

SCS 2019: The Future of Classics
Racial Equity and the Production of Knowledge
1.5.2019 | D. Padilla Peralta

It is daunting to bat clean up behind my distinguished panelists, but I will do my best to knock some baserunners home. My original plan was to offer some remarks on non-paradigmatic future verb forms in Greek, but I think you are all expecting somewhat different fare. For the next eight minutes I want to concentrate on the systematic marginalization of people of color in the credentialed and publicly recognized knowledge production of the discipline. Already in the historical practice of convening this conference in locations and hotel and conference centers that are not only ludicrously expensive but rife with micro- and macro-aggressions targeting people of color, the SCS does them no favors; and here I pause to mention the revolting racial profiling yesterday by hotel staff of Djesika Bel Watson and Stefani Echeverría-Fenn, co-founders of The Sportula. Those of you on Twitter who have heard of the incident and seen the video that they uploaded will have had an opportunity to reflect on how alienating these spaces continue to be for people of color. However the SCS chooses to call the hotel staff of the Marriott to account for yesterday's heinousness, we should remember that holding our hotel and conference venues to a racially equitable standard—and not letting them off the hook once they promise "to do better" or trot out whatever corporatized language of banalizing non-responsibility suits them—is only a first step. The longer-term steps all involve committing to the advancement of folks of color (and of the collaborative ventures that emerge to support their work and legitimate their standing) in ways that decenter and displace white privilege and supremacy from its position of preeminence and priority in the discipline's self-image.

This statement brings me now to the purpose of my remarks for this panel. I want to look at a blinding derangement: the responsibility of the major journals in the field for the replication of those asymmetries of power and authority that impoverish knowledge production in the field of Classics—by perpetrating the epistemic and hermeneutic injustice of denying a space and a place to scholars of color. The motivation for the data-harvesting project behind these remarks arose from attempting to cultivate the habit, practiced to genuinely emancipatory effect by several of you in this room, of assembling syllabi and bibliographies that meet as demanding a standard of citational justice as possible; and of meditating upon the collection of undergraduate and graduate syllabi and bibliographies that I have obsessively curated over the years, partly with an eye to mapping the major landmarks of authorized knowledge production in this field. How many women scholars appear on these syllabi? How many people of color? How many women of color?

Although not normally included within the dossier of his most explicitly racist words and deeds, Basil Gildersleeve's founding of *AJP* in 1880 has “[helped to shape](#) American classical scholarship” by spurring the development of a journal-centered disciplinary culture that has proven remarkably (if unsurprisingly) resistant to the pursuit of racial diversity and equity as a core objective. Let me put this another way: if one were intentionally to design a discipline whose institutional organs and gatekeeping protocols were explicitly aimed at disavowing the legitimate status of scholars of color as producers of knowledge, one could not do better than what Classics has done. In illustration of this point, I want first to recognize and center gender disparity in the publication trends of three major journals—*TAPA*, *AJP*, and *CA*—before proceeding to some data on the racial and ethnic backgrounds of the individuals who are published in the journals. For all of these journals, I have compiled twenty years' worth of data,

from 1997 to 2017. I'll say more about how I collected data on racial and ethnic background in a moment; for now, let's look briefly at gender disparities, beginning with the flagship journal of the SCS, *TAPA*.

As you'll see on this slide [= **Figs. 1-3**, next page], not all that much has changed in the past two decades. In the five-year period from 1997 to 2001, 36% of author appearances were by women; this figure dropped to 28% in the next five-year interval, rose to 31% in the next five-year period, and crawled up to 37% in 2012-2017. Matters do not improve when we turn to *AJP*, which as a quarterly offers more slots for publication: from a low-water mark of 27% in 1997-2001, the percentage of women author appearances climbed to 41% in the next five-year interval before descending into the 30s for the decade from 2007 to 2017. Meanwhile *Classical Antiquity*, which at one point came closest to achieving gender parity, has likewise trended downward on this front, from a high of 46% in 1997-2001 to 37.5% in 2012-2017.

