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Who is My Professor? A Content Analysis of Online Faculty Profiles to Inform Graduate Student Choice

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Abstract

As technology has advanced, faculty members have many ways to connect with current and prospective students. Yet, no extant research has examined online faculty profiles on institutional (.edu) websites. To inform graduate student choice literature, we examined a random sample of 1,500 online faculty profiles across 500 U.S. graduate programs. Findings suggest assistant and associate professors publish the most informative online profiles, whereas private for-profit professors and lecturers publish the least informative profiles. In addition, zero faculty members self-identified their pronouns, race and ethnicity, or their first-generation college student status in their biographical statement. Implications for research and practice in U.S. and international contexts are addressed.

Keywords: graduate students, faculty, technology, Internet, faculty profiles

Introduction

To date, sparse research has analyzed graduate student choice. A Google Scholar (2018) search for “undergraduate student choice” yielded dozens of peer-reviewed studies across four decades, while a search for “graduate student choice” produced few studies published in the 21st century. Strayhorn, Williams, Tillman-Kelly, and Suddeth (2013) examined graduate student choice of HBCU graduates, while Ramirez (2013) interviewed Latinas/os to learn of how these students chose doctoral programs. However, Kallio’s (1995) and English and Umbach’s (2016) studies of graduate student enrollment decisions are the largest to date.

To begin to this work, this study examines one of the most popular sources of pre-enrollment information for prospective college students across populations: the Internet (Burdett, 2013; Daun-Barnett & Das, 2013). Specifically, we examined a random sample of 1,500 online faculty profiles published on institutional .edu websites, serving as a potential source of information for students to understand the “reputation” of “faculty” (Kallio, 1995, p. 115; Olson & King, 1985, p. 312). Filling a large and important gap in the literature related to graduate student choice, this study will answer two questions:

- 1.) Do faculty members publish online profiles on their institution’s .edu website?
- 2.) If so, what information do faculty members share about themselves across institution type, faculty rank, and academic discipline?

Literature Review

This study will expand upon extant research suggesting faculty members have a large influence over a student’s graduate school preference (Bersola et al., 2014; Kallio, 1995; Olson & King, 1985; Ramirez, 2013; Strayhorn et al., 2013). Ultimately, this study seeks to contribute to graduate school choice literature and articulate what information faculty members share in their online profiles published on institutional websites, a potentially influential source of pre-application material for prospective graduate students, especially graduate students of color (Ramirez, 2013; Strayhorn et al., 2013).

Researchers have examined students’ decisions to pursue graduate school from the perspective of enrolled graduate students. Graduate students have reported a passion for learning, research, and service in a specific field was a powerful motivator for students to pursue graduate education, including, but not limited to, the fields of school psychology (Graves & Wright, 2007), engineering (Matusovich, Streveler, & Miller, 2010), nursing (Hickey, Sumsion, & Harrison, 2013), secondary music education (Dust, 2006), business (Johnson, 2010), and student affairs (Mertz, Strayhorn, &

Eckman, 2012). However, none of these studies have focused on the role of faculty in the decision-making processes of international students.

Olson and King (1985) and Malaney (1987) first analyzed the graduate school choice process, finding graduate school choice idiosyncratic from student to student. Both studies asserted a student's age, race, gender, socioeconomic status, and family structure influences a student's choice to attend a specific graduate school (Malaney, 1987; Olson & King, 1985). In a survey study of 303 graduate students at a large, public, Midwestern university, Olson and King learned "reputation of faculty" and miscellaneous personal reasons were the most important factors influencing the initial consideration of the university (1985, p. 312). In the largest study of graduate school choice to date, Kallio (1995) examined survey data from 2,834 graduate students at the University of Michigan. Kallio asked respondents to rate 31 institutional or graduate degree program characteristics, with these characteristics divided into four categories: academic, work, spousal, and social. Of academic factors informing graduate student choice, Kallio found "reputation of a department's faculty" and "quality of teaching" (p. 115) to be the most influential.

Later, Bersola, Stolzenberg, Fosnacht, and Love (2014) surveyed 540 admitted doctoral students at a public, highly selective research institution in the Western United States. Their results indicated faculty quality "the most important factor in the selection of the doctoral program, followed by research quality, faculty access, and program reputation" (Bersola et al., 2014, p. 525). When dividing the sample into admitted students and those who eventually enrolled, Bersola et al. (2014) learned "contact with faculty" was the most influential factor driving graduate students to enroll at the institution, leading the authors to assert, "admits who are inclined to enroll would also be more inclined to interact with faculty" (p. 528). Specific to underrepresented minorities (URMs), Bersola et al. (2014) also found admitted doctoral "URMs were significantly more likely to have contact with a faculty member" than non-URM peers before the enrollment process (p. 529), leading the researchers to assert URMs "tended to place more importance when choosing an institution on faculty" (p. 533) than non-URM peers.

However, beyond Olson and King's (1985), Kallio's (1995), and Bersola et al.'s (2014) studies—and other studies specific to certain types of graduate programs (Johnson, 2010; Mertz, Strayhorn, & Eckman, 2012; Pooch & Love, 2001)—research focused on specific graduate school choice across disciplines remains limited. Moreover, no extant research has explored how a faculty member's presence online influences students seeking graduate studies as an international student, emphasizing the importance and necessity of this study.

