EXAMINING STRATIFICATION IN ACADEMIC CAREER TRAJECTORIES FOR MINORITY PHD RECIPIENTS

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OVERVIEW

• Higher education is not a meritocracy; it creates and recreates different classes and replicates a "color line" reproducing the status quo.

• It is a stratification process that works to enforce a non-Hispanic white male set of rules and processes.

• Our current NSF-funded research from the SBE directorate (and the Science of Broadening Participation initiative) seeks to theorize and understand the experiences of URM scholars as they vary by gender in sociology and economics.

• The study seeks to use a mixed-methods approach to measure trajectories of PhD scholars from both disciplines, including unobtrusive measures and a survey of PhD scholars.

• We will consider the effects of mentoring and other early career interventions.
THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

The **theoretical concepts** to be tested and made operational are:

1) Human and social capital

2) Existence of “two worlds” and a “color line” for racial and ethnic minorities

3) Intersectionality by race, ethnicity, and gender

4) Professional networks and marginality to those networks
MEASURES OF SUCCESSFUL ACADEMIC CAREERS

The concepts will be made operational by the following measures:

1) Employment at a research-extensive (Research I) university

2) Achieving tenure within eight years of obtaining the PhD

3) Attaining the rank of full professor within fourteen years of obtaining the PhD

4) Participation in disciplinary and interdisciplinary networks

5) Productivity (in terms of scholarly publications)
The “Birthday Cake” Diagram for Some URM Scholars

Chart 1: The Survival of African Americans in the Scholarship
SCHEMATIC FOR CATEGORIZATION OF CONCEPTS AND VARIABLES

STRATIFICATION

Human Capital
Intersectionality
“Two Worlds”
Marginality
Social Capital

Examples

PhD from and/or employment at research-extensive university
Race/Ethnicity and Gender
Employment at Historically Black College or University; Hispanic-Serving Institution; Minority-Serving Institution
Inclusion/exclusion in departmental or interdisciplinary scholarly networks
Race and gender of PhD Advisor: e.g., white male; white female; minority male; minority female

Peer-reviewed publications and external grants
Participation in minority fellowship programs/dissertation fellowships
Co-publishing in peer-reviewed journal articles in graduate school or after graduation
PhD department type
WHY SOCIOLOGY AND ECONOMICS?

• There is a limited amount of **comparative work** despite a number of overlapping concerns about socio-economic outcomes in academic careers.

• There are increased calls for **interdisciplinarity** and building of joint concepts overall and especially at the National Science Foundation (NSF).

• There is a real need to examine similarities and differences in two important **concepts**—stratification and human and social capital.

• The ASA and AEA offer different types of **early career intervention programs** (e.g., MFP and AEA Economics Mentoring Program).

• There is a potential important impact for **policy decisions** and recommendations to come out of this research, for the STEM workforce and URM groups.
Research questions to be answered

- Are the processes and outcomes mentioned above, significantly associated with **academic stratification**?

  What are the effects of scholars’ **intersectional** statuses?

  What the effects of **advisors’** race, ethnicity, and gender?

- How are scholarly **productivity**, career **intervention** programs (such as MFP or the AEA Mentoring Program), or disciplinary **leadership** associated with career success?

- Are **“ideal”** or **“alternative”** PhD careers trajectories the result of URM scholars’ **choices** or the presence or absence of mentoring, networks, and inclusion?

- What is the impact of departmental and disciplinary **networks**?
RESEARCH DESIGN

Unobtrusive measures: dependent and independent variables
Use of existing disciplinary datasets and additional online searches

Survey instrument and qualitative analysis
Analysis of social networks and participation/marginality; sample taken from first unobtrusive database

Overall division of labor
Will be conducted at six research sites including ASA, UT-Pan American, George Mason University, Georgia Tech, Duke University, and Langston University
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Which of these concepts resonates with your experiences or your students’ or mentees’ experiences in the academic world?

Are the measures adequate?

What kinds of capital appear to be the most important for career success?

Do the survey questions appear valid for measuring “webs of inclusion and exclusion?”

How can intervention programs like MFP or the AEA Mentoring Program help in obtaining desired outcomes?

How can you see these concepts being applied in your own discipline?
THANK YOU!

For further discussion or help, contact:

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