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Strategies for Doctoral Students Who Desire to Become Higher Education Faculty Members at Top-ranked Programs

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Abstract

This study investigated what strategies doctoral students could employ to ensure their competitiveness in higher education graduate program faculty searches. A total of 39 program coordinators, department heads, and deans were asked how graduates from non-ranked higher education programs could prepare themselves for faculty opportunities, including searches at top-ranked schools. The findings indicate that developing grantmanship, networking, presentation, and publishing skills will help students to become more competitive. Additionally, participants suggested that students collaborate with other scholars, show initiative in their own professional development, understand the expectations of different program types, and be willing to participate in post-doctoral fellowships. These findings will help students who desire to serve at top-ranked doctoral higher education programs upon graduation. A unique feature of this paper includes a discussion of the unwritten values, rules, expectations, and social mores that influence a search process, including the roles of institutional fit, previous academic preparation, tokenism, and race. This study is designed to inform the decision-making of higher education program faculty as they prepare their students for the professoriate.

Keywords: doctoral education, higher education administration, doctoral student socialization, faculty development.

Introduction

DiRamio, Theroux, and Guarino (2009) found that 70% of faculty members at top-ranked higher education programs received their doctorate from the same or another top-ranked school. Additional analysis by DiRamio et al. (2009) also found that a significant social network emerged among very top programs. Faculty from top-ranked programs had closer network connections with other top-ranked programs when compared with other programs and sources for faculty hiring. So as faculty positions in higher education graduate programs continue to dwindle it may be important to understand what strategies a person who has graduated from a non-ranked program can use to prepare him or herself to be competitive in faculty searches (HigherEdJobs, 2012).

Recently, top-ranked programs in various disciplines have not been replacing faculty lines as they had previously done

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in the past (Williams-June, 2012). Therefore, graduates of these top-ranked programs in the United States have chosen to settle for appointments at less prestigious institutions (Medina, 2012). This makes it even less likely that a student from a non-ranked program will serve at an institution that is considered as or more prestigious as their doctoral alma mater. One of the challenges that the doctoral graduates from non-ranked programs have is lack of access to essential resources and socialization (Freeman & DiRamio, In-Press). This is expressed well in the statement below by a Dean in a school of education as cited by Schneider, Brown, Denny, Mathis, and Schmidt (1984):

> There are very real factors at a major research institution that work for the benefit of every graduate student. I don't have any doubt that, if you were to move our school of education lock, stock, and barrel to Podunk University and in 10 years take a national poll, we would no longer be in the top 10 in the country—even though the same faculty would be there. There is no way we could still be as good as we are now, because the students would…no longer have access to the very strong programs we have in the social sciences, in the humanities, etc. and to the major research support we have in the library and computer facilities…Those things are very real. (p. 620)

The comments above underscore the notion that major research institutions and top-ranked programs seem to have the resources to better prepare their students for their chosen careers. If this is true, it is unclear if non-ranked institutions, which have limited resources, can prepare their graduates to compete for highly competitive positions within the academy. And if this is true, how can graduates from non-ranked programs prepare themselves to be competitive in the academic job market as they start their careers?

This study identified top-ranked higher education administration programs based on the published annual rankings of the U.S. News & World Report (2011). This academic ranking organization uses seven criteria to tier each higher education administration programs by. The seven criteria are (1) tuition; (2) enrollment; (3) average GRE verbal score of entering doctoral students; (4) average GRE quantitative score of entering doctoral students; (5) average amount of externally funded research expenditure per faculty member (in thousands), (6) total amount of externally funded research conducted by the school (in the millions), and (7) doctoral programs acceptance rate. This is important as some institutions utilize these ranking criteria to signify the quality of their program. They also use this and similar criteria to inform their decision making when they seek to enhance their program, i.e., select students and faculty for their program (Freeman & Diramio, In-Press).

Purpose and Significance of the Study

This study is a part of a larger study that examines the hiring practices of top-ranked higher education administration graduate programs in the United States (DiRamio et al., 2009; Freeman & Diramio, In-Press). The first part of the larger study determined that top-ranked programs more frequently hired graduates from top-ranked programs than those at non-ranked programs (DiRamio et al., 2009). The second part of this study discovered why higher education programs chose top-ranked graduates over individuals who graduated from unranked programs (Freeman & Diramio, In-Press). This section of the study sought to investigate the strategies that graduates from non-ranked higher education doctoral programs could employ to prepare themselves for faculty opportunities, including searches at top-ranked schools. This topic is important as Freeman and Diramio (In-Press) found it vital that strong programs have a full diversity of perspectives represented both in their faculty and student rosters.

The overarching research question guiding this study aims to deepen the conceptual understanding of the strategies that can be utilized by graduates of non-ranked higher education programs to

be competitive when applying for tenure track positions in graduate programs. So the research question of this study is: What strategies can students from non-top-ranked higher education programs employ to make themselves competitive for a tenure track position in higher education including opportunities at top-ranked institutions?

Literature Review

This section of this paper will first review literature regarding the pre-doctoral and doctoral preparation and socialization of doctoral students who desire to serve as faculty upon graduation. Second, the role of higher education program faculty will be investigated. Third, delineation between characteristics of top-ranked and non-ranked programs will be addressed. And lastly, a discussion of the nexus between graduate program preparation of higher education scholars and their market competitiveness will be discussed.