Methods

Population and Sample

To complete the study, the research team needed to identify two different populations and samples: the population of U.S. institutions granting at least a master's degree and the population of U.S. postsecondary faculty members. Per the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), there were 2,092 U.S. institutions of higher education that awarded a master's degree or higher during the 2016-2017 academic year. After performing a power analysis with a 99% confidence level and confidence interval of 5, the team learned 500 institutions was a sample size large enough to be generalizable and robust for subsequent quantitative analysis.

After the research team identified the institution population and sample, the research team explored the total number of faculty members working in U.S. institutions of higher education granting at least master's degrees. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2018), there were 1.5 million faculty members—across all ranks, including professors, associate professors, assistant professors, instructors, lecturers, assisting/teaching professors, adjunct professors, and interim professors—working in degree-granting U.S. institutions during the 2016-2017 academic year. Of these 1.5 million faculty members, 53% of faculty worked full-time and 47% worked part-time. However, per IPEDS, there were 564,558 faculty members—across all ranks—working at U.S. institutions granting at least master's degrees during the 2016-2017 academic year. As a result, the research team considered 564,558 as this study's population. After another power analysis with a 99% confidence level and confidence interval of 5, the team learned 665 online faculty profiles was a sample size large enough to be generalizable and robust for subsequent quantitative analysis.

Yet, after an exploratory analysis of the institution and faculty sample, the research team learned several institutions in the sample only employed three faculty members in total. These institutions were often very small (fewer than 500 enrolled students) and offered graduate degrees in niche fields such as massage therapy, art curation, cloud computing, or wine making. As the first study of its kind, the research team decided to maintain the institution sample size of 500 and gather data for three online faculty profiles per institution, resulting in 1,500 online faculty profiles in this study's sample. As a result, this sample size of 1,500 approximately represents a 99% confidence level and confidence interval of 3, assuming a population of 564,558 faculty members from all ranks working in U.S. institutions granting at least master's degrees in 2016-2017.

Data Collection

The research team gathered all online faculty profile data during the Fall 2017 semester (August through December), understanding many

prospective graduate students search for and apply to graduate programs during the fall semester.

After identifying each institution and faculty sample size, the team employed a two-pronged randomization technique: one numeric and one alphanumeric. First, using IPEDS data, the team alphabetized all institutions awarding at least master's degrees and then assigned each institution a consecutive number. Then, the team employed a random number generator—set to parameters of 1 to 2,092—to randomly assign 500 institutions to the study's sample. Assigning a random sample of faculty to the study was more difficult, as many institutions in the study's sample did not publish a publicly-available central faculty directory on their institutional .edu website. This discovery served as an inadvertent finding, which will be discussed in a later section of this study.

As a result of a lack of central faculty directories online, the research team adopted an alphanumeric randomization technique. For 500 institutions, the research team located the list of graduate programs on each institutional website and employed a random letter generator to focus on one graduate program from each institution (i.e., the letter “G” would correspond to graduate programs beginning with the letter “G,” such as Geology). Then, the team would assign a random number to the list of programs (i.e., seven programs beginning with the letter “G” would render a random number generator set to parameters of 1 to 7) and randomly assign a graduate program to the study. Then, the team again employed a random letter generator to identify faculty in that program (i.e., the letter “J” would correspond to faculty members with last names starting with “J”). If the institution did not offer a graduate program or employ a faculty member with a certain letter, the team used the next letter in the alphabet to assign a program and/or faculty member to the study. After consulting with several subject matter experts, including current graduate faculty members, the research team agreed this alphanumeric approach to identifying faculty members was the most appropriate and feasible method of assigning a truly random sample of faculty members to this study.

After performing this alphanumeric randomization technique, the research team learned 189 of the 1,500 faculty members assigned to the study did not publish online faculty profiles. Table 1 below displays these faculty without institutional website profiles by institution type:

Table 1. Faculty without online faculty profiles on institutional websites, by institution type (n=189)

| <u>Institution type</u> | n (% of sample) |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Public, four-year | 15 (7.9%) |
| Private, four-year, nonprofit | 84 (44.4%) |
| Private, four-year, for-profit | 90 (47.7%) |
| Total | 189 (100%) |

As the research team identified random faculty members to assign to the study, the research team would extract the URL of the online faculty profile from the webpage, along with any text, images, and videos part of the faculty profile. The research team uploaded this data to a collaborative online database for analysis.

Data Analysis

The research team employed content analysis to analyze the data. The first round of coding required the research team to perform simple attribute coding (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) of the first 25 faculty profiles, producing three attribute codes: institution type, faculty rank, and academic discipline. The second round of descriptive coding (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) required the research team to evaluate the first 25 faculty profiles separately and then collaborate to compare results. From these first 25 profiles, a preliminary list of nine variables emerged: 1.) picture, 2.) video, 3.) email address, 4.) phone number, 5.) office location, 6.) classes taught, 7.) curriculum vitae, 8.) hyperlink to a personal website, and 9.) degrees earned. The research team employed a simple binary coding strategy to code the data (1=yes, 0=no).

