

The Role of Gender in Scholarly Authorship

By Jevin D. West, Jennifer Jacquet, Molly M. King, Shelley J. Correll, Carl T. Bergstrom, *PLoS ONE* 8(7): e66212. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0066212

Self-citation rates higher for men than for women

By Dalmeet Singh Shawla, *Nature* 535, 2016, 212, doi:10.1038/nature.2016.20176

Set your cites high

by Editor-in-Chief Bibian Campos Seijo, *Chemical & Engineering News*, 94(28), July 11, 2016 [Editor's Page]

Based on information collected from 1.5 million studies between 1779 and 2011, about 10% of all references regardless of author's gender seem to be self-citations. Yet, men self-cite 56% more than women do, even after accounting for gender differences in authorship. Over the past two decades men self-citation rate rose to 70% more than women despite an increase of women in academia. Scientists in ecology and evolution, sociology and molecular biology are more prone to cite themselves than historians and classical studies scholars. The study was led by Molly M King at Stanford University and is based on over 8 million papers across the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities; they reveal a number of understated and persistent ways in which gender inequities remain. Yet, even when the raw number of publications of males and females seem to be equal, the men predominate in prestigious first and last positions. Women are significantly underrepresented as authors of single-authored manuscripts. This in turn points to the subtle ways gender disparity still occurs in scholarly authorship regardless of general appearance of being decreased in academia. King and her colleagues discard gender-neutral names and authors listed with only first initial; this may have disproportionately excluded women who might have used their initials to obscure their gender. Men may be better in self-assessing their own abilities more positively than women. The authors were able to match sex to only 56.4% papers which excludes quite a number of papers. Authors note that most self-citations are appropriate and not the result of conscious attempt to contest the system. Yet, they suggest that such self-citation may still be a deliberate way to boost academic citation count. This in turn indicates that men may be better at self-promotion, perceiving fewer "social penalties" associated with self-promotion, etc. Conclusions may be somewhat limited due to the more senior positions men hold (women represent one-quarter of full professors and earn on average 80% of men in comparable positions), publish more papers and therefore have more work to self-cite, says Cassidy Sugimoto from Indiana University but acknowledged that the trend must be nevertheless addressed. Sugimoto said that study could not have accounted for academic productivity and that self-referencing is highly-dependent upon such productivity: about 78% of authors in the study sample are men and 22 % women. However, the greater self-citation increases citation count, increasing thereby perceived quality of paper and in the end –rightly or wrongly – being a measure of productivity of research scholars. It then reflects onto the visibility, pay and career progression of a scholar. There is an opportunity here for female scientists to make some adjustments and be more pro-active career-wise. Prepared by Ines Batinic-Haberle, Duke University School of Medicine, Durham, USA.