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This chapter presents an assistant professor's scholarly personal narrative at the precipice of promotion, and reveals how the feral child metaphor might aptly describe many junior professors' experiences as they navigate a path toward tenure. This chronicling of mentorship in sometimes unexpected venues may aid new faculty and those invested in their success in both earning tenure and retaining them in the field.

Of Feral Faculty and Magisterial Mowglis: The Domestication of Junior Faculty

Richard J. Reddick

One of the more fascinating literary and cultural motifs is that of the feral or wild child (a she-wolf raised Romulus and Remus, the founders of the city of Rome; the character Mowgli in Kipling's *The Jungle Book* had an identical upbringing). In fiction, this is characterized ultimately as an advantage, with the feral child avoiding the corrupting societal influences while gaining courage from an upbringing among animals. However, the feral child must endure socialization, an experience of tension and frustration, to become successful within a new societal context. Despite this acclimation, there is a twinge of regret and loss for the feral children who advance to adulthood—they never truly adapt and often return to their roots, only occasionally interacting with civilized society, à la Burroughs's Tarzan and Barrie's Peter Pan.

The feral child of literature is an apt metaphor for my experiences navigating a research-intensive, predominantly White institution (PWI) as a Black male professor. For underrepresented faculty there is a perpetual sense of being the other in PWIs (Stanley, 2006)—and while obtaining degrees and advancing through institutions provide some understanding and access, feeling like an unwelcome guest in a house constructed by and maintained for White, privileged scholars endures. Meanwhile, the socialization process is possible only with the investment of individuals and counterstructures that validate and endorse the feral faculty's existence. My journey from eager naïf to tenured professor illustrates these themes, and I share them here, partly chronicling moments of triumph and disaster buttressed

with theoretical underpinnings on faculty socialization via scholarly personal narrative.

Literature Review

What is the landscape of the academy in 2014, specifically from underrepresented scholars' perspectives? For starters, it is overwhelmingly White. As of fall 2011, 73.4% of faculty members in the United States were White—only slightly more than one quarter of the faculty were of color. Black faculty comprise 6.7%, an uptick from the late 1990s, but hardly approaching equity in a nation that is 13% Black (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2013). Other communities of color report similarly paltry levels of representation (e.g., American Indians, 0.5%; Asians, 6.2%; and Hispanics, 5.0%). Unsurprisingly, this underrepresentation has deleterious consequences for faculty of color, and specifically Black faculty. Turner and colleagues (Turner, González, & Wood, 2008) analyzed 20 years of scholarship on the experiences of faculty of color and found numerous factors that positively impacted the workplace for this population: a love for teaching, networking, student diversity, colleagues and allies, political involvement, and supportive leadership. However, adverse factors were greater in number, including undervaluation of their research interests, isolation, bias in hiring, unjust work expectations, a lack of diversity, and a lack of recruitment and retention. Additionally, many factors were presented as both positive and negative, including service, research outlets, and tenure and promotion (Turner et al., 2008).

Researchers have recounted the particularly taxing experiences for Black scholars in PWIs, noting that job satisfaction, representation among tenured faculty, and compensation rank far below the rates for White colleagues (Allen, Epps, Guillory, Suh, & Bonous-Hammarth, 2000). Brayboy (2003), Griffin and Reddick (2011), and Padilla (1994) have focused on the service burden for faculty of color and Black faculty, noting how PWIs exact a "tax" on underrepresented faculty via service and representation regarding campus diversity. While majority faculty are often provided space to initiate research and publications to ensure successful promotion bids, underrepresented faculty deal with pressure from varied constituents, who have levels of expectations for these faculty members, including their engagement with each constituency's needs.

Promotion and tenure can be significant stressors: Concerns about transparency in tenure standards, perception and value of research, and the relative weight of teaching and service compared to research and publication affect underrepresented faculty (Stanley, 2007). The social and instrumental distance between the pathways to success dictated by predominantly White academic norms to the values brought by many scholars of color can be perceived as ferine; the scholar from the underrepresented community is often advised to "civilize" himself or herself to ensure success.

Methodology

How does one "academicize" lived experiences such as those I will relate in this chapter? Scholars are given explicit and implicit messages that autoethnographic scholarship is without depth or rigor. Fortunately, researchers such as Nash (2004) have built a method: *scholarly personal narrative* (SPN), "a 'counter-narrative' to the faceless, de-contextualized research paradigm that has dominated scholarship" (p. vii). Nash further notes that SPN can provide a means for faculty of color to convey experiences, since they "have had to suppress their strong, distinct voices along with their anger, for years in the academy" (p. 2).

