(Re)Defining departure: Exploring Black professors’ experiences with and responses to racism and racial climate

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(Re)Defining Departure: Exploring Black Professors’ Experiences with and Responses to Racism and Racial Climate

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A growing body of research demonstrates that many college environments present challenges for black professors, particularly as they face institutional and personal racism. While scholars have linked these experiences to their attrition, this qualitative study explores black professors’ larger range of responses to difficult professional environments. Twenty-eight black professors employed at two large public research universities participated in this study. Findings indicate that in addition to institutional departure, black faculty respond to personal and institutional racism through a form of psychological departure and acts of critical agency, specifically forming external networks, aiming to disprove stereotypes and engaging in service activities. Thus, institutions must be mindful of the full range of responses to the racism that black professors face, not assuming the climate is hospitable simply because faculty are not leaving the institution. Rather, campuses must improve their campus environments through ongoing strategic initiatives focused on cultural change.

While the number of black professors at American colleges and universities has increased steadily in the past 40 years (Ryu 2008), many of these educators continue to face challenging environments on college and university campuses.
Media headlines in recent years highlight black professors’ experiences with racism and stereotyping, documenting the placement of hangman’s nooses on office doors (Smallwood 2007) and black professors being mistaken for thieves (Goodnough 2009). Faculty experiences with discrimination and racism have also been documented in a growing scholarly literature. Several researchers have described the experiences that professors of color continue to have with scholars who doubt their abilities (e.g., Banks 1984; Johnsrud and Sadao 1998), students who question their authority and knowledge in the classroom (e.g., Stanley 2006), and colleagues who make racist jokes or comments based on social stereotypes (e.g., Johnsrud and DesJarlais 1994; McKay 1997; Turner and Myers 2000).

While troubling in isolation, experiences with racism and discrimination can be indicators of larger issues that speak to the nature of the institutional context, or climate, within which professors work. An institution’s campus racial climate captures the attitudes, perceptions, and expectations within an institutional community around issues of race, ethnicity, and diversity (Hurtado et al. 1998). While more often used to frame the experiences of students, the racial climate can also have a distinct influence on faculty members’ experiences in and perceptions of the institution, potentially affecting their productivity, engagement, and satisfaction (Jayakumar et al. 2009; Ponjuan 2005; Turner and Myers 2000; Turner et al. 2008). Thus, an improved understanding of how the campus racial climate, as represented by perceptions and experiences with racism, affects black faculty is an important component of recruiting, retaining, and supporting black faculty members throughout their careers.

Several scholars note that black faculty must deal with challenging climates at predominantly white institutions. Encounters with racism can be frustrating and hurtful, deterring black scholars from entering academia and leading to early departure from an institution or, more significantly, from academe (Exum et al. 1984; Hendricks and Caplow 1998; Jayakumar et al. 2009; Johnsrud...
and Sado 1998; Ponjuan 2005; Trower and Chait 2002; Turner and Myers 2000). This literature has been highly valuable in identifying the challenges that black professors face and suggesting potential reasons for their under-representation in higher education.

Although higher education scholars have considered the influence of campus climate generally, or racism specifically, on intention to leave and actual institutional departure, we have less of an understanding of the other ways that black professors respond to hostile climates. Organizational theorists have long contested institutional departure as the lone response to dissatisfaction with one’s work environment. Hulin (1991) suggests that employees engage in a sequence of behavioral and cognitive responses in response to dissatisfaction or particular job components. This framework defines employee withdrawal as encompassing a range behaviors, including but not limited to physical departure from the organization. In addition to leaving the organization when dissatisfied or perceiving a lack of fit, Argyris (1991) suggests that employees react to these situations with absenteeism, psychological withdrawal, and lack of involvement. March and Simon (1993) offered a simplified list of options for employees facing challenging environments: accept the organization (and stay), reject the organization (and leave), or bargain for different conditions. Finally, Hirschman (1970) offers a triad of behavioral responses to organizational failure. While he notes that exit, or institutional departure, is indeed an option, employees and customers may also demonstrate voice, clearly articulating their dissatisfaction and making efforts to change the organization. They may also demonstrate loyalty, maintaining their affiliation with the organization, waiting for things to change. Thus, simply examining patterns of institutional departure as an indicator of hostile campus climate may lead to false assumptions about black professors’ level of comfort and satisfaction.

This study is motivated by a lack of understanding of how encounters with racism and stereotyping shape the ways in which black faculty navigate sometimes chilly environments and engage in their day-to-day work. We specifically explore the behaviors black faculty members exhibit when they encounter racism, contributing to scholarly knowledge about how they not only perceive and experience but also respond to the climates created within their institutions. Findings suggest that challenging climates do, in many ways, lead to black faculty departure; however, this departure does not always manifest itself in a professor’s decision to physically leave a campus. Rather, departure can be both behavioral and psychological, ultimately having the potential to affect a professor’s well being in a variety of ways. Our effort to increase understanding of how black professors’ experiences translate into coping strategies contributes to efforts to improve the retention rates, outcomes, and satisfaction of black faculty. As such, we close this article with recommendations for policy, research, and practice based on the findings.
Theoretical Framework

Critical race theory (CRT) serves as the conceptual guide for this study. We use this theoretical tool as a framework for understanding the experiences of black faculty related to race and racism. Originally developed within legal studies, CRT has been used increasingly in educational research to explore the individual and systemic inequities that persist between white people and people of color (Delgado and Stefancic 2001; Solórzano 1998). Several scholars have outlined the core constructs of CRT and their application to education research (e.g., Ladson-Billings 1998; Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995; Solórzano 1998; Tate 1997), suggesting five core propositions. First, CRT-based studies assume that race is central in the experiences of people of color and that racism explains a great deal of the inequity we observe, particularly in education. Second, CRT challenges dominant ideologies that suggest that claims of color blindness, equal opportunity, and meritocracy are fair and just. Rather, these ideas are seen as ways to maintain the status quo and perpetuate unequal distribution of educational opportunities and resources. These topics are not explored as purely academic pursuits; rather, the third theme of CRT affirms a commitment to social justice and the abolition of racism. Fourth, CRT validates and legitimizes experiential knowledge, basing conclusions on stories, narratives, and life histories documented from people of color. Finally, CRT insists that we be aware of historical and contextual forces, using interdisciplinary methods to facilitate a deeper understanding of the effect of race and racism on society, or more specifically in this case, on educational contexts and academic careers.

