

Disparities in a Flagship Political Science Journal? Analyzing Publication Patterns in the *Journal of Politics*, 1939–2019

Joseph Saraceno, University of Southern California

This article adds to ongoing discussions about the gender gap in political science publishing. Through a systematic examination of 80 years worth of data, I show how evolving trends in authorship and coauthorship have changed the nature of publishing in the *Journal of Politics*. I build on previous studies by incorporating into this analysis a decade's worth of submission data provided to me by the journal. Second, I use a latent Dirichlet allocation topic model to identify how the content of published articles has shifted in recent decades. I describe how these moves have affected the publication prospects of both men and women. Although progress has been made, the balance of evidence suggests that there remains unevenness in terms of both who and what is published in the pages of the *Journal of Politics*.

In their influential article “Gender in the Journals,” Teele and Thelen (2017) put forth considerable evidence suggesting that women continue to be underrepresented in political science publishing. Through an analysis of the publication patterns from 10 leading political science journals, they offer three central conclusions: the relative dearth of female-authored publications is not solely a function of their share of the profession, the increasing popularity of coauthorship is not benefiting men and women equally, and the methodological proclivities of top journals afford greater access to scholarship typically produced by men. These findings have since catalyzed research on the subject and even led to the self-auditing of five of the field's most prominent journals.¹ The current study seeks to build on these successes by speaking to similar questions with the added context of 80 years worth of data from the *Journal of Politics* (JOP).

In this article, I explore who and what has been published in the JOP from 1939 until 2019. The primary findings are as follows. First, consistent with past research, I show that female

political scientists have historically published at rates below what might be expected by their various shares within the discipline. Although progress has been made in recent decades, this disparity persists through 2019. Second, I find that increasing rates of coauthorship have been, in large part, to the benefit of men who collaborate with other men. Third, the data suggest that, although females submitted fewer articles than males, they also published at rates somewhat below their share of submissions. Research with multiauthored bylines, in contrast, was frequently published at rates higher than it was submitted. Fourth, a topic modeling application reveals that the type of content published by the JOP has changed in ways that work both in favor of and against women. The greater inclusion of comparative and international relations studies has somewhat increased the publication prospects of female scholars, while the increased number of quantitatively oriented works has disproportionately benefited men. Finally, I put forth data suggesting that some topics are over-/under-published relative to their share of overall citations. Notably,

Joseph Saraceno (jsaracen@usc.edu) is a PhD candidate in the Department of Political Science and International Relations at the University of Southern California.

Data and supporting materials necessary to reproduce the numerical results in the article are available in the JOP Dataverse (<https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/jop>).

1. For more information, see Brown and Samuels (2018).

the analysis reveals that the topics most dominated by women also received a higher share of citations than might be expected by their proportion of all published manuscripts.

DATA-GENERATING PROCESS

I use a data set comprising all research articles published by the *JOP* from its inception in 1939 until 2019. Although the type of content and the way it has been categorized has varied greatly over the period examined, “research articles” here generally refers to all article and short-article style original research currently published. Web-scraping techniques allowed me to extract the full-length text of each document and various metadata that will be used throughout the analysis. Specifically, I used an R script to download from the *JOP* website the type of content (whether an article, short-article, symposium piece, book review, etc.), an abstract, author name(s), and citation counts. These data were collected from 3,311 research articles.

Once the data were gathered, I assigned a gender to authors on the basis of their first and, when available, middle names. As is common in work of this nature, I used an R package designed to predict the sex of people from their first name.² These results were then crosschecked against a second database of over 100,000 first names. I made every effort to discern authors’ genders through their institutional or personal website when a name was not clearly identifiable as belonging to either a man or a woman. Each article was then assigned an authorship structure category, depending on whether it was written by one male, one female, a team of males, a team of females, or a team of both males and females. A secondary variable further classified mixed-gender teams as being majority male, majority female, or equally split between these two genders.