What factors account for this? Editors at several of the journals have complained about the gap between the volume of submissions by men and the volume of submissions by women, and from some editorial letters one gets the sense of a shrugging of the shoulders: yes, we're trying, but it's just so hard. Certainly, we'll need to talk about what constitutes meaningful effort to redress this imbalance, and to contend with the fact—undoubtedly obvious to many of you in this room—that men continue to receive more explicit encouragement to submit to journals than women. But the extraordinary discretionary power wielded by editors should also be subjected to scrutiny too, and I hope we will discuss this during the Q&A. For now, let me end by noting that discretionary power can and should be flexed to progressive consequence and outcome: in 2018, when only 3% of *Eidolon*'s authors were tenured men, [the journal published twice as many women as men](#).

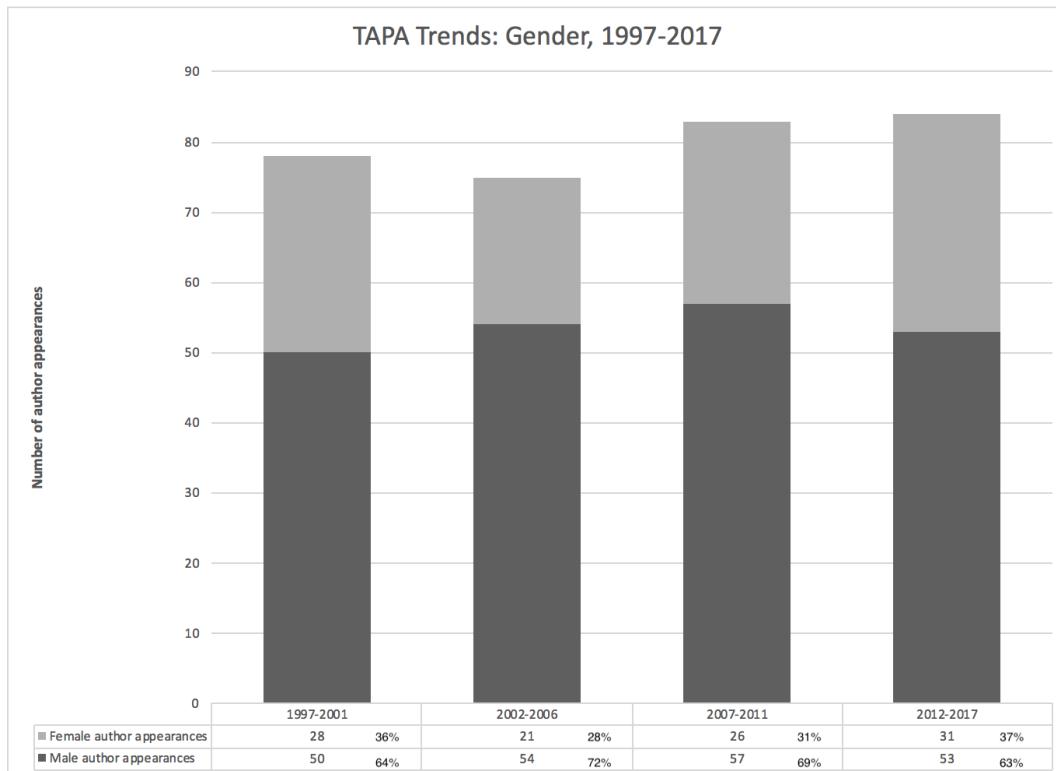


Fig. 1

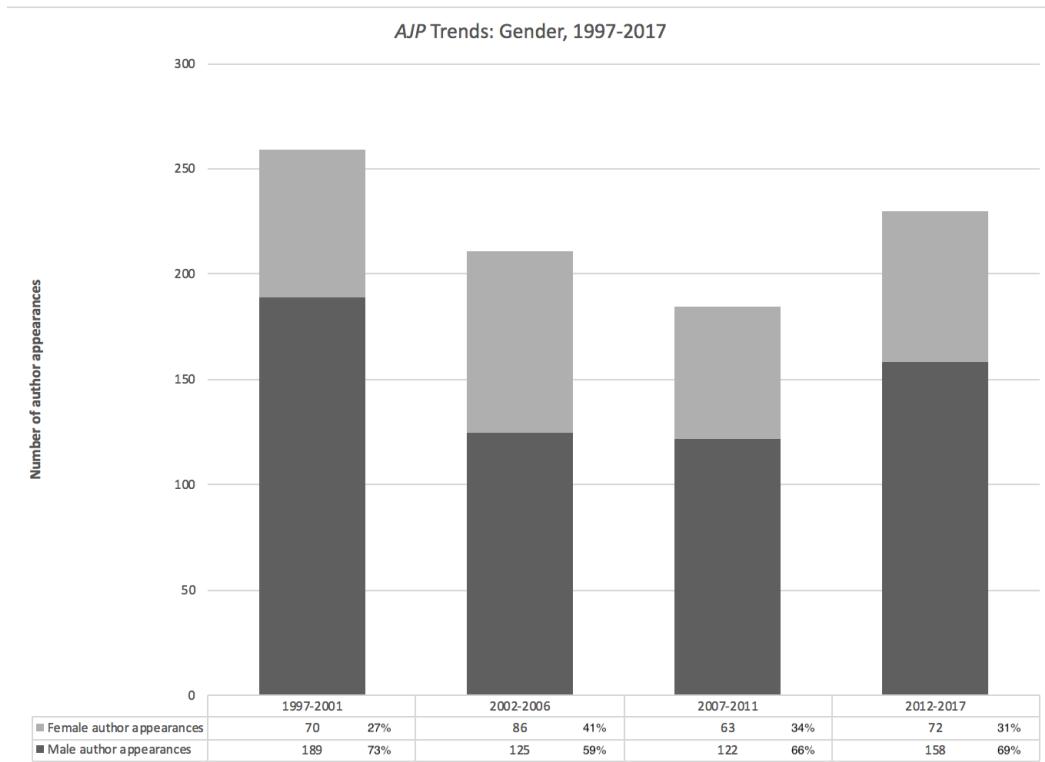


Fig. 2

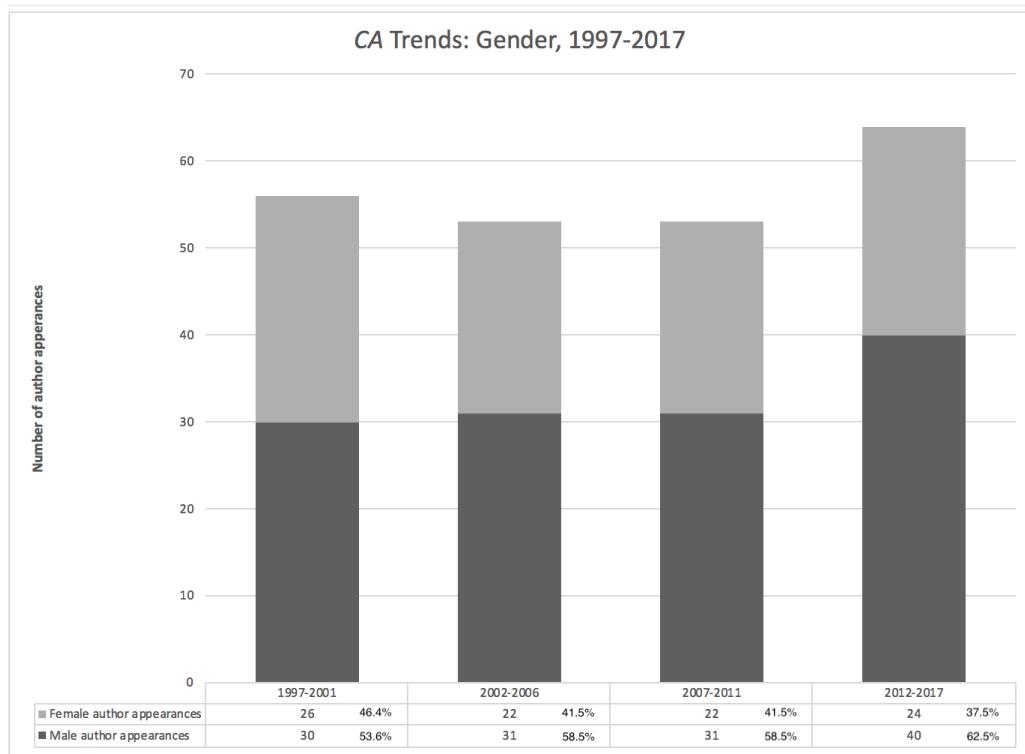


Fig. 3

The significance of editorial discretionary power comes into starker relief when we turn to the racial and ethnic make-up of the publication rosters of *TAPA*, *AJP*, and *CA*, the bleakness of which may not surprise some of you in attendance but which still deserves quantitative exposition. For all authors who published in these journals from 1997 to 2017,¹ I conducted Internet searches to establish their racial and ethnic background—digging into publicly available information on parents, families, and marriages as disclosed by birth announcements and obituaries/necrologies whenever I could pin these down. Such was the volume of searches from my laptop that Google repeatedly prompted me to confirm that I was not a robot. I grouped scholars into the following racial/ethnic categories: white American (US/Canada); white

