The “Elephant in the Room”: interrogating the sample demographics

Anjala S. Krishen¹ · Maria Petrescu²

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Research about research abounds in business academia, often occupying ample journal space. In these articles, we often highlight the best scholars, the most highly cited papers, or the shining stars of every field. For example, Seggie and Griffith (2009) create a dataset of the highest ranked scholars from the top 70 institutions to determine the level of publication productivity to achieve promotion to either associate or full professor. Interestingly, in testing whether PhD-granting affiliation or gender play a significant role, they find that gender does not. However, of the 50 scholars listed in their sample, only 11 (22%) are females, 5 (10%) of whom are non-White. Recently, van Osselaer and Lim (2019) list 35 professors from the 30 leading marketing departments, only 7 (20%) of whom are females and only 2 of those are non-White (5.7%). What we see is that looking at gender alone is not enough, we must dig deeper and evaluate whether the *sample* or the *criteria* itself shows something important. In fact, a quick survey of several such papers reveals that most, if not all, fail to provide sample demographics—see Stremersch et al. (2007), who discuss what it takes to increase citations. For a field which dissects target markets, tribes, consumer groups, gender, intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989), and all other differentiating demographic and psychographic variables, we rarely acknowledge our own demographics. As discussed in Krishen et al. (2020), the only two papers (2008 and 2010) which discuss marketing department chairs never mention the demographics of their samples.

First of all, when discussing publication productivity, citations, tenure likelihood, or any such performance

indicators, we must include sample demographics. When asking questions such as, “What does it take to get published?” or “Which papers are most likely to be cited?”—Why do we ignore the most obvious and basic demographics of the samples themselves? How can we test for the influence of gender, if the sample itself is completely skewed? Also, there is a very prolific set of research that points to these issues, showing that the *pipeline myth* (i.e., there are fewer females in academia) is not the sole reason for the skewed samples. Instead, the reasons include:

- *The power structure in academia* (and elsewhere) including the lower number of named professorships (Treviño et al. 2018), homophily in leadership positions (Krishen et al. 2019), and fewer females in high-level editorships and who are therefore consequently highly cited (Pan and Zhang 2014; Scharber et al. (2017), especially those who are intersectional (Carman et al 2018),
- *The overrepresentation of females performing needed service* to academia and the community (e.g., Hanasono et al. 2019),
- *The lack of viewpoints and critiques of these power structures themselves* by those in positions of power in the form of silencing (Mitchell 2018; Welde and Stepnick 2014), and mobbing and bullying (Prevost and Hunt 2018; Minibas-Poussard 2018).

Secondly, a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of academia itself, as a vessel for the promotion of creativity, higher-order thinking, and education for future scholars, is often overlooked in these studies. For example, *mentorship* is one of the most fundamental and necessary functions of an academic, and takes hard work and dedication. Other criteria for success like publishing with students or holding multiple editorial positions would provide greater insights to the field.

In closing, the *Journal of Marketing Analytics* welcomes papers striving to develop a deeper level understanding of how academia promotes the well-being of the institutions it serves and enacts equity in that process.

✉ Anjala S. Krishen
anjala.krishen@unlv.edu
Maria Petrescu
petrescu@erau.edu

¹ Lee Business School, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Las Vegas, USA

² Department of Business Administration, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Daytona Beach, USA

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Anjala S. Krishen is a Professor of Marketing and International Business and Director of MBA Programs at University of Nevada, Las Vegas and has a B.S. in Electrical Engineering from Rice University and an M.S. Marketing, MBA, and Ph.D. from Virginia Tech. She held management positions for 13 years before pursuing a doctorate. As of 2021, she has published over 65 peer-reviewed journal papers in highly ranked journals. In 2016, she gave a TEDx talk (at UNR) titled “Opposition: The light outside of the dark box,” and a UNLV Creates speech entitled “Consuming to Creating, Watching to Doing, Seeing to Being.” To date, she has completed over 65 marathons, seven ultramarathons, and five 100 milers and has a black belt in Taekwondo.

Maria Petrescu is an Assistant Professor of Marketing at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. Her main research areas include marketing analytics and digital marketing. She has published articles in journals such as Psychology & Marketing, the Journal of Marketing Management, Public Management Review, Journal of Product and Brand Management, the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, and the Journal of Internet Commerce.