OVERVIEW

Table 1 summarizes across each decade the total number of manuscripts published in the *JOP*, the proportion of those manuscripts that are collaborations between one or more authors, the total number of authors, and the proportion of authors who are female. As shown in the final column, it is evident that the gender gap in authorship is both longstanding and persistent. Although progress has been made in recent decades, many metrics indicate that women continue to be underrepresented. For instance, if we consider conference participation rates, the proportion of *JOP* authors who are female has lagged behind the share of female-lead American Political Science Association (APSA) presentations

2. This system acknowledges only two genders. For more information on the genderizeR package, see Wais (2016).

Table 1. Summary Statistics

Period	Total Articles	% Collaborative	Total Authors	% Female
1939–49	244	4.1	254	3.9
1950–59	242	5.4	255	4.3
1960–69	324	13.3	374	3.5
1970–79	320	19.9	387	6.7
1980–89	332	33.1	470	11.7
1990–99	343	49.6	569	18.4
2000–2009	577	59.4	1,075	18.2
2010–19	929	62.9	1,832	23.7

by roughly 40% since the 1970s (Gruberg 2009). When looking at the rates of political science doctorates conferred on women since the 1990s, I find that this gap grows to 50%.³ Even in the last decade, in which women constituted roughly 40% of assistant professors in PhD-granting departments (Mitchell and Hesli 2013) and 27% of the tenure-track faculty at top institutions (Teele and Thelen 2017), they continue to account for less than a quarter of all authors published in the *JOP*.⁴

It is also apparent that coauthorship has served an increasingly invaluable function in generating cutting-edge research. Among other factors, this is because of increased demands for specialized knowledge, the need for greater financial resources to tackle large-scale projects, and technological innovation that has simplified communication between researchers. This trend was first identified by Fisher et al. (1998) in the aptly named study “How Many Authors Does It Take to Publish an Article?” which noted that the number of coauthored *JOP* articles began to equal those written solely by one author beginning in the 1990s. In the roughly three decades since their analysis, the share of multi-authored work published by the journal has experienced roughly a 13 percentage point increase—from 49.8% in the 1990s to 62.9% in the 2010s. However, as evidenced by Djupe, Smith, and Sokhey (2019) and Teele and Thelen (2017), it is far from clear whether the move toward coauthorship has benefited men and women equally.

Figure 1 provides greater insights into the dynamics of gendered authorship in each decade since 1940. Figure 1A

3. See <https://www.nsf.gov/statistics/srvydoctorates/#tabs-2>.

4. A more optimistic picture might be painted when measuring the share of articles with at least one woman author. When analyzed this way, the data here do show an upward trajectory with female authors contributing to 28.7% of *JOP* publications in the 1990s, 29.6% in the 2000s, and 38% in the 2010s. However, these figures must be considered in the context that the proportion of articles written by at least one male author never fell below 86% in each of these periods.

