

The “Down-the-Hall” Phenomenon: Preparing the Next Generation of Faculty to Use Innovative Pedagogy



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Department of Research on the Discipline and Profession[†]

How is pedagogical knowledge disseminated to the next generation of faculty? Our research suggests that a significant approach to socializing graduate students to become users and developers of cutting-edge teaching and learning materials in TRAILS (the American Sociological Association’s (ASA’s) online, peer-reviewed, digital Teaching Resources and Innovative Library in Sociology) is through departmental and “teaching and learning” networks. Researchers have found networks of social ties to be important in the diffusion process. Social ties are seen as the basis for recruitment and diffusion occurring along existing lines of interaction (Diani and McAdam 2003). Those networks with dense ties are viewed as the most successful in spreading innovations (Rogers 2003). Departmental interaction is one such method of diffusion of innovations. Frickel and Gross (2005) have described departmental transmission as a “down-the-hall” phenomenon with information passing from well-respected senior faculty members to their juniors.

In this data brief we investigate whether departments are an important method for transmission of teaching and learning knowledge to graduate students. We examine other potential means of transmission, such as participating in activities that are part of what we have labeled the “teaching and learning network” (Spalter-Roth et. al 2011). The two most frequent network activities are subscribing to the ASA journal *Teaching Sociology* and joining the ASA Teaching and Learning in Sociology section. Finally, we examine whether the faculty of the future are similar to current faculty subscribers. To examine the efficacy of these networks in predicting subscription to the library of teaching and learning materials, we use unobtrusive data, primarily from ASA’s 2011 membership database (the most recent full year for which data are available). The database includes information on ASA member characteristics, such as current status (graduate student or faculty), demographics, area of academic specialty, type of academic institution at which members are employed, and participation in ASA activities such as section membership or professional journal subscriptions. Graduate students are defined as those who have joined ASA in the “student” member category, have at least a bachelor’s degree, and have filled out information about the probable year of obtaining their graduate degree.

In previous research briefs, we analyzed the diffusion patterns of TRAILS among faculty members, their characteristics, and the relationship between subscribing to the digital library of teaching and learning materials and participating in other activities geared toward the scholarship of teaching and learning.¹ This current brief focuses on the 162 ASA graduate student members who subscribed to TRAILS in 2011. A descriptive analysis compares the characteristics of student and faculty subscribers. A multivariate regression analysis explores the significant factors associated with ASA graduate student members’ subscriptions to the online library of teaching resources.

[†]Prepared by Roberta Spalter-Roth, PhD, Michael Kisielewski, and Jean Shin, PhD. This brief is part of an ongoing study conducted by the ASA Department of Research on the Discipline and Profession, and the ASA Minority Affairs Program.

¹See www.asanet.org/documents/research/docs/ASA_Data_Brief_TRAILS_072012.pdf.

GRADUATE AND FACULTY TRAILS SUBSCRIBERS IN 2011 REPRESENTED A PREDOMINANTLY HOMOGENEOUS USER GROUP

In 2011, 485 ASA members with faculty positions purchased a subscription to TRAILS; an additional 162 graduate student members also purchased subscriptions (see Table 1). Although a smaller percentage of TRAILS subscribers who were graduate students also subscribed to the journal *Teaching Sociology* (TS) than faculty members, these graduate student subscribers to *Teaching Sociology* were almost six times more likely than non-TS subscribers to have a TRAILS membership (see Table 1). Likewise, a substantially smaller number of graduate student TRAILS subscribers belonged to the ASA Section on Teaching and Learning in Sociology (TLS) than did faculty members. Yet here again, these student TLS Section members were almost seven times more likely to have a TRAILS membership than graduate students who were not section members. Both faculty and graduate students are significantly less likely to be found at research-extensive (Research 1) universities than other types of schools. Of all graduate students at research-extensive schools, only 3.7 percent subscribed to TRAILS, in contrast to 6.0 percent of all graduate students at other types of institutions (see Table 1). Nonetheless, the small number of faculty subscribers from research-extensive schools may encourage graduate students to join and to become aware of the cutting-edge pedagogical materials contained in TRAILS. Appendix Table 1a shows that fully 70 percent of the graduate student subscribers were in academic departments with at least one other TRAILS subscriber who was a faculty member. An examination of Appendix Tables 1a and 1b shows homogeneity between the characteristics of faculty and graduate student subscribers. As with the faculty subscribers, a significantly higher percentage of female graduate student members than males were TRAILS subscribers (5.0 percent compared to 3.1 percent, respectively). Out of each racial and ethnic group that subscribed to TRAILS, whites and Hispanic/Latino had the highest subscription rates. However, a smaller percentage of African-American graduate students subscribed compared to the percentage of African-American faculty subscribers (see Figure 1). These descriptive findings suggest patterns of diffusion and transmission through academic departments, section activities, institutional types, and similarities in demographic characteristics, but the patterns are only suggestive.

