

# Affirmative Action and Minority Access to Faculty Positions

EDGAR G. EPPS\*

*The underrepresentation of minorities in faculty positions in American colleges and universities, especially African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans, is well documented. This Article focuses on the various barriers to the recruitment and retention of minority faculty. After discussing the "prestige hierarchy" of higher education and its relationship to minority access to graduate school and the professoriate, this Article considers affirmative action's impact on the progress of minorities in academia. Although affirmative action may have changed some aspects of the academic search process, statistics reveal that a substantial gap remains between the proportion of minority students participating in higher education and the proportion of full-time minority faculty. This Article focuses on a number of obstacles still encountered by minority faculty, specifically the underrepresentation of minorities in "top" graduate and professional schools, the academic and non-academic demands on the time and resources of minority faculty that often interfere with their pursuit of tenure, and the marginalization of research that does not conform to traditional values and practices. The author concludes by challenging higher education institutions to adapt to the needs of a changing constituency.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Colleges and universities are products of American society and cannot be understood when viewed in isolation from the historical and cultural dynamics of that society. Individuals and groups who are concerned about improving the position of minorities and women in academia must take into consideration the context in which such institutions operate: "An academic hierarchy, consisting of schools with various levels of ranking and prestige, represents a complex institutional mechanism influencing the type of higher education available to various groups in American society. As such, the academic hierarchy maintains long-standing manifestations of educational inequality."<sup>1</sup>

The allocation of racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and gender groups within the academic hierarchy is consistent with the relative status, wealth, and power of these groups in American society. While Asian Americans are an exception among

---

\* Marshall Field IV Professor of Urban Education, The University of Chicago. B.A., Talladega College; M.A., Atlanta University; Ph.D., Washington State University. Paper prepared for presentation at the Symposium, *Twenty Years After Bakke: The Law and Social Science of Affirmative Action in Higher Education*, The Ohio State University College of Law, April 3-4, 1998.

<sup>1</sup> Dwight Lang, *Equality, Prestige, and Controlled Mobility in the Academic Hierarchy*, 95 AM. J. EDUC. 441, 442 (1987) (citations omitted).

racial and ethnic minorities, African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans find themselves facing barriers that can be traced to the historical, cultural, and social forces that have shaped their relations with white Americans for generations. The pervasive attitudes of racism and sexism continue to influence educational opportunities for minorities and women in America. Oppressed minority students usually have lower high school grades than non-Hispanic whites and Asian Americans,<sup>2</sup> lower scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the American College Test (ACT) before entering college,<sup>3</sup> and lower scores on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and professional school entrance examinations when applying to graduate and professional schools.<sup>4</sup> Although women's grades are generally equal to those of males,<sup>5</sup> their standardized test scores often place them at a competitive disadvantage in scientific and technical fields.<sup>6</sup> These achievement

---

<sup>2</sup> Among 1996 college-bound SAT test-takers, compared with whites and Asians, African Americans, Puerto Ricans, and other Hispanics had lower high school grade point averages, fewer years of academic study, and fewer honors courses. See FREDERICK D. PATTERSON RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF THE COLLEGE FUND/UNCF, 3 THE AFRICAN AMERICAN EDUCATION DATA BOOK: THE TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO COLLEGE AND SCHOOL TO WORK 13 (1997).

<sup>3</sup> In 1997, the average SAT score nationwide was 1,016. See Antoine M. Garibaldi, *Four Decades of Progress . . . and Decline: An Assessment of African American Educational Attainment*, 66 J. NEGRO EDUC. 105, 109-10 (1997). Asian American students had the highest average score (1,056), followed by white Americans (1,052), Native Americans (950), Hispanic Americans (934), Mexican Americans (909), Puerto Ricans (901), and African Americans (857). See *id.* On the ACT, the average score nationwide was 21.0 in 1997. See *id.* Asian Americans and white Americans recorded the highest averages (21.7), followed by Native Americans and Hispanic Americans (19.0), Mexican Americans (18.8), and African Americans (17.1). See *id.* For a breakdown of 1998 ACT scores by sex and racial/ethnic group, see *The Nation: Students*, THE CHRON. OF HIGHER EDUC. (1998-1999 Almanac Issue), Aug. 28, 1998, at 18 [hereinafter *The Nation: Students*].

<sup>4</sup> Except for Asian Americans, who scored higher than whites on the Biological Sciences Section and the Physical Sciences Section of the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) and the Quantitative Section of the GRE, scores of non-white racial/ethnic groups were lower than those of whites on all graduate and professional examinations in 1995. See FREDERICK D. PATTERSON RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF THE COLLEGE FUND/UNCF, 1 THE AFRICAN AMERICAN EDUCATION DATA BOOK: HIGHER AND ADULT EDUCATION 319-34 (1997) [hereinafter DATA BOOK] (providing a breakdown of averages for each racial/ethnic group on the GRE, the Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT), and the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT), and the MCAT).

<sup>5</sup> Studies indicate that, on average, women have better grades in high school than men. See Helen S. Astin & Mary Beth Snyder, *Women's Education and Career Choice: Disparities Between Theory and Practice*, in WOMEN AND EDUCATION: EQUITY OR EQUALITY 181, 186-87 (Elizabeth Fennema & M. Jane Ayer eds., 1984).

<sup>6</sup> Although women (503) scored only slightly below men (507) on the Verbal Section of the SAT in 1997, they scored substantially below men on the Mathematical Section (494

discrepancies in contemporary American education contribute to the relative scarcity of minority and women faculty in academia.<sup>7</sup>

This Article focuses on the obstacles encountered by minority faculty members in academia. In Part II, this Article discusses the prestige hierarchy of higher education and its relationship to minority access to graduate school and the professoriate. Part III examines the progress of minorities in gaining access to faculty positions during the affirmative action era. Issues discussed include the size of the pool of eligible minority candidates for faculty positions, the academic and non-academic demands on the time and resources of minority faculty that may interfere with their pursuit of tenure, and the marginalization of research that does not conform to traditional values and practices. In Part IV, this Article concludes by issuing a challenge to higher education institutions to adapt to the needs of a changing constituency.