Preparing Doctoral Students for the Role of Faculty Member

Pre-doctoral student preparation

Often when addressing the preparation of faculty, scholars start their discussion from potential faculty members' undergraduate and graduate education (Gardner, 2009; Gardner, Mendoza, & Austin, 2010). However, for the sake of this study, it is important to start with a review of the role that pre-graduate school educational opportunities and socialization plays in providing individuals with the tools to be prepared for graduate school. This is warranted because some students benefit from compounded educational and social advantages that impact their future employment opportunities.

Frequently, students who are the first in their immediate family to attend college are not armed with understanding of the tacit knowledge needed to succeed in an unfamiliar academic environment (Gardner & Holley, 2011). For instance, if an instructor shares with an entry level English class that it is important for them to write well, someone who is a first generation student may hear that information, but may think pragmatically that they are not preparing to be an English major and will probably not seek employment in a field that is writing intensive. However, what that student may fail to understand is that their competence will be judged by the quality of their verbal and written communications skills. Additionally, because of a lack of understanding regarding the relative weight that is placed on standardized test scores, if a students does not perform well on these test they will severely hinder their chances to be competitive for highly selective graduate programs, which produce the large majority of faculty in top-ranked higher education programs.

When first generation students are not appropriately socialized early in their educational development they may not be aware of the full range of their educational options. They may lack understanding regarding the importance of the prestige of a graduate institution. A student that is unaware of the importance of the rank of their graduate program could be under matched even if they have the academic profile to perform well at higher ranked institutions. Undermatching in this context is defined as a student selecting a graduate program less selective than their academic achievements indicates (Bastedo & Flaster, 2014). Additionally, if not socialized correctly prior to arrival in their doctoral program, incoming higher education graduate students, especially women and minorities, can be tracked into a practitioner oriented educational experience; whereas they may also have the basic skills that if honed could prepare them for a career in the professoriate. We will discuss the role of doctoral student socialization in further detail in the next section.

Doctoral student socialization

Scholars have lamented that graduate programs generally do not adequately prepare students for roles as faculty members (Bogler & Kremer-Hayon, 1999; Gaff, Pruitt-Logan, Sims, Denecke, 2003; Golde & Dore, 2001; Haley & Jaeger, 2012; Hinchey & Kimmel, 2000; Nerad, Aanerud, & Cerny, 2004; Nyquist, 2002; Nyquist & Woodford, 2000). When investigating strategies that would be important for doctoral students to use when preparing for faculty positions, it is important that the doctoral student socialization process be examined. Socialization of new faculty is not easy.

Gardner (2010b) defines socialization as "the process through which an individual learns to adopt the values, skills, attitudes, norms, and knowledge needed for membership in a given society, group, or organization" (p. 40). The doctoral socialization process prepares students for professional service during and after completion of the terminal degree. Many researchers have investigated the role of doctoral education in preparing students for the academy (Austin, 2002; Bragg, 1976; Ellis, 2001; Gardner, 2010a; Gonzalez, 2006; Soto Antony, 2002; Walker, Golde, Jones, Bueschel, & Hutchings, 2008; Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001). In particular, recent studies have focused on preparing students in academic disciplines such as in the areas of science, technology, engineering and math (Gardner & Barnes, 2007; Herzig 2004). Others have focused on issues related to socialization of ethnic minorities and women in doctoral programs (Ellis, 2001; Gonzalez, 2006; Herzig, 2004; Felder, Stevenson, & Gasman, 2014; Maher, Ford, & Thompson, 2004). If hired, intentionality is very important when seeking to socialize women and minorities into the academy (Jackson, 2004). The aforementioned studies that addressed the socialization of doctoral students in varied disciplines and addressed the role of gender and race in the socialization process all found that program faculty played an important role in the socialization of doctoral students towards the professoriate.

Gardner (2010a) posits that many studies address doctoral education through a monolithic lens assuming that graduates' experiences are the same across disciplines. There is a growing area of literature that addresses ways in which higher education doctoral programs socialize students for higher education graduate programs (Freeman, 2011; Harris, 2007; Wright, 2007).

There have been several studies that have proposed models of doctoral socialization (Bragg, 1976; Gardner, 2008, 2010a; Gardner & Barnes, 2007; Tinto, 1993; Weidman et al., 2001). One of the most cited studies is Tinto's (1993) three-stage model of doctoral persistence. Tinto (1993) identified the three stages as (1) the first year of study, the transitional stage, (2) the period leading to candidacy, and (3) the completion of the dissertation. During the first stage, students seek to establish membership in the academic and social communities of the university. When students move to the second stage, navigating interactions within the classroom and department or program context are very important. In this stage, issues of adaptive competence are central to students' persistence (Haynes, 1991). In both the first and second stages, students' experiences are dependent on interactions with varying faculty members. In the third stage, the emphasis shifts to the relationship with the student's academic advisor and the dissertation committee members. At this stage, persistence could be totally determined by the behavior of a specific faculty member. Tinto's (1993) model provides a comprehensive yet clear set of stages that addresses each of the major transitions within a doctoral students pathway to completion. However, it is important to note that most of Tinto's scholarship focuses on undergraduate studies: there are researchers such as Weidman, Twale, and Stein (2001) whose work focuses on graduate socialization.

As some students complete their program, they prepare to achieve their long-term professional goals. Those who are a part of a higher education doctoral program have the choice of using their degree in many fields, but many decide to go into careers as administrators, faculty, and policy

makers (Altbach, 2010; Davis, Faith, & Murrell, 1991; Wright, 2004, 2007). Wright (2004, 2007) found that these programs helped their students to gain expertise in the areas of general college administration or leadership, student services administration, and or college teaching. Many of the well-supported higher education doctoral programs primarily prepare their graduates to serve as future faculty members (Davis et al., 1991).