After this first round of coding, the research team performed a third round of inferential coding (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) to glean more insight from each faculty member's biographical statement. After each research team member performed the third round of coding, the team collaborated to compare results, producing five inferential codes to describe biographical statements, including whether the statement was written in the 1.) first-person or 2.) third-person, and the presence of a faculty member's 3.) research interests, 4.) research publications, and 5.) professional memberships. The research team again employed a simple binary coding strategy to code the data (1=yes, 0=no). In all, each research team member used 17 codes to analyze each online faculty profile, producing a total of 25,500 observations (17 codes per 1,500 faculty profiles).

Finally, to present the data in a comprehensible and feasible fashion, the research team needed to decide how to neatly categorize the various academic disciplines of each faculty member in the study. Initially, the research team coded over 200 different academic disciplines, and the team decided displaying data from over 200 academic disciplines was unfeasible. Moreover, the academic disciplines were often unique to certain types of institutions, as this study's sample included faculty members in theology, law, and medicine programs, even though many institutions in the study's sample did not offer one or more of these types of programs. As a result, the research team sought out a diverse graduate program catalog, which included as many different academic disciplines as possible, including theology, law, and medicine. Ultimately, the research team discovered Baylor University's (2018) graduate school catalog, which included graduate degree programs in theology, law, medicine, and a wide range of arts and sciences. Therefore, online faculty profiles were organized using Baylor's graduate school catalog, resulting in each faculty member's academic discipline falling into one of ten schools: 1.) arts and sciences, 2.) business, 3.) education, 4.) engineering and computer science, 5.) health and human services, 6.) law, 7.) music, 8.) nursing, 9.) social work, and 10.) theology. By using Baylor University's (2018) graduate program catalog, the research team was able to categorize every faculty member's academic discipline.

A description of the online faculty profiles in this study's sample (n=1,311; 189 faculty did not publish online profiles) can be found in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of online faculty profiles on institutional websites (n=1,311)

| <u>Institution type</u> | n (% of category) |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Public, four-year | 327 (24.9%) |
| Private, four-year, nonprofit | 894 (68.2%) |
| Private, four-year, for-profit | 90 (6.9%) |
| <u>Faculty rank</u> | |
| Lecturer/adjunct professor | 152 (11.6%) |
| Assistant professor | 387 (29.5%) |
| Associate professor | 352 (26.8%) |
| Full professor | 420 (32.1%) |
| <u>Academic discipline</u> | |
| Arts and sciences | 607 (46.3%) |

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Anthropology | 13 (>1%) |
| Architecture | 16 (1.2%) |
| Art | 59 (4.5%) |
| Biology | 95 (7.2%) |
| Chemistry | 24 (1.8%) |
| Communications/languages* | 31 (2.4%) |
| Economics | 17 (1.3%) |
| English | 72 (5.5%) |
| Environmental | 17 (1.3%) |
| science/geography/geology | 76 (5.8%) |
| History | 33 (2.5%) |
| Mathematics | 14 (1.0%) |
| Philosophy | 12 (>1%) |
| Political science | 65 (4.9%) |
| Psychology | 18 (1.4%) |
| Sociology | 13 (>1%) |
| Theatre | 30 (2.3%) |
| Miscellaneous** | 115 (8.8%) |
| Business | 158 (12.1%) |
| Education | 43 (3.3%) |
| Engineering and computer science | 85 (6.5%) |
| Health and human sciences*** | 43 (3.3%) |
| Law | 46 (3.5%) |
| Music | 74 (5.6%) |
| Nursing | 19 (1.4%) |
| Social work | 121 (9.2%) |
| Theology | |

*Note: Languages included Chinese, French, Italian, and Spanish

**Note: The research team created a miscellaneous category for any academic discipline with nine or fewer faculty profiles in this study's sample. This category included criminal justice, interior design, physics, public affairs, and veterinary science.

***Note: Health and human sciences included medicine, pharmacy, and public health.

Delimitations

The research team delimited this study primarily by sample size and website content. This study gathered a large and statistically significant institution sample (n=500; 95% confidence level, 5 confidence interval) and a very large and statistically significant faculty sample (n=1,500; 99% confidence level, 3 confidence interval). However, this study analyzes online faculty profiles from U.S. institutions granting at least master's degrees: It would be very difficult to discern exactly which courses each faculty member

taught from year to year. As a result, some faculty members in this study's sample may not regularly teach graduate courses every year. Moreover, this study only examined U.S. institutions: Future studies could examine international institutions and articulate how faculty members of international institutions present themselves on their institutional websites.

Findings

As displayed in the Data Collection section of this study, Table 1 indicated faculty members working at public institutions were more likely to publish online faculty profiles than private nonprofit and private for-profit peers. In total, 63 of the 500 randomly selected institutions in this study did not publish online faculty profiles, resulting in 189 faculty members without any information about themselves on their institution's .edu website. In all, public faculty members without profiles comprised 7.9% of unpublished profiles, whereas private nonprofit and for-profit faculty members comprised 44.4% and 47.7% of unpublished profiles in this study.

