

THE SCHOLARLY STATUS OF BLACKS IN THE ECONOMICS PROFESSION: HAS THE NATIONAL ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION AND THE REVIEW OF BLACK POLITICAL ECONOMY MATTERED?

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Abstract

This paper considers whether the National Economic Association and its journal the Review of Black Political Economy, has enhanced the scholarly status of black economists with research interests in the economics and political economy of race. With bibliometric data on all known black economists in academia and research-oriented institutions/agencies, we rank black economists by publications in the Review of Black Political Economy, and consider the black economist and black economist Review of Black Political Economy share of all articles published relating to the economics and political economy of race over the 1979 - 2011 time period. Our findings reveal that while the typical black economist has never published in the Review of Black Political Economy, the share of black economists publishing in the Review of Black Economy approximates the share of all articles published on the economic and political economy of race by black economists, and the share of articles published in the Review of Black Political Economy by black economists appears higher than typical journals in economics, but similar to other economics journals non-black economists dominate the share of published articles. Our findings suggest that both the National Economic Association and the Review of Black Political Economy have enhanced the scholarly status of blacks in the economics profession.

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I. Introduction

Arguably, a case can be made that with respect to the status of blacks in the economics profession, the problem of the 21st century remains the color line (Price, 2009). Using the median as a measure of representation, the typical Ph.D granting economics department in the United States has no black economist. To paraphrase Yogi Berra, relative to the status quo at the founding of the Caucus of Black Economists in 1969—the forerunner of the National Economic Association (Alexis, Spratlen, and Wilson, 2008; Browne, 1993; Handy, 2008)—*it's like Deja Vu all over again*, as the current status of blacks on the economics faculties of Ph.D granting departments appears no better, on average, than it was in 1969. It was of course the status quo in 1969 that motivated the founding of the National Economic Association (NEA) to address and remedy the underrepresentation of blacks in the economics profession.

At its inception, the NEA identified three core issues (Alexis, Spratlen, and Wilson; 2008): (1) The supply of black economists was intolerably low (2) Black economists were almost invisible on the programs of the American Economic Association, and (3) The programs at the annual meetings of the Allied Social Science Associations were virtually devoid of topics relevant to black Americans/economists such as, discrimination, poverty and the economics of the black Diaspora. Given the complementarities among these concerns, an implicit and related issue is the scholarly publication options for black economists with research interests/concerns in the economics and political economy of race. Indeed, this at least partly motivated the launching of the NEA scholarly journal the *Review of Black Political Economy (RBPE)*. In retrospect, the creation of the *RBPE* seems an optimal intervention to enhance the scholarly productivity and status of black economists overall, as there is evidence of discrimination against the publication of research by scholars in economics who find/report evidence that race—particularly being black—matters for a wide variety of economic outcomes (Coleman, 2008; Mason, Myers and Darity, 2008; Stewart, 2008).

In this paper, we consider the extent to which the NEA and its journal the *RBPE*, enhances the status of blacks in the economics profession by enabling a publication outlet for black economists with research interests in the economics and political economy of race. With bibliometric data on all known black economists in academia and research-oriented institutions/agencies as of December 2011, we rank black economists by publications in the *RBPE*, and consider the black economist and black economist *RBPE* share of all articles published relating to the economics and political economy of race over the 1979 - 2011 time period.

Our descriptive inquiry will presumably enable some insight into the NEA and *RBPE's* impact in

enhancing the scholarly status of black economists with research interests in the economics and political economy of race, as we consider the extent to which all known black economists in academia and/or research-oriented contribute to the *RBPE*, relative to black economist research agendas/interests in the economics and political economy of race. To the extent that the *RBPE* captures a proportion of black economist research that approximates black economist research agendas/interest in the economics and political economy of race overall, an implied counterfactual would be that the NEA and the *RBPE* have indeed enhanced the scholarly status of black economists.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. The second section describes the bibliometric data and methodology that informs our descriptive analysis. In the third section, we report by rank the contributions of all known black economists in academia and research-oriented institutions/agencies to the *RBPE* over the 1979 - 2011 time period. We also report descriptive statistics on the black economist share of contributions to the *RBPE*, and on the share of black economists with research agendas/interests in the economics and political economy of race so as to benchmark a possible counterfactual that informs the impact of the NEA and the *RBPE* on the scholarly status of blacks in the economics profession. The last section concludes.

