of values between new faculty members' graduate institutions and the institutions where they begin their work.

The tension between the value orientations of different institutional contexts has been highlighted more recently by Terosky and Gonzales (2016). In an analysis of faculty employed at institutional types different from where they received their training, they highlight ways faculty within varying contexts outside of the most research-intensive institutions redefine their understanding of their career pathways and perceptions of their contributions to society. This redefinition process echoes calls for the work of the professoriate to be expanded beyond just academic publishing in traditionally conceived ways, but to consider scholarship via nonacademic-based publications, teaching, and engagement with community (Boyer, 1990, 1996; Sandman, Saltmarsh, & O'Meara, 2008). Indeed, it is this redefined conception of scholarship that has been found to intrinsically drive faculty of color in their work (Antonio, 2002; Espino, Muñoz, & Kiyama, 2010), an ethos which may conflict at times with the values of the surrounding institutional context. This discussion calls attention to the dominant values that may play out differently across institution types for different individuals.

Thus, attention to the cultural exchange that occurs when faculty join a department and institution also is needed in conceiving of socialization processes (Tierney, 1997). Cultural exchange processes provide a conceptual viewpoint through which we understand the current work at hand, highlighting not just imposed values from the institutional context, but also the processes whereby individuals may attempt to shape their contexts to meet their own personal needs and ambitions. Therefore, given the tenuous positioning of new faculty, who may not push back against culture norms for fear of repercussion (Sorcinielli, 1992; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006), and the hostile and exclusionary environments faculty from marginalized backgrounds often encounter in the academy (Alexander-Snow & Johnson, 1999; Thompson & Dey, 1998; Verdugo, 2003), this exchange is of particular interest to our work as it is experienced by new faculty members. We employ these ideas in this study to better draw out the values and value-development processes that have shaped our own approaches to our faculty roles and contextualized our experiences with the broader literature on needs of new faculty of color.

### *Support for new faculty of color*

The first years of the faculty appointment have been characterized by high levels of stress, with many demands and mixed messages regarding expectations (Austin, 2003; Eddy & Gaston-Gayles, 2009; Olsen,

1993; Reybold, 2003; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). Some work has attributed difficulties in transitioning into the academy to a lack of clarity in expectations or feedback and inadequate preparation about what faculty roles entail (Austin, 2003; Eddy & Gaston-Gayles, 2009). For faculty of color in particular, additional support is needed to address issues of racism, tokenism, and hostile campus environments (Jayakumar, Howard, Allen, & Han, 2009; Stanley, 2006; Trower, 2003), which may manifest in negative experiences of isolation, questioning of qualifications from students, invalidation of research from colleagues, and disproportionately high expectations of service (Antonio, Astin, & Cress, 2000; Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Diggs, Garrison-Wade, Estrada, & Galindo, 2009; Stanley, 2006; Tuitt, Hanna, Martinez, Salazar, & Griffin, 2009; Verdugo, 2003; Villalpando & Delgado Bernal, 2002).

Support efforts for faculty of color have been found in meaningful mentorship relationships to better learn how to navigate institutions as faculty (Diggs, Garrison-Wade, Estrada, & Galindo, 2009; Turner, 2000) as well as peer groups and connections with other faculty of color via professional networks on- and off-campus to foster a sense of belonging and agency (Green & King, 2001; Núñez & Murakami-Ramalho, 2012). Leadership opportunities that allow faculty of color to contribute to societal change are also important (Baez, 2000; Núñez, Murakami, & Gonzales, 2015). While much of the work within this body of literature surely applies to newer faculty, barring few exceptions there is little examination specifically focused on the crucial transition period of the first year of the faculty experience. In one such piece focused on graduate experiences of new faculty of color, narratives from Espino and colleagues (2010) highlight the role of networks of peers from other marginalized identities in positively contributing to experiences with transition and success. They note that these groups exist both within and outside of the immediate campus contexts and provide support for intellectual and socioemotional development. These findings connect to what others have highlighted regarding the important role of personal communities inside and outside of the academy, from graduate experience through faculty roles (Niehaus & O'Meara, 2015; Núñez & Murakami-Ramalho, 2012; Sweitzer, 2009; Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001).

