IN THEIR OWN WORDS: TENURE AND PROMOTION EXPERIENCES
AND PERCEPTIONS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FACULTY
AT A HISTORICALLY WHITE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract


IN THEIR OWN WORDS: TENURE AND PROMOTION EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FACULTY AT A HISTORICALLY WHITE UNIVERSITY (182 pp.)

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This research study investigated the socialization, tenure and promotion experiences and perceptions of African American faculty at a historically White university in the Midwest. For decades, African American educators in the United States struggled with desegregation in the American school system and other areas of society (Fultz, 2004). Yet, although segregation was outlawed in 1954 following the Brown vs. Board of Education decision, implicit segregation continues to subtly manifest itself in the American educational system. Research suggests that African American educators continue to experience differential treatment associated with tenure and promotion systems, particularly at predominantly White colleges and universities (Menges, & Exum, 1983; Tillman, 2004). As a result, today a large number of the nation’s predominantly White colleges and universities have only small numbers of African American faculty members (Gay & Howard, 2000). Despite the harsh realities faced by African American faculty at predominantly White universities, the majority have assumed a bicultural stance and risen to the challenge.
This research uses data that were collected from 21 African American faculty representing five colleges and ten disciplines at a historically White university. Of the 21 participants, 13 were tenured and 8 held tenure-track appointments. Research findings from in-depth interviews and document analysis are suggestive of harsh realities of the tenure and promotion process that African American faculty at predominantly White colleges and universities are faced with. One overarching finding was apparent: the perception of needing to exceed expectations as an implicit requirement in the tenure and promotion process. Other major findings included: 1) tenure and promotion was viewed as a worthwhile experience by some participants, 2) the majority of participants viewed tenure and promotion as an arduous process owing to the perceived ambiguous nature of reviews, unsupportive chairs, its political nature, lack of collegial support and differential treatment, 3) participants reported experiencing challenges such as organizing the tenure dossier, balancing time between teaching, research and service, getting their research validated, and fear of tenure denial, 4) faculty members interviewed expressed the need for a formal mentoring program, clear tenure guidelines, and time release for research. It is important to note that White faculty may have had similar experiences, but that is an avenue for future research.

The implications of this research are important to policy makers in reexamining institutional structures and redefining policies that facilitate equitable treatment of all faculty regardless of race and ethnicity, gender, or religious affiliation. Owing to the centrality of the academic tenure system in determining the retention or attrition of faculty, the recommendations in this study are insightful to institutions that are committed to increasing diversity. Understanding the tenure and promotion experiences
and perceptions of African American faculty at a predominantly White university would be useful in designing institutional programs geared toward improving campus climates.

Approved:

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

*Historical Perspectives*

Starting before the 18th century, as a people, African Americans have experienced segregation in the educational sphere, economic and social spheres (Fultz, 2004). African Americans were segregated in schools and other areas of society (Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996). Segregation was widely perceived as a means of creating and maintaining a racial caste system. Part of the nation’s racial history has also been manifested through discrimination against Black faculty (Feagin et al., 1996). Desegregation as a function of the 1954 *Brown v. Board* decision is well documented (Fultz, 2004; Tillman, 2004). Fultz and Tillman suggest a majority of Black educators have excelled in their professional careers following the *Brown v. Board* decision. However, Black educators pay a heavy price as is evidenced in their wholesale dismissal (Tillman, 2004) from their teaching jobs and in most cases without the benefit of a notice (Fultz, 2004).

With limited tenure laws, safeguards for Black educators who lacked access to the local power structure were limited or nonexistent. A prevailing practice was that of assigning Black educators courses outside of their area of expertise/training, only to be dismissed for incompetence (Fultz, 2004). Some detailed significant events in the lives of Black educators are provided in Appendix A. Appendix B presents the impact of the *Brown v. Board of education* decision on the employment status of Black educators. Differential treatment of Black people in academe dates back to the 1950s during the
Brown v. Board of education era. As a result of the Brown v. Board of education decision, all-Black and all-White schools merged. The merge affected Black faculty, most of whom were fired while all White teachers were retained (Tillman, 2004). This was prevalent in the southern states of Mississippi, Oklahoma, and South Carolina.

During a significant part of the 19th century a limited number of African Americans taught at universities in the United States. By the 1940s not a single Black Ph.D./Ed.D taught at a White university. African American teachers were often considered appropriate only as educators for African American youth (Fultz, 2004). “Un-selfing” (Tillman, 2004, p. 290) occurred as a result of Black teachers being mandated to leave their positions in all-Black schools and being reassigned to all-White schools. Tillman (2004) describes un-selfing as working in a hostile environment in the face of denigration. Other scholars such as Hudson and Holmes (1994) have described teaching, after the Brown v. Board of Education decision, as “the almost lost profession”. In fact, Hudson and Holmes maintain that by the 1960s, there were no more than 200 Black faculty at traditionally White colleges and universities throughout the nation.

Today a large number of the nation’s predominantly White colleges and universities have only token or small numbers of African American faculty (Feagin et al., 1996; Gay & Howard, 2000; Hudson & Holmes, 1994). Yet, even the contributions of the few African American faculty, who have taught at traditionally White colleges and universities, then and now, are not fully acknowledged (Feagin, et al., 1996). The decline in the number of Black educators is further attributable to the lack of mentoring for professional development and personal growth. On the other hand, historically as well as contemporarily, the recruitment and treatment of Black faculty at predominantly White
colleges and universities have rarely been guided by the unbiased standards of excellence (Dorsey, 1990; Tillman, 2004). These biased standards have often transcended to institutional structures such as tenure and promotion that determine their stay or exit. To that end, the present study aims specifically at providing insights into the tenure and promotion experiences and perceptions of African American faculty at a Historically White University (HWU). Details on the tenure and promotion process are presented in chapter two of the literature review.

Research Context

African Americans represent approximately 13% of the U.S. population and make up 5% of the full-time faculty (NCES, 2000, 2002). As a result of this disparity, a number of studies have been conducted in an attempt to analyze the United States academic workforce. The results of these studies have indicated a need to increase cultural diversity especially within the academic sphere (Blackwell, 1989; Gubitosi, 1996; NCES, 2000, 2002; Wilds &Wilson, 1998). It is useful to have a study of African American faculty at this point in time especially considering demographic predictions which suggest that the United States’ workforce will become increasingly diverse in the 21st century (Aguirre, 2000). The two populations most likely to determine diversity in the workplace in the 21st century are women and minorities, of which African American faculty are a part. More importantly, research focusing on race and ethnicity often lump minority groups together (Gregory, 1999) without paying much attention to their unique historical, cultural backgrounds, and their plight in a country that is defined by the history of race. A study of a specific minority group such as African American faculty will not
only be informative to other minority faculty groups but to the majority of faculty as well. Specifically, it offers insights into retention strategies for the minority group faculty. In turn, retention strategies would reflect institutional success and commitment to diversity.

An increased representation of African American faculty has important implications for higher education. Insights into African American faculty experiences and perceptions of tenure could provide a roadmap for higher education to enhance opportunities to diversify faculty ranks as older faculty approach retirement. If Black faculty representativeness is to be increased in higher education, it is imperative that the academic workplace processes are examined in order to understand how African American faculty fit into the academic culture. However, attempts to increase diversity would be futile in the absence of insights into how African American faculty experience and perceive the dynamics of their academic careers in relation to the tenure and promotion process in academe.

Johnsrud and Sadao (1998) suggest African American faculty in higher education continue to experience both structural and personal barriers to tenure. In fact, despite efforts to recruit minority faculty, their increase has been very minimal in the past decade due to the unrelenting pressure to prove their worth in academe (Aguirre, 2000; Cooper & Stevens, 2002; Johnsrud & Sadao, 1998). Thus, the pressure to prove their worth coupled with feelings of insignificance can make tenure and promotion a daunting experience for minority faculty (Johnsrud & Sadao, 1998). Similarly, Menges and Exum (1983) note that minority faculty are often faced with barriers such as split or joint appointments. This has meant that the elimination of Black Studies Programs, in which many faculty of color are hired, is partly responsible for the underrepresentation of this
group of faculty at predominantly White institutions (Menges & Exum, 1983). As much as joint appointments may enhance survival of programs, they do not necessarily enhance minority faculty survival in academe. In joint appointments, minority faculty are forced to manage competing, sometimes conflicting demands and expectations from each discipline. The faculty may hold greater commitment and give more time and effort to a particular discipline than will be recognized and rewarded at the tenure review time. Joint appointments may pose a barrier to tenure in cases where the faculty is paid out of “soft” money (Menges & Exum, 1983). The appointment is often jeopardized when the money runs out.

Research shows that minority faculty tend to spend more time on teaching and service rather than research, which may have a negative impact on tenure and promotion given the value attached to research and scholarship (Blackwell, 1989; Turner & Myers, 2000). Often isolated and without mentors, Black faculty are faced with multiple challenges, as a result, their tenure rates tend to be lower compared to those of their White counterparts (Johnsrud & Sadao, 1998). Minority faculty continue to be regarded as “other” and are subjected to differential treatment based on their values and norms, and their ideas are often perceived as inferior to mainstream ideas (Johnsrud & Sadao, 1998).

Building on Johnsrud and Sadao’s (1998) study, Johnson and Harvey (2002) recommend that new faculty gain an understanding of both the formal and informal rules of the academy, particularly those relating to the tenure and promotion process. It seems even after nearly twenty years when Menges and Exum (1983) and Watkins and Berglund (1984) reported that new faculty sometimes do not “learn the
ropes” of the academy until much too late in the tenure and promotion process; and that African American faculty particularly at predominantly White colleges and universities lacked knowledge of what is expected of them in the tenure and promotion process, the same holds today (Johnson & Harvey, 2002).

In addition, other studies have confirmed that faculty at predominantly White colleges and universities receive conflicting information about tenure and promotion expectations (Tierney & Rhoads, 1994; Tierney, & Benismon, 1996). Also, minority faculty have difficulty in learning the informal aspects of institutional culture (Tierney & Rhoads, 1994). In advancing Tierney and Rhoads’s (1994) views, Finkin (1996) suggests that new faculty at predominantly White colleges and universities are not furnished with adequate information relating to policies, resources, roles, and responsibilities in a comprehensive way. If one is a member of a specific faculty subgroup such as women or minorities, their situation is likely to be even more difficult (Verrier, 1993). It would be insightful to find out whether or not the situation, in relation to affirmative action, equitable pay, and career upward mobility, has improved in the 21st century.

It is imperative to draw attention to the current avenue of research for a number of reasons. Institutions of higher education are in need of urgent reforms and development of induction strategies for new faculty in academe (Boice, 1992; Bullis, 1993; Gibson, 1992; Tierney & Rhoads, 1994; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). The task is even made more pressing by the imminent retirement of academics recruited in the boom years of the 1960s and early 1970s. Therefore, suitable arrangements made to replace them would benefit the academic society a great deal. Institutions are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that new entrants into academe, particularly those from underrepresented
groups, do not experience the “revolving door syndrome” (Tierney & Rhoads, 1994). That is, the current induction process of African American faculty entrants into academe may be deficient which calls for a reconceptualization of the process.

Furthermore, there is often an imbalance between new entrants into the academy and the work load expected of them. Van Maanen (1979) contended that many minority academic entrants have undergone some sort of socialization as researchers (during their dissertation research) but not as teachers. There is a lot that still needs to be done with regard to induction of new faculty into academe (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). The structure of departments and programs in higher education is not only less cohesive, but new faculty are often left to struggle on their own to achieve tenure status (Trower & Knight, 1999). Tierney (1997) notes that some departmental structures are too rooted in individualistic psychology. Furthermore, Weimer and Lenze (1991) noted that many new minority faculty rely on centrally provided social programs, whose effectiveness as a means of staff development has been challenged. For instance, Sternberg (1997) argues that knowledge of the way that things are done and of other people in the organization is far more important to success than are formal qualifications or IQ scores. Ideally, a positive tenure and promotion experience is unlikely in the absence of a good socialization process.

Proper socialization by mentors is deemed to provide support to both the mentor and protégé in many ways, such as: 1) the relationship provides emotional support and encouragement during times of stress, 2) the protégé adapts to the political environment within the university and department setting, 3) the protégé has an advocate who is willing to speak on his/her behalf, 4) enhances collaboration on research projects, 5)
Faith is reinforced through trust of the relationship, and 6) the protégé has a successful model to emulate (Phillips-Jones, 1982).

The following section of the chapter presents the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations, limitations, and definition of terms.

Statement of the Problem

Institutional leaders are being encouraged to demonstrate commitment to diversity in the form of recruitment of more African American faculty and other minorities. Although diversity is being encouraged, it is not however universally valued. Significant barriers still exist in the tenure and promotion process of minority faculty, especially African American faculty. Thus, it is important and timely to examine their experiences and perceptions of the tenure and promotion process at a Historically White University (HWU). The study uses the interpretative/qualitative research design.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to provide a descriptive analysis of African American faculty members’ experiences and perceptions of the tenure and promotion process at a HWU. In addition, a secondary purpose of the study is to determine the extent to which barriers to their success exist in such an institution. How might African American tenure and promotion experiences be best understood, and what are the implications of any findings for professional practice? How might the academic community rethink policies that might be developed to contribute to the successful and more rewarding experiences
of this group of faculty member? This study also explores the tenure and promotion success strategies employed by tenured African American faculty teaching at HWU. Also, of particular interest is the impact of social interaction/collegiality and the tenure and promotion process on role perception of African American faculty members.

To be able to understand African American attitudes, experiences and strategies needed to succeed at a HWU, it is important to examine individual African American faculty perceptions in depth. It is assumed that the tenure phenomenon has major components of a status passage (Glaser & Strauss, 1971) including temporal, directional, and actor-specific dimensions. It is viewed as complex, variable, and incapable of being framed in a standard way that corresponds to universal form. All people develop unique ways of making sense of their situation based upon their beliefs, backgrounds, and prior experience. As a rite of passage shared by participants, tenure review serves in this study as a common focus for a more in-depth exploration of their lives.

Gregory (1999) has written comprehensively on secrets to success and achievement among Black women in academia. She particularly focuses on the experiences of Black women in academe in exclusion of the male gender. Gregory’s (1999) findings suggest that African American women faculty decisions to remain in academe are associated with tenure status. According to the study, those who remained in academe were likely to hold tenure, be employed by a four-year academic institution, had many job offers, and had the highest rate of job satisfaction. The opposite was true for African American women who opted to leave.

The present study takes Gregory’s (1999) study a step further by incorporating the experiences and perceptions of African American male faculty in academia. This study is
particularly important given the dearth of research that focuses specifically on the tenure and promotion experiences and perceptions of African American faculty at predominantly White colleges and universities. In addition, Gregory notes that their status among the tenure ranks is not encouraging. She argues that obtaining tenure for some African American women faculty is increasingly difficult. She states:

Many are subjected to emotional and psychological abuses during the tenure review process. Some argue that focusing only on research puts many faculty of color at a disadvantage because they often focus more on teaching, mentoring, and community service. These activities often deterred Black and other minority faculty from their research, thereby decreasing their chances of receiving tenure (Gregory, 1999, p. 46).

More importantly, even though the academy still claims the greatest number of African American doctorate recipients relative to other sectors (American Council on Education (ACE), 1993; Gregory, 1999) many appear to be avoiding careers in academia. Some studies have suggested reasons that include low salaries, joint appointments (Menges & Exum, 1983) and the “revolving door syndrome” (Tierney & Rhoads, 1994). However, there is limited literature that ties the percentage of African American faculty in academia to the experiences of tenure and promotion. In addition, many of the studies that have focused on women and minority faculty in academia (e.g. Gregory, 1999; Turner & Myers, 2000) have often relied, for the most part, on quantitative approaches. This study uses qualitative research methods to address the following research questions.
Research Questions

1. What are the socialization, tenure and promotion experiences and perceptions of African American faculty at the HWU?
2. What challenges do African American faculty at the HWU face in the tenure and promotion review process?
3. What perspectives do African American faculty have on policies that govern the tenure and promotion process at the HWU?

Significance of the Study

Examining African American faculty perceptions about tenure and promotion experiences at the HWU provides an important framework for continued understanding of the tenure process across diverse institutions. This study is important because it fills the gap in the limited literature on the topic. It is in understanding Black faculty experiences in academia that relevant strides can be made toward increasing structural diversity (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, and Allen, 1999). Needless to mention, Black faculty experiences and issues of diversity are intricately intertwined. Through studies such as the current study, institutions can begin to understand barriers to diversity. The recommendations that these kinds of studies provide can be used to implement policies and programs that promote minority faculty teaching, research, service and policies and programs that favor and support diversity. Similarly, this study provides a window or vision into the situation of African American faculty underrepresentation at the HWU. It also serves to encourage institutional commitment to increase faculty
diversity proportionate to the steady increase in a diverse student body, and a
commitment to success in a multicultural society.

The findings of this study provide a better understanding of the tenure and
promotion experiences and perceptions of African American faculty at the HWU and
serve as a foundation for developing a body of literature on the tenure and promotion
experiences of other underrepresented subgroups such as Asian-Americans, Hispanics,
Latinos, and Africans from the continent of Africa. Further, this study has important
implications for theory building in the discipline of higher education. The findings
constitute important contributions not only to the knowledge base, but to the discipline of
education, academia, and society at large.

Delimitations

This study is confined to in-depth interviewing and document analysis as the
primary methods of data collection at the HWU. The approach is fundamentally
epistemological, that is, heavy reliance on language and text. Van Manen (1990)
describes epistemology as “lived experience soaked through with language” he argues
that “human experience is only possible because we have language” (p. 38). African
American faculty experiences might be studied by utilizing extant literature and through
other lenses such as linguistics, however, this is possible only up to a certain extent. It is
through examining and interpreting lived experiences that a true sense of reality can be
determined. Only then can diverse meanings underlying individuals lived experiences can
be explicated (Van Manen, 1990).
Research participants constitute both male and female tenured and tenure-track African American faculty. Twenty-one African American faculty were interviewed for this research. Institutional documents pertaining to the tenure and promotion process, such as departmental tenure guidelines and the faculty handbook were reanalyzed. Because of the nature of the study, certain limitations exist.

Limitations of the Study

First, the study is not generalizable to other institutions as African American faculty may have different perceptions and experiences about tenure and promotion processes at other White colleges and universities throughout the country. This is a case study of an HWU, thus, findings are more specifically applicable to this particular university. Experiences about the tenure and promotion process for African American faculty may be different in the eyes of the general population. Some participants could not vividly recall events leading to their tenure and promotion. This is because they had gone through the process over ten years ago. Other research participants seemed hesitant in divulging information related to their career, perhaps for fear of implications of their responses and/or retribution.

Gaining access to research participants was not an easy task. This was because of the busy schedule and time constraints of the faculty members. Further, the qualitative nature of the study renders its findings multiple interpretations, which often raise questions of authenticity in the eyes of the reader. A discussion of research authenticity is offered in chapter five. The definition of terms are provided in the next section.
Definition of Terms

*Faculty.* The Faculty Handbook (2003) of the HWU defines faculty as a person who has demonstrated scholarly or professional competence in a recognized academic discipline, and who is engaged in teaching or research pertaining thereto, or both. It is within this context that the term faculty is used in this study.

*Tenure.* Caplow and McGee (1965) defined tenure as the right to a continuing appointment at an academic institution with the exclusion of certain conditions. Tenure is also the means by which, or the conditions under which college staff members hold their positions (Shaw, 1971). Tenure is thus used to denote continued employment.

*Promotion.* Promotion is simply defined as advancement in academic rank (HWU Faculty Handbook, 2003).

*Socialization.* Socialization is the process by which individuals gain an understanding of the culture including values, attitudes, and expectations of the group in an organization (Austin, 2002; Tierney, 1997). Socialization is an ongoing process, which happens at all levels in an institution. It is a process through which an individual becomes part of a group, organization, or community. It is in this context that the term socialization is used in this study.

*Pre-tenured/tenure-track.* The terms pre-tenured or tenure-track are used to refer to faculty members that are not yet tenured, but are on course to getting tenure.

*Diversity.* The term diversity is subject to many interpretations. (Hurtado et al., 1999) describes diversity as a representation of a multiplicity of race/ethnic background of people and numbers. In this study, diversity is used to denote a set of complex issues
such as Black faculty representation at predominantly White colleges and universities, and embracing difference in all of its dimensions.

*Minority Faculty.* Research literature presents the term minority as referring to underrepresented subgroups such as African Americans, Asian-Americans, Hispanics, Africans, and Latinos collectively (Cooper & Stevens, 2002; Gregory, 1999). This study uses the term minority in the same context.

*Majority faculty.* Majority faculty is used to mean the larger population of faculty consisting of strictly White faculty members.

*Token.* Token is used in the context of what Kanter (1977) refers to as symbols. Individuals/groups of people whose visibility is heightened due to their underrepresentativess and whose work/productivity is less recognized in a given environment.

*Institutional Climate.* Harvey (1991) defines the term campus climate as the culture, habits, decisions, practices, and policies that make up campus life. That is, the extent to which the climate is “hospitable determines the ‘comfort factor’ for African Americans and other nonwhite persons on campus” (p. 128).

*Unidirectional.* Is a process of socialization that assumes all individuals progress through the socialization process in a single way. That is, “individuals progress through each of the stages and core elements of socialization in a step-by-step, incremental fashion” (Antony, & Taylor, 2004, p. 94).

*Bidirectional.* It is an approach that recognizes “a reciprocity of influence on parties so that the context and processes of the educational experience influence one another and the socialization outcome affect the normative context of the higher
education environment experienced by faculty members” (Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001, p. 48). In other words, both faculty and the institution gain from the socialization experience.

White faculty. The term White is used in the context of this study to refer to groups of people, and institutions comprised of predominantly non Black/African American or other minority groups and therefore, the letter W is capitalized.

Black faculty. As far back as the days of slavery, a variety of terms have been used to describe African Americans, such terms included: Colored, Negro, Black, and now African American. In the pre-Brown vs. Board of Education era, African Americans were usually referred to as “colored” people or “Negro” people (Tillman, 2004). Much as I acknowledge all of these terms, I use only African American and Black interchangeably throughout this study. Black is an appropriate term precisely because both the prejudiced eyes and the eyes that seek solidarity view the skin pigmentation as the unifying physical trait (Obidah, 2003).

Un-selfing. Taylor as cited in Tillman (2004) defines un-selfing as the psychological interaction that occurs between people that breeds mistrust in any kind of relationship. It is the overt/covert taking of a person’s dignity and is done subtly.

Organization of the Study

This study includes five chapters. Chapter one presents historical perspectives and context of the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, significance, delimitations, limitations, and definition of terms. Chapter two explores literature relevant to the research. Chapter three presents the research design. It
delineates the research methodology and methods necessary to accomplish the purpose of
the study, critical reflections, and research authenticity. Chapter four presents findings of
the study, and chapter five wraps up the study with the analysis of the results,
implications for future research, recommendations and concluding remarks.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The premise for conducting this qualitative study is to examine the experiences and perceptions of African American faculty at a Historically White University (HWU) about the tenure and promotion process. The goal of the study is to understand tenure and promotion success strategies taken by tenured African American faculty teaching at HWU. Of particular interest are also the impact of social interaction/collegiality and the tenure and promotion process on African American faculty perceptions of their roles at the HWU.