| Institution type | Picture | Video | Email | Phone | Office | Classes Taught |
|---|---------|-------|-------|-------|--------|----------------|
| Public, four-year (n=327) | 72.8% | 0% | 85.3% | 78.6% | 64.2% | 39.1% |
| Private, four-year, nonprofit (n=894) | 78.4% | 2.2% | 73.2% | 57.1% | 40.2% | 26.9% |
| Private, four-year, for-profit (n=90) | 62.2% | 0% | 46.6% | 31.1% | 32.2% | 11.1% |
| Rank | | | | | | |
| Lecturer/adjunct professor (n=152) | 42.8% | 0.1% | 47.4% | 22.3% | 13.8% | 16.4% |
| Assistant professor (n=387) | 78.3% | 0.5% | 79.1% | 69.5% | 49.8% | 29.9% |
| Associate professor (n=352) | 80.9% | 1.6% | 84.4% | 65.6% | 53.7% | 28.7% |
| Full professor (n=420) | 81.4% | 0% | 71.4% | 62.4% | 46.4% | 32.6% |
| Academic discipline | | | | | | |
| Arts and sciences (n=607) | 74.9% | 0.04% | 77.4% | 66.9% | 54.2% | 31.9% |
| Anthropology (n=13) | 69.2% | 0% | 92.3% | 92.3% | 61.5% | 84.6% |
| Architecture (n=16) | 87.5% | 0% | 56.2% | 18.8% | 18.8% | 18.8% |
| Art (n=59) | 79.6% | 0% | 69.5% | 54.2% | 42.4% | 27.1% |
| Biology (n=95) | 77.9% | 1.1% | 85.2% | 67.4% | 61.1% | 36.8% |
| Chemistry (n=24) | 91.7% | 0% | 91.7% | 79.2% | 54.2% | 16.7% |
| Communications/languages (n=31) | 80.6% | 3.2% | 77.4% | 77.4% | 48.4% | 25.8% |
| Economics (n=17) | 94.1% | 0% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 58.8% |
| English (n=72) | 66.7% | 0% | 59.7% | 62.5% | 48.6% | 26.4% |
| Env. science/geography/geology (n=17) | 76.5% | 0% | 88.2% | 82.3% | 82.4% | 64.7% |
| History (n=76) | 69.7% | 0% | 73.7% | 60.5% | 52.6% | 30.2% |
| Mathematics (n=33) | 54.5% | 3.0% | 84.8% | 72.7% | 54.5% | 21.2% |
| Philosophy (n=18) | 83.3% | 0% | 88.9% | 72.2% | 55.6% | 50% |
| Political Science (n=12) | 91.7% | 0% | 91.7% | 83.3% | 75% | 50% |
| Psychology (n=65) | 69.2% | 0% | 75.4% | 70.8% | 53.8% | 23.1% |
| Sociology (n=18) | 83.3% | 0% | 83.3% | 61.1% | 61.1% | 16.7% |
| Theatre (n=13) | 76.9% | 0% | 53.8% | 61.5% | 53.8% | 46.2% |
| Miscellaneous (n=28) | 71.4% | 0% | 85.7% | 64.2% | 39.3% | 28.6% |
| Business (n=115) | 81.7% | 2.6% | 67.8% | 55.7% | 44.3% | 31.3% |
| Education (n=158) | 68.9% | 3.2% | 73.4% | 51.9% | 48.1% | 25.3% |
| Engineering and computer science (n=43) | 83.7% | 0% | 88.4% | 83.7% | 58.1% | 9.3% |
| Health and human sciences (n=85) | 72.9% | 0% | 70.6% | 45.9% | 31.8% | 25.9% |
| Law (n=43) | 81.4% | 0% | 69.8% | 69.8% | 20.9% | 20.9% |
| Music (n=46) | 73.9% | 2.1% | 80.4% | 52.2% | 32.6% | 30.4% |
| Nursing (n=74) | 72.9% | 0% | 72.9% | 67.6% | 44.6% | 13.5% |
| Social work (n=19) | 79.8% | 0% | 84.2% | 68.4% | 31.6% | 47.4% |
| Theology (n=121) | 83.5% | 6.6% | 62.8% | 42.9% | 22.3% | 33.9% |
| Total | 75.8% | 1.5% | 74.3% | 60.7% | 45.6% | 28.9% |

Table 3. Online faculty profile information on institutional websites; by institution type, rank, and academic discipline (n=1,311)

Table 3 displays institutional information included in online faculty profiles (n=1,311).

Faculty members at public institutions were more likely to include their institutional .edu email (85.3%), phone number (78.6%), office location (64.2%) and the classes they teach (39.1%) than faculty members at private institutions. However, faculty members at private nonprofit institutions were more likely to include a picture of themselves (78.4%) and a video (2.2%) in their online profile than public or private for-profit faculty members.

Associate professors (n=352) were more likely to include a video (1.6%), their email (84.4%), and their office location (53.7%) than any other rank of faculty member. Full professors included a picture (81.4%) and the classes they teach (32.6%) more frequently than any other rank of faculty member. Across all variables, associate professors published the most informative online profiles, whereas lecturers and adjunct professors published the least informative online profiles

Although not all academic disciplines are equally represented given the study's random sampling technique, there emerged a wide range of information included in online faculty profiles from discipline to discipline. Economics (n=17), chemistry (n=24), and political science (n=12) faculty members included a picture of themselves in over 90% of their online profiles, whereas 54.5% of mathematics faculty members did the same. Specifically focused on contact information across disciplines, over 80% of anthropology (n=13) and environmental science/geography/geology (n=17) faculty members included both their email and phone number in their online profiles. Moreover, every Economics faculty member in this study included their email, phone number, and office location in their online profile. Inversely, only 53.8% of Theatre faculty members (n=13) included their email, 18.8% of Architecture faculty members (n=16) included their phone number, and 20.9% of Law faculty members (n=43) included their office location in their online profiles.

