

**Vested Accomplices: Men Embracing Cultural Humility in Personal & Institutional
Transformation at a Historically Black University**

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Introduction: A Story of Perceived Trauma

Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) serve minority populations in higher education. MSIs are uniquely positioned across the country and serve urban neighborhoods. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are a component of the MSIs that provide education for traditionally underrepresented and low-income students (Minority Serving Institutions Program, 2021).

HBCUs generally view themselves as a family, based on historical and social locations. But as is the case with real families, though there may be genuine care and though the best may be sought for members of the family, there is still family dysfunction; there are times when some members of the family remain uncared for, where some members of the family are unheard, mistreated and misunderstood. There is a perception, a perception based upon reality, that the family is not attentive to the needs of that family member. That family member is acutely aware of the family dysfunction. And in dealing with the dysfunction, that family member must deal with the trauma of suffering from the family dysfunction.

One area of specific focus is Black women faculty in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and social and behavioral sciences (SBS), who deal with a dysfunction that results in the trauma of not attaining the academic success for which they strive. Our student population is predominantly female, with 66% of all degrees earned in 2019-2020 being awarded to women (FAMU Institutional Research).

However, the faculty percentages do not mirror that of the students. The 2020-2021 data indicates that 27.7% of full professors across all disciplines are women (FAMU ADVANCE). Yet only 20.9% of tenured full professors in STEM/SBS are women. Drilling down to Black women, they comprise only 11.9% of tenured full professors in STEM/SBS. At the other end of

the STEM/SBS spectrum, 61.3% of those in the non-tenure rank of instructor are women, with Black women being 47.25% of that total number.

An obvious question is what accounts for the higher percentages between non-tenured instructor and lower percentages of Black women tenured full professor? This was a primary question that FAMU ADVANCE set out to answer. The FAMU ADVANCE proposal illuminated the need to develop strategies to ensure that Black women in STEM/SBS are treated equitably in hiring and promotion decisions. A clinical psychologist who attended a panel of five Black women faculty as part of the Florida Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate (AGEP) (NSF EES 1824267) Research Bootcamp casually observed that the women on the panel appeared to be speaking of their personal trauma as they mentored women doctoral students. This specifically raised trauma as an indicator for success or lack thereof for Black women in attaining the ranks of associate and full professor.

The FAMU ADVANCE (NSF EES-1824267) proposal centered around the notion that, although the institution is an HBCU, the concept of cultural humility is necessary to achieve gender equity at FAMU. The university must increase its awareness of the role of cultural humility in hiring and promotion decision making. Cultural humility is a “lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique whereby the individual not only learns about another’s culture, but one starts with an examination of her/his own beliefs and cultural identities” (Tervalon & Murray-García, 1998). As co-chairs of the cultural humility sub-committee of FAMU ADVANCE, the authors began to examine the role of men in working toward achieving cultural humility. This examination culminated in a presentation at the Equity in STEM Community Convening (2022) wherein we developed “Hermeneutics of Cultural Humility,” the idea that to counter the traumatizing experiences of Black women in STEM/SBS, FAMU must learn to

reinterpret how it “reads” Black women such that the university can come to a better understanding of not only Black women faculty, but also its own interpretations of who these women are and what they can accomplish.

We brought our distinct perspectives to the idea of Hermeneutics of Cultural Humility. Dr. Owens is a cis-gendered Associate Professor in Religious Studies with diverse research foci across religion, culture, and society. Dr. Moton is a Black queer Assistant Professor in Health Science whose research focuses on the health of sexual and gender minorities and HIV/AIDS. As men, we examined how we can become vested accomplices to the academic advancement of Black women in STEM/SBS at the FAMU. We discussed how the interpretation (hermeneutics) of text can be applied to the interpretation of social identity, an interpretation often steeped in patriarchy and heteronormativity. We then applied the concept of cultural humility to the patriarchal and heteronormative interpretation to social identity as a methodology to address diversity imbalances of Black women in STEM/SBS. As a heuristic, hermeneutics of cultural humility entails an ongoing process of interpreting social identity from a standpoint of understanding and correcting the trauma that Black women in STEM/SBS at the FAMU face.

