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**BLACK AND WHITE SOCIAL WORK FACULTY:  
PERCEPTIONS OF RESPECT, SATISFACTION,  
AND JOB PERMANENCE**

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**ABSTRACT**

A survey of Black and white faculty in predominately white schools of social work was conducted. The purpose of the survey was to examine qualitative job experiences of these faculty. The researcher attempted to assess how Blacks and whites perceive themselves being responded to as faculty members. This paper reports responses to two sociometric questions: 1) To what extent do social work faculty view themselves as being respected and 2) How satisfied, overall, are they with their faculty positions? Moreover, because much of the expressed concern for minority and female faculty has had to do with their retention, faculty perceptions of job permanence was also selected for study. Analysis of faculty responses to the survey questions indicated significant and outstanding differences exist among Black and white, male and female faculty. Both race and sex were found to be salient factors in predicting faculty perceptions of perceived respect, job satisfaction and permanence. Blacks reported perceiving themselves to receive less respect and job satisfaction than did white faculty. Irrespective of race or sex, tenure, was found to positively influence job satisfaction. Proportionately fewer Blacks than whites report having future plans for continuance in their present faculty positions. However, the clearest message which these data convey is, relative to other faculty, it is the Black female

faculty member who appears to be the "underdog" in social work education.

## Introduction

The issue of the hiring, promotion, retention and job responsibilities of minority and female social work educators has been of great concern to many.<sup>1,2,3</sup> Notably this concern has been expressed by the Council on Social Work Educators Standards 1234A and 1234B as these standards established affirmative action guidelines for minorities and women respectively.<sup>4,5</sup> Yearly, the Council publishes demographic statistics of all social work faculty. These data report, among other things, numerical break downs of social work educators by both race and sex. In addition, some comparative studies of salary and rank differentials for minority and female faculty have been conducted.<sup>6,7,8</sup> What these past efforts have in common is a quantitative focus. That is, the profession has thus far sought mainly to address the questions of how many minorities and women faculty are in the field, and how they are faring, especially with regards to salary and position. Most assuredly, these are important questions to address and worthy of continued attention. However, it is somewhat surprising that social work as a profession, so often criticized for being "soft" and perhaps overly concerned with socio-emotional issues, has not given more attention to the qualitative aspects of employment.

Several observers have noted that Black faculty frequently find themselves in small numbers, if not isolated, in predominantly white institutions.<sup>9,10</sup> There is also evidence that the informal contact which Black academics have with their white colleagues may have a significant affect on the productivity e.g. publications, of those Black faculty.<sup>11</sup>

At present, little is known about how minorities in particular perceive the quality of their job experiences. For example, how are they, as relative new-comers, getting along as professionals within their schools or departments? Are they well received as faculty persons? Are they given professional support in the way of respect and/or courtesy? Do they perceive themselves to have established positive relations with pertinent others: faculty, administrators and students. Relative to other faculty, how satisfied are they

with their faculty positions? And lastly, how permanent do they view their present positions? In general, research on job satisfaction has revealed that satisfaction may vary significantly as a function of race of the worker. Furthermore, when racial disparities in job satisfaction are obtained, whites are most often found to report higher levels of job satisfaction than Blacks.<sup>12,13,14,15</sup> What contributes to making these differences in reported levels of job satisfaction noteworthy is the strength of the influence which the factor of race has been noted to exert. For example, in a study of plant workers, Koch found race to account for 21% of the variance in job satisfaction beyond that accounted for by all other factors. Structural, cultural, social and social psychological factors accounted for only 4% of the variance not accounted for by race.<sup>16</sup>

By contrast, gender, unlike race, has generally not been found to be a good predictor of job satisfaction. Specially with regards to the social work profession, McNeece inspected the consequence which gender of social work faculty exerted on their reported levels of job satisfaction.<sup>17</sup> The findings of the McNeece study are in agreement with those of many other researchers who also failed to uncover consistent and/or significant differences in job satisfaction between males and females.<sup>18,19,20,21</sup> However, in view of the many studies which indicate a pervasive employment bias against female social workers, e.g. salary and promotions, the absence of consistent and substantial sex differences in reported levels of job satisfaction appears somewhat surprising.<sup>22,23,24,25,26</sup>

This study of social work educators was undertaken in an attempt to assess only a few of the many qualitative aspects of the job experiences of Black and white, male and female faculty. Foremost, this research is an attempt to assess how Blacks and whites perceive themselves being responded to as faculty members. Specifically, the project attempted to assess two questions: 1) Relative to white males: do Black and female social work faculty view themselves as being respected and 2) How satisfied overall are they with their faculty positions? Moreover, because much of the expressed concern for the hiring of minorities and women has had in question, not only on the issue of their acquisition, but also concern for retention of those faculty once hired, job permanence was also selected for study.