Haley and Jaeger (2012) found that many higher education women graduate students decide to pursue careers as higher education faculty after they enter their doctoral program, until the very end of their doctoral studies, or after graduation. They recommend that higher education programs encourage academically focused masters students to consider faculty careers in higher education programs, as many students are not aware of opportunities to serve as faculty prior to enrollment as a doctoral student.

Higher Education Graduate Program Faculty

Once students decide that they would like to become a faculty member one of the things that they need to consider is the type of program that they may want to serve in. There are particular programs that produce a fair amount of the faculty higher education programs across the United States (Wolf-Wendel, 2014). In Valerin's (2011) study of 105 doctoral programs in America, she identified them as:

> A program that is housed at a large, national research university where the primary focus is the creation of new scholarship for the discipline and maintaining a national if not international reputation. Students in this type of program are predominately engaged in full-time study and seek to be the next generation of faculty in the field. (p. 67)

She goes on to describe two other program types; they include programs that focus less on research generation but place more emphasis on the practical application of specific knowledge; and programs that describe themselves as offering a balance between theoretical information and practical application. The later two programs make up the larger share of higher education programs and the majority of their students engages in part-time study and serves in a full-time administrative capacity already (Valerin, 2011).

Ranked and unranked academic programs

When discussing the role of faculty in higher education graduate programs it is important to distinguish between the elite (ranked) programs and non-elite (unranked) as they have different characteristics (Freeman & Diramio, In-Press). The first type of program described by Valerin (2011) correlates with the description of ranked programs, whereas the majority of the programs related to the second and third types of programs match the description of unranked programs. Top and non-ranked higher education graduate programs share many of the same attributes such as highly trained faculty, but Freeman and Diramio (In-Press) found ten distinguishing programmatic characteristics that distinguish the training of students that matriculate through top-ranked programs. They include the following: (1) organizational culture; (2) emphasis on preparing students as researchers; (3) more external funding opportunities; (4) "brand" and reputation; (5) history of collegiality with top programs; (6) nationally recognized scholars; (7) better access to global, cross-cultural, international perspectives; (8) more opportunities for the socialization of students towards the professoriate; (9) more pressure to produce scholarship and maintain high research productivity; and (10) larger number of full-time faculty on staff.

The program characteristics above mirror those identified in Kahler's (2001) study of graduate programs that produce prolific writers. And they are similar to Keim's (1983) study regarding faculty in graduate programs in higher education and Hunter and Kuh's (1987) study of the back-

grounds of prolific contributors to the higher education literature. As Kahler's (2001) study pointed out:

> Although the studies were from different periods, the fact that some institutions persist as outstanding graduate programs appears to be supported. This should not be surprising given that the programs share common characteristics such as the type of student recruited, the productive faculty who mentored, the research oriented curriculum, and the strong collaborative community promoted. Those qualities appear to be influential in producing productive (scholars) authors. (p. 99)

Based on these important studies we find that it is important that future faculty that would like to have successful careers as higher education program faculty need to develop strong writing skills. These skills are important to helping potential faculty secure a position within the professoriate.

Research

In Kahler's (2001) study, he provides greater detail with regards to intentionality of top-ranked programs preparing students through "research courses, research practicums, socialization around research, research institutes in the institutions or programs, and the role of faculty research that is visible by and shared with the students" (p. 101). He also found that top-ranked programs incorporated into each course research by every student that may be used for future publications. Although it was not explicitly stated in graduation requirements, there were expectations in various courses that students engage in research, publishing, and conference presentations. In specific situations the study described that there are some students that had published peer-reviewed scholarship prior to completing their doctorate. This was partly because they had engaged in scholarly writing in their courses. This helped them become more competitive on the job market. However, research is not the only area in which potential faculty should hone their skills. Mariani (2007) admonishes that successful higher education doctoral programs encourage their students to present at referred conferences, and to be an excellent faculty member aspiring professors need to prepare themselves in the area of teaching and instruction (Freeman & Kochan, 2014).

Teaching

Veronica Chukuemeka found in her (2003) dissertation, which investigated the impact of program reviews on higher education doctoral degree programs, that higher education professors generally have high student-faculty ratios and heavy teaching loads. And as the composition of students change, classroom dynamics change, making it important for faculty within higher education to assess and modify their andragogical approach (Olds, 2008). Those seeking to prepare themselves for future faculty positions need to develop ways in which to assess their on instructional practices (Freeman & Kochan, 2012). This is why it is important to ensure that the faculty assigned to higher education graduate programs have developed expertise on pertinent topics and also have a thorough grasp of various instructional techniques. Faculty in these programs need to have expertise in all the vital areas associated with the programs needs (Harris, 2007). Aspiring faculty need to have sensitivity to various learning styles and be committed to the goals of their higher education program (Freeman, 2011).

Higher education graduate programs should recruit a diverse core of full-time faculty that are trained in the theoretical foundations of higher education with the use of practitioners augmenting the full-time faculty's expertise (Freeman, 2011). This approach provides students with not only exposure to new knowledge, but also to the "hands-on" aspects of higher education (Wright, 2007). Harris (2007) wrote that "a mix of faculty backgrounds is necessary to properly prepare students in theory and practice" (p. 41). Further, he found that higher education programs were using practicing administrators to supplement the full-time academic faculty in many higher edu-

cation programs. Harris reports that some higher education programs also invite retired administrators to provide instruction on topics related to administrative practice.