## II. THE PRESTIGE HIERARCHY

What is important for us to consider with regard to minorities in the professoriate is that the position of "professor" has a highly valued status, especially in those institutions that are at the very pinnacle of the academic hierarchy—the major research universities. Irving Kristol has argued that academics are among the "upper" classes of American society.<sup>8</sup> In addition to such benefits as tenure, long vacations, and choice of working hours, much of the status value of the professoriate is based on its relative exclusivity. Thus, when we ask colleges and universities to expand opportunities for low status groups and persons, we pose a serious threat to the claim of exclusivity upon which their hallowed status rests.

The status of faculty members is determined not only by the quality of their research, but by the prestige of the institutions by which they are employed. Undergraduate institutional prestige is based on the "quality" of applicants and

---

versus 530). See *The Nation: Students*, *supra* note 3, at 18. On the GRE in 1995–1996, women had lower mean scores than men on the Verbal (474 versus 502), Quantitative (500 versus 574), and Analytical (540 versus 563) sub-tests. See Cheryl D. Fields, *It's Not Rocket Science*, BLACK ISSUES IN HIGHER EDUC., Apr. 2, 1998, at 18, 19.

<sup>7</sup> In the fall of 1995, there was a total of 550,822 full-time faculty members in the United States. See *The Nation: Faculty and Staff*, THE CHRON. OF HIGHER EDUC. (1998–1999 Almanac Issue), Aug. 28, 1998, at 30 [hereinafter *The Nation: Faculty and Staff*]. Of this total, only 34.6% were women and only 12.6% were minority. See *id.* The racial/ethnic breakdown was as follows: 2,156 (0.39%) were Native American, 27,573 (5.0%) were Asian, 26,835 (4.87%) were black, 12,942 (2.35%) were Hispanic, 468,518 (85.06%) were white, 10,853 (1.97%) were non-resident aliens, and 1,946 (0.35%) were of unknown race. See *id.*

<sup>8</sup> See Irving Kristol, *About Equality*, COMMENTARY, Nov. 1972, at 41, 43.

students attracted to the institution. The quality of applicants and students, in turn, is determined by the prestige ratings of the students' social backgrounds, the quality of the secondary schools they attended, and their rankings on certain indicators of intellectual aptitude, ability, and achievement. For graduate and professional schools as well as for individual graduate departments, prestige is determined not only by the students' scores on admissions tests, but also by undergraduate grades and perhaps, most importantly, the quality (prestige ranking) and selectivity of the undergraduate degree-granting institution. Thus, there are certain self-maintaining features of the academic prestige hierarchy that are inherently discriminatory. Students who earn degrees from highly ranked undergraduate institutions are likely to attend highly ranked graduate schools, while students who graduate from lower ranked undergraduate institutions are likely to attend less prestigious graduate schools. Faculty selection committees, typically composed largely of white males, generally subscribe to the same set of culturally induced values as admissions committees. Consequently, candidates are evaluated and ranked on the basis of the prestige of the institutions from which they obtained their principal degrees in addition to their other qualifications.

Students from families with lower social status and students who are members of oppressed minority groups are less likely than more advantaged students to attend prestigious undergraduate institutions and are less likely to attend graduate or professional school.<sup>9</sup> When such disadvantaged students do attend graduate or professional school, they are more likely to attend institutions with relatively low prestige rankings.<sup>10</sup> The prestige rankings of the institutions from which

---

<sup>9</sup> Although minority representation at all levels of higher education has increased since 1976, minorities continue to be underrepresented among college and university students relative to their representation in the college-age population. See DATA BOOK, *supra* note 4, at 54-57. For instance, African Americans and Hispanics constituted 12.6% and 10.5% of the U.S. population respectively in 1995. See *id.* at 2-3. However, in Fall 1994, African Americans represented only 10.7% of all undergraduates, and Hispanics represented only 8%. See *id.* at 56-57. Furthermore, information compiled by the Integrated Postsecondary Data System (IPEDS) shows that African Americans receive a lower percentage of their bachelor's degrees from research universities (21.7%) than the population as a whole (32.3%). See *id.* at 86. African Americans, on the other hand, obtain a greater percentage of their bachelor's degrees from master's institutions (43.0%) than the population as a whole (35.5%). See *id.*

<sup>10</sup> African Americans earn a greater percentage of their master's degrees from master's institutions than the population as a whole. See DATA BOOK, *supra* note 4, at 86. In 1993-1994, African Americans received 45.9% of their master's degrees from master's institutions and only 29.1% from research universities. See *id.* at 86. Of all master's degrees awarded in 1993-1994, research universities awarded 39.1% and only 34.4% were awarded by master's institutions. See *id.* Similarly, African Americans earn a disproportionately low percentage of their doctoral degrees from research universities (60.6%) as compared to the population as a whole (76.1%). See *id.* at 87. This pattern of representation of African Americans in higher education was summed up by the *African American Education Data Book*:

individuals obtain doctoral degrees affect, in turn, the prestige of the institutions by which they are employed. The relative paucity of minority scholars in the doctoral programs of highly prestigious institutions partially accounts for the difficulty minority scholars encounter when they apply for faculty positions at elite institutions. Thus, the apparent vicious cycle of low representation of minorities among the student bodies of prestigious undergraduate institutions leads to low representation of minority graduates attending highly prestigious graduate schools, which, in turn, leads to low representation of minority scholars among the faculties of major research universities.

Neil J. Smelser and Robin Content have characterized the faculty selection process as a competition between universities trying to advance or solidify their positions in the prestige hierarchy.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, success in educating, hiring, and promoting minority scholars is not highly valued as a status generating mechanism. Therefore, it is not surprising that minority faculty members, like minority students, are found mainly in the less prestigious colleges and universities.