This paper is a fuller exploration of the presentation. In it we address how to be vested accomplices as men who embrace cultural humility in personal and institutional transformation at the FAMU. The first part of this paper looks at the unique perspectives of the authors as we dealt with issues as co-chairs of the cultural humility and implicit bias (CHIB) subcommittee of FAMU ADVANCE. It introduces the concept of the Man Box and our own need to break out of it and move to a hermeneutic of cultural humility. The second part of the paper looks at the philosophical underpinnings of hermeneutics, moving from interpretation of texts to interpretation of social identity. It explores how interpretation of both is historically situated,

resulting in the need for a continual reexamination and critique of the interpretation. We then take a closer look at cultural humility, its parameters, and how FAMU ADVANCE uses it to promote diversity. Finally, in the last section we combine hermeneutics and cultural humility together and probe how the two of us develop it to assist us in being vested accomplices in the promotion of Black women in STEM/SBS at FAMU.

Breaking out of the Man Box to Hermeneutics of Cultural Humility

Dr. Owens

Prior to Dr. Moton coming as co-chair of CHIB there was another man who served along with me. Initially, the work of CHIB ran smoothly. From the beginning the subcommittee met and made some first steps toward training sessions on cultural humility and implicit bias. The subcommittee brought in an outside facilitator, who specializes in cultural humility work, to facilitate the training. She came to the FAMU to meet with CHIB and discuss some possible formats for the training. At her behest, CHIB decided upon having some face-to-face and online instruction. Two things happened that necessitated a pivot in offering the training. First, the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2019, which meant that if any face-to-face training sessions took place they would be seriously limited. Second, the state legislature of Florida moved to make statutory changes that would seriously curtail, if not stop altogether, any discussion of implicit bias.

With these two events in mind, the first a current reality and the second a distinct possibility, CHIB decided to do a face-to-face cultural humility pilot workshop in November of 2021 in a room large enough to accommodate the various committees of the FAMU ADVANCE. The outside facilitator would conduct the pilot workshop. The other co-chair took the lead in communicating with the facilitator in setting up the technical logistics of the workshop. As the

date for the workshop drew nearer, the other co-chair constantly requested that the facilitator send her proposed PowerPoint for approval, and the facilitator complied with his requests. At a final Zoom meeting with the facilitator, three male members of CHIB that included this author, the other co-chair, the second author, and the PI of the grant, the PI made it clear that under no circumstances should the facilitator have had to make her PowerPoints available since the facilitator possessed expertise in cultural humility and implicit bias training. The PI argued that if the facilitator had been a man, a request for PowerPoints would not have been made, and that the request made of this facilitator was a clear example of the biases of the male members of CHIB.

The facilitator said that she thought the request strange since she was a subject matter expert on cultural humility and implicit bias; she accommodated the request because she thought that the co-chair made the requests on behalf of the PI. The PI called us to task for exhibiting the same behavior that the FAMU ADVANCE is attempting to combat, and that if we, the male members of CHIB display that behavior, then what hope is there for the rest of the institutional community? As the conversation went on it became painfully clear to me that I had not done enough to examine my own implicit biases such that I should have questioned the other co-chair's request for the PowerPoints. I had made some implicit assumptions that the other co-chair had the right as a man to ask for the facilitator's PowerPoints.

After this incident, the other co-chair decided that he no longer had any time to devote to FAMU ADVANCE, and stepped down as co-chair, at which point the second author became co-chair. I learned from this, and continue to learn, the practical reality of how cultural humility is an ongoing lived process. It is not just a theoretical exercise. It takes daily, committed acts of critical self-reflections whereby I must reexamine the hermeneutical lens in which I view Black women faculty at the FAMU. It can sometimes be messy. It can sometimes be fraught with

misunderstandings and misinterpretations, but to be vested accomplices with Black women in STEM/SBS, it is necessary.

Dr. Moton

As a public health practitioner and sexual health researcher, a significant focus of my training was on the concepts of cultural competence and cultural humility. My initial introduction to cultural competence involved my work in the HIV/AIDS field. Workshops were held with staff to ensure we could consider our skills, knowledge, and awareness when interacting with others. A component of this training involved learning about the cultural competence scale and the five constructs on the continuum. My immediate thought while analyzing this scale centered on “reaching the pinnacle” of cultural competence in my work. During this time, a mentor, and professor, started the inaugural course offered at this MSI, entitled Cultural Humility. I distinctly recall being excited about the course and eager to learn more about cultural humility. This course introduced me to concepts such as intersectionality, privilege, biases, and power. This course transformed my everyday practice of cultural humility and extended to populations outside my work.