II. Data and Methodology

Our data on black economists currently employed in academia and research-oriented institutions/agencies is based upon that reported in Price (2008), which was originally constructed/compiled by Agesa, Granger and Price (1998, 2000, 2002a, 2002b, 2005). Current updates were enabled by: (1) surveilling the webpages of economics departments in the United States, and (2) information provided by a large network of black economist regarding their knowledge of black economists historically and currently employed in academia and research-oriented institutions/agencies. As of December 1, 2011 our database of black economists in academia and research institutions/agencies consisted of 306 individuals, of which three are known to be deceased.¹ We include the known deceased black economists in our analysis as they were alive and made scholarly contributions to the *RBPE* during our sample time period.

The American Economic Association's *EconLit* is the source of our data on black economist publications. *EconLit* provides indexing and abstracts of the worldwide literature on economics, covering more than 800 major economics journals annually. It also indexes and captures bibliometric data for collective volumes

¹Included among the deceased black economists is Marcus Alexis—an esteemed black economist, and one of the founders of the NEA, who died in May of 2009.

(essays, proceedings, etc.), books, dissertations, working papers, and *Journal of Economic Literature* book reviews each year. Our bibliometric data from *EconLit* captures only refereed journal articles, and picks up fully-abstracted publications with full-text search starting in 1979 and ending in December of 2011. For each black economist, we capture the number of articles published in the *RBPE*, without adjustment for the number of coauthors.²

As *EconLit* also enables a full-text search back to 1979, we were also able to determine from each black economists total output in refereed journals, the number of publications that can be construed as contributions to the economics and political economy of race. In particular, we conditioned the search for refereed journal articles on a Boolean conditional for “Black”, and “White”, and “Race”. The idea here is that if an individual black economist has made a contribution to the economics literature on the economics and political economy of race, these three terms must appear somewhere in the publication. Given this, the total number of refereed articles on the economics and political economy of race for each black economist in our sample was computed.

III. Results of Bibliometric Analysis

Our main bibliometric results are reported in Table 1, which reports in rank order, black economists by the number of publications in the *RBPE* between 1979 and 2011. The top-ranked black economists are William A. Darity and Gregory N. Price of Duke University and Morehouse College respectively.³ Of the 308 black economists in our data, 80 made 269 contributions to the *RBPE*. For approximately 37 percent of black economists who made contributions to the *RBPE*, at least half of their total contributions to the economics literature in general were contributions that appeared in the *RBPE*. Black economists affiliated with Historically Black Colleges/Universities (HBCUs) are underrepresented with respect to making contributions to the *RBPE* as they constitute approximately 30 percent of all black economists in our sample, but account for approximately 25 percent of all contributions by black economists to the *RBPE*. Using the median as a measure of the representative research productivity of black economists in our sample, the typical black economist made no contributions to the *RBPE* during the time period under consideration.

²Fosu (2005) argues that a failure to adjust for coauthorship introduces an upward bias in the productivity of black economists, as it conflates total productivity with marginal productivity. However, Agesa Granger and Price (2005) show that the distribution of black economist productivity does not change with adjustments for coauthorship.

³In cases where the current institutional affiliation of an individual could not be verified, the affiliation is listed as “unknown”.

Given that one of the explicit goals of the NEA at its genesis was to strengthen economics research capacity at HBCUs (Alexis, Spratlen, and Wilson, 2008), the approximate 25 percent share of *RBPE* publications by economists affiliated with HBCUs is noteworthy. In this context, the *RBPE* may be of special importance to HBCUs as it enhances the scholarly status of HBCU economics faculty, and may have an impact on the pipeline of future black economists as there is evidence suggesting that HBCU scholarly productivity in economics has a causal impact on the number of HBCU graduates who go on to earn doctorates in economics (Agesa, Granger and Price, 2000; 2002a).