¹ For *TAPA*, I included the presidential addresses as well as authors who published notes/*paragraphoi*; for *AJP*, I included authors of reviews.

European (with non-Canadian British Commonwealth folks included); black, African-American, or Afro-Caribbean; East Asian, Asian-American, or Asian Canadian; Native American/indigenous, Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander; a Middle Eastern/South Asian category that includes Israeli/Palestinian scholars; Hispanic or Latinx; and the always-convenient Other/Unable to Determine for those authors who eluded the surveillance gaze of my Internet searches.² I then tabulated the racial and ethnic distribution of author appearances in each of these journals for three five-year intervals (1997-2001, 2002-2006, 2007-2011) and one six-year interval (2012-2017).

The hegemony of whiteness is everywhere in evidence across these three journals [= **Figs. 4-6, end**]. For *TAPA*, in the period from 2012 to 2017, 91% of author appearances were by white American or white European scholars—an “improvement” (I use this word advisedly) on the 98%, 96% and 97% white composition of the author pool during the previous intervals. During this twenty-year period, figures for the white composition of the *AJP* author pool have bounced around from 94.5% to 97% to 94% again to 97%. *CA* has not cleared the 90% mark either: the corresponding figures have bounced back and forth from 91% to 96%, although I will

² A few limitations should be borne in mind. (1) Authors may well claim racial or ethnic identities beyond or in addition to those that I assigned them. I did not double-assign/split authors between two categories; however, in the interests of biasing against my hypothesis that the overwhelming majority of published authors were white American or white European, I did try to be as generous as possible in assignments to historically underrepresented groups if there was any indication that an author belonged to or claimed membership in one. (2) I suspect that my figures do not adequately account for the presence of authors who identify as Native American/First Nation/indigenous, for reasons to be explained in a fuller version of this paper.

note—in the Pokémon tokenizing spirit—that *CA* is the only one of the journals to feature authors in every single category during any one of these temporal intervals. These percentages remind me of nothing so much as the census figures for those intensely segregated suburbs that defined the childhood and adolescent years of my partner. Publication in elite journals in Classics is a whites-only neighborhood.

By now, the solution-minded among you will want to hear some possibilities floated for how to rectify this, for the well-being and the future of this discipline. Despite my strong preference for playing the Shame Wizard to this crowd instead of drawing up some action plan, I do want to close by nodding in the direction of the *American Historical Review*'s call to decolonize itself, [in an editorial letter](#) published by Alex Lichtenstein a year ago. This editorial combines a plan of action with a forthright diagnosis of the journal's "complicity in the inability of the profession to divest itself fully of its past lack of openness to scholars and scholarship due to race, color, creed, gender, sexuality, nationality, and a host of other assigned characteristics." The editorial letter is a moving document, and I would urge all of you to read it.

As far as I'm concerned, the most fundamental question for the future of knowledge production in Classics is this: how do we recognize, honor, and repair the silencing of the knowledge that people of color carry? How do we perform—and validate, and support—the reparative epistemic justice that the discipline so sorely needs? It is here that I will insist on a modification to the discourse of inclusion. For this reparative epistemic justice to take flight, holders of privilege will need to surrender their privilege. In practical terms, this means that (in an economy of academic prestige defined and governed by scarcity) white men will have to surrender the privilege they have of seeing their words printed and disseminated; they will have to take a backseat so that people of color—and women and gender-nonconforming scholars of

color—benefit from the privilege of seeing their words on the page. Again, however, I emphasize that this is an economy of scarcity that at the level of journal publication will remain zero-sum (until and unless this system of publication is dismantled): every person of color who is to be published will take the place of a white man whose words *could* have or had already appeared in the pages of that journal. And that would be a future worth striving for.