The absence of minority faculty members lessens the probability that minority students will complete graduate and professional programs at the same rate as white students. James E. Blackwell's research showed that the most persistent, statistically significant predictor of enrollment and graduation of African American graduate and professional students was the presence of minority faculty members.<sup>12</sup> Simply stated, institutions that were successful in recruiting and retaining black faculty did a far better job of recruiting, enrolling, and graduating black students than those that had few or no black faculty members.<sup>13</sup> In other words, research suggests that the presence or absence of minority faculty members in graduate and professional schools is a relatively good informal indicator of an institution's commitment to the goal of equal opportunity for minorities in higher education. If an institution cannot recruit, employ, and promote to tenure a critical mass of minority faculty members, it is not likely that the same institution will be successful in recruiting, retaining, and graduating a significant number of minority

---

Anyone concerned with educational equity would be struck by the relative absence of African Americans who received degrees at all levels from research universities, and the preponderance of African Americans who received bachelor's and master's degrees from master's-level institutions. Similarly, a preponderance of African Americans received their doctorates from doctoral-granting institutions, rather than from more prestigious research universities.

*Id.* at 54.

<sup>11</sup> See NEIL J. SMELSER & ROBIN CONTENT, *THE CHANGING ACADEMIC MARKET* 7 (1980).

<sup>12</sup> See JAMES E. BLACKWELL, *MAINSTREAMING OUTSIDERS: THE PRODUCTION OF BLACK PROFESSIONALS* 64-72 (1981).

<sup>13</sup> See *id.*

students at either the undergraduate, graduate, or professional level.

The American system of higher education will require a greater commitment to equity and effectiveness than has occurred in the past if it is to provide both access and success for minority students. Minority scholars have contended for many years that institutions must look beyond the traditional indicators of excellence when assessing the academic potential of prospective students and faculty.<sup>14</sup> However, few institutions have committed themselves to the search for alternative means of determining academic potential.

Burton R. Clark has described the great variation in American education as follows: Major research universities (especially Ivy League schools and similar institutions) are at the top of the academic hierarchy, followed by selective liberal arts colleges, lesser universities, public and private colleges that offer degrees as far as the master's, non-selective four-year colleges, and community colleges.<sup>15</sup> The most prestigious institutions have a competitive advantage in the academic marketplace because they can rely on an "old boys' network" to supply them with candidates for faculty positions who meet all of the formal and informal selection criteria (having attended the right schools, worked with the right scholars, and conducted the right kind of research). Promising minority candidates who have not graduated from major research institutions may not be given serious consideration when the competition includes such "privileged" graduates. Minority graduates of high ranking institutions also have an advantage over their peers who have attended second and third tier institutions; however, the number of these minority graduates is relatively small.

Clark correctly points out that the cultures of the faculties at the various types of institutions are extremely different.<sup>16</sup> However, the leading universities set the standards that are emulated by others aspiring to improve their relative positions. "The reward system of promoting academics on the grounds of research and published scholarship has become more deeply rooted in the universities, and would-be universities and leading 4-year colleges, with every passing decade."<sup>17</sup> Both the type of graduate program and the type of employing institution influence a young faculty member's opportunities for becoming a productive and respected scholar. In each case, the stronger the research tradition, the greater the likelihood that the young scholar will acquire the knowledge and values that lead to research

---

<sup>14</sup> See, e.g., Amado M. Padilla, *Ethnic Minority Scholars, Research, and Mentoring: Current and Future Issues*, EDUC. RESEARCHER, May 1994, at 24-27 (discussing the importance of institutional support for ethnic researchers as well as for promising ethnic students and faculty).

<sup>15</sup> See Burton R. Clark, *The Academic Life: Small Worlds, Different Worlds*, EDUC. RESEARCHER, June-July 1989, at 4, 5.

<sup>16</sup> See *id.* at 7.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.* at 5.

productivity. Because minority academics are likely to graduate from institutions with weak research traditions and are likely to find early employment in similar institutions, they are at a disadvantage when competing with graduates of major research universities for positions in prestigious institutions.

### III. THE IMPACT OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Colleges and universities, because they accept federal contracts and grants, are subject to contract compliance reviews that monitor the affirmative action efforts of the institutions. Although some beneficiaries of affirmative action now say that their accomplishments have been stigmatized by the perception that they are less qualified than their white peers,<sup>18</sup> others agree with Bryan Fair:

Some critics of affirmative action point to decisions by schools like Duke to admit people like me with test scores substantially below the school's standards. They allege such a mismatch is harmful to people like me, presumably meaning that my test scores preclude my competing with other students at Duke and that when students like me fail, we lose the little confidence and self-esteem with which we began.

I disagree. First, Duke gave me a great opportunity, one that did not hurt me in any way. . . . Duke gave me a chance. I learned that its high standards were not beyond my capacity but, rather, only beyond my training.<sup>19</sup>

Although responses of institutions vary, affirmative action has changed the nature of the academic search process. Academic searches are now widely advertised and minorities and women are invited to apply. What has been the impact of opening up the selection process? After three decades of affirmative action, U.S. Department of Education statistics show that a substantial gap remains between the proportion of minority students participating in higher education and the proportion of full-time minority faculty.<sup>20</sup> Helen S. Astin, et al.'s 1997 survey of minority faculty reports that Asian American faculty members are more likely

---

<sup>18</sup> See, e.g., STEPHEN CARTER, REFLECTIONS OF AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION BABY (1991).

<sup>19</sup> BRYAN K. FAIR, NOTES OF A RACIAL CASTE BABY 52 (1997).