Men as accomplices in promoting the work of gender equity are critically important to understanding the hermeneutical lens of cultural humility. Committing myself authentically to the everyday practice of cultural humility was difficult. A few times, I recognized or found myself “being silent” when other men would project micro aggressions and biases toward Black women. For example, during the same encounter referenced by the first author, during our (CHIB) meeting, as one of the three male co-chairs, I realized that I could not embrace silence and walk away. When my silence was called to the floor by the PI, I immediately became aware my silence was dangerous. As a Black gay male, I was often accustomed to the silence of others

when issues emerged that involved me. A self-reflection on my silence made me realize that I am responsible for demanding change, speaking up, and letting other men know their actions are not okay. In addition to my silence, I acknowledged that I often did not support or validate women's stories or experiences. This inaction ultimately contributed to the emotional labor that Black women in the academy and other settings often face. Emotional labor or emotional tax is the heightened experience of being different from peers at work based on your gender and race/ethnicity and the associated ability to have a healthy work environment (Understanding the Emotional Tax on Black Professionals in the Workplace, n.d.).

In my everyday intentional practice of cultural humility, I had to listen more to women and validate their stories and experiences as an accomplice. Finally, on my life-long journey of implementing cultural humility in my everyday practice, I had to take steps to educate myself on the myriad issues women, especially Black women, face. Often, when one does not understand issues, we rely on individuals to "teach us" or explain these issues. To expect those who are most vulnerable to educate you on the issues impacting them also contributes to emotional labor. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that I continue to educate myself and other men on issues impacting Black women in the academy and not "lay it at the feet" of Black women. Recently, I found myself on a committee hiring a faculty member. The reference backgrounds from two Black women being considered for this position contained similar disturbing themes. The two Black women who were products of HBCUs were characterized as "bullies and difficult to work with." Immediately, I felt compelled to address this concern with the committee and for us to collectively explore why these sentiments were associated with two Black women from HBCUs. Initially, when I referenced this alarming sentiment, the committee was silent. However, other women on the committee started to agree and a conversation was had in

reference to this. The practice of cultural humility has not been easy, and at times it is challenging. Experiencing the issues discussed has fully immersed me in cultural humility transformation and sparked a renewed appetite to be intentional and committed as an “accomplice in gender equity.”

Understanding Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is both a philosophy and a methodology of interpretation. First and foremost, hermeneutics is a philosophy, an epistemological study of interpretation in historical context. To understand interpretation, its scope, and validity, one must consider what a text means. This is not only pertinent to the reader of a text at a given historical time, but this also means that one must consider what the text meant in other historical periods. Thus, one must think how a text has been traditionally understood. Even if one does not know the tradition, one may still be encumbered by prior historical interpretations. For example, in my interpretation of a biblical text, I not only give my interpretation of the text, but I also follow a long line of other interpreters, whether I have a conscious awareness of them or not. And it is the unconscious awareness that often leads to unconscious bias in the interpretation of a text because we bring historical assumptions, some known and some unknown, to the reading of texts. To be unaware of these assumptions can lead to a misreading of the text.

More concretely, in an interpretation of John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” one can give their interpretation of what it means. However, their interpretation is not solely their own; rather, an individual interpretation is also informed by how others in the past have interpreted the text, both in its original Greek and in subsequent languages. However, if there is no understanding of the original Koine Greek, one would not know that “only

begotten” can just as easily be interpreted as “unique,” which can lead to critical questions of what does “unique” mean? Does it mean that God had other sons, and that there is something so different about Jesus that he can justifiably be called unique? Does it also raise the possibility that God has daughters as well? These brief examples show how hermeneutics is not simply a matter of one person in one historical context deciding what a text means. Rather, it indicates that one needs to carefully consider embedded biases in interpreting a text.

As a methodology, hermeneutics presents different modes of interpretation. For example, in the above-referenced biblical text, there exist different hermeneutical approaches. One can read the text literally with a presumption that what the text says is what the text means. This hermeneutical approach would surmise that God has only one son, and that son is Jesus. However, if one approaches the text from a hermeneutic of suspicion, which brings a fair amount of skepticism to the purported traditional understanding of a text, that person can be led to believe that prior interpreters had some vested interest in deciding that God had no children other than Jesus, denying the possible existence of other sons and daughters. Someone reading the text from a cultural hermeneutical approach may determine that in a patriarchal culture it is easier to impose upon God and Jesus masculinity, thus rendering maleness as superior to femaleness.