## The Sample

The sample for this study consisted of faculty who were listed in the Council of Social Work Education's roster as working at an accredited graduate school of social work during 1977. However, because one of the goals of the research project was also to obtain quantitative information on the nature of interactions between Black and white faculty, only those faculty who were listed as working at predominately white institutions were selected. Three hundred and fifty Black faculty were subsequently selected using this criteria. A purposive sampling technique was employed in selecting the white faculty. A random selection of 350 white faculty members was drawn from the same schools from which the Black faculty had been selected. Thus, a total of 700 faculty, 350 Black and 350 white faculty were selected for participation in this study. One-hundred and thirty-three Blacks (38%) and 114 whites (33%) completed and returned the questionnaire.

- Naturally, the researcher was hoping to obtain a higher rate of returned questionnaires. Indeed the low return rate is a significant limitation to this study. While one is never sure why a particular questionnaire is not returned, it is quite possible that the racial and sociometric nature of many of the questions asked may have served to attenuate the number of respondents. In accord with this possibility, the author believes that the failure to more thoroughly assure respondents of the confidentiality of their responses may have also significantly contributed to the low return rate. However, despite the low overall return rate, the returned sample does approximate the parameters of graduate social work faculty. For example, the statistics on Social Work Education in the United States compiled for CSWE by Rubin and Whitcomb (1978) report that in 1977 there were 489 Black faculty members in graduate schools of social work.<sup>28</sup> Of this number, 45% were males (219) while 55% were females (270). The present sample of Blacks includes 47% (62) males and 53% (71) females. Rubin and Whitcomb (1978) reported that there were 2,824 white faculty, 53% (1,503) of whom were male and 47% (1,321) of whom were female. The present sample consists of 55% (63) male and 45% (51) female white faculty. Perhaps the greatest and most significant distinction between the sample represented here and social work faculty as a whole is the extent to which the faculty included in this study are full rather than part-time faculty.

Rubin and Whitcomb found that among Black faculty, 78% (381) were full-time and 22% (109) part-time. For white faculty, they found 67% (1,893) were full-time and 33% (931) part-time. The sample for this study consists of 90% (115) full-time and 10% (13) part-time Black faculty, and 83% (94) full-time and 17% (18) part-time white faculty. Hence, the findings of this study are clearly more representative of social reality as perceived by full-time social work faculty.

Looking at academic degree held, Rubin and Whitcomb reported finding that 69% of the Blacks and 53% of whites held M.A.'s or M.S.W.'s, while 27% of the Blacks and 42% of the whites held D.S.W. or Ph.D. degrees. This study's sample consists of 63% (81) Blacks and 44% (81) of whites with M.A.'s or M.S.W.'s and 37% (48) Blacks and 56% (53) of the whites holding D.S.W. or Ph.D. degrees.

### **Instrumentation**

The survey questionnaire consisted of 41 items which assessed both demographic and sociometric information. Albeit the goal of this project was to assess the qualitative experience of faculty, it was still necessary to ask many demographic questions, e.g. rank, position, so as to allow reporting findings with greater specificity.

The questionnaire was pretested on a small group of Black and white faculty members who were not included in the final sample. While this method was employed to test the wording and format of the questionnaire, no tests were performed to examine specific types of measurement validity and/or reliability. However, given our experience with the questionnaire's pretest, it is believed that face validity of the items was achieved in construction of the instrument. The questionnaire, along with a return-envelope and a cover letter describing the project, was mailed to all faculty who had been selected for participation in the study.

This paper will focus on two sociometric single-item questions for which the respondent was required to make a response on a five-point Likert scale - five representing the highest level of response, and a third question pertaining to the perception of their permanence:

- 1) As pertains to personal and professional respect given to you by others in the department, what degree of respect do you feel that you receive?