We situate our findings within this broader, growing conversation about new faculty of color transitions into the academy, drawing from our own narratives and connecting them to shared themes in the collective stories of new faculty of color experiences. In an effort to use these experiences to connect to broader systemic occurrences, we situate these perspectives within a critical race theory (CRT) framework to offer an analytical perspective of new faculty experiences and the socialization processes that also critique the institutions that shape these experiences.

### ***Critical race theory and understanding the academy***

CRT provides a lens that critiques the dominant thoughts that shapes everyday interactions, systemic practices, and policies, and allows for examination of experiences of marginalized populations (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002; Solórzano, 1998; Tate, 1997). CRT centers on several principles (Decuir & Dixson, 2004; Solórzano, 1998). It foregrounds the presence of racism in society at large and educational institutions; recognizes intersectional identities that also are oppressed within society (e.g., gender, class, sexual orientation); rejects oppressive ideologies that work against notions of meritocracy and equal opportunity; underscores the voices of marginalized populations; and is committed to social change and the eradication of oppression in society.

As applied to research on faculty experiences, CRT has been a useful lens in examining and understanding experiences of graduate students and faculty (see Espino, Muñoz, & Kiyama, 2010; Jayakumar, Howard, Allen, & Han, 2009; Patton & Catching, 2009; Villalpando & Delgado Bernal, 2002). In each of these studies, CRT facilitated closer attention to systemic racist practices that shape the experiences of faculty with teaching, research, and service. Similarly, we employ CRT to facilitate a deepened socialization lens that accounts for the ways higher education—which has a rich history of racial exclusion and marginalization—has shaped our development and situates experiences of new faculty of color within this system. These perspectives help frame the bodies of work on support for and socialization of faculty to underscore our individual experiences with multiple identities and distinct life histories and connect those experiences to systemic patterns within the academy.

## Methods

### *Study context*

This study started after each of us accepted and began our tenure-track faculty positions at three different institutions across the United States. While transitioning from the same doctoral program to our respective institutions, each of us acknowledged that our experiences as first-year faculty of color were not reflected in the scholarly literature. This realization emerged during a telephone call in 2014 among the three of us, a routine check-in to offer peer support and accountability. Prompted by our discussions during this phone call, we sought to fill this gap and collaboratively designed a research study to illuminate and understand our experiences during the first year in our tenure-track positions.

### *Narrative inquiry*

Narrative inquiry is the study of stories based on the meanings derived from individual lived experiences. Rooted in interpretive hermeneutics and phenomenology, narrative inquiry is “a process of collaboration involving mutual storytelling and restorytelling as the research proceeds” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4). Employing a narrative inquiry approach is suitable in circumstances where researchers seek to understand complex phenomena. Thus, we chose narrative inquiry as a methodological approach as it allowed us to prompt our reflections and center particular aspects of our faculty experiences. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) encourage narrative inquirers to adopt a three-dimensional inquiry space framework: temporality, sociality, and place. First, narrative inquirers conceptualize time as being permeable, and intentionally shift across this dimension. Doing so disrupts traditional narrative structures and allows for freedom when storytelling in ways that unearth the complexities of individuals’ experiences. Second, narrative inquiry requires the consideration of both personal and social conditions, concurrently. This involves examining social and personal issues both inward and outward. Third, place considers the contexts in which experiences are shaped and the specific spaces where these events occur. We were deliberate in considering time, personal and social issues, and environmental contexts when asking questions, crafting narratives, engaging in dialogic discussions, and analyzing data.

