

WHO MAKES IT TO THE TOP OF THE ACADEMIC LADDER? CONSTRAINTS AND ENABLERS FOR BLACK AND HISPANIC PHDS



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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** seeks to theorize and understand the experiences of **URM scholars** as they vary by gender in **sociology and economics**.
- The study uses a **mixed-methods** approach to measure trajectories of PhD scholars in sociology and economics.

THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

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

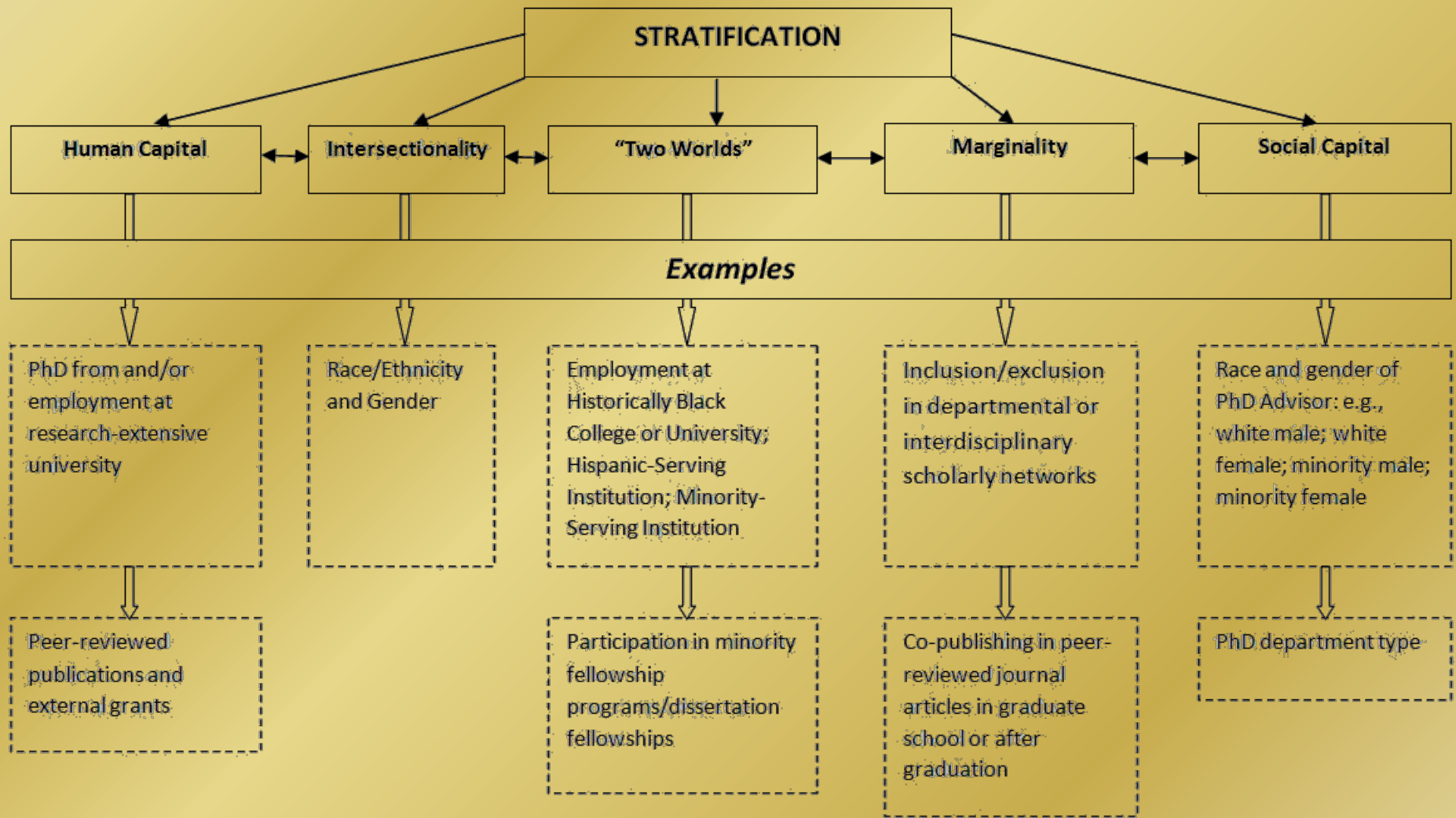
- 1) Human and social capital
- 2) Intersectionality by race, ethnicity, and gender
- 3) Existence of “two worlds” and a “color line” for racial and ethnic minorities
- 4) Professional networks and marginality to those networks
- 5) The difference between “ideal” or “alternative” PhD career trajectories as the result of URM scholars’ choices or the presence or absence of mentoring, networks, and inclusion

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**)

SCHEMATIC FOR CATEGORIZATION OF CONCEPTS AND VARIABLES



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).