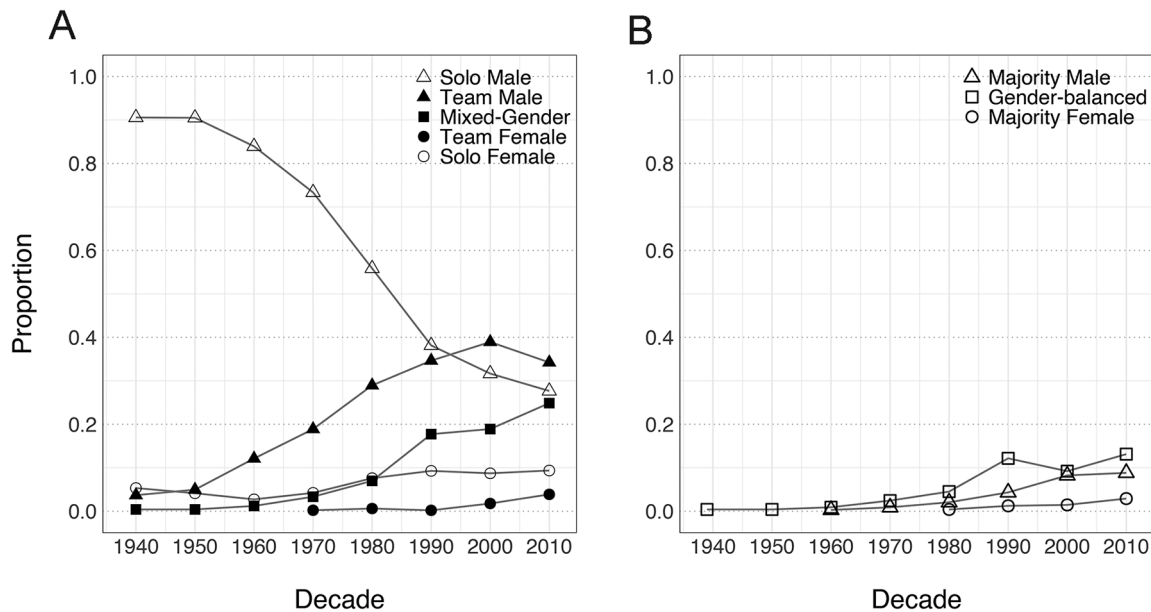


Figure 1. Articles by authorship type, 1939–2019: A, authorship; B, mixed-gender authorship. Points represent the proportion of articles published by each authorship category in each 10-year period.

separates the authorship data into five categories based on gender. Authorship for each article was coded as follows: *solo male*, for articles written by a single male author; *solo female*, for articles written by single female author; *male team*, for articles with no female authors and two or more male authors; *female team*, for articles with no male authors and two or more female authors; and *mixed gender* for articles written by at least one male and one female.

Given the information gleaned from table 1, it is hardly surprising to find that a vast majority of early scholarship was produced by solo-authoring males. More interesting, however, is that the precipitous decline of solo-male authorship, the share of which has decreased by roughly 50 percentage points over the last five decades, has been accompanied by a similarly dramatic rise of research by teams of men. Research with multemale bylines first overtook male solo-authored work back in 1995 and continues to be the most common authorship structure today (constituting 35% of all 2019 articles). Since the 1970s, the share of research published by that group has risen by roughly 20 percentage points—an increase rivaled only by mixed-gender collaborations. The share of work produced by solo females and female-only teams over the same period, in contrast, increased by 4.9 and 3.8 percentage points, respectively.

Are there reasons to believe that similar trends exist in other top-tier journals? In their analysis, Fisher et al. (1998) found notable similarities in the early authorship patterns of the *JOP*, *American Political Science Review* (*APSR*), and *American Journal of Political Science* (*AJPS*). In all three

journals, the share of articles written by male collaborators increased in excess of 30 percentage points from the 1950s to 1990s (851). Teele and Thelen (2017) likewise find that male teams continue to be particularly successful at publishing in the field's leading outlets today. According to their data, which span 2000–2015, the share of articles published by that group averaged 34.5% in the *JOP*, *APSR*, and *AJPS*. This compares to just 19.2% in the other seven journals examined (22.2% when excluding *Political Theory*).

The major success of all-male teams notwithstanding, the number of articles published by teams consisting of at least one man and one woman has also seen a notable increase over the past few decades. Whereas the share of articles published by mixed-gender teams stood at 6% during the 1980s, it reached nearly 25% during the 2010s. Fisher et al. (1998) and Young (1995) both commented that early signs of this female inclusion signaled a movement toward breaking down barriers experienced by women in accessing research networks. However, as was the case more than two decades ago, very little work by teams of women has been published in the *JOP*. On this point, it is also worth noting that not all mixed-gender teams are equal in terms of their contribution to gender parity in publishing. While female perspectives may have gained visibility through inclusion, how gender is balanced within mixed-gender teams may have profound implications for the type of work that is ultimately submitted for publication (Nielsen et al. 2017).

Figure 1B disaggregates mixed-gender teams into majority male, majority female, or gender balanced on the basis

of the gender breakdown within mixed-gender collaborations. We observe that the share of articles authored by an equal number of men and women, typically one of each, has remained largely unchanged since the 1990s. This compares to majority-male authorship, which experienced a threefold increase during the same period. The data reveal that, even when men and women work together, it is most often the case that the number of males equals or exceeds the number of females on a project. This is especially consequential in light of Sarsons (2017), who finds that women in economics are given less credit for work coauthored with men. In only 43 of the articles published over the last 80 years have male authors been outnumbered by their female colleagues.

