

Socializing Mammies? Examining Graduate Student Engagement of Black Women Graduate Instructors



Katherine I. E. Wheatle
Allison BrckaLorenz

June 1, 2015

2015 NCORE

Check-In

What challenges are you facing on your campus related to the socialization of Black/African American women graduate students?

June 1, 2015

2015 NCORE

Socialization of Graduate Students

- Austin and Daniels (2006):
 1. "What am I supposed to look like and act like in my professional field?"
 2. "What do I, as a professional, look like to other professionals as I perform my new roles?"
- "Involvement" (Gardner and Barnes, 2007)

June 1, 2015

2015 NCORE

Socialization (con't)

- Teaching and service activities are less valued than activities linked to research (Austin and McDaniels, 2006; Davidson and Foster-Johnson, 2001; Davis, 2008; Tierney and Bensimon, 1996; Tierney and Rhoads, 1994)
- Greater involvement in teaching and service serve as barriers to promotion (McPherson and Schapiro, 1999)

June 1, 2015

2015 NCORE

Mammies of the Academy?

- Patricia Hill Collins (2000) asserts the controlling image of mammy "represents the normative yardstick used to evaluate all Black women's behavior" (p. 72)
- Pertains not only to Whites expectations of Black women, but also to economic exploitation of Black women in the labor market (e.g., wage gap)
- I contend that this imagery and ideology has direct implications for Black women graduate student instructors

June 1, 2015

2015 NCORE

Purpose

- To explore self-perceptions of teaching experiences of Black or African American women graduate students who teach, or graduate student instructors (GSIs)
- Contribute to knowledge about Black or African American women GSIs, their teaching experiences, and occupational goals

June 1, 2015

2015 NCORE

Research Questions

1. What teaching roles do Black or African American women GSIs hold compared to their counterparts?
2. What are Black or African American women GSIs' perception of their control of courses they teach?
3. How much time do Black or African American women GSIs spend on instructor- and non-instructor-related activities?
4. What are the occupational goals of African American women GSIs?

June 1, 2015

2015 NCORE

Data

- 2014 administration of the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement for Graduate Student Instructors (FSSE-G)
- Designed to complement the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) by measuring
 - GSIs' perceptions and expectations of undergraduate engagement in educationally purposeful activities
 - The extent to which GSIs promote learning and development in the courses they teach
 - The extent of their interaction with students
 - How they allocate their time
- GSIs who taught or assisted with an undergraduate course during the 2013-2014 school year

June 1, 2015

2015 NCORE

Sample

- 2,560 GSIs
- 8 research universities
- 78% working toward a doctoral degree
- Average of 3 years in current degree program
- Largest disciplines:
 - 27% Arts & Humanities
 - 18% Physical Sciences, Mathematics, & Computer Science
 - 16% Social Sciences
- Average age of 29
- 42% Man, 54% Women
- 81% US citizen
- Racial/ethnic identity
 - 70% White
 - 13% Asian, Native Hawaiian, other Pacific Islander
 - 3% Black or African American
 - 3% Hispanic or Latino
 - 6% other
- **3% Black or African American women (n=45)**

June 1, 2015

2015 NCORE

Measures

- **How much do you control the following:** (*Very much, Quite a bit, Some, Very little*)
 - Purpose and goals
 - Content
 - Instructional materials
 - Instructional activities
 - Assessment
- **What is your teaching role for this course?** (*Select all that apply.*)
 - Course instructor
 - Lab instructor
 - Lecture or discussion instructor
 - Reader or grader
 - Tutor
 - Other

June 1, 2015

2015 NCORE

Measures (con't)

- **In a typical 7-day week, about how many hours do you spend on each of the following?**
 - Teaching activities
 - Research, creative, or scholarly activities
 - Your course work
- **In a typical 7-day week, about how many hours do you spend on each of the following instructor-related activities?**
 - Preparing class sessions
 - Teaching class sessions
 - Grading assignments and exams
 - Meeting with students outside of class
 - Course administration
 - Working to improve your teaching