Narrative research uses multiple analytical techniques, including but not limited to, autobiographical writing, field notes, interview transcripts, journal entries, and storytelling. Autobiographical writing was used extensively in this study as it aligns with CRT and allows us to connect personal narratives with our lived experiences as first-year faculty. Further, since narrative inquiry gives voice to individuals who are oftentimes ignored and whose stories are largely absent in the literature, we employed a collaborative approach to narrative inquiry and co-constructed meaning from our commonalities and differences. This also is corroborated by the CRT framework, which centers the voices and experiences of people of color. Narrative inquiry is well suited for this particular study given its narrative approach and the scant literature on the experiences of faculty of color during their first year.

### *Participants*

Although each of us graduated with a Ph.D. in higher education from the same large, public “very high research activity” university (according to Carnegie Classifications) in the Midwest and began tenure-track positions at the same time, our life experiences, initial motivations for pursuing the doctorate, and faculty positions are distinctly different from one another. Eddie identifies as a Black man who grew up in a rural, predominately-Black community. At the start of his doctoral program, Eddie aspired to be a faculty member. He works at a medium-sized, public “high research activity” university in the Mid-Atlantic region. During his first year, he was one of three Black tenure-track faculty whose academic appointments were solely in the School of Education. Brian identifies as a Black man who grew up in an urban, predominantly-Black community. Brian originally aspired to be a chief student affairs officer given his previous professional experiences. However, his exposure to research and teaching opportunities acquired in his doctoral program prompted him to enter the professoriate. In his first year, he worked at

a large, public “doctoral/research university” situated in the Midwestern region and was the only tenure-track Black male faculty member in the College of Education at his institution. Desiree identifies as a U.S.-born Latina, whose identity and career aspirations are intertwined with family and community. She entered the professoriate as a means of making change at individual, institutional, and systemic levels. She currently works at a large, private “doctoral/research university” on the West Coast, where she was hired in the School of Education among a cohort of five new faculty—four being people of color and one of those being Latina.

### **Data collection and analysis**

Data drawn for our analysis were based on multiple data sources, including autobiographical narratives, dialogic conversations, reflective journals, and textual artifacts (e.g., social media messages, e-mails). Data collection occurred in four interconnected phases.

First, we created a narrative protocol that was grounded within the literature about junior faculty experiences; this narrative protocol became a guide as we crafted our individual autobiographical narratives. We each wrote a narrative responding to the following prompts: (1) “Reflect on the support you received from your institution as a first-year, new faculty member,” and (2) “Reflect on who is the scholar you were groomed to be in your doctoral program and the scholar you were hired to be at your current institution.”

Second, we engaged in a structured group dialogue where our individual narratives were read aloud and shared with one another. The sharing of narratives in this phase allowed us to hear in one’s own voice our respective faculty experiences, which allowed us to better understand the data. After reading the narratives to one another during the group dialogue, we identified potential topics that warranted additional insights to fully capture the particularities of our respective faculty experiences.

Third, based on the group dialogue, we constructed a new narrative protocol based on the following prompts: (1) “Reflect on the feedback we received in our focused group discussion by looking at artifacts (e.g., social media posts, reflective journals, e-mail messages) that were reflective of our experiences during the first year,” (2) “Reflect on how you experienced institutional change during your first year,” (3) “Reflect on the role of a core colleague group and your experience,” and (4) “Reflect on your career objective when you entered your doctoral program; to what extent does your current career objective align with that initial objective?” Lastly, after completing our individual autobiographical narratives, we repeated the process of engaging in structured group dialogue, reading our individual narratives aloud to one another and discussing the commonalities and distinctions in our collective experiences. Although the narratives were written towards the tail end of our first year in a reflective format, the textual artifacts gathered allowed us to draw from our experiences as they had occurred and incorporate and corroborate those experiences with our retrospective reflections.