The professional factors that influence career mobility among minority faculty represent a serious and important gap in academic research. If we are to successfully expand and retain the pool of African American faculty, especially among the upper academic ranks, it is important to find out why an increasing number of African American academics at American colleges and universities leave academia (Tierney & Rhoads, 1994). If this trend is left unchecked, African American students may eventually find themselves with no African American faculty with whom to affirm their presence or to serve as academic role models and mentors. As African American faculty leave academia, they leave a gap. The gap is often not filled. This exodus disadvantages not only Black students on college campuses who look up to these faculty as role models, but also denies White students an enriched diverse faculty and environment. As a result fewer African American students are likely to graduate. Failing to achieve tenure has been
noted as one of the reasons why minority faculty opt out of academia or move from one institution to another. Thus, finding reasons for the barriers to tenure and strategies to overcome them is especially useful (Gregory, 1999). Furthermore, a study of African American faculty is useful because their historical struggles are unique and the barriers they have had to overcome are formidable.

This chapter presents a historical overview of the tenure and promotion process. Other topical issues discussed include, regulations of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) on tenure and promotion, significance of tenure, policy issues related to tenure and promotion, diversity, factors affecting Black educators in academia, and socialization in the academic community. First, a historical overview of tenure is presented.

Tenure at a Glance

Tenure did not exist until the 1940s (Metzger, 1973). Institutions at that time employed a one-year contract system in appointing faculty. Faculty that did not excel on their annual review were not reappointed. The contract system was prevalent at institutions that were supported by the state and was ratified by governing boards on the premise that yearly appropriations invalidated long-term appointments (Metzger (1973). However, professors sought freedom for their expressions and beliefs on college and university campuses. That is when the American Association for University Professors (AAUP) issued a Statement of Principles in 1940 primarily for two purposes. One, to empower senior faculty as a body qualified to judge other faculty and to make tenured faculty autonomous over capricious dismissal by the institution.
By the mid 1980s, approximately 85% of all colleges and universities had tenure systems in place (Mortimer, Bagshaw, & Masland, 1985). The review of tenure-track faculty according to tenure and promotion policies differed markedly from institution to institution at the time and still does (Baez & Centra, 1995). Institutions that are without the tenure system have term contract systems (Chait & Trower, 1997). Term contracts are renewable at the college’s discretion without any “up-or-out” stipulation (Baez & Centra, 1995). The contract length often varies depending on seniority or length of service (Chait & Trower, 1997). The down side is that most institutions with term contracts are relatively small and financially constrained. Nonetheless, tenure systems have benefits both for the institution and the tenured faculty.

Tenure is probably the most important decision made in a college or university (Diamond, 1999). By awarding tenure to faculty, an institution makes a determination of its future, what its strengths will be, and whether or not its priorities will be met. On the other hand, the “up-or-out” tenure policy disallows inefficient professors to linger on (Baez & Centra, 1995). Tenure is also a trade off for the low salaries paid to professors as compared with other professionals. On the part of professors, tenure ensures job security, but most importantly it affords faculty academic freedom to teach, research, and become innovative without having to worry about losing their jobs. In addition, Baez and Centra (1995) state, “senior faculty do not feel threatened by appointing competitive faculty” to sustain the quality of faculty at the institution (p. 2).

By extension, tenure was originally conceived as a means to protect academic freedom. Tierney and Bensimon (1996) state, “if academic freedom was the goal, then due process, tenure, and the evaluation of faculty work was the path to that
goal” (p. 25). It can be inferred that the U.S. higher education system has advanced from a time when no institution had a structured tenure system in the 1940s, to the present, when 85% of U.S. colleges and universities have some form of tenure for the protection of academic freedom (Cooper & Stevens, 2002). Presently the tenure-track system has become the means by which professors gain respectability in academia.

Universities have therefore come to understand the need to have clearly articulated and fair tenure guidelines that enable the retention of the brightest scholars, particularly in departments in which disciplinary values are not shared (Braxton & Berger, 1999). However, despite all that is known, the process of articulating fair and just tenure and promotion guidelines at institutions of higher education still remains a challenge. Finnegan (1998) notes that without clearly delineated standards for tenure and promotion, junior faculty would probably not receive tenure and might find difficulty in retaining a high confidence level. A case in point is where an assistant professor was denied tenure for not publishing in traditional scholarly outlets (Cage, 1995). In that particular case, a strong emphasis had been placed on teaching and service, and less on traditional scholarship, yet the tenure and promotion decisions were made based on research and scholarship of the faculty. It would be insightful to note how many cases of a similar nature have occurred among African American faculty at the HWU and institute programs that guard against the occurrence of such incidences.

The American Association for University Professors (AAUP) has for decades stressed the importance of clear criteria subject to regular review for tenure and promotion. Yet, this has been one issue that institutions, colleges, schools, and departments have not given the attention that it deserves (Diamantes, 2002; Turner &
Myers, 2000). It is imperative that colleges and universities develop clear-cut guidelines/policies to guide and direct tenure-track faculty about what they need to accomplish in order to be tenured.

More often than not the application of tenure standards is impacted by the value set of each participating academic unit within the college/university culture and perhaps poses a dilemma for non-tenure-track faculty. There is no standard solution to the dilemma faced by tenure-track faculty, as strategies for achieving tenure are subject to extreme variation depending on the institution, discipline, and department (Braxton & Berger, 1999). For example, the advice for one community of scholars within a particular department can be extremely different from that given to another department on the same campus. Thus, complaints about the tenure and promotion process are largely related to a lack of clear guidelines (Turner & Myers, 2000).

Bensimon and Tierney (1994) note that the most confusing aspect of the professional lives of tenure-track faculty is the amount of work expected to be accomplished. In their 1996 study, Tierney and Bensimon found the criteria for what defined good teaching as a measure for tenure and promotion tenuous at best. Although research was important, how it was defined left a lot to be desired. Tierney and Bensimon (1996) found:

In fields such as engineering, most faculty members saw proposal writing and the attainment of grants as part of the research process. In other fields, research counted only if the results were published in a refereed journal, and in still other areas, books counted more than articles. It was not surprising that the sciences attached more importance to multi-authored articles than a field such as education
did, but seemed strange that individuals in the same department had different ideas about what was important (p. 127).

In addition, faculty members were expected to serve on committees at various levels but they were not sure how much committee work was sufficient (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996; Bronstein & Ramaley, 2001). No one seemed to know exactly what was expected in terms of teaching, research, and service. The process of tenure and promotion in “itself was a mystery” (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996, p. 127). Information on the timeframe, who was involved, and how dossiers were compiled was often vague if not contradictory. For instance, faculty “were told by a department chair to develop a dossier one way, only to be informed later by personnel in the dean’s office that they must use another format” (p. 127). Clearly, institutions need to reassess what constitutes rigorous and legitimate scholarship as it relates to tenure, and its relationship to institutional barriers that might maintain ethnic and racial division.

Why Tenure?

Tenure has multiple levels of significance (Whicker, Kronenfield, & Strickland, 1993). The main argument in favor of the institution of tenure is the protection it provides for academic freedom. However, researchers have questioned the value of academic freedom and suggest other ways to protect it (McPheron & Winston, 1993). The existence of tenure has often been perceived as an expensive and wasteful luxury indulged in by professorate freed, through the nonprofit status of colleges and universities, from the rigors of the competitive economy (McPheron & Winston, 1993). McPheron and Winston (1993) maintain that the institution of tenure is not a control
mechanism imposed on universities to protect faculty jobs or to ensure academic freedom, but an integral part of the way colleges and universities function. The tenure system is an equitable response to the highly specialized nature of academic work and to the long-term training such work requires (Finkin, 1996). The rewards for faculty, after achieving tenure are numerous. These rewards include – academic freedom, job security, merit reward and career motivation.

**Academic Freedom**

The formal rationale for tenure has often been the protection of academic freedom (Finkin, 1996; Whicker, et al., 1993). Proponents of tenure have argued that professors under the watchful eye of any authority, the federal government, state government, university administrators, board of trustees, or community, lack the freedom needed to explore new ideas and theories (Finkin, 1996). Tenure overshadows the roadblock to intellectual progress by granting not only job security for keepers of the social knowledge base, but also great autonomy in how those jobs are executed (Finkin, 1996).

**Job Security**

Tenure ensures job security. That is, a tenured faculty cannot be dismissed for insignificant reasons. For instance, a tenured faculty cannot be dismissed based on personality conflicts, she/he is afforded some measure of protection against capricious loss of employment. Tenure also means that faculty members are not at the mercy or
whims of deans, provosts, department chairs or the community (Whicker, Kronenfield, & Strickland, 1993).

**Merit Reward**

Tenure is a merit reward for a job well done. Faculty members are expected to perform well in three main areas, scholarship and research, teaching, and service. Tenure is, therefore, the reward for meeting performance expectations in these three areas. In most colleges and universities, professional training and educational credentials and collegiality also determine tenure decisions (Whicker, et al., 1993). It should also be noted, however, that although institutions formally state that the three criteria for tenure are weighted equally, scholarship and research are more valued, but often varies from institution to institution (Whicker et al., 1993).

**Incentive**

The importance of individual and personal needs cannot be overlooked. Many minority faculty members enter higher education visualizing education as the key to advancement in a global world and a chance to make scholarly contributions. However, this is not the case. In some institutions, higher education is only part of the criteria used to confer tenure. Before being tenured, minority faculty may feel pressure to participate in research projects and service activities only for the sake of building a portfolio for tenure (Garcia, 2000). A few research opportunities may be turned down, by untenured
minority faculty, but after being tenured, they may express more interest in broader, long-
term and daring research projects without fear of being questioned (Garcia, 2000).

In the next section I present policies that are intended to aid institutions of higher
education to create supportive work environments necessary for attracting and retaining
high-quality faculty members. I focus on policies that govern the retention and academic
freedom of tenured and tenure-track faculty.

Tenure and Promotion Policies

In the United States, institutions of higher education have for a long time faced
immense pressure to improve their educational quality (Immerwahr, 1999). Accordingly,
the early 1990s marked the advent of numerous books written to condemn many of the
policies and practices of higher education. Similarly, Altbach (2001) argues that higher
education should not simply tinker at the edges, but rather fundamentally revamp faculty
appointments among other concerns. For instance, the American Council on Education
(ACE) proposes that colleges “alter ways in which they think about and perform their
basic functions of teaching, research, and service” (Eckel, Hill, & Green, 1998, p. 3).
There is need for institutions to transform their practices to remain viable and relevant to
society.

Among the many areas targeted for change are faculty appointment policies,
particularly the traditional academic tenure and promotion process (Immerwahr, 1999). It
seems that tenure policies have not been modified since the early 1990s, when tenure-
track faculty were increasingly under pressure to teach and publish in order to achieve
tenure (Finkelstein & LaCelle-Peterson, 1992). Faculty at that time raised questions about
“equitable treatment, the expectations and policies of the institutions that hired them” (p. 11). Today, critics contend that tenure policies ought to be reformed to “fit” changes in the larger society (Altbach, 2001; Rice & Sorcinelli, 2002). As cited in Altbach (2001), Tierney (1998b) summarized tenure concerns as follows:

Tenure, as we have known it, needs to change in order to keep pace with new social, intellectual, and economic contexts, as do all organizational structures. We ought not to reify a structure – tenure – and assume it is a belief, and that it can be supported without a structure. Protecting academic freedom as the bedrock of the academy is imperative if we are to remain intellectually curious, competitive, and free. But tenure as we have known it will not be particularly functional for the changing circumstances of the twenty-first century (p. 59).

In a similar vein, research has shown that with the changing times, policies written to support predominantly White, full-time, tenure-eligible faculty are antiquated if not harmful at best (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001). Therefore, there is need to stress the reform of such policies to be more inclusive (Rice & Sorcinelli, 2002). It is only then that such policies will be able to shape a work environment that facilitates and promotes the work of faculty of all races/ethnicities and benefits society at large.

It is imperative to note that the AAUP does not provide standards for promotion of faculty from assistant to associate professor or from associate to full professor (O’Meara, 2000). Perhaps if it did, there would not be as much subjectivity in the process. Nonetheless, all policies imply that when faculty members apply for tenure and promotion, they are required to provide evidence that they have grown and achieved in
all areas of evaluation since their last promotion. Tenure policies also stipulate that faculty members have attained all qualifications preceding the rank for which they apply. However, this does not mean that all policies are clearly articulated.

The inadequacy of written policies at colleges and universities are a source of considerable frustrations for all groups of faculty. Faculty members need to have clear-cut statements that direct and guide them in what they need to do to get promotion and tenure. The ACE, AAUP, and United Educators [UE] (2000) and Rule (2000) have provided suggestions for those involved in the decision-making of tenure and promotion. The proposed suggestions are clear standards and procedures for tenure evaluation. The three bodies have challenged institutions to propose guidelines that match those employed in the actual evaluation of tenure-track faculty. It is imperative that department chairs and others involved in the tenure process clearly communicate all criteria for tenure and promotion to pre-tenured faculty at the outset of their appointments (Rule, 2000). Furthermore, institutions should be prepared to develop mechanisms for handling any biases arising from the tenure and promotion process.

ACE, AAUP, and UE (2000) further suggest consistency in tenure decisions regardless of the candidate’s race, gender, disability, and national origin. The application of institutional policy against discrimination related to the tenure process cannot be overemphasized. Tenure policies need to be adhered to at all times by all parties participating in the review process. The ACE, AAUP, and UE further emphasize the importance of candor in the evaluation of all groups of faculty. It is important that all responsible parties in the tenure process explain to faculty the evaluation process and standards for reappointment and tenure. Finally, several organizations suggest
unsuccessful tenure candidates should not be isolated socially. Efforts may be made to help the person relocate to another institution/position. Institutions are also cautioned against overlooking some aspects of tenure policies that may cause uncertainty and/or conflicts (ACE, AAUP, & UE, 2000).

For instance, senior faculty who often hold strong opinions about tenure candidates may wish to convey their opinions privately to individuals who have influence in the evaluation process. From a policy standpoint, the institution should clarify whether such individual opinions should be properly conveyed and considered (Trower, 2000). The concern pertains to how the recipient (influential party) should use the information in the evaluations for tenure. Questions such as to whether such information should be shared with all parties in the evaluation process or whether it should be disclosed to the candidate should be considered. The appropriate course of action is for institutional policies to address such biased possibilities (ACE, AAUP & UE, 2000; Trower, 2000).

Furthermore, since the awarding of tenure and promotion is directly influenced by faculty productivity in teaching, research, and service, policies that identify the most valued outputs also seem more useful than those that imply every activity category is equally important (Fairweather, 2002; Trower, 2000). Policies meant to encourage teaching productivity and effectiveness might adversely affect individual research productivity, and vice versa. Fairweather (2002) suggests that more complex and likely successful policies might reward teaching and research productivity differently at specific points in the faculty members’ career. For that matter, academic policies might differentiate individual faculty responsibilities and allocate rewards accordingly rather
than having a single broad institutional expectation for faculty work. Institutional adherence to the AAUP 1940 Statement of Principles might be a just course.

AAUP Tenure and Promotion Regulations

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) is an association of faculty members (AAUP, 1990, 1995, 2002). AAUP has published rules about the tenure process that guide the granting of tenure in various universities. This is not to say all colleges and universities embrace the rules and regulations of AAUP. However, there are many that adhere to AAUP tenure rules without an AAUP bargaining unit at these institutions.

AAUP rules stipulate that a faculty member has six years to earn tenure. In most settings, if a faculty is on a tenure-track contract and the university does not review him/her formally for tenure, continued employment beyond the tenure decision is deemed equivalent to granting tenure (AAUP, 1995). Once faculty members are tenured, they become full members of the university community. At the expiration of a period, commonly not exceeding six years of full-time service, a faculty member is either accorded tenure or dismissed based on a formal review. A tenured faculty can be discharged only for “just cause” or other permissible circumstances and only after a hearing before a body of his/her academic peers (Finkin, 1996). Contrary to popular conceptions, tenure does not guarantee lifetime employment. Rather, tenure provides that the person will be retained as a full-time faculty beyond a specified period of time.

The standards of “adequate cause” to which the tenured faculty may be held accountable are within the dispensation of each college or university to determine
through its own established rules, provided the rules are not applied in a manner that violates the academic freedom or the common personal civil liberties of the individual (Alstyne, 1996). An institution may grant dismissal for “adequate cause” arising from failure to meet a specified act of affirmative misconduct (Finkin, 1996).

Tenure guarantees that an individual’s professional security and academic freedom will not be placed in question without the observance of full academic due process (Alstyne, 1996). Academic due process ensures that fairly meticulous procedures are observed whenever a formal complaint is made. In addition, dismissal can only be justified on some stated ground of professional irresponsibility. To ensure the impartial determination for dismissal, three facts must be considered: 1) that the stated cause is the authentic cause for dismissal, 2) that the stated cause exists in fact, 3) that the degree of demonstrated professional irresponsibility warrants outright termination of the individual’s appointment rather than some lesser sanction, even after taking into account the balance of service and the personal consequences of dismissal (Alstyne, 1996). Based on the AAUP (1990, 1995) tenure policy, a professor’s appointment cannot be terminated based on displeasure of the views he/she advances on the content of the curriculum, admissions standards, grading practices, etc. A professor is free to criticize institutional policies and practices with which he/she disagrees (Finkin, 1995). This in a sense serves to strengthen academic freedom, which is the main reason tenure was instituted in academia.

In the next section I discuss diversity in relation to the tenure and promotion process. Research has shown that practices that serve to stifle diversity in all of its dimensions are not only insidious but harmful as well (Gregory, 1999).
Diversity

The issue of diversity has been and still is a major subject of discourse at many American colleges and universities. This emanates from the recent pressure to improve the climate for diversity and to increase the number of degrees awarded to support the national economy (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999). In the next ten years, students of color will make up a large percentage of the student population at postsecondary institutions, especially at research institutions (Hurtado et al., 1999; NCES, 2002). The growth in college enrollments of African American students necessitates equitable representation of faculty of the same race/ethnicity in higher education (Gregory, 1999). Gregory concurs with Hurtado et al. (1999) in affirming that faculty of color are able to provide support that benefits students from their particular groups, bring more voices and more diverse perspectives to what is taught, how it is taught and why it is important to learn, all of which are important contributions to the institution.

Nonetheless, despite the challenges presented by home and school socialization in terms of determining opportunities for college attendance, the challenge of recruiting, retaining, and providing a satisfying college experience for an increasingly diverse student population rests with higher education. Research suggests that an institution’s ability to provide a comfortable environment for learning and socializing is a key factor in facilitating the intellectual and social development of all students (Hurtado et al., 1999).
In this era, as higher education institutions learn to serve diverse student bodies in multicultural environments, understanding these environments is essential to improving them for diversity and students’ success. To improve climates for diversity, campuses must first be able to comprehend the broad dimensions of the problem that a relatively poor climate may present. Campuses with low proportions of racial/ethnic groups provide limited opportunities for interaction across race and ethnicity lines. This limits students’ learning experiences. Furthermore, environments that lack diverse populations, underrepresented groups are often regarded as symbols or “tokens” (Kanter, 1977). Kanter maintains that tokenism contributes to heightened visibility of the underrepresented group, exaggeration of differences among groups, and the distortion of individuals’ images to fit existing stereotypes. The fact that racial and ethnic individuals remain minorities in majority White environments contributes to their social stigma and the stress that goes with minority status. The converse is that campuses that increase diversity at all levels significantly improve the college experiences of historically underrepresented groups. Diversity at the student and faculty levels also result in significantly more opportunities for all students to learn how to interact with those from different cultural backgrounds.

Hurtado et al. (1999) study on campus climate for diversity presents the institution’s historical legacy of inclusion and exclusion of various racial/ethnic groups and the institution’s structural diversity in terms of representation of various racial/ethnic groups as two of the elements of a campus climate. A college’s historical legacy of exclusion of various racial and ethnic groups can continue to determine the prevailing climate and influence current practices. At the faculty level, tenure has often been an
important factor in determining the retention of diverse racial/ethnic groups on campuses. In this regard, if commitment to diversity on campuses at all levels is to be continued in higher education, one of the factors that determine minority faculty retention, tenure and promotion, would need to be examined in the context of the academic workplace.

The academic workplace has been described as chilly and alienating for minority faculty (Aguirre, 2000). On one hand, minority faculty find themselves burdened with heavy teaching and service responsibilities that constrain their opportunity to engage in research and publication. On the other hand, minority faculty are expected to assume and perform institutional roles that afford the pursuit of diversity on campuses, yet those roles are often ignored especially in the faculty review for tenure (Aguirre, 2000). This among other factors may contribute to decreased numbers of minority faculty in higher education as many opt out (Gregory, 1999). Given the critical nature of diversity in higher education at the present time, a study of Black faculty is in order.

Increasing racial and cultural inclusion of faculty has been a major concern at many colleges and universities in the American educational system over the past few years (Gregory, 1999; Myers, 2002). For instance, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2002) study on tenure status of postsecondary institutional faculty and staff confirms that there is a great disparity between tenured majority faculty and tenured minority faculty. As of 1998, White non-Hispanics were more likely than Black non-Hispanics to report having tenure, 54 percent versus 44 percent (NCES, 2000, 2002). Yet, although some colleges and universities have made attempts to increase the numbers of minority faculty through affirmative action programs for races/ethnicities, there is still a
significant gap of underrepresentation in higher education that cannot be overlooked (NCES, 2000).

Factors Affecting Black Faculty in Academe

Gregory (1999) states that it is plausible that minorities experience some degree of difficulty matriculating through the tenure process. Gregory’s research indicates that minority faculty have often opted to exit academic institutions for failing to successfully meet the requirements for tenure and perceived limited prospects of obtaining tenure based on their experiences. Although research institutions graduate about 61 percent of prospective African American faculty, only 2.9 percent of faculty members at these institutions are tenured (Gregory, 1999). Many institutions have very low African American faculty tenure rates, progression, and retention. This is attributed to the fact that most African American doctorate holders seem to be concentrated in the lowest ranks; and are found at two-year and four-year colleges and universities rather than larger research institutions (Gregory, 1994).

Research on minority faculty and their status among tenure ranks is not encouraging (Gregory, 1999). Minority scholars are barely present among the tenure ranks in most predominantly White institutions. Two decades ago minority faculty were concentrated most heavily in the ranks of instructor and assistant professor (Gregory, 1994). Today, the trend has barely improved (Gregory, 1999). Minority faculty often find tenure and promotion to be tenuous, inappropriate, unrealistic, or unfairly weighted (Banks, 1984; Gregory, 1994; Myers, 2002). Some minority faculty members never get tenure and are often caught up in the “revolving door” syndrome (Gregory, 1999; Myers,
Research indicates that minority faculty members are affected in many ways by, among other factors, the academic environment, occupational stress, support networks, and formal support systems (Garcia, 2000).