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Department of Education statistics indicate that minorities constituted 23.8% of all students in higher education in Fall 1994. See DATA BOOK, *supra* note 4, at 56-57. Of this 23.8%, 10.1% were black, 7.4% were Hispanic, 5.4% were Asian American/Pacific Islander, and 0.9% were Native American. See *id.* Although minorities represented almost 24% of the student body, only 12.6% of full-time faculty members were minority according to Fall 1995 U.S. Department of Education statistics. See *The Nation: Faculty and Staff*, *supra* note 7, at 30. Of this 12.6%, 4.87% were black, 2.35% were Hispanic, 4.87% were Asian American/Pacific Islander, and 0.39% were Native American. See *id.*

to have completed a doctoral degree than their peers.<sup>21</sup> For example, 85% of Asian-American male professors and 61% of Asian-American female professors have Ph.D. or Ed.D. degrees compared to 61% of African-American male professors and 42% of African-American female professors.<sup>22</sup> This survey also found that 29% of male African-American faculty members and 34% of African-American women professors teach at historically black institutions.<sup>23</sup> Although the number of African Americans earning doctoral degrees reached an all-time high (1,315) in 1996, they still earned only 4.7% of all doctoral degrees awarded to American citizens.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the proportion of doctoral degrees earned by women compared to men is higher among African Americans than among any other racial or ethnic group.<sup>25</sup>

Assuming that future faculty members will be recruited from the ranks of current graduate students, it appears that little change can be expected in the near future. In the fall of 1995, only 6.8% of graduate students were black, 3.9% were Hispanic, 4.4% were Asian American/Pacific Islander, and 0.5% were Native American.<sup>26</sup> African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans are especially underrepresented in science, mathematics, and engineering graduate programs.<sup>27</sup> Because African Americans, Hispanics, and American Indians are less likely than whites and Asians to earn bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, and doctoral degrees, it is clear that we cannot expect substantial changes in the pool of persons eligible for faculty positions without improving the quality of education available to minority students at each stage of the educational process.

Empirical studies are needed to determine origins and career paths of minority scholars. Daniel G. Solorzano examined data from the National Research Council's Doctorate Records Project in a study of baccalaureate origins of African

---

<sup>21</sup> See HELEN S. ASTIN ET AL., RACE AND ETHNICITY IN THE AMERICAN PROFESSORATE, 1995-1996, at 8-9 (1997).

<sup>22</sup> See *id.*

<sup>23</sup> See *id.* at 3-4.

<sup>24</sup> See *African-American Doctoral Degrees Reach an All-Time High*, J. BLACKS IN HIGHER EDUC., Winter 1997-1998, at 84, 84 [hereinafter *Doctoral Degrees*].

<sup>25</sup> The proportion of doctorates earned by African-American women increased from 38.7% in 1977 to 62.7% in 1994, but declined slightly to 59.3% in 1996. See *id.* at 85.

<sup>26</sup> Of a total of 1,732,500 graduate students enrolled in 1995, only 118,600 were black, 68,000 were Hispanic, 75,600 were Asian American/Pacific Islander, and 8,500 were Native American. See *The Nation: Students*, *supra* note 3, at 18.

<sup>27</sup> See *Doctoral Degrees*, *supra* note 24, at 84; Gail E. Thomas, *Participation and Degree Attainment of African-American and Latino Students in Graduate Education Relative to Other Racial and Ethnic Groups: An Update from Office of Civil Rights Data*, 62 HARV. EDUC. REV. 45, 51 (1992).



Americans who earned doctoral degrees from 1980 to 1990.<sup>28</sup> He found that the majority of African Americans who received doctorates during this period earned their undergraduate degrees from small, traditionally black institutions and other less prestigious colleges and universities.<sup>29</sup>

Several studies have reported that minority students attending predominately white institutions experience feelings of discrimination and relatively low levels of interaction with white faculty and students.<sup>30</sup> However, the research is inconsistent on the extent to which students' perceptions of discrimination and the quality of their relations with faculty and other students affect their performance and completion rates. For example, Michael T. Nettles found that although African-American doctoral students were more likely than whites to perceive that their doctoral institutions were racially discriminatory, they perceived greater support from their (white) mentors and were more satisfied with their doctoral programs.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Sylvia Hurtado's research revealed that minority graduate students had higher self-concepts in racial climates they perceived as having low trust and little interaction among racial groups.<sup>32</sup> A. Wade Smith reported that African-American students with high aspirations and high grades perceive more experience of racism than less successful students.<sup>33</sup> However, Smith also reported that the aspirations of African-American students are depressed by the racism they encounter at higher prestige institutions even when they receive good grades.<sup>34</sup> As Hurtado comments,

---

<sup>28</sup> See Daniel G. Solorzano, *The Doctorate Production and Baccalaureate Origins of African Americans in the Sciences and Engineering*, 64 J. NEGRO EDUC. 15 (1995).

<sup>29</sup> See *id.* at 22.

<sup>30</sup> See Jomills Henry Braddock II & William T. Trent, *Correlates of Academic Performance Among Black Graduate and Professional Students*, in COLLEGE IN BLACK AND WHITE 161, 169-70 (Walter R. Allen et al. eds., 1991) (discussing findings regarding black graduate and professional students' interaction with white faculty); Sylvia Hurtado, *Graduate School Racial Climates and Academic Self-Concept Among Minority Graduate Students in the 1970s*, 102 AM. J. EDUC. 330, 347 (1994) (noting that minority students have low levels of interracial interaction and experience feelings of discrimination); Sylvia Hurtado & Deborah Faye Carter, *Effects of College Transition and Perceptions of the Campus Racial Climate on Latino College Students' Sense of Belonging*, 70 SOC. OF EDUC. 324, 339 (1997) (finding that perceptions of a hostile college climate had a negative impact on Latino students' sense of belonging); A. Wade Smith, *Personal Traits, Institutional Prestige, Racial Attitudes, and Black Student Academic Performance in College*, in COLLEGE IN BLACK AND WHITE 111, 119-21 (Walter R. Allen et al. eds., 1991) (finding that black students with the highest aspirations and performance levels report more experience of racism than other black undergraduates).

<sup>31</sup> See Michael T. Nettles, *Success in Doctoral Programs: Experiences of Minority and White Students*, 98 AM. J. EDUC. 494, 507-14 (1990).

<sup>32</sup> See Hurtado, *supra* note 30, at 346.

<sup>33</sup> See Smith, *supra* note 30, at 119.

