

Forum

The APSR Hall of Fame: A Comment

Arthur H. Miller, who wrote “10.00” articles in *APSR* between 1954 and 1994 thinks that getting published in such a prestigious journal is “a feat that should be recognized.” With two colleagues he has therefore written an article on the *APSR* Hall of Fame (Miller, Tien, and Peebler 1996). Arthur Miller is assured a place of prominence here as a member of the “elite group of 45 authors” who have published more than five times. But in order to be sure that the exclusive character of the Hall of Fame is preserved, the cutoff is conveniently set at 10 articles. Miller, et al. toy with the idea that any other approach to academic ranking and evaluation might well be replaced by using the number of publications in *APSR*, which “is a more objective measure,” but end up recommending another measure—the “Professional Visibility Index”—based on the number of articles in *APSR* multiplied by the number of citations from the *Social Sciences Citation Index*. I have no quarrel with their editorial statistics for the journal, which I assume to be correct. However, when they move into citation data, they go seriously wrong.

My interest in the citation scores in this article was first aroused when I noticed that William J. Dixon, with just two articles in *APSR* and about 30 articles to his credit altogether (though an impressive list, given that he was born in 1951) has collected 9,693 citations and places third on the list of citation leaders among authors published in *APSR* in the period of 1974–94 (Table 5, p. 79). This is nearly three times the number of citations of a giant of the profession like William Riker and 5.5 times the number of citations of a prolific and prominent scholar like Steven Brams. Well done, Bill!

My enthusiasm for this finding turned to skepticism when I noticed the other names near the top of the

list, such as Brown, Smith, and Jones, and—indeed—Miller. This brought to mind a problem I have come across in my own work on citations to *Journal of Peace Research* and to Johan Galtung’s work (Gleditsch 1980, 1993). The problem is that the *SSCI* lists author only by their surname and initial(s). This choice was probably made because many journals supply no more than the initials of their authors. It is not a problem if the surname is relatively rare in the profession. Thus, I can say with some confidence that Johan Galtung for years has been the most frequently cited Norwegian social scientist, and that he has just been overtaken by Jon Elster. But I would have to be very cautious about commenting on the exact number of citations of a younger scholar, Thomas Hylland Eriksen, because there are other authors who are indexed by *SSCI* as “T. Eriksen” and even “T.H. Eriksen.”

Miller, et al. are evidently aware of the fact that the Brown, Smith, and Jones at or near the top of their ranking are likely to be a collection of different people. Thus, the W.J. Dixon who published “Inequality and Political Violence Revisited” in *APSR* in 1993 is obviously not the same person as the W.J. Dixon who published “A Comparison of Four Methods for Rating Overall Social Value” in *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavia* in 1986. Most importantly, he is not the W.J. Dixon who authored the manual for the BMDP statistics package, and who is probably responsible for the bulk of the “Dixon” citations. Similarly, it was not the political scientist A.H. Miller who wrote “Lack of Association between Cortisol Hypersecretion” and “On Suppression of the DST in Patients with Alzheimer’s Disease” in *American Journal of Psychiatry* in 1994. Even though Miller, et al. are aware that “authors with common last names tended to be inaccurately counted” (p. 80), they go ahead and publish a list of citations (Table 5)

which is likely to be completely misleading.

There are several other problems with the use of citation data in this article. While the printed version of *SSCI* (available from 1956) counts as separate all citations to different works of the same author, the CD Rom version (available from 1981) counts only one citation per citing article. Thus, if I cite W.J. Dixon’s *APSR* article on democracy and the peaceful settlement of international conflict from 1994 and throw in a reference to his 1993 article in *Journal of Conflict Resolution* at the same time, the CD Rom version gives him only one citation.¹ The same counting principle applies to the version of *SSCI* available on the Dialog information bank (with coverage from 1972). Rather than using the same source throughout, Miller, et al. try to solve this problem by multiplying the CD Rom data by a standard factor of 2.94. This clearly gives an inflated citation score to authors such as N.H. Nie or W.J. Dixon who have a limited number of very highly cited works.² Bruce Russett is given a citation score of 2,623 in Table 6, but does not appear at all in Table 5 which lists all “citation leaders” down to 1,754 citations. Seymour Martin Lipset who, according to Gary Marks biography of him in *The Encyclopedia of Democracy* (Marks, 1995, p. 766) is more frequently cited by other scholars than any other living political scientist or sociologist, is not mentioned at all.³

These lesser problems confirm that the authors are not very familiar with the use of citation scores. However, they are insignificant compared with the monumental error of aggregating the citation scores for entirely different people with the same surname and initial(s). As noted, their list of citation leaders virtually meaningless. Their measure of professional visibility (Table 6)—offered as “a valid and reasonably accurate measure of visibility and performance”—is slightly more meaning-

ful, since the useless citation scores are weighted by the true number of publications in *APSR*. In this list, the people found at the head of the list are at least genuinely major names of the profession. No Brown, Smith, and Jones here, although the high position of A.H. Miller may still be questioned. Bill Dixon, with his inflated citation score, should have made *fourteenth* place on the PVI index, except that the authors decided to include only authors with five or more *APSR* articles.

There are ways of getting around this problem. One is to extract all the citations from the Dialog base and carefully sort out the citations to different publications, to ensure that only publications belonging to the *APSR* authors are included. Another would be to enlist the co-operation of the Institute of Scientific Information, publisher of the *SSCI*, and use their original database. A third, and simpler, method would be to limit the citation scores to citations to the

APSR articles themselves. All these methods are possible, but they require deeper insight into citation data, more hard work, and greater expense.

Notes

1. Strictly speaking, the number of citations will be lower only if the search is limited to the name of the cited author. If one searches separately for each of that author's cited publications, the number will be the same as that obtained by summing the citations in the printed version. I am grateful to Eugene Garfield, Chairman Emeritus of the Institute for Scientific Information, for pointing this out.

2. There were several minor errors in the original article. Anyone familiar with the international relations literature will balk at finding that Bruce Bueno de Mesquita has only 61 citations. In the June issue of *PS* (p. 192) there is an "update" of Table 6 where Bueno de Mesquita appears with a more probable citation score—1,171.

3. The same statement is made by Diamond and Marks in their introduction to a Lipset *Festschrift* in 1992. I have been unable to trace the source of their information.

References

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