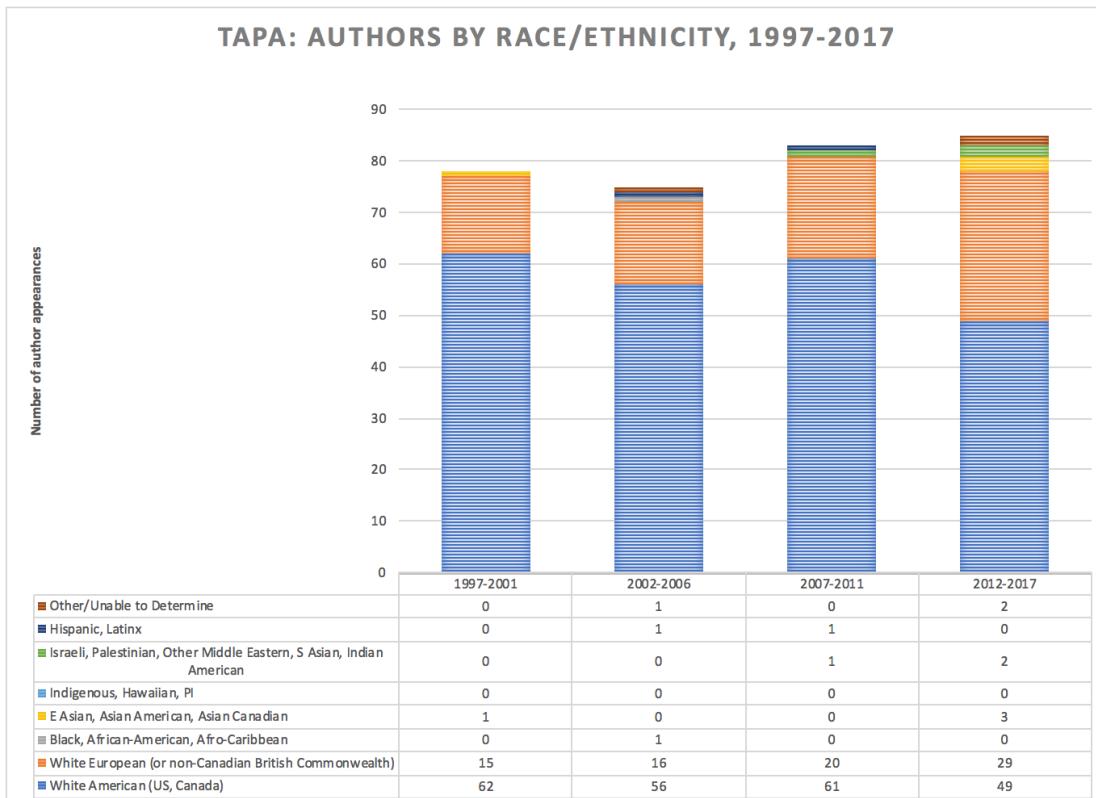


Fig. 4

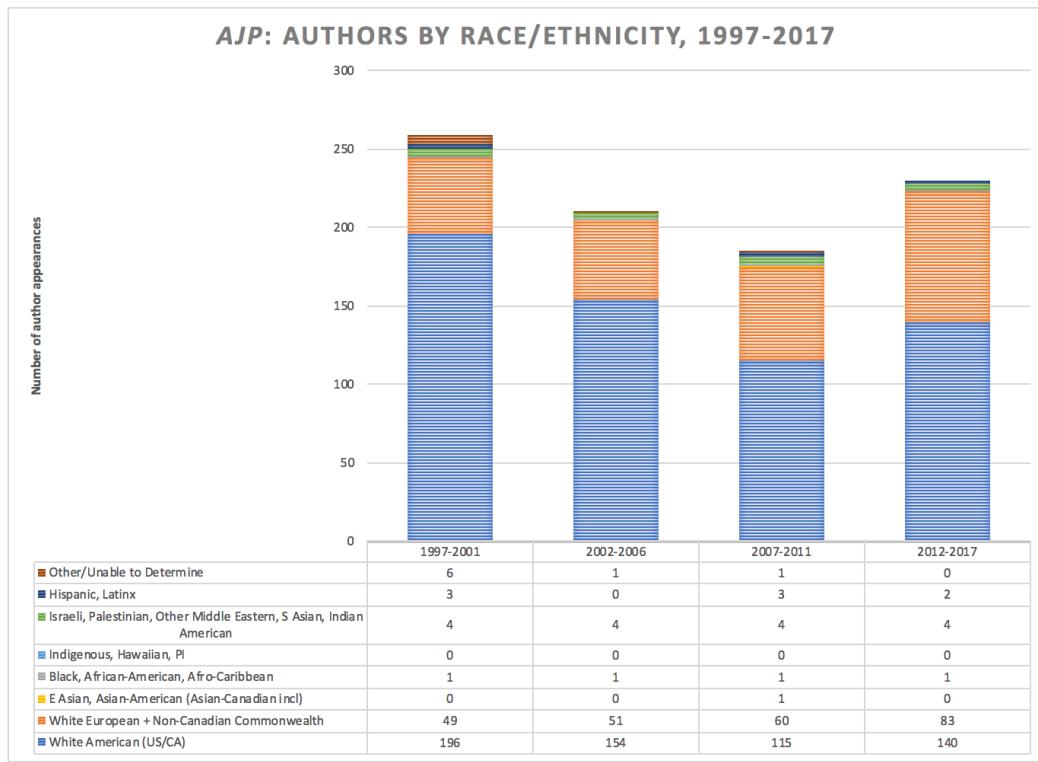


Fig. 5

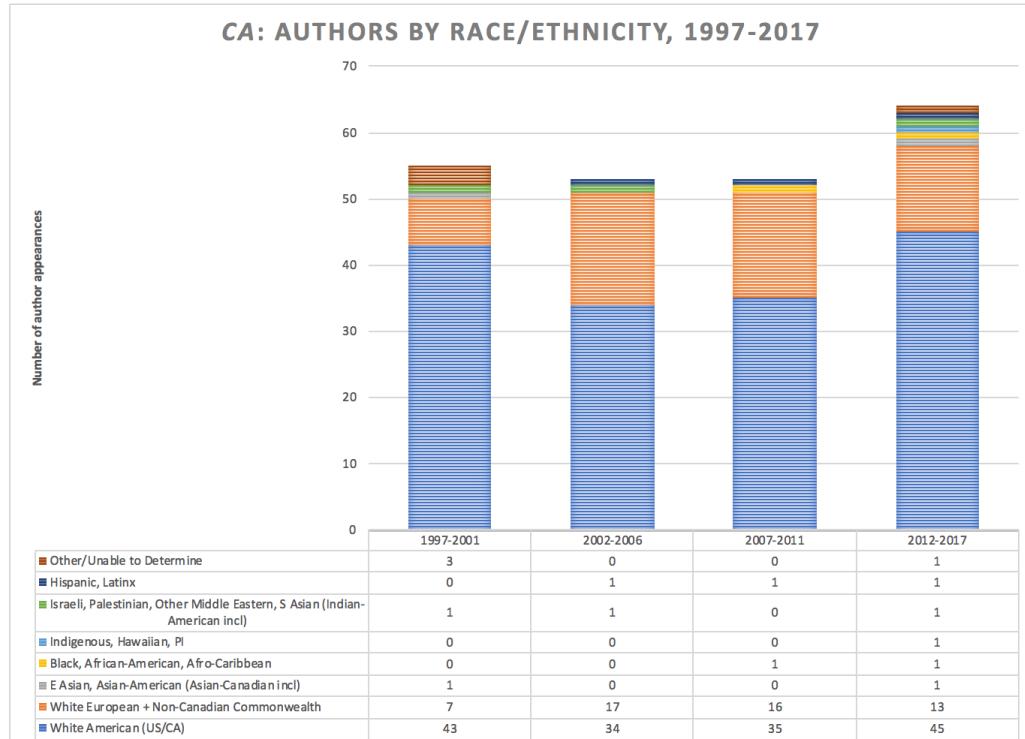


Fig. 6

Addendum: In response to queries and promptings on Twitter and Facebook from several colleagues (and building on the recent number-crunching of Jo Quinn, Walter Scheidel, and Helen Morales), I've taken a crack at comparing the overall demographic make-up of the pool of professional classicists in the US to the gender + race and ethnic breakdowns of the three journals that I audited for my SCS paper. Because up-to-date statistics on the demographic profile of classicists in the US are not available, any reconstruction entails no small amount of conjecture. But we can make a few sensible assumptions about the demographic parameters of North American classicists with the help of (1) the APA [CSWMG Surveys](#) from the late 1990s and early 2000s; (2) the data collected by the [SCS Placement Service](#) over the past several years, provided we acknowledge various limitations up front: response rates to the CSWMG surveys were not great; both the Surveys and Placement Data are a very imperfect approximation of the demographic profile of the field as a whole, etc. (I'll have further comment on one potentially significant shortcoming in a moment.) It should be noted too that the universe of contributors to the journals is not bounded by the US and Canada—another complicating factor that I'll sidestep for now.

With these caveats in mind, I devised a procedure for extrapolating the changing demographic profile of the North American field over time and for a quick compare-and-contrast exercise. (For more details, please consult—and double-check!