The Institutional Climate

The institutional climate can be explored in the context of department, campus culture, or collegiality – the relation and interaction among colleagues. Most colleges and universities are organized according to academic disciplines such as departments, whose members hire, evaluate, promote, or fire. The nature and quality of a department’s collegial relationships serve as a reflection of its culture and determine whether a department, as a social environment, is healthy or dysfunctional (Garcia, 2000).

Hu-DeHart (2000) notes that like all cultures faculty have a culture that is readily available to those whose backgrounds are most similar or homophilic. Accordingly, new faculty who are White, male, middle class, whose instruction style and subject matter and research interests lean towards the mainstream (what is commonly acknowledged as valuable and reasonable academic work) experience the least difficulty in the tenure and promotion process (Hu-DeHart, 2000). Besides the normal expected pressures that accompany the new and untenured minority faculty, there is the stress and discomfort associated with alienation (Garcia, 2000).

Turner and Myer’s (2000) study suggest that once hired, minority faculty continue to experience exclusion, isolation, alienation, and racism resulting in uncomfortable work environments, especially in predominantly White university settings. Antony and Taylor (2004) note that Black faculty start experiencing negative stereotyping while pursuing
their advanced degrees. In their study, Antony and Taylor found that Black doctoral students experienced stereotyping in many ways, including “tokenism, marginalization, and labeling in a variety of situations including campus life, classrooms, faculty interactions, and exposure to education’s body of knowledge” (p. 99). In this particular study, Black graduate students felt a sense of not being welcomed or valued by White faculty members. Furthermore, Turner and Myers (2000) note, “compared with White faculty, Black faculty are less satisfied with nearly every aspect of their jobs” (p. 22). Nonetheless, despite their dissatisfaction with their jobs or however chilly the climate may be, many minority faculty rarely abandon their academic careers once committed.

**Occupational Stress**

The existing under-representation of minority groups and the desire for colleges and universities to increase minority representation on committees place formidable responsibilities on minority faculty (Turner & Myers, 2000). Minority faculty often find themselves in a double bind; they feel they cannot refuse to serve on committees, even though heavy service loads mean limited time for research. Minority faculty face significant role conflicts, “they must balance teaching, research, and service to the institution, knowing that there are pressures to perform in each area, though rewards are not equal” (Aguirre, 2000, p. 44). In addition, Turner and Myers (2000) point out that White faculty and minority faculty receive differential treatment in terms of work expectations. For instance, “minority faculty are often asked, and feel compelled, to serve on more committees than White faculty members” (p. 26). Turner and Myers (2000)
further explain that Black faculty are expected to accept committee invitations, especially when it involves addressing minority issues.

Thus, some African American faculty have found, through their experiences that obtaining tenure is increasingly difficult because, “many are subjected to emotional and psychological abuses during the tenure review process” (Gregory, 1999, p. 44). Aguirre (2000) outlines barriers in the academic workplace that hinder African American faculty from successfully performing their work gaining respect and attaining job satisfaction. Gregory further states, “Black faculty perceived themselves as less respected in the academic workplace, less likely to receive satisfaction from their academic positions and less certain about their employment futures” (p. 45). The academic environment has often been perceived as using minority faculty selectively, based on their minority status to serve on service and affirmative action committees (Aguirre, 2000). Many faculty of color have often focused more on teaching, mentoring, and community service, activities that deter them from research and as a result, decrease their chances of getting tenure. Similarly, a number of studies have confirmed that the research of African American faculty members have often been trivialized and devalued if it focused on minority issues of social concern (Exum, 1993; Gregory, 1999; Tierney & Rhoads, 1994) because these issues are not of interest in mainstream publications (Turner & Myers, 2000). Research on race, gender, and ethnicity is viewed as not “real” scholarship, particularly when it is presented from an African-centered perspective and the same perception holds for journals (Locke, 1998). Since research is an important component of tenure and promotion, it is clear that such a perception of African American faculty members’ scholarly productivity would have serious implications on their tenure and promotion.
Support Structure

Establishing a successful support structure where new minority faculty can receive direction on a range of issues is essential to their success in the tenure and promotion process (Tierney & Rhoads, 1994). Faculty have to fulfill the job requirements which include preparing new courses, teaching, advising students, research, serving on committees, and attending meetings. Minority faculty may not have role models to help them understand the process. In addition, the demands of the job are often compounded by the isolation they experience because of their race and ethnicity (Blackwell, 1988, 1989; Cooper & Stevens, 2002; Spore, Harrison, & Haggerson, 2002). It is, therefore, not surprising that many minority faculty experience “a lack of respect, lack of publication opportunities, and lack of recognition for their scholarship” (Turner & Myers, 2000, p. 13). Minority faculty continue to report experiences of subtle discrimination in the workplace, which include the devaluation of their work, especially when the scholarly research focuses on minority issues. Furthermore, Turner and Myers (2000) note that subtle and pervasive discrimination in the review and promotion process produces huge differences in stress levels between White faculty and minority faculty.

For ethnic minority women, the support structure is more complex given the disproportionate number of male faculty and the reaction they often have toward mentoring women (Garcia, 2000). Many colleges and universities have formal programs in place that are designed to offer support and assistance to new faculty. The programs provide faculty development seminars tailored to the needs of new faculty such as preparing for tenure, teaching effectiveness, and grant/proposal writing (Garcia, 2000).
Given the above factors, how might the experiences and perceptions of African American faculty about tenure and promotion be insightful to other groups of minority faculty, the institution, and academe at large?

Socialization in the Academic Community

Academic socialization is “a ritualized process that involves the transmission of the organizational culture” (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996, p. 36). Tierney and Bensimon observe that the structure of a number of colleges and universities is designed to filter tenure candidates rather than to advance diverse concepts of inquiry. The cultural systems that are in place at colleges and universities provide multiple ways of evaluating tenure candidates, but the systems do not socialize them to survive and thrive in a community founded on difference.

Researchers have suggested a bidirectional instead of a unidirectional scheme of socialization in which faculty are encouraged to influence and change the institution, just as the institutional mores may influence and change them (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). Early socialization, especially socialization at graduate school has been proven to be rewarding. Antony and Taylor’s (2004) study explains that the mentoring afforded to Black doctoral students in graduate school enabled them to acknowledge the unique challenges that face Black scholars if they took the academic route. Yet, they were able to draw upon the experience and advice of their faculty mentors and rise above the challenges presented in their careers.
Socialization needs to be embraced as a cultural process that orients faculty and the institution to emerging institutional values and ideologies. Within the context of mentorship, socialization is best explained by Bensimon and Tierney (1996):

A senior professor is able to impart more than wisdom or mere information; he/she can also explain how faculty members can work with one another. If history is used merely as a pretext for maintaining the status quo, then new faculty learn one thing about the institution; if it is used as a way to illustrate how contexts have changed over time so that faculty are able to change accordingly, then we learn another. The point, then, is not simply that mentoring is needed, but that we need to consider how the role is assumed so that new faculty are not mentored hierarchically, but instead are allowed to develop their own voices and academic identities (p. 59).

It is imperative that institutions build a conscientious framework for socialization that is shaped by and helps shape the institution’s culture and those within it regardless of their race/ethnicity.

In summary, the current literature review has presented an historical and current overview of tenure and promotion, as well as discussed regulations of the AAUP in accordance with tenure and promotion, the significance of tenure, policy issues related to tenure and promotion, and factors affecting minority faculty careers in academia. The literature review has also teased out important gaps in extant studies that present important avenues for further research. For instance, Gregory’s (1999) and Aguirre’s (2000) studies among others present experiences of women and other groups of minority faculty in academia without any specificity to African American faculty. Similarly,
Tierney and Rhoads (1994) and Turner and Myers (2000) allude to experiences of minority faculty in academia, but rarely do they make specific reference to African American faculty experiences and perceptions of the tenure and promotion process. It is, therefore, important to have a study that focuses on African American faculty given their unique struggles and the barriers they have to overcome. I present the qualitative research methodology in the following chapter.
CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology

Chapter three details the qualitative case study method used in this study. It describes the rationale for selecting this research method, sample selection techniques, methods of data collection and data analysis.

In this study, African American faculty voices are placed at the forefront in accordance with the main philosophies of qualitative research inquiry. Thus the main concern in this research is first, to explore tenured and tenure-track African American faculty experiences and perceptions of the tenure and promotion processes in academia. Two issues are examined: one, how can the experiences and perceptions be understood and two, what are the implications of any findings for professional practice?

The second concern is, how can the academic community rethink policies that may be developed to enhance the upward mobility of this group of faculty members? In addition, the study explores the tenure and promotion challenges and success strategies of tenured African American faculty members at a Historically White University (HWU). Also, I examine how social interaction/collegiality affects African American faculty in relation to the tenure and promotion process. Furthermore, the study is timely because of the disproportionate number of tenured African American faculty members at predominantly White colleges and universities. Although research institutions employ up to 61% of African American faculty, only 2.9% are tenured (Gregory, 1999).

The focus on African American faculty experiences reveals rich descriptions of workplace processes and relations that might not exist in the literature. Mills (1992) states
that “interpretive accounts of organizational culture are important in drawing our attention to the importance of organizational situations in shaping people’s understandings and hence expectations of key aspects of social life” (p. 98). This study explores the notion that faculty experiences are shaped by the dominant discourse pertaining to their positions in academia. According to Burnett (1991), “accounts provide a direction to understanding lived experiences, because they focus on how individuals make sense of their world in their private reflection and analysis, and shared experiences” (p. 122).

Attending to lived experiences as expressed in narratives and accounts enhances the understanding of communication phenomenon that takes place behind closed doors, and provides a unique perspective on participants’ interpretations of workplace processes (Burnett, 1991). Furthermore, studying narratives and the impact they have on institutional participants provides insight into the dynamics of institutional control and resistance (Clegg, 1993). The present study utilizes the in-depth interview approach to direct participants’ attention to their own experiences and perceptions of the tenure and promotion process.

To this end, the approach to investigating African American faculty experiences and perceptions of the tenure and promotion process is primarily interpretive. This approach is informative not only to the research and discipline of education, but also to the academic sphere and society at large. I discuss the interpretive approach and data analysis in the following sections.
The Interpretive Approach

By definition, the interpretive approach refers to the process of explaining the meaning of something. It is a qualitative approach that is premised on a research philosophy that counters much of the traditional scientific research in the social sciences (Denzin, 1989). The interpretive approach informs research by identifying different definitions of a particular phenomenon, locating assumptions held by diverse interested parties, identifying strategic points of intervention in both professional and social situations, and making it possible to suggest alternative moral points of view from which the phenomenon can be interpreted and assessed (Bantz, 1993; Denzin, 1989). It should be noted that within the interpretive approach lie a number of methods and methodologies that researchers can tap into in an effort to respond to particular research questions. Before delving into a discussion of methods used for data collection, I make a distinction between research methodology and research method.

Denzin (1989) describes methodology as “the theory behind the method, including the study of what method one should employ and why” (p. 27-28). Methodology is a body of methods, rules, and postulates employed by a discipline. It is a philosophical framework that positions a particular perspective or approach.

Method on the other hand is defined as a systematic procedure or process used to obtain a desired outcome. Thus, the notion of method is “charged with methodological considerations and implications of a particular philosophical perspective” (Denzin, 1989, p. 280). In other words, method is concerned more with the specifics, procedures, and techniques. In that sense, the interpretive process represents a philosophical and human
science orientation which allows for effective inquiry into the lived experiences of people and strives to preserve the subjective personal dimensions of those experiences. Hence, the methods that comprise a particular interpretive approach are dependent on the research and the object of the study (Bantz, 1993). A discussion of the research site, gaining entry, sampling subjects, and “elite” interviewing follows.

The Research Site

The study was conducted at a predominantly White university research institution, pseudonym – HWU. HWU is located in a small rural town in the Midwest commonly referred to as the Appalachian region. Most people in the Appalachian region are low income earners. However, the HWU attracts professionals from high income brackets from all over the country. It is home to a student population of approximately 20,000 and approximately 2,500 faculty and staff. Of the 2,500 faculty and staff, approximately 800 are faculty, and only 38 of the 800 are African Americans.

The choice of the research site was based on the proximity of the research site to the researcher, financial and time constraints. Most importantly, the HWU presents a unique case because it is still in the early stages of diversity despite the long-term efforts that have been made. Many professionals of color – faculty and staff – have come and left for various reasons. After talking to African American faculty members, it was clear that HWU climate is not conducive to fostering success and retention of this group of scholars. Hence, the need to investigate the tenure and promotion process as experienced by African American faculty members. This is because tenure and promotion process is one of the structural processes that determine the retention or attrition of faculty.
Gaining Entry

Prior to data collection, permission was sought and granted by the Institutional Review Board of the HWU. An electronic letter (see Appendix C) was sent to the elite research participants requesting them to participate in the study. Those who responded in the affirmative were interviewed. At the time of the interview, participants were provided with an oral overview of the project, which included a description of the research topic, methods, and procedures. They were also informed of their rights in the process and asked to sign a consent form ensuring their willingness to participate in the study (see Appendix D). The consent form served to protect participants’ identity and confidentiality. Participants’ names, organizational affiliation and any other identifying labels were removed.

Sampling subjects

When it comes to sampling, qualitative research naturally takes the form of deliberative (purposive) sampling (Ortiz, 2003) and theoretical sampling (Punch, 1998). On the one hand, purposive sampling is where the researcher samples in a deliberate way, with some purpose/focus in mind, for instance, to get specific questions answered (Patton, 2002). Deliberative sampling was deemed ideal for this study because of the variety of opinions it affords. Patton (1990) explains that the power of deliberative sampling lies in the selection of information-rich cases. It is these information-rich cases that subsequently address the object of the study.
It should be noted that there are no standard sampling procedures in qualitative research due to a great variety of approaches, purposes, and settings. Given the nature of this study, identifying resourceful/key informants was imperative. Rubin & Rubin’s (1995) and Ortiz’s (2003) strategy of conducting pilot interviews to identify key informants and snowballing was used in this study. Ortiz defines snowballing as identifying interview participants based on the recommendations of those already interviewed.

Theoretical sampling on the other hand entails collecting data, coding, analyzing and further collection of data using emerging themes as parameters and then coding and analyzing again. This process continues until the saturation point, where themes cease to emerge. That is, the new data collected is not distinct in any way from the existing data (Seidman, 1998). Nonetheless, saturation point might not be reached in the absence of proper consideration of interview participants.

“Elite” Interviewing

The choice of “elite” interviewing in this study is predicated on the assumption that participants are individuals considered to be influential and well-informed people in the community of learners (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Participants are selected based on their expertise in the subject matter of the study. Marshall & Rossman note that elite interviewees often serve as sources of valuable information because of their positions in a variety of realms, social, political, and so forth. Elites such as faculty members can and usually provide an overview of the institution or how it compares with others. They are also able to report on policies and future plans from a particular standpoint. To quote
Marshall and Rossman, “elites often contribute insight and meaning to the interview process because they are intelligent and quick-thinking people at home in the realm of ideas, policies, and generalizations” (114). Elite individuals – African American faculty members – are the main focus of this study, and in-depth interviews are the main source of data.

Data Collection

Research literature indicates that qualitative research approaches take many forms in terms of data collection (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). The most common approaches include in-depth interviews, focus group interviews, document analysis, and observation just to mention a few. A combination of these approaches can be used as the objective of the study may dictate. The approach to data collection in this study was primarily in-depth interviewing. This approach not only provides information rich in detail and substance, but also is “directed toward understanding informants’ perspectives on their lives, experiences or situations as expressed in their own world” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 88). In addition, organizational documents were reviewed.

In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews may take the form of one-on-one interviews and/or focus group interviews (Seidman, 1998). It was determined that one-on-one in-depth interviews were most appropriate for this study because of the sensitive nature of the subject matter. In-depth interviews provide an “understanding of the experiences of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (Seidman, 1998, p. 3). To afford research
participants exploration of their thoughts and feelings without restrictions (as in the case of objective questions), semi-structured open-ended questions were used, which also allowed for a wide range of responses.

The use of semi-structured interviews enables the researcher to guide the interview process on the intended course, and probe further on emerging significant worldviews (Hoepfl, 1997). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility within the parameters of the study. Despite the semi-structured nature of the interviews, an interview protocol (see Appendix E) was used to keep the interviewees on track, ensure some consistency in the outcome, and for analytical purposes. Before the interview process begun, permission was acquired from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), see Appendix F.

In-depth, open-ended interviews serve multiple purposes within the interpretive approach of scientific inquiry (Ortiz, 2003). Research indicates that interviews are used in exploring and gathering experiential narrative material that serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon (Van Maanen, 1990). Also, interviews serve as a vehicle for developing a conversational relationship with a participant about the meaning of an experience (p. 66). Consistent with Van Maanen (1990), Denzin (1989) argues that meanings, understandings and interpretations, cannot be standardized or obtained by means of a formal fixed-choice questionnaire. This is because, it is more than just one person asking questions and the other responding. Interviewing is a skillful act of managing communicative experiences where one or more persons share their experiences in search of self-understanding.
Interviews took place at the participants’ place of work and lasted approximately 90 minutes to 120 minutes. However, a few participants preferred a venue (e.g. restaurant) other than their offices. All the interviews were audio-recorded with consent from participants. Tape recording the interviews as opposed to note taking enabled the researcher to focus more on the interviewees’ cues and needs. Patton (1990) argues, “The raw data of interviews are the actual quotations spoken by interviews” (p. 284). There is no known substitute for such data; hence the need to tape-record the interviews. However, tape-recording does not rule out the necessity for note taking. One can never rely solely on technology, in case of mechanical failure, notes taken would suffice.

Given that the focus of the research is on faculty members’ lived experiences and perceptions of the tenure and promotion process, interview questions followed the guidelines suggested for phenomenological research (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000) and grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2000). Use of myths and stories (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) were encouraged to allow participants to talk about their experiences and perceptions of the tenure and promotion process. Thus, the method and design of the study was informed by a number of theoretical perspectives such as, socialization theory and organizational culture. The selected interview methodology was not intended to “test hypotheses,” or “evaluate” in the sense that these terms are traditionally used. Rather, the intent was to examine the perceptions of individual faculty in depth and in detail so as to have a better understanding of their behaviors, attitudes, and experiences. The interview protocol was designed to address 3 broad questions:

1. What are the socialization, tenure and promotion experiences and perceptions of African-American faculty at the HWU?
2. What challenges do African American faculty at the HWU face in the tenure and promotion review process?

3. What perspectives do African American faculty members have on policies that govern the tenure and promotion process at the HWU?

Participants

There is no specific approach to choosing participants in qualitative research. Participation is normally voluntary and the list of participants expands with time during data collection. However, the number of people who participate in the study is left to the discretion of the researcher (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The initial plan was to interview all 38 tenured and tenure-track African American faculty members at the HWU. However, 21 of the 38 faculty members accepted to be interviewed. Some of those who declined to be interviewed did not give any particular reason although several follow-up attempts were made.

Twenty one faculty members from a single research university form the core of this study. These participants were selected based on their willingness to participate. However, three areas of possible comparison emerged: 1) gender – seven women, fourteen men, 2) tenure stage – thirteen tenured, and eight on tenure-track, 3) discipline – seventeen from Arts & Sciences, one from Education, one from Health and Human Services, one from Engineering and one from Medicine. The age of participants ranged from 31 to 62 years, with a mean of 46.5 years. Two out of the 21 had prior affiliation with the university as students or in an administrative capacity. One faculty had a split appointment with a different academic unit.
The approach to data collection was designed to elicit information about participants’ pasts, their current work experience, and what meaning they attached to their tenure and promotion experiences. Follow up interviews were conducted to expound on emerging themes. This particular approach was also aimed at building relationships with participants. Research shows that relationship-building is an important aspect of qualitative interviewing/research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Ortiz, 2003). To corroborate as well as augment findings from interviews, organizational documents related to the tenure and promotion process were reviewed.

Organizational Documents

Punch (1998) notes that documents, both historical and contemporary are a rich source of data for social research. When used in conjunction with other data, documents can be important in triangulation as well as a source for analysis. They provide qualitative researchers with rich resources of analytic topics. Lindlof (1995) describes documents as indicators of what an organization produces and how it certifies certain kinds of activities such as license or deed and codifies procedures or policies among other functions. Retrieving and analyzing the tenure and promotion documents of the HWU offer many advantages. Taken alone, the value of the document is limited. However, when combined with other forms of data, such as field notes and interview transcripts, the identities and values of the university and its members begin to emerge. For instance, many first-hand accounts of faculty experiences and the influence the tenure and
promotion process has had on them are documented throughout the formal and official
documents produced by the university.

The main documents reviewed in this study included departmental tenure and
promotion guidelines and the faculty handbook. The rationale to review organizational
documents was to augment and corroborate results from in-depth interviews. Denzin
(1989) notes that checking data from more than one source is an important feature in
qualitative research.

Data Analysis

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) suggest that one approach to data analysis is to analyze
data during the data collection phase. It is important that data collection and analysis go
hand in hand so as to build a coherent interpretation of the data (Marshall & Rossman,
1999). The researcher is guided by initial concepts and develops understandings, but
shifts or modifies them as the data collection and analysis phase progresses. This
approach ensures that the data are tentatively analyzed by the end of the data collection
phase. The other approach involves two phases. The first phase involves collecting data
without any preliminary analysis and the second phase involves conducting a formal
analysis of the data.

In this study, a preliminary in-the-field analysis approach was used. However, the
more formal analysis was suspended until data collection was completed. In-depth
interview follow ups on key themes was conducted to get a richer understanding of
participant’s world view. It is only in examining, questioning, and interpreting lived
experiences of individuals that we are able to get a true sense of reality (Rubin & Rubin,
In addition, perceptions of myths, narratives, and stories of individuals also provide some basis for the reality. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) argue that some preliminary analysis must take place in the field; without the preliminary analysis, the data collection process would have no direction and thus lack substance for later analysis. Formal data analysis was done using generic data analysis procedures.

**Generic Data Analysis**

The generic data analysis procedure entails organizing the data; generating categories, themes, and patterns; coding the data; testing the emergent understandings; searching for alternative explanations; and writing the report. Briefly, organizing the data involves reading and rereading through the data to thoroughly familiarize with the data (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The purpose of organizing data is to “clean up” the unnecessary data. Generating categories, themes, and patterns normally supercedes data organization and is accomplished through prolonged engagement with the data. Categories were generated by noting patterns evident in the text. Categories formed became buckets into which segments of text were placed and eventually coded.

Some coding scheme was applied to data categories and themes to mark passages in the data using codes. Codes take on different formats ranging from abbreviations of key words to numbers (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Coding brings together similar ideas, concepts, or themes discovered in the process of organizing data. The next phase in the data analysis entailed evaluating the plausibility of developing understandings and exploring them through the data (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). This phase involved searching through the data and challenging the understanding, searching for negative
instances of patterns, and incorporating them into larger constructs as deemed fit. Testing emergent understandings evaluates data for their usefulness and centrality. This leads to searching for alternative explanations as part of the data analysis process.