GRADUATE STUDENT TRAILS SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE ASSOCIATED WITH FACULTY MEMBER TRAILS PARTICIPATION AND TWO OTHER TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Which of these patterns of diffusion and transmission remain significant when compared to one another? Figure 2 displays the three statistically significant factors associated with graduate student subscriptions to TRAILS in 2011, based on a binary logistic regression model. All of these factors reflect methods of dissemination and transmission. These factors consist of departmental propinquity and participation in teaching and learning activities: that is, subscribing to the journal *Teaching Sociology* and belonging to the ASA Section on Teaching and Learning in Sociology. The full results in Appendix Table 2 show that ASA graduate student members in 2011 with one or more faculty members from the same academic department are almost twice as likely to be TRAILS subscribers compared to graduate students whose within-department faculty are not TRAILS subscribers.

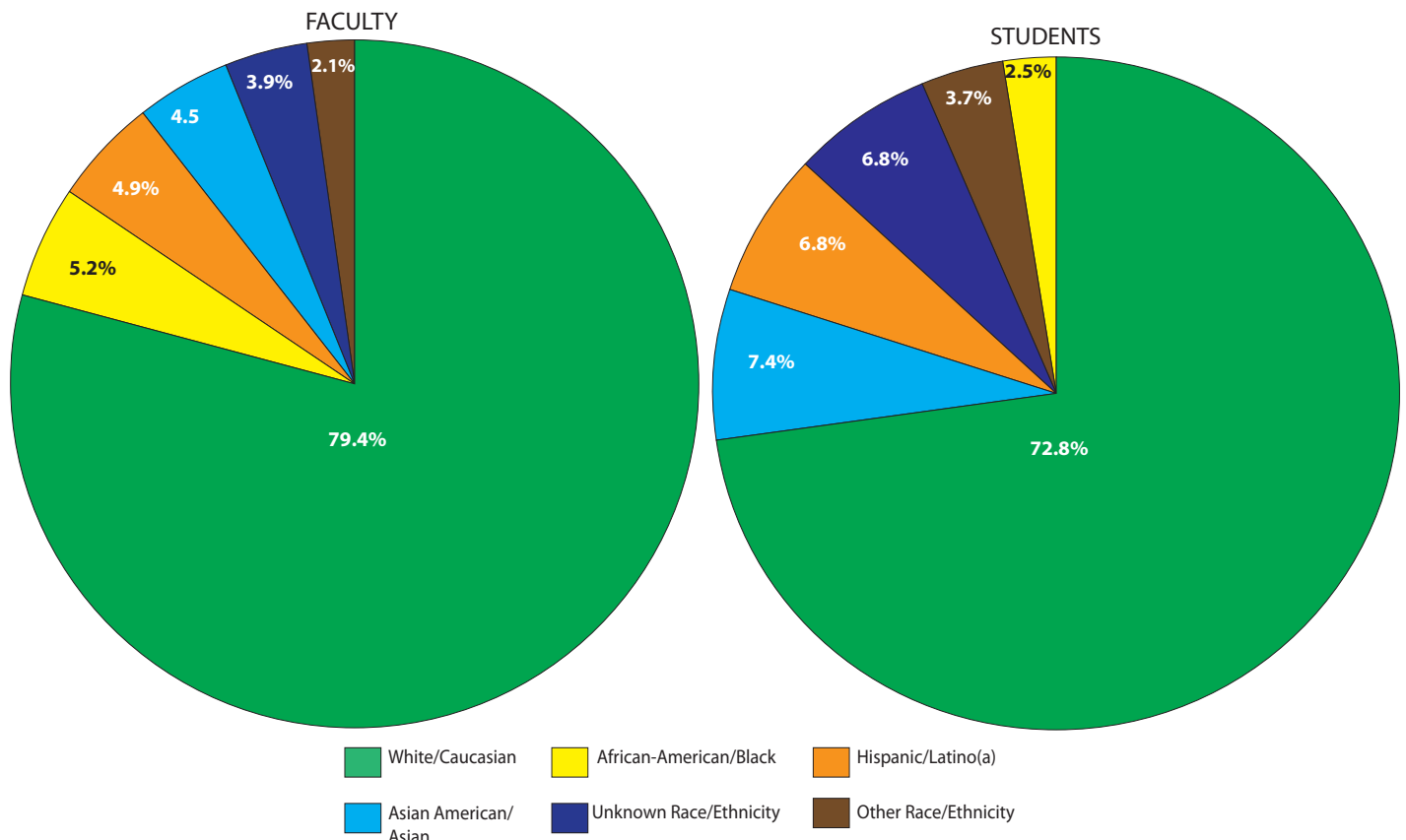
Table 1. ASA Graduate Student and Faculty Member TRAILS Subscribers by Subscription Status to *Teaching Sociology*, Membership in the ASA Teaching and Learning Section, and Type of Academic Institution: 2011.