Critical race theory guides this research in several ways. First, race is considered central to the experiences of black faculty. Relative to the history of American higher education, the population of postsecondary faculty members has only recently begun to diversify. It is important to consider the role of race, including encounters with white privilege, in the historical and present experiences of black faculty in higher education. Thus, while we acknowledge that participants have varying levels of identification with their black identity and may perceive their race as having little to no influence on their daily lives, we inquire how race has shaped their campus experiences rather than whether their race has played a role. Second, this study validates and relies on the experiential knowledge of black faculty members. Consistent with its emphasis on voice and storytelling, this study draws on the narratives of black professors employed at predominantly white research universities to illuminate their experiences with racism. Furthermore, CRT directs us to view these encounters as commonplace rather than exceptions to the rule, emphasizing the centrality and frequency with which people of color encounter racism on predominantly white college campuses.
Literature Review

Much of the literature supports the proposition that racism plays a substantial role in the work lives of faculty of color. Johnsrud and DesJarlais (1994) found that the discrimination minority faculty experience falls into two categories: structural racism and personal racism. Structural racism, also called institutional racism, refers to a system of institutional structures that lead to the disparities we observe between black faculty and their colleagues. In other words, structural racism attends to the racism inherent in institutional processes and policies rather than individual actors or behaviors. Personal racism addresses direct experiences with racism and discrimination at the individual level.

The literature suggests that structural racism manifests itself in several ways, including the persistent underrepresentation of black professors in academe. Despite representing 14 percent of the American population and 12 percent of all undergraduates, only 6 percent of all professors were African American in 2005 (Ryu 2008). These numbers become even smaller when examined by institutional type, revealing the specific underrepresentation of black faculty at research universities. While black professors constitute over 8 percent of faculty at public master’s colleges and approximately 7 percent of faculty at two-year colleges, they comprised 4.3 percent of full-time faculty at public doctoral institutions and 4.7 percent at private doctoral institutions in 2003 (Cataldi et al. 2005).

The lack of black faculty representation on predominantly white campuses often leaves black faculty vulnerable to requests to participate in services related to enhancing campus diversity. For example, black professors are more likely to be involved in committee work, especially concerning minority issues, than their colleagues (Allen et al. 2000; Blackwell 1988; Padilla 1994; Tierney and Bensimon 1996). There are also high expectations for African American faculty to be engaged with students, and they are often sought for advising, support, and guidance on issues related to students’ personal and professional development (Plata 1996; Tierney and Bensimon 1996; Williams and Williams 2006).

Structural racism also manifests in how the work of black academics is judged, particularly when conducting research on underserved communities (Blackwell 1988; Hendricks and Caplow 1998; Johnsrud and Sadao 1998; Menges and Exum 1983; Turner and Myers 2000). While not all black professors want to study issues directly related to their racial/ethnic community, those who do contend that community-focused research is judged by the standards of a pervasive white, Western orientation, and their work is not valued (Johnsrud and Sadao 1998; Menges and Exum 1983; Stanley 2006; Turner and Myers 2000). Institutional policies and decision makers often privilege certain forms of research over others, viewing work that does not fit
within their notions of “rigorous scholarship” as unworthy of serious consideration and its authors undeserving of promotion. In many cases, this may leave African American professors with a tough choice: Should they do research acceptable in their field (especially to those making tenure and promotion decisions) or should they work in areas that reflect their own experiences and interests in communities of color (Johnsrud and Sadao 1998)?

The second form of racism addressed by Johnsrud and Sadao (1998) is personal racism. Faculty of color frequently report that they are stereotyped, harassed, and “tokenized” (e.g., Banks 1984; Johnsrud and DesJarlais 1994; Johnsrud and Sadao 1998; McKay 1997; Menges and Exum 1983; Stanley 2006). While there are notable exceptions, today’s racism within academic contexts tends to occur in less obvious and hostile forms. Many are subjected to a more subtle form of racism referred to as “microaggressions.” Microaggressions are defined as “stunning, automatic acts of disregard that stem from unconscious attitudes of white superiority and constitute a verification of black inferiority” (Davis 1989, 1576), often manifested in subtle slights or questions about one’s abilities (Solórzano et al. 2000, 2002). For example, when explaining her experiences and those of peers, McKay (1997) notes how both white men and white women ignore the presence of African American faculty in informal situations or suggest that black faculty would be happier at a historically black college. Furthermore, African American faculty often face microaggressions in the form of white peers’ assumptions that they were hired solely for affirmative action purposes and are less qualified scholars (Banks 1984; Stanley 2006). Observing these attitudes, some scholars have noted that black faculty members burden themselves with the responsibility of disproving negative stereotypes by being positive representatives for their race, “proving” to peers that they are deserving of their appointments and promotions (Banks 1984; Johnsrud and Sadao 1998; Menges and Exum 1983; Smith and Witt 1990; Stanley 2006).

A growing literature has clearly articulated the struggles generally faced by faculty of color employed at predominantly white universities, highlighting their experiences with both structural and personal racism. This study uses CRT as a framework and focuses specifically on the lived experiences of black faculty by exploring their experiences with racism and perceptions of the campus racial climate, exploring how professors both experience and respond to their environments. In addition to replicating previous work that addresses how black faculty perceive the environments in which they work, this study adds to the extant literature in several ways. First, while researchers have applied CRT to their efforts to understand the experiences of students of color (e.g., Solórzano et al. 2000, 2002), its application to the experiences of faculty of color generally, and black faculty specifically, is underdeveloped. One exception is Johnson-Bailey and Cervero’s (2008) comparative account of their
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race- and gender-based experiences as academics. Second, the study highlights the multiple ways in which black professors respond to racism. Although some professors do indeed leave their campuses when facing challenging environments, we suggest that faculty members respond and resist alternative ways. Finally, this study also considers the sources black faculty members seek for support when facing hostile campus climates, fostering their efforts to persist and succeed in academia.

Method

This study was conducted as an interpretive multicase study. According to Merriam (1998), an interpretive case study allows researchers to go beyond describing phenomena, encouraging the collection and coding of data in ways that support, challenge, or develop theory about events, experiences, and outcomes. Multicase studies are designed to include data collection and analysis of more than one case (i.e., more than one professor), allowing for comparison across faculty members and enhanced external validity of findings (Bogdan and Biklen 1998; Merriam 1998). These strategies are appropriate for this study; they create opportunities to triangulate quantitative findings and make comparisons among participants. Thus, in this case, the focus is on the individuals participating in this study, and comparisons are made between participants rather than focusing on differences between institutional contexts and their influence on participants. Using CRT as a guiding framework, this study addresses two core questions: (1) How do black professors describe their perceptions of and experiences with race and racism on their respective campuses? (2) How do these individuals respond to the more challenging climates they may encounter, and from where or whom do they draw support to persist despite hostile climates?

The Study

Institutional sites.—In-depth interviews were conducted with 28 black professors employed at two public research universities of similar size and institutional mission, Oceanside University and Column University (pseudonyms). Both institutions are categorized as “research universities—very high research activity” within the Carnegie Classification system (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching 2008). Detailed demographic information on both institutions can be found in table 1.