DIFFERENTIAL RATES OF SUBMISSION

The data presented thus far suggest that women may not be published in the *JOP* as much as we might expect by their various shares within the discipline. Important questions, however, persist. For instance, has female-authored work been rejected at higher rates than work written by males? Have women opted to send their work to other outlets? How much of this disparity can be explained by differential rates of submission? Getting at these and related questions has historically been difficult because submission data are often publicly unavailable. In two cases in which such data were accessed, both Breuning and Sanders (2007) and Østby et al. (2013) find that work by women was published at rates

slightly higher than would be expected by their share of submissions. A series of papers published in 2018 found that, conditional on submission, acceptance rates between men and women are largely the same (Breuning et al. 2018; König and Ropers 2018; Nedal and Nexon 2018; Peterson 2018; Samuels 2018; Tudor and Yashar 2018). Fortunately, in order to resolve these questions as they relate to the *JOP*, the journal has provided me access to submission data from the last 11 years—the period when they are available. I present the submission and corresponding publication information in figure 2.

We observe in figure 2A that submission shares by team type have remained somewhat stable over the past decade. Solo males remained the largest submitting group with an average annual submission rate of 35.5%, followed by teams of men (26.1%), mixed-gender collaborations (22.6%), solo women (12.2%), and teams of women (3.5%). However, the trends suggest that scholars are moving toward authorship types that have proved increasingly successful in recent decades and away from those that have not. Specifically, the success of all-male and mixed-gender teams may be encouraging others to pursue similar arrangements. When compared to 10 years earlier, the submission rates by each of those groups has increased by upward of 5 percentage points. But, the share of solo-authored content experienced a net decline of 8 and 2.2 percentage points for solo men and solo women. There was no net change in the submission share of all-female teams.

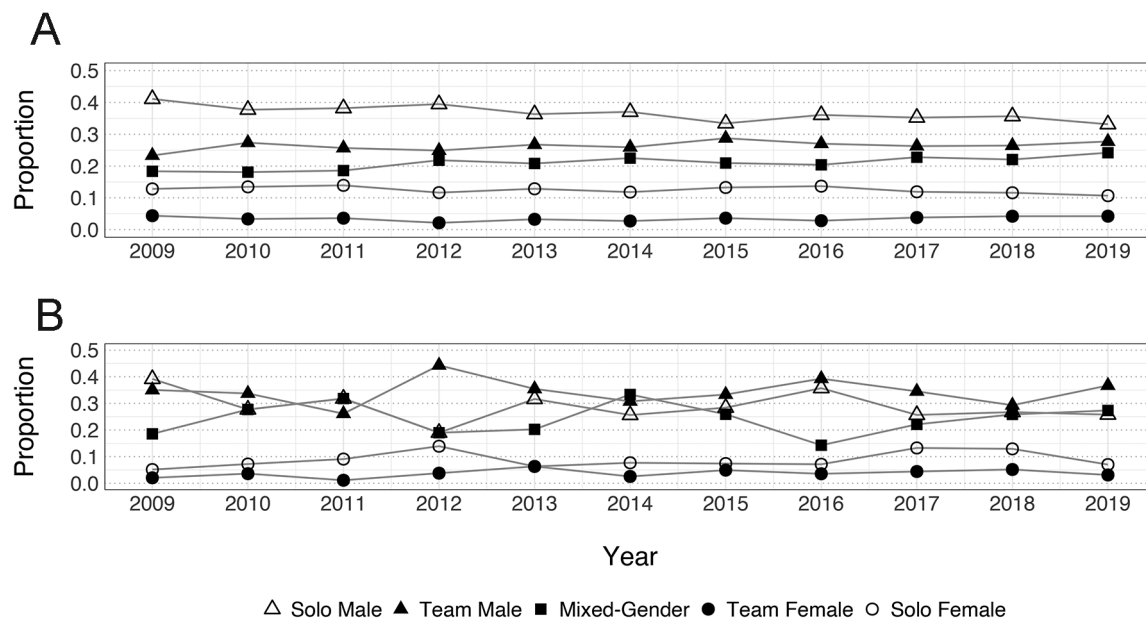


Figure 2. Articles by authorship type, 2009–19: A, submitted articles; B, published articles. Points represent the proportion of articles published by each authorship category in each year. Authorship data for submitted articles were provided by the *Journal of Politics*.