There are other hermeneutical approaches, but they are all subject to what Hans-Georg Gadamer calls a hermeneutic situation. That is, because of our own historical positioning, we cannot effectively say anything about the true meaning of a text. As interpreters, we are caught in a “web of historical effects” (Gadamer 1989, 300-301). He surmises that these historical effects play a validating role to interpreters of a text; there is no such thing as an ahistorical interpretation. We are consciously or unconsciously influenced by other historical interpreters. Both as philosophy and as methodology hermeneutics is an ongoing process of meaning making.

From one historical era to the next, it continues to circle back on itself to gain a better understanding of the philosophy and the process of text interpretation. Thus, hermeneutics is in a constant mode of reinventing itself.

Hermeneutic Circle and the Pitfalls of Meaning

Integral to the historical reinvention of hermeneutics is the hermeneutical circle. Georgia Warnke (2014) claims the hermeneutic circle “describes the way we project a meaning for the whole of the text as soon as we grasp or think we grasp some part of it” (p. 577). In making meaning of John 3:16, one may then make meaning of John’s gospel in its entirety, or even make meaning of the much larger text, the Bible. And that meaning making could be based solely on one’s interpretation of that singular Bible verse. Obviously, there are some dangers to this method of meaning making. First, an interpretation of the text may, in fact, be a misinterpretation of the text. For instance, given the ambiguity of translating from one language to another, there may not be requisite knowledge of the original language to give an accurate interpretation of the text. Second, even if that interpretation holds some validity, it may invalidly impose meaning on the rest of John’s gospel or the Bible from that one brief biblical snippet. This example of the biblical text comes from one of four gospel narratives of the life of Jesus. Yet, the Bible is not merely a text of narratives; it also includes poems, didactic teachings, letters, apocalypses, and other writings, none of which have anything to do with Jesus.

Thus, the hermeneutic circle requires a constant reading and revising of meaning. The continued reading/revising process means that we move from anticipating meaning, i.e., one can anticipate what the book of Revelation means by a given interpretation of Jesus as being God’s son, to an understanding of the Bible as a whole. The whole, the Bible, is larger than the constitutive part, John 3:16. However, the constitutive part and the whole form a functional

interrelationship, by which the one helps us to better understand the other. Warnke claims that to understand a text we must assume that it forms a self-consistent whole (Warnke 2014). The whole and its constitutive part have an internal logical consistency, and the recurring reading and revising of the whole and the constitutive part enable us to come to a better understanding of both because our biases are constantly put in check.

The hermeneutic circle, the constant rereading and revising of text, and awareness of our hermeneutic situation, the persistent checking of our biases, shows that interpretation is trial and error. From one historical epoch to the next, text interpretation is fraught with the possible misreading and misunderstanding of the text. This seeming pitfall of hermeneutics does not mean that we cease in our attempts to understand a text. It simply means that we consider the interrelationship of the hermeneutic circle and our hermeneutic situation.

From Written Text to Social Identity

Just as the interpretation of written text is subject both to the hermeneutic situation and the hermeneutic circle, the interpretation of social identity is subject to the same interpretive concerns. Warnke argues that just as interpreters of written text enter an already “preinterpreted” text, thus building upon what came before, so too do interpreters of social identity enter a situation where social identity has been preinterpreted by others. Social identity is made up of constitutive parts. For instance, a woman is not simply a woman. A woman may be rich or poor, Black or white, young or old, cis-gender or transgender, or myriad constitutive and intersectional parts. Warnke admonishes us that interpreting what woman means is fraught with the same pitfalls as are found in reading and interpreting text. In this vein, the hermeneutic situation dictates that one does not understand what it means to be woman or man without prior historical

references of what these terms have meant. Similarly, the hermeneutic circle means that one may interpret womanhood by one's interpretation of only one woman, and vice-versa.

Warnke makes a cogent argument for applying a hermeneutical frame to social identity, especially as it relates to gender. She states if we “conceive of gender identity . . . as an interpretation, we can acknowledge the way in which an interpretive approach allows us to examine our previous knowledge and assumptions. . .” (Warnke 2014). First, approaching Warnke's statement from the perspective of hermeneutic situation, it can be seen how interpretation of womanhood is understood. As an example, the biological state of femaleness has always existed, but understandings of womanhood based upon that femaleness have undergone various interpretations throughout different historical time periods.