We were cognizant of Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) three-dimensional inquiry space approach and analyzed the data both individually and collectively, focusing our analysis on commonalities and differences in our experiences across contexts and time. The sharing of our individual narratives collectively and the structured group dialogues were important during data analysis, as we were able to compare our narratives with one another while identifying exceptional occurrences. Consistent with the CRT framework, we often acknowledged and spent considerable time reflecting on the role of race and racism in our collective educational experiences (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) throughout the analysis process. Analyzing multiple forms of data allowed us to create thematic categories that captured our experiences as first-year faculty of color.

We employed multiple strategies to ensure trustworthiness in this study. First, member checking, as Patton (2002) explains, served as an important part of the analytic process throughout our research as we engaged in analyzing and interpreting data and reaching consensus regarding this study’s results. Second, we presented our emergent findings at a national research conference as an opportunity for peer review and debriefing, allowing us to discuss the results of the analysis while receiving verification of the credibility of findings. Lastly, we practiced reflexivity and reflected on our collective and individual positionalities throughout the research process. We reflected on being students of color at a consistently

top-ranked doctoral program in higher education (according to *U.S. News & World Report*) to now having assistant professor, tenure-track faculty appointments across differing institution types in various regions of the United States. This analysis resulted in themes within three key areas, which we present below.

## Findings

Our stories are presented as a personal account of our first-year, tenure-track faculty experience. In doing so, we present and discuss our stories within three themes that emerged from the data: meaning-making of our doctoral experience, support throughout the transition process, and the role of peer colleague groups. We present these themes using verbatim quotes and excerpts from our autobiographical narratives, dialogic conversations, and textual artifacts.

### *Meaning-making of doctoral experience*

During our first year, we each engaged in continuous reflection on the faculty members we were *groomed to be* and who we were *hired to be*. How do we grapple with the differences between who we felt we were prepared to be as faculty members and who we realized our new institutions expected us to be? This tension was realized as our faculty positions were at institutions notably different from our doctoral institution. We grappled with fundamental questions: How had we come to understand our own scholarly identity, how did others see us as scholars, and was the reality somewhere in between? Also, how is this experience further complicated by our experiences as new faculty of color? This line of questioning offered insight into what the literature highlights as the doctoral student socialization process while also diverging notably in perspective from literature on reconsiderations of scholarship.

In each of our narratives, we noted that life took a backseat to our doctoral program faculty members' academic responsibilities. It also cannot be overlooked that meaningful, hands-on connections to communities of color felt distant during our doctoral experience, and we entered our first year knowing we wanted a different experience as faculty members. The following quote demonstrates the way an observation during our doctoral program shaped how one of us approached the first year as a faculty member:

It was modeled what the faculty experience looks like—limited time with family, “life” being loosely defined ... just a perpetual continuation of graduate school where life is put on hold, you're disconnected from communities of color as you theorize on them from ivory towers. This was not a world I wanted to be a part of.

Relatedly, our narratives also noted the influence of doctoral faculty behavior that we wanted to emulate. The doctoral socialization process in many ways called into question our original motivations and aspirations for acquiring the doctorate. The following quote represents how one of us initially aspired to be an administrator after completing doctoral study, which showed us the mentor-based style of academic advising was a worthwhile task to mirror as a first-year faculty member:

I realized halfway through my doctoral process that my interests were aligning more with faculty and the academic classroom ... [My advisor] ... helped shaped who I was groomed to be. As a result, I knew that I was going to be a faculty member who spent a considerable amount of time mentoring students in addition to fulfilling the requirements of research, teaching, and service.

In this case, once more, our default behavior in the first-year, tenure-track faculty role was to the norms of the institution where we earned our doctorate and the behaviors observed (Austin, 2003). This reflects what Terosky and Gonzales (2016) recently highlight regarding the tensions inherent in redefining the faculty role when there are great differences between the institutions where one is appointed and where one was trained.

