Chapter 5
Navigating the STEM Professoriate as a Black Woman: Surviving but at What Cost?

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ABSTRACT
The absence of faculty diversity continues to plague American colleges and universities, with about 6% of associate and 4% of full professors identifying as Black or African American, based on a 2016 survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics. This chapter will reflect on the personal experiences of a Black woman in STEM, examining whether diversity efforts have affected the number of Black and African American women in the STEM professoriate. It includes current efforts regarding diversity and inclusion, as well as recommendations of ways that institutions can help to foster a sense of belonging.

INTRODUCTION
The lack of diversity in institutions of higher education is well documented, yet despite calls to increase faculty diversity in the academy, the percentage of Black faculty has remained essentially constant. The number of articles regarding the experiences of students, staff, and faculty from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, point to the continued issues regarding institutional climate. This chapter discusses definitions of diversity and institutional reporting of diversity gains. The account

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uses an autoethnographic approach and includes the reflections of a Black woman in STEM with experience working at both a historical Black university (HBCU) and a liberal arts intensive predominantly White institution (PWI); examining whether diversity efforts have affected the number of female Black and African-American women in the STEM professoriate. The chapter ends with current efforts regarding diversity and inclusion, as well as recommendations of ways that institutions can help to foster a sense of belonging.

BACKGROUND

Definition of Diversity and How Institutions Define Diversity Gains

Diversity may be described in various ways. The D5 coalition, one of many groups committed to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion, defines diversity as a “demographic mix of a specific collection of people” focusing particularly on racial and ethnic groups, LGBT, persons with disabilities, and women ("What is DEI?, " n.d.). Their definition “encompasses what diversity looks like in the 21st century” and focuses on groups that have remained underrepresented and “marginalized in the broader society.” They define equity as “impartiality and fairness within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources by institutions or systems.” Stating that “this requires an understanding of the underlying or root causes of outcome disparities within our society.” Most institutional efforts focus on structural diversity - which refers to the “numerical representation of various racial/ethnic groups” (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen & Allen, 1998).

With various campus climate surveys and assessments, how do institutions decide which programs to develop or what changes to make to increase the recruitment and retention of minority faculty? With such few minority faculty, and the ability to be easily identified, how willing are minority faculty to give honest input? How reliable are the results obtained from such surveys? Vaccaro (2010) showed how positive campus climate surveys can hide serious issues related to institutional sexism and racism. A recent article on the results of a campus climate survey conducted at the University of Iowa and the University of Maryland - College Park stated that minority faculty at both institutions “expressed lower levels of satisfaction compared to their majority counterparts and cited both overt and subtle forms of bias” (“Campus Climate Survey Findings Break Along Color Line,” 2019).

The American Council on Education’s Annual Status Report of Minorities in Higher Education Fall 2016 gives the percentage of Black full, associate, and assistant professors as 3.8%, 5.8%, and 6.3%, respectively (Snyder, de Brey, &
Transformative Learning: Positive Identity Through Prison-Based Higher Education in England and Wales
www.igi-global.com/article/transformative-learning/216373?camid=4v1a

African-Born Female Academics in the U.S. : Experiences of Inclusion, Exclusion, and Access - Building Careers on Marginalized Identities
www.igi-global.com/article/african-born-female-academics-in-the-us/169965?camid=4v1a