- 2) Overall, how satisfied are you with your position in the university or college?
- 3) Within the next five years, what would you predict about your employment
  - a) Most likely remain
  - b) Undecided - remain only if promoted, probably leave if tenure is not achieved
  - c) Definitely leaving

### Findings

In an effort to obtain greater specificity, the variables tenure and degree (M.S.W./Ph.D.) were introduced into the analyses as control variables. However, because four-way analyses of variance would have resulted in the loss of some data and because interactions found in four-way ANOVA's are considerably less interpretable, three-way ANOVA's were employed. Hence, for each dependent variable (respect and satisfaction), two 2 X 2 X 2 Analyses of variance were performed, i.e., race X sex X degree, and race X sex X tenure. Furthermore, because there was an inequitable distribution of "doctoral degrees held" among whites 56% (53) and Blacks 37% (48) and a similar inequitable distribution with respect to tenure, whites 65% (73) and Blacks 39% (51), there existed the possibility of obtaining a race effect that was actually attributable to the differential in degrees and tenure statuses between the two groups. Therefore, prior to undertaking the analyses of variance procedures, stepwise regression analyses were run for both dependent variables (respect and satisfaction) with race, sex, degree and tenure as independent variables. The Beta coefficients for these independent variables regressed on the dependent variable respect were: Race, - 0.224; Sex, 0.036; Degree, - 0.115 and Tenure, 0.002. The Beta coefficient for the independent variables regressed on the dependent variable satisfaction were: Race, - 0.246; Tenure, 0.236; Sex - 0.093, and Degree, 0.027. These analyses suggest that differences between racial groups can be attributed only in part to their differential distributions of degree and tenure, as the impact of race was always found to be greater in its effect upon faculty respect and satisfaction than were the factors of Gender, Tenure or Degree.

**Perceived Respect:** As pertains to personal and professional respect given to you

by others in the department, what degree of respect do you feel that you receive?

The findings, as shown in Table I, indicate that white females report receiving the highest level of respect from others followed respectively by white males, Black females and Black males. Analysis of variance procedures indicate significant main effects for race. The differences in perceived mean levels of respect reported by whites and Blacks, 4.37 and 4.01 respectively, were found to be significant ( $F = 12.27$  p. 00). By contrast, a comparison of respect scores by sex, reveals that sex was not a significant factor affecting the reported levels of perceived respect which faculty reported receiving from others. Furthermore, neither sex, degree, nor tenure as indicated by the analyses of variance procedures, was found to be significantly influential in effecting the reported perceived degree of respect which faculty received from others. In addition, the analyses indicated neither race X sex X degree, nor race X sex X tenure interaction effects.

In sum, it appears that only race significantly affected the degree of respect they reported receiving from others. While neither, gender of faculty, the degree they hold, nor their status as a tenured or non-tenured faculty, significantly influenced the degree of respect which faculty perceive themselves to receive from others.

Table I  
Personal and Professional Respect  
White and Black Faculty Report Receiving

|        | WHITE  |        | BLACK  |        |        |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Male   | X=4.30 | SD=.73 | X=3.98 | SD=.94 | X=4.14 |
|        | N=63   |        | N=61   |        | SD=.85 |
|        |        |        |        |        | N=124  |
| Female | X=4.45 | SD=.61 | X=4.04 | SD=.95 | X=4.24 |
|        | N=61   |        | N=69   |        | SD=.84 |
|        |        |        |        |        | N=130  |
|        | X=4.37 | SD=.68 | X=4.01 | SD=.94 |        |
|        | N=124  |        | N=130  |        |        |



**Perceived Satisfaction:** Overall, how satisfied are you with your position in the university or college?

The mean scores of the reported levels of overall job satisfaction for faculty by race and sex indicate that white females have the highest mean satisfaction score followed by white males, Black males and Black females reporting the lowest mean satisfaction score (see Table II). The main effects for race, indicate that white faculty as a group report higher levels of job satisfaction than do Black faculty, 3.97 vs. 3.10. The analyses of variance procedures indicate that these reported differences in mean satisfaction scores are significant ( $F = 14.28$   $p .000$ ). Hence, in concurrence with other research findings, race appears to be a significant contributor to worker reported level of job satisfaction.

Looking at job satisfaction levels by sex, we found the mean scores for males and females to be 3.69 and 3.30, respectively. The analyses of variance procedures indicate that sex as a main effect did approach significance ( $F = 2.95$ ,  $p .087$ ), as a factor influencing the reported levels of overall job satisfaction. However, white males and females have almost identical mean satisfaction scores, 3.96 and 3.98 respectively. In contrast, the same cannot be said for Blacks as the mean scores of Black males and females are noticeably disparate, 3.40 and 2.87, respectively. A t-test of difference indicates that there is a significant difference in the mean scores of these Black males and females, ( $t = 2.62$   $p .010$ ). Thus, as is apparent by viewing the mean scores in Table II, it is the lower mean score of Black females which results in the observed gender effects and accounts for much of the difference in reported satisfaction levels between Blacks and whites as groups.