Oceanside University is a public institution that was founded in the early 1900s and is located in an urban community in the western United States.
It serves over 37,000 students; approximately two-thirds of the students are undergraduates. In 2005, approximately 2,500 individuals were employed as faculty members at Oceanside University. The majority of professors are white, making up 66.4 percent of all faculty on campus. Almost a third of the faculty members at Oceanside are from minority groups. Column University is located on the East Coast in the mid-Atlantic region and is the flagship institution in its state’s higher education system. Comparable in size to Oceanside, Column enrolls approximately 35,000 students; 25,000 are undergraduates. Almost 2,000 faculty were employed at Column in the 2005 academic year. While having a smaller population of minority faculty compared to Oceanside, Column employs a larger number of African American professors.

These two institutions were chosen based on their similarities and efforts to determine whether black faculty experiences are similar across two contexts in different locations. However, there are also interesting differences between the campuses, which make the contexts unique and interesting locations for understanding the similarities and differences between faculty experiences. Column University was a segregated institution through the 1960s but through concerted, institutional efforts is now one of the most diverse institutions in the country, with a particularly large population of black students. Oceanside University, however, was well known for its accessibility to African American students in the past; however, in the past decade Oceanside has seen steep declines in the number of underrepresented students present in its student body. At the time of data collection, the institution had received national attention for low black student enrollments.
Sample.—Within the context of this study, “black” was defined as any individual of African descent, including individuals born in the United States, as well as immigrants from Africa or the Caribbean. The terms “African American” and “black” are used interchangeably; however, both terms refer to this comprehensive definition, inclusive of those who are and are not U.S. citizens. All professors participating in this study were part of the African diaspora and/or were of African descent.

Based on an interest in having sufficient sample representation by gender, rank, and discipline, interview participants were selected and recruited using purposeful rather than random sampling (Bogdan and Biklen 1998). Key administrators at Column and Oceanside universities assisted with participant identification and recruitment. At Oceanside, black professors were identified by their membership in the institutional organization for black professors and staff. Invitations to participate in the study were distributed through the organization’s listserv by its president, with interested faculty directed to reply to the principal investigator. Black professors were also identified through their public faculty Web sites and contacted directly. At Column University, an administrator working on faculty retention endorsed the study and provided a list of black faculty employed at the institution. At Column, professors were e-mailed directly and invited to participate in the study. Snowball sampling (Bogdan and Biklen 1998) was also used to recruit participants. Participants were asked to recommend other black faculty who could add additional insights through their involvement in the project. Nominated faculty were contacted by their recommenders and asked to directly contact the principal investigator if interested in participating.

Seventeen Oceanside professors (10 males, 7 females) and 11 Column professors (6 males, 5 females) agreed to participate in this study. Twenty-six were full-time professors, and 25 were tenure-line at the time of their interview. Participants had been professors for an average of 16 years. Five participants were assistant professors, 11 were associate professors, and 12 were full professors at the time of the interview. Faculty were from a diverse group of departments and programs, with the largest proportion teaching in the social sciences (n = 12) followed by professional programs (n = 5). Four professors were in math or engineering, two taught in the life sciences, one in the arts, and one identified as being in an interdisciplinary program. Please see table 2 for more detailed information about each participant.

Procedures.—Each participant engaged in a one-on-one semistructured interview (Bogdan and Biklen 1998) describing his or her path to the professoriate, experiences on campus, perceptions of professional expectations and obligations, and relationships with students. To ensure confidentiality, all participants were assigned pseudonyms.

Prior to each interview, participants completed a brief demographic ques-
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tionnaire, which took approximately two to three minutes to complete. The interviews took approximately 60 to 90 minutes to complete. All participants were asked for permission to audio record interviews for verbatim transcription. Reflective memos were also written within 24 hours of each interview. These memos assisted in the process of making sense of the interviews and potential findings, capturing the lead researcher’s immediate thoughts and feelings on the discussion, how a given professor’s responses fit into the responses of others, and emerging connections between themes. The research team collectively also engaged in memo writing throughout the analysis and writing process in an effort to clarify thinking around emerging themes and how various aspects of professors’ narratives were related to one another.

**Measures and analyses.**—Demographic data collected on presurvey questionnaires were entered into SPSS and analyzed using basic statistical descriptive techniques. Professors’ narratives collected via interviews serve as the key source of data. The interview protocol was developed based on a review of the literature on the experiences of African American faculty. Of particular relevance to this study, participants were asked questions about their experiences as professors at their home institution; past experiences as a mentor and prote´ge´; the types and quality of relationships they have with the general student body, students of color, and African American students; and their thoughts on the influence of these relationships on their personal and professional lives and development.

Upon completion of the transcription, professors’ narratives were organized through a systematic coding process, which provides a structure for comparison and understanding of the data (Maxwell 2005). Coding procedures were consistent with the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss 1967) developed using both inductive and deductive processes. An initial list of codes was composed based on the literature on the experiences of black faculty and principles of CRT. The data were then read carefully, and the initial list of codes was amended to include the full range of experiences described by participants. Consistent with methods outlined by Bogdan and Biklen (1998) and Merriam (1998), data were then reread, coded, and organized using ATLAS ti software based on emerging themes. Themes with similar underlying principles were clustered together, reflecting core patterns of black professors’ responses to racism.

**Validating findings.**—After data were analyzed and an initial written report of findings was completed, a member-checking strategy was used to validate findings (Maxwell 2005). All participants were e-mailed a summary of emergent findings and solicited for feedback. All participants were invited to discuss these findings further, and in-person or phone appointments were scheduled with all interested participants. Appointments were optional, and many study participants opted to forgo this meeting. Furthermore, all respondents had
the right to review their transcripts and the comments that appeared in the text of the manuscript and were able to edit, omit sections of, or prohibit use of their transcript or interview recording.

**Limitations**

While this study certainly has a great deal to contribute to our understanding of how black faculty experience and resist the racism they face at predominantly white institutions, the limitations of this work must be addressed. As a qualitative project based on the narratives of professors employed at two research institutions, the findings cannot be viewed as indicative of the experiences of all black faculty at all college campuses. Generalizability is beyond the scope of this project and inconsistent with the principles of CRT, which focuses on context-bound understandings of lived experiences. Regardless, it is important to remind readers that this study illuminates the experiences of a specific group of scholars, and more work must be done to confirm the consistency of these findings across environments. We also note that while it is important to acknowledge intersectionality (Collins 1998), or the ways in which individual experiences can vary based on one's racial and gender identity, this topic is not addressed in this study. The ways in which the experiences and responses of black faculty vary based on their gender certainly should be explored in future research.