Combined, these stories exhibit the many focal points of how attitudes from one's doctoral education emerge in each new faculty member's life. On the surface, our stories do not venture far from what previous research has argued regarding understanding socialization through casual observation and as a form

of assimilation into the academy (e.g., Antony, 2002; Austin, 2003). However, time is often requested to serve communities of color at our institutions, and honestly, we desire to do so. All of our research agendas are based in serving the communities with which we identify. This behavior was modeled by our graduate faculty in a way that differed from what we aspired to as scholars ourselves, and more aligned with Baez's (2000) conception of race-related critical agency. The tensions in personal and institutional values are exacerbated through a CRT lens. That lens highlights a tension that can be understood as both oppressive to individual thriving and reflective of what some have discussed as the bicultural identity faculty need to be able to survive in academe (Tuitt et al., 2009). Therefore, although our stories reveal how the espoused behaviors of our doctoral experience served as a starting point in understanding our first year as faculty, the meaning-making process identified the risks of ignoring aspects of who we wanted to become as faculty at our new institutions. This further underscores ways the institutional norms that shape the faculty experience may discourage focus on populations that have been historically marginalized and, thus, perpetuate inequality in society more broadly.

### ***Support throughout process***

In our narratives and conversations, we discussed how our first-year faculty experiences were defined by both formal (e.g., institution-wide faculty orientations, professional development sessions) and informal (e.g., impromptu meals, “check-ins” from other colleagues) support structures. As first-year faculty and scholars of color, we were constantly negotiating our research agendas, teaching responsibilities, service expectations, social identities, families, and life commitments and turned to our respective networks for advice and support. While reading our narratives aloud, we reflected on various types of support not only within our respective institutions but also outside of the institutions' setting.

Through these support structures, we were able to acclimate to our respective institutions and gain key insights into many important aspects of the first year. The following excerpt illustrates the multiple forms of institutional support that helped significantly in acclimating to the new environment; this support mainly came from colleagues who ultimately became mentors and sources of advice:

Support looks differently in many different contexts. There's support through the institutionalized mechanisms of transition support, often called “orientation”—long sessions, reflectively designed as those with different experiences try to design sessions of information they think will be most helpful for the broad pool of “you” new faculty members ... Support also came in the form of emails, coffee dates, five-minute conversations at faculty meetings, and many other forms from colleagues, self-appointed or mentally-designated mentors.

These comments highlight and connect to ways in which navigational capital was passed on via these support mechanisms. We also reflected on advice from more senior faculty colleagues to steer clear of institutional service commitments and focus primarily on research and teaching responsibilities. Although this was viewed as positive advice, it created some internal dissonance. As previously mentioned, each of us has an interest in serving communities of color, but not focusing on this type of service in particular or service activities in general was strongly encouraged. This connects to previous work by Baez (2000), among others, which argued for the role of service as an empowerment opportunity for faculty of color that supports the transformation of institution, society, and self, an idea we embrace but had to navigate through the intentions of others who recommended us away from it.

In addition to receiving formal institutional support, we reflected on advice from faculty colleagues about how to negotiate places outside of the formal university setting:

My colleagues invited me to their homes to meet their families, faculty outings, etc. ... I remember having conversations on where to buy certain items, or where to get a haircut, or where to get good food. I recognize a key to navigating this city is based on who you know.

Embedded within our narratives as well was the role of other faculty and staff of color. Support relative to shared minoritized experiences within the academy highlighted the need for outreach from other faculty of color for interpersonal connection, the demands of being one of only a few faculty of color within your institution, and the need to find ethnic spaces within a predominantly-White region.

In sum, our narratives and conversations suggest that support and advice from other faculty colleagues played a major role in acclimating to our new environments. These early messages proved beneficial during the initial few weeks of our faculty appointments as we negotiated how to approach the promotion and tenure process at our respective institutions. Prior research suggests that faculty members are not adequately prepared for the demands placed on them as new faculty members (Austin, 2003). Yet, our narratives extend this beyond only work-related demands, and our findings introduce the influence of cultural adjustment in transitioning directly into the faculty role and new space. Thus, as first-year, tenure-track faculty of color, it was critical for us to create support structures both within and outside of the institutional setting to cope with tenure processes that oftentimes collided with our social identities, experiences, and cultural lives.