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

Conducted at six research sites including ASA, UT-Pan American, George Mason University, Georgia Tech, Duke University, and Langston University

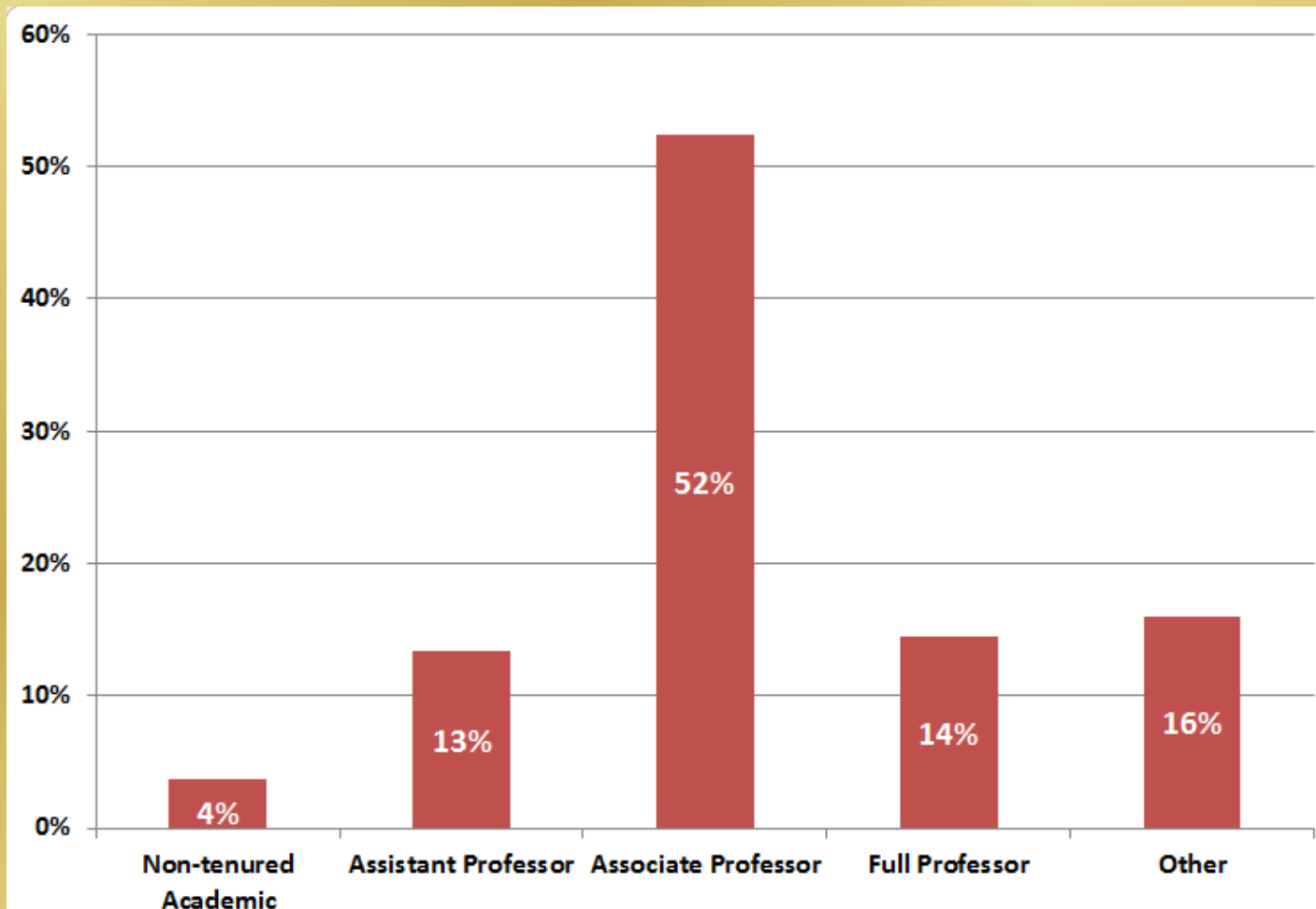
Preliminary Findings: Unobtrusive Data

Important caveat: these findings are based on about half of our population in Sociology and may change with more data (and thus, do not as yet answer the research questions).