Number of ASA members with characteristic/total possible cases	TRAILS Subscribers	
	Graduate Students (N=162)	Faculty (N=485)
Subscription to <i>Teaching Sociology</i>		
Subscribed (54/301; 196/966)	17.9%	20.3%
Not subscribed (108/3,475; 289/4,345)	3.1%	6.7%
<i>Chi-Square</i>	148.41***	177.15***
Teaching and Learning in Sociology Section Membership		
Section member (41/184; 145/471)	22.3%	30.8%
Not a member (121/3,592; 340/4,840)	3.4%	7.0%
<i>Chi-Square</i>	152.49***	292.04***
Type of School		
Research I university (104/2,814; 107/2,127)	3.7%	5.0%
Other type of school (58/962; 378/3,184)	6.0%	11.9%
<i>Chi-Square</i>	9.51***	80.08***

Note: For 5,311 faculty and 3,776 graduate student ASA members in the 2011 membership year; *** p<0.001.

Source: American Sociological Association, Department of Research on the Discipline and Profession, 2012.

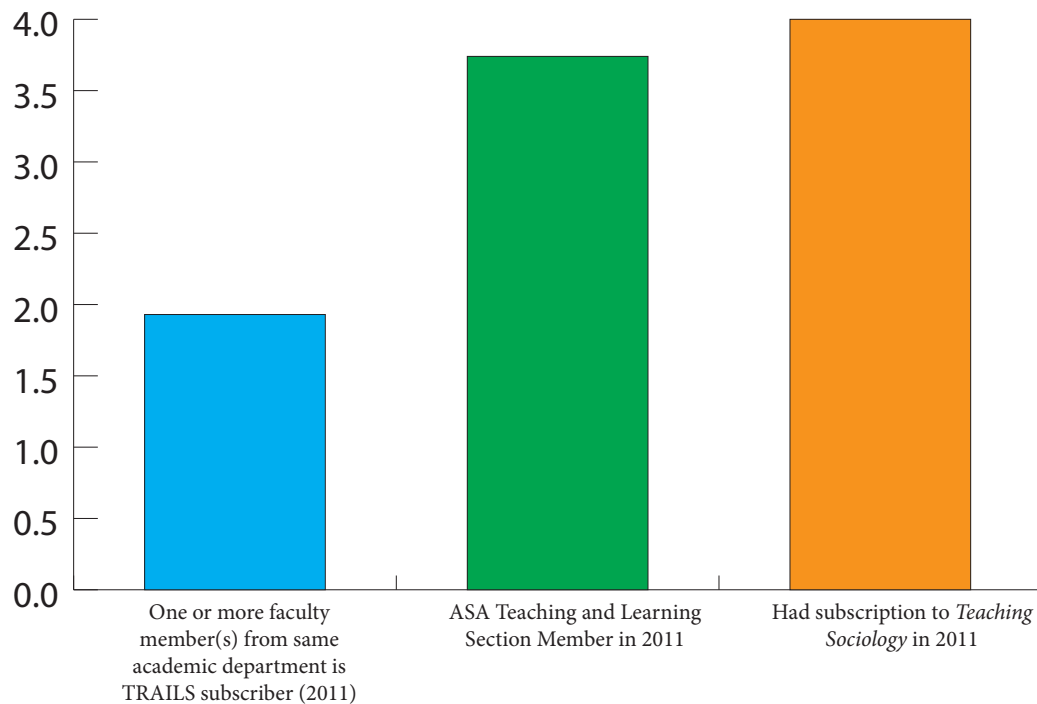
Figure 1. Percent ASA Faculty and Graduate Student Member TRAILS Subscription Rates by Race: 2011.



Note: For 485 ASA faculty and 162 graduate student TRAILS subscribers in the 2011 membership year.

Source: American Sociological Association, Department of Research on the Discipline and Profession, 2012.

Figure 2. Statistically Significant Logistic Regression Results for 2011 ASA Graduate Student TRAILS Subscriptions Associated with All TRAILS Subscriptions, by Intra-Departmental Faculty Subscribers and Two Types of Teaching and Learning Activities.



Note: Above are the statistically significant odds ratios from a logistic regression model on ASA graduate student subscribers to TRAILS in 2011. Please see Appendix Table 2 for the complete model.

Source: American Sociological Association, Department of Research on the Discipline and Profession, 2012.

