

UNDERREPRESENTED MINORITY GROUPS IN ACADEMIA



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Dr. Cathy Wu, February 12, 2021

- We cannot possibly cover everything on this topic.
 - You should continue to learn about these things and how they can be overcome.

- What I'll attempt to cover briefly:
 1. The reality of academia;
 2. What I've learned and observed about the environment (as an international female scholar in the US);
 3. How I've dealt with it and what I wish I knew earlier.

- “Embrace the reality and deal with it.”

Note: the first part was mainly drawn from

- *Dr. Emily Ritter's slides on “Underrepresentation in Political Science”:*
<https://www.emilybenckenritter.com/s/Stereotype-Threat-and-Opportunity.pptx>



Figure 2. Tenure and Non-Tenure Placement Overall, 2010-2017

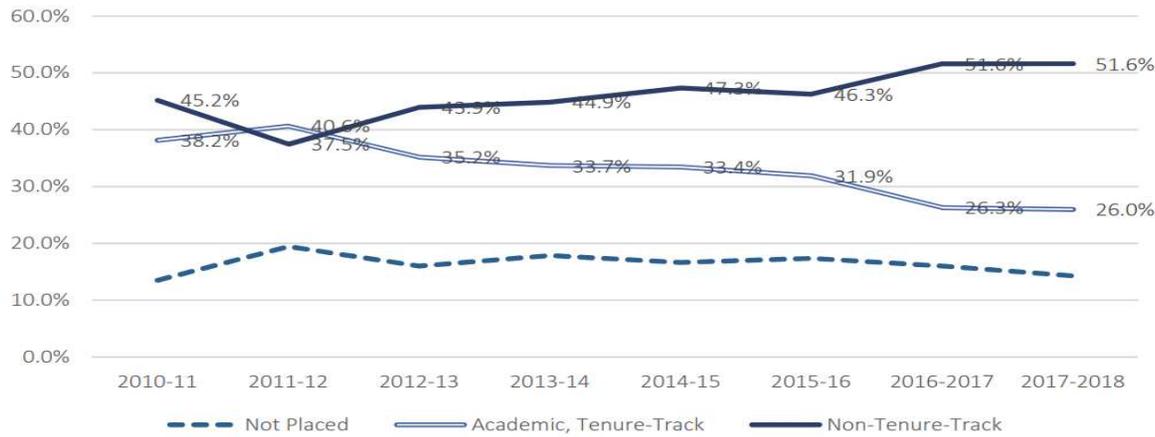
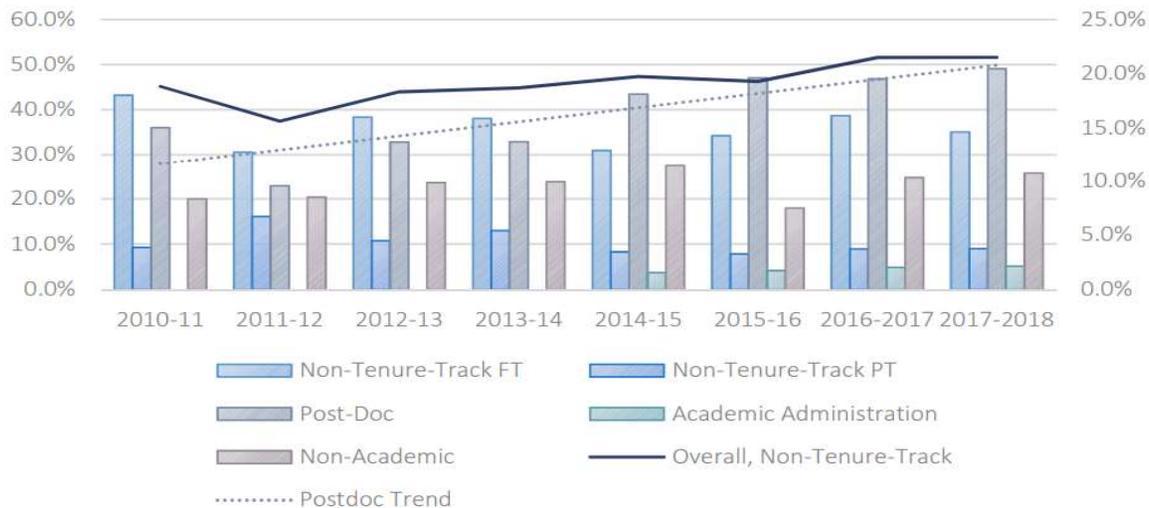