- Almost 95% of this preliminary sample obtained their PhDs at Research I institutions.
- About 40% are currently employed at Research I institutions, while the majority (60%) are not.
- About 3/4 are tenured.



Breakdown by Academic Rank



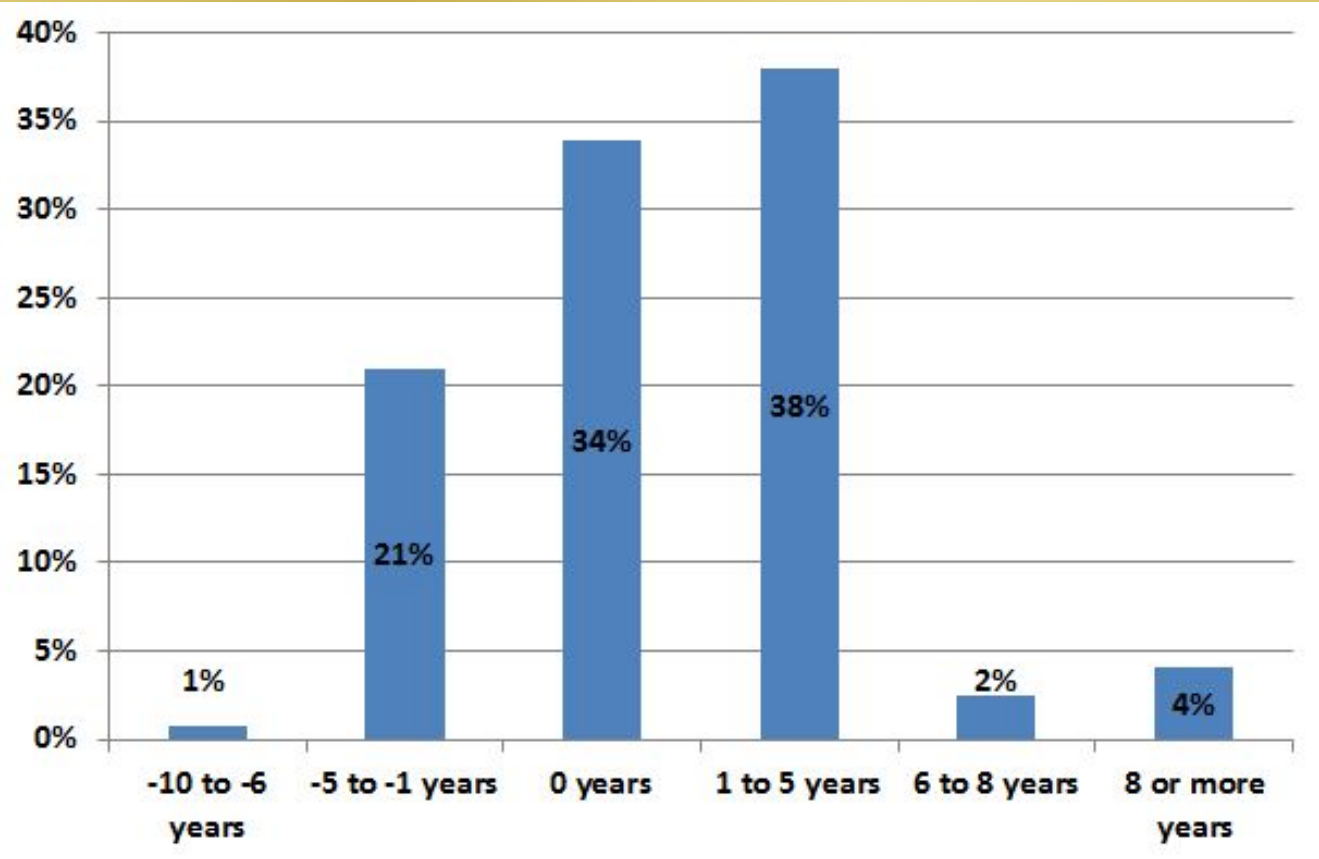
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Years in the Pipeline

Assistant Professors

- Almost 60% became assistant professors between 0-3 years after obtaining their PhDs.
- Yet, about 22% obtained this position before they gained their PhDs.
- The remainder took longer.

