

Researchers of Color, Fame, and Impact

Michael A. Zárate¹, Gordon Nagayama Hall², and Victoria C. Plaut³

¹Department of Psychology, University of Texas at El Paso; ²Department of Psychology, University of Oregon; and ³Department of Psychology, School of Law, University of California, Berkeley

Perspectives on Psychological Science
2017, Vol. 12(6) 1176–1178
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sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1745691617710511
www.psychologicalscience.org/PPS



Abstract

Fame and eminence, as traditionally measured, limit the definition of impact to the publication world. We add two types of impact to the traditional measures of fame and eminence. Many of the traditional measures of fame or eminence are based on social-network connections, whereby individuals appoint other people to positions of eminence. Editorial boards are one specific example. Eminence is also limited to number of publications, for example, with little regard for the impact of those publications at the societal level. In addition to the dominant measures of eminence, societal impact broadens the definition of impact to reflect real-world changes. Two examples include mentoring, which is rarely mentioned as a criterion for eminence, and policy value, such as when research influences important public policy. These additions are discussed in reference to the general underrepresentation of researchers of color in academia.

Keywords

fame, diversity, impact

The concept of scientific eminence is more complicated than it appears. We presume all researchers want to make an impact. The original articles of this special section are informative about how to measure fame, as traditionally conceptualized. One of the current authors (Plaut, 2014) labeled this the dominant model of success because it is the most common and because it is used by the group with the dominant amount of power in the situation. Our concerns go beyond the *b* index, productivity, and fame. Our questions concern the inclusion of researchers of color in the field, possible impediments, and the criteria one uses to identify impact. Our criteria for impact include mentoring the students to broaden the eventual impact on the field and to the value of the work to society.

Our interest was sparked by the realization that of the eight authors of the articles in the first “Am I Famous Yet” Symposium, all were European American and seven were men. The lone female in the group wrote about female eminence. There, Eagly and Miller (2016) asked, “where are the women?” We use their excellent article to further ask, “where are the researchers of color?” Of the 100 most influential scholars listed by Diener, Oishi, and Park (2014), we believe only one researcher of color is listed—Claude Steele. Although

many researchers are afforded the simple goal of focusing on their research productivity, researchers of color often have added demands with few benefits toward their productivity as measured by their publication record. Those demands can take the form of committee work to ensure a diverse committee, being subject to more extensive expectations for student mentoring, and feeling the need to work to enhance their group standing. That representation takes time, effort, and cognitive energy, all of which can inhibit their research legacy, as measured by the *b* index. That need not mean, however, that it inhibits their larger impact. Representing one’s group might implicate other criteria as well. We will return to this later.

Underrepresentation in Academia

Myers (2016) asked “where are the minority professors?” Myers reported that in very-high-activity research universities, the type of places many eminent psychologists

Corresponding Author:

Michael A. Zárate, Department of Psychology, UT El Paso, 500 W. University Ave., El Paso, TX 79968
E-mail: mzarate@utep.edu

work, only 4% of the faculty are Latino, 3% are African American, and 13% are Asian. The numbers change very little across institution types. At the baccalaureate colleges, Latinos make up 5% of the faculty, and African Americans account for 5%. However, although Asians represent 13% of the faculty at these research universities, they account for only 6% at the baccalaureate colleges. The number of Native American faculty is 0.4% across the board. Among all professors, 73% and 80% are White at the research universities and baccalaureate colleges, respectively. For full professors, those numbers are 82% and 87%, respectively. Thus, researchers of color are not well represented in the academy.

One might argue that those numbers reflect an older cohort and that the situation is changing. The Latino population, in particular, is often labeled young and, consequently, they should be more strongly represented among new professors. The data provide little support for that idea. At the very-high-activity research universities, Latinos and African Americans each make up 4% of the nontenured assistant professors. The National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (2017) reports that Latinos make up 5.5% and African Americans 8.3% of new PhDs (among U.S. citizens). Data regarding Asian candidates have been collected only since 2011, but during that time, Asians made up 7.2% of the new PhDs. Thus, the demographics of new PhDs are underrepresented among new tenure-track faculty. If the general population in the United States is the base rate, researchers of color are terribly underrepresented in the academy. Their low representation can inhibit the ability to achieve traditional forms of eminence, which is described next.