However, the gender of this faculty member was not significant. Graduate students participating in the most frequent activities in the teaching and learning network²—subscribing to *Teaching Sociology* and joining the ASA Section on Teaching and Learning in Sociology—are about four times as likely to subscribe to TRAILS. Other factors such as demographic characteristics of the graduate students are not associated significantly with subscribing to TRAILS. Some of these factors, such as gender, are significantly related (statistically) to faculty subscriptions to TRAILS, but they do not appear to be significantly related to student subscriptions. The full results of the regression model upon which Figure 2 is based are displayed in Appendix Table 2.

Discussion

These results indicate that graduate students subscribe to ASA’s online digital library for innovative teaching and learning resources as a result of relationships and networks. Graduate students are almost twice as likely to subscribe to TRAILS when at least one faculty member from their academic department subscribes—other factors being equal. This finding suggests that sociology faculty play a significant role in generating awareness of teaching and learning activities to students—what has been referred to as the “down-the-hall” phenomenon (Frickel and Gross 2005). They are four times as likely to subscribe to this teaching tool if they belong to the ASA Section on Teaching and Learning in Sociology and if they subscribe also to the discipline’s teaching journal (*Teaching Sociology*). These graduate students appear to have a strong interest in teach-

ing and learning activities. Those graduate students with a teaching orientation who are currently attending research-extensive universities may seek positions at more teaching-oriented schools, and as future faculty their institutional profile may be similar to current faculty. In terms of other characteristics, graduate students and faculty show relative homogeneity. Overall, our results indicate that the process of socialization to be a good teacher is the result of relationships with departmental faculty and participation in network activities that valorize teaching.