—the tables.) The CSWMG 2001-2002 survey returned 37% as the percentage of women holding faculty positions in classics, and 2.5% as the percentage of minorities in classics posts. Turning now to SCS Placement Data for 2015-2016 and 2016-2017, an average of the data for these two cycles yields 50.6% for women and 8.1% for minorities. If the field has in fact gone from 37% women to gender parity—or

something close to it—the implication assuming steady growth is an increase of 0.86 percentage points per year; if in the case of POC the percentage has climbed from 2.5% to 8%, the corresponding annual increase is 0.36 percentage points.

The tables track journal trends across four periods (1997-2001, 2002-2006, 2007-2011, and 2012-2017) and by comparison to field-wide demographics.¹ For *TAPA/AJP/CA*, the correlation between the percentage of women in the field and the percentage of published women authors is either weak or negative; the gap between the overall percentage of women in the field and the percentage of published women authors appears to have grown in recent years. Matters with POC scholars are a little more complicated. *CA*'s percentage of POC authors in 1997-2001 is impressive in relation to the composition of the field at the time. This percentage then returned to the orbit of the field-wide number for the next two cycles before rising again in 2012-2017. For the years 2012-2017, *TAPA*'s percentage of POC authors also outpaced the field-wide figure, after having lagged behind for two of the three previous cycles. *AJP* has remained within two and a half percentage points of the field-wide figure (2x above, 2x below) for the past two decades.

It is quite possible, however, that the benchmark figures of 2.5% (2001-2002) and 8% (2015-2017) that I've adopted for POC in classics are too low. Table 11 of the 2004 survey status that 2.7% of tenure-track hires in the US and Canada for the period 1999-2004 were minorities, which tracks with the 2.5% of POC in posts at the time of the 2001-2002 survey; but how many

