

Racial, ethnic, gender bias occurs in pathway from teacher to principal

February 28 2017



Bradley Davis, UTA assistant professor of educational leadership and policy studies. Credit: UT Arlington

A University of Texas at Arlington College of Education researcher shows in a new study that race and sex still matter when public school teachers seek to become principals.

Bradley Davis, UTA assistant professor of educational leadership and policy studies, published *Pathways to the Principalship: An Event History Analysis of the Careers of Teachers With Principal Certification* in the *American Educational Research Journal*. Davis' co-authors included Mark Gooden, UT Austin professor, and director of Principalship Program and PSEL Coordinator; and Alex Bowers, associate professor of Educational Leadership at Teachers College, Columbia University.

"We found that five to seven years after certification is when teachers are most likely to become principals," Davis said. "We found that for white men, that move happens sooner and is more likely than for women or men of a different race or ethnicity. We view this as evidence of systemic bias in principal selection."

Researchers used data on nearly 11,000 educators over 17 academic years in a highly diverse context. The study examined the career paths of [teachers](#) to determine whether and when they transition into principalship. The study incorporates a variety of event history analyses to determine how an individual's race, gender and their combination contribute to those individuals' likelihood of making the career transition.

The researchers found that even when controlling for personal characteristics and measures of professional experience, there were inequitable pathways to the principalship constructed around race and sex.

"Where that bias originates is beyond the scope of this particular paper but if you ask me, it often comes down to who school boards and district leaders are more comfortable with," Davis said. "Comfort is a subjective measure and often results in power holders hiring or promoting folks who look and act like themselves."

Teresa Taber Doughty, dean of the College of Education, said Davis' study illustrates a systemic challenge in the education sector.

"The study certainly gives a voice to the underrepresented," Doughty said. "The study shows serious racial, ethnic and gender inequities."

Davis said new research this semester will look at whether or not these gaps in opportunity have narrowed over time.

Provided by University of Texas at Arlington

Citation: Racial, ethnic, gender bias occurs in pathway from teacher to principal (2017, February 28) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-02-racial-ethnic-gender-bias-pathway.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.