While there are commonalities between SPN and autoethnographic methods, SPN "puts the *self* of the scholar front and center … mak[ing] narrative sense of personal experience" (Nash, 2004, p. 18). SPN allows for translating the personal to a larger audience, similar to how scholars of color have leveraged their experiences to challenge and reinterpret established discourses on the academy (see Fries-Britt & Turner Kelly, 2005).

Theoretical Framework

How, then, are feral faculty domesticated? I look to the extant literature on faculty socialization, particularly the work of Austin (2002), for conceptualizations of this process. As Golde (1998) notes, the faculty socialization process begins in graduate school, where a potential faculty member has to first believe that he or she can do the academic work, then commit to graduate student life, and, finally, identify whether he or she belongs in academia; for underrepresented faculty, the final stage may not occur.

Austin (2002) additionally explains that the 21st century presents unique challenges to the faculty socialization process; advancing technology and increasing workloads represent a major transformation of higher education—meaning that the standard for excellence is an ever-elusive target. Increased attention regarding work-life balance in the academy (Reddick, Rochlen, Grasso, Reilly, & Spikes, 2012) is yet another component of socialization. Austin (2002) recommends interventions to facilitate successful socialization, including mentoring, advising, feedback, and greater transparency regarding faculty responsibility.

Cawyer, Simonds, and Davis (2002) present five characteristics that impact faculty socialization: (1) interpersonal bonding (affirming new faculty), (2) social support (emotional care), (3) professional advice (exposing departmental workings), (4) institutional history (knowing the dirty laundry of the organization), and (5) accessibility (new hires feeling they can seek information from senior colleagues). These characteristics aid the civilizing of faculty not privy to dictated mores.

Johnson and Harvey (2002) present one of the few faculty socialization models focused on Black professors, finding three major impediments to

faculty socialization: (1) lack of clear communication of institutional values and expectations; (2) lack of transparency from senior faculty, creating barriers to knowledge; and (3) heavy workloads limiting knowledge for promotion and tenure (this finding may be an artifact of the majority of the institutions in the sample being teaching-centered historically Black colleges and universities [HBCUs]). However, one can extrapolate factors that helped and hindered Black faculty socialization—the process where being feral is supplanted by an understanding of a foreign environment's norms and expectations. I can reflect on three aspects of my socialization: *mentoring-at-a-distance*, in which scholars who were invested in my success intervened and supported my trajectory; "*troll models*," colleagues who (in)advertently demonstrated what *not* to do in pursuit of tenure; and *cheerleaders*, who remained optimistic and emphasized the importance of my presence in academia.

Findings

In this section, I provide vignettes from the aforementioned three categories.

Mentoring-at-a-Distance. Mentoring has been traditionally regarded as a close, interpersonal relationship with a senior member of an organization (Kram, 1988). In fact, a defining characteristic of mentorship is proximity; physical distance within developmental relationships leads to the utilization of other forms. My experience speaks to how embracing technology reconceptualizes the meaning of *proximal*. I landed a position at my undergraduate alma mater in my hometown where my family resided, in a department where my presence was welcomed. However, there were concerns unique to my situation and that of my colleague Victor Sáenz, also hired at the same time. For instance, our senior colleagues were tenured decades before, from strong practitioner backgrounds; as researcher-scholars, we found their advice well-intentioned but often inapplicable. Fortunately, the relationships I had established as a graduate student with scholars at other institutions deepened. These "associates" became true mentors, investing time via e-mails, calls, and conference chats. Initially I thought of these as fleeting moments with people I admired, but their influence was far more significant.

Gia is one such mentor-at-a-distance, well known in my subspeciality as a fun-loving but incredibly prolific scholar. I knew Gia socially and had presented a paper with a dear collaborator in a session with her. In the discussion, Gia made points that I had similarly found in some of my work. As I excitedly shared our common findings, Gia asked where the manuscripts had been published. When I replied that they were in an edited volume, she responded, "You really need to get those ideas into peer-reviewed journals!" Initially I was confused; wasn't I supposed to find a broad audience through chapters? Gia's advice, however, was part of the domestication process; scholars need to communicate to multiple constituencies, and the one

with the greatest influence on early-career scholars is the peer-review community. One's most significant work should *initially* appear in these venues, while edited volumes are ideal for extensions of this work. As a senior scholar, this seems obvious; nearly a decade ago, I did not understand this aspect of the academy. Gia's gentle but firm admonition alerted me to the fact that I could count on her to give me direct, yet supportive advice.