June 1, 2015

2015 NCORE

Measures (con't)

- **Which of the following best describes your occupational goal?**
 - College or university professor or instructor
 - Clinical research in private sector
 - Research in nonprofit/government sector
 - University research
 - College administrator
 - Precollege teaching position
 - Other
- **What is your racial or ethnic identification?** (*Select all that apply.*)
 - American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Black or African American; Hispanic or Latino; Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; White; Other; I prefer not to respond
- **What is your gender identity?**
 - Man; Woman; Another gender identity; I prefer not to respond

June 1, 2015

2015 NCORE

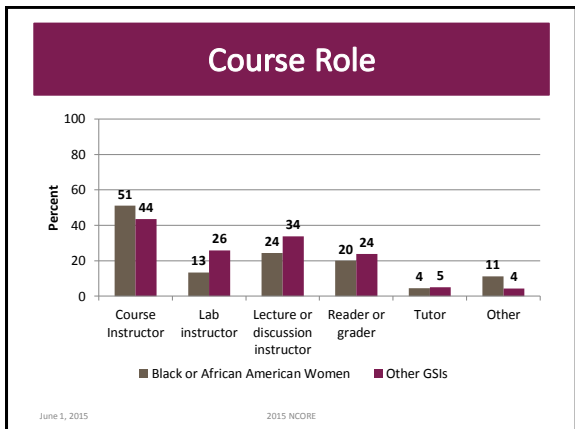
FINDINGS

June 1, 2015 2015 NCORE

Question #1

Compared to their peers, what percentage of Black/African American women GSIs do you think indicated they were a course instructor?

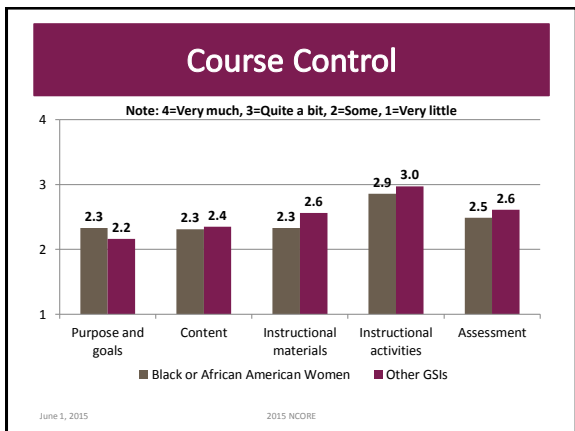
June 1, 2015 2015 NCORE



Question #2

On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being “very little” and 4 being “very much,” how much control do you think Black/African American women GSIs reported having over the courses they taught?

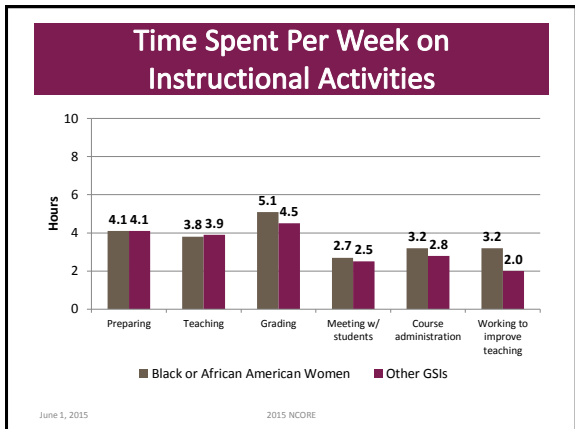
June 1, 2015 2015 NCORE



Questions #3

Compared to their peers, do you think Black / African American women GSIs spent more or less time on instruction-related activities?