<sup>34</sup> See *id.* at 124.

minority students may be highly critical of the racial climate and still experience success.<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately, the cost of success for some may be reduced aspirations.<sup>36</sup>

Eric Margolis and Mary Romero maintain that one function of the "hidden curriculum"<sup>37</sup> in sociology (and by inference other schools and departments) is the reproduction of traditional or mainstream scholars.<sup>38</sup> "The actual locations and mechanics by which the hidden curriculum produces professional identity includes: department culture, cliques or factions, group interactions in meetings or seminars, mentoring or apprenticeship relationships, the informal or formal allocation system for allocating teaching and research assistantships, [and] the selection of courses for teaching assistants to teach."<sup>39</sup> Their study of twenty-six women-of-color graduate students enrolled in Ph.D. programs in sociology revealed eight elements of the "strong form" of the hidden curriculum: "stigmatization, blaming the victim, cooling out, stereotyping, absence, silence, exclusion, and tracking."<sup>40</sup>

The stigmatization and stereotyping may be expressed in comments, attitudes, and behaviors that imply that minority and women graduate students (and faculty) are less qualified than white males.<sup>41</sup> The victim blaming process encourages students to look within themselves or to their social backgrounds for causes of difficulties they encounter in graduate school.<sup>42</sup> The cooling out process provides a rationalization for lowered aspirations (forget the Ph.D., accept a Master's and get on with your life; or, perhaps you would be happier in a less competitive university).<sup>43</sup> Absence is expressed in the curriculum; minorities and women may not see themselves represented.<sup>44</sup> Absence may also be demonstrated by the

---

<sup>35</sup> See Hurtado, *supra* note 30, at 347.

<sup>36</sup> See JACQUELINE FLEMING, *BLACKS IN COLLEGE* 105 (1984) (concluding from a study of black students at the University of Houston that, while displaying excellent academic progress, such students showed signs of identity alienation, unhappiness, and loss of ambition).

<sup>37</sup> Margolis and Romero's concept of a "hidden curriculum" refers to "how the graduate school curriculum in sociology not only produces professional sociologists, but also simultaneously produces gender, race, and other forms of inequality." Eric Margolis & Mary Romero, "The Department Is Very Male, Very White, Very Old, and Very Conservative": *The Functioning of the Hidden Curriculum in Graduate Sociology Departments*, 68 *HARV. EDUC. REV.* 1, 2 (1998).

<sup>38</sup> See *id.* at 28-29.

<sup>39</sup> *Id.* at 8.

<sup>40</sup> *Id.* at 12.

<sup>41</sup> See *id.* at 12-13, 15-17.

<sup>42</sup> See *id.* at 13-14.

<sup>43</sup> See *id.* at 13-15.

<sup>44</sup> See *id.* at 17-19.

paucity of minority and women faculty in a department.<sup>45</sup>

The voices of minority and women students may be silenced in different ways. For example, when one speaks up in a class discussion, the professor and white males may listen politely and then continue the discussion as if no comment had been made;<sup>46</sup> or the topics of interest to minority and women students may be considered trivial or peripheral.<sup>47</sup> Exclusion may take the form of not including such students in study groups or cooperative research projects.<sup>48</sup> It may also take the form of denying teaching or research assistantships to students who do not fit the mainstream ideal (lack the preferred cultural capital). Finally, the tracking may include targeted teaching or research assignments: teach ethnic or women's studies; focus your dissertation on ethnic issues.<sup>49</sup>

Unless these types of structural barriers to success are eliminated, it will be difficult to increase the representation of minority and women students in faculty positions. These practices represent a form of institutionalized elitism that makes it difficult for minority and women graduate students to compete on an equal basis with white men. While the respondents in this study cannot be considered representative of graduate education in the United States, the experiences of these women should not be considered exceptional. Their concerns echo many of the experiences reported by other researchers.<sup>50</sup>

Although it is obvious that attention must be paid to increasing the pool of

---

<sup>45</sup> See *id.*

<sup>46</sup> Margolis and Romero comment that “[f]aculty and graduate students frequently respond with deafening silence to comments about race in class or they tend to avoid students who bring the topic of race into public discussions.” *Id.* at 21.

<sup>47</sup> Margolis and Romero have observed a “deafening silence” in graduate programs—“the absence of race and gender in the curriculum.” *Id.* at 19. They note that this silence socializes students to a traditional perspective as to what constitutes legitimate knowledge and fields of research and study. See *id.* at 21.

<sup>48</sup> Students who become vocal about issues of equity, racism, and sexism may be sanctioned by exclusion. See *id.* at 22. Furthermore, “[s]tudents who persistently address issues of inequality risk being labeled activists, driven out of sociology, and, in some cases, pushed into interdisciplinary programs.” *Id.*

<sup>49</sup> See *id.* at 24 (suggesting that a kind of tracking system provides unequal access to the top research opportunities, post-doctoral fellowships, and jobs in prestigious institutions).

<sup>50</sup> See, e.g., Hurtado, *supra* note 30, at 344–48 (study of African-American and Hispanic students attending graduate school in the 1970s); Nettles, *supra* note 30, at 514–16 (study of black and Hispanic doctoral students); Smith, *supra* note 30, at 122–26 (study of black students at predominantly white and traditionally black universities). For a discussion of the legacy of racism in higher education, see Christine I. Bennett, *Research on Racial Issues in American Higher Education*, in HANDBOOK OF RESEARCH ON MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION 663, 672–76 (James A. Banks & Cherry A. McGee Banks eds., 1995).

eligible minority candidates for faculty positions, some researchers also emphasize a need to improve the recruitment and retention of minority faculty.<sup>51</sup> Caroline Sotello Viernes Turner and Samuel L. Meyers's analysis of data from a survey of Midwestern institutions led them to "recommend a focus on mentoring, networking, and research support to assure that minority faculty fulfill their potential and contribute to the intellectual future of our universities and colleges."<sup>52</sup>

### A. *Obstacles Encountered by Minority Faculty on Predominantly White Campuses*

Minority faculty members often encounter obstacles on predominantly white campuses that constrain their ability to progress up the academic hierarchy. Two such obstacles are of particular concern: (1) The tendency of minority faculty members to be overburdened with academic responsibilities and (2) the inflexible expectations of universities and colleges regarding research and publication. These obstacles are discussed, in turn, below.