There are also limitations associated with our method of sampling. Participants were free to choose whether they wanted to engage in this study, and it is possible that those who perceived their black identity as more salient or had who stronger beliefs about the quality of the climate at their institution (good or bad) were more likely to volunteer. Thus, we may have a somewhat skewed view of climate and its influence. Furthermore, most participants in this study were tenured faculty at the time of the interviews. This achievement represents their ability to successfully navigate their environments and persist despite the challenges they face. The voices of those who faced similar challenges but did not fare as well do not have their voices represented in this work and should be the focus of future study.

**Findings**

Despite the differences in Column and Oceanside universities in terms of their respective locations and trends in their minority student communities, the experiences of black faculty are strikingly similar across campuses. When asked if they believed their racial or ethnic backgrounds influenced their experiences...
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on campus, most participants at both Oceanside and Column replied strongly in the affirmative. Their responses included phrases like: “Oh, yeah. Definitely,” “Absolutely,” “No question,” and “In a huge way.” Professors describe working in environments where they perceived several instances of personal and institutional racism, most often noting their thoughts on how their race shapes the ways in which they are seen and engaged by their colleagues, their sense of belonging in the campus community, and experiences in the tenure and promotion process.

In addition to documenting professors’ narratives and experiences with racism, we outline the behavioral responses to more hostile campus climates. For a small number of participants, racism led to a physical departure, leaving their institution and seeking employment elsewhere. However, participants’ narratives also suggest that behavioral responses can be more complex than physically removing oneself from the negative environment. The formation and focus on external networks, efforts to disprove stereotypes, and engagement in service are themes emerging from participants’ accounts. These themes suggest that, for most participants, rather than just a physical separation and relocation to another institution, individuals respond to racism with forms of psychological departure and critical agency.

Personal Racism

Overall, participants’ accounts of personal racism suggest that they believe some of their colleagues see them first as black and second as professors. Paula recalls her experiences as she made the transition from working in the field to taking on a full-time faculty position at Oceanside. There were multiple departments within which she felt she could fit but wanted to make a choice that made sense for her career and potential for professional success in the long term. Paula recounts that during this process “I had one white guy say to me, ‘Well, you’ll do fine anyway, you don’t really have to work that hard because you’re a black woman. It’s handed to you.’” Thus, Paula’s colleague assumed that her race was going to be the deciding factor in her tenure and promotion case rather than her ability as a scholar. This questioning of her ability to obtain tenure without having to rely on her identity as a black woman is an example of what scholars have identified as microaggression (Davis 1989; Solórzano 1998; Solórzano et al. 2000, 2002). Microaggressions are automatic and often unconscious behaviors that reveal assumptions of white superiority and black inferiority, including the behavior of Paula’s colleague, who subtly called into question Paula’s willingness to work hard and her quality as a scholar.

In other cases, encounters with personal racism and microaggressions are
less related to participants’ professional roles; in fact, they seem to occur in spite of them. Participants indicate a pattern of being perceived as people of color first and academics or peers second. Karla from Column University shares that a colleague once questioned her about her hair, which was in braids, suggesting that her hairstyle was inappropriate and should not be worn in that way for a long period of time. Matt speaks of an encounter with another faculty member who assumed that Matt was a worker in facilities rather than a professor: “I remember walking into a classroom to meet a visiting scholar who was giving a talk, and when I walked in, someone who represented the group came up to me and asked me if I was there to move the furniture.” Thus, even though Matt was acting in the capacity of an Oceanside faculty member welcoming a visiting scholar, he was still assumed to be part of the facilities staff rather than a faculty member. While this experience caught him off guard in the moment, he describes himself as unsurprised by this experience. He expresses a high level of awareness of his race and gender and how that shapes how he is perceived. He acknowledges, and to some extent accepts, that he will be treated differently in the academy, stating “I don’t pretend to be like every other professor.” Thus, in his eyes, Matt’s experience as a faculty member is distinctive because he is black.

Reginald, also an Oceanside professor, describes racialized comments made to him during faculty meetings, which made the environment more challenging to live and work in. He explains that his colleagues are somewhat resentful of him and his work, not necessarily agreeing that his work, which engages issues of race within his field, is valid scholarship and that he is doing work where “it is not quite clear whether it should matter or not.” Reginald perceives the behaviors of his colleagues as being based in racism and translating to his interpersonal interactions with colleagues. He notes: “I have had colleagues say things like . . . ‘someone has got to pick the cotton around here.’ It’s a very difficult and trying environment to be involved in.”

Institutional Racism

Study participants also describe the ways in which institutional structures and processes challenge them as professors. Some describe institutional racism as the active resistance or passive failure to increase the number of faculty of color on their campuses. Participants were aware of the low numbers of faculty of color at department, academic college, and institutional levels, often citing the number of black faculty or tenured faculty of color on their respective campuses. Senior faculty members were also aware of how those numbers have (or have not) changed over time, chronicling institutional struggles with retaining a diverse faculty. Eileen, a professor at Oceanside University for 15
years, highlights the continued underrepresentation of black women in her
department: “I am still one of remarkably few black women in our department.
I think we have two—in the largest department on campus, which is absurd.
. . . The numbers are insane.”

Being outside the majority seems to influence these participants’ sense of
fit within their departments and with their peers. Alice has been a faculty
member at Oceanside in the same college and department for over 20 years,
and while she is academically stimulated by her environment and feels that
it is a great place to work in terms of academic freedom, she is not completely
fulfilled. She describes feeling like she is not as socially connected to her
colleagues, specifically linking this disconnection to her race, noting, “there
are so few of us on campus, you feel a certain degree of marginalization and
not being a part of the networks.” Some participants, like Felicia at Column
University, could not point to a particular racist incident or experience. How-
ever, she and others perceived a definite lack of fit within their departments
or among their peers. Felicia has a joint appointment on her campus, and
while she feels some tension because she perceived the departments as not
being fully supportive of her splitting time between programs, she also perceives
racial undertones to her discomfort. She shares that “People were welcoming
I think because generally, they welcome black faculty, but I felt like there was
tension, underlying tension,” manifesting in somewhat awkward, uncomfortable,
and limited relationships with her largely white, male colleagues.

Some of the most challenging encounters with institutional racism occurred
during black faculty members’ tenure reviews. Several participants provided
detailed accounts of having experienced racism during their tenure cases.
Reginald, who is mentioned above as facing struggles with colleagues who
did not necessarily perceive his race-related work as valid, describes his tenure
review as being particularly contentious. He blames the challenges he faced
on racism, noting that his colleagues questioned the racial background of his
outside referees: “I came up a year early, and I was initially actually denied
tenure . . . not on my work, but based on the fact that too many of my outside
referees were black. Then my case was sent back to the ad hoc committee
with the explicit instructions to solicit more letters from white people.” Sim-
ilarly, Paula describes how her tenure process at Oceanside was derailed early
on by one negative teaching evaluation. She notes that she was unsurprised
by this because “she had been black all her life” and other black professors
had shared their own similar battles with her: “In talking to other black faculty
I found out that basically, I don’t know any[one] that hasn’t had some probably
equally horrendous experience of either trying to be promoted to tenure or
trying to be appointed into a tenure line position . . . on that level, there’s a
lot of institutionalized racism.” Thus, these participants clearly acknowledge
their perceptions of the connections between their race and their professional experiences, social relationships, and advancement.