Information regarding classes was also wide-ranging, as 84.6% of Anthropology faculty members and 64.7% of Environmental Science/Geography/Geology faculty members included a list of their classes in their online profile, whereas 9.3% of Engineering and Computer Science faculty members (n=43) did the same. In fact, aside from only 1.5% of the entire sample providing a video in their online profile, only 28.9% of all faculty members provided a list of their classes in their online profile. Across the entire sample, pictures (75.8%) were much more prevalent than videos (1.5%), while emails (74.3%) were more prevalent than phone numbers (60.7%) or office locations (45.6%) in online faculty profiles.

Table 4 below displays personal information included in online faculty profiles (n=1,311):

Table 4. Online faculty profile information on institutional websites; by institution type, rank, and academic discipline (n=1,311)

| <u>Institution type</u> | <u>CV</u> | <u>P. Site</u> | <u>Degree s</u> | <u>Bio</u> | <u>Bio. 1st</u> | <u>Bio. 3rd</u> | <u>R.int</u> | <u>R.pub</u> | <u>P.memb.</u> |
|---|-----------|----------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| Public, four-year (n=327) | 19.5% | 11.3% | 68.2% | 49.8% | 10.1% | 39.7% | 52.3% | 41.9% | 33.9% |
| Private, four-year, nonprofit (n=894) | 6.7% | 7.5% | 80.4% | 60.1% | 6.4% | 53.7% | 40.6% | 34.9% | 31.1% |
| Private, four-year, for-profit (n=90) | 22.2% | 5.5% | 91.1% | 62.2% | 3.3% | 58.9% | 41.1% | 41.1% | 37.8% |
| <u>Rank</u> | | | | | | | | | |
| Lecturer/adjunct professor (n=152) | 2.6% | 6.6% | 59.9% | 44.1% | 1.3% | 42.8% | 20.4% | 13.8% | 14.5% |
| Assistant professor (n=387) | 8.5% | 7.5% | 78.1% | 58.7% | 7.3% | 51.4% | 41.9% | 33.6% | 28.4% |
| Associate professor (n=352) | 11.4% | 10.5% | 81.8% | 57.7% | 7.9% | 49.8% | 48.9% | 40.6% | 35.2% |
| Full professor (n=420) | 11.7% | 7.9% | 81.7% | 61.7% | 8.4% | 53.3% | 49.3% | 45.7% | 39.8% |
| <u>Academic discipline</u> | | | | | | | | | |
| Arts and sciences (n=607) | 10.9% | 10.1% | 74.9% | 59.5% | 8.6% | 51.3% | 45.4% | 40% | 27.5% |
| Anthropology (n=13) | 0% | 7.7% | 76.9% | 69.2% | 15.4% | 53.8% | 92.3% | 46.2% | 46.2% |
| Architecture (n=16) | 18.8% | 0% | 75% | 81.2% | 0% | 81.2% | 37.5% | 18.8% | 25% |
| Art (n=59) | 3.4% | 25.4% | 72.9% | 74.6% | 1.7% | 72.9% | 32.2% | 37.3% | 22% |
| Biology (n=95) | 13.7% | 11.6% | 67.4% | 62.1% | 14.8% | 47.3% | 50.5% | 33.7% | 31.6% |
| Chemistry (n=24) | 8.3% | 0% | 70.8% | 62.5% | 8.3% | 54.2% | 41.7% | 25% | 20.8% |
| Communications/languages (n=31) | 9.7% | 3.2% | 87.1% | 41.9% | 6.5% | 35.4% | 45.2% | 32.2% | 41.9% |
| Economics (n=17) | 0% | 0% | 94.1% | 58.8% | 0% | 58.8% | 52.9% | 23.5% | 35.3% |
| English (n=72) | 1.4% | 1.4% | 81.9% | % | 15.3% | 41.6% | 47.2% | 40.3% | 36.1% |
| Env. Sc./geography/geology (n=17) | 0% | 17.6% | 58.8% | 56.9% | 5.9% | 41.2% | 17.6% | % | 5.9% |
| History (n=76) | 14.5% | 5.3% | 89.5% | 47.1% | 6.6% | 61.8% | 42.1% | 11.8% | 36.8% |
| Mathematics (n=33) | 42.4% | 12.1% | 84.8% | 68.4% | 9.1% | 30.3% | 51.5% | 55.3% | 30.3% |
| Philosophy (n=18) | 5.5% | 5.5% | 94.4% | % | 16.7% | 66.6% | 61.1% | 57.6% | 50% |
| Political Science (n=12) | 25% | 16.7% | 83.3% | 39.4% | 8.3% | 33.3% | 41.7% | 50% | 33.3% |
| Psychology (n=65) | 6.2% | 3.1% | 75.4% | 83.3% | 3.1% | 44.6% | 21.5% | 25% | 21.5% |
| Sociology (n=18) | 5.6% | 0% | 77.8% | 41.6% | 0% | 61.1% | 33.3% | 18.5% | 33.3% |
| Theatre (n=13) | 23.1% | 15.4% | 84.6% | 47.7% | 0% | 38.5% | 46.2% | 33.3% | 23.1% |
| Miscellaneous (n=28) | 7.1% | 7.1% | 82.1% | 61.1% | 3.6% | 35.7% | 32.1% | 38.5% | 25% |
| Business (n=115) | 5.2% | 0.8% | 84.3% | 53% | 7.8% | 45.2% | 44.3% | 29.6% | 34.8% |
| Education (n=158) | 8.9% | 4.4% | 81.6% | 50% | 5.7% | 44.3% | 32.2% | 27.2% | 28.5% |
| Engineering and computer science (n=43) | 9.3% | 27.9% | 58.1% | 39.5% | 2.3% | 37.2% | 69.8% | 46.5% | 39.5% |
| Health and human sciences (n=85) | 1.2% | 4.7% | 83.5% | 57.6% | 5.9% | 51.7% | 51.8% | 36.5% | 41.1% |
| Law (n=43) | 25.6% | 18.6% | 79.1% | 76.7% | 0% | 76.7% | 51.1% | 46.5% | 46.5% |
| Music (n=46) | 21.7% | 13.1% | 69.6% | 69.6% | 8.7% | 60.9% | 39.1% | 21.7% | 52.2% |
| Nursing (n=74) | 0% | 5.4% | 81.1% | 50% | 1.4% | 48.6% | 23% | 12.2% | 28.4% |
| Social work (n=19) | 10.5% | 0% | 68.4% | 57.9% | 15.8% | 42.1% | 57.9% | 31.6% | 52.6% |
| Theology (n=121) | 17.4% | 4.9% | 89.3% | 62.8% | 7.4% | 56.4% | 43% | 57.9% | 36.4% |
| <u>Total</u> | 9.6% | 8.3% | 78.1% | 57.7% | 7.1% | 50.6% | 43.6% | 37.1% | 32.2% |