Additionally, it is important that aspiring faculty are collegial. It is also their responsibility to develop a coherent curriculum, teach, and assess student learning (National Panel Report, 2002). Haynes (1991) states that "inadequate preparation of the faculty in curriculum development and the field of Higher Education is the most serious problem that inhibits the growth and maturation of the field" (p. 39). It is also important that the program philosophy is clear and that aspiring faculty understand that they do not need to be at the center of a curriculum. Instead, they should see themselves as being facilitators of learning. Ivankova and Stick (2005) describe learning facilitators as "presenting comprehensive topics for discussion and helping students integrate ideas from multiple sources and encourage interactions without giving 'facts' or making demeaning statements" (p. 123). Lail (1998) suggests that higher education program directors develop rewards and incentives to encourage faculty to diversify their teaching and learning strategies and methods in their programs. Understanding the importance of preparation and socialization of aspiring faculty in the areas of research and teaching, below we review the viability of non-ranked graduates obtaining a faculty position at a ranked institution

Viability of Non-Ranked Graduates as Faculty

Deans and chairs are primarily responsible for hiring higher education program faculty (Freeman, 2014). It is their duty to ensure that they have or are able to attract faculty who will enhance their programs. Uzoigwe (1982) found that it is important for chairs, directors, and coordinators of programs to have strong backgrounds in the field of higher education and have the stature within the academic community so that the program can be recognized both within the university and beyond. Cooper (1980) suggested that aspiring faculty within higher education graduate programs need to have a strong understanding of higher education as a field of study.

DiRamio, Theroux, and Guarino (2009) determined that graduates of unranked doctoral programs in higher education were not as competitive when competing for faculty positions at top-ranked programs. Freeman & Diramio's (In-Press) study sought to discover why top-ranked higher education programs were two times more likely to choose graduates from top-ranked schools over individuals who graduated form unranked programs. Their study found that members of search committees perceived that students from less prestigious programs were less likely to be exposed to large grants to support doctoral research and are less likely to have published and worked with prominent scholars in the field who can speak on their behalf to vouch for the student's quality of work.

This study is important because research shows that the top students may not attend the top institutions because of various reasons (Bastedo & Flaster, 2014). Therefore, top institutions may miss out on the opportunity to retain the best talent, as the current metrics for evaluating academic competence has proven flawed. Literature shows that faculty of top-ranked programs tend to lead the lions' share of the editorships and serve in leadership roles in the professional societies and organizations that shape the direction of most academic fields (Hilmer & Hilmer, 2011). If programs continue to select candidates based primarily on pedigree, they may lose out on talent that can enhance the broader field of study. Therefore, this study sought the perspectives of those who have participated in faculty searches at top-ranked programs to ascertain strategies that graduates of non-ranked programs can use to secure a faculty position in top-ranked programs.

Methods

A phenomenological qualitative approach was utilized to carry out this study. A phenomenological approach was chosen because previous studies revealed that top-ranked programs preferred to

hire graduates from top-ranked higher education administration programs (DiRamio et al., 2009) and that search committees believed that graduates from these programs were more prepared for faculty positions (Freeman & Diramio, In-Press). In Freeman and Diramio's (In-Press) study all participants believed that graduates from top-ranked programs were better prepared for faculty positions then those who graduated from unranked programs. Therefore, this study used the phenomenological method to discover the strategies graduates from non-ranked higher education doctoral programs can use to prepare themselves for faculty opportunities, including searches at top-ranked schools. It was important to employ this methodology to identify the shared experiences and perspectives among the participants, all who whom are intimately affiliated with the phenomena (Ballad & Bawalan, 2014).

The list of the top 21 higher education administration programs identified by the U.S News & World Report Best College 2011 Edition was used to identify potential participants for this study. The participant population included over 75 faculty members, program coordinators, department heads, and/or deans that were affiliated with top-ranked higher education programs. Participants were solicited via email or by phone to participate in this study as approved by Auburn University's Institutional Review Board. They were able to confirm their desire to be interviewed by sending an email to a secure university email account. Through email exchanges times were scheduled to interview participants individually over the phone. Prior to the interviews the informed consent forms were sent to the participants and signed. Interviews were completed over the phone and through an open-ended semi-structured questionnaire using online data-collection software. Participants were able to withdraw at any time without question.

Morse (as cited in Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005, p. 282) suggested that, when conducting a phenomenological study, more than ten participants should be included. In-depth interviews were conducted via phone conversations with program coordinators, department heads, and deans. Thirty-nine assistant, associate, and full professors participated in this study. Out of the thirty-nine participants, two identified themselves as deans, two identified themselves as academic coordinators, and one identified as a department chair. Twenty-four of the participants had participated in a faculty search within three-years of the collection of the data. All participants served at institutions that were classified by the Carnegie Foundation as either Research Universities with high or very high research activity or Doctoral Research Universities.

Population and Sample Selection

A purposive sample was used in this study. The participant population was comprised of faculty members, program coordinators, department heads, and deans that are affiliated with higher education graduate programs ranked by U.S News & World Report Best College 2011 Edition. Deans, department heads, and faculty were chosen as the participant population because they are integral to the hiring process of new faculty within a department. These individuals in many ways have the unique opportunity to influence the way the program is operated on a daily bases.