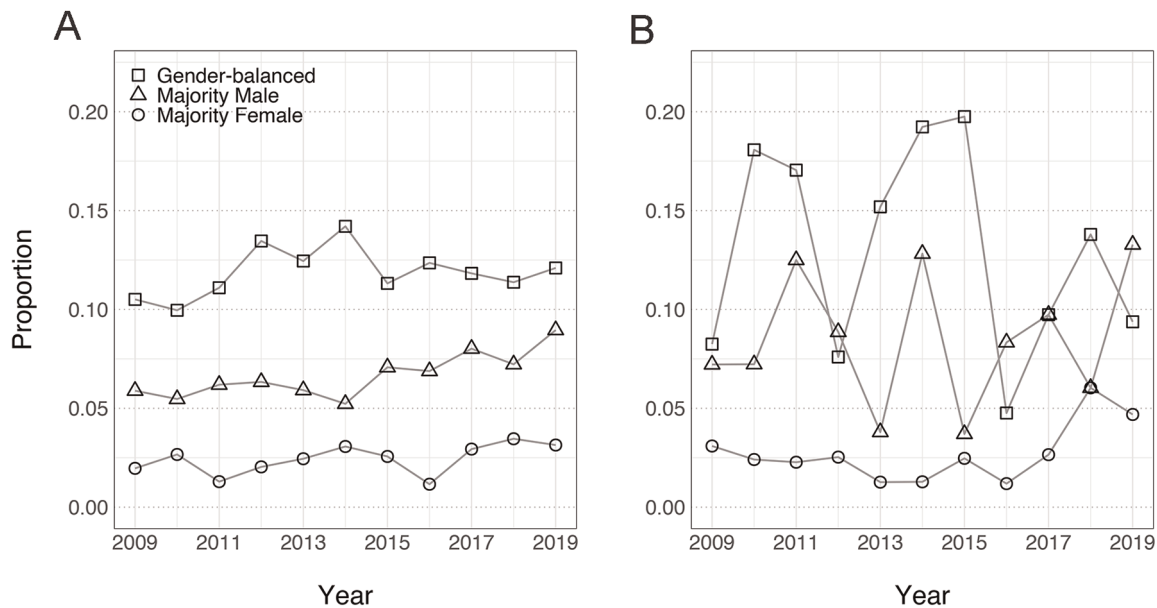


Figure 3. Mixed-gender articles by authorship type, 2009–19: A, submitted articles; B, published articles. Points represent the proportion of articles published by each authorship category in each year.

The data also reveal notable differences between the rates of submission and publication among various groups. I find that, overall, women published at a rate slightly lower than they submitted (23.3% vs. 25.7%) and considerably below their share of all APSA members, 31% (Teele and Thelen 2017). Whereas teams of women submitted and published at similar rates, solo females averaged roughly 4 percentage points fewer publications than they submitted over the period examined. This gap was at its widest in 2013, with solo-authoring females contributing 13% of submissions while publishing at a rate of only 6%.⁵ In comparison, male teams outpaced their share of submissions in each of the last 11 years—amounting to publishing, on average, at a rate 7.3 percentage points higher than they submitted annually. Articles written by a mix of men and women published at a rate roughly 2.8 percentage points higher than they were submitted at.

Figure 3 illustrates how gender is broken down within mixed-gender submissions (fig. 3A) and mixed-gender publications (fig. 3B). In general, I find that the makeup of mixed-gender collaborations published in the *JOP* comports reasonably well with that of submitted articles. The largest share of mixed-gender submissions was by teams with equal numbers of male and female contributors. This group, on average, submitted 11.8% of all articles and published at a rate of

12.9%. Male-majority teams outpaced their submission rate by a slightly higher margin—submitting 6.6% and publishing 8.6% of all articles. Majority-female teams submitted and published at virtually the same rates.