¹ For each interval, I supply the figures at the midway mark: i.e., for 2002-2006 I calculate the state of affairs in 2004. See the note accompanying each table.

POC were forced out of the academic pipeline in the years between completing the level of training that would put them in position to write their first journal article (so advanced ABD/early-career PhD recipient) and competing successfully for a T-T (or for that matter any full- or part-time position)? As for the picture in more recent years, we have to turn to other proxies. A check of the [Digest of Education Statistics](#) reveals that in the years 2015-16 and 2016-17 23.4% of doctoral degree recipients in the liberal arts and humanities were minorities. (NB: this percentage includes non-resident aliens.) I don't think the numbers in Classics either for recent doctoral recipients or for the field as a whole are on that level yet. Nonetheless, there are good reasons—anecdotal and otherwise—to assume that the POC constituency in North American Classics is currently somewhere in the 10-20% range.

Instead of fancy statistical adjustments, I'll limit myself now to two tweaks: let's double the 2001-2002 benchmark of 2.5% to 5%, and the 8% benchmark to 16%, for a fifteen-year improvement of 11% that translates to an annual increase of 0.73 percentage points. If we run the numbers for POC in the journals again, the situation looks rather different. Only *CA* in the years 1997-2001 clears the field-wide figure; otherwise, the journals fall short, in some cases strikingly short. (Note e.g. *TAPA* 2007-2011 or *AJP* 2012-2017.)