These interpretations dictate permissible conduct of women based on the given knowledge and culture of the time. A woman of fifteenth century England is different from a twenty-first century woman of England. The former is understood with one historical hermeneutical lens, while the latter is understood with another. Obviously, the fifteenth century interpreter has no knowledge of the twenty-first century interpreter. Yet, while the twenty-first century interpreter may have some knowledge of the earlier interpreter and is able to examine the knowledge and assumptions of that fifteenth century interpreter, they still live with the historical situation of being subject to the prior interpretation. This is the case even if the twenty-first century interpreter critiques the fifteenth century interpreter's historical situation.

Second, from the perspective of a hermeneutical circle, it can be seen how understandings of womanhood are fraught with interpretive pitfalls. If I have knowledge or presume to have knowledge of a woman, does that knowledge then transfer into knowledge of all women? As with the example of John 3:16 and its relation to the Bible, an understanding of the

constitutive part, woman, does not automatically translate into an understanding of the whole, women. One woman cannot serve as the interpretive framework for all women. Similarly, one woman is not simply one woman. She has a multitude of identifiers. She may be Black and woman. She may be poor and woman. She may be woman and any number of other identifiers. Simply, the social identifier “woman” intersects with other social identifiers. The hermeneutic circle requires us to take these additional identifiers into consideration to avoid succumbing to prejudicial misunderstandings of the constitutive woman or women as a whole. In this vein, Warnke argues that to ensure diverse participation of women in different social settings, we must change our interpretive lens of how we understand the constitutive part and the whole (Warnke 2014).

To ensure diverse participation in social settings such as the workplace, Warnke borrows from the intersectional theory of Kimberlé Crenshaw. In critiquing a legal case wherein the eighth circuit appellate court claimed that none of the African-American women recently hired at an automotive plant were discriminated against when they were fired, neither because of their status as women, nor because they were Black, Crenshaw noted that the court ignored the intersectionality of the women in question. The women were not simply women, nor were they simply Black. They existed at the intersections of race and sex, both marginalized identities. The refusal by the court to recognize this intersectionality meant that the “boundaries of sex and race discrimination are defined respectively by White women’s and Black men’s experiences” (Warnke, 2014). In Warnke’s view the court’s failure to recognize the intersectionality of race and sex meant that it failed to consider the misinterpretation of these Black women as either only women or only Black. A hermeneutics of social identity would necessitate seeing how one’s hermeneutic situation is often governed by past interpretations and misinterpretations of social

identity. Likewise, a hermeneutics of social identity can aid in examining the hermeneutic circle so that one does not misinterpret the constitutive part or the whole. A failure to take account of one's own hermeneutic situation and an underappreciation of the hermeneutic circle can lead to what Warnke calls blind prejudice; a prejudice that leads to a workplace that lacks diversity.

To counter blind prejudice, one would need to have an acute understanding of both one's hermeneutic situation and the hermeneutic circle, which can lead to a more diverse workplace whereby intersectional theory is considered. As applied to a university setting Warnke says it is likely that intersectionality theory can lead to more diversity in the workplace:

To the extent that research perspectives coincide with, and teaching benefits from, the sort of diversity of experience currently associated with race, class, gender . . . then identities as African-American, working class, female, as well intersections among race, class, gender . . . will be coherent parts of contemporary university settings. (Warnke 2014)

This foundational description of how the hermeneutic circle works and its inherent pitfalls are important to our model of and approach to impacting change for Black women at HBCUs. Following, we introduce the second term of our approach, namely cultural humility.

Understanding Cultural Humility

Cultural humility is a direct descendant of cultural competency and signals the wave that popularized the use of such an approach. The cultural competence method involves the ability to understand, appreciate and interact with people from multiple belief systems other than one's own. Cultural competence gained traction during the 1980's and 1990's and was used in health promotion and health education practice (Greene-Moton & Minkler, 2019). Initially, the focus of

cultural competence served as guide to coach and empower health professionals on engaging with patients from diverse backgrounds (Greene-Moton & Minkler, 2019).

