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Ethnic Differences Among Assistant, Associate, and Full Professors at Texas 4-Year Universities

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Examined in this study was the change in Black and Hispanic faculty employment at the Assistant, Associate, and Full Professor levels at 4-year universities ($n = 36/39$ universities) in Texas for the years 2003 and 2009. The number and percent of Black and Hispanic faculty members increased at all three levels of employment between the years 2003 and 2009. Although statistically significant increases were present at all levels except for Black Full Professors, the effect sizes reflected trivial increases. The rapid ethnic diversification of the student population at institutions of higher education in Texas has not been mirrored in its faculty.

Keywords: faculty of color, Black faculty, Hispanic faculty, diversity

A trend in higher education to promote diversity among the student population and faculty ranks has been evident since the 1970s. The goal of increasing racial and ethnic diversity among college faculty has been met with varying degrees of success during the past decade (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006). According to Harris, Joyner, and Slate (2010), even though affirmative action policies have been in place for years, faculty of color continue to be underrepresented in institutions of higher education.

Although many institutions have made concentrated and aggressive efforts to recruit and retain students from ethnic minority groups, the same efforts have not been made for faculty (Laden & Hagedorn, 2000; Rivera & Ward, 2008). An increase has occurred in the

number of faculty members from ethnic minority groups, yet this increase has not kept pace with the increase in the number of students from ethnic minority groups (Alger, 2008). Gainen and Boice argued that “a disturbing flatness in the faculty curve” (1993, p. 1) was evident when contrasting the increase in the number of students from ethnic minority groups with the number of faculty members from ethnic minority groups (Vega, Yglesias, & Murray, 2010). The percent of faculty of color nationally has risen from less than 9% of faculty at institutions of higher education to approximately 12.5% (Astin, Antonio, Cress, & Astin, 1997; Diggs, Wade, Estrada, & Galindo, 2009). Weinberg (2008) attributed the low percentage of faculty members of color to the small number of Ph.D. recipients in these

ethnic minority groups in proportion to population as a whole. Blacks and Hispanics each make up approximately 12% of the population but receive approximately 6% and 4% of the Ph.D.'s respectively. Gainen and Boice (1993) postulated that the student population at institutions of higher education was growing more ethnically diverse at a faster rate than the faculty population. According to the United States Department of Education (2000; 2009) the enrollment of minority students has risen from 32% in 2000 to 37% in 2007.

Murdock, Hoque, Michael, White, and Pecotte (2003) speculated that the Hispanic population would experience a substantial increase in Texas. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2009), Hispanics made up 36.9% and Blacks made up 12.0% of the population in Texas. These numbers represented an increase of 0.4% for the Black population and 4.9% for the Hispanic population in Texas between 2000 and 2009 (Murdock et al., 2003; U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Texas recently became a majority-minority state where the majority of the state's population is from an ethnic minority group (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). The workforce of Texas will be made up of more than 50% Hispanic workers by the year 2020 (Kelly, 2005).

The designation of Texas as a majority-minority state has increased the attention that institutions of higher education have placed on their faculty population in terms of ethnic diversity. The most relevant question of this attention and intense focus is the benefit of having a diverse college faculty. Various scholars have contended that institutions of higher education need faculty members of color because "they provide students with diverse role

models, assist in providing more effective mentoring to minority students, are supportive of minority-related and other areas of nontraditional areas of scholarship, and give minorities a greater voice in the governance of the nation's colleges and universities" (Antonio, 2002, p. 583). Other scholars (e.g., Turner & Myers, 1999) have emphasized the benefits to the institution by arguing that essential components to having diverse and pluralistic institutions of higher education are faculty members of color who are present and who participate in the operations of these institutions.

The American Council on Education (ACE, 1998), in its concept paper on diversity in higher education, took the position that, "preserving [that] diversity is essential if we hope to serve the needs of our democratic society" (p 1). The Council's reasons for taking that position are that racial and ethnic diversity enriches the educational experience, promotes personal growth, strengthens communities and the workplace, and enhances America's economic competitiveness (ACE, 1998). Cole and Barber (2003) specified several other potential benefits of achieving a diverse faculty. They stated that achieving equity for Blacks and other minority groups in faculty employment suggests that discrimination is no longer an obstacle for academic careers. Additional benefits cited included the positive impact on the academic success of minority students, recognition of the contributions of diverse groups, the provision of role models for students, and probability that theories and empirical data will be informed by the special perspectives that only members of minority groups can bring to research and teaching (Cole & Barber, 2003, p.

