

Non-white scholars are underrepresented in scholarly articles in communications

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Non-White scholars continue to be underrepresented in publication rates, citation rates, and editorial positions in communications and media studies, finds a new study by NYU Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development and published in the *Journal of Communication*.

To explore the racial make-up of cited scholars within the field of communications, the study's researchers analyzed the racial composition of primary authors of both articles and citations in research journals between 1990-2016. The data looks at publication and [citation rates](#) within the National Communication Association (NCA) and the International Communication Association (ICA) journals - 12 peer-reviewed communications journals.

"The [article](#) was published in a special issue surveying changes in the field of [communication](#) in the last three decades of scholarship and research," said Dr. Paula Chakravartty, the study's senior author and associate professor of media, culture and communication at NYU. "We wanted to know, what if anything, has changed when it comes to race and representation."

The study shows that non-White scholars were virtually absent in [journal](#) publications as recently as the 1990s. Non-White authors in these publications increased to six percent by the end of 1990, and 12 percent by the end of 2010.

The research highlights that non-White first authors are cited significantly fewer times than their White counterparts (16 to 25, respectively). It also notes that articles authored by non-White scholars are cited significantly fewer times. This means that research done by non-White scholars does not receive equal circulation and suggests that lesser value is placed on work authored by non-White scholars. This has negative professional implications both for non-White scholars, in terms of contract renewals, tenure and promotion, and for the field in general, in terms of the visibility of and attention to the knowledge produced.

The one exception pointed out in this study, are articles produced around race. Citation rate disparities disappear when examining only published work on race related topics, but because White scholars are overrepresented in published articles and overrepresented among scholars writing about race, they still enjoy substantially more visibility.

"If we truly value research produced by faculty of color, and are serious about promoting their scholarly and professional success and advancement, we must make a conscious effort to make sure our [citation](#) practices reflect this," said Charlton McIlwain, a co-author of the study and associate professor at NYU Steinhardt.

In addition to Dr. Chakravartty and Dr. McIlwain, the research article was co-authored by Rachel Kuo and Victoria Grubbs, also of New York University.

More information: Paula Chakravartty et al, #CommunicationSoWhite, *Journal of Communication* (2018). [DOI: 10.1093/joc/jqy003](https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqy003)

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