The Case for Improving Inclusion in Academic Publishing

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Introduction

Academic publishing has a diversity problem:

- 96% of respondents have a bachelor's degree or higher
- Salaries remain low (average UK salary £32k/$42k)
- Publishing remains resolutely white compared to national demographics
So what?

This lack of diversity is costing us money; valuable profits which could be reinvested in our businesses and support more and better publishing.

But more importantly, a lack of diversity in academic research generates data biases which affect people's lives.
What I’d always been taught about heart attack symptoms are, in fact, typical male heart attack symptoms, and women tend to have different symptoms. Not only do women not know this, but also, doctors are missing women’s heart attacks—and women are more likely to die of a heart attack than a man as a result.

Caroline Criado Perez, author of Invisible Women
## Racial Diversity in US S&E

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race and ethnicity</th>
<th>S&amp;E occupations</th>
<th>S&amp;E highest degree holders</th>
<th>College degree holders</th>
<th>U.S. residential population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total (number)</td>
<td>6,407,000</td>
<td>13,497,000</td>
<td>45,941,000</td>
<td>231,875,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>72.9</td>
<td>65.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than one race</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Problem

Academia is not representative of society at large.

Therefore, how can we be confident that our publishing is representative?

We need more diversity in both academia and academic publishing.
And we need to acknowledge industry bias

Authority bias is the tendency to attribute greater accuracy to the opinion of an authority figure (unrelated to its content) and be more influenced by that opinion.
The Milgram Experiment

Milgram measured the willingness of men from a diverse range of occupations with varying levels of education, to obey an authority figure who instructed them to perform acts conflicting with their personal conscience. Participants were led to believe that they were assisting an unrelated experiment, in which they had to administer electric shocks to a "learner." These fake electric shocks gradually increased to levels that would have been fatal had they been real.
The Results

100% of participants administered shocks at levels labelled "Danger: Severe Shock"

65% of participants continued until they were administering "fatal" shocks
So, a few questions

Question 1
Do you really believe that 96% of roles in your organization really require a degree?

Question 2
How often does "authority bias" sway decisions in your organization?

Question 3
How intentional are you about ensuring published science is unbiased?
What can you do?

1. **Be intentional** when you write role profiles and job advertisements
2. **Have courage** to question authority bias
3. **Reach out** to under-represented groups through outreach, paid internships, trainee programmes
Get in touch!

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