3).

According to Harris et al. (2010), much is dependent on the success of colleges achieving diversity in their faculty. They noted the success of Closing the Gap (THECB, 2005) and Achieving the Dream (Achieving the Dream, 2005), initiatives designed to increase the college participation rate of minority students, will be directly impacted by the number and percentage of minority faculty. Where success is present in recruiting, selecting, and hiring minority faculty members in significant numbers, the likelihood of recruiting, selecting, and enrolling significant numbers of minority students increases (Harris et al., 2010). Additional benefits cited included the positive impact on the academic success of minority students, recognition of the contributions of diverse groups, the provision of role models for students, and probability that theories and empirical data will be informed by the special perspectives that only members of minority groups can bring to research and teaching (Cole & Barber, 2003, p. 3).

As the importance of creating an environment that is supportive and welcoming to an ethnically diverse student population became a major goal for many colleges and universities, recruiting and retaining an ethnically diverse faculty population must also become a goal (Brown & Greenwood, 2010). Jan (2010) contended that an ethnically diverse faculty assists in the recruitment and retention of a diverse student population. An ethnically diverse faculty ensures that students have role models, whose ethnicity mirrors their own, to look toward when seeking a mentor (Brown & Greenwood, 2010). Institutions of higher education

are charged with the task of assisting students as they continue developing their identities. The development of identities is especially influential for those students who enter college as a traditional college student, age 18 to 22 (Strange, 2008), because they are still in a developmental identity stage (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002).

When faculty members of color are hired at an institution of higher education, it is possible that they are the only person of a particular race or nationality in their department. Black and Hispanic faculty members have reported a feeling of tokenism based on their perceived ethnic and racial differences from their White colleagues (Turner & Myers, 1999). Feelings of isolation and limited access to quality mentors have also been documented (Turner & Myers, 1999). The lack of adequate mentorship opportunities in addition to covert racist feelings from their non-ethnic minority colleagues could have a negative effect on faculty of color (Padilla & Chavez, 1995; Turner & Myers, 1999). These feelings have been strong enough to cause some faculty of color to change institutions (Turner & Myers, 1999).

Many times faculty members of color are sought out for their expertise when issues of ethnic concern are brought up by students as well as other faculty. Faculty members of color have felt pressured to act as a spokesperson for their race (Laden & Hagedorn, 2000). Pressure to act as a spokesperson and resident expert on topics related to ethnic issues may create unwanted consequences for Black and Hispanic faculty members. The amount of attention that many faculty members of color express toward ethnic interests could encourage others to look at them

as experts in their ethnicity as opposed to experts in their field of study (Garza, 1988; Turner & Myers, 1999). The fact that faculty members of color could have different life experiences than their White peers could assist the institution in its efforts to provide a richer educational experience for its students (Jan, 2010). Unfortunately, the time that faculty members of color spend acting as an ethnic representative takes away from the time that they have to work on more scholarly efforts. Reductions in time available for research could have an impact on the number of articles that faculty members of color are able to submit for publication which could have a direct impact on their ability to receive tenure (Laden & Hagedorn, 2000). More often than not, when Black and Hispanic faculty are hired for faculty positions in higher education they are hired for non-tenure-track positions (Laden & Hagedorn, 2000). As a result, opportunities for career advancement for faculty of color are often limited (Astin et al., 1997; Turner & Myers, 1999). Nieves-Squires (1991) established that faculty members from ethnic minority groups, more specifically Blacks, Hispanics and American Indians, were more likely to be members of the lower levels of the professoriate than were their White counterparts.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the differences in faculty employment at the levels of Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Full Professor for Black faculty members and Hispanic faculty members at Texas 4-year universities. With diversity being a top priority for universities, this diversity should be reflected in the ethnic membership of students as well as

faculty. As the student population at Texas 4-year universities becomes more diverse, so too, in our estimation, must the faculty population.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study: (a) What is the difference in the percentage of Black Assistant Professors employed at Texas public 4-year universities between 2003 and 2009?; (b) What is the difference in the percentage of Hispanic Assistant Professors employed at Texas public 4-year universities between 2003 and 2009?; (c) What is the difference in the percentage of Black Associate Professors employed at Texas public 4-year universities between 2003 and 2009?; (d) What is the difference in the percentage of Hispanic Associate Professors employed at Texas public 4-year universities between 2003 and 2009?; (e) What is the difference in the percentage of Black Full Professors employed at Texas public 4-year universities between 2003 and 2009?; and (f) What is the difference in the percentage of Hispanic Full Professors employed at Texas public 4-year universities between 2003 and 2009?