Figure 3. Non-Tenure-Track Placements and the Rise of Post-Doctoral Positions, 2010-2017



THE REALITY OF ACADEMIA

- A steady decrease in the number of tenure-track positions over time, and a concomitant increase of non-tenure-track positions.
- Post-docs and non-academic first placements show a general trend of increasing over the last 8 years.

<https://preprints.apsanet.org/engage/api-gateway/apsa/assets/orp/resource/item/5d2dd689f4cf65001aa0744b/original/apsa-graduate-placement-report-analysis-of-political-science-placements-for-2017-2018.pdf>

<https://www.apsanet.org/Portals/54/APSA%20Files/Data%20Reports/Employment%20Data/Graduate%20Placement%20Report%202016-2017.pdf?ver=2018-02-02-103603-070>



THE REALITY OF ACADEMIA

Characteristics	Graduate Placement Types							
	Overall n=616	Post Doc n=126	TT n=160	NTT, FT n=90	NTT, PT n=23	Non-Academic n=66	Academic Administration n=13	Not Placed n=88
Gender								
Female	42.2%	36.5%	55.6%	27.8%	34.8%	45.5%	53.9%	38.6%
Male	57.6%	63.5%	44.4%	72.2%	65.2%	54.6%	46.2%	60.2%
Other	0.2%	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Race/Ethnicity								
URM	19.8%	19.1%	21.9%	13.3%	21.7%	25.8%	15.4%	23.9%
Non-URM	73.7%	74.6%	66.9%	85.6%	73.9%	63.6%	76.9%	76.1%
Race								
African American/Black	3.1%	0.0%	5.0%	2.2%	4.4%	1.5%	7.7%	4.6%
East Asian/Asian Am.	10.6%	7.9%	14.4%	8.9%	13.0%	6.1%	7.7%	13.6%
Hispanic/Latino/a	6.2%	6.4%	6.3%	1.1%	0.0%	13.6%	0.0%	10.2%
Middle Eastern/Arab Am.	4.2%	4.8%	3.8%	4.4%	4.4%	1.5%	0.0%	8.0%
Native Am./AK Native	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1.1%	0.8%	0.6%	1.1%	4.4%	3.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other	1.1%	0.8%	2.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%	1.1%
South Asian/Indian Am.	3.4%	4.8%	3.1%	3.3%	8.7%	6.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Two or More Races	0.7%	1.6%	0.6%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
White/Euro American	63.2%	66.7%	52.5%	76.7%	60.9%	57.6%	53.9%	62.5%
Ethnicity								
Hispanic/Latino/a	7.5%	8.7%	6.9%	1.1%	0.0%	13.6%	8.3%	11.4%
Not Hispanic/Latino/a	83.4%	79.4%	83.1%	90.0%	100.0%	71.2%	91.7%	86.4%

<https://preprints.apsanet.org/engage/api-gateway/apsa/assets/orp/resource/item/5d2dd689f4cf65001aa0744b/original/apsa-graduate-placement-report-analysis-of-political-science-placements-for-2017-2018.pdf>

- “Women and URMs are opting out of academia in larger proportions, with the exception of URMs in academic administration, but are also taking more tenure-track positions as their first placement.”
- “Notably, these placements have higher teaching and service commitments straight out of graduate school than a post-doc or non-tenure track position.”
- “On the other hand, men and non-URMs are taking post-docs and full-time non-tenure track positions as their first placement, likely to increase their number of publications, grant applications, and works in progress before committing to both higher teaching loads and departmental and university service.”