Marshall and Rossman (1999) argue that alternative explanations always exist. It is a phase that involves searching for, identifying, and describing alternative explanations as well as demonstrating how the explanation offered is the most plausible compared to other explanations. The final phase in the data analysis is writing the report.

**Research Authenticity**

Research authenticity refers to the validity and reliability of the study. Hoefl (1997) describes internal validity as the extent to which the findings accurately describe reality, and external validity as the ability to generalize findings across different settings. To ensure internal validity in this research, method triangulation and member-checks were employed. Triangulation entailed the use of multiple data collection methods such as in-depth interviews and document analysis. Document analysis served to corroborate and augment in-depth interview data. Member-checks on the one hand involved follow up interviews with the participants to ensure that the emergent themes and interpretations were accurate.

To ensure external validity, “rich thick-descriptions” were used. Merriam (1998) explains that providing readers with rich thick descriptions allows them, “to determine how closely their situations match the research situation and hence, whether findings can be transferred” (p. 211). Reliability on the other hand entailed examining both the process and the product of the study for consistency (Lincoln & Guba, 1995). Lincoln and Guba
argue, “since there can be no validity without reliability, a demonstration of the former is sufficient to establish the latter” (p. 316). Hence the adoption of an “inquiry audit” as proposed by Lincoln and Guba is in order.

Critical Reflections

The African American faculty experience with the tenure and promotion process is an area that has always intrigued me. From my early experience as a master’s student to my time spent pursuing a doctorate, I have, to a large extent, focused on understanding the intricate details of the Black peoples’ experiences in the United States. As a young scholar, I have presented at a national conference in Ontario, Canada, on the experiences and perceptions of Black people using data from on-line health care information. In addition, I have done class projects that entailed interviewing Black faculty members on their tenure and promotion experiences. The overwhelming response to one of my class projects demystified any skepticism I had had about the project, and impelled me to pursue this as a dissertation topic.

My decision to focus on the experiences of African American faculty members with the tenure and promotion process at a predominantly White university was a function of not only having a difficult time getting assimilated in a White culture, but also having been granted access to Black faculty from both Africa and the United States, who constantly shared information with me about their experiences in a culture so far removed from their own. My curiosity about the tenure and promotion experiences of Black faculty members at a predominantly White university acted as a catalyst not only to my gaining access to information and participants, but also to my ability to provide thick
descriptions about a sensitive subject matter. It was at this point that the concept of liminality (Eastland, 1993) became a reality for me as a female African student and researcher from Africa; investigating the experiences of African American faculty at a predominantly White university in the United States. Eastland describes liminality as a temporary state during a rite of passage when the participant lacks social status or rank and is required to follow specified forms of conduct and expected to show obedience and humility.

Although I embarked on this project with some preconceived notions about the kinds of descriptions my research participants might offer, I was surprised to find somewhat both positive and negative encounters, described with utter sincerity. I found that the participants for the most part had found ways to manage their lives and experiences in ways that contributed to their social, physical and mental well-being. As a researcher employing qualitative research methodologies, I realized early the importance of remaining neutral and “non-leading,” before it dawned on me that some of my pre-conceived notions of Black faculty members’ experiences were inaccurate.

My experiences and/or interactions with people from a wide spectrum of backgrounds and knowledge enlightened me to unimaginable degree and served well in this research endeavor. I have lived in this country for the past six years pursuing masters and doctoral studies and working as a teaching assistant and a research assistant. These experiences afforded me the knowledge to the inner-workings of academic units. I may not have been considered an “insider” per se; nonetheless, my training and intentions as a future scholar and educator enable my pursuance of this study. Given that the nature of qualitative inquiry is built around human relationships, Bruckerhoff (1996) underscores
traits that make humans, “instruments of choice” in a qualitative inquiry. He stresses that researchers must:

Have genuine interest in the people studied, listen well, ask questions revealing insight and interest in the situation at hand, show respect for others’ ideas and actions, remember details about people, places and events in the field study, present an attractive personality and appearance, give something of lasting value to the persons or groups studied, keep accurate records of everything according to acknowledged criteria, be honest about intentions and perceptions relevant to the field study, exercise caution, do no harm, and admit personal and professional weaknesses as limitations of the study. The qualitative researcher must become a student whose best known, personal attributes are a child-like innocence, uncommon good manners, and a facile mind determined to know and understand other people and cultures (p. 7).

To take such powerful words lightly as a qualitative researcher would be a disservice not only to oneself but to the human race that form the basis of most qualitative inquiries. I must confess that Bruckerhoff’s words guided my research endeavor throughout the entire process.

Summary

In this chapter I have given an overview of my philosophical approach to studying African American faculty members’ lived experiences and perceptions about the tenure and promotion process at the HWU. The approach to this research is interpretative. This entails drawing on two main data sources: in-depth interviews and institutional
documents. I have also delineated the data collection and analysis phases of the study, in accordance with the main tenets of grounded theory approach. A brief critical reflection of the researcher was also offered. The next chapter presents the findings of the study.
CHAPTER FOUR

Research Findings

The preceding chapter addressed the critical stage of interpretative research, a point where thick descriptions of the lived experiences of African American faculty members at a Historically White University (HWU) were collected. The chapter explicated the approach used in the study and explained how interviews and documents were used to capture specific and personal accounts.

This chapter presents the application of Denzin’s (1989) interpretive process known as “bracketing.” It is here that the research findings (the phenomenon) are broken down into themes and independently analyzed for meaning. In this chapter, the essential features of the experiences of participants are isolated using the process of thematizing. Thematizing entails identifying clusters of common descriptions and isolating them for further scrutiny. Denzin maintains that thematizing serves to give structure to the wide variety of lived experiences offered by participants.

As was explained in chapter three, the themes in this study are discussed using an interpretive perspective. The goal of the chapter was to interpret or make sense of the data collected through in-depth interviews and document analysis. Thus I examined the voices and words of African American faculty members at the HWU in relation to the tenure and promotion process. In addition, Bantz’s (1993) 5-step process of interpretation was used to explain the gathered messages. The first phase involves gathering and organizing the information. In the second phase, messages are analyzed for vocabulary
and themes. In the third phase, the symbolic forms are analyzed. In the fourth phase, inferences and expectations are constructed. In the fifth phase, inferences about the meanings of the messages are made. It is important to note that Bantz’s (1993) 5-step model was developed to facilitate an understanding of an organization that was developed from its communicative life. Only phases 2 and 5 are used in this study. Phase 2 is ideal for this chapter and phase 5 is ideal for chapter five. Since phase 1 was discussed in chapter three, this chapter focuses on phase 2 of the process of interpretation. Consistent with Bantz’s (1993) model, the vocabulary on the one hand leads the researcher to certain repetitive messages and on the other hand messages are coded for themes to provide the rich data necessary for interpretation.

It should be noted at the outset that this research does not in any way purport to describe the collective tenure and promotion experiences of African American faculty at all predominantly White research universities. Nor does it attempt to explicate the inter/inner-workings of academic departments, processes, and procedures of the academic tenure system. The research simply presents the tenure and promotion experiences and perceptions of 21 African American faculty at a historically White university.

As stated in chapter one, the study reported here examined in detail the tenure and promotion experiences and perceptions of African American faculty members at a Historically White University. The chapter is organized in concert with the three specific research questions posed in chapter one. First, themes that address the first statement, the tenure and promotion process as experienced and perceived by African American faculty members at the HWU are presented. Second, themes that address the second statement, challenges encountered by African American faculty members in the tenure and
promotion process are presented. Third, themes that address the third statement, African American faculty members’ views on policies that govern the tenure and promotion process are examined.

Themes

Thematic analysis as explained by Bantz (1993) is a two-criterion process of reduction. Essentially, themes must occur frequently within the messages and they must represent “at a minimum a simplex of ideas and at a maximum a multiple complex of ideas” (p.95). The thematic analysis of interviews and documents revealed one overarching perception that the climate both within and outside of the HWU is not perceived as supportive of African American faculty members. This is supported by the majority of the themes that address the three questions in this study.

The following is a summary of thematic constructions that address the three questions: 1) supportive departments, 2) racial and cultural insensitivity, 3) third-year review 4) unsupportive chair, 5) the political nature of tenure , 6) knowing what it takes, 7) collegiality, 8) differential treatment, 9) organizing the tenure dossier, 10) balancing time, 11) research validation, 12) fear of tenure denial, 13) formal mentoring program, 14) unclear tenure guidelines, 15) time release. Themes are examined in detail as the voices of participants are heard through their messages to each other and to the broader audiences; they serve as a guide for enacting and believing in perception.

Consistent with much of the existing literature on the experiences of the African American educators in academia, this study reveals a number of distinctive demands on and pressures facing African American faculty members on tenure track appointments. In
a nut shell, this study reveals that African American faculty are not only faced with definitive tasks, such as designing courses and writing and securing grants, but must contend with the implicit, such as knowing where to get the support and answers they need. They have to make sense of ambiguous and often obscure or hidden information, have to gauge departmental politics and factions and have to delicately establish their credibility among peers and senior colleagues. It is a difficult set of hurdles for the majority of participants in this study. I present themes that address the first research question in the next section.

Tenure and Promotion Experiences and Perceptions

Supportive Department

When asked to talk about their tenure and promotion experiences at the HWU, a number of African American faculty members who participated in this research felt that they had departmental support when they were going up for tenure. The sentiments of most participants are summarized in the following quote:

I think it went pretty well, it was a unanimous vote…. In the area of publication, I admit that I did the bare minimal, I did not submit anything for jury publication; I submitted book chapters, something I knew that would get published. In this school that was okay because they accept just about anything as research. I knew I wouldn’t try that at Indiana, Wisconsin or Michigan. Those are very strong research institutions. I think the tenure process was okay for me, I thought it wasn’t violating as it has been in other cases I know of. For instance, there was a
woman in this department, despite the fact that she had to juggle her career with a husband and children, she had done, to my knowledge, what would qualify her for tenure, yet the committee had issues with her. They didn’t seem to have issues with a male faculty who had barely done anything to warrant tenure. His dossier was mediocre so to speak… the woman had to contest and eventually got tenure.

The tenure and promotion process is dynamic and therefore, the standards by which faculty members were measured more than ten years ago might not suffice today. The process has continually undergone transformation to include requirements that were not previously part of the review process, "faculty are now being involved with research more, it’s also the direction the university is taking.” What used to be a sort of an in-house process now has a different format in the sense that tenure candidates are required to go through two separate reviews. That is, candidates are reviewed by their departmental tenure committees and by external reviewers as determined by their departments. An in-house process entails clearance for tenure and promotion at the school, the college, and university levels. Gender can also be an issue in the tenure review process as the above quote indicates. Clearly, the male faculty who did not do much to warrant tenure ended up getting tenure while the female faculty who probably warranted it, given what she had done, had to contest to get tenured.

For some faculty members, going up early for tenure and promotion served to alleviate some of the pressure they would have otherwise felt if they had had to wait to go up much later. The following quote is reflective of this view:

Specifically about me, when I came here I came with a lot of experience. The process was not changed but I was given three years to apply for tenure and that
was to my advantage. Because number one, it would take out the pressure for me to develop a more secure job. Whereas I think the normal process requires seven years, I was offered that opportunity in three years. At the same time, the downside of it is that if I came in and I was a bad apple, they could actually get rid of me in less than seven years. The process itself, I think, has changed tremendously, but when I came through, the process was pretty fair.

Even though going up early for tenure and promotion might be perceived as pressure relieving, it is nonetheless a win-win situation for both the faculty member and the university. The tenure process is also viewed as fair by those who were evaluated based on their productivity and performance. For instance one respondent stated, “I was evaluated on my productivity, on my performance and track record and I personally didn’t see any racial implications related to the process. I just can’t remember any obstacles or concerns of any type going up, I thought that was incredible.”

The complexity of going up early for tenure and promotion lies in its potential to hamper somebody else’s chances of getting tenure. This happens in instances where other candidates have low competitive edge relative to the candidate that is going up early. The dynamics have an influence on how one anticipates his/her own chances of successfully acquiring tenure and promotion. More importantly, going up early might raise questions of whether individuals will or will not be judged on their own merits.

An important factor in the tenure and promotion process is the stand taken by other faculty members, tenured or untenured that affect the outcome of the process another respondent stated, “for me, when I went up for tenure, it seemed like faculty in
this department wanted you to be successful. So we showed each other how to be successful in getting tenure. It’s a different world out here.”

It is also imperative that a faculty member’s tenure and promotion committee feel confident about his/her research. The tenure and promotion process may be stressful and demanding and one may feel frustrated at best, but with due support, the process is viewed as tolerable by some faculty as stated by one:

Actually, putting my dossier materials together, the process was good. I think they felt confident and knowing that I felt confident about my research. I had the material to support the research. So the process was okay. A lot of work; that is why I say okay. It pretty much consumed my winter break. And, usually during winter break I’m getting out of here. And so, having to stay here and be absorbed in so much, so immersed in that process is really hard work, it’s frustrating. And, I mean I got through, glad I did it and everything. The process was fairly okay, better than I had anticipated, but a lot of that had to do with my colleagues.

Cultural and Racial Climate

Many of the participants recall having had a cordial reception when they first joined the university, but like everything else, things changed with time. Initially it is okay, but then later there is always going to be tensions. People, the majority of White women think you’re an affirmative action hire, when the reality is the majority of White women are affirmative action hires, and you’re not. You’ve got to prove yourself. It’s not your potential; it’s what you prove you’ve done to get your position in academia. I was not so concerned because of my husband, he was already here and I already knew what
he had experienced as a faculty member in another department in another college. He had a horrific time with racism with the vice chair when he was going through tenure.

Other participants recall having difficulty adjusting in a community that is predominantly White especially when they have come from places that are more diverse than what the HWU offers. Racial tensions clearly exist:

I’m a very race-conscious person, and it wasn’t until this year that I fully recognized that there is a lot of racial tension. Hearing conversations where African American faculty members in other areas talk about the difficulty they are having, what they are dealing with as a minority in their various programs. It wasn’t until recently when I started talking to people in other departments that I realized this is really an issue at this university. And of course, now the buzz word is diversity, I think may be that has something to do with it. I thought initially it was just physically seeing this university and the people as a community; that was my perception of the racial difference. And like I said, it wasn’t until we actually allowed ourselves to explore the community, connect more with the African American professors in different departments that I realized there are some racial concerns here.

The racial climate in the context of diversity is for the most part viewed as apathetic and frustrating if not disillusioning. One participant sums it up in the following quote:

I mean, they talk a good game, they talk the talk but they are not walking it. With current budget cuts, the first thing that goes is any money spent on diversity. Any faculty member who holds some office that deals with diversity has left in recent
history. As soon as that person leaves, there’s no effort to fill that position. For example, [a colleague I know] did not get the support she needed in her unit in order to fulfill the needs of African American students who needed help because of their sexual orientation. And after she left, there was no effort to fill her position. [Another staff] who was special assistant to the president for diversity just left to take up a position at another university. So I’m waiting to see if they’re going to fill that position or not. We are ignored, I don’t think we’re appreciated, and so when we do leave, whether because of tenure or not, the administration really doesn’t pay much attention to us.

There is an African American faculty in [a different department] leaving for various reasons. Another faculty member in the same college, different department is looking; he wants to move to another city. This is natural. I mean, you can’t expect everybody who comes to this university regardless of their color to stay. But from my personal experience, diversity is pretty apathetic. As long as you don’t have to spend any money, as long as you don’t have to take a stand, or go against the “old boys” network [it is okay], so I’m pretty disillusioned. My concern is that my former university, had two Black presidents and they could be manipulated and used. They didn’t have any strength and backup. I hope the new president at this university actually wants to make some changes here and especially if he wants to improve the climate or progress faster. The latest equity study, whatever they are doing, I mean, how many more studies do you need? We already have the data; it’s just a matter of putting things in place to improve the
situation. So diversity is just talk. It’s the political thing to do, talking. It doesn’t make any difference if you actually don’t do anything but talk.

It is the general perception of the university and the surrounding community that the university/town is a small perfect place to live. However, there seems to be a wave of cultural insensitivity on the campus that most participants alluded to:

This place is a little nice place to live. If you’re White, it’s wonderful. And they think in there own frame of reference, having a lovely time, great place for kids, lots of things to do, so what’s your problem? How come you can’t adapt? Why can’t you like to do things we like to do? You are supposed to assimilate, become like us. We bring you here we like diversity in terms of how you look, but we don’t like diversity in terms of how you think. We don’t want to embrace your different cultures or different points of view or different ways of looking at things.

If I need my hair done, I have to go to Columbus because there is no one here who can do Black hair. That’s not important to them; it does not affect them, so why should they be concerned about it? They seem to think that you ought to be able to adapt. I’m pretty assimilated, I’m probably the one who did the most changing in order to adapt.

Even in my own area of expertise there is, and I don’t mean in a negative way, ignorance, not knowing about cultural and racial sensitivity. And so I feel like sometimes that burden is on me to have to teach it, but it’s not until an incident comes up that I realize things these people don’t know. Not that I mind taking that time out per se, this is an issue and we need to deal with it. We can’t
dance around it. We have to talk about it, we have to have some dialogue, and fortunately it was in my own department that they were very open to it.

In other incidences participants felt that they are often caught up in a double bind especially in cases where race is implied. For instance, avoiding talking about the issue only confirms perceived stereotypes, yet at the same time talking about it may aggravate the situation, as evidenced in the following quote:

About five students, one after another, came to my office one quarter complaining about a faculty member, who they said treated them in a racist manner. They didn’t appreciate it. You know, naive me, I just got tenure; I didn’t know how the system worked. So I figured that if I brought up the issue during peer evaluation, on a committee, that the director would talk to the guy. He may not agree that what he said was racist, but that he would just be put on notice to watch it. Didn’t work that way! The director didn’t address the issue at all. And when the faculty member in [question] found out that I had asked some questions and another Black faculty member had made the same accusations, he filed a professional ethics grievance against me demanding an apology, wanting me to be fined 10% of my salary, it was nasty. And then after that it was just a series of retaliation every opportunity he got. I filed a complaint, we dragged it out, he put it in the newspaper. The university decided they could not do anything because nothing had happened. It’s been six years of a waste of my time.

In a similar vein, isolation for instance, being the only African American faculty in the entire college, only seems to aggravate cultural insensitivity. One feels invisible yet
at the same time highly visible. African American faculty deal with issues that majority faculty never have to deal with.

I’m the only African American in this college, in all the departments… so with somewhat being removed from the main campus, I do not have a lot of exposure to what’s going on in the general university community. However, my experience here at this college specifically dealing with race is that I’m an invisible person. People go out of their way to show me or prove that race is not an issue that sometimes they miss the important parts where race is an issue. What I mean by that is, because of the global [perception] that race is not an issue they don’t see color, they just see a family person. [That is what] they would like to impress upon. The persona they would like to get across. There are certain issues that are distinct to Black faculty such as, the feeling of isolation, knowing that you have no one that looks like you in a similar position. When we get to the social aspect, you have to really start thinking about even the mundane stuff like where do Black faculty, I mean, where do I go get a haircut. You know, my wife, where does she get her hair done. Where do we go to church, even the mundane issues come up. There is no mechanism in place that even remotely addresses those issues, because once again, they treat me like, you know, not so much as a Black faculty, but just another faculty person. Just like everyone else, but in fact I am not just like everyone else. It is a total package that I think gets ignored all the time when you deal with faculty of color.
Third Year Review

Generally, tenure and promotion reviews are designed to direct and guide a person in the right direction. Yet, reviews can also leave one confused bewildered and confused when they say one thing and mean the other. Faculty members in this study seem to have been encouraged by their third year reviews, meaning they were on the right track to getting tenure, only to be told in the final analysis that they did not meet the requirements:

We go through a third year review, is that point at which they say, okay you’re on the right track, you can continue. I got encouragement in my third year review, they said okay, things look good so far, but we really want you to focus on your research….. Other departments have a yearly review. [Anyway], I saw a pattern early, but I could not make any charges, you can’t prove what hasn’t occurred in the future. One can have enough foresight to say I see a pattern here, I see things I don’t feel comfortable with. You see a pattern that tells you that individuals once they start off with the negative, they find negatives, okay, and that’s all they look for. Eventually you are told you don’t qualify for tenure.

For faculty members on the receiving end of more definitive forms of feedback, feeling obligated to “read into” the underlying assumptions or having to contend with contradictory messages is both frustrating and preoccupying.

In other instances faculty members have been downgraded for the simple fact that their research is not yet in print even though it is forthcoming. Since publishing takes a while before the final product is actually out on the market, one would imagine that
faculty members would be applauded for their scholarly efforts. Yet that is not always the case. There seems to be no clear criteria and/or double criteria for evaluating faculty work.

A lot of things I pull sometimes have been forthcoming, in press, because that is the state they are in. So she [chair] changed it. So when I go to put in my stuff, I had to rewrite it based on what these new things are that they have come up with. So because most of my stuff is forthcoming, I was downgraded for my productivity for last year. And so, this year they better be in print. Every year there’s not been one time where I have not had to say to the chair, this evaluation is unfair. There has only been one time where I got a five out of five, only once. I think it had to do with who the chair was… One of the things said at the faculty meeting was that there is no clear criteria in terms of how they are coming up with all these judgments about who should get what on their evaluation. There is no criteria, and I cannot get this department to set up such a criteria like [that] over in the Arts and Sciences, and say somebody who publishes an article gets this rating, someone who publishes a book review gets this rating, someone who publishes a book gets this rating, book chapter this rating. They won’t do that here because they want to leave it abstract, so whoever is on the committee can decide.

Which I think screws me up every time, because there’s always someone on the committee from that pool who doesn’t like me. Who feels like I’m a traitor, or I haven’t been collegial, and they are not really paying attention to the work that I do. For example, I’m a staff on two ARA committees, ARA is a big committee, American Research Association, can’t get better than that. I was told
so what. Evaluations matter when you go up for tenure and promotion. I’m always outvoted because I want them to say what the rule is. So what if people are good at changing the rule. Tell me what the rule is. I will learn the rule and do better than the rule. Because if you don’t tell me what the rule is, I’m guessing and that’s the problem with our evaluation process and the tenure and promotion process. So I just have to go with what I know, and that’s, overdo, you always have to be better than White people, you’ve got to do better. If you just do what they do, they’re like okay, that’s good. No! I do more because that’s the rule for you, you’re Black. You know that’s the unwritten rule. It was so clear to me that they had been deciding these things arbitrarily based on who is on that committee, and there feelings, and there own lack of productivity. I should add, versus what somebody has actually accomplished.

Across participants in this study confirmed that performance appraisals in academic departments are complicated by, among other things, intricate interpersonal dynamics among colleagues and unstated rules. Although many describe defensive reactions to these dynamics they soon realize that it is a steep and slippery hill without the support of colleagues and administrators.