Method

Participants

Participants for this study were the 4-year universities ($n = 36$ to 39) in Texas on which data were gathered from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Accountability website (<http://www.txhighereddata.org/Interactive/Accountability/>). The Interactive Institutional List on the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Accountability's website was used to determine the number of Black and

Hispanic faculty that were employed at these institutions for 2003 and 2009 at the levels of Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Full Professor and the data were downloaded into an Excel file. The data were then converted into an SPSS datafile where the percentages of Black and Hispanic faculty members were compared at each of the three levels of employment for 2003 and 2009.

Results

Descriptive statistics were calculated for the Texas universities in this study and are displayed in Table 1. The underlying distribution for all variables were calculated and the standardized skewness coefficients (i.e., skewness value divided by the standard error of skewness) and the standardized kurtosis coefficients (i.e., the kurtosis value divided by the standard error of kurtosis) yielded values that revealed serious departures from the normal range of $3/-3$ (Onwuegbuzie & Daniel, 2002). Accordingly, nonparametric Wilcoxon's dependent samples *t*-tests were performed on the data because the data were outside of the range of normality.

A statistically significant difference was evident based on the Wilcoxon's dependent samples *t*-test between the percent of Black Assistant Professors in 2003 and their percent in 2009 at Texas 4-year universities, $z = -2.90, p = .004$. The effect size, Cohen's *d*, of 0.10 was trivial (Cohen, 1988). A higher percentage of Black Assistant Professors was employed at Texas 4-year universities in 2009 (13.90%) than in 2003 (10.06%). A statistically significant difference was also evident between the percent of Hispanic Assistant Professors in 2003 and their percent in 2009 at Texas 4-year

universities, $z = -3.22, p = .001$. The effect size, Cohen's *d*, of 0.07 was again trivial (Cohen, 1988). A higher percentage of Hispanic Assistant Professors were employed at Texas 4-year universities in 2009 (24.36%) than in 2003 (19.72%).

A statistically significant difference was yielded between the percent of Black Associate Professors in 2003 and their percent in 2009 at Texas 4-year universities, $z = -3.58, p < .001$. The effect size, Cohen's *d*, of 0.04 was trivial (Cohen, 1988). A higher percentage of Black Assistant Professors were employed at Texas 4-year universities in 2009 (13.69%) than in 2003 (11.89%). A statistically significant difference was also revealed between the percent of Hispanic Associate Professors in 2003 and their percent in 2009 at Texas 4-year universities, $z = -3.88, p < .001$. The effect size, Cohen's *d*, of 0.08 was again trivial (Cohen, 1988). The data revealed that a higher percentage of Hispanic Associate Professors were employed at Texas 4-year universities in 2009 (20.92%) than in 2003 (16.11%).

A statistically significant difference was not present between the percent of Black Full Professors in 2003 and their percent in 2009 at Texas 4-year universities, $z = -2.49, p = .13$. The percent of Black Full Professors was 9.39% in 2003 and only 9.79% in 2009, a miniscule increase. A statistically significant difference was revealed between the percent of Hispanic Associate Professors in 2003 and their percent in 2009 at Texas 4-year universities, $z = -3.79, p < .001$. The effect size, Cohen's *d*, of 0.09 was trivial (Cohen, 1988). A higher percentage of Hispanic Full Professors was employed

at Texas 4-year universities in 2009 (16.00%) than in 2003 (12.00%).

Discussion

The data in this study revealed that the percentage of Black and Hispanic faculty members increased at Texas 4-year universities from 2003 to 2009 at all three levels of employment, with the exception of Black faculty members at the Full Professor level. Although the increases represented a step toward achieving an educational environment equally diverse in its student and faculty populations, the increases were trivial. Universities will need to explore ways to ensure that the ethnic diversity of its faculty matches that of its students (Vega et al., 2010).