#### 1. *Academic Responsibilities*

Minority faculty members, like all faculty, have teaching, counseling, and committee responsibilities as well as expectations that they will conduct research and produce publications in appropriate journals or other venues. Teaching responsibilities tend to be greater at less research-oriented institutions, while publication demands tend to be lower. Therefore, scholars who begin their academic careers at the average college or university will have heavy teaching loads and relatively few opportunities for research and publication. This makes the later transition to a major research university very difficult. Because many minority scholars begin their careers in institutions that value teaching more than research, they do not compile very impressive lists of publications and remain outside the academic mainstream throughout their careers.

Minority faculty often complain about overwhelming counseling responsibilities. Counseling assignments are officially the same for minority and non-minority faculty. However, many minority (and women) faculty find themselves in situations where the expectations of students are an added complication. Students expect minority (and women) faculty to be available whenever the students need someone to talk to about academic or personal

---

<sup>51</sup> See Caroline Sotello Viernes Turner & Samuel L. Myers, Jr., *Faculty Diversity and Affirmative Action*, in AFFIRMATIVE ACTION'S TESTAMENT OF HOPE: STRATEGIES FOR A NEW ERA IN HIGHER EDUCATION (Mildred Garcia ed., 1997).

<sup>52</sup> *Id.* at 145.

problems and are not very receptive to explanations about the need to do research and publish so that the faculty member can make tenure. Minority faculty also feel obligated to serve as faculty advisors to minority student groups. Furthermore, some minority faculty take on a heavy burden of supervising junior and senior papers, master's theses, and doctoral dissertations. One senior scholar, who has served as mentor to more than 100 graduate students, reported that he would never turn away an African-American student who asked him to serve on a dissertation committee. As a result, his dissertation counseling responsibilities are much greater than those of most of his colleagues. These advisory activities can be very time consuming, taking time and energy away from research and writing. A young minority scholar who accepts too much of a counseling load will have difficulty meeting publication expectations.

Mentoring is an important role assumed by many professors. However, many minority (and women) faculty, through a sense of obligation to their students, elect to become mentors to many more students than is typical for university faculty. This is not entirely a voluntary process. Most traditionally white universities employ only a few minority faculty members and many departments employ few women. Therefore, students looking for supportive role models seek out the limited number of minority (and women) professors for advice and moral support. This is a role that most minority professors feel obligated to accept. Again, demands on time can be considerable—writing letters of recommendation and helping with graduate or professional school selection, job and fellowship applications, and post-doctoral research opportunities can become a routine part of the professor's job. I do not mean to imply that white male professors do not also perform these duties for minority and women students, but minority and women professors, because of students' perceptions that they need a "friend in court," frequently assume a heavier load of these responsibilities than the faculty at large.

Minority faculty may also find themselves overburdened with committee responsibilities. In addition to traditional committees, minority faculty are expected (by the administration, faculty, colleagues, and students) to serve on committees associated with minority affairs, campus security, race relations, minority faculty and student recruitment, and university relations with the minority community. During periods of relatively quiet race relations, these burdens are not too onerous because the committees rarely meet. However, when racial incidents occur and racial tensions are high, such committees may meet daily for weeks or months. A senior faculty member at a publicly supported major research university reported that such committee work became so time consuming and so emotionally draining that he had little psychic energy left to devote to his research program. As a result, several projects were left uncompleted until he was able to take a leave of absence.

A faculty member in such a situation feels a responsibility both to the university and to the students. Improving race relations, enlarging opportunities

for minority students and faculty, and strengthening support systems for non-traditional students are viewed as very important objectives well worth the time and energy devoted to them. However, such work is usually undertaken at the cost of reducing one's efforts in other areas. Too often, it is the research effort that suffers. For the young scholar who is seeking tenure, diverting resources from research to fulfill other obligations (real or perceived) may result in losing an opportunity for promotion. Universities expect the same level of productivity from minority (and women) faculty as from the faculty at large. In tenure and promotion deliberations, little consideration is given to excessive counseling, advising, mentoring, or committee work. Much weight is typically given to the opinions of outside readers. Thus, a person's "citizenship" contributions are not given value equal to that of published research.

## 2. *Focus of Research*

The minority professor is expected to meet the same requirements for tenure and promotion as non-minority faculty. This means compiling a respectable body of published work. However, minority scholars raise several concerns about comparability and definitions of quality in the humanities and social sciences.

African Americans tend to be interested in studying child development, learning processes, and psycho-social dynamics among African Americans. Often they do not want to conduct comparative studies because they view cross-racial comparisons as scientifically meaningless and politically dangerous (because of the potential for invidious comparisons that are frequently misinterpreted and used to justify discrimination, government neglect, and the like).<sup>53</sup> However, research on minority populations and concerns is frequently viewed by tenure committees as "parochial" or as "problem oriented" research. Therefore, it is not valued as highly by tenure committees as similar research that focuses on white subjects or that uses a comparative research design.

Much weight is given by tenure committees to publications in journals that use peer review processes. Typically, there is a status hierarchy ranking journals within disciplines. Minority professors believe that the higher-ranking journals undervalue research on minority subjects.<sup>54</sup> In addition, some minority scholars prefer to publish their work in peer reviewed journals that specialize in research

---

<sup>53</sup> See Padilla, *supra* note 14, at 25 (arguing that minority researchers should focus on intra-group variability and the development of ethnic knowledge rather than concentrating on cross-racial comparisons).

<sup>54</sup> See *id.* (noting that very few articles on African Americans and other ethnic groups are published in the American Psychological Association (APA) and American Educational Research Association (AERA) journals).

on minorities.<sup>55</sup> Materials published in such journals reach an audience that has the same interests as the researchers. However, because some mainstream scholars consider such journals to be low in prestige, work published in journals targeting African-American, Hispanic, Native-American, or Asian-American audiences tends to be undervalued by tenure review committees.

