

A portrait of faculty diversity at selected elite Universities

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Keywords

VMA (Visible minority academics), Faculty diversity Racialized students.

Through a document analysis, this paper describes the problematic of faculty diversity at Harvard, Stanford, Princeton, McGill, UBC, and the University of Toronto. Existing studies suggest that these institutions have not succeeded to proportionately increase the representation of VMA. The ratio between VMA and racialized student population is still low. Whereas white academics continue to be over-represented in tenure positions. Ipso facto, the present paper suggests that these universities need to identify and address structural barriers against faculty diversity.

Introduction

Faculty diversity has been at the epicenter of employment equity policies at Harvard, Stanford, and Princeton. For example, since 1970, Harvard's *University-Wide Statement on Rights and Responsibilities*, *Statement of Equal Opportunity Laws and Policies*, *Non-Discrimination and Affirmative Action Policy* were designed with the goal to increase diversity within the professoriate. Likewise, Princeton's *Target of Opportunity (ToO)*, *Equal Opportunity Policy* and *Affirmative Action Plan* were framed with the goal of hiring and tenuring best minority professors. Similarly, Stanford's *Commitment to Faculty Diversity* and *Best Practices of Creating a Diverse Search Plan* were also developed to accomplish the same goal. As opined by Stanford President John Hennessy, diversity and inclusion are priorities for Stanford (Stanford News, 2016). To some extent, the equity policies of these institutions have addressed the need for more faculty diversity. Equipollent to Harvard, Stanford and Princeton, three elite Canadian universities (McGill, UBC and the University of Toronto) have also developed such policies. For instance, last year, McGill University's *Principal Task Force on Diversity, Excellence and Community Engagement* was initiated in order to diversify its academic workforce. Its *Policy on Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Prohibited by Law* was orchestrated with the purpose of providing regulations against disparate treatment, and unfairness in the academic workplace. From the same standpoint, University of Toronto's *Guidelines for Employees on Concerns and Complaints Regarding Prohibited Discrimination* and the *Human Resources Guideline on Civil Conduct* emphasize the same goal.

The *Employment Equity Policy* and *Strategy for Advancing Equity and Diversity* at UBC also identify the necessity to hire and promote more racialized academics. While faculty diversity is identified as goal to achieve, existing statistics, university equity reports and other online documents present a different discourse.

Method

In the present paper, the literature derives from existing studies, statistical data, and online university reports related to the critiques of faculty diversity in the following six elite universities: Harvard, Stanford, Princeton, McGill, UBC (University of British Columbia) and UofT (University of Toronto). Online documents and statistical records were examined through document analysis, because it was impossible to have access to more in-depth-data. The reason is that university administrations are often recondite. Their entire public records are not always made available to the general public. The conceptualization of VMA is based on the definition provided in the *Employment Equity Act* of Canada where invisible minorities refer to non-white and non-indigenous people (Agocs, 2002; Frey, 2014). Accordingly, VMA refer to tenured and tenure-track visible minority academics. While diversity infers many things, in this paper, it is solely bounded to racial inequality in the professoriate of aforementioned universities. Thus, its scope is only limited to the criticism of faculty diversity at the following institutions: Harvard University, Princeton University, Stanford University, McGill University, University of British Columbia and the University of Toronto.

Faculty diversity at Harvard, Princeton and Stanford

So far, only 11% of junior professors and 8% of senior professors at Harvard University are VMA versus 40% of the student body comprised of racialized students (Bolotnikova, 2016). A recent report also indicates that Harvard's VMA still experience social isolation, and unique challenges in pursuit of tenure (Aspelund & Bernhard, 2015). According to its 2013 *Faculty Climate Survey*, around 40% of VMA versus 20% of white professors responded that they have to "work harder to be seen as a legitimate scholar" (Enwemeka, 2014). Additionally, 53% of VMA disagreed that they experience a welcoming and an inclusive workplace climate (Enwemeka, 2014). While Harvard is making efforts to diversify its professoriate (Aspelund & Bernhard, 2015), the results of Harvard's 2013 *Faculty Climate Survey* evidence that faculty diversity has not been fully achieved yet. In addition, Zappa's report (2014) on pervasive prejudice at Harvard states that the hiring process is still shaped by implicit bias. Policies set up by the university to encourage diverse hiring practices are not always effective. Regulations to monitor faculty diversity exist, but numerical requirements for the proportion of candidates of color considered have not been set yet (Zappa, 2014).