The rankings in Table 1 also suggest that relative to other economics journals, the *RBPE* has no hard preference for authors with “fancy addresses” associated with prestigious research-intensive institutions. The top ranking is shared with authors from two distinct types of institutions—one with a reputation for research excellence, while the other is not. Across the rankings one observes an author institutional affiliation that is probably more diverse/heterogeneous in terms of institutional type and gender than what is observed in a majority of economics journals. To the extent that the manuscript refereeing and editing process at journals is biased against authors at institutions that are not viewed as prestigious (Hodgson and Rothman, 1999) and/or having occupying a favorable position in the social class hierarchy underlying the production of social science (Lee, 2006), the *RBPE* appears to be a journal providing publishing opportunities to black economists that is not constrained by the historical reputation, or lack thereof, of the institution where black economists are employed.

Table 2 reports simple publication share means across four categories: 1.) Black economist share of all *RBPE* articles, 2.) The share of Black economists who have published in the *RBPE*, 3.) The share of Black economists who have made contributions in any economics journal on the economics and political economy of race, and 4.) The *RBPE* share of all articles published by Black economists.⁴ Several conclusions are supported by these means. First, the *RBPE* is not a “black journal” per se, as the majority of articles published in the *RBPE* between 1978 - 2011 were by non-black economists. Second, the majority of black economists have never published in the *RBPE*. Third, the share of economists who have published on the economics and political economy of race is approximately similar to black economist share of articles published in the *RBPE*. Lastly, the majority of actual research contributions by black economists are in economics journals other than the *RBPE* and plausibly published with *Journal of Economic Literature* (JEL)

⁴The denominator for this measure is the sum of all articles published in any economics journal indexed in *EconLit* by black economists over the 1979 - 2011 time period—which was 2,218.

classification codes not typically associated with the *RBPE*.⁵ Thus, in contrast perhaps to the perceptions of say tenure/hiring committees and other observers of the scholarly profiles of black economists, the *RBPE* is not an exclusive outlet for radical/heterodox research by black radical/heterodox economists (Conrad, 1994)—nor is it a “economics journal for blacks” per se.

In general, our bibliometric analysis in Tables 1 - 2 of black economist research productivity in the *RBPE* suggests that the NEA and *RBPE* enhance the scholarly status of blacks in the economic profession in several ways. First, given the virtual absence of black economists on the faculties of Ph.D granting economics departments (Price, 2009), who dominate the pages of economics journals (Hodgson and Rothman, 1999), that the *RBPE* appears not to have any biases regarding the institutional affiliation of authors suggests that if the *RBPE* did not exist, many black economists would not be published due to their institutional affiliation. It also appears that the *RBPE* enables black economists with research interests in the economics and political economy of race to achieve publication success, as the fraction of articles published by black economists in the *RBPE* is approximately similar to the fraction of all black economists in our sample with research achievements in the economics and political economy of race. This suggests that in the absence of the *RBPE*, many black economists with research agendas in the economic and political economy of race would have diminished publication prospects, as we are unaware of any other economics journal in which approximately 32 percent of the contributions on on the economics and political economy of race are by black economists.

It is also instructive to note that a significant fraction of the black economist *RBPE* publication output in our bibliometric data was enabled by two black female editors, Margaret Simms (1983 - 1988), and Cecilia Conrad (2005 - present). We are unaware of any other economics journal that has had two black females as primary editors. As such, a plausible counterfactual in this instance is that if the *RBPE* did not exist, there would have been no black female primary editors of economics journals. A similar conclusion can be made for black male editors of economics journals, as the primary editors of the *RBPE* excluding Margaret Simms and Cecilia Conrad have been black males. As being an editor of an economic journals is an outcome that enhances an individual’s scholarly status, it appears that the existence of the *RBPE* has enhanced the scholarly status of blacks—both males and females—in the economics profession.