Table 1					
Women field	Women TAPA	Years	Correlation		
37.0%	35.9%	1997-2001	0.32		
39.2%	28.0%	2002-2006			
43.5%	31.3%	2007-2011			
48.2%	36.5%	2012-2017			
	32.9%	average		<u>Notes</u>	
POC field	POC TAPA	Years		IF we have gone from 37% women in field (2002) to parity in 15 yrs: 0.86666667	
2.5%	1.3%	1997-2001	0.83	assume increase of .86 percentage pts per yr For intervals, calculate increase up to halfway pt (.86 *2.5 for 5-yr window; .86*3 for 6-yr)	
3.4%	4.0%	2002-2006			
4.3%	2.4%	2007-2011			
5.4%	8.0%	2012-2017			
	3.9%	average			
Women field	Women AJP	Years		IF we have gone from 2.5% POC field (2002) to 8%, 5.5% percentage increase over 15 years 0.36666667	
37.0%	27.0%	1997-2001	-0.01	assume increase of 0.36 percentage pts per yr For intervals, calculate increase up to halfway mark (.36*2.5 for 5-yr window; .36*3 for 6-yr)	
39.2%	40.8%	2002-2006			
43.5%	34.1%	2007-2011			
48.2%	31.3%	2012-2017			
	33.3%	average			
POC field	POC AJP	Years			
2.5%	5.0%	1997-2001	-0.35		
3.4%	2.8%	2002-2006			
4.3%	5.4%	2007-2011			
5.4%	3.0%	2012-2017			
	4.1%	average			
Women field	Women CA	Years			
37.0%	46.4%	1997-2001	-0.91		
39.2%	41.5%	2002-2006			
43.5%	41.5%	2007-2011			
48.2%	37.5%	2012-2017			
	41.7%	average			
POC field	POC CA	Years			
2.5%	9.1%	1997-2001	0.08		
3.4%	3.8%	2002-2006			
4.3%	3.8%	2007-2011			
5.4%	9.4%	2012-2017			
	6.5%	average			

Table 2					
POC field	POC TAPA	Years	Correlation	<u>Notes</u>	
5.0%	1.3%	1997-2001	0.8346769	IF we have gone from 5% POC field (2002) to 16%, 11% increase over 15 years 0.73333333	
6.8%	4.0%	2002-2006		assume increase of 0.73 percentage pts per yr	
8.7%	2.4%	2007-2011		For intervals, calculate increase up to halfway mark (.73*2.5 for 5-yr window; .73*3 for 6-yr)	
10.8%	8.0%	2012-2017			
	3.9%	average			
POC AJP	Years				
5.0%	5.0%	1997-2001	-0.3467247		
6.8%	2.8%	2002-2006			
8.7%	5.4%	2007-2011			
10.8%	3.0%	2012-2017			
	4.1%	average			
POC CA	Years				
5.0%	9.1%	1997-2001	0.07920351		
6.8%	3.8%	2002-2006			
8.7%	3.8%	2007-2011			
10.8%	9.4%	2012-2017			
	6.5%	average			

Extracted from APA CSWMG 2001-2002 Survey						
Table II: Composition of Faculty			Means: 1997-2001		Means: 1990-1997	
	2001-2002					
Male	826.56	63.0%		496.36	64.0%	700.53
Female	485.44	37.0%		276.57	36.0%	301.62
Total	1312			775.56		1000.75
White	1279.2	97.5%		756.11	97.5%	980.74
Minorities	32.8	2.5%		19.50	2.5%	21.52
Total	1312			775.50		1000.75
TAPA			1997-2001	2002-2006	2007-2011	2012-2017
Male			64.1%	72.0%		62.4%
Female			35.9%	28.0%		36.5%
Other			0.0%	0.0%		9.4%
White			98.7%	96.0%		91.8%
Minorities			1.3%	4.0%		8.2%
AJP			1997-2001	2002-2006	2007-2011	2012-2017
Male			73.0%	59.2%		68.7%
Female			27.0%	40.8%		31.3%
Other			0.0%	0.0%		0.0%
White			94.6%	97.2%		97.0%
Minorities			5.4%	2.8%		3.0%
CA			1997-2001	2002-2006	2007-2011	2012-2017
Male			53.6%	58.5%		62.5%
Female			46.4%	41.5%		37.5%
Other			0.0%	0.0%		0.0%
White			90.9%	96.2%		90.6%
Minorities			9.1%	3.8%		9.4%