WHAT ABOUT THE TOPICS PUBLISHED?

One way to better understand publishing trends at the *JOP* is through a systematic accounting of types of work published in its pages. Although others have qualitatively categorized work published in various political science journals, I seek to build on their successes by incorporating computational methods into the evaluation. Namely, by using the full length of the *JOP* articles as a corpus, I employ a topic modeling algorithm known as latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA) to identify the dominant subject matter of each article published during this period. As a generative probabilistic model, the LDA algorithm recognizes that each article is a combination of topics and accordingly assigns probabilities based on word co-occurrences within each article (Blei, Ng, and Jordan 2003). In short, the output is a set of topics consisting of words that commonly occur together and less often outside of the topic. A small sample of these words is presented in table 2. The labels of each topic are based on my qualitative assessment of titles, abstracts, and high-frequency words associated with a given topic.⁶

5. For context, solo females published at a rate of roughly 7% in 2014, 2015, and 2016. It is also worth noting that the rate of publication by solo-authoring males was also lower than their corresponding rate of submission in nine of the 10 years presented here.

6. One difficulty inherent to this approach is that it is often hard to assess the “proper” number of topics to be generated by the model. Typically, predictive measures such as perplexity or held-out likelihood are used to assess how well the model can predict unseen test-set documents after

Table 2. Topic Model Output

Topic Label	High-Frequency Words
Interest Groups	Groups, interest, members, organizations, activity, influence
Political Theory	Man, life, human, nature, thought, Hobbes, philosophy
Gender and Politics	Women, social, participation, gender, female, men, politics
Political Economy	Economic, income, fiscal, growth, welfare, market, inequality
Race and Ethnicity	Black, white, racial, ethnic, school, minority, representation
Democratic Theory	Rights, democratic, moral, public, liberal, justice, freedom
The South	States, southern, county, Negro, governor, Virginia, Carolina
Electoral Politics	Elections, candidates, district, incumbent, office, primary
Survey Methods	Respondents, information, survey, attitudes, treatment
Postwar Politics	Soviet, war, world, national, social, united, communist
International Affairs	Conflict, foreign, military, international, war, aid, civil
Judicial Politics	Court, supreme, cases, judicial, law, courts, justice, legal
Formal Theory	Model, decision, equilibrium, preferences, choice, probability
Public Administration	Local, government, service, agencies, city, administer, board
Statistical	Models, data, variables, effect, results, analysis, significant
Legislative Politics	Congress, House, legislative, committee, Senate, majority, bill
Comparative Politics	Countries, international, institution, regime, corrupt, Latin
Partisanship	Issues, ideological, opinion, liberal, conservative, polarization
Media and Politics	Media, coverage, exposure, negative, television, advertising
Voting Behavior	Voter, campaign, candidate , turnout, electorate, ballot
Approval Ratings	President, economic, support, approval, performance
Experimental Methods	Experimental, subjects, control, condition, assigned, effect

Figure 4 displays the number of articles published by topic in the decades from 1940 to the present. It is immediately evident that there has been wide variation in the type of content published, reflecting both the diversification of interests and greater sophistication within the discipline. Whereas a single topic, Postwar Politics characterized roughly 35% of all articles published through the 1950s, no topic in the last decade has accounted for more than 12%. Intriguingly, we observe that the most popular types of articles published today were virtually nonexistent just 25 years ago. Part of this is attributable to the steady increase in quantitatively oriented articles—particularly those categorized here as Statistical and Formal Theory. At the same time, the *JOP* has shifted its content to cater more to a generalist audience over the past two decades. This is evidenced by the increased number of articles related to Comparative Studies and International Affairs.