Coding Process

When the initial interviews were concluded the information was transcribed. After which, some observations and reflections based on the responses where typed up in a separate document. The researcher then returned to transform the initial notes into emerging themes. The data was then reviewed to ensure the development of "concise phrases that contained enough particularity to remain grounded in the text and enough abstraction to offer conceptual understanding" (Ballad & Bawalan, 2014, p. 12). Next, the emerging themes were grouped together based on the similarity of content. Lastly, a table of themes was created which included both major and sub-themes, which each had a corresponding quote along with a line number to connect the quote to the original transcript.

Concerns for Validity and Reliability

After transcribing the responses from the initial phone meeting, follow-up phone interviews were incorporated for purposes of member checking and data validation. Utilizing the member checking approach enabled the participants to review the information from the survey to ensure that they accurately reflected their feelings and responses (Creswell, 1998). The follow-up interviews also enabled additional questioning related to the study.

Researcher Positionality

As someone that previously aspired to serve as a faculty member at a top-ranked higher education program, the researcher had a strong and vested interest in understanding the strategies needed to be competitive in a faculty search. The origin of the desire stemmed from the researcher's graduate experience, as he did not graduate from a top-ranked higher education administration program. Subsequently, he has been a finalist in multiple faculty searches, including at top-ranked programs. Therefore, at the end of this study he provides a concluding thought section, which provides insights based on his lived experiences participating in search processes at top-ranked institutions. The researcher provides this positionality statement as it key to qualitative inquiry and addresses the social construction and constructivist criteria by acknowledging his bias (Croom, 2011; Freeman, 2011).

Limitations of the Method and Concerns for Generalizability

The findings are not generalizable as they are qualitative data but provide valuable insights. The limited sample size forces the restriction of the application of results to a limited population of coordinators, department heads, and deans who have served or are serving in top higher education administration programs. However, the study did reach a point of saturation when the researcher found that the majority of the participants were no longer providing new information. An additional limitation included the use of phone interviews, which reduced the opportunity to observe various social cues and standardize the surroundings of the participants (Opdenakker, 2006).

Findings

Strategies for Those Seeking Faculty Positions

The interviews that were conducted provided great insights into ways in which graduates from non-ranked doctoral programs could be better prepared for faculty searches. Participants were asked the following question: What strategies can graduates from non-ranked higher education doctoral programs use to prepare themselves for faculty opportunities, including searches at top-ranked schools? Two groups of strategies were found to be helpful in this study. The two strategy areas were Scholarly Development Strategies and Professional Development Strategies. Scholarly Development Strategies are initiatives that are associated with the core functions of academic work, which include functions such as publishing and research; whereas, Professional Development Strategies address competencies that are not specifically scholarly by nature but are important to supporting career success within the academy. The next section will further illuminate both groups of strategies.

Scholarly Development Strategies (skills and attributes)

Scholarly development strategies identified included developing publishing, presenting, and grantmanship skills. The data supporting these findings are presented in this section.

Publishing

This was the most commonly mentioned strategy. Twenty-three participants shared that publishing in peer-reviewed outlets was an important strategy in making someone competitive in a faculty search process at a top-ranked higher education program. While publishing was mentioned as one of the most important areas in which people from a non-ranked program could distinguish themselves, several participants shared that writing as first author was almost as important. Here are examples of their responses by Participant one:

> "Get published as first author - before applying for jobs."

Participant two goes even further by sharing that publishing as a single or first author demonstrates that a candidate has been socialized as a potential faculty member.

> Publish; a record of publication prior to graduation indicates a student who has been well socialized. Socialization is presumed to exist among students who have worked with faculty with national reputations at top-ranked programs. Students completing their degrees at non-ranked places can compensate for the absence of pedigree by demonstrating they know how to get their programs of research started and move ahead in their careers; publishing on one's own helps satisfy that criterion.

Participant three, who serves as a program coordinator, advises potential faculty candidates for top-ranked programs to "accept the rules of the game of academia" if they want to be successful:

> If you are adamant about certain journals you want to be in, I can tell you before we even hire you, you would not get tenure if they're not the core ones, it won't work. It has never worked and it never will and everyone that tries to change that system they don't get tenure.

Presenting

Presentations were another aspect where participants believed that faculty candidates could distinguish themselves. A third of the respondents mentioned this strategy as important. Participant four suggested that candidates "go to (Association for the Study of Higher Education) ASHE and present research." Participant five said to "Write conference papers and present them at (Association for the Study of Higher Education) ASHE and (American Education Research Association) AERA and get active (at the graduate student level) in those organizations. Get some visibility among the faculty members in the top programs." Participant six simply said to "Learn to present." This means that students should look out for opportunities to present their scholarly research in various forums, whether they are at their graduate institution or at scholarly meetings. The practice of presenting in a peer-reviewed context is important for the development of those who seek to serve in the highest realms of academia.

Other respondents such as Participant seven, give this advice, "Focus on scholarly accomplishments-- present at conferences--a strong academic record will overcome a 'non top' academic program," and "Present at refereed conferences (Association for the Study of Higher Education) ASHE and (American Education Research Association) AERA."