**Responses to Racism**

A small number of participants describe racism as motivating their decision to seek out academic positions elsewhere, resulting in a physical departure from the institution. For example, Reginald describes his experience at Oceanside as “schizophrenic,” in that he has supportive and positive relationships with the senior administration and faculty of color on campus generally but significant challenges with the faculty in his own department. This led to his serious consideration of leaving Oceanside on multiple occasions, even receiving job offers from other institutions. He explained, “It’s very clear that there is a significant segment of my department, that in each step of the way, would rather not [have] me here . . . and they have made that very clear at this point. And so that’s been a very sort of difficult tension and has on three occasions led me to pursue job offers elsewhere.” Similarly, Michael explains he was pushed to leave his previous institution because of the personal racism he faced. While he notes the importance and influence of his mentors throughout his career, he also had several experiences throughout graduate school and his early professional career where individuals doubted his abilities and the likelihood that he would be successful long term, which he ascribed to his race. For him, moving on to an institution like Column was like “dying and going to heaven,” because he no longer faced doubts about his ability to succeed: “The thing that astounded me most about [Column] in comparison to all of my previous experiences in academia was that it seemed . . . as though people were not betting against me. And that was the sense I always had . . . that somehow people didn’t expect me to succeed.”

Despite these narratives, institutional departure was relatively uncommon among professors participating in this study. Rather, professors appear to engage in a series of resistance behaviors when facing a challenging climate. These activities include seeking ways to define themselves outside of their academic departments, and in some cases their institutions, through networks and relationships, working doubly hard to disprove any negative preconceptions that colleagues may have about their qualifications or character, and actively engaging in service activities to counter the racism they observe.

**Building external relationships.**—One of the most common responses articulated was the decision to reconceptualize their institutional and personal identities. Rather than defining themselves as professors at Oceanside or Column, many seek strength and support from the connections related to their roles as black faculty, scholars, parents, and community members.
For some, this entails establishing relationships with other departments and choosing to define themselves in terms of their affiliations with these departments and less with their “home” departments. Research centers, institutes, and ethnic studies departments provide some participants with an environment they describe as “supportive,” “more accepting,” and “hospitable,” particularly in comparison to their home programs and departments. For example, many participants are either core faculty or are affiliated with their campus African American studies program (12 participants at Oceanside, 6 participants at Column) and speak of the community they find within these programs. Calvin admits that while he aims to be a good citizen in his home department, he is more engaged in African American studies: “To be honest, I spend not that much time in my department. I do my duties as a citizen, but I feel much more connected to the community in Afro-Am [African American studies], and I tend to spend more of my intellectual time there.” Reginald, who has a joint appointment at Oceanside, finds the African American studies program to be a more supportive environment than his other department. “The black faculty are universally sane. . . . [they] get along with one another, and are very supportive of one another. . . . They have all been pretty supportive.”

Whether formed through affiliations with ethnic studies departments or other means, relationships with faculty of color provide participants with the support they need to persist within challenging climates. A core group of black women at Column enhanced Keira’s experience as a faculty member: “I think all of us found that as black women working on black women, we were very isolated. We really didn’t have anybody who could read our work, who knew substantively what we were talking about, and so we became each other’s kind of network.” Kevin, also at Column, stresses the importance of the relationships that grew out of his involvement in campus organizations. He says, “There are some campuswide organizations that are great, that have fostered my development intellectually, and I have been able to make some social connections to other faculty who do what I do and are interested in the kind of work that I do, which has been good.” Jason had a similar experience at Column University, connecting with colleagues through an organization for black faculty and staff that creates networking opportunities for professors of color outside of their departments. This serves an important role for Jason, and he notes that “when you’re a person of color and you’re not the majority” it is increasingly important “to surround yourself with people with your same likes, dislikes.”

Academic networking and professional support are not limited to the confines of one’s campus. In fact, relationships with colleagues at other institutions provide an academic community of support that affords an opportunity for self-definition within a much broader context. Matt relies on his far-reaching network for support to meet the social and academic needs that go unmet at
his institution. Eileen’s relationships with her former classmates supply her with a network that supports her research interests and initiatives: “We have maintained very, very strong relationships, and other people have said... how much they admire the fact that there’s this core of social scientists who still maintain relationships... [and] try to support each other’s research. ... That has been very, very central in my development as a scholar.”

For other participants, choosing to establish social relationships distinct from their professional lives provides a safe haven from the challenging climates they faced on campus. Alice, who describes the enduring underrepresentation of scholars of color at Oceanside as a challenge, explains why she chooses to not fully define herself as an Oceanside professor: “Is my whole self defined by my life at Oceanside? No. ... I think there’s something of that at this university that makes you step back when somebody is asking, ‘Are you happy and self actualized here?’ Not completely... you just don’t feel as much a part of stuff. You know, I think I’m respected in my department and you know, [I’ve] been here certainly for a long time, but I don’t feel the same kind of camaraderie with the other people who have been here for 25 years.” These feelings of isolation and being outside of social networks encouraged Alice and others to define themselves by relationships outside of academia, allowing them to gain the support they need to manage their professional lives. “My kids,” “my church,” and “my family and friends” were often cited by participants as providing the support they relied upon for combating a hostile environment. Darren, who served as a faculty member at Oceanside for many years, explains, “I kept my personal life and my nonuniversity life very separate. ... I didn’t socialize with my faculty. ... I went to socialize with my kids, my friends, my family, and they were not [Oceanside] people, so two very different [worlds].” Diane’s comments perhaps best capture this sentiment. Diane described encountering several challenges and resistance from colleagues, which she perceived as being related to her race. She suggests it has been “key to survival... to not allow the department and the system there to define who I am and how successful I am,” instead relying on external networks for validation. In other words, Diana does not root her life and relationships within her department and focuses on building relationships elsewhere.