⁵That black economists possibly publish most of their articles with JEL codes beyond those that typically appear in the *RBPE* casts some doubt on the idea that the underrepresentation of blacks on economics faculties is possibly explained by the failure of black economists, particularly newly-minted Ph.D’s to have research specialties in the area/fields of high demand by economics departments (Peoples, 2009).

Overall, our bibliometric analysis suggests that the NEA and the *RBPE* have indeed enhanced the scholarly status of blacks in the economics profession. Given the counterfactual of no NEA and *RBPE*, it is plausible that many of the scholarly outcomes observed in our data would not have been realized, given the research interests/agendas of black economists in the economics and political economy of race. This seems particularly true for black economists at HBCUs. The elevation of many black economists to economics journals editors is also a noteworthy achievement of the *RBPE* that has no rival at any other economics journal. As such, our analysis provides evidence that since its founding at the Caucus of Black Economists in 1969, the NEA and *RBPE* has had a significant and positive impact on the scholarly status of black economists.

IV. Conclusion

This paper considered whether the National Economic Association and its journal the *Review of Black Political Economy*, has had a favorable and beneficial impact on the scholarly status of black economists with research interests in the economics and political economy of race. An analysis of bibliometric data over the 1979 - 2011 time on all known black economists in academia and research institutions/agencies provided descriptive insight into a variety of scholarly outcomes for black economists that are associated with enhance scholarly status. Our results suggest a plausible counterfactual that if the NEA and *RBPE* did not exist, the scholarly status of blacks in the economics profession would have been lower than currently observed.

Our analysis omits one major bibliometric measure of scholarly status—citations. To the extent that the economics profession at-large views the contributions of black economists as not being worth of citing (Price, 2008), publications by black economists in the *RBPE* may not be a pathway to to enhancing scholarly status. As such, our conclusion that the NEA and *RBPE* have had a significant impact on enhancing the scholarly status of blacks in the economics profession may suffer from an upward bias. The results of Price (2008) however suggest that black economists affiliated with the NEA and who publish in the *RBPE* can offset the aversion of non-black economists in citing the research findings of black economists published in the *RBPE*. The quantitative significance of black economists citing other black economist research published in the *RBPE* is perhaps a useful future extension of the results reported here.

Table 1
Ranking of Black Economists
By Review of Black Political Economy Publications
1979 - 2011

Rank	Name	Institution	Number of Publications	Percentage of Total Publications
1	William A. Darity Jr.	Duke University	13	.1214
1	Gregory N. Price	Morehouse College	13	.4814
2	Margaret Simms	Urban Institute	11	.9167
2	James B. Stewart	Pennsylvania State	11	.3667
3	Samuel L. Myers Jr.	University of Minnesota	10	.2439
4	Marcus Alexis*	Northwestern University	8	.4705
4	Charles L. Betsey	Howard University	8	.7273
4	Harold A. Black	University of Tennessee	8	.2353
4	Thomas D. Boston	Georgia Institute of Technology	8	.6667
4	Augustin K. Fosu	United Nations University	8	.1765
4	Wilhelmina Leigh	Joint Center for Political And Economic Studies	8	.6667
5	Jeremiah Cotton	Massachusetts-Boston	7	.7000
5	Julianne Malveaux	Bennett College	7	.7000
6	David Swinton	Benedict College	6	.6667
7	Jacqueline Agesa	Marshall University	5	.2778
7	Andrew F. Brimmer	University of Massachusetts	5	.1218
7	Bernadette P. Chachere	Delgado Community College	5	1.000
7	Cecilia A. Conrad	Pomona College	5	.3125
7	Kwabena Gyimah-Brempong	University of South Florida	5	.1000
7	Glenn C. Loury	Brown University	5	.2174
7	Patrick L. Mason	Florida State	5	.2174
7	William E. Spriggs	Howard University	5	.5000
8	John Handy	Morehouse College	4	1.000
8	Alvin E. Headen Jr.	North Carolina State	4	.4000
8	Geoffrey Warner	Unknown	4	.6667
8	Shelley White-Means	University of Tennessee	4	.1905
8	Ricard America	Georgetown University	4	.5714
8	Bernard Anderson	University of Pennsylvania	4	.3077
9	Lynn C. Burbridge	Northern Kentucky	3	.5000
9	Carlton G. Davis	Michigan State	3	.2500
9	Bichaka Fayissa	Middle Tennessee	3	.1428
9	Amon O. Okpala	Fayetteville State	3	.3333
9	Rhonda V. Sharpe	Bennett College	3	.7500
9	Rhonda M. Williams*	University of Maryland	3	.5000
9	Barbara Jones	Alabama A&M University	3	1.000
9	Jessica G. Nembhard	John Jay College	3	.6000
10	Yaw A. Badu	Unknown	2	.5000
10	Darrick Hamilton	New School University	2	.1818
10	Mwangi S. Kimenyi	Unknown	2	.0645
10	Arthur T. King	Unknown	2	1.00

