Race Segregation Across the Academic Workforce: Exploring Factors that May Contribute to the Disparate Representation of African American Men

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Climbing the Academic Achievement Ladder: Promoting the Success of Black Males
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Introduction

- Two legal policies showed great promise for improving the work conditions for African Americans in education:
  - *Brown et al. v. Board of Education (1954)*
    - Set into motion a **social contract** that promised to correct the injustices in the United States by **eradicating the inequities in the educational system** between racial groups (Grant, 1996).
  - **Title VII of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964**
    - States that it is **unlawful to discriminate** against any individual for employment because of **his/her race or color** in regard to hiring or work conditions (e.g., promotion, compensation, and job training) or any other matters related to employment.
    - Title VII prohibits **both intentional discrimination** and **neutral job policies** that disproportionately exclude people of color that are not job related (Kaplan & Lee, 1995).
Rationale

• Results of several recent studies by the author suggest that there is racial segregation and discrimination implicit in the hiring practices in higher education (Jackson, 2001; Jackson, 2002; Jackson, 2003a; Jackson, 2003b; Jackson, 2004a; Jackson, 2004b; Jackson, 2006).
  – African Americans in general and African American males in particular were found to be disadvantaged in the higher education workforce.
  – The corpus of these studies examined demographic shifts in the higher education workforce by race/ethnicity and concluded that for the most part African Americans are located in lower-level positions at less prestigious institutions.
  – While this body of work is useful for identifying and describing “race segregation” in the higher education workforce, the methodological procedures and data treatment do not explain the results.
Research Questions

• Do measures of human capital and merit-based performance help to explain the observed representation, by principal activity, of African American males in the academic workforce?

• Do measures of human capital and merit-based performance help to explain the observed representation, by principal activity, of White males in the academic workforce?
Human Capital Theory

• Human capital theory purports that **individuals** and **society** derive **economic benefits** from investments in people (Sweetland, 1996).

• While various activities (e.g., health care) have been found to increase human capital, **education receives the most research attention** (Langelett, 2002).

• Equally or more important than the production of human capital is the **screening process** used by potential employers to sort individuals throughout the hiring process.
Human Capital Theory

- From this perspective the screen has the power and authority to make evaluative judgments on what forms and type of human capital are more or less important.
Merit-Based Performance Measures

- The modern American economy requires organizations to operate efficiently, thus requiring more productivity with less financial resources (Bok, 2003).

- A common response to these pressures is the implementation of a merit-based pay system (Lauer, 1991).

- In doing so, individual job performance is linked to salary increases.

- A merit pay system is best situated within an organization when there is a logical flow between organizational goals and outcomes.
Merit-Based Performance Measures

• Each institution of higher education in the United States tends to value more weight to one of the three teaching, research, or service awarding according to institutional mission (Altbach, Berdhal, & Gumport, 1999).

• The performance of faculty evaluations are used for various reasons in higher education: contract renewal for new faculty; tenure decisions; promotion in rank (i.e., assistant, associate, and full professor); and merit pay (Thelin, 2004).
Method

- 1999 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty Restricted Data (NOSPF:99)
  - 957,767
  - 1/DEFF * NORMWT

- Dependent Variable- academic workforce
  - Administration
  - Teaching
  - Research
Method

• Independent Variables
  – Human Capital
    • Institutional Type of Higher Degree
    • Field of Highest Degree
    • Institutional Type of Place of Employment
    • Institutional Control of Place of Employment
    • Years of Current Position
  – Merit-Based Performance Measures
    • Career Publications
    • External Funding
    • Total Number of Grants
    • Teaching Committees
    • Administrative Committees
Method

• Logistic Regression
  – Delta-Ps
Discussion

• The logistic regression models based on human capital and merit-based performance measures employed in this study were designed to simulate the hiring practices in higher education.

• Statistically significant results emerged for both sets of models (i.e., African American and White males); however, overall the magnitude of these variables was small.

• First, the logistic regression models seem to contain appropriate variables to explain the high observed representation of White males in the academic workforce, especially so for the Teaching Model.
Discussion

• Second, the lack of significant variables in the African American models, in turn, helps to explain the observed representation of African American males in the academic workforce. Simply put, the lack of influence may help to explain the documented low observed representation.
  – (a) the analytic model excludes or does not adequately measure all of the relevant variables

  – (b) the hiring practices in higher education disadvantage African American males in the academic workforce
Discussion

• Third, the criteria and variables privileged in the hiring practices in the academic workforce may be problematic for African American males.

• Fourth, human capital and merit-based performance measures do appear to be related to the hiring practices in the academic workforce, but differ in their degree of explanation for the separate models for African American and White males.
Implications

• Collectively, these results suggest that the hiring practices in the academic workforce could be restructured to minimize the disparate effects on African American men
  – limiting racial bias in personnel decisions and ultimately addressing the resulting race segregation of the higher education workforce.

• In closing, there are two logical extensions for this study.
  – First, further inquiries using these or related data should employ a pooled sample to provide direct comparison between African American and White men.

  – Second, the use of multinominal logistic regression to examine differences across the separate logistic regression models (i.e., administration, teaching, and research) of this study may be quite revealing.
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