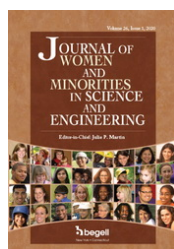


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One foot out the door: Interrogating the "risky hire" narrative in STEM faculty careers

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ABSTRACT

Many faculty believe that the racial demography of their disciplines afford highly qualified, racially minoritized scholars more power in the academic job market. As such, search committees may not offer candidates from these groups faculty positions because they perceive them to be high risk and difficult to retain. One often cited study by Smith et al (1996) debunked this myth, showing highly competitive racially minoritized candidates did not have more offers, but it is over two decades old, and the narrative remains. Using publicly available data of the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP), we studied this issue and found no statistically significant differences in rates of early departure between highly qualified, racially minoritized scholars and other highly qualified racial groups across three different STEM disciplines. We also used data from U.S. News and World Report (USNWR) university rankings, and the FY 2007 Survey of Research and Development Expenditures at Universities and Colleges to understand whether early-departing faculty across all racial categories leave for more prestigious institutions as is assumed. Those results indicate a slight trend of early-departing faculty leaving for more prestigious institutions than their previous one. We situate these findings within the faculty diversity discourse and offer implications for practice and future research.



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