Managing stereotypes.—Experiences within challenging climates, particularly those where black professors have their abilities as scholars questioned, appears to lead to behavioral modifications among participants in this study. Several participants recall guarding their actions to disprove inaccurate perceptions based on their racial identities. For example, Eric from Oceanside admits feeling as though he and his behaviors are more closely scrutinized by his colleagues, and so he conducts himself as though he is always being watched. He perceives this behavior as “healthy” and in his best interests as a scholar:
“I feel that people are looking at me through a different lens. . . . I don’t even want to give anybody the impression that I’m doing something that is inappropriate, that if somebody wanted to use it against me, they could do it. And I have a clean slate.” Aaron, also a professor at Oceanside, expresses caution and hesitation about his behavior, noting that he sometimes cannot speak out on issues or is more “politically neutral” than he might be because he fears how he would be judged.

In addition to a behavioral constraint, some use their perceptions of climate and racism as a source of motivation. Doubts of scholars’ academic abilities appear to be related to an express desire to prove skeptics wrong. This process involves proving one’s worth as an academic and defending against negative criticism or doubt. Corrine acknowledges the prevalence of racism and sexism on her campus, seeing it as part of the reason why it is so important for her to be successful. She says, “I do stand my ground. I’m not shaken. . . . When I think of Fanny Lou Hamer saying, ‘I’m sick and tired of being sick and tired,’ I really reach back and stretch out to whom I call my ancestors, people who fought for me, died for me, to be where I’m at today. I don’t take disrespect and racism and sexism very lightly at all.” Some of this resistance is focused specifically on the ways in which participants believed their work is judged. Keira and Michael, both Column professors, perceive African Americans in academia as being held to a different standard than others, reminding their black students that their skills will have to be especially strong to resist beliefs about their ability. Eileen from Oceanside explains that black professors often faced harsher judgment of their work, particularly if it is race related and that, in response, these professors have to work harder to assure their advancement: “Some of them are in departments where their research is not as valued as the research agenda of somebody else. So they have to have a lot of publications and a lot of good publications.” Aaron from Oceanside University draws motivation from negative opinions about his work, explaining that the devaluation of race-related work pushes him to be more prolific and rigorous in his scholarship: “Because your work is viewed by your colleagues as being less important than comparable areas . . . you have to be much more pointed and rigorous in what you do . . . especially for racial minority African American faculty. . . . We work on issues about race . . . that kind of work, at least in this environment, could be viewed as less than rigorous. You have to be twice as good as people who work in other areas, and you have to publish in places that are twice as high [in status], and you have to do more of it.” Thus, based on these comments, black professors who perceive the climate at their institution as hostile are resisting stereotypes and attempting to insure their advancement by being without fault and overachievers.

**Engagement in service.**—Like redefining oneself and engaging in a proving process, participation in institutional service allows participants to combat
challenging climates. This service primarily manifests in two ways—service to the institution and service to students. Service to the institution largely involves committee work. Participants’ agreement to serve often arises not out of a desire to add committee involvement to their dossier; rather, they feel a desire to serve as a voice for communities of color on campus. Jason from Column University references his committee work, noting not only how he was asked to participate in committees to add diversity but also that he sought out opportunities to be involved, as the campus was dealing with race-related issues. In describing her extensive engagement in committee work during her time at Oceanside, Eileen admits that she continues to participate, despite the time it takes away from her research, because she fears what will happen if there is no voice representing the interests of people of color at the table: “One of the reasons I felt compelled to stay on [a specific Oceanside committee] was to be kind of a presence for faculty of color . . . remarkable things could get said sometimes that I found intolerant. And if you’re not there to kind of catch them, things just go unchallenged. . . . It’s necessary for somebody to kind of be there watching what goes on.” Theresa’s experiences on an Oceanside faculty search committee mirror Eileen’s, and she explains how her presence required more serious consideration of a black candidate, saying they could not disregard his strong application because “I was there and they couldn’t be so blatant and discriminate.”

Participants also respond to personal and institutional racism by engaging in service activities related to their students. For many participants, establishing mentoring relationships with students fills multiple agendas, including promoting “success in the academy” and “developing another generation of black scholars,” thus helping to address the underrepresentation they observe in academia. A number of participants stated they felt a “special commitment,” “extra obligation,” and “responsibility” to serve as a resource for minority students, especially African American students.

In addition to drawing extra time, students can be sources of support to faculty, although this is not a source of support that faculty members deliberately seek or expect. Jonathan says, “As somebody who cares about black people and the black community, I feel it gives me some psychic benefit to know that I am working with black students and talking to them, and they’re in my classes and I’m contributing.” Marilyn, from Oceanside University, notes that just seeing black students makes her feel less isolated on campus and more comfortable, helping her “to feel like I’m not surrounded by a sea of white faces.” For Karla, who works at Column, the support she receives from her black students is at times unspoken, but palpable. She explains that her work with black students and the special way they support her keeps her centered and happy, which has been particularly important when facing challenging times in her department, noting “there’s a love and a caring that’s
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difficult to put your finger on it, and they kept me sane . . . they wanted me to be successful.”

Discussion

There is much that can be learned about the role of race in the academic trajectories of black scholars by attending to the voices of black faculty. Contrary to suggestions that America has become a postracial society or that society is color-blind, CRT suggests that encounters with racism are common in the everyday experiences of people of color (Delgado and Stefancic 2001). Education is not immune from this assertion, and racism continues to shape the ways in which people of color experience and respond to their environments (Ladson-Billings 1998; Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995). This appears to be particularly true of black faculty, making CRT an appropriate lens through which to view their experiences. Until 1969, over 96 percent of full-time faculty members were white (Schuster and Finkelstein 2006). By 2007, just 17 percent of the total number of faculty members in the United States were faculty of color (Snyder et al. 2009). Thus, CRT reminds us that the historical homogeneity and, by some measures, slow diversification of the professoriate must be considered in efforts to understand the experiences that current and emerging faculty of color encounter as they engage in their careers and professional activities. Related to this environment are structures of power, traditional ways of selecting and promoting faculty, and issues of mentoring and support that may serve as a disadvantage to faculty of color.

The findings of this study certainly confirm previous research, which suggests that black professors must contend with personal and institutional racism in their campus environments (e.g., Johnsrud and DesJarlais 1994; Johnsrud and Sadao 1998; McKay 1997; Stanley 2006; Turner et al. 2008), highlighting the centrality of race in the experience of black faculty. In terms of personal racism, professors describe encounters that can be understood as microaggressions, or slights that may appear minor or inconsequential but that have a debilitating effect when aggregated. Faculty participants recount the racially charged commentary of their colleagues regarding their hair and physical features, as well as being subjected to expectations about what their racial identity means in terms of their role at the institution. Thus, the findings of this study make a significant contribution through their addition to a growing literature that speaks specifically to the microaggressions that scholars of color face (e.g., Constantine et al. 2008; Solórzano 1998) and highlights challenges within the context of their relationships with their colleagues.

