For Us, By Us: How the Academy Assesses the Credibility and Legitimacy of Race-Related Research by Black Scholars

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Presentation Flow

- Why is this a relevant issue?
- In what literature is our issue grounded?
- Who determines the legitimacy of scholarship?
- How does the issue manifest itself?

Why is this a relevant issue?

“Seriously, folks, there are legitimate debates about the problems that plague the black community from high incarceration rates to low graduation rates to high out-of-wedlock birth rates. But it’s clear that they’re not happening in black studies departments. If these young scholars are the future of the discipline, I think they can just as well leave their calendars at 1963 and let some legitimate scholars find solutions to the problems of Blacks in America” (Riley, 2012, para. 5).

In what literature is our issue grounded?

- The higher education context is rich with information and support across disciplines: Education, Qualitative Studies, History, African American Studies, Feminist Studies, Law, Sociology, Communications.
- “an apartheid of knowledge that marginalizes, discredits, and devalues the scholarship, epistemologies, and other cultural resources of faculty of color is embedded in higher education” (Bernal & Villalpando, 2002, p.169).
Who determines the legitimacy of scholarship?

- Eurocentric perspectives determine the merit of research, which inherently devalues and views research by persons of color on race related issues as less rigorous (Hendrix, 2002).
- “Too frequently, an epistemology based on the social history and culture of the dominant race has produced scholarship which portrays people of color as deficient and judges the scholarship produced by scholars of color as biased and nonrigorous” (Bernal & Villalpando, 2002, p. 169).

Legitimacy and credibility issues that Black scholars face also affects how they must represent their work:

- “Oppressed groups are frequently placed in the situation of being listened to only if we frame our ideas in the language that is familiar to and comfortable for a dominant group. This requirement often changes the meaning of our ideas and works to elevate the ideas of dominant groups” (Collins, 1990, p. xiii).

How does this issue manifest itself?

Specifically within qualitative research:
1. Subordination to positivist research
2. ‘Racialized subjectivity’: Too much subjectivity is perceived as less scholarly (Alridge, 2003)

Generally, within higher education:
- Critiques of our work from the academy
- Lack of representation in certain disciplines or peer reviewed journals
- Lack of attention given to exemplar works, i.e. citational authority
- Research topics, design, epistemological assumptions, analysis, and interpretations

- “Qualitative research evaluation also favors Whites because the issue of researcher bias is not raised frequently with White researchers at least not related to their race and knowledge of a particular subject” (Hendrix, 2002).
- “In other words, when Whites study themselves, they are ‘interviewers’ rather than ‘white interviewers’ of White study participants” (Hendrix, 2002, p. 167).
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Hendrix, K. G. (2002). "Did being Black introduce bias into your study?": Attempting to mute the race-related research of black scholars Howard Journal of Communications, 13(2), 153-171.

Hidalgo, C. L. McDowell & E. V. Siddle (Eds.), Racism in education (pp. 69-83). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Educational Review.