Grantmanship

The third strategy that emerged from the interviews was the notion that it was important for doctoral students to have exposure to grant-writing experiences prior to graduation. Having had experience with grants or any form of external funding was seen as an asset for any faculty candidate to have. Participant eight just simply said that you need to have a "track record of grants." In this context, that means that students should be able to demonstrate on their curriculum vita that they have learned the process of identifying, writing towards securing, submitting, securing, and par-

ticipating on a team engaged in projects supported by grants. And Participant nine believed that a graduate of a non-ranked program would need to "show great promise for obtaining external funding." This can be demonstrated even if students have not participated in all aspects of the grantmanship process. If they can show that they have gained significant knowledge in various aspects of the process, this will be seen as a great asset.

Professional Development Strategies (actions and attributes)

Professional development strategies identified included networking, collaborating, and participating in post-doctoral fellowships. The data supporting these findings are presented in this section.

Networking

Participant ten in the interviews believed that it was important for graduates from non-ranked institutions to network with those that are in the field and outside of their institution. He noted:

> I would definitely give the advice to go to conferences in the field of higher education such as (Association for the Study of Higher Education) ASHE's and go to the places where there are senior scholars in the field from the top-ranked programs. Get to know them, and talk to them and see if that could help you kind of down the road in some meaningful way. I think those are the kind of strategies that I would recommend to folks from unranked programs for sure.

Other participants second his notion that establishing a professional network outside one's institution is important for non-ranked program graduates. Participant 11 states, "Network at national conferences; have a conversation on the phone with search committee chair and members before applying." Participant 12 suggests, "Expand professional networks outside the institution, seek mentors in other universities." Participant 13 put it succinctly: "Develop relationships with faculty at larger programs" And lastly, Participant 14 advises to "Network heavily at higher education conferences. Get involved in conferences."

Participant 15 emphasized that graduates from non-ranked programs would need to take more initiative if they really wanted a position in a top-ranked program. This person said:

> The key is really, it's more on the students, a little bit more effort is needed on the part of a student at a less prestigious higher education program to make their way without the level of resources that would typically be available in a more prestigious institution.

Collaboration

In addition to publishing, several respondents also stressed the importance of collaboration. Here are some examples of what the study contributors said. Participant 16 shared, "Publish in reputable journals, present papers, engage in collaborative research projects at the regional and national level." Participant 17 suggested to "Collaborate with faculty and other researchers at top programs." Participant 18 emphasized the importance of being a citizen of an academic community:

> Show ways you have and will be a good citizen for the unit, department, and institution. (In terms of service to the unit, advising, etc.) Be other-directed not solely talking about YOUR research agenda. Help the unit to see how you would fit as a colleague.

Engage in post-doctoral fellowships

In addition to participating in scholarly activities such as research, grantwriting, and presenting, several participants suggested that gaining teaching experience along with serving in a post-doctoral fellowship will enhance their preparation for a faculty role at a top-tier program. Although participation in post-doctoral programs was suggested for graduates in non-ranked pro-

grams, these types of fellowships can be accessed by graduates of ranked and non-ranked programs alike. In the case of non-ranked program graduates, it can signal to potential top-ranked programs that the candidate has the ability to work on a major funded research project. Participant 3 suggested that post-doctoral fellowships may be a way in which potential faculty can gain some more experience that will enable them to be more competitive when competing for positions.

> Post docs they do exist. The thing is the ones that are public are the ones that are generally institutional based. There are many of those. Others are association based like ETS (Educational Testing Services) and AERA. But there are certain institutions that have their own post doc opportunities.

He then went on to share where other Post-Doctoral Opportunities may be found.

> It's not discipline specific so they exist but see the prime ones like for higher education those are linked to funded projects and the only way you know about those is if they do a national search.

Another Participant 19 shared that there are other issues at play when trying to earn a faculty position, which includes the increasingly competitive nature of the faculty appointments. He described it this way:

> The day is coming when brand new minted PhD's won't be getting these jobs. They are going to have to get a post doc, because the stakes are becoming higher and higher that unless it is a very seasoned newly minted PhD that the ability to meet all those expectations in the six year time frame is going to be increasingly more difficult.

Discussion and Conclusion

If a student would like to serve in a top-ranked program he or she must be socialized and given the opportunity to learn the "hidden curriculum" or unofficial values and norms that this study presents (Jakeman, 2007). The participants stressed that it is important for students who want to serve as future faculty be exposed to securing and writing grants. This is consistent with Francis, Mills, Chapman, and Birks' (2009) comments when they suggest that writing for publications as a doctoral student can lead to securing grants. They share, "Publication in a variety of referred journals, including those with a measured impact factor, increases the chance of new graduates being awarded a competitive grant, in addition to increasing their profile in a specialty area" (p. 99).

Participants in this study stressed that research in the form of peer-reviewed articles and grants were essential to doctoral students developing the portfolio that would make them competitive within the academy. Many of the participants believed that developing a strong network of colleagues outside of one's home institutions would open opportunities for collaborative writing projects and grants. This would also help to address what Amo, Ada, and Sharman (2012) describe as "academic inbreeding," which they describe as strong programs and well-known faculty only working with and hiring those who have the same or higher academic status. They suggest, "Doctoral students and faculty should also be encouraged to engage in inter-institutional research activities, to ensure against academic inbreeding and against social stratification in institutes of higher education" (p. 89).

Participants suggested that peer-reviewed conferences would be a great forum to establish these networking opportunities. Having the opportunity to share one's work in the form of a presentation was encouraged. Many saw this as a step towards developing the skills to publish, especially if invited to serve as a reviewer of conference abstracts and papers. This is inline with Stoilescu and McDougall's (2010) comments that "there are many ways to start a publishing journey such as serving as a reviewer for conferences and eventually serving as a reviewer for peer-reviewed

journals" (p. 80). Many of the participants suggested that doctoral students should reach out to more experienced faculty outside of their institutions to establish professional relationships. This is not unusual in the United States. These relationships should not end when a student becomes a professor. Francis et al. (2009) share, "the notion of novice academics creating mentoring relationships with more experienced scholars in order to support them during the process of learning to write for publication is very popular in the United States of America" (p. 101).