The discourse of diversity is not espoused by all academic administrators. For some department chairs, the recruitment of more VMA is not important. Likewise, in Zappa's report, an associate professor of history Naoko Shibusawa said that at Harvard, "diversity becomes deprioritized by the point the hiring decision is made" (Zappa, 2014). In addition, there is not enough mentorship opportunities available for junior VMA. Even after securing a faculty position, VMA still encounter a hostile campus environment. Navigating the process of tenure has remained taxing for them. At Stanford University, where VMA represent 22% of the professoriate (Stanford University, 2015), the situation is the same as at Harvard. For instance, in April 2016, it was reported that Stanford students led a mass demonstration, protesting against the lack of faculty diversity on campus (Democracy Now, 2016). Until now, the representation of VMA is not proportionate to the higher percentage of racialized students. While these students

slightly represent more than 50% of its student population, Stanford's faculty is still 70% white (Democracy Now, 2016). Commensurately, faculty diversity is still an issue at Princeton University. As of today, VMA only constitute 15% of its professorial cohort, versus 43% of its undergraduate student body being constituted of racialized students (Princeton University, 2015). The symbolic representation of VMA in professorial ranks has caused frustrations among some non-white professors. Voicing their concern regarding the lack of substantive diversity, in 2015, faculty members at Princeton's department of African American studies supported the student protests against structural racism at Stanford. Parallel to that, they demanded that university administrators need to implement effective diversity policies in order to increase the hiring and retention of VMA (Department of African American Studies, 2015). Overall, existing equity data on Harvard, Princeton and Stanford evidence that these elite American universities have not fully achieved faculty diversity. In spite of developing employment equity policies, the representation of VMA in tenure positions has not been incremented yet.

Faculty diversity at McGill, UBC and the University of Toronto

In spite of their emphasis on diversity, existing literature reveal that racial inequities within McGill, UBC and the University of Toronto's professoriate are still perennial. For example, last year, Jennifer Chan a Chinese-Canadian and an associate professor of education at UBC complained that she was unfairly evaluated and denied chair because of her race. Commensurately, British Columbia's Human Rights Tribunal condemned UBC of unfairly evaluating and denying tenure to McCue, a racialized professor (Redden, 2016). According to McCue, standards required to assess scholarly activities were unclear and that her minority research works were under-evaluated by university tenure and promotion committees (Redden, 2016). Until now, UBC's VMA only represent 20% of full-time professors, while racialized students make up 65% of the student body (Todd, 2015). These statistics evidence that there is still no proportional representation at UBC. Concurrently, at McGill University, VMA only constitute 9.2% of the professoriate (Bastani&Tefaye, 2015) while racialized students account for 37% of the student population. In Bastani and Tefaye (2015) and Hampton's (2015) articles, it is indicated that the under-representation of VMA is still perpetual due to systemic discrimination in hiring and tenure processes. It is also indicated that effective diversity management policies and practices are still lacking. Even though McGill's equity policies bear a diversity stance, institutional hostility against diversity has not completely faded away. McGill is still a chilly place and unwelcoming to non-white faculty. The contextual climate of its departments fosters a feeling of fear among VMA who work there. Consequently, leading them to silence their frustration and to keep a happy face.

Discussion around issues related to race and structural disparities in academia are not always supported in departments. In Bastani and Tefaye's article, ZouaVang, a racialized assistant professor at McGill's department of sociology complained, "I myself have refrained from bringing up issues of race in my own department and at McGill more generally because there is not this welcoming environment where people can freely talk about race without fear of repercussions" (Bastani&Tefaye, 2015). McGill's 2016 equity report titled '*Equity in the Hiring of McGill Academic Staff: An Investigation*,' highlights the same problem. This report raises the alarm

that there is resistance to implementing equitable hiring practices at the departmental level. The lack of commitment, formalized practice, and transparency in regards to employment equity at McGill still represents a hindrance against substantive diversity (Desai, 2016). In support of the color blind discourse and tokenism, symbolic diversity is more accepted by academic administrators. For the sake of clarification, in the present paper, symbolic diversity refers to tokenistic recruitment and retention, and the under-representation of VMA. Whereas substantive diversity denotes that there is an increase in the hiring and promotion of racialized professors, and that the academic workplace environment is inclusive. Analogous to the employment equity statistics of McGill and UBC, VMA (13.3%) are under-represented at the University of Toronto (University of Toronto, 2013).

For many years, no racial data on its student body was available. It is only this year that the university administration has decided to collect such data (Islam, 2016). Up to the present, there is a fair representation of non-white students on campus. Sure enough, a discrepancy exists between their representation and VMA's. Considering the statistical data, Martin Friedland (2015) critically contends that it might take more than fifteen years before the retention of VMA can reach at least 15%. This year, Black Liberation Collective, a student organization at the University of Toronto, demanded that the university needs to hire more racialized professors (Reynolds, 2016). On the basis of evidences provided, it transpires that these elite Canadian universities have failed to effectively increase the recruitment and retention of VMA. Thus, the status quo remains unchanged because VMA are still under-represented within their halls.