Analyses indicate that tenure was significant. The presence of tenure had significant and positive effects on the reported satisfaction levels of all faculty ( $F = 18$   $p .000$ ). That is, all faculty who reported having tenure, regardless of their race or sex, expressed greater satisfaction with their jobs than did those faculty who reported not having tenure. No significant tenure interaction effects were observed.

Table II  
Reported Overall Job Satisfaction of  
White and Black Faculty

|        | WHITE  |                 | BLACK    |                 |                            |
|--------|--------|-----------------|----------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Male   | X=3.96 | SD=.99<br>N=62  | X=3.40   | SD=1.04<br>N=59 | X=3.69<br>SD=1.07<br>N=121 |
| Female | X=3.98 | SD=1.03<br>N=51 | X=2.87   | SD=1.24<br>N=70 | X=3.30<br>SD=1.27<br>N=121 |
|        |        | X=3.97<br>N=113 | SD=.1.00 | X=3.10          | SD=1.20<br>N=129           |

**Perceptions of**  
**Job Permanence:**

Within the next five years, what would you predict about your employment?

Faculty members were asked to predict their probable employment situation for the next five years. Table III shows faculty responses to this question. Clearly, whites in comparison to Blacks have the greater proportion of faculty who state their likely intentions to remain 62% vs. 23%, respectively. As pertains to who are uncertain as to whether they will be leaving or staying in the present academic positions, approximately a third of all white and half of all black faculty fall into this category. Of these faculty that state that they are definitely leaving, only 8% of white faculty are in this category, as compared to a quarter of Black faculty. A 2X3 chi square analysis of these distributions suggest that there is a significant relationship between race of faculty and their future employment predictions ( $X^2 = 37.30$ ,  $p .000$ ). That is, Blacks and whites, as groups, appear to differ with respect to their plans for future employment. Most notably, a significantly greater proportion of white faculty, than Black, have plans to remain in their positions. Conversely a greater proportion of Black faculty, than white, are uncertain about their future employment or have definite plans to leave in the near future.

Table III  
Employment Predictions of  
White and Black Faculty

|       | Most<br>Likely<br>Remain | uncertain | Definitely<br>Leaving    |
|-------|--------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| White | 62%<br>(N = 67)          | 30%       | 8%<br>(N = 33) (N = 9)   |
| Black | 23%<br>(N = 28)          | 52%       | 25%<br>(N = 64) (N = 31) |

$X^2 = 37.30$  D.F=2 P .0001

Inspecting employment predictions by sex also revealed some significant findings. Specifically, white males had the highest number of any group, reporting "most likely remain" 65% (39). They were respectively followed by white females 57% (28), Black males 25% (15), and Black females 20% (13). Looking at those who are "undecided," Black males 45% (29), had the largest proportions, followed respectively by Black females 34% (22), white females 35% (17), and white males 27% (16). Finally, comparatively low numbers of white males 8% (5) and females 8% (4) have "definite plans to leave" their present faculty positions within the next five years. By contrast 15% (9) of Black males and 34% (22) of Black females report having definite plans to leave their present faculty positions. Analyses comparing Black and white males indicate that these differences in employment predictions are significant, ( $X^2 = 18.08$  p .000). Similarly, a comparison of Black and white females indicate that the differences in employment predictions noted between these two groups are also significant, ( $X^2 = 19.43$  p .0001). By contrast, analyses of employment predictions within racial groups, but between sexes, revealed no significant differences between males and females.

Due to the unequal proportions of Black and white tenured faculty, it was possible that the employment prediction distribution reported in table III might be a function of this disparity. That is, the non-tenured faculty may anticipate not receiving tenure or perhaps for financial reasons, being required to move. Therefore, analyses were

conducted employing tenure as a control variable. Table IV shows future employment predictions for tenured faculty. It is evident that the possession of tenure does not significantly alter the general picture of white and Black employment predictions. Thus, even when controlling for tenure, there continues to be significantly greater proportions of white faculty, than Black, who have plans to remain in their present positions and greater proportions of Black faculty, than white, who are uncertain about their continued employment, or have definite plans to leave their present positions.

