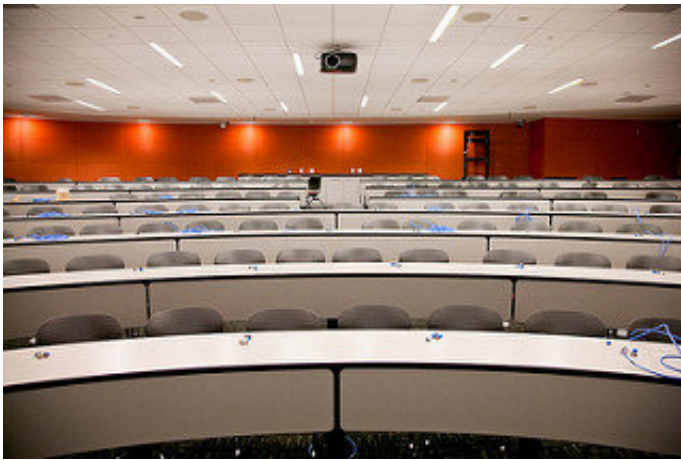


Study highlights challenges facing black computing faculty

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Credit: EdTech Stanford University

A recent study used text-mining analysis to highlight the impact that microaggressions have on black faculty in computing disciplines, finding that it contributes to a sense of alienation from the larger higher education community.

"There's been work on the so-called 'leaky pipeline' regarding the role of microaggressions against students and the impact they have on the lack of diversity in the STEM disciplines," says Fay Cobb Payton, first author of a paper on the work and a professor of information systems/technology and University Faculty Scholar at North Carolina State University. "But what about the effect on faculty?"

"We've seen a lot of people of color leaving [higher education](#) and wanted to better capture the role that microaggressions may be playing," Payton says. "It's understood that you need faculty of color if you want to increase STEM diversity. So why is it so hard to attract and retain faculty of color, particularly black faculty in computer science, information science and computer engineering?"

To address these questions, the researchers used text-mining techniques to analyze 135 news articles published since 2010 in media outlets that focus on higher education. The researchers defined microaggressions as brief and commonplace verbal, behavioral or environmental indignities – whether intentional or unintentional – that communicate hostility, insensitivity and negativity to an individual or group.

The researchers found there was a significant "service tax," with black faculty being asked to take on more administrative responsibilities – such as serving on hiring committees and efforts focused on diversity – than their non-black peers. This takes time away from work that is weighted more heavily when faculty come up for promotion.

"And even with this disproportionate amount of additional service work, black faculty are not well represented in administrative positions associated with leadership," Payton notes.

The data-mining analysis also found evidence that the impact of microaggressions on black faculty was similar to the impact on black students. Namely, microaggressions created a sense of isolation that effectively distanced faculty from their academic and work communities.

"This likely contributes to the departure of black researchers from higher education, which is consistent with what we – as members of higher ed communities – have seen anecdotally over the course of our

careers," Payton says.

"This [work](#) highlights the need to broaden participation in the field, workforce competitiveness, and shifts from consumer to ownership/entrepreneurship paradigms," Payton says. "For example, leaders need to evaluate the culture in their departments and colleges to not only ensure inclusive climates and practices, but that leaders lead transformatively to address and clear difficult impediments. Black faculty should not face undue 'service tax' burdens, or be visible only when a unit needs to check a box marked 'diversity.' Black faculty, like all faculty, want to be acknowledged for their technical aptitude. They want to rise or fall without facing burdens or responsibilities that other [faculty](#) don't have to deal with."

The paper, "(Text)Mining Microaggressions Literature: Implications Impacting Black Computing Faculty," is published in the Journal of Negro Education.

More information: Fay Cobb Payton et al. *(Text)Mining Microaggressions Literature: Implications Impacting Black Computing Faculty*, *The Journal of Negro Education* (2018). [DOI: 10.7709/jnegroeducation.87.3.0217](#)

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