WHO ARE UNDERREPRESENTED MINORITY GROUPS?

- URM: groups of persons similar in identity and experience that are represented in lower proportions in the professional field than their distribution in the wider population
- Traditionally underrepresented groups:
 - Blacks, Latino/as, Native Americans, Asian-Americans, persons of most races and ethnicities represented around the world, LGBTQ persons, first-generation undergraduate/graduate students, Veterans, persons from rural or impoverished backgrounds...and more
- Federally protected groups:
 - African-Americans, Latin Americans, traditionally categorized women

International students



WHY UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS?

- Persons who identify with underrepresented groups are **extremely valuable** for the advancement of knowledge
 - Different experiential perspectives that provide different models for thought
 - Different attitudes and psychological traits that open conversations
 - Different knowledge base for asking questions and offering answers
 - Role models and mentors for students from underrepresented groups
- Underrepresented groups experience **subtle external and internal barriers** that put them at a disadvantage as compared to their well-represented counterparts.
 - Less likely to graduate from college, to complete advanced degrees, to land desired employment, to attain tenure, and to advance to promotion than white males, holding all qualifications and production constant.



STRUCTURAL INEQUALITIES

- Societal and family pressures place a higher parental burden on women than men.
- Black and Hispanic persons are disproportionately likely to attend school districts with low funding and teachers of fewer achievements.
- First-generation students are less prepared for academic achievement than persons with parents with tertiary education.
- Veterans commonly experience trauma that can create emotional difficulty in completing tasks.
- International students use English as a second language and experience cultural barriers (visa, far away from home, etc).



STEREOTYPE THREATS

- We are told that people of our identity aren't good at X, so we believe we are not good at X or do not bother to try it.
- We do not see people like us succeeding in X, so we self-censor
 - Women in STEM fields
 - Perception of racial inferiority:
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1999/08/thin-ice-stereotype-threat-and-black-college-students/304663/>
- Even if some of us “make it,” we are likely to suffer from
 - Imposter syndrome: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/05/the-confidence-gap/359815/>



SOLUTIONS

- *Structural inequality is addressed by changing the institutions*
 - *Social norms and institutional changes*
 - *Accommodations in the organization*
- **Be aware of these inequalities/threats/biases**
 - It's NOT your fault!
 - Be aware of the stereotypes and biases: the first step of building confidence
 - Advocate for yourself (e.g. your works, grants, other opportunities)
 - Look for support groups:
 - Mentoring map (designed for junior faculty members but helpful for graduate students as well): <https://ncfdd-production-file-uploads.s3.amazonaws.com/media/399d28e3-a382-44b1-8bfa-4394ad6148d5-MentoringMap-Interactive.pdf>