_Unsupportive Department Chairs_

One would imagine that department chairs are selected based on their impartiality in making judgments, charisma, and leadership style just to mention a few good qualities. However, these same qualities that make department chairs stand out among other faculty
members are the very qualities that seem to be on the judgment stand in the tenure and promotion proceedings:

I never felt that the chair [of my department] was supportive when I came in, in certain situations. When I came here I taught huge sections of courses and I always got excellent reviews. When one looks at teaching reviews and says to me, it’s not that you’re good, but you’re okay… what students are reflecting is a comparison, and these guys are so bad that they make you look good, kind of thing. And I walked away and said, you know, should I have said something. Should I have addressed this? Terrible! Terrible! Because, you know, one of the things that I enjoy is teaching. My students always say that I am enthusiastic. My course ended, subsequent to that the course was changed, the whole process was changed. There were three sections, I had an entire section. Okay, so I taught the entire section, somebody else the next section etc. It wasn’t comparing A to B to C within the same student group. It was my group simply saying whatever. The next thing that happened, you know, your teaching is fine, but you need to get your research up and running. Every year same review. I got nominated for university professor, it required that you be given a year off of teaching. That requires approval of your chair. So I went to him and said, would you approve, and he turned to me and said, your teaching is not up to scale. You don’t need university professorship. You’re only looking good because of the other two incompetent faculty.

The [one year] release never really came. The tenure review process, to give an example, every year was like that, regardless to me what I did, it always
had this stigma, this kind of, well he was never good enough. And so the more that happened, the more I started thinking, this guy is not supportive, there is something here. My wife can tell you that at that time I just didn’t want to talk to anybody, because I knew exactly what was gonna happen. No matter what I did he [my chair] would always find something negative to say. It was always negative, yet he created the impression that he was supportive.

The majority of faculty members felt that the reason why their department chairs were not supportive in the tenure and promotion process was because the department chairs did not like them on a personal level. It seems the department chairs in many instances were unwilling to genuinely review faculty members’ progress.

My former chair was trying to really undermine me. Basically, had I not had any publications by the time I came up for tenure and promotion, I would have been crushed. My chair was also forced to give me a third year review, which he did not want to do because apparently he did not like me, he was working against my best interests. One of my colleagues who is now retired, insisted I be given a third year review so I could know if I was on course for tenure and promotion.

For those faculty members who received regular formal evaluation, feedback provided by the department chair only propagated feelings of uncertainty and apprehension.

*The Political Nature of Tenure*

In many instances the tenure and promotion process is perceived as being political in the sense that any number of reasons could be used to deny tenure to a faculty whose
teaching, research, and service are up to scale. One participant whose experience resonates that of the majority of participants recalls:

The tenure and promotion review process was nothing other than trying to undermine the ultimate outcome. Subsequent to that I learned a lot more that confirmed what was the case. There were other politics involved. I didn’t see the review on the letters that were issued because one of the things the letter says is that even if you have a good review, it’s what the tenure committee decides that counts. Yet, if the letters say we don’t think you qualify, then they can use the reviews. So I didn’t know that. So I put my dossier together and submitted to the committee…. It’s hard when you see the games that people try to play to justify their decisions. None of us has all the skills or all the answers. You’re supposed to prove that you’re an independent researcher, okay. Several things they were trying to push were getting my research going, but the lab was not ready yet at the time.

My work was very connected to what I was doing earlier, I got a piece published with my former advisor against his objections. Worked on another project with PhD students in my lab and got it published. Thank God it paid off because I never stopped believing in what I was doing. Things like that to somebody who is unaware of my research, simply translates to Dr. so does not meet the requirement [for tenure and promotion]. One committee member with whom I had done a number of projects voted against me, disregarding my input in his work. Another requirement is outside letters, if the letters were negative they would be useful to him. Even if there are rules, the interpretation can be in such a
way that it is to your disadvantage and it is one of the strategies that is used across the board. You cannot argue with somebody that the letters say x y and z but it does not inform me…then indeed it isn’t about you. And I see a letter that says five good things and one negative, the same can be interpreted differently. Because you take that one negative thing and say it’s the most important, the other good things are useless.

The tenure and promotion process is perceived as political based on existing racial overtones that come into play especially at faculty meetings. Evidently, at these meetings African American faculty are put on a judgment stand should what they say end up being perceived as challenging the norm. The idea of the “alpha male” as one participant put it, seems to reign at certain levels, not to mention being judged on the basis of one’s background:

This is a microcosm of the world, people come from all sorts of backgrounds and have views of being in our place and that kind of stuff. My personal view is, I’m not gonna be in a department and not make a contribution. Most people don’t want you. Unfairness repulses me, whether it is among children, adults, I can’t stand it. And so, if the process is unfair, I will raise my hand and ask questions. And I’ll say are we being fair here, and a lot of people don’t like that coming from a Black person. If it were coming from someone else, it’s okay. There’re people who have this idea [that] who are you to be able to say this or that. They are not comfortable with that. And so, I feel racism manifests in people who have this in the back of their mind, the feeling that because you’ve come from, you’re less than. There is still a lot of stereotyping.
Some people say, we have stereotypes, they’re poor people, okay, yeah! We’ve a whole institution of racism and you cannot single somebody out because they could be well dressed or speak well or whatever. Until you go and look at their finances or where they live, you don’t know that. Your system has told you that anybody who looks this should be this or be that or behave this way or whatever. And so that’s the kind of thing that you find with individuals. Especially when that individual is powerful, and the problem with institutions is when you’ve got the powerful individuals making decisions and I use the idea of the “alpha male,” if the alpha male is the one who feels that way, everybody falls in line in academia.

Sometimes [the way you’re treated] has to do with how you came. I felt [my tenure experience] had to do with how I came. I read a memo at one of the advisory committee meetings which simply said, had this been a White individual … the idea was for me not to be able to make it at this institution, that was in a memo. So before I came the faculty had a meeting. When I am around here thinking oh, everything is peaches and cream, there were some people who were saying there is no way in the world I could make it. Even though I had the highest evaluations in this department, it never mattered. This is how the process works. So for whatever reason it was, I was never wanted here.

I personally feel race had to do with it. However, one does not have other minority faculty members in the department before who had gone through this process to see a sense of a pattern. It does not give me much support in my conclusion. But, I think it’s one theory that is not support free. All you have to do
is listen to the others. What I think, what happened is, when you start off by saying we don’t want this university to be coming and telling us we need to hire minority faculty, we’ll support them. The department doesn’t have the ability to say well, we don’t have money. The provost has created a pot of money to support this process, okay.

The tenure and promotion process is also described as political in the sense that there are those of the majority faculty group who barely do enough but yet qualify for tenure and those of the minority group whose work reflect excellence and promise but do not qualify for tenure and promotion. To say that people come up with all sorts of justifications to deny African American faculty tenure is an understatement. By the same token, leaders who recognize flaws in the tenure and promotion process and step up to the plate to correct them are admired:

Publication-wise, some individuals who hadn’t even reached my level of publication had been tenured and promoted. A senior administrator recognized the differences between my dossier and that of the other individuals who had been tenured, there was no comparison. You come in and they are stuck in the negatives, so you ought to have confidence. It’s a very complex set of dynamics and I think it has to do with the individual [going up for tenure and promotion]. The senior administrator had enough courage to do the right thing in overturning the tenure decision. He said he knew he would pay a price, and to understand that you would pay a price for making the right decision, I think is admirable.
Knowing what it takes

Across participants in this research expressed the importance of knowing what it takes to “get there,” meaning getting tenure and promotion. Being rigorous and demanding more on the part of students is important in the sense that students get to learn a lot, but it can also affect how students evaluate faculty. Ideally having mentors and a supportive network of colleagues and friends cannot be overstated. The following quote summarizes the sentiments of most participants:

I used to teach gender classes and race studies, but as an African American I taught it from a base of knowledge, critical theory, critical race theory, feminist theory. So I’m speaking to them [students] about our field, I’m speaking to them about the knowledge base. I’m asking them to learn the knowledge base, most people do not understand that there is a knowledge base in Black Studies. It’s not equal to just talking about what being Black is. In this college people’s evaluations are 4 and 5s on a scale of 5 which I find very interesting. So my evaluations were not a 4. They don’t understand that number one, I’m making the students learn more, because I’m a very rigorous person. That’s what I learned in my own graduate education. So I always ask the students to do more than other faculty cohort, and that was the issue with the students. I always ask them to read things I assume they want to read about. I want them to read about the structure of racism, not how people feel, but how people have structurerized that White people are at an advantage. That White males and White females are at an advantage over other groups structurally, they don’t want you to read that. So my evaluation
is not going to be as high as that of my colleagues’ and they didn’t seem to want to understand that. Until recently, I was being downgraded because my evaluations were low; they were not as high as everybody else’s.

I have a high understanding of; I know what it takes to be successful in the academy. I have a lot of colleagues, a lot of mentors in the academy, they mentor me well. So people think I’m arrogant, but I’m not, I’m just real clear on what it takes to be successful, and it’s not whether or not you like me, it’s publications. That’s what is going to make you a success in the academy, not how well you schmooze [sic] and schmooze. I know that there were people who didn’t like me before going up for tenure and promotion. So I knew that the only weapon I had [at my disposal with which] to eradicate their personal feelings about me was again, publications and my service. They were gonna wrangle my teaching, which they did, but they couldn’t argue with my service, or with my publication record. So there was no reason why they couldn’t give me tenure. And, I knew that going into tenure, so in some ways I felt good about it. But even with that, someone voted no on my tenure and promotion, so it wasn’t a unanimous decision. It should have been a unanimous decision. Because a year before a male faculty member had gone up for tenure, he had excellent teaching evaluations, for the most part 4 and 5s but he didn’t have service, and surely didn’t have any publications. He had a unanimous vote. Same thing with two White women that went up, they had pretty good teaching evaluations, one had okay publications, the other was like uhmm… At another institution what they put up for publications wouldn’t have counted and I know that. This is not a Research I
institution, so some of the things they put up counted for publications. But even given that, they had a unanimous vote. So it left me feeling unsure who the person was, I didn’t trust them anyway, because you wonder who around here is thinking I don’t deserve tenure and promotion.

It seems as if being rigorous in terms of demanding more from students, service and publications, does not necessarily afford one a clear slate for tenure and promotion. There is a whole set of dynamics that play into the process, especially considering there are those faculty of the majority group who do less, yet end up with a unanimous vote on tenure and promotion.

However, for many faculty members, attitudes toward their jobs seem directly related to the meaning they ascribe to acquiring academic tenure. Their self-discipline manifests itself through focusing on task, and getting the papers out for publication, and isolating themselves from departmental dynamics and politics. Many appear to possess a strong sense of optimism and confidence that the outcome will be favorable and meritorious rewards will ultimately follow.

As much as students’ evaluations matter, each department has its own criteria for tenure and promotion. While some departments may place more emphasis on research, than teaching and service, the reverse is true for other departments. And so it is not overstretching to infer that each one of these three areas (teaching, research, and service) is evaluated based on the philosophy of the discipline to which faculty belong. For instance:

Some schools you don’t teach well, they get rid of you. Our program you’ve got to teach well or leave. That’s because we have a good reputation within our entire
college in the teaching area. So you can’t teach well, you’re out of here. You just forget it. You can be scholarly, but if you don’t perform well in the classroom students will say the guy can’t teach. So focusing on teaching and scholarship is vital in this institution and in this academic unit.

Participants admit that African American faculty members are determined to be successful in their careers even with the seemingly lack of support that manifests itself in many ways:

My colleagues were doing things to me… when I had cancer one of my colleagues told me not to use cancer as an excuse. Just the negativity and taking classes away from me without any consideration, without even asking me was beyond my comprehension. They gave me undergraduate classes which they knew I got lower evaluations than my graduate courses. So I felt it was always a conspiracy. The last meeting I went to in [my former] program with those people before I came up for tenure was a total attack on me. Who I was, how come I was asked to teach in a research program, which now I am [teaching] full-time, and I agreed to do it, so how come I had to do that. So I was like shoot, you teach in other programs, you do what you want to do without permission, but I can’t? It was so clear to me they had spent some time talking about this and they were gonna get me at this meeting, and I just laughed. It totally threw them off. The first question, African Studies White guy says, what do you know about qualitative methodology. And I’m like it depends on who you read, he’s like I’m not gonna go there, I’m like fine! Because he knows he couldn’t go there with me. When it comes to an intellectual discussion they can’t hang, they want to do party
stuff. I don’t engage in that, so we can’t connect on that level. If it’s not about that, then I really don’t have anything to say.

Even though I had emergency surgery my first quarter, then I had breast cancer a year and a half later, I published, still presented, and did what I needed to do. So I have upped what is possible, and I think that scares them because I am setting the bar higher than what they are willing for it to be.

**Collegiality**

Participants described tenure as a marriage contract, and collegiality is a huge part of the contract. Even though collegiality is not stated in the tenure and promotion guidelines as part of the requirement for tenure and promotion, it nonetheless, has important ramifications. The sentiments of faculty members interviewed can best be summarized in the quote below:

The drawback to tenure and promotion stems from the unwillingness of the individual members to really examine the review process. They have a liking or dislike for the individual whom they are reviewing, it is human nature. Tenure is like marrying someone, there are intangibles that come into the decision-making process, how well the person is liked is not quantifiable, it’s from within, inside. Collegiality is a major factor, they don’t talk about it, but it’s there. It is like the sixth sense. In any case it makes the whole process subjective. On what basis do you make a decision to marry someone in a dating relationship? You look deeper and deeper, on the intangible, the deeper you get, the more subjective it gets. The same thing with tenure, it’s a permanent relationship. If you work well and do not
relate well with colleagues, then you’ll not get tenure. Collegiality really shouldn’t be an issue in the tenure and promotion process unfortunately it is when it comes to making tenure decisions.

To some participants, collegiality does not really exist in their worlds (departments). In fact, it is a general understanding of participants that it is their hard work rather than collegiality that earned them tenure and promotion. It is certainly not collegiality if relationships among faculty members are riddled with vindictiveness and rancor to the extent that a faculty member’s courses get cancelled. The next quote exemplifies the degree of lack of collegiality in various departments:

Collegiality in terms of support for what I want to do in terms of scholarship has not been there. That’s how I got tenure and promotion, through my scholarship. I didn’t get it because people like me. If that had been the case, I would not have gotten tenure and promotion. One of the last things people said to me was that I wasn’t acting very collegial… They had played all the cards they could to get me to go out, I didn’t. So they didn’t know what to do. They couldn’t deal me intellectually; they couldn’t have an intellectual conversation. They wanted to back me into this corner of being the angry Black person, I said, I study this, I’m not going there, because then they would feel vindicated by anything that you do … The disrespect, the lack of support…. Even one White woman after I left [the program], she tried to paint me as the angry Black woman. We had this raging conversation on the email, uhm... I was like you know, I’m gonna pray for you, and she’s like how dare you! You aren’t my God darada! I was like I’m still gonna pray for you! It was harsh because I was supposed to teach a course, and I
found out they had deregistered the course…I have been teaching the course since I have been here. Well, get permission from the coordinator, because she was the coordinator. We’re not supposed to get permission from the coordinator. If there is anywhere I can make some extra money, they would stump on me [try to prevent it]. Even though, obviously I know I’m the most competent person that was in my program. I know the data, the literature; I have been in the field for a long time. I know I am competent when it comes to the knowledge base. Often I found out through students that my other colleagues were telling them [students] not to work with me. Which I thought was the lowest thing you can do.

Underlying a number of experiences, particularly women’s, there seems to be a sense of suspicion and distrust contrary to collegial-type rhetoric generally associated with academic departments. A general lack of collegiality may lead to isolation on the part of new faculty. Participants view the departmental culture as fragmented probably due to the fact that everyone is required to do research and research happens to be a very lonely type of thing unless people team up together.

For many participants, collegiality is not much of a function of lack of contact with colleagues as it is a function of negative interactions such as hostile comments/and or exchanges between faculty members. Similarly, the lack of collegiality can be linked to the individualized nature of faculty socialization, which for many faculty members, especially recent graduates, greatly differs from their graduate school experiences. Collegiality is a complex aspect in itself.

The complexity of collegiality lies in part in the fact that it is not identified by universities as one of the criteria of awarding tenure. More importantly, the complexity of
collegiality lies in the fact that it involves an assessment of tenure candidates’ conduct. This could range from matters as simple as demeanor to matters as complex as racial discrimination.

**Differential Treatment**

It was in no uncertain terms that a number of participants expressed experiencing differential treatment as they went through the tenure and promotion process. The tenure and promotion process is supposedly objective and governed by standard rules for all tenure-track faculty members, regardless of their race in an effort to facilitate a fair process and ensure a just outcome. However, this is not always the case in many instances as noted by one of the respondents:

Even for tenure and promotion, uhm… they changed all the dates when some of the things had to be due. I got a one week notice. They changed the format for the whole thing. No one helped me put my dossier together. The format was changed [and] I had to figure it out. Last year, no one even came and told me what the committee had voted, I found out when I got the letter. This year when I was on the committee myself…They treated people differently. I found out I had a month less than people before me to put my stuff together. So I was not pleased with that. And I had to have six external reviewers, but they only had three. Which when you think about it, people are busy, [and] hardly have time to go through somebody’s file and write a letter… Also my external reviewers were talking about me as young and upcoming person in the field, which they couldn’t stand to hear. So you got externals who were saying tenure this person, we’re amazed at
everything they’ve done considering what they have been through, and how much they teach. Still it wasn’t a unanimous vote. It should have been a unanimous vote. One of my reviewers emailed me after he had sent his letter, said he emailed the chair of the committee and asked her if she received his letter, but she [chair] never emailed him back!

The differential treatment on the other hand is a function of the “old boys club,” that is, that tenure was originally designed for male faculty members in the academy. And so, it’s only until recently that women have joined the academy, especially Black women. It is a transition the academy has had to deal with and it is in itself a change in the status quo. This contention was best put this way:

The promotion and tenure was always with white males, so when women opted into it, it changed. When Black people/women opted into it, it sure enough changed! So they are not going to spell out what you need to do exactly, because they want to leave it to something as vague as collegiality. Which has nothing to do with anything about whether or not you’re competent, whether or not you gonna inform students well, whether or not you gonna serve your community.

Other African American faculty felt that they get treated differently in terms of what is expected of them relative to the majority White faculty. Their productivity is not acknowledged for the most part, and there is a sense of not being appreciated and/or not valued in the institution:

I get treated differently in terms of one, not expecting a lot out of themselves… You do an excellent thing and you’re being told, that’s average, when it’s not. Because she’s not publishing in refereed journals, research journals… because she
refuses to play the game... We refuse to stand around in the stereotype of buying into being happy to be there smiling all the time. And they don’t know what to do with that, they think we should just be happy to be here because it makes them like themselves. Someone like me who had had all the health issues and still kicking … productivity, you’ve to ask yourself, what am I doing. If I can’t do that, and she’s doing it and she’s got all these to deal with. Most of them, I believe, is what they are saying to themselves, otherwise, what’s the issue. If I’m doing what I am supposed to do, why shouldn’t you be happy for me? I would be happy for you. [I believe] they don’t want us to lead. My husband is leading right now, I’m leading here, and that’s a hard pill to swallow because we are not supposed to be here.

Similarly, faculty interviewed felt that they get treated differently in terms of pay equity. It seems as if the university is not responsive enough to their needs, which raises the question of whether or not African American faculty members are a valuable commodity to the university:

Unfortunately I came up for tenure as the economy was going down.

Subsequently, they have hired three White males at comfortable salaries, may be a little more. So it is interesting that you can find monies to bring people in, but you can’t find money to bring people to equitable level. There wasn’t an equity adjustment. What it boils down to is your relationship with the department and the manner in which it is viewed. Every school dean is different; chair of the department is different. The process is naïve in the sense that, I don’t think there have been enough people of color by numbers here to really educate these
individuals in terms of what should be done. Being not reactive to things, but
dealing with us from the standpoint of, are we valuable commodity. Are we as
valuable as other professors, are we more valuable because of the word diversity.
And we start using terms like diversity.

Other instances of differential treatment are associated with getting tenure and not
promotion, yet White faculty get both. It seems as though even if African American
faculty members outperformed White American faculty members, equitable treatment is
not necessarily guaranteed:

I was forced to wait six years to get promoted. In the interim, all these junior
faculty members who had come in were actively getting promoted, White
males/females. So as a result of that incident, I was bothered. When that was over,
I was still angry because of what had happened to me. Not only that, my former
chair got promoted to associate on a bogus book contract that he never converted
to a book. Never published the book! All he had was one encyclopedia article, he
got promoted to associate. I had two books and a bunch of articles published in
refereed journals, but was still not promoted. And that told you something about
this institution. He is a person that could not by any standards be promoted
anywhere, but he got promoted here. When you come up for tenure, you better
have double what Whites have. That has always been the experience of African
Americans in this country. We never are treated the same, we never have to play
by the same rules. We have been handed the rules and somehow the rules get bent
in some other direction.
Evidently, competitive aspects of academic cultures appear to be reinforced and propagated by the sometimes subtle but often more overt departmental practices engaged in by senior faculty and administrators. Examples include the way tenure and promotion is determined and how merit raises are calculated among other things. Clearly, differences in status and prestige are reinforced and propagated through overt and more subtle departmental practices.

For instance, being made to feel like one belonged but did not really belong or being treated in a less-than respectful manner at faculty meetings or in social situations, send a subtle yet strong message of exclusion. It also makes a distinct statement as to who is valued and not valued. All the while values are shaped, status differentials are reinforced, and certain individuals are placed in positions of advantage over others. This study has revealed varied competitive aspects of academic cultures ranging from cultural and racial insensitivity to differential treatment of African American faculty, not to mention the challenges that abound in the tenure and promotion process.

Challenges in the Tenure and Promotion Process

The following themes address the second question of this research: challenges encountered by African American faculty members in the tenure and promotion process. Four themes emerged, organization, balancing time, research validation, and unclear tenure guidelines.
Organizing the Tenure Dossier

A number of participants report being particularly at a loss as to how to organize their tenure and promotion dossier for review. It is something that a few had to deal with on their own. The tenure and promotion document does little to give any clue as to what goes into the tenure file first, and what goes in last. Without a mentor it is much harder to figure out the format, and hence the resultant chaotic nature of the dossier:

I just put all that stuff in the file. I’m not as organized, some people here have really pretty dossiers, you know, they just put it together beautifully, but there was no substance. I just threw all the stuff in the file and said here. So to me that was challenging, to show them what I have done, because I could barely fit everything in there. There was no specific format, no guidelines, so I’m like, I can do whatever I want to do. So I just threw it in there and said here! Of course people complained, and they said directly to me like, you know, it wasn’t pretty. Yeah, they didn’t give a guideline, because I asked and they said do it however you want. So that was the hardest part, putting this thing [dossier] together.

In other instances, faculty had to seek advice from friends at other universities as to how to organize their dossiers:

Well, what happened is that … I was going up for promotion and I had no one working with me, putting my dossier together. I had no faculty mentor, which is what other faculty members had. It didn’t exist. I was on my own, and it was quite challenging. So I was basically asking individuals from other universities how to
put my dossier together. These are individuals at Research I institutions, they told me how to put it together. My chair basically was not helping me at all.

