

Departmental Seminar

The Brilliance Barrier: Stereotypes about Brilliance Are an Obstacle to Diversity in Science and Beyond

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. | November 26, 2019 (Tuesday)

Chamber, 11/F, The Jockey Club Tower | Centennial Campus | The University of Hong Kong



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Abstract

I propose that a field's diversity is affected by what its members believe is required for success: Fields that value raw intellectual talent above all else may inadvertently obstruct the participation of women and (some) minorities. The environment in these fields may be less welcoming to women and minority groups because of the cultural stereotypes that associate intellectual talent—brilliance, genius, etc.—with (some) men. This proposal is supported by observational and experimental data from a wide range of fields in the sciences and the humanities, as well as by developmental data that reveal how early these stereotypes take hold.

About the Speaker

Andrei Cimpian (<http://CimpianLab.com>) earned a PhD in psychology from Stanford University in 2008 and is now Associate Professor of Psychology at New York University. One of his main areas of expertise is academic achievement and motivation. Among other topics, he has investigated common cultural beliefs about intellectual ability—including stereotypes about who has such ability—and the effects these beliefs have on young people's aspirations and achievement. In a second line of work, Dr. Cimpian investigates the development of children's concepts of natural kinds and social groups, and their explanations for what they observe in the world. Dr. Cimpian's research has been published in top journals such as *Science*, *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, and *Psychological Science*, earning him the 2018 American Psychological Association Distinguished Scientific Award for Early Career Contribution to Psychology. Media outlets such as *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, *The Washington Post*, NPR, and *The Economist* have covered his work.

Background articles:

[Leslie, S., Cimpian, A., Meyer, M., & Freeland, E. \(2015\). Expectations of brilliance underlie gender distributions across academic disciplines. *Science \(New York, N.Y.\)*, 347\(6219\), 262-265.](#)

[Bian, L., Leslie, S., & Cimpian, A. \(2017\). Gender stereotypes about intellectual ability emerge early and influence children's interests. *Science \(New York, N.Y.\)*, 355\(6323\), 389-391.](#)

~All are Welcome~

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