Over the years, I have consulted Gia over many dilemmas: where to submit manuscripts, navigating the ethics of the publication process, and how to graciously decline opportunities to publish chapters with prominent scholars. I know Gia does this for a multitude of junior scholars, but she is gifted in making her mentees feel as if she is exclusively focused on their careers. I use the term *mentoring magnet* to describe scholars such as Gia, who despite distance and an incredibly active research agenda find time to invest in a number of junior scholars.

Another mentoring magnet who served as a mentor-at-a-distance is Magdalena, whose work I voraciously read during my dissertation writing. I had the opportunity to meet Magdalena a few times, but thought that I was just one of the faces she politely spoke to on the conference circuit. During my first year as a faculty member, I learned she was paying closer attention than I had thought. In an e-mail exchange about a conference symposium mix-up, she added this note:

> I met some doctoral students who mentioned you at a conference [related to your research agenda] recently. They had many positive things to say about you and your work. Thought you would like to know.

It may seem like a minor pat on the back, but for a junior professor in an eternal state of self-doubt, hearing a senior scholar compliment my work and connection to students was incredibly validating. I returned to this e-mail after receiving rejections from journal editors, using it as motivation—*a prominent, well-published scholar in my field thinks highly of my work; sooner or later one of these manuscripts will get accepted!*

Years on, I have made the most of the brief time I spend face-to-face with Magdalena, but our correspondence via e-mail is lengthy and meaningful. When I was in the editing stage of a manuscript submitted to a prestigious journal, Magdalena was one of the first to ask about its status so that she could cite it in her work. Magdalena has opened networks, and, through her scholarship and mentorship, has pioneered a path validating a place for scholars such as myself who bring multiple identities in contrast to the dominant population at many PWIs.

There are many examples of mentoring-at-a-distance in my journey. Jamal, who included me in numerous projects as I started in the professoriate, although he was not in my exact subspecialty; Kwame, who suggested I investigate family-friendly policies such as the clock stoppage I ultimately employed when my daughter was born prematurely; and Jabari, whom I would

see at the annual conference and who would connect me to other scholars in the field via his expansive network. Many of these mentors worked across various axes of identity to provide metaphorical shelter from the storm of achieving tenure at a research-intensive institution.

"Troll Models."   Young scholars look to peers and senior colleagues for guidance; I was no exception. However, as instructive as those colleagues were who showed me how to best utilize my skills, I may have learned as much from those who navigated the academy incongruent to my values. I use the term *troll models* to describe these scholars. It is only fair to note that many of these scholars simply chose a different pathway than mine and that this nomenclature is somewhat provocative. Nevertheless, from these examples I realized I had to strive for another direction in the academy. A good colleague of mine in the policy world, Vernon, demonstrated what a troll model could be. After a visit, I asked, "Why did you choose to not join the professoriate? You love research, and you're an excellent teacher—this is the perfect life for you." Vernon recounted a discussion he'd had with Bill, a senior scholar we both knew. After Bill had extolled the benefits of an academic career to Vernon at a cookout, Vernon found himself sitting next to Bill's teenaged son. Vernon asked Bill's son what he thought of his dad's career, and the son responded: "I guess it's great, especially now that he's well established in his field. I see a lot more of him now. When I was younger, he was always traveling. I guess now I'm kind of getting to know my dad for the first time."

Vernon's story struck me. My son, Karl, was born in October during my first year as a professor, and I remember responding to e-mails with a sleeping infant on my chest (not easy, but possible). My spouse pointed out to me that it *might* work better if I was able to focus on parenting when I was at home; I shamefully agreed. Since then, I think I've done a much better job of balancing work and family. I carve out time to take Karl to karate class, and I've been at virtually every school event for both him and my daughter, Katherine. From my own research, I know that junior faculty men still grapple with utilizing family-friendly policies at work. However, I have endeavored to be as present as I can be in my family's lives. I am relieved to have earned tenure, because it does suggest that the promotion process does have some regard for the soul as well as the mind.

I am not perfect, and occasionally disappear to check e-mails or finish a manuscript. The example of senior scholars a generation or two before me has instructed me to prioritize some aspects of my life differently. I am fully aware that someone with different priorities may take advantage of opportunities that I would bypass. I am at peace with this understanding— and I will admit, as the children get older, there's a little more freedom in my schedule.