However, we should note that these findings may not be causal; it could be the case that graduate students encourage faculty members to subscribe to the digital library, rather than the reverse. Thus, the down-the-hall process of dissemination may not be from senior to junior scholars, but the other way around. Although we think that the relationships shown in the regression model are likely to be causal, regardless of whether this is the case, the models show significant relationships suggesting that networks play an important part in the dissemination of pedagogical materials.

References

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²See [www.asanet.org/images/research/docs/pdf/Networks and Diffusion.pdf](http://www.asanet.org/images/research/docs/pdf/Networks_and_Diffusion.pdf).

Appendix Table 1a. Subscription to TRAILS by ASA Graduate Students Members: 2011.

Characteristics	Graduate Students		
	N=3,776	Subscribed to TRAILS (N=162)	
		Percent	Count
One or more faculty member(s) from same academic department is subscribed to TRAILS		70.4%	113
Gender			
Women	2,335	5.0%	117
Men	1,441	3.1%	45
<i>Chi-Square</i>		7.73**	
Race/Ethnicity			
African-American/Black	264	1.5%	4
Asian American/Asian	263	4.6%	12
Hispanic/Latino(a)	223	4.9%	11
White/Caucasian	2,294	5.1%	118
Other Race/Ethnicity	161	3.7%	6
Unknown Race/Ethnicity	571	1.9%	11
<i>Chi-Square</i>		17.19**	
Degree			
Has Master's degree	2,657	5.0%	133
Does not have Master's degree	1,119	2.6%	29
<i>Chi-Square</i>		11.18***	

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05 (2-tailed tests).

Source: American Sociological Association, Department of Research on the Discipline and Profession, 2012.

Appendix Table 1b. Subscription to TRAILS by ASA Faculty Members: 2011.

Characteristics	Faculty		
	N=5,311	Subscribed to TRAILS (N=485)	
		Percent	Count
Gender			
Women	2,775	12.1%	335
Men	2,536	5.9%	150
<i>Chi-Square</i>	60.54***		
Race/Ethnicity			
African-American/Black	357	7.0%	25
Asian American/Asian	295	7.5%	22
Hispanic/Latino(a)	246	9.8%	24
White/Caucasian	3,956	9.7%	385
Other Race/Ethnicity	132	7.6%	10
Unknown Race/Ethnicity	325	5.8%	19
<i>Chi-Square</i>		29.34	
Degree			
Has doctoral degree	4,916	9.1%	445
Does not have doctoral degree	395	10.1%	40
<i>Chi-Square</i>		50.9*	

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05 (2-tailed tests).

Source: American Sociological Association, Department of Research on the Discipline and Profession, 2012.

**Appendix Table 2. ASA Graduate Student TRAILS Subscribers, 2011:
Log-Odds of Subscribing to the Digital Online Library.**

Variables	Graduate Student Subscriber to TRAILS in 2011		
	Coefficient	Robust Standard Error	Odds Ratio
One or more faculty member(s) from same academic department is TRAILS subscriber (2011)	0.658**	0.238	1.93
ASA Teaching and Learning Section member in 2011	1.319*	0.237	3.74
Had subscription to <i>Teaching Sociology</i> in 2011	1.386*	0.211	4.0
Female faculty member	0.182	0.206	1.20
Academic institution is Master's-level or other (compared to Research I/research-extensive institutions)	0.402	0.599	0.99
Race/ethnicity (compared to whites)			
African-American/Black	-1.192	0.520	0.30
Asian American/Asian	0.203	0.318	1.23
Hispanic/Latino(a)	0.075	0.335	1.08
Other race/ethnicity	-0.288	0.441	0.75
Ethnicity missing (control variable)	-0.774	0.325	0.46
Constant	-3.701*	0.206	0.03
Number of cases	3,776		
Wald Chi-Square	146.02		
-2 Log likelihood	673.4		

Note: * $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Source: American Sociological Association, Department of Research on the Discipline and Profession, 2012.

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American Sociological Association
Department of Research on the Discipline and Profession
www.asanet.org
research@asanet.org