Not only did the participants share that it was important for students at non-ranked programs to produce scholarship that would be acceptable at a peer-reviewed journal, they suggested that they send their publications to top-tier venues. This is consistent with Amo et al.'s (2012) suggestion that "Beyond developing doctoral students' research skills, doctoral students also need to be encouraged to target high quality academic journals. If a scholar produces a high quality manuscript, it should be sent for review in a highly-ranked academic journal, regardless of the scholar's status (p. 88)."

One of the key areas that the participants did not mention directly but is an underlining theme throughout this study is the role of the program faculty in mentoring and preparing their students for future faculty positions. As Gardner (2010b) suggested, "The role of faculty members is central to the student socialization process" (p. 40). They serve as the "gatekeepers into and out of doctoral programs (p. 39)" It is the program faculty's responsibility to expose their students to the themes that are outlined in this study. Most students, especially first generation college students, have not been exposed to the rigors of a doctoral education and the expectations of the academy. They first must be orientated to the expectation that publishing is a very important role in a faculty member's job.

Stoilescu and McDougall (2010) share the following:

> It is not easy to adjust one's life to publish scholarly manuscripts doctoral students have not had much experience in this area. Some feel that focusing on academic writing, other than the dissertation, occurs when one has landed a post-doctoral or assistant professorship position. However, we argue that graduate students should not wait to secure any of these positions in order to attempt to publish academic research. (p. 79)

So it is important that program faculty understand that they serve multiple roles in the life of a student. Gardner (2010b) suggests, "Faculty members play myriad roles in the socialization of doctoral students, including instructors in the classroom, supervisors for students with assistantships, committee members for the thesis or dissertation, advisor or chair of the research process, and even mentor" (p. 39). It will be important that they embrace these roles as their students will be seen as an extension of their academic legacy or progeny.

While all of the themes in the findings section had been repeated by the majority of the participants and reached saturation, there were additional comments provided that did not but warrant further discussion. Although teaching is an aspect of the expectation of faculty at these institutions, few respondents mentioned this as important to preparing for a position at a top-ranked institution. Here are some examples of what they said. Participant 21 mentioned that candidates need to have "Experience in teaching." Participant 22 shared that aspiring faculty also need to "Show their competence in teaching." Participant 23 admonished that potential faculty should "Acquire some teaching experience." And Participant 24 said that "Some teaching experience" is important. This supports and reinforces much of the research discussed in the literature review section of this paper. While not mentioned by the majority of participants, teaching and instruction remain vital aspects of the role of a faculty member. Future research may need to be undertaken in this area to find out why there seems to be little emphasis placed on teaching by search committee members.

Another area that has been missing from past discussions regarding higher education faculty is the issue of race. Although not mentioned by other participants, because of the rich description provided by Participant 3 in his comment, the researcher felt it important to include it in this section of the discussion (Barker, 2011, 2012; Felder, 2010; Felder et al., 2014), particularly as it provides context to the hidden curriculum that racial minorities will need to understand when embarking in the job selection process at top-ranked programs.

> The color line is clearer in the Deep South. But, it doesn't mean it doesn't exist in these liberal places, either it's just, the walls are a little more penetrable say in a liberal place but sure, know that the point really to your study and the whole dynamic of even asking the question it's not equal. There isn't an equal playing ground and race does play a factor because again there's a linkage and this hasn't been validated, but you can look at the top programs and you will not see large populations of students of color. But, you will also see that the people of color that go on and do well most of them, came out of a top program. Then there are those that didn't necessarily go to a top program, but worked very hard, figured out the system and understood to invest in the things that count in the academy. (Participant 3)

Intentionality and thought regarding the socialization of future faculty is essential to ensuring that a discipline or field continues to grow and strive. The beginning of this socialization generally begins during a students doctoral education. As a doctoral student considers a career in the academy they need to determine the type of institution they would like to serve at.

Participant 20's comments below properly summarize the findings from this study regarding how a person graduating from a non-ranked program can be successful in a faculty search of a top-ranked higher education program. He shared:

> Single authored journal articles in top tier publications. You need high impact, high profile venue, single authorship, your name must carry some weight in the professional association and that's something you work for through volunteering on committees and eventually getting on better committees, and better committees, until you get a prime position. Those are the things that almost force people to know you exist. And, you publish in the journals that are connected with your association, because everybody gets those. Everybody doesn't get the journal of higher education even though it is a top journal, everybody gets the review of higher education, and it comes with your membership. That is your target journal, everybody gets it. You know the other aspects is building a significant network, you don't have to go to a top program to have a network of top researchers that are at top programs, it's just harder, it's very hard to break in these closed circles, but it's not impossible, it happens. And then the third is, if you understand external funding and in this era it doesn't matter where you come from. If you can bring in money there will be a place for you in this academy.

