



PRESS RELEASE

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Overcoming 'Otherness' in Scientific Research Commentary in *Nature Human Behavior*

Washington, D.C. In a provocative commentary in *Nature Human Behavior*, Dr. Jane L. Delgado of the National Alliance for Hispanic Health and Dr. Rueben C. Warren former Director of the National Center for Bioethics in Research and Health Care at Tuskegee University and now at Meharry Medical College, call for a critical examination of 'otherness' in science to advance the meaningfulness and quality of research and move beyond health disparities, a sanitized catch-all phrase, that defuses what are more accurately labeled as harmful health outcomes (HHO). They also provide interventions to proactively address otherness to produce better science.

Dr. Delgado explains further, "True scientific excellence requires all voices, and varied experiences and perspectives. To harness the full potential of our society, we must recognize and actively address the biases that 'otherness' introduces into scientific research." Dr. Warren adds, "It's crucial to acknowledge that our collective progress is hindered when research is skewed by the exclusion of significant populations based on gender, race, or other dimensions of identity."

The commentary highlights the detrimental impact of 'otherness' in scientific methodologies and outcomes, particularly in health-related research. They describe how the factors that define a sense of belonging produce the corollary of otherness. These factors include race, ethnicity, sex/gender, religious affiliation, heritage, political association, and other dimensions. The impact is science that is limited by its methods and scope producing adverse health outcomes. Negative otherness distorts all aspects of science from how teams are structured, participants invited, questions asked, answers that are developed, follow-up actions, interpretation of findings, final conclusions, and clinical decision-making."

The commentary makes clear, "Otherness is not a new concept and while the focus on otherness focuses on the negative consequences there are also positive outcomes that may occur. Positive outcomes from otherness occur when there is a recognition of differences that are taken into consideration to tailor actions to the individual to produce positive outcomes." A good example of positive otherness is the movement for precision or tailored medicine.

The authors call for a recalibration of the scientific enterprise by building diverse teams, encouraging multiple perspectives, improving AI algorithms with comprehensive data sets, and leveraging 'otherness' to foster innovation rather than division. The authors conclude that individual actions and leadership are paramount to overcoming the entrenched biases of 'otherness' and achieving a future where scientific discovery is unbounded and all-inclusive.

For the full commentary, please visit *Nature Human Behavior*:

<https://rdcu.be/dxCUC>



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About the National Alliance for Hispanic Health (The Alliance)

The Alliance is the nation's foremost science-based source of information and trusted advocate for the health of Hispanics in the United States with a mission to achieve the best health for all. For more information visit us at www.healthyamericas.org

About Meharry Medical College (Meharry)

Meharry is one of the nation's oldest and largest historically black academic health science center and includes a medical school, dental school, graduate school, applied computational sciences school, and the Center for Health Policy. For more information visit Meharry at: <https://home.mmc.edu>

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