I have encountered other troll models. There were scholars who advised me to "just say no" (the Nancy Reagan mantra) to service or

connecting with the community, without realizing that I research and teach in the community from whence I came; I am a homecoming faculty member of color (Reddick & Sáenz, 2012). Wiser advisors urged me to integrate service, teaching, and research—advice that acknowledged my admiration for those in the community who made it possible for me to become a professor. My troll model examples work for *some* in academia; there are multiple ways for an academic life. Fortunately, I had counterexamples to the paths I found worrisome.

Cheerleaders.   I discussed the impact of mentors-at-a-distance earlier; cheerleaders are a little different. These supporters are not always faculty colleagues; for me, they are advisees, students, friends, or professional colleagues in other fields. They are there to support the team, regardless of what the scoreboard reads. I recall students' e-mails precisely when I receive a disappointing article review or an unsuccessful grant proposal review. This e-mail arrived about a month into fatherhood, when I was unsure whether I was wearing clean clothes or shaving on a daily basis:

> Thank you for bringing so much additional material to your lectures each week. As a feminist it is *extremely* difficult to sit through readings and lectures that seem to revolve around the role men (particularly Anglo men) have played in the world; your efforts to recognize the relevant efforts of both female and minority individuals in the context of higher education did not go unnoticed and were much appreciated. I wish you the best in your academic career here at UT!

Messages of this ilk are the lifeblood of the day-to-day academic grind. Previously, as a teacher, I remember a mentor urging me to greet every child with a smile and hello, "because you might be the only person to do it that day." Similarly, one of these "cheers" can be one of the few positive moments in a day festooned with failure. The nature of rigor and competition necessitates being on the losing end at times; encouragement from cheerleaders keeps one in the game.

The high service loads for scholars of color at PWIs leads to what I term "associate assistanthood." Many of the obligations that traditionally are the domain of senior faculty (chairing departmental committees, chairing dissertations, and directing degree programs) can fall into the hands of assistant professors. This is not a complaint; the reality of working in a small department is that these things must be done, and senior colleagues bear a greater share of the burden. Cheerleaders mediate the load in many ways: A regular discussion among students in my department was how to access new faculty in a nonburdensome manner. Many advanced students served as informal gatekeepers, redirecting students to senior faculty or assisting junior colleagues with concerns to protect my time. I was awestruck when one advisee shared how she had taught a peer about conference

proposals, "because *you* don't need to be spending your time worrying about that." I also had the support of emeritus faculty, who agreed to serve on committees or guest lecture in courses. Just as cheerleaders will build a pyramid by serving as the base while allowing a teammate to climb to the apex, these advisees, friends, and professional and emeritus colleagues allowed me to stand on the shoulders of giants (though they are too humble to see themselves as such). In my mind, they are giants in generosity and kindness.

Discussion and Conclusion

I have stretched the feral metaphor to the limit in this narrative; however, it aptly conveys an enlightening socialization process that I have experienced. Despite the chasm that separates my being from the predominantly White academy, I am slowly finding support externally and internally that validates my place, as Austin (2002) and Golde (1998) note within the final stage of graduate student development. Pre-tenure, I felt I had been granted the opportunity to sink or swim; I have emerged afloat.

The ever-evolving role of the faculty has made mentors-at-a-distance increasingly important; they have demonstrated a humane path toward the life of the mind. Mentors-at-a-distance and cheerleaders interpersonally affirmed my presence in the field, demonstrating care for my entire being while revealing the inner workings of the academy. I was armored with knowledge to supplement on-campus mentors, who informed me of the institution-specific realities of academia, corresponding to conceptualizations of faculty socialization (Cawyer et al., 2002; Miller, 1995). Furthermore, through knowledge of the field at large and experiences at peer institutions, mentors-at-a-distance were often more forthcoming about likely tenure expectations than local senior colleagues, in line with Johnson and Harvey's (2002) findings about socialization for Black faculty. Conversely, troll models have helped me understand the consequences of certain choices; I am better equipped to make decisions knowing potential outcomes.

So having reached tenure, am I fully domesticated? *No!* I revel in the fact that my journey has been somewhat out of sync with the prevailing pathways of socialization, though I benefited from support mechanisms through different sources. I still embrace emblematic methodologies and theories outside of the academy—such as this chapter. Simultaneously, I have been accultured to my field's tenets. In conversation with colleagues of color at PWIs, I have found that this is a commonly held sentiment. For feral faculty, occupying this middle space is our ultimate destination, with the flickers of wildness peeking through the veneer of academic civilization. It is becoming a more comfortable space, as I echo the sentiments of Voltaire: "Froth at the top, dregs at bottom, but the middle excellent."

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