As the diffusion of cultural competence permeated the healthcare field, the idea of “competence;” a mastery of being competent of other cultures, sparked significant debate and divide among practitioners (Isaacson, 2014; Murray-García & Tervalon, 2014). The idea of competence suggests a finality, which is counterintuitive to the authentic and actionable concept of cultural humility. Therefore, a shift emerged where instead of focusing on competence an emphasis is placed on sensitivity and awareness. In 1998, Tervalon and Murray-García introduced cultural humility as a best practice model in the healthcare field on physician training. Since its application in healthcare field, the actionable approach of cultural humility is used in a variety of disciplines. Tervalon and Murray-García posit that cultural humility promotes a “lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and self-critique.” Extant literature defines cultural humility as the ability to maintain an other-oriented interpersonal stance concerning aspects of cultural identity. In essence, cultural humility allows individuals to commit to lifelong learning and centers on the notion of constant self-reflection.

While cultural competence and cultural humility both involve a process of development and improvement, cultural humility is *self-practice*, requiring a certain level of self-awareness, empathy, and understanding. Cross et al., 1989 define cultural competence as a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that collide in system, which enable professions to effectively engage in cross-cultural situations. However, there are notable limitations of the concept and its practice. The approach of cultural competency lacks elements of social justice, which enables the potential to perpetuate stereotypes among various cultural groups, and its attention on knowledge attainment (Campinha-Bacote, 2018).

Therefore, cultural humility relinquishes the emphasis on knowledge attainment and grounds its focus on critical self-reflection and life-long learning. Cultural humility is an actionable driven practice that allows individuals to be purposefully, and intentionally rooted in the advancement of social justice issues such as power imbalances, sensitivity, awareness, and learning from differences. To better understand cultural humility, one must first recognize the definition of culture. Culture, as we know it, informs our behaviors and interaction with others (Cultural Respect, 2021). Operating within a shared culture, ideas, and beliefs allows for much easier communication and understanding. However, a lack of communication and understanding can occur when individuals operate from contrasting core beliefs.

Research on Cultural Humility

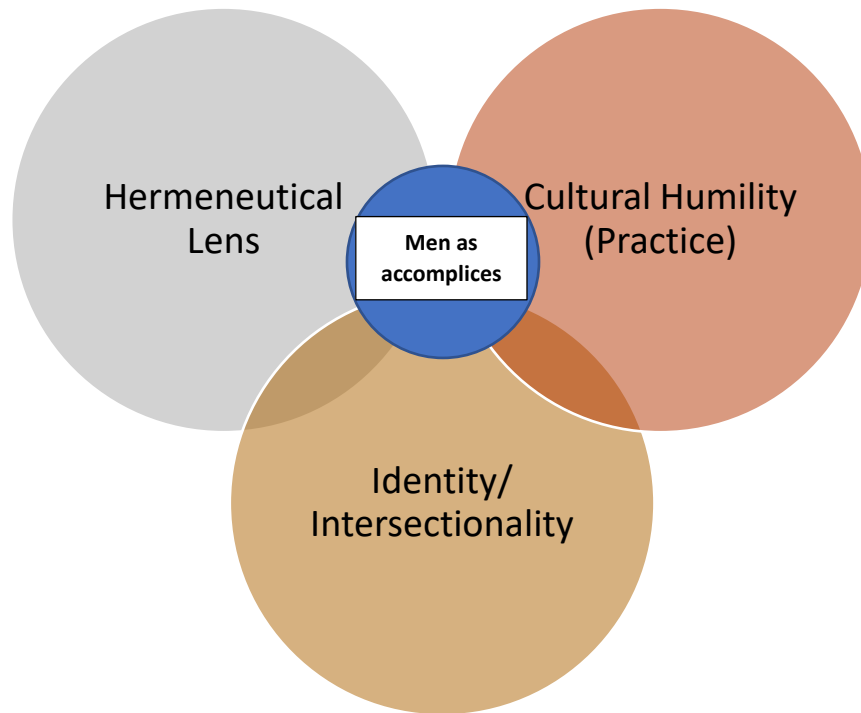
Recent shifts in the literature support the concept of cultural humility in numerous disciplines, including healthcare, education, social work, public health, and the arts. The growing body of research supporting cultural humility allows investigators to dive deeper and better understand cultural differences to improve interactions with disenfranchised groups and those who are marginalized (Yeager & Bauer-Wu, 2013). Studies that have explored the concept of cultural humility include several functions that permit an individual to explore their personal, professional, and research actions that may guide their research (Yeager & Bauer-Wu, 2013). In the model of cultural humility, individuals are encouraged to commit to life-long learning, engaging in self-reflection and diverse partnerships. The essential functions of cultural humility recognize and uplift the notion that proficiency is not possible, and as the world evolves so do we as practitioners of cultural humility. Exploring these fundamental values give individuals the unique opportunity to work with diverse populations and to meaningfully and intentionally engage with others who are different from us.