Data suggests few faculty members at any institution included their curriculum vitae (CV) or a personal website in their online faculty profile. Faculty members at private for-profit institutions were most likely to include their CV (22.2%), while public faculty members were most likely to include a hyperlink to their personal website (11.3%). Private for-profit faculty members were also most likely to include a list of their earned degrees (91.1%), a biographical statement (62.2%), and a list of their professional memberships (37.8%) in their online profile. Inversely, public faculty members most often included their research interests (52.3%) and a list of research publications (41.9%). Across all institution types, this study suggests faculty members at private for-profit institutions published the most informative online profiles in terms of personal information.

Moreover, tenured faculty members—associate professors and full professors—included more personal information in their online profiles than non-tenured faculty members. Perhaps because tenured faculty members have more accomplished research or scholarly careers, tenured faculty members were more likely to include CVs, personal websites, earned degrees, biographical statements, research interests, research publications, and professional memberships in their online profile than non-tenured peers. Lecturers and adjunct professors omitted the most personal information in their online profiles, again potentially speaking to the temporary nature of their academic employment.

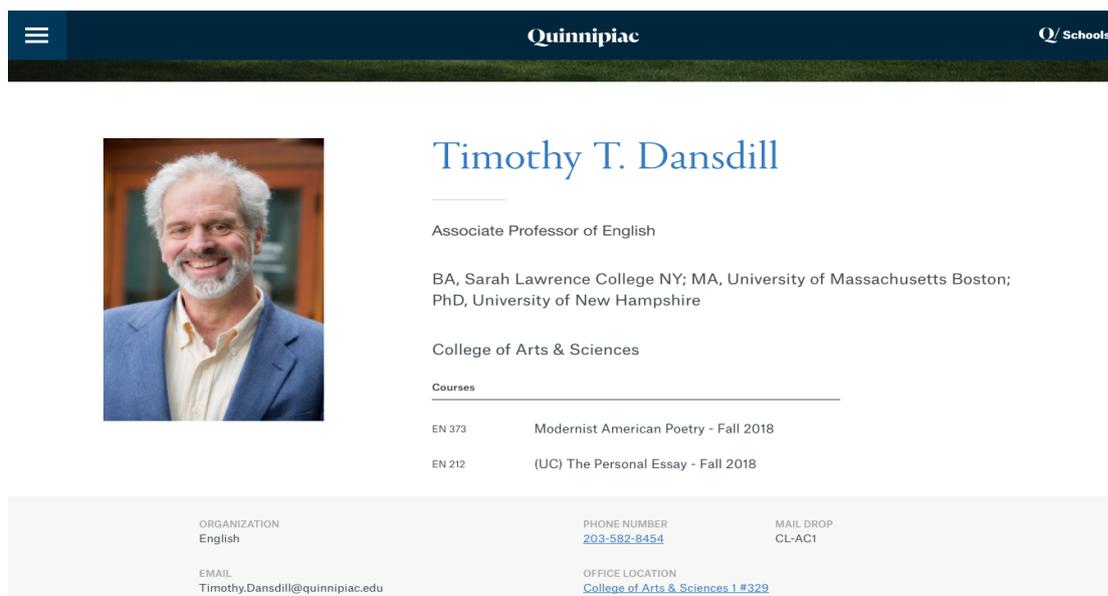
Similar to institutional information, there emerged a wide variety of personal information included in online faculty profiles from discipline to discipline. Mathematics faculty members (n=33) were most likely to include their CV in their online profile, yet these faculty members were of the least likely to include a biographical statement (39.4%). Art faculty members (n=59) most often included a hyperlink to their personal website (25.4%), while zero Architecture, Chemistry, Economics, Sociology, or Social Work faculty members included a hyperlink to a personal website. Of any kind of personal information, 78.1% of all faculty members included a list of their earned degrees in their online faculty profile, with 57.7% including a biographical statement. Philosophy faculty members (n=18) most often wrote a 1st person biographical statement (16.7%), while zero Architecture, Economics, Sociology, Theatre, and Law faculty members wrote a 1st person statement. Anthropology faculty members most often included their research interests (92.3%), Theology faculty members (n=121) most often included research publications, and Music faculty members (n=46) most often included professional memberships in their biographical statements. Inversely, Environmental Science/Geography/Geology faculty members were least likely to include research interests (17.6%), research publications (11.8%), and professional memberships (5.9%) in their biographical statements.