1 in 5 URM students become Assistant Professors prior to graduation



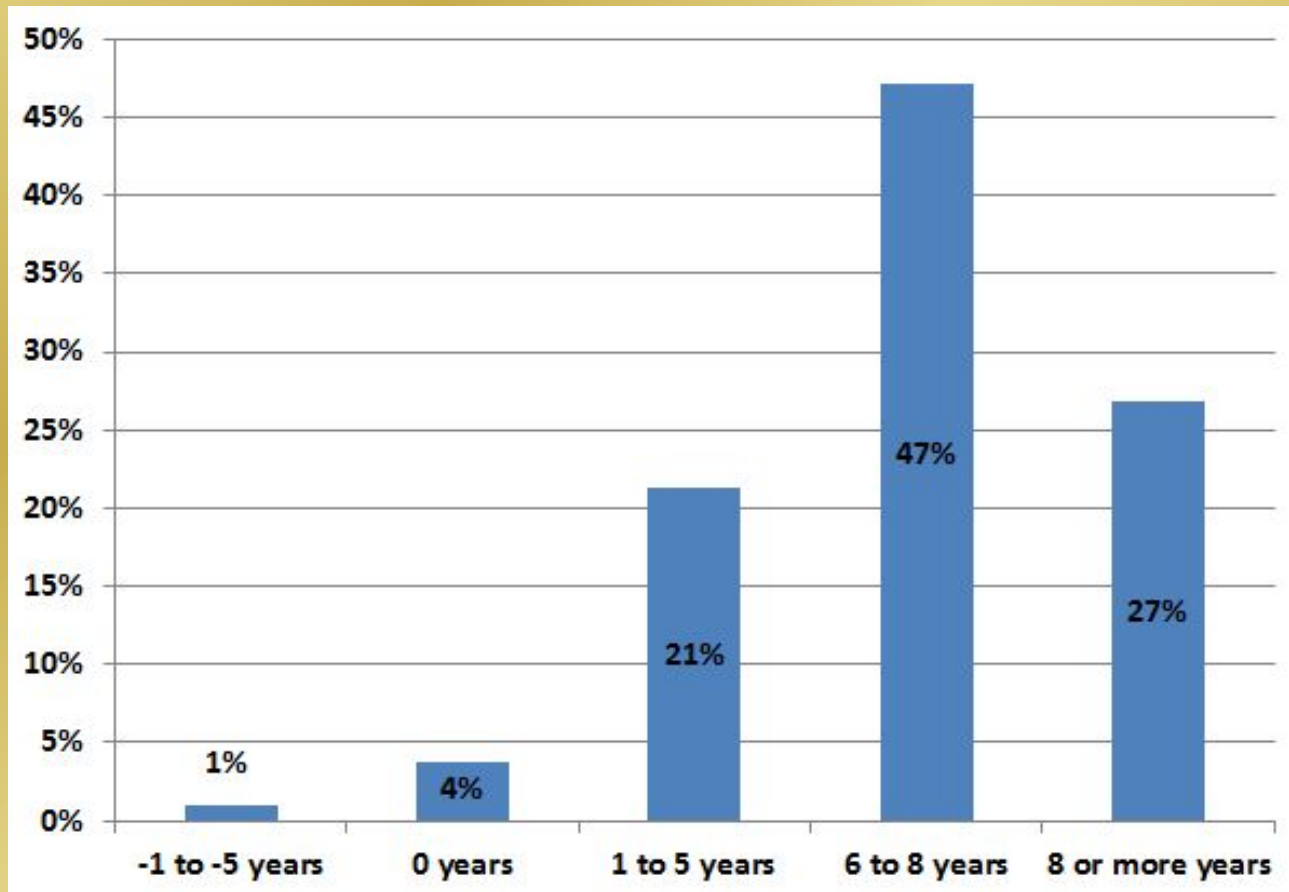
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Further Along the Pipeline

Associate Professors

- The modal group of faculty members took between 6 and 8 years after tenure to become associate professors (47%)—the expected number of years.
- About $\frac{1}{4}$ took longer than 8 years.
- An equal percent were “whiz kids” and became associate professors fewer than 6 years after earning the PhD.