Practicing Cultural Humility

The practice of cultural humility is centered on an individual's interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions. The interpersonal aspect of cultural humility entails a person being "other-oriented," which involves a level of respect, consideration, and humility. The intrapersonal level of cultural humility deals with an individual's awareness and deep understanding of the cultural experiences of others (Hook & Davis, 2019). The literature also references other critical attributes such as institutional accountability, empathy, and compassion, acknowledging and balancing power imbalances (Foronda et al., 2015). While understanding the features one should possess in the practice of cultural humility, researchers have equally noted characteristics that define what cultural humility is not. Oppression, intolerance, exclusion, marginalization, misconceptions, labeling, hostility, and bullying are harmful elements and do not belong in the practice of CH. Current social injustices that have become engrained in today's society emphasize the need for CH in spaces that transcend our communities. Higher education institutions have served as a vehicle for social mobility and economic opportunity in the US. However, many faculty from marginalized backgrounds, including Black women and LGBTQ+ folks, are often forgotten, which highlights the significance of the work of FAMU ADVANCE which seeks to use cultural humility to balance the institutional and intersectional barriers to equity for STEM/SBS faculty (National Science Foundation (NSF)).

Figure 1.

Conceptual Model of “Men as Accomplices”



Note: Describes the intricate relationship of having a hermeneutical lens, cultural humility, and intersectionality. At the core of the conceptual model is the role of “men as accomplices” in supporting Black women in the academy.

The Diffusion of Hermeneutics, Intersectionality, and Cultural Humility

The authors present the current conceptual model to understand better the relationship between hermeneutics, cultural humility, intersectionality, and the role of men as accomplices (see Figure 1). As described, having a hermeneutical lens allows individuals to govern themselves with a full recognition of how one may interpret or misinterpret social identities. Just as a person may read a given written text and interpret that text based upon prior interpretations, the same can be done when interpreting social identities. Not being aware of the hermeneutic situation can easily mean that one misinterprets the text, whether written text or social identity. However, by incorporating the idea of having a hermeneutical lens provides a fresh perspective

on “reading” social identity. It empowers men to not subsume all women into one category based on one’s understanding of only one woman. Succinctly, when men understand their hermeneutical circle and identity it empowers them to avoid “blind prejudice.” Blind prejudice, similar to cultural blindness and cultural incapacity, prevents men from embracing authentic cultural humility. The elimination of blind prejudice can ultimately lead to an acknowledgment of intersectionality, which posits that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression.

Additionally, engaging in the practice of cultural humility necessitates being aware of not only the culture of Black women STEM/SBS faculty at FAMU; it also means that as Black men we are acutely aware of our own cultural identity, and the ways in which that identity helps or hinders the academic advancement of the Black women. As stated earlier in this paper, the practice of cultural humility is an ongoing self-reflective process, one whereby we as Black men consciously advocate for Black women in STEM/SBS. As result of that self-reflective process we become better able to deal with the pitfalls of our implicit biases discussed earlier in the paper by appreciating the cultural nuances of Black women in STEM/SBS.

To fully understand a person, it is critical to account for these cultural nuances. Intersectionality refers to the interaction between race, gender, cultural ideologies, and institutional arrangements and how these components operate in terms of power (Davis, 2008). The term intersectionality was coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, which aims to explain the oppression of African American women. Intersectionality used in our context allows men to internally reflect on their privilege, emphasizing a comprehensive understanding of the plight of Black women (Crenshaw, 2019). Cultural humility allows men to embody lifelong learning and self-reflection, challenge and address power imbalances, and advocate for

institutional accountability for Black women in higher education. Mobilizing men in support of a hermeneutical lens, intersectional approach, and cultural humility practice is vital to the work of gender equity in strengthening the voice of Black women and empowerment. By committing to these practices, men can emblematically be in the service of women and act as change agents to tackle harmful policies and practices that burden Black women faculty in higher education. We, the authors of this paper, faced our own challenges in the ongoing practice of being vested accomplices for Black women in STEM/SBS at FAMU. As co-chairs of the Cultural Humility and Implicit Bias Subcommittee (CHIB) of FAMU ADVANCE we had to navigate our own biases toward and misinterpretations of women.

Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) is one of the nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and is committed to transforming its institutional climate and culture in support of gender equity and advancement of women faculty in STEM. A critical component of the concept of cultural humility is institutional accountability and recognizing the power imbalance inherent in organizations (Moncho, 2013). Cultural humility used in this context is the driver to addressing gender inequalities, with the ultimate goal of increased awareness of gender equity in policies and action. Dr. Marcia Allen Owens, the principal investigator of FAMU ADVANCE and Director of the Center for faculty ADVANCEment, offered the concept of cultural humility to transform the Florida A&M University's climate, culture, and policy practices. In essence, the focal point of this initiative is to ensure that women faculty in STEM/SBS can thrive as higher educational institutional faculty. The diffusion of cultural humility into FAMU's infrastructure has included strategic and impactful strategies such as career coaching training, policy reviews, writing boot camps,

mentoring, and professional development opportunities. Another critical component of this work involves the role of men in advancing gender equity as vested accomplices.

Men as Accomplices

What is a man's role in promoting gender equity at an HBCU? To achieve the goal of gender equity and uplifting women of color in the academy, men must stand in solidarity and understand the role of intersectionality. Only when men authentically engage in owning our privilege and biases, can we truly be accomplices for Black women in STEM/SBS. Men acting as accomplices is a powerful tool and, when used, can challenge issues related to gender inequality (Moser & Branscombe, 2021). Further, understanding the role of male accomplices requires additional work. For instance, male accomplices should not only be aware of their privilege but acknowledge their unique position of patriarchy. *A Call to Men*, a core training workshop offered a way to be vested accomplices in promoting gender equity. This training allows men to engage in healthy manhood by moving outside of the Man Box, which perpetuates gendered norms and disregards those who do not conform to a gender binary (A Call to Men, 2023). The Man Box represents the socialization of men in which men are expected to be strong, powerful, and emotionless. *A Call to Men*, is a national violence prevention organization, which provides training to men, boys, and communities, and seeks to promote a healthy and respectful definition of manhood (Porter et al., n.d.). The principle of healthy manhood means valuing and respecting women, girls, and LGBTQ+, Trans and non-binary individuals. This harmful socialization perpetuates violence against those most vulnerable in our society including women, girls, and LGBTQ+ individuals (A Call to Men, 2023). In the fight for gender equity for women, it is critical for men to show support and help to modify disadvantaged power dynamics. Studies

have well-documented the positive influence male allyship has on the well-being of women in the workplace (Hall et al., 2018; Moser & Branscombe, 2021).

Call to Action

The time is now. Engaging men in the critical work of gender equity is needed to bring forth inclusiveness and sustainable change. Men are uniquely positioned to leverage their power and privilege to advocate for Black women in the academy. Intentionally and purposefully promoting issues burdening Black women can we only achieve transformative gender equity. Before men embark on the journey of gender equity, recognizing their power, privilege, and biases is imperative to becoming authentic accomplices. An accomplice is not merely someone who silently advocates from the sidelines for Black women. A genuine accomplice must be willing to get dirty and uncomfortable and be active and driven to champion on behalf of ALL women, especially Black women. Black women faculty in STEM/SBS at FAMU experience trauma. As discussed in this paper, the levels of trauma experienced by Black women faculty in STEM/SBS at FAMU takes on many forms. Despite their success rate between hiring and possible promotion, they undergo the pain of being Black and women, which they often suffer in silence. As Black men who endeavor to be vested accomplices, the authors propose transformational concepts and approaches, such as hermeneutics of cultural humility, to assuage the pain Black women faculty in STEM/SBS face. Practicing this much-needed work is our way of engaging in the diligent tasks of critical self-reflection and the continual practice of addressing how we can alleviate the lived trauma of Black women in STEM/SBS. We know when women are burdened from reaching their full potential, society as a whole is impacted. In the pursuit of gender equity, there are no shortcuts or manuals to guide this work. To achieve gender equity ALL men are needed to bring about lasting change. We recognize that the hermeneutics of

cultural humility calls for a constant revamping of our work; this is the essence of engaged critical self-reflection and intentional action that moves men towards gender equity at FAMU and becoming true accomplices.

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