Despite the salience of these encounters, professors spoke more often of their struggles with institutional racism, noting the small numbers of black
faculty on their respective campuses and expressing frustration that there has been little institutional commitment to change. These observations are consistent with demographic data highlighting the underrepresentation of black professors (see Ryu 2008) and researchers who argue that minority faculty are often hired in token numbers in most departments. Such tokenism leads these professors to being one of few individuals or, in some cases, the only person of color in their respective departments (Blackwell 1988). Furthermore, as documented by scholars such as Exum and colleagues (1984), Allen and colleagues (2000), and Williams and Williams (2006), scholars in this study face challenges in the tenure and advancement process, fearing that their work would be judged as subpar based on their emphasis on issues related to communities of color. Where there is no objective determinant of success, personal opinions and racialized beliefs can taint the ways in which one’s body of work is viewed (Exum et al. 1984). Consistent with the principles of CRT, the ways in which racialized beliefs and subtle discrimination can taint the tenure and promotion process call into question notions that the academic tenure and advancement system is based purely on meritocracy and objective assessment.

These experiences can translate into a negative, hostile, or chilly campus climate, pushing black faculty to be dissatisfied and to leave their campuses or academia (e.g., Plata 1996; Trower and Chait 2002). This work does offer some confirmation of this phenomenon. Professors expressed their dissatisfaction and frustration with these experiences, in some cases considering opportunities at other institutions because of the racism they faced. However, our findings also suggest that departure does not come just in the form of physical leave taking from the institution or the express intention to leave. We specifically identify three responses that accompany the possibility of physical departure from an institution: departmental departure, self-definition, and engagement in service.

Some participants’ behaviors represent a form of departure that is less literal but still constitutes a form of dissociation or detachment from the environments they continue to physically inhabit. In some ways, this is akin to work that assesses faculty intention to leave, which also suggests that a psychological dissociation takes place before institutional departure (Ponjuan 2005; Rosser 2004; Xu 2008; Zhou and Volkwein 2004). However, our findings suggest that faculty members may dissociate from their environments, to some extent, when they experience challenges; they may not always express a clear intention to leave. This dissociation from a hostile environment is similar to a phenomenon noted by hooks (1989) and Jordan-Zachery (2004). Both authors note that when subjected to marginalization, black women in particular may seek a “home place,” a space where they can be validated personally and professionally.

When challenged by racism and hostility in their own departments, par-
Participants engaged in a form of departmental departure, which can be understood as seeking “home places” outside of their respective academic programs. Locating a home place may be crucial to one’s resilience in a department. In fact, the home place may provide black faculty with security in their positions in which they can discuss their professional and personal lives (Jordan-Zachery 2004). While Jordan-Zachery speaks primarily of the role that mentoring can play in establishing a “home place” for black female professors, participants in our study generally found and established several other supportive spaces at and beyond their institutions. First, some established external networks, often composed of faculty of color who support their work. While some were able to make these connections with individual faculty members, others established their networks through departmental affiliations, choosing to root themselves more firmly in academic areas and research centers where their work is welcome. African American studies programs appear to play this role for several faculty, serving as a space where they are validated as scholars. These findings resonate with research by Brown (2006), who suggests that African American studies programs serve as a supportive “safe space” for black students. Perhaps these departments can be understood as serving a similar purpose for black professors.

Furthermore, a home place need not be a physical space, and black professors also appear to use supportive relationships established off campus as sources of support. In an academic sense, these relationships take the form of enduring networks of supportive colleagues and potential collaborators. While these networks appear to be quite similar to African American studies departments in terms of the support they offer, they are also somewhat distinctive. A lack of social connection on campus pushed some faculty to define themselves more by their personal lives and relationships.

We acknowledge that this form of departure or effort to gain support may not appear to be inherently problematic. Building close relationships with faculty in other departments and at other institutions may lead to new opportunities to write and gain funding for research. And having social support from one’s family and friends may offer faculty the support and motivation they need to continue to do good work or may be common among faculty across all racial and ethnic groups. However, we must keep in mind that these relationships are being formed and emphasized because relationships with colleagues are lacking in their own departments. Collegiality, or positive relationships and camaraderie between colleagues, can lead to greater rewards and recognition within the university (Butner et al. 2000; Exum et al. 1984; Stanley 2006). Tenure and advancement evaluations include department and college-level evaluations, which can be based on subjective assessments of faculty contributions to the department. At an extreme, developing strong relationships outside of one’s home department may detract from black pro-
fessors’ time spent with colleagues within their respective academic programs. This can cause them to be relatively unknown or disliked in their departments, leaving them more vulnerable to negative assessments, a lack of connections to colleagues, and a perceived lack of fit in the department (Exum et al. 1984).

The second and third behavioral responses to racism also are distinct from a physical departure from the institution; however, they are perhaps more akin to forms of critical agency than actual departures. Borrowing from Gramsci, Baez (2000) frames critical agency as any behavior that acts as a form of resistance, manifested when individuals face environments marked by domination and oppression. This is perhaps also reminiscent of the “voice” response to organizational failure described by Hirschman (1970). We can certainly understand the second behavioral response observed, an active effort demonstrated by some to disprove stereotypes, as a form of critical agency. Participants are aware that their underrepresentation translates into a “hyper-visibility,” a feeling that they are carefully watched for confirmation of beliefs about the appropriateness of blacks in higher education. Some took these perceptions as a challenge, resisting by monitoring their speech, behaviors, and perhaps most interestingly, their work ethic. Participants noted the importance of not only being good but being exceptional, pushing themselves to publish more and in the best journals in order to be perceived as legitimate scholars.

The forms of resistance demonstrated by the faculty participating in this study appear to be quite similar to a “proving process” that high-achieving black students engage in at predominantly white institutions (Fries-Britt and Griffin 2007; Fries-Britt and Turner 2001). Across multiple studies, Fries-Britt and colleagues describe high-achieving African Americans as being aware of others’ beliefs about their abilities and working doubly hard to disprove these stereotypes and gain recognition as scholars. It stands to reason that black professors were once high-achieving students—thus, perhaps we are observing behaviors they have been using to resist racism for long periods of time.

Again, a response to racism that pushes black faculty to work harder and leave no doubt of their abilities and qualifications may not initially appear to be cause for concern. However, Claude Steele’s (1997, 1999; Steele and Aronson 1998) work specifically links prevalent social stereotypes to the academic performance of stigmatized individuals, suggesting that resistance can actually become a distraction. Steele and his colleagues suggest that African Americans who strongly identify with academics often actively resist social stereotypes about blacks’ intelligence, distracting them from the task at hand and, in turn, hindering their performance. Those who grow weary of the strain associated with resistance in fact may convince themselves that academic success is not really important, thereby disidentifying with academe altogether (Steele 1999).