Discussion as related to existing studies

While VMA remains under-represented in the professorial workforce of Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, McGill, UBC and the University of Toronto, existing studies indicate that such issue is not only conspicuous at these six universities. Broadly speaking, existing studies indicate that faculty diversity continues to be hampered by institutional discrimination across American and Canadian universities alike (Fleras, 2014; Henry & Tator, 2009; Jayakumar et al., 2009). Eisenkraft (2010) contends that, while Canadian universities are considered to be among the most liberal institutions, many non-white academics still feel excluded or denied opportunities. Likewise, in Chapa's work (2006), it is argued that every day discrimination and negative campus climates hinder the retention of American universities' racialized faculty. In these institutions of learning, systematic discrimination transpires in racial bias hiring, tenure and acculturation processes. Regarding the hiring process, VMA who apply for tenure track or other faculty positions often experience unfair screening by university search committees (Hassouneh, 2013; NAASS, 1999). A research indicated that in spite of having the same educational attainment, the time for securing a tenure-track position is much longer for VMA than for white academics (Spafford, 2006). Even after being hired, VMA often continue to encounter disparate treatment in academe.

For tenure, the process is strenuous and full of systemic barriers to surmount (Fryberg, 2016; Barnes & Mertz, 2012). For example, when navigating tenure process, Barnes and Mertz (2012) argued that double standards are often imposed upon them. Likewise, researchers have

pointed out that non-white academics are less likely to achieve tenure than their white peers because of the perennality of ethno-racial inequality in academia (Nakhaie, 2013; Turner, 2000). Adding to these challenges, opportunities that could bolster their career advancement and self-actualization, are limited. As a result, the promotion of professors of color remains so small that they continue to be invisible in academe (Turner, 2000). Concerning the acculturation, VMA encounter a chilly workplace climate wherein there is less institutional support (Jayakumar et al., 2009). Because of such unwelcoming environment, the feeling of malaise and social isolation is endemic and perennial among them (Spafford, 2006). Some of the organizational factors that foster this chilliness are minority work devalorization (Fryberg, 2016), tokenism and insufficient mentorship. As argued by researchers (Luz-Reyes & Halcon, 1988; Lopez & Johnson, 2014), their research, teaching and service are often less and biasedly rated (Lee & Janda, 2006). For example, findings from a study conducted by Reid (2010) demonstrated that white students prejudicially under-rate the teaching of non-white professors during course evaluations. Tokenism, in particular, the '*one-minority-per-pot syndrome*' is mistakenly interpreted as an indicator of faculty diversity by academic administrators (Moody, 2004). This term refers to the color-blind ideology and the belief that the under-representation of VMA in academia implies that faculty diversity has been achieved. Yet, in comparison to the rising number of racialized students in Canadian and American universities, the current representation of VMA is proportionately lower. Respectively, statistical data evidence that the academic labor force is constituted of only 16.9% of VMA, versus 83% of white academics in Canada (CAUT, 2010). Along the same vein, in American universities, the demographic representation of VMA in professorial ranks is only 16%, versus 79% of white academics (NCES, 2015). VMA's experience of systemic discrimination is not only limited to aforesaid issues, but also extends to the problematic of eurocentrism (Fleras, 2014).

Many studies (Spafford et al., 2006; Kobayashi, 2009, Stanley, 2006) stipulate that the Eurocentric habitus propels white privilege and precludes faculty diversity. In particular, race as a sociological determinant positively affects the retention of white academics. Whereas for VMA, it represents a structural impediment that can be addressed through specific diversity policies and practices (Quezada & Louque, 2004). Considering the rationale described in existing studies, many researchers have opined that more diversity is needed because it will benefit universities. Among the benefits, they have argued that faculty diversity creates a learning environment that enhances racialized students' academic performance (Hagedorn, et al., 2007). Whereas its paucity negatively affects their acculturation (Huang & Korab, 2016). It creates opportunities wherein they can be more mentored by faculty members who better understand their cultural ethos. Plus, more professorial diversity is an asset for scholarship than a liability (Luz-Reyes & Halcon, 1988). As indicated in a 1995 *Faculty Survey* produced by UCLA's *Higher Education Research Institute (HERI)*, minority academics enrich scholarship and teaching by offering new perspectives (Fine & Handelsman, 2010).

Conclusion and implication

Taking into consideration that aforementioned six elite universities have failed to increase the representation of VMA at the proportion of racialized student population on campus, it will be in their best interest to identify the institutional barriers that hamper substantive diversity. These six institutions could consider monitoring and evaluating their hiring practices, departmental mentorship, workplace socialization, and tenure systems. It is beneficial to do so because existing labor studies have also highlighted that the hiring practices and organizational habitus of historically white institutions embed structural racism (Cox, 1991; Becker, 2010). In addition, the outcomes of such scrutiny could inspire Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, McGill, UBC and the University of Toronto to implement best diversity management practices in order to increase the recruitment and retention of VMA.

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