Black Assistant Professors on average made up 10.06% of all faculty members at the Assistant Professor level at Texas 4-year universities in 2003 and 13.90% in 2009 whereas their Hispanic counterparts made up 19.72% in 2003 and 24.36% in 2009. This change was representative of an increase for the Black and Hispanic Assistant Professors of 3.84% and 4.64% respectively. At the Associate Professor level the increase was smaller, 1.80%, for the Black faculty members but higher for Hispanic faculty members, 4.81%. This finding is contrary to the literature in which faculty members of color are concentrated more heavily at the lowest levels of the professoriate (Nieves-Squires, 1991).

The differences between Black faculty and Hispanic faculty were more pronounced at the Full Professor level with Black Full Professors making up 9.39% of all faculty members at the Assistant Professor level at Texas 4-year universities in 2003 and 9.79% in 2009 whereas their Hispanic counterparts made up 12.00% in 2003 and 16.00% in

2009. This change was representative of an increase for the Black and Hispanic Assistant Professors of 0.40% and 4.00% respectively. This finding supports Nieves-Squires' (1991) contention that faculty of color were concentrated more heavily at the lowest levels of the professoriate.

The percentages of Black and Hispanic Professors at all three levels of employment at 4-year institutions of higher education in Texas were not indicative of the ethnic diversity of the population of Texas as a whole (Murdock et al., 2003). Conversely, the increase in the overall changes among the Black and Hispanic faculty members at all three levels were similar to the changes in the population of Texas as a whole. The population of Blacks and Hispanics in Texas increased 0.40% and 4.9% respectively from 2000 to 2009 (Murdock et al., 2003). Texas institutions fell well below the national average of having approximately 9% of faculty members being members of ethnic minority groups (Astin et al., 1997).

A need exists for universities to focus more attention on recruiting and retaining Black and Hispanic faculty members. Though the goal of diversifying faculty because of an increasingly diverse student body may be the conventional wisdom, some researchers believe that the imperative extends beyond student success (Joyner & Slate, 2010). According to Smith (2008), instead of justifying faculty diversity through student demographics, university administrators and faculty search committees should question the expertise and talent needed to be credible, effective, and viable in a pluralistic society.

Although their numbers are

increasing among the faculty ranks, the student population from these ethnic minority groups is increasing at a much faster pace. This disproportion between faculty members from ethnic minority groups and students from ethnic minority groups could have an adverse effect on these students because they seek faculty members from their same ethnic minority group to act as mentors (Gurin et al., 2002; Maton, Hrabowski, Ozdemir, & Wimms, 2008). Having a limited number of faculty of color and therefore a limited number of mentor choices for ethnic minority students could negatively affect the institutions efforts for reaching ethnic minority students (Jan, 2010).

Many scholars believe that the problem of underrepresentation among faculty at Texas colleges and universities can be changed (Joyner & Slate, 2010). An abundant amount of literature on minority faculty recruitment and retention is available to administrators who are interested in making changes. A search of the numerous research studies and other works over the past decade resulted in a plethora of case studies, programs, methods, and unique initiatives developed by colleges to diversify the faculty (Joyner & Slate, 2010)

Strategies have been proffered that show potential for closing the employment gap between Hispanic, Black, and White faculty. In writing about strategies for employing more Black faculty, which may also apply to hiring more Hispanic faculty, Turner

(2002) suggested that one of the more productive strategies for hiring more Black faculty is for administrators to directly intervene in the process. However, Cole and Arias (2004) argued that the efforts made by colleges to increase the attractiveness of a career as a faculty member for minorities is not sufficient to make a measurable change. They maintained that the most important reason for minority faculty underrepresentation is the small number of minorities earning the required academic credentials.

The data for this study show that overall percentages of Hispanic and Black faculty employed in Texas 4-year colleges and universities has increased. Though such data can be interpreted as not losing ground, they can also mean that more progress is needed, especially in closing the employment gap between Hispanic, Black, and White faculty (Joyner & Slate, 2010). One of the major implications of the demographic change in Texas is that increasing numbers of Black and Hispanic students will enroll in the state's colleges and universities. Administrators should be cognizant of that trend and design strategies that will result in a significant closing of the employment gap in faculty positions (Joyner & Slate, 2010). The manner in which higher education institutions respond to that challenge through its recruitment, selection, and hiring practices will directly impact the achievement and employment gap in Texas colleges and universities.

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