

Abstract Submitted  
for the APR18 Meeting of  
The American Physical Society

**Privilege and Broadening Participation in Physics** LIOR BURKO,  
Georgia Gwinnett College — Recently, Scherr and Robertson published a highly visible article in the “Race and Physics Teaching” special collection of *The Physics Teacher*, titled “Unveiling Privilege to Broaden Participation.” These authors argue that factors contributing to the underrepresentation of women and people of color in physics can be seen as manifestations of White and/or male privilege and that White male privilege pervades the discipline of physics as well as the classrooms in which physics is taught and learned. We review and critique some of the arguments, including (1) “Physics is portrayed in textbooks as . . . independent of all social or political contexts, rather than as being shaped by the culture of the European Enlightenment (among other cultures) or the conditions during specific international conflicts;” (2) “Physics strongly values male-socialized traits such as independence, competition, and individual victories. Objectivity and rationality themselves, the foundations of scientific ideology, are also male-socialized traits;” (3) “Conceptualizing Nature as governed by laws can suggest that it is ruled by a lawmaker, who is often implicitly conceptualized as a male authority;” and (4) “We need to be willing to open up the space of what counts as physics.”

Lior Burko  
Georgia Gwinnett College

Date submitted: 09 Dec 2017

Electronic form version 1.4