Applying this framework to the experiences of black professors, those who tire
of proving their worth may eventually elect to leave their institutions and pursue work in another field. Thus, we must be wary that motivation to disprove stereotypes can become stressful and overwhelming, doing more harm than good.

Finally, some professors appear to engage in a third form of critical agency, that of choosing to make a significant commitment to committee work and mentoring students. The time that black professors spend participating in these activities has been well documented (e.g., Banks 1984; Blackwell 1988; Johnsrud and Sadao 1998; Stanley 2006; Turner and Myers 2000; Williams and Williams 2006), and Baez (2000) has similarly written about faculty of color and their engagement in service as a form of critical agency. In addition to seeing these activities as a way to help their communities, race-related service activities offer opportunities for faculty of color to make connections across campus, providing a sense of community and a network of support for those who felt isolated and alienated from their colleagues (Baez 2000; Stanley 2006).

The findings of this study resonate closely with Baez’s work. In addition to offering opportunities to make connections across campus, black professors describe the importance of committee work as a means of challenging the persistent racism in their environments, standing sentry against the ways in which racism can negatively influence the decision making that takes place behind closed doors. Working with students also serves multiple purposes. First, mentorship allows participants to address the lack of diversity in academia by supporting the next generation of scholars of color. It also, often unintentionally, offers an additional source of support for faculty.

While service may serve as a means to combat racism and offer sources of support, increased engagement in these activities may put black faculty in a difficult position. Service is widely described as challenging to balance with other academic responsibilities. Over time, tenure and promotion decisions have come to rely on primarily excellence in research, with participation in committee work, teaching, and advising seen as unhelpful for professors seeking career advancement (Blackwell 1988; Tierney and Bensimon 1996). The tenure process at large research universities is driven primarily by research productivity. While some attention is given to teaching, there is little to no consideration of a professor’s commitment to institutional service (Tierney and Bensimon 1996). Furthermore, an excessive commitment to service that draws faculty away from their research responsibilities can hinder their productivity and tenure evaluation (Blackburn and Lawrence 1995; Tierney and Bensimon 1996). In this way, a hostile campus climate can exacerbate the influence of other barriers to success, pushing black faculty to engage in activities that are potentially harmful to their professional development in order to survive their environment.
Implications

Critical race theory emphasizes the importance of social justice and change (Delgado and Stefancic 2001), and, as such, this study was conducted with the intent of contributing to efforts to improve campus climates for black professors. Our findings remind institutional leaders that they must be mindful of and take responsibility for recognizing the multiple dimensions of climate as they aim to improve institutional environments. In addition to understanding the experiences of black faculty within the broad campus climate, scholars must study and address individual interactions, particularly within academic departments, that comprise faculty perceptions. While positive interactions can provide peer support and a sense of community, negative interactions can serve as stimuli to the forms of departure we present. Critical race theory reminds us that instead of promoting equity, efforts to maintain “color-blind” systems or argue that academia is and should remain a pure meritocracy simply maintain the status quo (Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995) and, in this case, the traditional underrepresentation of faculty of color.

To truly see change in the professoriate, the ways that racialized beliefs influence the ways in which one’s work is assessed must be closely examined and considered in efforts to promote greater equity in academia. This study can provide institutional leaders with insights regarding how personal and institutional racism can influence the tenure and promotion process. Thus, we strongly recommend that institutional leaders closely monitor decision making and the reasoning behind questionable recommendations, comparing their work and productivity to others who have recently been promoted. In addition, the increased inclusion of black faculty and advocates for work specifically addressing the needs of those from underserved communities on tenure and promotion committees could also promote an awareness of the subtle and sometimes overt ways in which the work of black scholars is dismissed.

Furthermore, we suggest that department chairs, deans, and institutional leaders address the importance of interactions between faculty members and integration within departmental communities when considering the experiences of black professors. Multiple participants in our study describe themselves as socially detached due to a lack of diversity in their respective departments and the low quality of interactions with their colleagues. As such, we recommend that institutional leaders implement focused and specific initiatives to improve interactions between faculty members. Workshops and diversity training programs can certainly help individuals acknowledge and change their biased perspectives and stereotypes. Some of this learning and growth may be facilitated through Intergroup Dialogue, which promotes sustained, intimate interactions and intellectual risk taking between members of two or more
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social identity groups. Intergroup Dialogue has proven to enhance relationships between individuals of various identity groups and offers a space in which all participants are better informed (Zúñiga et al. 2002). While dialogue programs are usually targeted at students, faculty may find that the opportunity to participate in these groups can serve both as a coping method for instances in which a hostile and isolated environment is experienced and an opportunity to educate the community more broadly about issues that black professors face.

We acknowledge the limitations that are inherent in these recommendations. Although diversity workshops and trainings may be useful, they may also prove to be unauthentic and superficial, particularly considering that those who are in the most need of such efforts often choose not to attend. As such, institutions must consider developing valuable incentives to encourage participation in such efforts, perhaps more strongly considering faculty members’ documented efforts to promote diversity and equity in academia or improve the campus climate within the tenure and promotion process. Tackling tough issues within the context of departmental meetings that all must attend, rather than holding separate, optional training sessions and workshops, may also be a useful strategy.

The findings of this study strongly suggest that institutional leaders and policy makers cannot assume that the climates in academic departments are acceptable simply because professors have not relocated to another institution. It is critical for academic leaders and institutional decision makers to be able to recognize the formation of external relationships, a focus on overachievement, and extreme commitment to service as forms of resistance to institutional and personal racism. While we argue that these behavioral responses can be detrimental when taken to an extreme, we do not suggest that institutional leaders fully dissuade or limit professors from engaging in these demonstrated forms of resistance. For example, it is important for faculty to find a network of scholars with whom they feel comfortable and supported. Institutions should, in fact, foster such networks by providing safe spaces for faculty to engage with their peers, in the form of affinity or dialogue groups, for example, and affording them the opportunity to share their experiences with other faculty with whom they identify. Instead of telling faculty to not engage in these behaviors, we urge institutional leaders to find ways to allow scholars of color to obtain the support they need without ignoring the challenges they face or allowing faculty to put themselves at risk for an eventual physical departure because they have few collegial relationships within their departments, have burned themselves out academically, or have overemphasized service to the detriment of their scholarship.

As such, we recommend creative efforts to allow professors to resist in productive ways. For example, findings suggest that ethnic studies departments and programs can play a significant part in creating safe, collaborative spaces for black professors to make connections and have their work validated. Cre-
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ating ways and means for service-related contributions to be acknowledged within the tenure and advancement process may be helpful in making this form of resistance less detrimental. Furthermore, we add our collective voice to those who call for service to be considered more seriously in the tenure and advancement process. Rather than punishing black faculty for taking on this role as change agents, institutional leaders must be more thoughtful about ways in which to allow black professors to make these important contributions.

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