### **Peer colleague groups**

Finally, our narratives discussed the importance of collaborating with other faculty. Perhaps as no surprise, the peer colleague group was a distinguishing factor of our first-year, tenure-track faculty experiences. This is different from the tangible support of travel funds, new faculty research grants, and course releases, but is an informal, person-to-person effort that helped mold our first year. This was present both within our new institutions and from support at other campuses. The meanings from these interactions echo what others describe as the role of valuable informal connections with other faculty in the lives of faculty of color (Green & King, 2001; Núñez & Murakami-Ramalho, 2012).

We all referenced the influence of our external peer groups across the country that consisted of networks forged through participation in professional associations, graduate program alumni, and other faculty colleagues (including faculty of color). In many cases, these external networks were maintained primarily through social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter). During data collection and analysis, reflecting on our textual artifacts illuminated the maintenance of our external peer colleague groups. In several cases, social media posts, primarily via Facebook, sparked conversations from our external networks that served as sources of encouragement, affirmation, and validation. We described a defining moment where one of us had the opportunity to design a course that included critical perspectives and readings from scholars of color, an effort that was in direct response to a lack we observed from our graduate coursework. The Facebook post about this courses elicited multiple responses of validation from our external peer colleague group:

I've come to the blank pages of my future syllabi both overwhelmed and enthralled to be able to shape the learning experience of those in my classroom in ways I had always hoped would have been done for me, challenging those professors whose good-natured efforts to create an "inclusive" curriculum—or a reading list that included at least one non-White author—fell short of providing me the tools or validation I needed to thrive. I'm grateful for their mentorship and the growth I experienced because of them, however I embrace the opportunity to do it differently. Not by sprinkling authors throughout the syllabus, but by reshaping the topics and approaches to understanding them. Maybe I'll fall short, but maybe, just maybe, it'll be something great. Probably a combination of both.

This Facebook post included deep reflection at the intersections of personal and professional experiences, and the community provided by social media allowed for engagement and support with colleagues across the country.

We also used Facebook to recall some key lessons during the first year regarding teaching and service. It is not uncommon to be tapped to partake in service activities, especially as faculty of color (see Baez, 1999, 2000; Stanley, 2006). In these examples, social media was used to describe being more selective in service commitments and intentional with course designs, prompting several senior faculty in our external peer colleague networks to offer commentary and teaching lessons they had learned over time.

Fostering these external peer colleague networks allowed for a larger sense of community external to our respective institutions and promoted success within the academy. In one way, this reflects what Niehaus and O'Meara (2015) describe regarding the role of professional networks and Núñez and Murakami-Ramalho (2012) discussion of faculty of color circles. The hybrid of these two approaches reflects similar notions embedded in Espino and colleagues' (2010) narratives of connections to one

another and to other work that integrates professional and personal networks. Of note, we also serve as members of each other's external peer colleague group as illustrated via retweeting each other's posts (Twitter), and responding to Facebook threads offering support to one another. As a result, we validate those faculty experiences from other institutions.

## **Discussion and implications for faculty work**

By drawing from personal narratives regarding our experiences as first-year faculty members, this work adds to the literature surrounding new faculty experiences and the supports needed for a successful transition and integration into academe. The implications of our study relate to doctoral-level faculty, academic deans and department chairs, and social media usage among faculty.

### ***Doctoral faculty***

A main contribution of our work identifies that the socialization literature surrounding graduate education is not nuanced enough. As previously highlighted, the focus on socialization tends to begin and end with doctoral students and what they intentionally experience or causally observe. However, there is room to further discuss the specifics about how those values and norms are transmitted and how those values and norms are experienced when the socialized agent is inserted into a new community, which may have its own sets of cultural expectations. Tierney's (1997) work helps to capture the interchange of values when faculty enter a new institution, and our work adds to that understanding by capturing the personal experience of that cultural interchange, particularly as disempowered agents within the academy.