Areas for Future Research

Gill and Hoppe (2009) found that entry into the academy was the number one reason that individuals decide to pursue doctoral studies. The pursuit of doctoral studies in higher education graduate programs can improve career prospects, personal development, and address the intrinsic interest in the field (Brailsford, 2010). It may be interesting for a quantitative study to be conducted to discover what percentage of doctoral students from higher education doctoral programs have a goal of serving as future faculty in similar programs. Further research on this topic should include an investigation of why faculty at top-ranked programs do not prioritize teaching when recommending strategies for being a successful faculty member at a top-ranked program. It also would be relevant to find out if students in non-ranked programs desire to serve at top-ranked programs

and vice versa for students at top-ranked programs. The lack of discussion of issues such as the role of race, social economic statues, and gender, and its role in the selection process needs to be explored in future research. Furthermore, it would also be interesting for a qualitative study to be developed to uncover how faculty at non-ranked program faculty prepare their graduates for future professional roles including faculty positions and what attributes/experiences are important for students to have. In the next section the researcher will provide his own concluding thoughts regarding the things individuals should be aware of if they aspire to serve at a top-ranked institution, but are a graduate of a non-ranked institution.

Concluding Thoughts

The faculty selection processes at top-ranked higher education institutions are a complex endeavor. Interestingly, many first generation college graduates who have the privilege to complete their doctoral degrees in higher education are not familiar with the unwritten values, expectations, and social mores of the academy. Although there is no literature that speaks to this notion, within private discussions amongst minority faculty in higher education programs, there is ample discussion regarding the socialization process. First generation students can be underprepared for faculty opportunities at more selective institutions. Search committees at top-ranked institutions can and will expect that successful candidates have certain academic pedigree beyond having the appropriate terminal degree. Questions related to institutional fit will inevitably arise even if a candidate has a substantial and competitive publication record and presentations. Although in the past the concept of undermatching has focused on students from disadvantaged backgrounds at the undergraduate level, it also can have implications for graduate students and their future employment prospects for selective programs. The importance of high school, undergraduate, and standardized test performance are important factors that influence the future academic trajectory of potential graduate students. Some first generation students will need to be told why it is important to perform well in these areas and how it will expand or limit future opportunities. Some incoming higher education graduate students, especially women and minorities, are unaware that they could possibly become a faculty member, much less a faculty member at a top-ranked institution.

Not having a complete understanding of the importance of program influence, relative prominence of their dissertation advisor, and academic prestige on job prospects has significant implications for those who end up at lower ranked programs. Generally, they tend to publish less by graduation than their counterparts who attended top-ranked programs (Hilmer & Hilmer, 2011). Additionally, faculty in these programs should talk to their students about their research interests and the demand for those interests within the field. In times of austerity as it relates to limited tenure-track faculty positions, search committees will look for candidates to be able to conduct research that has the possibility of being externally funded. This along with having the ability to teach in the areas that are needed and having practical full-time experience in the field will enhance a candidate's chances.

But perhaps the one of the unspoken and taboo discussions that must be brought into the open are the issues of racism and tokenism. Harper (2012) defined racism in the academy "as individual actions (both intentional and unconscious) that engender marginalization and inflict varying degrees of harm on minoritized persons; structures that determine and cyclically remanufacture racial inequity; and institutional norms that sustain White privilege and permit the ongoing subordination of minoritized persons" (p. 10). There is scant literature that addresses the selection process of higher education preparation program faculty and virtually no literature that reviews the ethnic diversity issue implicit in them. However, "the time has come to irritate the engrained practices of the field" (Croom, 2011, p. 67), and when dealing with these issues faculty need to ensure that they are not just addressing the lack of ethnically diverse faculty without understand-

ing the practices that hinder the development of underrepresentation of diverse doctoral students in higher education preparation programs (Felder et al., 2014).

The unspoken ideas of token faculty positions for ethnic minority positions permeate the academy. An example of this can happen when a search committee purposefully seeks to hire one person from a particular ethnic background, and they end up pitting candidates from one ethnic background against one another. There are plenty of private discussions amongst minority faculty, alumni, and graduate students affiliated with higher education programs regarding the faculty selection process. In particular because there are a limited amount of searches within the field, along with the limited number of minority candidates, most of the candidates know who they are competing against. This lends to there being only one faculty member from that ethnic background in the program. Although most higher education programs have around three full-time faculty members, many top-ranked programs can have six or more (Freeman, Hagedorn, Goodchild, & Wright, 2014). Which begs the question, Are these programs truly trying to diversify the program faculty roster beyond that one ethnic representative? These issues are not spoken about openly but have direct impact on the search process and anyone associated with them, i.e., potential candidates, the candidate's mentors, and search committee members need to take these issues into account. Patton and Catching (2009) address issue directly in the context of African Americans but has implications for other minority groups when they write:

> Student affairs (Higher Education) graduate programs that prepare faculty can assist in increasing the number of African Americans in the profession by developing intentional programs to recruit potential African American faculty. Such programs should be facilitated with the understanding that faculty will be recruited because of a true departmental commitment to diverse perspectives. Thus, the end goal should not be about recruiting one faculty of color, but to consistently identify ways to recruit additional faculty, and also to incorporate diverse perspectives into the curriculum (p. 724-725).

It is important that graduates of higher education doctoral programs be exposed to the vast opportunities that a degree in higher education administration can provide, including preparing them for the professoriate. Although many graduates of higher education doctoral programs do not become tenure-track faculty members at top-ranked institutions, it is still important to prepare these students for professional success in their area of their choice. Clearly, more research is needed to find out whether higher education programs adequately prepare graduates for the professoriate, but this study provides a useful starting point for higher education doctoral program student development and for future research in that realm.

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Biography

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