The challenge in putting the tenure dossier together seems compounded by a last minute rush associated with a lack of prior preparation. The amount of work required for tenure review is overwhelming at best:

I was amazed at how much information was required. I basically had to submit all course evaluations, a list of all committees I had served on, all publications and presentations. That’s a lot of work! What made it more complicated was that I did not have a documented record of my teaching. I just didn’t think it was necessary. Nobody informed me about it. Of course I have been a successful teacher, received a round of applause in one of my lecture classes, but I had no records to show for it. The other thing is that, nobody tells you at the outset to have a list of references, people who are familiar enough with your work to review it. Most challenging is when the department decides to change the format of the dossier at the last hour.

**Balancing Time**

Balancing time can be challenging especially if faculty are torn between administration and the three areas (teaching, research, and service) that are evaluated for tenure and promotion. Faculty can often get bogged down with work as the following quote reflects:

Balancing time was something that was challenging for me, because we have a program with six hundred plus majors, and our production is the largest in the
school. So we have created a mentoring program with undergraduate students and that can take a lot of time. And then for nine years I [was] faculty coordinator for our student-run video production company, so a lot of administration, a lot of teaching, a lot of service along with my own personal work. I should have focused more on the creative and scholarship. See, I went off into these other areas, and our faculty will allow you to do that, if they know you have strength in it. But one of the things that we have improved on right now and we haven’t done it across the board, we have told new faculty coming in, don’t get bogged down in the administrative-service component, make sure you are teaching your courses. Even in your advising, you need to limit that, so you can focus on research and teaching. That is where we have improved.

Seemingly there is inadequate time for faculty to prepare for and get the information to the students. The kind of information that faculty really want the students to have and to make sure they are learning. Sometimes information might be sacrificed given the time constraints. Ten weeks is a short time to really prepare materials, have adequate presentation of it and to get the students to engage in active learning with it. Looking at the quarter system “having to do service and scholarly and creative research, there is not enough time, it’s overwhelming, there isn’t adequate time for the classroom.”

In departments that put emphasis on teaching, faculty members feel that most of their time is consumed in new course development and preparation, leaving hardly enough time to dedicate to research:

It’s been a learning experience for me, teaching takes a lot more time than I expected. Teaching is emphasized a lot in this department. It emphasizes teaching
in ways that I haven’t experienced at other universities. It’s not necessarily a bad thing, but it is different from what I had experienced. During this first year, much of my time has been dedicated to teaching and to developing courses. Kind of trying to get a body of courses I would teach for the next few years. This takes probably 60%-70% of my time. In terms of service to the department, that takes probably another 15% of my time developing the department’s web journal, which has been kind of my central task for the year and that’s a good experience. Research and writing during the academic year takes probably another 15% of my time, which is hardly enough time to come up with any meaningful scholarship. So, balancing time is really a challenge.

Due to the demanding nature of teaching and research, faculty find themselves putting off research and writing until such times as summer and winter breaks, when they have more time on hand:

To be honest with you, balancing time is actually a scary challenge. For instance, I have had one quarter where I didn’t really have a chance to do research. I immediately got concerned that I may not be able to get out and do research, scholarly activities that I needed to do. Research is a heavy component when it comes to tenure and if they don’t see that I might be out of here. And so, when I’m doing service and research, what I find myself doing in an effort not to have my teaching interrupt my research, I try to do it during the winter break; try to do a lot of it over the summer, and a bit during spring break. That doesn’t necessarily mean that it always works. When I have to miss a week of classes I’m concerned about my evaluations. So being able to find balance is hard and it’s scary. I don’t
want to get so engaged in research that it affects my teaching and evaluations from students. So I’m always worried about people’s reactions. If I have a heavy teaching load I can’t get sufficient amount of research in and that affects my chances of getting tenure.

Research Validation

What are the implications for an African American faculty member whose research, for the most part, is Afro-centric and by the same token detracts from “mainstream research”? It means having to convince White faculty of its validity. This can be a challenge especially when White faculty do not seem to and/or choose not to want to understand one’s point of reference.

Sometimes, not always, my research is not that which is immediately recognizable because I do work from an African American aesthetic. So a lot of my creative research and activity will be based on that aesthetic. That doesn’t necessarily mean because I am Black I have to do Black things. I do Black things because it is of interest to me and in my academic process, there is very little about African Americans in the field doing creative research in the area. So I have all this information about European Americans and even some Europeans and their accomplishments in the field and very little information about African Americans. So [throughout] my whole academic process, undergraduate to graduate work, I have a longing for that history. I knew it was there but, you know, I would find several sources on one individual who is in the field. So [I have] a curiosity, a longing for that type of research; a longing for my personal
research on the African American aesthetic. One of the perceptions is, okay, he’s African American, he’s Black therefore has to do Black things. You know, that has been the perception for quite some time. Others say, okay, they would read it, look at it, analyze it, and say okay, I don’t understand it. They do either one of two things, either they don’t understand it and talk negatively about it, or they don’t understand it so they decide not to judge it. If you don’t understand it question me, let’s talk about it. It is a challenge, in the sense that how do you get your work validated if people do not want to understand it?

Participants admit that the direction of their research and the amount of time allocated to their work is influenced by their research interests and for the most part, by tenure pressures. Staying focused and conservative is vital in some research programs. Branching out into other exciting avenues of research on the other hand may not be a welcome idea. The influence of a socialization process that values certain academic activities over others is apparent:

Well, I’m not oblivious to some of the politics related to my research. A lot of my research, in particular, may not be readily accepted or valued for that matter, as it may be considered non mainstream. Black educators for decades have been called marginal, deviant, and unwelcome by a number of scholars. What I’m saying is that, my research may not be valued by traditional journals, which is a big issue when it comes to tenure and promotion. It’s a challenge faced by most Black educators.

On many occasions I haven been stunned at the perception senior faculty have of my work. Clearly, they don’t seem to validate my research as part of the
discipline. It raises a lot of questions, and I view those kinds of perceptions as suppressive to my academic success. It is scary because if what I do is not valued, my chances of getting tenure are slim.

Getting faculty research validated in many ways is a question of not only the subject matter, but the research methodology as well. It is no news that quantitative research has always tended to be more valued and readily accepted as compared to qualitative research:

Getting your colleagues to appreciate your scholarship even though it may be different from the traditional scholarship has been a little difficult…especially when it is qualitative. To me, the notion of research is that it is pure. It doesn’t matter what you research, how you do it, or where you do it. I don’t consider myself the university’s top researcher, but there have been some research projects that I have worked on and have added to the body of knowledge and been useful in terms of [applicability]. What I found was the defensiveness on the part of one of our researchers that I would dare question. I’m not anti research, anti intellectual. I just think we should value everyone’s contribution.
Fear of Tenure Denial

The challenge is associated with going all the way through the tenure and promotion process and being denied tenure. That is the scary part for most faculty members. There is also the fear that one person at the upper end of the administration might not have an understanding of a faculty member’s research and therefore, may not view it as scholarly and valuable:

Because this is an area of art, suppose that one person in upper the administration is not sensitive to what is considered scholarship, scholarly research, and creative activity in the arts form, what if that person is looking for all these published material and art does not fit that kind of publication? Because you will see a lot of things of the arts and productions of more materials, which is equivalent to articles and written type of work or scholarship. So that was a kind of fear for me. Being in an area of arts, suppose this person is not an arts advocate, suppose the provost was not an arts advocate, or someone like that. So I made it through all these stages and then to get that kind of rejection, that was the fear. I mean at one time you are supposed to get the actual notification, I’m anticipating it, and really they were not late, they were on time, but I was just so worried. I’m like there are people who have already heard, and I haven’t, does that mean I’m not gonna get it. That fear of going through that process and then somewhere in the upper administration you get rejected.

Similarly, participants feared the implications of tenure denial, given the current economic situation as it relates to affirmative action and higher education funding:
A lot is at stake now, and everybody, faculty and administrators are aware of what is happening. The stakes are higher for Blacks in higher education – with affirmative action under the gun, with cut backs on federal monies – one cannot afford not to be wary. It would be a hard blow to be denied tenure.

Junior faculty report that while the tenure process is supposed to be very objective, meaning that it leaves no room for misinterpretations, it is at the same time monitored and interpreted by human beings. And so, whenever that is the case, it means there are grey areas within the process subject to interpretation, and that is scary. Therefore, as junior faculty, they would want people making those interpretations in their favor. So for that to happen, the normal thing that people do is to make concerted effort to please and get along with people who are involved in the making of tenure decisions:

Sometimes you would probably sense that young faculty would not offer an opinion because they don’t want to offend someone that would pass judgment on them later. And these are not things that are unique to our system in this school; they are unique to academia and the process in general. What am I saying, I’m saying that whereas you would think that all faculty should be comfortable in voicing their opinions, I think faculty members who are not tenured are not comfortable because they know if they said the wrong thing, it would come back to haunt them. [Thus], even as tight as the [tenure and promotion] process is, it is still being monitored by human beings. In regard to my school and even the university in general, things could be interpreted in different ways. When we make rules, the purpose of the rule is to take the subjectiveness out of the situation. It is this or that, you know. You can make all the rules in the world, I
still think as objective as it is and with the rules in place, we still have human
beings implementing the tenure and promotion process.

The importance attached to academic tenure makes it all the more scary if one
fails to get it. It is not so much in the long-term employment (as literature may have it) as
it is in the respect that seems to come with tenure. It is the indication from colleagues that
one is important that they are doing a good job and that one is a valued member of the
faculty that is the epitome of tenure. Job stability and security, increased mobility, and
evidence of having proven themselves among peers are among other aspects attached to
the meaning of tenure. We live in a culture that is so success-oriented that failures are
frowned upon and that in itself is scary.

Yet, failures bring about a certain balance in a society where everybody is
seemingly striving for success. If every imaginable faculty were tenurable for instance,
there would be no “room” to hold all tenured faculty in academia. Nonetheless, the
academic tenure system ought to be transparent in their policies to better serve present
and future academics and professionals.

Policy Perspectives

Three themes emerged that address the third question of this study. Participants
felt that there is a need for, (1) a formal mentoring program than what is currently in
place, (2) a need for clear tenure and promotion guidelines, and (3) a need for time
release for research. Thus, the third part of this study explores the necessary policy
changes that would make the tenure and promotion process less ambiguous.
A Formal Mentoring Program

The majority of faculty interviewed expressed a need for a formal mentoring program with clear guidelines. The mentoring program should be designed to see them through the tenure and promotion process successfully. Basically, junior faculty would be assigned mentors by their department chairs, to ensure that they (junior faculty) are making progress in all the three areas of teaching, research, and service. The need for the program was expressed by one of the respondents thus:

When I first came, I can’t say I had a mentor as such. I’m the kind of person who sort of had to learn on the job. Had I had a mentor, for one thing, I may have gone through the process more easily. It was more of a professional strategy and I think that had I been talking to a mentor, they could have probably taken that to heart more than I did. A mentor could have sort of shepherded me through the process. I think that we have not mentored faculty of color very well; not because we have so few on our faculty, but because I think that over the years, they have come and gone and I think we did a poor job at mentoring them. I’m not saying that faculty members have not been mentored at all. I’m saying that most faculty are first generation, by that I mean, their parents weren’t faculty and their grandparents were not faculty. And each generation stands on the shoulders of the previous generation. When I came, it was sort of the “old boys” system where males would mentor males informally.

One of the things a mentor would have told me, if I had one and I did not, was that it’s okay to say no to some of the work that some of the males didn’t
want to do because they were working on research or they were doing this and that. When I first came and whenever I wanted to, I said yes to far too many things. I sort of allowed myself to be sort of buried in some projects that took a lot of my time and energy, when I could have spent that time working on something else. So, a mentor would have told me, you don’t have to say yes, you can say no. Junior faculty need time and energy that will allow them to do those things that are required for tenure and promotion.

The “old boys” system has however, gradually faded away as more and more female faculty have joined the institution and academia at large. There are certainly more female faculty today than a few decades ago; as life has changed for women in this country, especially with the inception of affirmative action. However, mentoring is still largely an area of concern at faculty level.

Faculty members have had to find information related to tenure and promotion from various sources, when they would have preferred getting it from one source. In most cases, the information from the different sources is often inconsistent and can be quite frustrating. The following quote summarizes the respondents’ frustrations:

I did not have one person saying okay, to deal with one-on-one. Many times I had to go to different people and ask questions. The good thing is that when I did have a question, it was answered as fully as possible. It would have been better for me to have one person to deal with. That way going through the process, I would not have had to ask. Who should I ask? Who was available at that time? I could have just dealt with a mentor one-on-one. Then there are times when two people gave information that was inconsistent, then you’re like okay, whose perspective
should I take? So, as far as specific mentorship, that was lacking and I think it is worth having it. Just that kind of general guidance collectively from those professors and associate professors that was there for me, but not that individual one-on-one.

In addition, faculty interviewed expressed the necessity for mentors who are familiar with their research so that should any conflicts arise, the mentor can better guide them in their tenure and promotion process. This would ensure that faculty do not have to “piece-meal” it together, in other words, they would not have to seek information from different people. Having an individual mentor is also a great way to build friendship/relationship. In expressing the importance of mentorship, one respondent stated:

The knowledge I have about tenure and promotion is through “piece-meal”. I ask faculty, you know, have you had this problem? How do you go about the pay in the summer time? I ask the administrative assistant about filling out forms. There’s no one individual, not even a few of the individuals that I consider mentors, who actively say, hey let me pull you out to the side. This is what you should be doing. You should look out for this and make sure that you have that. I don’t have that at all. I’m not looking and of course it is just one of those situations that there are no personalities I have come across here at the college that say, hey, I’m approachable. I’m here. I have been through the process. I have done it. Let me show you the way. No, you don’t get that from anyone around here. There is need for a formal mentoring program.
Ideally, how it would work is to have new faculty assigned a mentor as they join the unit and indeed the university. One does not need to get along with the assigned mentor. The idea is, the mentor would have an initial responsibility to ensure that the new faculty member learns the “ropes”. At least, the mentor would give the new faculty advice and then after becoming familiar with the environment, the new faculty member can find a mentor of choice. Right now, I am in the osmosis stage, you know. I’m just kind of hoping that a mentor would bump into me in the hallway.

Participants suggested workshops as a great way to facilitate formal mentoring processes. These would not only enable faculty to learn more about the tenure and promotion process, but it is also a chance for them to present their dossiers to other faculty and seek guidance. One participant noted:

I think we should have workshops where someone is not just giving information, but workshops where people are actually active. Where you can present, okay, this is the start of my document [dossier]. Let’s sit down and look through this. Let’s move on to the section that you are teaching. These are the things that you might include. That way, you come out with a product that will help you teach and organize so that when you actually come up for tenure and promotion they will be like, this person, collectively we worked together, organized this and I feel good about it. Not, just to have someone to tell you about the process, but to actually have someone talk about it and to work with you. It might be a completely different field, but they might be able to help. Well, this is
what we look for, and this is how we do it. And so, some actionable workshop where we can work together would suffice.

It was the general consensus of participants to institute a formal and solid mentoring program at the graduate (masters and doctoral) level that goes beyond the usual mentoring of students by advisors to include not only a student’s committee members, but administrators as well. This would alleviate, at an early stage, some of the difficulties faced by new faculty in developing mentoring relationships. As Tierney and Rhoads (1993) noted, lack of institutional support related to mentoring for faculty is a major factor in attrition.

In addition to a formal mentoring program, an emphasis upon serial socialization processes would be helpful. Serial socialization pertains to providing role models who help to initiate newcomers to the organization. Serial socialization is not an action where White faculty members try to equip Black faculty members with the skills necessary to survive. Rather, it is a process amenable to cultural differences and enables all organizational members to become cultural learners. In this sense, socialization becomes not an experience where everyone must be homogenized, but a process that upholds difference in high regard. Serial socialization can assist new faculty by utilizing the experience and expertise of senior faculty through a mentoring relationship. Faculty mentors can play a positive role in helping new faculty learn the subtleties of mundane stuff and survive the initial years of socialization. Thus, increasing diversity demands structural changes, and socialization through mentoring is a central ingredient to such change.
Clear Tenure Guidelines

Participants underscored the importance of making the tenure document very specific so that they know exactly what is expected. It becomes confusing when the tenure document is unclear both at the college and the school level, especially with regard to the format of the dossier. Participants’ sentiments were best expressed in the following quote:

Because that one document is not as clear as it should be, the breakdown happens from the college level down to the school. They are changing the document, trying to revise it at the school level and that means that we are not pretty sure exactly what is expected at the college level. We’ve got individuals going up for tenure and promotion who would be at a complete loss. You have the document in front of you and you are constantly asking; what exactly does this mean? Not only that, what information should I put in here? What should be included? Physically, how should it look? What should be the format? You know…

Because different people go up for tenure and promotion at different times, it is different each time. You look at these different documents [and say] okay, which one, should I use as a format?

It was clear that sometimes the wording of the tenure document can be very vague in terms of what counts for tenure and promotion. At the same time, if the document is constantly altered, it means that someone is affected each time and that might be a bit of a constraint. Over the course of our conversations, participants suggested that the tenure document should be set up in such a way that faculty members can organize their dossiers
as they progress toward tenure and promotion. In addition, modification in the language used in the three areas of tenure: teaching, research and service is invaluable. Language such as for instance, “excellent teaching, significant research, meaningful advising, and significant service” should be clearly defined.

In concert with a clear tenure document, the tenure and promotion process in itself needs to be made more transparent. This would ensure that faculty members do not end up wondering why they were denied tenure, as the following quote illustrates:

The question is, perhaps we can make the process fair and a little more transparent so that if you were denied tenure, you don't have to wonder; is this a question of someone not liking me on the committee…We have to make the process more transparent so that those questions don’t have to arise. There is the outside committee that judges your work, [and] that becomes a question of finding the right people. It just can’t be anybody in the university, [because then it becomes] a question of personalities judging you as a personality and not necessarily judging your work. That part of the process, I think is not transparent. I would wish to change it because people bring their prejudices to the process and I don’t know how you can get around that - short of erasing people’s memories. Just having them pay attention to what is in front of them, or again, it may be a question of the external committee, which may bring up its own complications.

You always hear stories about people who as far as they knew, went through all the steps successfully; had a requisite number of publications, solid teaching reviews, record service, and still didn’t get tenure. And much of it like many things is about personalities and how we are wanting different things that
aren’t necessarily stated in the official tenure and promotion document. There is always the human factor that is out there. But it is a wild card, you know, where on one hand it should be a straight forward process, but it is not, and I think everybody knows that. So, most of the horror stories involve just that kind of thing. People who probably rightfully expected to get tenure given what their tenure and promotion document said, but they ended up not getting it because someone on the university committee or departmental committee was opposed to having that person remain in that department, for instance.

The official tenure and promotion guide given by the department and the college indicate that faculty should be engaged in equal potions of teaching, research and service. Yet that seems to be a pact, not a case in reality. The reality is that research, in particular, is always weighted more than teaching and service. That is the unspoken requirement, as the following quote indicates:

Now, if I were to go to my department chair or dean and ask them with a microphone in my hand, what do I need to do to get tenure? They would tell me, you need to be a good teacher, do good scholarly work, and service your academic community and that would be the patent answer. Now, if I take the microphone away and we close the door and I say, what do I need to do? They will say, you need to get publications; you need to bring in some money; you need to graduate students. Oh, by the way, do a good job at teaching and if you find some time, do some service.

What is stated on paper is often not the case in reality when it comes to what is required to get tenure and promotion. Apparently, research is highly regarded, yet it is not
explicitly stated. Participants referred to “pinning down” from authorities both what is expected and what holds weight in tenure proceedings. Their preoccupation with “knowing” revolves around narrowing down a numeric range of refereed publications expected for tenure or trying to interpret the meaning of language used in departmental and university documents in reference to publishing and fundraising.

Varying forms of written and verbal information can be helpful. A handbook and survival guides that outline basic steps to getting tenured and promoted would be helpful. Such information can be helpful in guiding faculty through the often oblique system of needs and demands of academia. As one participant suggested, “having senior faculty actively involved in looking out for the welfare of junior faculty would be helpful.” The institution should be able to provide systematic, verifiable advice to all tenure-track faculty members. If teaching for instance holds less weight in the tenure and promotion considerations, it should be clearly stated.

The quality of faculty teaching is perceived to hold little or no weight particularly in the research university’s reward system. In fact, most participants feel ambivalent about what is valued and what is ultimately rewarded for in tenure and promotion proceedings. The low priority status of teaching has been in-bred in many of the faculty as part of their socialization, particularly those in schools that tend to underscore research and scholarship.

Time Release for Research

It was determined that faculty, especially new hires on tenure-track have inundated teaching responsibilities including new course preparations. They spend an
insurmountable amount of time preparing for new classes every quarter. This leaves them with barely enough time to conduct research. Therefore, research participants suggested release time for research as the following quote attests:

The end of last quarter was my ninth quarter at this university. In nine quarters, I have taught nine different classes. So, you can imagine, I’m doing new class preparations every quarter. So, what that does, it leaves very little time to dedicate to your research. I have had as many as 17 – 26 students a quarter that I advise. I have three masters students, one PhD student and up until the beginning of this academic year, I had one undergraduate researcher. So, you know, I have a full plate other than my own personal, trying to get money to do some type of research. Now, what I have found, I complained about it - that my teaching responsibility is impeding my ability to go out and write proposals, [publish] in scholarly journals. My chair, he kind of shrugged his shoulders like, that is the way it goes. I had to step up to the plate. That is exactly what I have had to do. You know, that is what I am required to do. I can complain about it and nothing gets done or I can step up to the plate and do it. Or I can walk away from this university and go somewhere else.

I would like to see that as part of the tenure and promotion process, faculty get release time for research. In other words, in the fall quarter, a faculty member is released from teaching duties to do sufficient and adequate amount of research. In the winter and spring he/she can then focus on that area of teaching. So I think that having that release time and letting students and people at the administrative level know is vital.
Again, in order to truly apply oneself, participants suggested a reduction in the teaching load; or at least getting the teaching load to a point where it becomes automatic, that is, teaching the same courses every quarter. It was also apparent that junior faculty get stuck with service classes and a little bit heavier undergraduate teaching loads, while senior faculty gravitated toward more graduate classes with lighter teaching loads. One of the participants had this to say:

I would say that we might need to flip it; you know, that junior faculty, when they come in, specifically reduce the amount of student hours. For example, if I only have to teach one class per quarter for my first two years or so and I’m teaching the same class over and over at least two or three times, I can dedicate more time to my scholarship. At that point, if I have that kind of set up and I’m not keeping up with my scholarship, which would be a good barometer to measure my productivity. But, when you have to evaluate me in comparison to a person who has been here teaching the same class four/five times, especially since I teach a service class of 48/50 kids, you know, it is not even a comparison.

