

Researcher works for diversity and inclusion in sciences, one journal at a time

November 16 2021



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

A University of Rhode Island researcher and colleagues who study invasive species have published a series of articles in the journal *Biological Invasions* aimed at identifying and addressing concerns about

diversity, equity and inclusion in the journal, which they believe will lead to a better understanding of invasive species around the world.

Laura Meyerson, URI professor of natural resources science and deputy editor-in-chief of *Biological Invasions*, led a survey of the journal's editorial board, authors and reviewers to "define who we are and where we're located," she said.

They found that the board was "overwhelmingly American, overwhelmingly white, and with more men than women," Meyerson said. "And most of our papers were published by Americans and Europeans, though there were many from New Zealand as well. English-speaking countries dominated."

The self-study of the journal's diversity was inspired by discussions among many researchers in recent years about diversity and inclusion in the sciences. Meyerson hopes that this effort will inspire other journals in other disciplines to follow suit.

"It's the right thing to do, because it's important that everyone is included," she said. "But it's also important to improve the science. Invasion science is a [global science](#). Invasions come from one region to another region, and if we're not understanding where species are coming from or how they behave, then we only have a partial picture and we don't know as much as we think we know."

For example, in a global report Meyerson is preparing on [invasive species](#), she has noted wide gaps in data from Africa and Asia because few papers have been published by scientists in those regions in peer-reviewed journals in English.

"What that means is that if people from those regions haven't been able to publish their work, our science is depauperate," she said. "We're

making assumptions and hypotheses and coming to conclusions with only partial information. It means the likelihood of success in combating species invasions is going to decline."

Meyerson's co-authors on the new papers are Daniel Simberloff, University of Tennessee, the editor-in-chief of *Biological Invasions*; Sara Kuebbing, University of Pittsburgh; Martin Nuñez, University of Houston; Mariana Chiuffo, Universidad Nacional del Comahue, Argentina; Hanno Seebens, Senckenberg Biodiversity and Climate Research Centre, Germany; Matt McCary, Rice University; Deah Lieurance, University of Florida; and Bo Zhang, Oklahoma State University.

"By publishing these numbers and findings, I hope that we signal that disproportionate representation of editors based on nationality, race, ethnicity, and gender relative to the general global population is important for underlying ethical reasons as well as for increasing the global reach and diversity of perspectives in [invasion](#) biology," said Kuebbing.

The authors argue that increased diversity and inclusion in the journal will enrich the science by including data from more places around the world. And the inclusion of scientists from different cultures will bring new insights and perspectives on data interpretation and understanding.

"The risk of ignoring most of the planet when it comes to understanding ecological processes, such as [biological invasions](#), is that we may end up with the wrong idea of how nature works," said Nuñez.

As a result of the self-study of the journal, Meyerson said that the [editorial board](#) of *Biological Invasions* is increasing its geographic, racial and ethnic diversity. It is also working with reviewers and editors to ensure that submitted papers are not rejected due primarily to

deficiencies in English grammar.

"Authors shouldn't suffer an English tax," she said. "If their science is good, we don't want to reject it because they didn't use the right adverb."

The journal editors are also proactively seeking papers from regions seldom covered, including Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Abstracts of papers will also be published in multiple languages at the request of the authors.

In addition, authors, editors and reviewers are being encouraged to use gender neutral language in their papers when possible. And in an effort to be respectful of the transgender community, name changes can be incorporated retroactively to past publications.

Meyerson said that other scientific journals are beginning to make diversity statements and attempting to address similar concerns.

"When we look at the sciences, they tend to be dominated by North Americans and Europeans, mostly by white males," she said. "There has been huge progress in recent years, and countries like Japan and China and India have produced fantastic [science](#) and are leading us in so many ways. But in general, it's still an issue across the sciences."

The papers will be published together in an introductory section of the January 2022 issue of *Biological Invasions*, but they will be available online Nov. 18.

More information: The published papers will be available Nov. 18 at link.springer.com/journal/10530/online-first

Provided by University of Rhode Island

Citation: Researcher works for diversity and inclusion in sciences, one journal at a time (2021, November 16) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-11-diversity-inclusion-sciences-journal.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.