

**8-a. Review of Recommendations
from the Committee on the
Status of Racial and Ethnic
Minorities (*action item*)
Council**

**American Sociological Association
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**Report of the American Sociological Association (ASA) Committee on the
Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities (SREM) in Sociology:
Results of the Graduate Student Survey**

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INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In 2007, the American Sociological Association (ASA) Committee on the Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities in Sociology (SREM) authorized Committee Chair Denise Segura to develop a survey to investigate the professional experiences and academic preparation of racial-ethnic minority graduate students¹ in the discipline. In 2008, SREM approved an online graduate student survey that was pre-tested at one large, PhD-granting department. In 2009, the revised graduate student survey was administered to 22 PhD-granting sociology departments in the United States. Survey development was supported jointly by the University of California, Santa Barbara's Institute for Social, Behavioral and Economic Research (ISBER) and ASA. SREM members Denise Segura, Scott Brooks and Jean Shin are the co-Principal Investigators and collaborated in the development of the survey and the data analysis. Survey results have been analyzed by Denise Segura in consultation with Dr. Laura Romo, UCSB Gevirtz Graduate School of Education. ASA Director of Research Dr. Roberta Spalter-Roth provided key feedback and advice on survey construction and analysis.

The following report provides an executive summary, an analysis of key survey findings regarding differences between white students and students of color on the importance of racial-ethnic diversity, peer social climate, faculty mentoring and professional socialization, and program satisfaction. The report concludes with recommendations for future research and how to improve departmental climate and strengthen the professional socialization of graduate students.

¹ The terms "racial-ethnic" minority and students of color are used interchangeably to refer to students of African American, Asian, American Indian, and Latina/o heritage.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Findings

Several major findings emerged from the 2009 Graduate Student Survey administered to graduate students in 22 PhD-granting institutions in sociology in the United States.

1. Graduate students perceive and value racial-ethnic departmental diversity differently. Compared to White students, students of color reported that faculty and department diversity was more important to their enrollment decisions.
2. Student satisfaction with their graduate program varies by race-ethnicity. Latina/o and Asian students reported less satisfaction with their graduate program vis-à-vis White and African American students.
3. Graduate students perceived “raced” advantages in other groups. Compared to students of color, White students more strongly agreed that racial-ethnic minority students are given advantages that discriminate against other students. Conversely, racial-ethnic minority students more strongly agreed that White students are given advantages that discriminate against other students.
4. Although reports of race-ethnic discrimination were low for all students, students of color reported slightly higher levels of discrimination from their peers compared to White students.
5. Latina/o students perceived less respect from their peers compared to White students.
6. Asian students felt less accepted by other graduate students compared to White students.
7. Students generally reported moderate levels of faculty mentoring. However, compared to African American students, Latinas/os reported lower levels of mentoring.
8. For all students, increased mentoring from faculty, more perceived respect among students, and acceptance from other students was associated with higher levels of satisfaction with their graduate program.
9. A higher percentage of students of color have seriously considered leaving their program compared to White students.

These findings are consistent with other initiatives from several other ASA programs and departments. Most notably, the findings of this report complement the ASA Research Department’s recent study of Minority Fellowship Program (MFP) alumni who are or were early career PhDs, and their productivity, placement, and retention compared to two comparison groups (Spalter-Roth, Mayorova, Shin, and White 2011).

Recommendations

1. Sociology departments should explicitly recognize that as their programs diversify in ways that reverse historical patterns of enrolling predominantly White students, there will be tensions among students, faculty, and staff that need to be identified and analyzed to develop support systems that strengthen peer relations, faculty mentoring and academic professionalization.
2. ASA should disseminate and discuss the findings of this report at the yearly ASA conferences of the Directors of Graduate Studies and the Department Chairs.
3. Through SREM and the Minority Affairs Program, ASA should sponsor a panel and series of focus groups with graduate students to discuss the report findings and develop recommendations for the ASA to disseminate to departments to consider integrating into their programs.
4. Through SREM, ASA should encourage the regional sociological associations to disseminate the report findings through special thematic sessions. Regional associations should also be encouraged to hold focus groups with graduate students to discuss the report findings and develop recommendations to disseminate to departments to consider integrating into their programs.
5. ASA and SREM should jointly encourage departments to hold a series of discussions with their graduate students to discuss the report findings and ascertain what might be done within the program to improve peer relations and academic professionalization.
6. ASA should support the production of research briefs that further analyze findings of this SREM report to include unreported features of department climate, faculty advising, and departmental procedures that may also impact graduate student satisfaction and their preparation for academic careers.
7. ASA Council should renewal of the Committee on the Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities for another five-year term. We recommend that SREM collaborate with the ASA Research Department to examine longitudinal career tracks of early-career faculty to identify differences by race-ethnicity and gender