Across the entire sample, personal websites (8.3%) and CVs (9.6%) were the elements least likely to appear in online faculty profiles, with faculty members preferring to include 3rd person biographical statements (50.6%) than 1st person statements (7.1%) in their online profile. In addition, research interests (43.6%) were more likely to appear in online faculty profiles than publications (37.1%) and professional memberships (32.2%). Beyond the personal data presented in Table 4, it should be noted that 57.7% of all faculty members included a biographical statement in their online profile. Of this 57.7%, zero faculty members self-identified their pronouns, race and ethnicity, or their first-generation college student status in their biographical statement.

Discussion and Implications

This study's data suggest faculty members working in public institutions publish online profiles more often than faculty working in private institutions, although private institutions comprised over 75% of the sample. Here, prospective graduate students seeking information about their potential faculty members may experience difficulty in learning about or contacting faculty members at private institutions. Although extant research has articulated how faculty members share scholarship on social media (Moran, Seaman, & Tinti-Kane, 2011; Reddick, 2016), faculty members at private institutions should consider publishing an online profile on their institution's website to better inform prospective graduate student choice.

Another important finding was the lack of 21st century technologies embedded in online faculty profiles: Only 1.5% of the sample included a video in their online profile (Table 3), while 28.9% included a schedule of courses they teach (Table 3) and only 8.3% included a hyperlink to a personal website (Table 4). Consider the information presented in Figure 1 below:



The screenshot shows a faculty profile for Timothy T. Dansdill. The header includes the Quinnipiac logo and 'Q Schools'. The profile features a photo of Timothy T. Dansdill, an Associate Professor of English. His credentials include a BA from Sarah Lawrence College NY, an MA from the University of Massachusetts Boston, and a PhD from the University of New Hampshire. He is affiliated with the College of Arts & Sciences. The 'Courses' section lists two current courses: EN 373 Modernist American Poetry - Fall 2018 and EN 212 (UC) The Personal Essay - Fall 2018. Contact information at the bottom includes the organization (English), phone number (203-582-8454), mail drop (CL-AC1), email (Timothy.Dansdill@quinnipiac.edu), and office location (College of Arts & Sciences 1 #329).

Figure 1. Screenshot of faculty profile with auto-populated current course schedule

Here, this faculty member included an auto-populated list of their current course schedule, informing prospective students of specifically what courses they may take with this faculty member upon their enrollment. In addition, this faculty member included multiple forms of contact information, as well as a hyperlinked location of their office, which led to an interactive map of the Quinnipiac University campus. Also consider Figure 2 below:

Monica McPherson, Ph D



Figure 2. Screenshot of video embedded into online faculty profile

Although this faculty member did not include any contact information in their profile, the faculty member did embed a video into the profile, personally introducing them to prospective students and sharing their research interests. Figure 3 below represents one of the most informative online faculty profiles in this study:

Writing Center Director

- College Writing
- Courses
- Faculty Resources
- Writing Center
- Ward Prize
- CTLR
- Writing and Rhetoric Program Faculty
- News & Events
- Contact Us

[Site Editor Log On](#)

Shawna Shapiro
Director of Writing and Rhetoric Program, Associate Professor of Writing & Linguistics

Email: sshapiro@middlebury.edu
Phone: (802) 443-5977
Office Hours: tbd
Office Location: Carr Hall 201

You can find out more about me at my webpage, <http://sites.middlebury.edu/shapiro/>, which has a link to my current CV and materials from past courses, workshops, and conference presentations.

