Book Review

Tedious Journeys: Autoethnography by Women of Color in Academe
Edited by Cynthia Cole Robinson and Pauline Clardy
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In the book, *Tedious Journeys: Authoethnography by Women of Color in Academe*, the appropriateness of the adjective *tedious* resonates across the chapters. Regardless of the positions and level of commitment from which these authors' pursue success in academia, their unfolding journeys have been laced with knots. They describe circumstances that strain what could, for them, be more fluid progressions across their roles and statuses in academia. This book documents the myriad ways in which these women are stymied in their advancement due to overt and covert exchanges of power among students and their parents, faculty, staff, and also administrators whose positions of privilege can extend into community and professional realms.

At the same time that these women in academe present change (i.e., inclusion), they can also present a threat of change. Those who perceive themselves as entitled actors or at least tokens in the production of knowledge may sense their viability is at risk when the institution begins to reflect the cultural, linguistic, and epistemological plurality of the global population. However, presence and possibility do not always represent change in institutional or personal values. For instance, in the book, Chavez describes her work as a dean of students and the inability of universities to honor the ways in which she interprets her professional duties and infuses them with cultural knowledge. Additionally, Randolph's account of navigating student evaluations from courses on diversity to research methods, suggests that work (in) academia requires *some* disentanglement of knots—especially those that result from the permanence of racism and gender inequities. Further, in an

account by Brown concerning a student complaint, a supervisor asked her: What could you have done differently? Instead the administrator might have asked what she encountered and how she responded. As the former she was placed on the defensive and the communication was shrouded by a kind of professionalism (which feigns race and gender neutrality) and proceeded from the perspective that her power was unchallenged. Instead, as she reveals, her power was challenged by multiple actors operating collaboratively from different positions of privilege. Although the discourse directed by the supervisor drew a particular response, Brown shares with the audience her differently filtered response. Regardless of the social and professional positions in academe, one can learn from both communications about which questions and responses are deemed "appropriate" and how the assumptions which undergird them help to sustain conditions that are disproportionately and repeatedly harmful to some groups.

Many of these women scholars are taxed professionally and emotionally so as to induce stress which can create health problems or exacerbate preexisting conditions that can negatively impact performance. Although each scholar appears to have overcome many setbacks, which is to be applauded, they provoke us to ask whether we too often suffer in silence. The individual lens of the autoethnographic method coupled with the research in which these women authors have grounded these accounts speaks to need for institutional change. In fact, the editors and authors echo a desire to use this book to inform aspiring scholars and other institutional representatives seeking a change in an academic culture fraught with struggles. The chapters in this book reflect an academic culture that marginalizes these women in a way that is more tedious than not, or necessary. Keeping in mind their already tenuous circumstances in academia we are encouraged by this collection of chapters to ask the following questions: What are the possibilities for dialogue about racism and sexism in the academy? Where is the moral outrage over the institutional racism and sexism experienced by these women? What institutional mechanisms are in place to assure that students, faculty and administrators demonstrate ethical performance in evaluation processes for hiring, retention, tenure and promotion? What would equity look like for all scholars?

That this collection shares little of scholars' strategies for tackling tedious journeys through the use of institutional mechanisms (i.e., generating institutional responses to student resistance enacted through formal complaints or student evaluations), points to the need for better understanding, policy, and advocacy that broaches subjects like differential treatment related to prejudice, pay, and paradigms. What this collection tells us from the multiple institutions

represented and positions these authors hold in them, is that institutional structures and cultures of universities and colleges must support multiple forms of well-being as part of their investment in mutually beneficial relationships with, but not limited to, women scholars whether Black or White. The authors present some strategies, or at best suggest varying forms of institutional support for retaining women who are often underrepresented on campus. Their ideas may appear commonsensical, however the authors' stories articulate what they perceive as lack of concern or acknowledgment shown by institutional decision-makers of basic support strategies for faculty in general. Four recommendations for equitable change in institutions of higher education are offered by authors contributing to *Tedious Journeys*. They urge institutions to: (a) protect junior faculty from burdensome committee work and other tasks that other faculty often decline, (b) support new faculty in focusing on overall career development as well as on institution-specific responsibilities, (c) establish and support formal mentoring programs, and (d) acknowledge through equitable practices the unique experiences that underrepresented women contribute to the institutions' resources.

Despite the tedium experienced during the journey, these enduring women articulate professional integrity by using a variety of persistence strategies, from familial to professional relationships expressed during email exchanges or debriefing sessions. When we considered the stories describing the exertion that individual resiliency requires in order to unravel the tedious knots, we realized that race and gender blind policies that ignore these lived experiences still leave inequities unchallenged. We honor the strength and courage these women muster to endure moments of challenge. Their narratives provide insight into problematic higher education's institutional practices. We conclude that the challenges and opportunities underrepresented women scholars face in academe can be utilized as a starting point for institutional change in the promotion of more equitable and inclusive practices.