PRACTICAL ADVICE

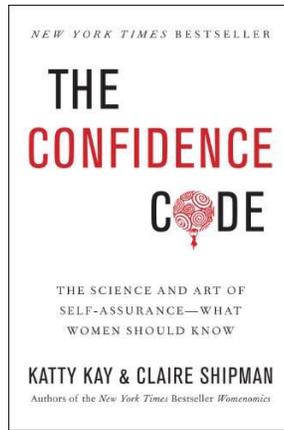
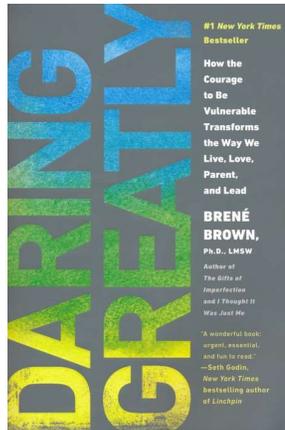
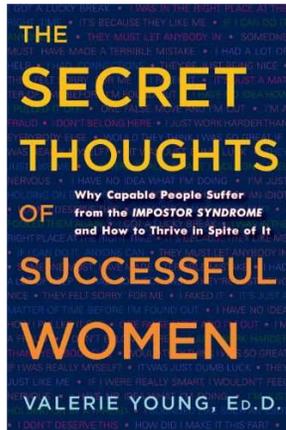
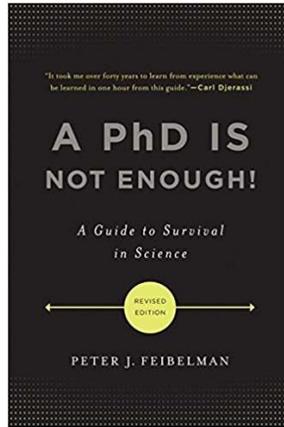
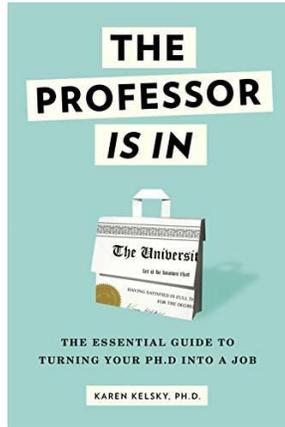
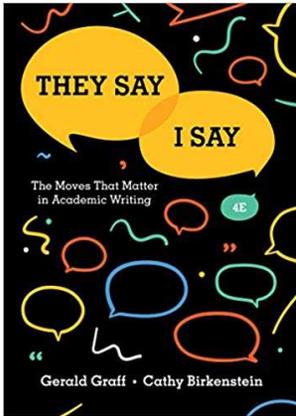
- **Is a career in academia right for me?**
 - Teaching, research, and service
 - Flexibility? Location? Alternatives?
- **Prepare early**
 - Career path, dissertation, publications
 - Treat graduate studies as a full-time job
 - Have a plan B (transferable skills)
- **Do and show good work: self-promotion**
 - Academia is about scholarly **exchanges**.
 - Take advantage of conferences (coffee chat, elevator pitch, professional events) and social media.
- **Don't waste time on self-doubt**
 - Counterproductive
- **However, remember to be kind to yourself**
 - Be patient
 - Look for support groups and counseling services if necessary
 - Your work \neq You



PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- **Mentally prepared for making extra efforts**
 - Remind yourself of why you decide to study abroad in the first place.
- **Observe, mimic, practice, and repeat.**
 - Mimicking is the first step to learn a new language, norms, and culture.
 - e.g., how your American (white male) colleagues participate in grad seminars, how seasoned scholars present their research and introduce it in a concise way, etc.
 - Overcoming cultural barriers doesn't have to be painful. Find something that interests you and develop some hobbies.
- **Learn to be confident and assertive especially when the culture you grew up with values humility and modesty.**
 - How to do that? See the second advice.
- **Think strategically about your comparative advantage**
 - What's your strength (going back to slide #6)? Can you find something that connects your strength and your interest?





USEFUL RESOURCES / NETWORKS

- Dr. Amy Catalinac's presentation on "Overcoming Barriers to Women's Advancement in Political Science": https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/catalinac_womenstalk.pdf
- Women Also Know Stuff: <https://womenalsoknowstuff.wordpress.com>
- People of Color Also Know Stuff: <https://sites.google.com/view/pocexperts/home?authuser=2>
- Journeys in World Politics: <http://www.saramitchell.org/journeys.html>
- Women in Conflict Studies: <http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~wics/>
- Visions in Methodology: <http://visionsinmethodology.org>
- ODU Career Pathway: <https://sites.wp.odu.edu/careerpathways/>
- How to survive grad school (for women): <https://web.apsanet.org/cswp/how-to-survive-grad-school/>