Further, these graduate and new faculty narratives are complicated by the experiences of being people of color navigating academic spaces. As cited previously, research on experiences of faculty of color highlight the graduate experience, unwelcoming college environments, racial microaggressions from students, and the marginalization of scholarship by faculty of color. Yet, the literature fails to address the emergence and impact of these tensions during the transition into an academic space as a new faculty member. In practice, faculty—ourselves included—need to be more intentional in creating opportunities to discuss the demands of tenure-track faculty work with doctoral students and better prepare them to navigate these varying systems of values.

### ***Academic deans and department chairs***

Our narratives also provide academic deans and department chairs with insight into how new faculty of color experience institutional culture, spaces, and norms. It is notable that our findings demonstrate how informal support had a more prominent impact than formal structures (e.g., assigned faculty members, orientations). This speaks to a need to address campus climate issues on college campuses, focusing attention on the way the climate directly and implicitly affects faculty experiences during the first year, potentially setting the tone for how the campus and the academy overall will continue to be experienced far beyond year one. As previously explained, the broader political, social, and cultural context of universities and departments shape the academic and personal lives of first-year faculty of color. Therefore, deans and chairs may find this as an entry point to assess what new faculty hires attribute to their success and whether their new environment can accommodate that. Thus, their hopes on hiring doctoral students directly into tenure-track positions based on signs of future promise as scholars can be matched with efforts to further enhance first-year faculty experiences. Acknowledging the barriers faculty of color face, our narratives demonstrate the importance of year-long support during the first year as part of the ongoing acclimation process.

### ***Social media and new faculty***

Finally, our introduction of the role of social media and the interweaving of scholarly validation by way of engagement occurring within social media adds to what is already known about support for new faculty.

Given the fixture social networking has become in the way individuals connect with one another, more work is needed to better understand how this form of communication influences socialization processes and provides support throughout doctoral and faculty experiences. Connecting to the importance of maintaining connection with personal and professional networks (Niehaus & O'Meara, 2015; Núñez & Murakami-Ramalho, 2012), these findings help inform the support efforts implemented by institutions for their new hires, encouraging not just the value of formal practices but also a cultural shift that supports informal practices of collegiality and cultural validation.

Although narrative inquiry offers rich opportunities to contribute to our collective understandings on faculty life, it is not without its limitations. Given the aims of this particular inquiry and our methodological approach, there were moments where we expressed great vulnerability, which prompted us to restrict our analysis and center certain experiences as we did not wish to portray our institutions in a negative manner. Our positions as pre-tenured faculty members in the academy shaped our choices and constraints during the research process. Notwithstanding these limitations, this study offers rich insights into understanding the extent to which a community of scholars of color intentionally supported one another both in their doctoral program and respective faculty appointments.

## Conclusion

We offer insight into our lives and provide a springboard through which future conversations about first-year faculty can happen at the individual, institutional, and professional levels. Considering the scant literature on first-year faculty experiences in the academy, we advocate for more scholarship foregrounding the experiences and realities of first-year faculty of color as well as first-year faculty more broadly. Doing so aids institutional leaders not only in understanding the lived realities of the new faculty experience, but also in designing initiatives, such as orientation and mentoring programs, to help first-year faculty make meaning of their doctoral experience within their respective new faculty environments. Acknowledging the value orientation newly-minted doctorates bring with them is important; supporting them through balance as they integrate into the new institutional environment—as opposed to forcing misaligned values and expectations—may better prevent burnout, fatigue, and attrition. This is particularly true given huge disproportions between the presence of people of color among senior faculty and administrators and those entering the professoriate. Our stories about this process offer perspectives pertaining to the first-year, tenure-track faculty experience that are markedly absent from the literature, and they highlight the need to consider the joint venture of carefully grooming scholars into faculty while recognizing that each individual brings his or her own preferences, aspirations, desires, and motivations.

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