What qualifies as acceptable research designs and research topics is also largely determined by the values or culture of the major research universities. "Faculty of color voice a common concern that their work is undervalued and that they are treated differently in the academy than their peers."<sup>56</sup> Mainstream paradigms of knowledge are problems that are particularly aggravating for minority scholars in the social sciences and humanities because they can limit the ability of minority scholars to position their own work within the cultural and experiential framework of non-white traditions. In the humanities, the minority scholar may find it necessary to spend time justifying the inclusion of African-American literature, art, or music in the curriculum, while in the social sciences much time may be spent refuting biased work or justifying the study of "problem" groups rather than mainstream subjects. Thus, the minority scholar is constrained by the culture of the major research university to select research paradigms, research topics, and publication outlets that conform to the traditions of institutions that have historically excluded minorities.

Because much of the responsibility for setting standards and determining who is qualified for admission to a graduate program or who is qualified for a tenure track position is located at the department level in major research universities, such institutions will not be very successful in changing selection criteria unless they find ways to make innovative selection processes profitable at the departmental level. This would require institutions to tie some proportion of departmental resources to the department's success in recruiting, retaining, and graduating minority students. This general approach has met with some success in the recruitment and retention of minority faculty members. For example, if a department is rewarded with an additional faculty position after a successful search for a minority or woman professor, the seriousness of recruitment and employment efforts may take a great leap forward. The search committee may discover a pool of eligible candidates that they had long claimed to be non-existent. Similar incentives could be applied to research assistantships, teaching assistantships, and fellowships. Unfortunately, this is a level of commitment that is not likely to be found at many institutions. Rather than seeking to expand the pool of applicants and establish innovative criteria for selection, the typical practice is to intensify

---

<sup>55</sup> See *id.* at 25–26 (discussing the importance of promoting the publication of ethnic research in ethnic journals). Some of these journals include: *Journal of Black Studies*, *Journal of Negro Education*, *Phylon*, *Journal of Black Psychology*, and *Journal of Non-White Concerns*.

<sup>56</sup> Turner & Myers, *supra* note 51, at 132.

efforts to recruit the small number of minority students and faculty who meet traditional selection criteria.

### B. *The Need for an Effective Minority Recruitment Program*

The foregoing discussion of traditional values and practices in mainstream institutions of higher education suggests that African-American, Hispanic, and Native-American students and faculty encounter a culture that rejects them as legitimate participants in the life of the academy. Walter R. Allen points out that African-American students on predominantly white campuses continue to be severely disadvantaged relative to white students in terms of persistence rates, academic achievement levels, and overall psycho-social adjustment.<sup>57</sup> Of all problems faced by African-American students on predominantly white campuses, those arising from isolation, alienation, and lack of academic and social support systems appear to be most serious.<sup>58</sup> Many minority faculty members have experienced similar problems in finding support networks among the faculty and administration at such universities. There is a tendency for minority faculty to be located on the periphery rather than in the mainstream of teaching and research. They are often in non-tenured positions or special programs for minorities. Given the relative scarcity of minority faculty at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, no matter how committed these persons may be, there simply are not enough of them to meet the needs of all current and future minority students. The extent to which *all faculty*, rather than minority faculty, are committed to the task of recruiting and nurturing minority talent is an indication of an institution's commitment to equality for minority students.

When considering the factors that affect students' progression through institutions of higher education, one can focus on the characteristics of individual students or on the characteristics of the institutions they attend. In focusing on individual characteristics, it is typical to begin with traditional measures of academic performance or achievement: achievement test scores, grade point average, or rank in school or college graduating class. Some studies also include measures of students' attitudes, aspirations, values, and self-perceptions.<sup>59</sup> Of the

---

<sup>57</sup> See Walter R. Allen, *Introduction to COLLEGE IN BLACK AND WHITE* 1, 5 (Walter R. Allen et al. eds., 1991).

<sup>58</sup> See *id.*

<sup>59</sup> See, e.g., Walter R. Allen & Nesha Z. Haniff, *Race, Gender, and Academic Performance in U.S. Higher Education*, in *COLLEGE IN BLACK AND WHITE* 95 (Walter R. Allen et al. eds., 1991) (including measures of students' self-concept, racial attitudes, and occupational aspirations); Hurtado, *supra* note 30 (focusing on students' academic self-concept); Kenneth W. Jackson & L. Alex Swan, *Institutional and Individual Factors Affecting Black Undergraduate Student Performance: Campus Race and Student Gender*,



attitudinal variables, the most consistently useful are the students' educational expectations and academic self-confidence.<sup>60</sup> However, it can be concluded from a review of studies that focus on student characteristics that such factors typically explain a relatively small proportion of the variation in rates of progression through undergraduate, graduate, or professional schools.<sup>61</sup> Thus, when one notes the wide variation among institutions in their ability to recruit, retain, and graduate minority students, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that institutional characteristics are likely to be more important than individual student characteristics in explaining differences in institutional success at producing minority graduates. However, I agree with Hurtado that future studies of minority graduate students should include "finer measures of the graduate experience that reflect interactions with advisors, departmental faculty, and peers, as well as student views of the racial climate of the university community."<sup>62</sup>

There is a fair amount of consistency in the literature as to what constitutes an effective program. First among the characteristics of institutions that have been effective in producing relatively high proportions of minority graduates is *institutional commitment*. Institutions with programs that have been judged to be effective usually have strong recruitment programs, a broad range of support services, and substantial financial aid packages. These institutions also demonstrate their commitment to minority enrollment, retention, and graduation by: (1) employing relatively large numbers of minority faculty members; (2) supporting minority student organizations and involving them in decisions about recruitment, retention, and support services; (3) establishing and providing adequate support for a minority affairs office; and (4) developing and supporting a systematic university affirmative action program.

Institutional commitment requires strong support from the president and other high-level administrators. This support should be visible and consistent. Institutional commitment is expressed in public statements and in communications with the minority communities and the schools that serve them. It is also expressed by the physical location of the minority affairs office and its place in the organizational structure (for example, to whom does the director report?). Other aspects of institutional commitment include a positive racial environment, the

---

in COLLEGE IN BLACK AND WHITE 127 (Walter R. Allen et al. eds., 1991) (including measures of students' racial attitudes and self-attitudes); Smith, *supra* note 30 (including measures of students' occupational aspirations, perceptions of racism, and feelings of adjustment).