The Ethnic Tax

How can being a researcher of color inhibit research eminence? It can both increase committee work and decrease intellectual merit. Committee work is important, but it does little to enhance one's eminence (Park & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2014). Most researchers of color and female researchers attest to the frustration of increased committee work to ensure diverse committees. Although this derives from a well-intentioned value, it takes away time and effort from research productivity. Padilla (1994) referred to this as a "cultural taxation" (p. 26). Given that there are fewer researchers of color, they are often tagged for more committee work. Likewise, researchers of color seem destined to be pigeonholed to serve on professional society diversity committees, despite having the same broad interests as other members. We believe that, as a group, hiring and tenure committees should be diverse, but we know of no data addressing the general makeup of those specific committees. These processes are well

established. Padilla discussed this in 1994 and little has changed. To make matters worse, research suggests that people of color and women are penalized for supporting diversity in the workplace, an effect mediated by perceptions of competence (Hekman, Johnson, Foo, & Yang, 2017). Research finds that researchers who do more institutional work are less successful in terms of number of publications and speed of career advancement (Bergeron, Ostroff, Schroeder, & Block, 2014). Thus, eminence can be inhibited because of increased committee work and decreased respect because of that committee work.

There is one exception to the finding that service hurts productivity: research-related service, such as serving on editorial boards. Unfortunately, a review of many of the social psychological journals reveals strikingly low levels of diversity. We challenge readers to evaluate their primary journals for the ethnic background of the editorial team and whether that team represents their discipline. Sternberg (2016) stated that people "tend to feel positively, and be more favorably disposed, toward others they view as similar to themselves" (p. 878). Sternberg described similarity of academic background and interests, but we add to that ethnic and demographic similarity. Greenwald and Schuh (1994) reported that among North American researchers, non-Jewish researchers more often cited non-Jewish than Jewish researchers, and Jewish researchers more often cited Jewish researchers than non-Jewish researchers. Freeman and Huang (2015) reported that for the 2.57 million papers in the Thomson-Reuters Web of Science database, among researchers based in the United States, the homophily is well beyond chance. Researchers are more likely to publish with others of the same ethnicity, even after controlling for discipline, location, and other relevant factors. That preference for similar others unintentionally produces greater support for similar others, biasing criteria such as citation indexes and board membership.

Fewer Opportunities for Citation

The number of times one's work is cited is a function of opportunities to be cited. Researchers whose work focuses on race, ethnicity, or diversity science may have fewer opportunities for their work to be cited than researchers in mainstream areas of psychology. In a search of PsycInfo, only 4% of the articles published in the flagship journals *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, and *Developmental Psychology* (978 of 24,274 articles) addressed race, ethnicity, or diversity. In contrast, 26% of the articles in these journals addressed cognition or cognitive issues (6,355 of 24,274). Thus, researchers whose publications are on cognitive issues have at least six-fold more opportunities to be cited than researchers

whose publications are on race, ethnicity, or diversity. Although diversity science can be conducted by researchers of any ethnic background, the most prolific researchers in diversity science are researchers of color (Hall & Maramba, 2001).

Enduring Impact

Despite the increased time and energy involved in having to represent one's group, it can also be rewarding. In particular, mentoring was generally left out of the criteria for eminence and fame. If researchers of color are expected to do more mentoring, then those efforts should be given credit. One way to impact the field is through your students and expanding access to the field. Therefore, we add James Jones to the list of eminent psychologists. Dr. Jones led the American Psychological Association Minority Fellowship Program (APA-MFP) from 1977 to 2005. Through his leadership, the APA-MFP supported almost 1,500 students of color while they earned their PhDs. It is difficult to identify researchers of color in the United States across social, personality, and clinical areas who are not keenly aware of and often indebted to Dr. Jones.

Impact beyond the psychology journals is also important. Lasting impact occurs when research changes the world either through more applied work or through activism efforts. Roediger (2016) identified eminent researchers from between 1936 and 1942. In 1954, which is essentially the same time period, Kenneth and Mamie Clark's research was critical to a landmark Supreme Court ruling—*Brown v. Board of Education*. Sixty-three years later, this ruling continues to influence both school-system processes and the political landscape more broadly. If we were to ask graduate students about the psychological research behind that ruling, we would guess that most could provide a summary of “the doll studies” and could name the researchers. Thus, while Kenneth Clark won the Presidential Medal of Liberty in 1986, it was not until 8 years later that he won the APA Award for Outstanding Lifetime Contribution to Psychology. We also point out that the Clarks were not listed in the top 100 or 200 of the most eminent post-World War II psychologists by Diener et al. (2014). Thus, we argue that to make an impact, one can use additional criteria that go beyond the number of articles published to include other activities, such as the students mentored or the impact of work beyond psychology journals. Use of a wider array of indexes might allow identification of a wider array of researchers.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared that they had no conflicts of interest with respect to their authorship or the publication of this article.

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