mathematics during the time period 1 July 1992 to 30 June 1996. I did not recall that my department had produced more than a handful of minority Ph.D.s. I was positive that no African-American or Native American had received a doctorate from this department. Mervis's data were obtained from the National Opinion Research Center (NORC), a contractor to the National Science Foundation. According to those data, 74 Ph.D.s were awarded in mathematics in the United States during this time period. The breakdown was as follows: one Black, three Mexican-Americans, eight other Hispanics, 43 Whites, and 19 Asians. Apparently, citizenship is not considered when this data is collected.

I obtained a listing of the students who received doctorates in mathematics, applied mathematics, and statistics from our university. I counted 65 doctorates for that time period. There were no African-Americans, Native Americans, or Chicanos in that list. There was one person whose mother was born in Latin America who could be considered a U.S.-born minority. Seven Mexican nationals were on the list. The discrepancy in data might come from several sources. Apparently, computer theory and practice was considered mathematics for reporting purposes. Twenty-six doctorates in computer science were produced in that time period, and there was one Chicano on the list. Also, several students received doctorates in May 1992 and August 1996 who could have been counted.

Mervis's article paints a depressing picture of the education of the minority population, but it is apparently even worse than it appears.

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Rankings of Research-Active Departments

One might expect that the well-publicized, extremely competitive nature of the job market for tenure-track faculty positions recently would have an interesting side effect: with an oversupply of qualified applicants for all open positions, the relative quality of faculty across different institutions should be evening out. To study this possibility, I have analyzed the National Research Council rankings of the home departments of U.S. authors in *Science* and *Nature* for 1999 and 1989 (volumes 244 and 284 in *Science* and 339 and 399 in *Nature*) (*1*). It would be interesting to extend the study to international authors, but unfortunately a unified international ranking of departments is not available.

The mean ranking of an author's department for the 1989 volumes is 19.2 ± 1.5 (n = 163; the uncertainty is taken as the standard deviation divided by the square root of n). The mean for 1999 is significantly lower, 24.3 ± 1.3 (n = 244). There is no significant difference between the two journals in a given year. Since *Science* and *Nature* have remained the premier research journals over this 10-year span, the natural explanation for this trend is a decrease in the variation of faculty quality between different institutions. Such information should be kept in mind when interpreting rankings of research-active departments.

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