Notes

*Deceased

Table 1—continued
Ranking of Black Economists
By Review of Black Political Economy Publications
1979 - 2011

Rank	Name	Institution	Number of Publications	Percentage of Total Publications
10	Vincent R. McDonald	Unknown	2	1.00
10	James Peoples	Wisconsin-Milwaukee	2	.0625
10	David Poyer	Morehouse College	2	.4000
10	William Rodgers	Rutgers University	2	.0909
10	Omari H. Swinton	Howard University	2	.5000
10	Roger Williams	Morehouse College	2	.6667
10	Linda Loubert	Morgan State University	2	.6667
11	Terence Agbeyebe	Hunter College	1	.1111
11	Richard Agesa	Marshall University	1	.0714
11	Olugbenga Ajilore	University of Toledo	1	.2000
11	Joyce A. Smith	University of Illinois	1	.2000
11	Rodney Andrews	Texas-Dallas	1	.2000
11	Donald R. Andrews	Southern University	1	.2500
11	Nina Banks	Bucknell University	1	.2500
11	Kwadwo Bawuah	Virginia State	1	.3333
11	Cleveland Chandler*	Howard University	1	.3333
11	Jan E. Christopher	Delaware State	1	.5000
11	Ralph Christy	Cornell University	1	.0667
11	Robynn Cox	Spelman College	1	1.000
11	Terry Ann-Craigie	Connecticut College	1	1.000
11	Kenneth Daniels	Virginia Commonwealth	1	.0526
11	Rudolph Daniels	Florida A&M University	1	.2500
11	Mamit Deme	Middle Tennessee State	1	.1667
11	Frank Ekanem	Unknown	1	.1111
11	Fidel Ezeala-Harrison	Jackson State University	1	.0833
11	Tekie Fessehatzion*	Morgan State University	1	.0500
11	Darrell J. Gaskin	Johns Hopkins University	1	.0833
11	Curtis Haynes	Buffalo State	1	1.000
11	Gary Hoover	University of Alabama	1	.0417
11	Gerald D. Jaynes	Yale University	1	.2500
11	Philip N. Jefferson	Swarthmore College	1	.0714
11	John M. Mbaku	Weber State University	1	.1000
11	Donald R. McDowell	North Carolina A&T	1	.2500
11	Nelson C. Modeste	Tennessee State University	1	.1428
11	Alfred Parks	University of Illinois	1	.2000
11	Clifford Reid	Colby College	1	.1111
11	Lauren M. Rich	University of Chicago	1	.5000
11	Walter Simmons	John Carroll University	1	.1250
11	Mark D. Turner	Optimal Solutions	1	.5000
11	Martin Williams	Unknown	1	.0178
Median			0	0

Notes

*Deceased

Table 2
 Shares of Black Economist Publications:
 Review of Black Political Economy, Economics of Race: 1979 - 2011
 1979 - 2011

Black Economist Share of Review of Black Political Economy Articles	Share of Black Economists Published in Review of Black Political Economy	Share of Black Economists Publishing on The Economics of Race	Black Economist Review of Black Political Economy Publications As a Share Of Total Black Economist Publications
.3462	.2597	.3214	.1212

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