Participants consistently commented about the lack of time to pursue scholarly work. They were frustrated due to lack of time for the necessary adequate preparation for new courses, which require a lot of time. In general, a high amount of stress was reportedly associated with heavy work loads that require spending more time on lecture preparation. Unrelenting pressures from work loads can be disheartening at best.

However, there doesn’t seem to be any conspiratory type of group that is out to make things difficult for African American faculty. If there are any such situations at the research site investigated, it is basically in the environment of specific individuals. In
those cases where people have instinctively made it to the faculty level in their career, I think they have developed the instincts to deal with those situations. In other words, they learn to work within the environment. In those cases, the things that they do would bring about changes. The following quote attests to this inference:

I look at myself, coming to this university, as a trend-breaker. Meaning, if you look specifically at my area, there was no African American in the field at this university. How old is this university, 200 years old. So, with me coming in at a senior level, it has truly sent down a message. But at the same time, it broke the trend. If there were any doubts with anybody-- however sometimes the stereotypes are so engrained to the point where the stereotype become truth. So, if there were any doubts of the sort in anyone’s mind that an African American cannot do this job, the stereotypical pattern is broken. Because I came here and I was given the opportunity, I did the job. And not only did I do the job, but I increased the level of performance and raised the standards higher. Now, twenty years from now they will be looking for a lead person. And, there are African Americans among the pool [that qualify]. The narrow minded stereotypical thought on the part of White Americans is redundant because I have already broken that barrier. So, I think that if you look around at the African Americans collectively in their own fields, I’m sure many of those people broke the same barrier. We are like the first generation pushing through and of course as you know, that same barrier was broken at the highest level at this university with the board of trustee hiring an African American president.
Taken together, the aforementioned themes in this study reveal that participant’s narratives of experiences about the tenure-track and/or academic departments revolve around perceptions of interpersonal relationships among faculty members. The majority of participants described much of their mundane activities as influenced by interactions with colleagues. The tenure and promotion experiences whether positive or negative has much to do with collegiality: the interpersonal and professional relationships of faculty members.

Summary

In this chapter I have presented the findings that address the three questions posed earlier in chapter one; the socialization; tenure and promotion experiences and perceptions of African American faculty at HWU; challenges; and policy changes that would ensure a better tenure and promotion experience by faculty members. The findings suggest divergent points of view pertaining to the tenure and promotion experience. There are those faculty members who truly had a positive tenure and promotion experience and there are those who had just the opposite. For those who uphold the overarching perception that the institutional climate at the HWU is un-conducive to the success of African American faculty, HWU becomes suppressive of their ideals and professional growth. This perception counters the dominant culture’s construction of a social reality that perceives the HWU as having an institutional climate that is conducive to the professional growth of not only African Americans but in general people from all walks of life.
The emergent themes in this study do not in any way attempt to collectively represent the sentiments of African American faculty at historically White Universities. African American faculty members who declined and/or were unable to participate in this study for various reasons may concur with the findings in this study and/or have different views. In the subsequent chapter the emergent findings are further interpreted and discussed and recommendations for future research and conclusions are made.
CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

The objective of this study was to explore the socialization, tenure and promotion experiences and perceptions of African American faculty at a predominantly White university; their challenges and perceptions about policy were also examined. By examining lived experiences, specifically messages and meanings attached to them, shared realities emerge. The present chapter discusses significant findings of the study and provides recommendations as well as implications for future research.

Bantz’s (1993) fifth phase (making inferences about meanings of messages) of the five-step model, and Denzin’s (1989) construction process are utilized. Construction means “pulling it all together.” The emergent themes in chapter four are interpreted further and discussed in the context of the larger society. It is here that the tenure and promotion experiences and perceptions of African American faculty at a Historically White University (HWU) are subsumed under one essential meaning. Essentially, themes undergo further scrutiny to reveal the underlying meaning (Orbe, 1998). In other words, the collective experiences of African American faculty with the tenure and promotion process are discussed and analyzed. The discussion begins by 1) reviewing chapters one through four, 2) explicating the research questions in the context of the most salient themes, and ends with 3) a discussion of the implications for future research, recommendations, and concluding remarks.
Summary of Chapters

Chapter one discusses the importance of studying a historically marginalized group in relation to the tenure and promotion process at a HWU. The purpose, significance, and scope of the study led to three important questions: 1) what are the socialization, tenure and promotion experiences and perceptions of African American faculty at an HWU? 2) What challenges do African American faculty members face in the tenure and promotion process? 3) What policy perspectives related to the tenure and promotion process exist? I examined the lived experiences and perceptions of African American faculty members in order to find out their coping mechanisms in the tenure and promotion process within a HWU culture.

Chapter two reviews relevant literature that pertains to the history of tenure and promotion process including the AAUP tenure and promotion regulations, the importance of tenure, tenure and promotion policies, diversity and factors affecting minority faculty in academia. Denzin’s (1989) interpretive process provided a framework for data collection and analysis, affording an understanding of what it is like to be a tenured or tenure-track African American faculty at the HWU.

Chapter three details the method and tools used in the collection of data. In-depth interviews supplemented by organizational documents were tools used in coordinating data and constructing themes. In addition, chapter three describes the research site, processes involved in entering the organization, gathering and analyzing the data. Bracketing the researcher’s choices and biases afforded some justification for the interpretations in the later stages of data analysis.
Chapter four presents the voices and interprets the messages of African American faculty by utilizing Bantz’s (1993) second phase of the five-step interpretive model. The second phase of Bantz’s five-step interpretive model involves an analysis of the messages constructed by faculty members, including themes and vocabularies and their meanings.

In this section, the relationship between the various constructs and themes developed are summarized. The summaries provide the backdrop for discussing the meanings attached to the lived experiences of tenured/tenure-track African American faculty members. What does it mean to be a tenured/tenure-track African American faculty member at an HWU?

As suggested by participants in this study, the tenure and promotion process as experienced by African American faculty at the HWU presents many challenges. There are positives and negatives depending on the individual, the setting (department) and the frame of mind from which one interprets his/her experience. Further scrutiny of the emergent themes revealed one overarching descriptive statement: exceeding expectations. It is important to note at the outset that the majority of the participants described their overall experience about the tenure and promotion process as being, for the most part, arduous. To this end, the tenure and promotion attributes are constructed within the purview of the institutional climate. These attributes include the arduous nature of tenure, lack of mentorship - going it alone, collegiality as a ruse and the need for diversity.

**Tenure as a Worthwhile Experience**

Faculty members who were interviewed for this study, particularly those who had a positive experience in their tenure and promotion process attributed their positive
experience to their ability to assume what Alfred (2001) and Sadao (2003) identify as a bicultural stance (biculturalism). Sadao defines biculturalism as “the achievement of adapting to a dominant culture enough to function effectively in it without sacrificing the belief systems of the ethnic culture” (416). A bicultural stance enables Black faculty to prevail in balancing the demands of a faculty career in the face of institutional barriers.

In addition to taking a bicultural stance, how faculty arrived at an institution shapes their path to success. The opportunities normally take the nature of direct invitations from professors and/or colleagues to apply for a position at the university; or informal offers, for instance, receiving word about a potential job opening from friends and acquaintances or being invited as a visiting fellow. A number of participants confessed that if they had not been invited to apply for tenure track position, they would have, probably pursued careers outside academia. This finding has important implications, especially at this time and age when not only the HWU but other colleges and universities are striving for ultimate diversity on their campuses.

The findings of this study further reveal that internal drive, knowing what it takes to be conferred tenure and promotion; ability, curiosity, and some support from the departments play a vital role in the tenure and promotion success of Black faculty. Essentially, these insights afford a window into a framework that is culturally reciprocal to all, enabling us to not only focus on institutional barriers and individual successes, but rather examine the recruitment and tenure and promotion of faculty of color in a new light.
The Institutional Climate

In the academic realm, institutional climate pertains to the dynamics of an institution’s historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion of various racial/ethnic groups. In addition, it would include structural diversity in terms of numerical representation of various racial/ethnic groups; the psychological climate, which includes perceptions and attitudes between and among groups; and a behavioral dimension that is characterized by relations among groups on campus (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999). Nonetheless, the institutional climate in this study is discussed within the context of tenure and promotion attributes.

This study found that African American faculty members had negative experiences toward their tenure and promotion process. This finding is similar to other studies that advance theories about the underrepresentation of faculty of color in higher education and institutional factors such as racism, tokenism, lack of adequate role models and mentoring, the double standards for tenure and promotion and the lack of validation of research in minority issues (Boice, 1993; Exum, 1983; Johnsrud & Des Jarlais, 1994; Miller, 1991; Olsen, Maple, & Stage, 1995; Turner & Myers, 2000; Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999).

Furthermore, similar to Verrier’s (1995) study, overt actions of departments such as public statements at faculty meetings, “who are you to be able to say that” or the way office equipment in departments is allocated, “I had no computer for a couple of years and had to buy my own,” clearly illustrate the importance and value of some faculty members. All the while, “values are shaped, status differentials are reinforced, and certain
individuals are placed in positions of advantage over others” (p. 114). This is particularly true in relation to the way participants are evaluated in tenure and promotion decisions. For Black faculty members, sometimes exceeding expectations may not afford one equal academic and/or social status.

Exceeding Expectations

_The Arduous Nature of Tenure_

Literature on tenure and promotion indicates that Black faculty often lack knowledge of the tenure process at research universities (Menges & Exume, 1983; Verrier, 1992). On the contrary, the findings of this study suggest that participants have some general knowledge of what is expected of them in order to get tenured. However, this does not imply that all the tenure and promotion guidelines are clearly delineated. Faculty members know, to some degree, the political workings of the process and have an awareness of the general institutional requirements. Although the political nature of the tenure and promotion process is deemed inappropriate, participants chose to play the game by the rules to ensure their success in the process. Knowing the tenure and promotion requirements means that faculty members know not only the explicit but the implicit expectations of the process. As one participant succinctly put it, “you not only have to do what you are expected to do, but you also have to exceed expectations. As an African American you expect watchful eyes everywhere.” The message implied that African American faculty members are evaluated differently, therefore, to achieve
equality, they have to be better than their White colleagues. It is a constant life scripts with which African American faculty at the HWU pattern their lives.

Research shows that faculty members, in general, complain about lack of time to pursue their research interests (Tierney & Rhoads, 1994). This is because much of their time is taken up by heavy service and teaching loads. Faculty members at the HWU are not any different. In fact, African American faculty interviewed expressed added frustration attributed to preparing for new course loads every quarter. Faculty are expected to teach up to three course loads per quarter, a short time in which to fully engage students in active learning as well as engage in research and scholarship. It is not surprising that faculty, particularly junior Black faculty find themselves “burning the candle at both ends.” Exhaustion and work burnout becomes the nature of faculty life. Nonetheless, they have to develop mechanisms to help them rise above their challenges in order to get tenured and promoted.

Boyer’s (1990) study suggested that faculty should be rewarded for their own volition. This means that if one is good at teaching, he/she should be evaluated and rewarded (tenured and promoted) based on teaching; those good at research should be evaluated based on research and so forth. Unfortunately, although Boyer’s model is more than ten years old, it has not been well received, especially at some research universities. The findings in this research parallel Boyer’s stance about equitable value in the three areas that faculty are evaluated for tenure and promotion. Faculty need to give back to society, as one participant suggested, “of what good is it for one to sit in the library doing scholarly work, publishing books and articles that probably will never be read? It is
important that research is disseminated beginning in the classroom and who can do this better than the faculty member who has conducted the research?”

Participation in service is unquestionable. It is here that faculty get involved in making decisions that affect their lives, their careers, and their students. To be excluded from policy making is to succumb to administrative rules and policies that often conflict with faculty interests. Thus, faculty Black or White come full circle in their careers as they partake in teaching, research, and service. On the other hand, although Boyer’s (1990) model has sound implications, it may be a little intricate to implement at research universities that value all three areas of teaching, research and service. The following quote attests to this claim:

Boyer’s model would, for instance, require a set of criteria that someone would have to objectively evaluate to ensure that the criteria are balanced regardless of a faculty member’s volition. If, for example, one faculty member’s volition is teaching, there should be a required criterion set forth to state the value of that faculty member in the academic institution based on his/her teaching alone. The set criterion should be equally comparable to the research criterion and to the service criterion. That would take work. The second problem would arise in the evaluation process. For example, how would someone with 100% teaching be compared with one with 100% research? How can institutions objectively evaluate the two individuals? If one is a research professor, who brings to the institution millions of dollars every year and the other is a teaching professor, who wins teaching awards, how would the institution determine the net worth of each faculty member? How you truly evaluate, is a problem. It also requires that you
actively seek that kind of set up, so you would consequently staff your departments based on their needs. Enough individuals to cover the classes and enough individuals to sufficiently support the overhead of the department based on research and so forth. So, you will have to balance out annual reviews at the department as such. Put in place a mechanism that would allow for a transition from teaching to research and vice versa.

Intricate to evaluate as Boyer’s Model may seem, tenure and promotion committees guided by Boyer’s (1994) recommendations give detailed feedback. The model is supported by faculty in the sense that it allows for reflection and subsequent action to meet the expectations of the tenure and promotion committees. On the other hand, committees that are guided only by convention and the collective wisdom of committee members do a disservice to untenured faculty going up for tenure and promotion. Therefore, it is imperative that outside reviewers are people who are familiar with a tenure candidate’s research agenda. Ideally, outside reviewers are selected by the candidate and approved by the department chair. However, this may differ from one academic setting to another.

Consistent with the literature, this study found that the perception that African American faculty whose scholarship focuses on issues of race/ethnicity, African American aesthetics and gender have to contend with the devaluation and dismissal of work as non mainstream, polemic, peripheral, and self-serving (Allen, Epps, Guillory, Suh, & Bonous-Hammarth, 2000; Collins, 2000). Suffice it to say professors who conduct research on race and racism with the possibility that their work would affect the public image of universities, the issue of tenure becomes an especially salient point of
dissent. The differential treatment of research in academia drives one to ask whether or not the university approves of or validates research that may illustrate the presence of racism in the institution, its sponsoring companies or the general society (Chait & Trower, 2000; Jasper, 2001). What is disquieting is the new ideologies and myths that justify the lack of diversity within the student bodies and especially at the professoriate and administration level (Fenelon, 2003). The perception that there is stiff competition for highly qualified faculty, says nothing about devalued research, tenure denial and subsequent exit out of academia. Or that the overall institutional climate in academia and in particular, at predominantly White colleges and universities is so chilly to African American faculty and other minority groups (Turner & Myers, 2000) that more and more are choosing careers in the corporate arena.

Research within the more quantitatively oriented field of education can be differentially valued within the tenure and promotion systems based on its political ramifications. This study advances Fenelon’s (2003) view that tenure can mean that administrators and alumni groups may be forced to live and coexist with faculty whose research challenges their own beliefs and value system.

On the positive side one would argue that race/ethnic-centered and/or Afro-centric research adds diversity to the knowledge base, essential in advancing multicultural programs. It is in itself a positive addition to the research agendas and scholarship in academia. Thus, African American scholars and other ethnic scholars need to constantly fight against attempts to marginalize and devalue their research and service to the communities that they serve. As Dixon-Reeves (2003) asserts, African American scholars should:
Continue to pursue their personal areas of research and submit them to the appropriate refereed journals, whether they are mainstream or specialty ones. They should continue to work actively and aggressively within their departments, their universities, and their local and national organizations to put pressure to change the institutional racism that exists at all levels of these institutions (p. 23).

Overall, diversity at the professoriate and research associated with minority faculty has made little progress in the past two decades despite the increase in research avenues, student demographics, and general public knowledge. Individual minority faculty continue to pay a price and feel compelled to make a case for their research agendas over critical issues even in the face of increased diversity on campuses. Seemingly, Black faculty are treated differentially in every detail of their lives including age, gender, religious beliefs, research interests, and where they secured their terminal degrees. Kussrow (2001) has documented that discrimination is alive and well; it will be with us for a long period of time, because someone always feels superior to someone else. Unfortunately, differential treatment manifests itself in many subtle ways including the expectation of Black faculty members to continually outperform in all aspects of academia.

An important finding consistent with the literature on minority faculty service demands suggests that faculty at the HWU feel somewhat overwhelmed by the service factor. Although they may exceed expectations as the nature of the game demands, advising, serving on manifold committees, community service, name it, it may not amount to much recognition. The general consensus is that service is rarely weighted favorably in the tenure and promotion decisions. Yet, institutions need the participation
of faculty of color on committees because service is important to both the faculty and the institution. Participation in decision making enhances the diversity of perspectives, ensures sensitivity to the needs of people of color and may be personally and politically rewarding to faculty of color, in general. One wonders however, why service, which seems so invaluable, is less valued in the tenure and promotion decisions? The answer, I suppose lies in institutional reputation. If it is tied to traditional notions of merit, that is, faculty research and perhaps teaching, then there is little incentive for institutions to value service as they would scholarship and/or teaching.

Nonetheless, service presents problems for the retention of faculty. Therefore, rather than penalize faculty who underscore service in the tenure and promotion decisions, service especially when it serves to eliminate barriers that prevent some groups from fully participating in society should be considered by institutions as meritorious. It is therefore necessary to encourage scholars to promote a more inclusive strategy of redefining merit in the faculty tenure process.

Securing tenure, a major task not only for Black faculty but faculty in general, is the means by which they attain social parity (Sadao, 2003). Exceeding expectations in the three areas, teaching, research and service is no easy task. This study compliments Sadao’s research findings that faculty of color “fair better when they have internalized a bicultural way of thinking and behaving rather than experiencing either marginality from the dominant culture or assimilation with the resulting loss of their ethnic culture” (p. 415). This study has illustrated that internal factors such as self-esteem, hard work, curiosity, drive, and intelligence greatly influence Black faculty members’ academic success. However, grappling with ambiguous tenure and promotion guidelines without
the benefit of a mentor who can provide direction and assurance can often be an overwhelming challenge.

*Mentoring – Going it alone*

Complaints about faculty work loads and time constraints can be interpreted as an emphasis upon disjunctive verses serial socialization processes. Disjunctive processes are those where little or no mentoring is offered, whereas serial socialization depends on role models to assist the newcomer in learning the ropes (Tierney & Rhoads, 1994). Evidence suggests that work loads are fairly stable over the span of faculty life. Yet, despite the lack of mentors and demanding expectations, many Black faculty members rise to the challenge and indeed excel in their careers. Serial socialization enables new faculty to utilize the experience and expertise of senior faculty through a mentoring relationship. Although mentoring emerged as an important factor at the faculty level, particularly in the tenure and promotion process, mentoring relationships developed during the graduate school experience contribute significantly to academic cultural socialization. Such relationships not only facilitate cultural knowledge and expectations, they also contribute to professional visibility within the academy (Alfred, 2001).

Recent literature indicates that junior African American faculty are likely to encounter peer counselors, advisors, role models, sponsors and coaches during their socialization and in particular, mentoring process (Dixon-Reeves, 2003). However, this study found just the opposite. African American faculty at the HWU had not received any sort of formal mentoring during their tenure and promotion experiences. If there was any administrative support and program advice from administrators, it was on a miniscule
level. Perhaps the colleges, schools, and departments represented in this study have not deemed it necessary to provide some sort of mentoring program that caters not only to African American faculty but caters to all faculty members at the HWU. Or, faculty members have not communicated a strong need for mentorship and out of indifference they have been ignored. However, it is clear that the majority of Black faculty members exceeded expectations and emerged successful without mentors. This does not imply that they do not need mentors. Effective mentoring is key to professional development, publication, tenure, and promotion. Similarly, collegiality like mentoring has been known to be a good source of support (Reynolds, 1992; Boice, 1992) and the lack of which can translate to isolation and intellectual under stimulation.

Collegiality as a Ruse

Research on collegiality has provided some insights into the general lack of collegiality and the subsequent isolation faced by faculty (Boice, 1992; Reynolds, 1992; Tierney & Rhoads, 1994). For some faculty, lack of collegiality is experienced not so much through lack of contact with colleagues but rather through negative interactions. Yet, even without collegial support, Black faculty members still manage to exceed expectations for tenure and promotion and achieve their goals. The lack of collegial support reported by faculty can be linked to individualized nature of their socialization, which for a majority of faculty, stands in sharp contrast to their graduate school experiences. “The rich simulation of graduate study days is exchanged sometimes for intellectual bareness when the graduate student moves from a collection of desks in a shared room to a private office as an assistant professor” (Mager & Myers, 1982, p. 105).
Consistent with Mawdsley’s (1999) research on collegiality as a factor in tenure decisions, collegiality has often been viewed as a ruse to validate some form of differential treatment. Collegiality in itself is an abstract factor whose weight in balance against a tenure candidate’s research, teaching, and service record is unclear and therefore is often assumed. To many, collegiality can mean not only the ability to cordially work with students, but also the ability to work with students in a way that sufficiently challenges them. It can mean creativity, which is an important element if faculty members are to excel in their own research, and provide effective guidance to students. Teaching techniques, grading techniques and availability to students for advising are all important factors in the evaluation of faculty by students.

 Needless to mention, student evaluations are an important component in tenure and promotion reviews. Accordingly, Mawdsley (1999) notes that the demeanor of non-tenured faculty in the classroom can be a basis for termination. Similarly, although the relationships between non-tenured faculty and other faculty on one hand, and non-tenured faculty and students on the other hand can be an appropriate factor in tenure decisions, it should not serve as a disguise for inappropriate reasons at the institutional or national level. The following quote clearly illustrates these sentiments:

Collegiality is just like the surface of the ocean. It’s restless, it doesn’t stop, doesn’t move, you don’t know where it starts where it ends. You have no way of actually measuring it. How do you measure collegiality? By a smile, by a good morning in the morning even when someone is specifically talking about you behind your back to students? It’s a measurable concept, but it can’t be measured. It can’t be measured by a numerical system. So, it does affect the outcome, which
means that, and this is not just at this level, it is also true at the national level in the sense that presidents have the right people as Supreme Court judges because of that one thing. They know how these people think, they can predict what the decision would be. So, how can we break that down to this level? It’s the committee. Usually it’s the committee that is voted on. We trust human beings to do the appropriate thing.

Faculty who had received negative feedback in the tenure and promotion proceedings argued that other impermissible reasons were the basis for the tenure decisions, as the next quote confirms:

I think it is impossible to separate the human side of us from reality. It could be anything; it could be the way people think about other people. Whereas we are supposed to evaluate people strictly based on a given set of factors, it could be that this person took my car and I am getting back at him, you know. So, it is totally outside the arena of academia, which makes impulsive decisions.

Ideally, what supports collegiality as a factor in the tenure and promotion decisions is the fact that universities must rely on the cooperative and corporate action of its faculty for academic governance. Hence, collegiality among faculty, staff, students, and administrators is an important factor in the multifaceted/cultural realm of academia.

The need for Diversity

Although diversity was not the main objective of this study, it emerged as a salient factor, especially in relation to the institutional climate. The importance of diversity cannot be overemphasized, especially at this time of significant demographic
changes brought about by the new immigration and dramatic increases in students of color in institutions of higher education (Alex-Assensoh, 2003). The very viability of academia may depend on its ability to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student body. Recruitment efforts to increase the numbers of both faculty and staff of color have for a long time seemed to be the answer. Yet, without institutional incentives to not only attract this group of people but to also retain them, it would be a futile effort.