<sup>60</sup> See, e.g., Allen & Haniff, *supra* note 59, at 105-06 (evaluating studies of students' self-esteem and occupational aspirations); Hurtado, *supra* note 30, at 344-48 (discussing findings from a study of academic self-concept among minority graduate students).

<sup>61</sup> For studies focusing on student characteristics, see *supra* notes 30 and 59.

<sup>62</sup> Hurtado, *supra* note 30, at 347.

presence of minority faculty, and a critical mass of minority students.

The extent to which the institution has *institutionalized* its efforts to provide access and success to minority students is also important. It is important to ask whether the recruitment, retention, and graduation of minority students is an integral goal of the university that is made apparent in all of its pronouncements as well as in its normal operating procedures. If the institution is constantly debating the need for such a program, you can be sure that the commitment is weak.

The quality of a university's effort is reflected both in the amount of support it receives from the highest administrative levels of the institution and in the range of approaches used to attain the goals of retention and graduation of minority students. Without an adequate financial aid package, for instance, most minority applicants cannot afford the cost of a graduate education.<sup>63</sup> The availability of research assistantships and teaching assistantships is especially important. It is through exposure to and interaction with faculty in regular work roles (apprentice-like situations) that graduate students acquire a sense of the profession and its requirements. It is also through such interactions that mentoring relationships are formed and professors come to know students well enough to assess their talents in a practical performance-based setting that is independent of grades and test scores.

Availability of post-doctoral fellowships is also extremely important in many graduate departments. Such fellowships encourage young scholars to refine their research skills and produce early publications that will qualify them for positions at major research universities. They also provide additional opportunities for mentoring relationships to develop and for faculty members to become sponsors of minority students.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

Demographic changes will have a serious impact on the racial and ethnic

---

<sup>63</sup> According to the 1998 U.S. Census Bureau report, the poverty rate for African Americans was 26.5% in 1997, and among Hispanics the poverty rate was 27.1%. See Robert Pear, *Black and Hispanic Poverty Falls, Reducing Overall Rate for Nation*, N.Y. TIMES, Sept. 25, 1998, at A1. The poverty rate for non-Hispanic whites in 1997, however, was only 8.6%. See *id.* The median household income of Asians and whites exceeded the national average of \$37,005 in 1997, while blacks and Hispanics were well below the national average at \$25,050 and \$26,628 respectively. See *id.* at A20. This data suggests that minority students generally must rely more heavily on financial aid to fund their college educations. In fact, data shows that 67% of African-American women and 65% of African-American men at four-year colleges and universities received financial aid, compared to 49% of white men and women. See DATA BOOK, *supra* note 4, at 113.

composition of undergraduate student bodies in the next two decades. Harold L. Hodgkinson has predicted that "by around the year 2000, America will be a nation in which one of every three of us will be non-white."<sup>64</sup> Minorities now cover a broader socioeconomic spectrum than ever before. This means that institutions will be required to make significant changes in their recruitment procedures. Institutions will have to seek more non-traditional means of determining student qualifications if they are to maintain enrollments in a nation in which the middle-class white population, which has been their traditional constituency, is consistently becoming an ever smaller proportion of the applicant pool. The challenge to institutions is to adapt to the needs of the new constituency while providing high quality education for all students.

Second, there is a need for an increase in the national commitment to *both* equality and excellence at all levels of education. This will require a revitalization of educational programs for all students, but especially the implementation of high quality preschool, elementary school, and high school programs. One of the major problems facing those who are concerned about the minority presence in higher education is the size and quality of the potential pool of applicants. Careful attention to raising performance levels, reducing dropout rates, and raising aspirations is needed. In addition, the provision of adequate financial aid to all aspiring students is an essential key to the success of all other efforts to increase minority presence in undergraduate, graduate, and professional education.

Finally, returning to the role of academic culture, universities should appeal to the humanitarian impulses of the faculty by asking them to be more alert for opportunities to improve the academic climate for minority faculty and students. University faculty should make special efforts to assure that minority faculty and students are treated fairly and given opportunities to grow and develop in an atmosphere that is free of racism. Senior faculty should be encouraged to serve as advisors, mentors, and sponsors of minority students. However, appeals to altruistic values work best when they are accompanied by rewards and sanctions. Perhaps reduced teaching loads, sabbaticals, or research funds might be used to reward professors who exhibit unusual acumen in working with minority students.

For minority faculty, the most pressing need in academia is respect from their colleagues—respect as persons, respect for research that focuses on minority populations and concerns, and respect for new approaches to studying minority populations. With regard to the study of minority populations, it is essential for mainstream scholars to keep an open mind about such issues as the universality of many of the cherished tenets of Western social science. Generalizations from studies of Anglo-European descended populations may be woefully inaccurate when applied to non-European peoples who have quite different cultural and

---

<sup>64</sup> HAROLD L. HODGKINSON, *ALL ONE SYSTEM: DEMOGRAPHICS OF EDUCATION, KINDERGARTEN THROUGH GRADUATE SCHOOL 7* (1985).

experiential histories.

Minority scholars who formulate their research on the basis of their unique cultural experiences may develop epistemologies and ontologies that are considerably different from those of mainstream researchers. This may result in the phenomenon of “contending claims to truth.”<sup>65</sup> Twenty years ago, Robert K. Merton drew attention to the importance of this issue and recognized the importance of contributions of members of previously powerless groups (Insiders) to an understanding of the dynamics of intergroup relations.<sup>66</sup> He also noted that mainstream (Outsider) and non-mainstream (Insider) knowledge are both important.<sup>67</sup> What I am suggesting is that the academy must become more receptive to the *weltanschauungen* (conceptions of the world) of scholars who are members of previously excluded groups. The work of such scholars will broaden our knowledge and expand our ability to understand social and material phenomena as they are experienced by women and non-European peoples.

---

<sup>65</sup> Robert K. Merton, *Insiders and Outsiders: A Chapter in the Sociology of Knowledge*, in *VARIETIES OF POLITICAL EXPRESSION IN SOCIOLOGY* 9, 9 (1972).

<sup>66</sup> *See id.* at 36–44.

<sup>67</sup> *See id.*