Courses

Courses offered in the past four years.
 ▲ indicates offered in the current term
 > indicates offered in the upcoming term[s]

FYSE 1405 - Language and Social Justice >

Language and Social Justice
 In this seminar we will explore questions: What is the relationship between language and power? How does linguistic prejudice contribute to social inequality? Is language a human right, and if so, what are the implications? We will engage with scholarly, journalistic, and artistic works, including writings by Julia Alvarez, James Baldwin, Deborah Cameron, Lisa Delpit, William Labov, Rosina Lippi-Green, Thomas Ricento, Richard Rodriguez, Amy Tan, and many others. Students will develop a range of reading, writing, and oral presentation skills, and will receive frequent feedback on their work throughout the semester. 3 hrs. sem. **AMR CW SOC**

Fall 2016, Fall 2018



Office Address:
 Middlebury College
 Writing and Rhetoric Program
 Carr Hall 201
 Middlebury, VT 05753

Figure 3. Screenshot of informative online faculty profile

This faculty member published a wealth of information and technology in their online profile, including contact information, a picture, a hyperlink to their personal website with a link to a CV and other academic materials, and an interactive auto-populated course schedule. The course schedule allows prospective students to click on the specific courses taught by the faculty member, learning more about the course and when the faculty member has taught the course.

Other generalizable findings include tenured faculty members publishing more informative online faculty profiles than non-tenured faculty members, including lecturers and adjunct professors. The research team hypothesized non-tenured faculty members may be working on short-term, temporary contracts. Therefore, these faculty members may not have access to an office (only 13.8% included this information in their profile), a phone number (22.3%), or an updated list of courses taught (16.4%). As a result, depending on the program and institution, a prospective student may experience difficulty learning about their potential faculty members, especially if the program or institution has embraced lecturer or adjunct hiring in lieu of tenured faculty hiring. This finding may render it even more difficult for international students to choose graduate programs, as international students must study full time to maintain their F-Visa. Without learning about full-time faculty, these students may feel that full-time study at a certain institution not in their best interests.

Echoing earlier studies demonstrating the idiosyncratic nature of graduate school choice (Malaney, 1987; Olson & King, 1985), this study suggests prospective students may unearth a wealth of information about faculty members, or little at all, depending on their desired academic discipline and institution. This finding was uniquely true considering private nonprofit institutions, as only 6.7% of 894 private nonprofit faculty members in this study published their CV in their online faculty profile. All 17 Economics faculty members in this study failed to publish their CV in their online profile, however, 58.8% of these faculty members composed a biographical statement. This wide range of information—seemingly idiosyncratic from institution to institution and discipline to discipline—poses a challenge for prospective students. Ultimately, future research should explore what faculty data is most informative for student choice, including how international students explore programs and faculty online.

Finally, in a surprise in the findings, zero faculty members included their pronouns, race/ethnicity, or first-generation status in their biographical statement. Bersola et al. (2014), Ramirez (2013), and Strayhorn et al. (2013) all found faculty members to be influential factors for students of color seeking graduate education. Moreover, Renn (2010) and Renn and Reason (2012) have called for more scholarship focused on the enrollment decisions and experiences of minoritized members of the LGBT community. Data in this study suggest both students of color and members of the LGBT

community may have trouble finding affinity with faculty members at different programs, due to a simple lack of basic information about faculty identity. Perhaps more problematic, 189 faculty members did not publish online profiles, and 25% of faculty members who did publish online profiles did not include a photo of themselves. In these scenarios, faculty members may be inadvertently requiring students of color and members of the LGBT community to make unnecessary or uncomfortable assumptions, such as judgement of identity based on name alone or an exploration of other online resources to gather more information.

Extant research has demonstrated gender, race/ethnicity, and first-generation status are salient student identities at multiple levels of postsecondary education (Bersola et al., 2013; Ramirez, 2013; Renn, 2010; Renn & Reason, 2012; Strayhorn et al., 2013). Yet, this study finds faculty members do not share these identities with their future students. Future research and practice in the area of faculty development should focus on how faculty members share their identities and whether prospective students can gather sufficient faculty identity information to make a well-reasoned graduate school decision. Without this research and practice, minoritized students may not be able to make the best graduate school decisions, resulting in a perpetuation of inequitable access to graduate education for these student populations.

Conclusion

Akin to early research suggesting graduate school choice is idiosyncratic across disciplines (Malaney, 1987; Olson & King, 1985), this study finds faculty members publish a wide variety and quality of information in their online faculty profiles. Yet, our findings suggest prospective students seeking graduate schools may be able to learn more about tenured faculty members and faculty members at public institutions.

However, given the importance of faculty when students of color choose a graduate school (Ramirez, 2013; Strayhorn et al., 2013), faculty members in this study may be holding back critical and personal information about themselves, potentially deterring students of color from applying to a certain graduate program. Moreover, zero faculty members in this study disclosed their pronouns or first-generation (if applicable) status, even though gender and first-generation status are salient student identities from a variety of racial and socioeconomic backgrounds (Perna, 2006; Renn, 2010; Renn & Reason, 2012). These findings may also negatively impact the graduate program choice of international students, as international students may rely on Internet communications (e.g., email) and information to make their choice, given their distance from their prospective institution.

Although Internet technologies have rapidly advanced over the past decades, this study finds many faculty members across the United States have not embraced this technology as it relates to their online faculty

profile published on their institution's website. As a result, many prospective graduate students may lack important information when making a decision that will change the rest of their lives: where to go to graduate school. From this information, faculty members at all institution types should publish the most informative online faculty profile possible, paying close attention to information understood to influence graduate school choice: the type of research a faculty member performs and the racial/ethnic background of the faculty member. By publishing informative online profiles, faculty members may come into contact with more engaged, more compatible graduate students, who in turn, will feel as if they made an informed decision.

No more will graduate students think, "Who is my professor?"

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