Table IV  
Employment Predictions of Tenured  
White and Black Faculty

|       | Most Likely Remain | uncertain       | Definitely Leaving |
|-------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| White | 65%<br>(N = 60)    | 29%<br>(N = 27) | 5%<br>(N = 5)      |
| Black | 26%<br>(N = 19)    | 42%<br>(N = 31) | 32%<br>(N = 24)    |

$$X^2 = 32.43 \text{ DF}=2 \text{ P } .0001$$

In sum, it appears that faculty projections of employment permanence are better predicted by race, than by sex or tenure. That is, employment predictions of faculty resemble, more so, their same race colleagues than those colleagues who are of a similar sex or tenure status.

### Summary and Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that the perceptions of the quality of work experiences of social work faculty vary significantly as a function of race, gender, and the possession of tenure. The amount of personal and professional respect which faculty perceive themselves to receive from others in the department appears to vary only as a function of race. Specifically, the findings suggest that Black faculty perceive themselves to be the recipients of less respect from significant others in the work environment than do white faculty. Gender does not appear to be a significant

contributor to the degree of respect which faculty report receiving. Similarly, the factors of tenure and "degree held" appear to have no significant effect on the degree of respect which either Black or white faculty perceive themselves to receive.

With regard to reported levels of job satisfaction, it appears that as a group, Black faculty are less satisfied with their college/university positions than are white faculty. Similarly being female was found to have a negative effect on the reported satisfaction levels of faculty. However, these effects seem to be limited to Black female faculty, as white female faculty resemble quite closely their white male counterparts. Indeed, the Black female faculty member appears to be the least satisfied of all faculty. Moreover, tenure, but not degree, appears to have a significant effect on faculty satisfaction. The possession of tenure appears to positively influence the reported overall job satisfaction of all faculty, irrespective of race or gender.

When viewing future job permanence of these faculty, both race and gender serve as significant predictors. The findings indicate that a significantly greater proportion of white faculty than Black, have plans to remain in their present positions, while significantly greater numbers of Black faculty, than white, are either definitely leaving or are uncertain as to their future plans. Of those with plans to leave, it is the Black female faculty who reported having the highest proportion of any group with definite plans to leave, and the lowest proportion of any group with plans to remain in their present positions. Furthermore, even when tenure status differences between Blacks and whites were controlled for, this picture of projected future employment remained unaltered.

In sum, these survey findings suggest with regards to respect; job satisfaction and future employment predictions, that Black faculty, relative to whites, perceive themselves to be less respected, to receive less satisfaction from their positions, and to have less certain employment futures. However, unquestionably the clearest message which these data convey is: When comparing Black and white faculty, it is the Black female who is the "underdog" in social work education. In 1978 Gould and Kim reported similar negative findings pertaining to the salaries of Black female social work faculty.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps, as others have argued, the Black female may be victim due to the "double whammy" of possessing both second class gender and racial statuses.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately,

these data do not allow us to construct causal relationship. We can offer no sound explanations as to what caused the negative association between job satisfaction and race for Black females, while simultaneously we observed no such negative gender effects for white females. We are also uncertain as to why the apparent race/gender double-whammy effect did not manifest itself with regards to Black female perceptions of receiving respect from others. Similarly, we have no clue as to what causes the apparent readiness for greater mobility among Black faculty irrespective of tenure status. It is possible that they have greater job opportunities and hence mobility; it is also possible that their mobility is associated with dissatisfaction. What is clear, however, is that many important questions have been raised. For those concerned with the acquisition and retention of minority and female faculty concerns noted here warrant further attention and exploration by individual schools and departments.

Finally, due to the overall small sample size of the study, particularly white faculty, the findings obtained here must be viewed with due caution. *Ipsa facto* conclusions drawn from these findings must also be guarded. However, despite the limitation of the sample size, these data, because of their potential significance, suggest that this area of study warrants further inspection. It has been said that, "If social work as a profession is to survive with credibility it must address itself to distributive justice and muscle a firm commitment at all levels of its enterprise."<sup>31</sup> These findings strongly suggest that attention be given to the issue of perceived or felt racism and/or sexism as they might manifest themselves in schools of social work. Hopefully, this article will help serve as a catalyst for greater discussion of such issues as racism and sexism as they might manifest themselves in the interactions among faculty, students and administrators. Hence, these findings should be used foremost as an aid in self-exploration. That is, these data are not intended for use to condemn specific schools or departments; rather, they should serve to inform all schools of possible areas of concern and, in this sense, assist each school in assessing and improving their social and professional environments. In short, it is hoped that the finding of this study will serve to stimulate the enhancement of social work teaching environments which resemble less those elements of society we oppose, and more the society we advocate.

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