1 in 4 URMs took longer than 8 years to Associate Professor rank



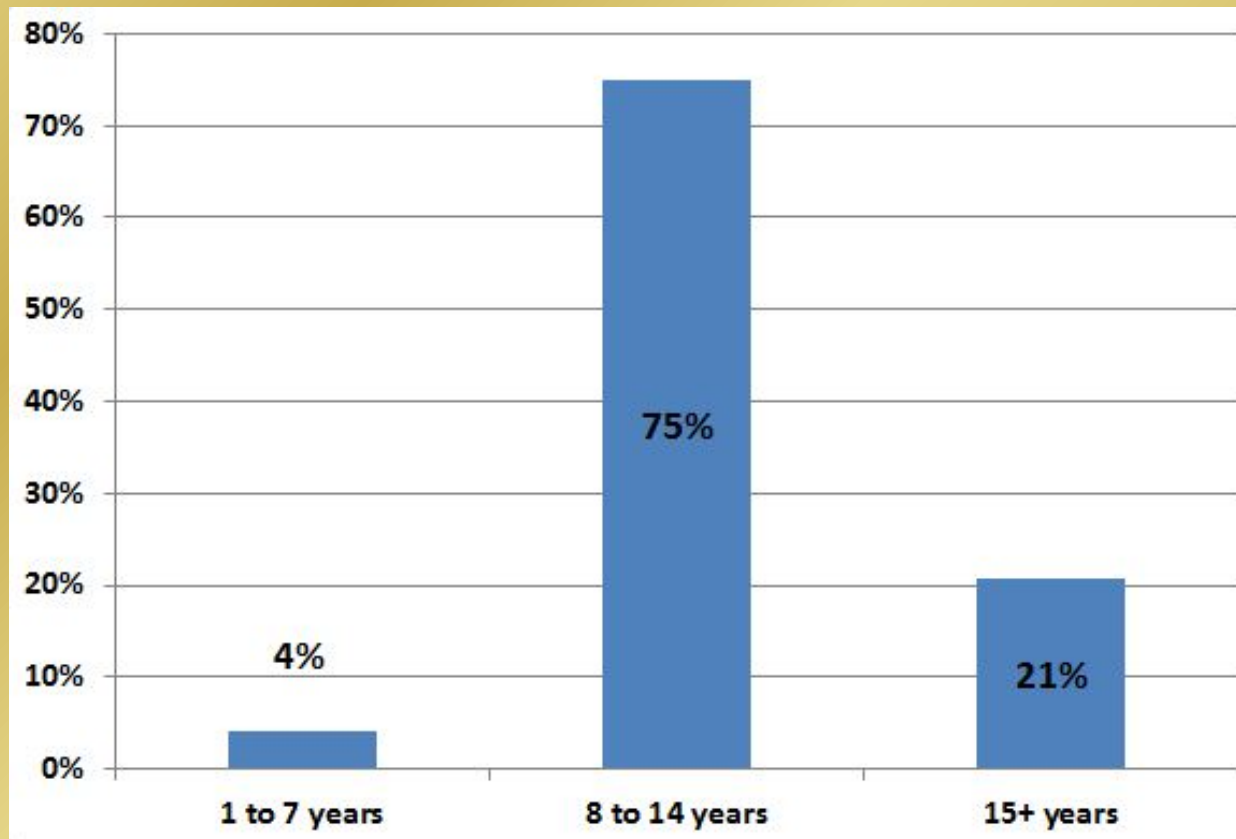
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The Top of the Pipeline

Full Professors

- 79% of the small number of faculty who made full professor did it in 14 years or less.
- The other 21% may have been “stuck in rank.”
- There may be other associate professors who are “stuck in rank.”

The majority of URMs who became Full Professors did so within 14 years



N=24

Are There Initial Differences between Black and Hispanic Scholars?

Based on looking at data SO FAR (with much still to be verified):

- **No** significant differences in whether or not they attended a Research I institution.
- **No** significant differences in whether or not they were employed at a Research I institution.
- **No** significant differences in whether they achieved tenure.
- **No** significant differences in whether or not they became associate professors.
- **No** significant differences in whether or not they became full professors.

Are There Initial Differences Between Women and Men?

Based on looking at data SO FAR (with much still to be verified):

- **No** significant difference in PhD institution.
- **No** significant difference in employing institution.
- **No** significant difference in percent tenured.
- **No** significant difference in percent becoming associate professors.
- **Yes**, men are significantly more likely to become full professors.

Next Steps in the Second Project Year

- Continue to collect and verify unobtrusive data.
- Further data analysis and reporting.
- Compare findings with the database for Economics (presentation forthcoming at American Economic Association meeting in January).
- **Go beyond the percentages and survey URM scholars about their experiences, especially inclusion and exclusion within their departments and disciplines.**

AUDIENCE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Which of these concepts resonates with **your experiences** in the academic world?

Are the **measures** adequate? What would you add or subtract?

In your view 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?

THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING!

For further discussion or help, contact:

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