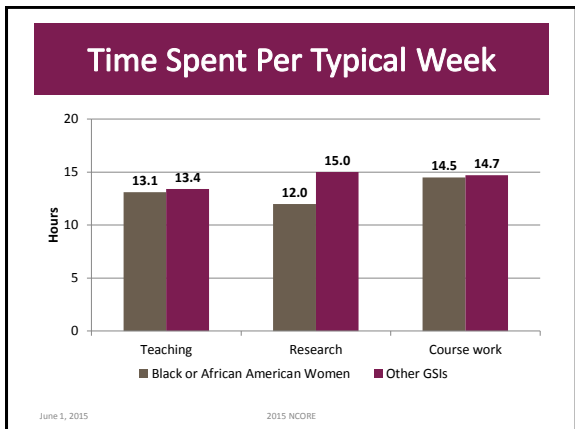
June 1, 2015 2015 NCORE



Question #4

Compared to their peers, what non-instruction-related activity do you think Black/African American women GSIs spend the least amount of time in a typical week?

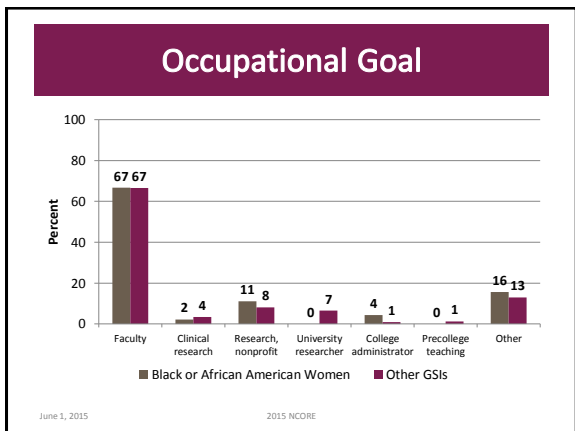
June 1, 2015 2015 NCORE



Final Question

To what career trajectory do you think Black/African American women GSIs reported aspiring most?

June 1, 2015 2015 NCORE



Summary of Findings

- Black/African American women GSIs lead classrooms as course instructors, but are underrepresented in other instructional roles
- GSIs overall reported less control over courses they teach, but Black/ African American women GSIs reported slightly less control over the majority of activities related to course instruction

June 1, 2015 2015 NCORE

Summary (con't)

- Black/African American women GSIs spent comparable amounts of time on instructional activities, but reported spending more time:
 1. Grading,
 2. Meeting with students,
 3. Course administration, and
 4. Working to improve teaching.

June 1, 2015

2015 NCORE

Summary (con't)

- Black/African American women GSIs reported spending fewer hours per week on research than their peers
- Yet, majority reported seeking the professoriate as their occupational goal

June 1, 2015

2015 NCORE

Discussion

- Results from survey responses support contextual evidence from qualitative studies on Black women academicians (i.e., graduate students and faculty)
- Despite indicating intentions for the professoriate, Black/African American GSIs reported spending less time on research, an activity that would make them more competitive on the academic market
- Having less control over their courses but serving so heavily as course instructors likely has negative impacts on instructors' confidence and psyche

June 1, 2015

2015 NCORE

Unanswered Questions...

- What part(s) of their socialization experiences are drawing women in this study to spend more time on instruction-related activities?
- What are institutions doing to help facilitate Black women graduate students into research and publishing opportunities?

June 1, 2015

2015 NCORE

Limitations & Future Research

- Small sample size limited our statistical analyses
- Future research:
 - Include multiple administrations to increase # of Black women GSIs
 - Disaggregation and within group comparisons of engagement
 - FSSE/FSSE-G comparisons of Black women

June 1, 2015

2015 NCORE

From Results to Dialogue to Action

- Considering your campus context, how might the results look different? In what areas do you expect them to be similar?
- What did these results make you think about that you hadn't considered before?
- How might you begin an investigation on the status of graduate instructors with intersecting identities at your institution?

June 1, 2015

2015 NCORE



Thank you.

Presentation and
more information
about FSSE-G at
fsse.iub.edu

kiwheatl@indiana.edu
abrckalo@indiana.edu