Faculty of color have an important role in decision making and formulating policies that address the needs of diverse university constituents. Thus, incorporating them into the academy serves as a mechanism for change and also for giving voice to historically excluded members of the academy. In the context of research at predominantly White colleges and universities, is only a prelude to long-term institutional change (Alex-Assensoh, 2003; Tierney & Rhoads, 1994). In view of Alex-Assensoh’s claim, this study suggests that institutions that make concerted efforts to increase the numbers of faculty of color but do nothing to change the institutional climate, do not ameliorate significant barriers that Black faculty and other faculty of color are faced with in their career development.

Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, and Allen (1999) note that often institutions focus on a single element of the climate, that is, the goal of increasing the numbers of racial/ethnic representation on campuses. Although it is a vital area of institutional effort, the authors suggest other elements of the climate require attention as well. These elements include but are not limited to the institution’s historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion of various racial ethnic groups, its structural diversity in terms of numerical representation of various racial/ethnic groups, the psychological element, which includes
perceptions and attitudes between and among groups on campus, and a behavioral element that is characterized by relations among groups on campus. These four elements are intricately connected, and constitute a campuses climate that may or may not be perceived as chilly.

The findings of this study further suggest that diversity, whether structural or otherwise, does not happen in a vacuum. The institutional climate has to be “right,” and there needs to be concerted efforts to move from theory and “talk, talk, and talk” to practice. It would be futile to focus only on a single element such as structural diversity with little or no attention paid to the other three aforementioned elements. The general consensus of participants in this study was that until the institutional climate, in all of its dimensions is improved upon; the HWU will continue to experience difficulty in retaining Black faculty, students and staff. Hurtado et al, (1999) maintain that a college’s historical legacy of exclusion of various racial and ethnic groups, for instance, can continue to determine the prevailing climate and influence current practices. Therefore, it is imperative to note that unchanging practices impede attempts to recruit and retain not only faculty of color but students and staff as well, resulting in minimal increases and/or invisibility.

African American faculty at predominantly White institutions have been rendered invisible by virtue of their limited numbers, but at the same time highly visible by virtue of their skin color, “the only grain in the sea of beans” so to speak. While they may not view themselves as affirmative action hires or tokens (Kanter, 1977) the general perception of the White majority affirms that view. The invisibility/visibility serves to reinforce often their feelings of isolation and marginality. Increasing structural diversity
is one step toward improving the institutional climate. Perhaps when ultimate diversity is realized at the HWU, Black faculty will not feel differentially treated and/or compelled to exceed expectations.

This section of the study has synthesized the findings presented in chapter four, in an effort to draw the reader into a deeper understanding of the tenure and promotion experiences and perceptions of African American faculty at the HWU. In all the three salient factors discussed, tenure, mentoring and collegiality, one thing is apparent: exceeding expectations is an implicit requirement for Black faculty. The general feeling is that in order to be recognized, valued, and rewarded, which in many instances is not the case, Black faculty have to be exceptional in their work performance, above and beyond expectations.

Critical Assessment

The findings and assumptions of the current study may not be surprising to members of the Black faculty group, who read this dissertation. From an educational standpoint this study is unique because it is the first study that focuses on the tenure and promotion experiences and perceptions of African American faculty members at the HWU. The study adds to the growing and needed area of research on barriers to retention of minority faculty at predominantly White colleges and universities.

Theoretically, the connection between methodology and methods provided a trajectory to view experiences in an analytical format without sacrificing the richness of individual member’s experiences and perceptions. In addition, the interpretative approach afforded the research to be data driven rather than method driven. The study gives voice
to the muted. Thus, it is considered as a powerful tool of empowerment for the participants and those whose sentiments are echoed. To the extent that the research provides insight into the lived experiences of African American faculty at a predominantly White institution, it is my conviction that it is a worthwhile endeavor.

To be able to respond to questions raised by critics of higher education as to why some institutions such as the HWU are still at the left end on the diversity continuum, we must understand the process of tenure and promotion in academia to be more receptive to faculty ideas, needs, and goals, regardless of their ethnic/racial and gender orientations. Since tenure determines either retention or attrition of faculty, examining the tenure and promotion process as it is experienced and perceived by Black faculty is an important step toward increasing diversity. The study is relevant to policy makers in formulating policies that would best serve the interests of all concerned.

The descriptions provided in this study are not by any measure intended to represent the tenure and promotion experiences and perceptions of all African American faculty at all predominantly White universities, nor are they intended to represent the collective tenure experiences of African American faculty at the HWU. The insights should however be used to compliment a priori related research, essentially advancing the legitimacy of the African American as a valuable, insightful, and important avenue of research.

Recommendations

The findings in this study suggest ways the university (HWU) can use to improve the tenure and promotion experiences of African American faculty and also to foster
retention of this group of faculty. Three important sets of recommendations are offered. The first set pertains to institutions and faculty in general. These include, 1) a need for a formal mentoring program, 2) substantiated tenure and promotion guidelines, and 3) release time for research. The second set of recommendations relates to administrators, particularly chairpersons and the third set addresses prospective faculty.

For Institutions and Faculty

As suggested in this study and elsewhere in the literature, the implications of a mentoring program far outweigh the self-mentoring process that any faculty has had to go through. A mentoring program would serve to guide and lead faculty through the tenure and promotion process. As a form of network, mentoring would counterbalance the isolation that Black faculty, in particular, experience in an academic workplace that is predominantly White.

Consistent with (Baldwin & Chronister’s, 2001; Chait & Trower’s, 1997) research findings, participants recommend changes in the tenure and promotion policies in terms of acknowledgment and reward for additional demands on faculty of color who often invest more time in teaching and service activities and the acknowledgement and validation of research conducted by faculty of color. In addition, the criteria used in the review process for tenure and promotion need not be ambiguous with double standards but consistent, clear, and should be reviewed regularly. Teaching, research and service, for instance, should be weighted equally in the tenure and promotion decisions. Of equal importance is also the clarity of how much teaching, research and service are required. The three areas need to be substantiated. Colleges and universities need to rethink their
notion of what constitutes rigorous and legitimate scholarship and carefully reexamine their views on minority research and scholarship. In other words, is what is considered non-mainstream research and scholarship a question of the researcher or the research itself?

In relation to time release for research, faculty warrant realistic and balanced workloads, needless to mention, faculty have their own personal demands that need attention. Institutions can do either of these two, give junior faculty on tenure-track time release for research and scholarship or reduce their teaching loads so they can have time to focus on research besides teaching and service.

The tenure-seeking process is unique to an individual, and so, networking and collegial interaction is key to discovering important subtleties and easy navigation through the process. Since collegiality, as evidenced in this research, is concerned more with conduct rather than academic aspects such as scholarship and teaching, it has often been a suspect factor to faculty members, who have been denied tenure. For that matter, collegiality should be only one of several factors (not the sole factor) in a tenure and promotion decision.

It is important that faculty, in general, stay close to research, close to the university, get involved in the university life, but should not lose sight of their communities. They should ensure their research involves a perspective from their communities because that is where it would be given respect. Therefore, administrators need to increase financial support for travel and research projects as well as instituting programs geared toward improving the retention of Black faculty and faculty of color in general.
Consistent with Diamond’s (1999) recommendations, institutions should inform faculty in writing at the outset, the number of years toward tenure. They should also include in their yearly reviews, what faculty members need to do to be considered for “early tenure.” It is incumbent upon institutions to ensure that their stated criteria for tenure match the actual criteria used in practice. Institutions also are mandated to develop procedures for handling unexpected information they receive on a tenure candidate, whether positive or negative, such as acceptance of a book for publication or harassment charges, amid a tenure review process.

It is imperative that institutions, disciplines/colleges clarify what is expected of a tenure candidate without making the process seem esoteric (Turner & Myers, 2000). For instance, faculty should have a time frame of what is expected of them, and how decisions are reached (Diamond, 1999). Thus, tenure-track faculty and faculty at large have the right to know about issues that affect their lives, how, and by whom decisions are made. To the extent possible, institutions need to clearly delineate to faculty, in the tenure documents, what is required for tenure and promotion. To do otherwise, as Tienery and Bensimon (1996) put it, is to make a mockery of an institution that presents itself as a community. Tenure and promotion guidelines should also be updated yearly through the directive of the department chairperson and tenure committees.

For Chairpersons/Administrators

Given the importance of the role of the chairperson in the tenure and promotion process, it is imperative that he/she develops a time frame for reviews and the format for its presentation as well as a time frame for the specific steps of the tenure and promotion
review. More importantly, chairpersons are encouraged to develop positive relationships with faculty. The chairperson should discuss with tenure candidates during formal reviews, what they will need for their files, such as outside letters of review. There have been cases where tenure candidates were not aware of what to include in the tenure dossier until the last hour (Tierney & Rhoads, 1996). Such cases can be avoided by informing faculty during their first year that all work-related information must be kept for tenure review. Hence, department chairpersons should be trained to provide performance reviews to tenure candidates that explicitly address progress toward tenure.

Further, tenure decisions must be consistent over time among candidates, regardless of their race, gender, disability, and national origin. Formal evaluations of a single individual over time should reflect a coherent set of expectations and consistent analysis of the person’s performance. To that end, the department chair and responsible administrators should explicitly explain to all tenure-track faculty the standards for tenure and reappointment and the evaluation cycle of progress for meeting requirements. Lastly, faculty and administrators are reminded to treat the unsuccessful tenure candidates with professionalism and decency.
For Prospective Faculty

It is worth noting that particular institutional issues regarding tenure and promotion guidelines reveal much about the difficulties of applying general concepts to specific situations. For prospective faculty, it is important that they read the institutional and the departmental mission statements before accepting an academic position. The advice is important as tenure and promotion committees evaluate individual candidates based on how well their contributions fit with the departmental and institutional mission statements. Job candidates are also encouraged to gather a sense of what counts for tenure and promotion before accepting the job. One cannot emphasize enough the importance of determining, during the job interview, the feasibility of meeting the tenure and promotion requirements given the work load.

Implications for Future Research

This study no doubt marks the beginning not the end of a fulfilling, scholarly career focusing on Black faculty experience. Right from the initial stages of this study, I grappled with the critical decision of whether or not to conduct a comparative study that entailed including the tenure and promotion experiences of African American faculty at historically Black universities. The decision to narrow the scope of this study was influenced by time constraints and monetary resources. It would be interesting to compare the findings of this study with a similar study conducted at a historically Black university. In addition, a comparative study of Black faculty and White faculty experiences of the tenure and promotion process at predominantly White institutions is warranted. It would be insightful to see how their experiences differ or compliment each
other. The views of Black faculty who have left the HWU owing to tenure denial would be an important point of departure in understanding and restructuring the tenure system for the best interests of all. Although the tenure and promotion structure of faculty and staff may be slightly different, perspectives from both sides would be resourceful in bringing about a sustainable structural diversity.

Most fascinating would be for scholars to study the disjuncture between perceptions and reality of research and diversity, especially as evidenced in the professorial issues of tenure and promotion. I am fascinated by the concepts of Black experiences and African-centered theory and look forward to the opportunity to contribute to the expansion of this theory. I hope projects like mine will play a pivotal role in moving from the periphery, issues related to Black faculty experience, to the forefront of contemporary education research.

Faculty of color have been described in the literature as important contributors to new knowledge in academia (Neumann & Peterson, 1997; Turner, 2000). Many view themselves as reflecting and projecting their realities in the work that they do. As faculty, they bring their experience and knowledge into campus discourses, in the classroom, in the literature and in their communities. They provide guidance and support for their students and colleagues in academia, not to mention advocating for the admission of young talented students of color and faculty into institutions of higher learning. They serve as role models, as their presence and success encourage others of similar backgrounds to pursue educational goals.

Lastly, this study is relevant to institutions of higher education, practitioners, particularly administrators, faculty and students aspiring to be future faculty and/or
administrators. Some institutions have revamped their tenure and promotion processes, while others are in the process of doing so for the benefit of both the institution and the individual (Diamond, 1999). It is no doubt, given the dearth of research focusing specifically on tenure guidelines that this avenue of research warrants further exploration to determine the degree to which tenure guidelines have had systematic, constructive impact beyond faculty and personnel management.

Conclusion

Any kind of change within organizations, cultural or otherwise, requires questioning the system in place. It behooves administrators at HWU to ask, what are the common causes of Black faculty attrition? Common negative experiences reported in this study are a good indicator that something is wrong with the system and that the system needs to change. Administrators can start the change process by examining what is taken for granted about both institutional and departmental cultures and the structure and process of tenure and promotion. One of those taken-for-granted assumptions is that Black faculty are expected to conform to the prevailing institutional and departmental cultures. Administrators need to consider how the institutional culture needs to change in order to be more accommodating to members of diverse cultures. Among these changes are valuing every faculty, respecting their values, interests, life styles, and most importantly viewing Black faculty and faculty in general as an investment to be nurtured and mentored through their professional development.

The present study reveals that the answer to the grand question: the experiences and perceptions of African American faculty with the tenure and promotion process does
not lie in a single academic construct. Findings involved a qualitative exploration of multiple facets of the university including but not limited to, the institutional climate, mentoring, policy, and structural issues. Black faculty are challenged to meet and exceed the demands of the tenure and promotion process even in the absence of support systems. The study illuminates some of the dilemmas that Black tenure-track faculty are faced with, owing to unclear tenure guidelines. Given the importance with which tenure and promotion is viewed, it is only fair that guidelines to achieving it are clearly delineated and unambiguous.

It behooves administrators to ensure that the tenure and promotion guidelines are not riddled with “mystery.” Specifically, the role of the department chairperson in guiding and advising tenure candidates through the process should not be taken lightly. This study also offers recommendations aimed at “rooting” out the “mystery” of the tenure and promotion process. The recommendations are important particularly in engendering a tenure and promotion process that is equally beneficial to both the institution and the individual.

Further, this study discussed the need for a review/reformation of current policies regarding faculty tenure and promotion to promote and enhance a better experience, diversity, and a positive institutional climate for all. This would ensure that the best interests of faculty, the institution and society at large are served. The mystification and misinformation that candidates experience in the tenure review process is unnecessary and benefits no one. The prevailing, somewhat paternalistic and Eurocentric response to Black faculty issues and faculty of color in general is redundant. It is my hope that HWU
and many other cases of a similar nature will move forward to a comfort level where everybody in the university is valued.

Although academia is a tremendously political arena, different perspectives are critical and essential to the growth and development of any academic setting. To that end, recommendations offered in this study should not be overlooked especially in this time and age when tenure systems are undergoing a lot of criticisms. To say that the institutional climate for Black faculty and faculty of color in general can and should be improved is an understatement.
References

ACE, AAUP, & UE. (2000). *Good practice in tenure evaluation: Advice for tenured faculty, department chairs, and academic administrators.*


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## APPENDIX A

Significant events in the Lives of Black Educators, 1954 to 1965

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
officials declined to explain the log delay in making the decision on her reappointment.

January, 1960  In Phoenix, Arizona, Black substitute teacher Louis Pete charged that the school district of Phoenix discriminated against Black teachers. The school district hired only one African American during a 2-year period.

July, 1961  In Mound City, Illinois, former school teachers L. L. Owens and his wife Gertrude filed a federal suit charging they were fired because of racial discrimination. After an all-White and an all-Black school merged, all of the Black teachers were fired, whereas all of the White teachers were retained.

November, 1962  In Clarksdale, Mississippi, Mrs. Noelle Henry, wife of Aaron Henry, the state’s NAACP president, was fired from the teaching position she had held for 11 years. She filed suit against the school board in the district court’s Delta Division.

November, 1963  In New Orleans, Louisiana, the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ordered a district court to hear Sybil Morial’s suit challenging the state law prohibiting integration. She was a public school teacher and the wife of the city NAACP leader Ernest Morial.

August, 1964  In Raleigh, North Carolina, Willa Johnson filed suit in federal court charging that her teaching contract was not renewed because of her civil rights activity. She stated that she was active in voter registration in Halifax County and that her dismissal was designed to punish her and intimidate other African Americans.

December, 1965  In Little Rock, Arkansas, eight Black teachers who lost jobs when the all-Black school was closed appealed to the federal court to be reinstated. A lower court ruled that school officials did not have to guarantee positions to teachers displaced because of school desegregation.

APPENDIX B

The Impact of *Brown v. Board of Education*

On the Employment Status of Black Educators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-1954</td>
<td>Approximately 82,000 Black teachers taught 2 million Black children who attended mostly segregated schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>On May 17, the U.S. Supreme court ruled in the case <em>Oliver L. Brown v. the Topeka (KS) Board of Education.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954-1965</td>
<td>More than 38,000 Black educators in 17 southern and boarder states were dismissed from their positions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975-1985</td>
<td>The number Black students who chose teacher education as a major declined by 66%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984-1989</td>
<td>New teacher certification requirements and teacher education program admission requirements resulted in the displacement of 21,515 Black teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>African American teachers represented 6% of the public school teaching force, whereas African American students represented 17.1% of the public school student population.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX C

Permission Letter

Cathy S. Kimuna
8864 United Lane Apt. 28
Athens, oh 45701
May 12, 2004

Dear Faculty Member:

I am a graduate student working on my dissertation at Ohio University on the topic of tenure and promotion. As an African American faculty, I wanted to talk to you about your experiences and perceptions of the tenure and promotion process at your institution, and how the process has impacted your perception of your role in terms of teaching, scholarship, and service. I will be talking to a number of African American faculty both tenured and pre-tenured, beginning June 3, 2004. Ideally, I would need about one and a half hours or so. Any time at your convenience, morning, noon, or evening this week or next week would be fine.

I work for Minority Graduate Student Affairs, and we are involved in the recruitment of minority graduate students for the various programs on campus, in an attempt to increase diversity. My premise for this study is predicated on the notion that increasing student diversity without increasing faculty diversity is a disservice to the institution. Yet, it would be futile to try to increase faculty diversity without an understanding of their experiences and perceptions of the very structure that determines their stay or exit.

Note that participation in this study is strictly confidential and entirely voluntary. All information will be kept in strict confidence.

I look forward to your kind and prompt response. Thanking you in advance.

Sincerely,
Sihoya Ç. Kimuna
APPENDIX D

Ohio University

Human Subject Consent Form

Title of Research project:  In their Own Words: Tenure and Promotion Experiences and Perceptions of African American Faculty at a Historically White University

Researcher/Investigator:  Sihoya C. Kimuna

I. Federal and university regulations require me to obtain signed consent for participation in research projects which involve human subjects. After reading the statement below, if you agree to participate in this study, please indicate your consent by signing this form.

II. Statement of Purpose

This study is aimed at exploring the tenure and promotion experiences and perceptions of tenured and pre-tenured African American faculty at a Historically White University (HWU). In addition, this study aims at examining the success strategies employed by tenured African American faculty in achieving tenure. Also, of particular interest is how social interaction/collegiality and the tenure and promotion process affect African American faculty’s perceptions of their roles. The findings of this study will contribute to the knowledge base and insights of African American faculty at the HWU, the discipline of education, the academy, and society at large.

Approximately 30-35 African American faculty members will be interviewed for this study. The one-on-one, in-depth interviews will last approximately one and half to two hours. The interviews are recorded, with your permission, to allow for later transcription and analysis. Note that the only foreseen risk pertains to your having to disclose intimate information about your career. However, your participation in this study is strictly confidential. Your responses will be kept in strict confidence. Tapes and transcripts will be stored in a safe place, and there will be no mention of your name on them. You will not be personally identified in any of the transcripts or written reports. The interview tapes will be destroyed after all data has been transcribed. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to skip any questions or terminate the interview at any time.
I agree that all known risk to me have been explained to my satisfaction and I understand that no compensation is available from Ohio University and its employees for any injury resulting from my participation in this research.

I certify that I have read and fully understand the Statement of Purpose, Procedure, and agree to participate in this research project. My participation is given voluntarily and without coercion or undue influence. I understand that I may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of any benefits to which I might otherwise be entitled. I certify that I qualify to participate in the study.

Signature  ---------------------------------------------------- Date  -------------------
Print Name  ------------------------------------------------------------------

For future reference please contact:
Sihoya C. Kimuna: Tel: 740-594-1058; Email: caty42@hotmail.com
APPENDIX E

Interview Protocol

Briefly introduce myself and project, and my work experience

I am interested in learning about your experiences and perceptions of the tenure and promotion process at this institution. How have these processes impacted your career? I’m also interested in learning about strategies you have employed in your academic career to be successful. If you do not feel comfortable answering a particular question, simply skip it and we will move on to the next. Note, this is absolutely voluntary and you are free to end it at any time. The interview is being recorded, with your permission, so I can be able to transcribe it later. Let me know whenever you are ready to begin so we can turn on the tape-recorder.

To begin, I would like you to provide a brief description of yourself and your experiences working at this institution.

Age
Race/ethnicity
Duration worked at the institution
Job title/rank
Description of the institution in terms of the racial climate
As a group 1 faculty how did you arrive at this institution?

How long have you been in your current position?

On an individual basis, what has/was your personal experience of faculty tenure and promotion process been like? What is/was your understanding of the entire process? How has it impacted your academic career?

What programs, services, activities, policies, etc. does this institution have/lack that you believe would support African-American faculty growth.

Tell me about a typical working day for you as a faculty member.

What do you see as the major challenges to tenure and promotion at this university?

In general how would you describe this university’s response to issues of tenure and promotion of African American faculty?

Has there ever been a time when you noticed your department chair/tenure committee members treating you differentially based on your race/ethnicity? If so, how did you feel?
How about other racial groups? Did you ever observe them being treated differently? What did you observe?

What strategies have you employed in your academic career to remain afloat?

What policy changes related to the tenure and promotion process would you recommend? How might that be accomplished, benefits, etc.

Supposing you were researching on African-American experiences and perceptions of the tenure and promotion process at this university, what are some of the issues you would like addressed?

Is there anything else you would like to say to help me understand how this institution deals with upward mobility of minority faculty?

Would you be interested in being further interviewed on this topic?

How would you describe this interview process? Any suggestions for improvement?

Thank you very much for participating in this study. Your responses will be kept in strict confidence.

For future reference please contact:

Sihoya C. Kimuna
8864 United Lane Apt. 28
Athens, OH 45701
Tel: 740-594-1058
Email: caty42@hotmail.com
APPENDIX F

IRB Approval

The amendment, detailed below, and submitted for the following research study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board. Approval date of this amendment does not affect the expiration date of original approval.

Revised recruitment - Sent Appendix B letter via email to Group 1 African American faculty members

Project: In Their Own Words: Tenure and Promotion Experiences and Perceptions of African American Faculty at a Midwest White University

Project Director: Cathy Sihoya Kimuna

Advisor: Valerie Conley
(If applicable)

Department: Counseling and Higher Education

Rebecca Cale, Associate Director, Research Compliance Institutional Review Board

10/10/04
Date