The primary issue that we are concerned with is how men and women compare in terms of authorship in various

topics. I plot in figure 5 the share of each topic written exclusively by women, men, or mixed-gender collaborators from 2000 to 2019.⁷ We observe that the *JOP* topics most frequently written about by women include Gender and Politics and Race and Ethnicity. This comports with long-standing evidence that female researchers tend to be over-represented in studies of race and gender (Kelly, Williams, and Fisher 1994; Roberts 2018; Young 1995). For both Gender and Politics and Race and Ethnicity, upward of 25% of articles are written exclusively by females, and more than 60% have at least one woman author. These topics are also the only ones in which men author considerably less than half of all articles. Other topics frequently authored by women include Interest Groups, Survey Research, Comparative Studies, and International Affairs. In contrast, topics written almost exclusively by men include Formal Theory, Partisanship, Political Theory, Approval Ratings, and Statistical. Of the articles categorized within these topics, less than one-quarter are written solely or in part by women.

These data can speak to the notion raised in Teele and Thelen (2017) that top journals, like the *JOP*, exhibit a preference for content that women are less likely to produce.

generating parameters from a training set. Yet, as noted by Chang et al. (2009), maximizing these quantities has the potential to inhibit the production of topics that are meaningful or substantively interpretable. After estimating the model across a wide range of values, I fixed the number of topics to 26. I found that this value produced the most frequently reoccurring and coherent topics while also allowing for meaningful comparisons across time.

7. Excluded from the analysis are topics with less than 30 articles published during the period.

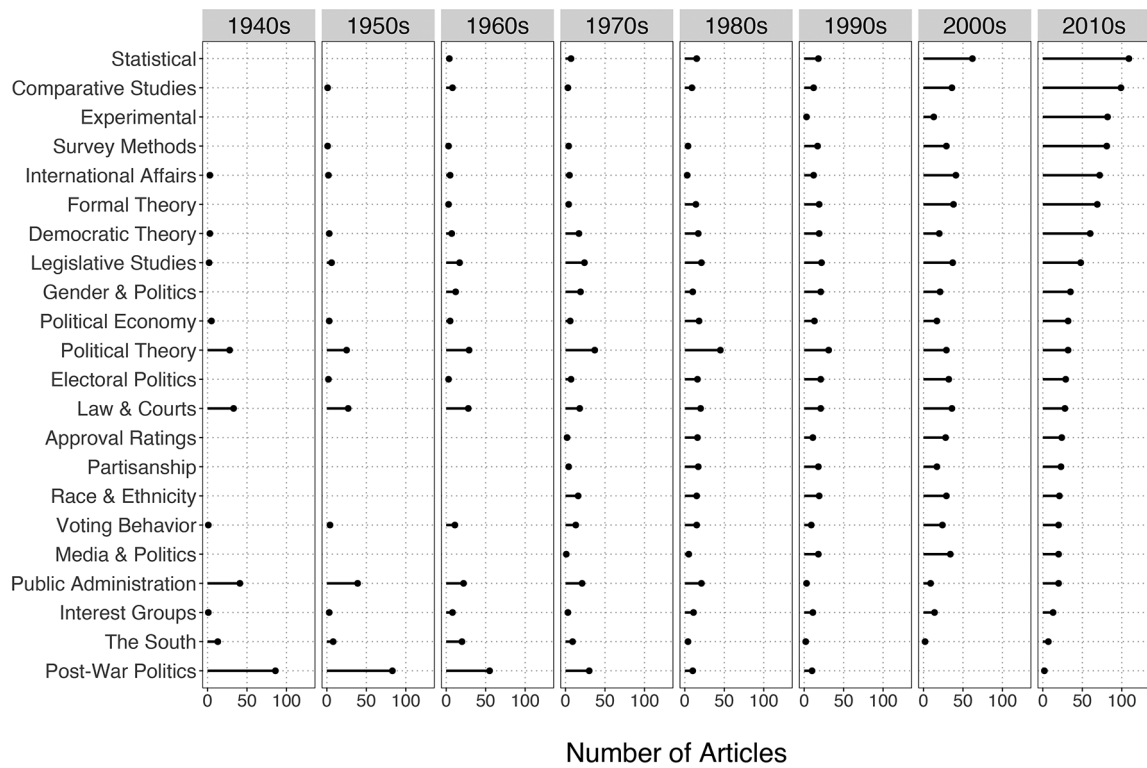


Figure 4. Articles published by topic in 10-year periods. Line segments represent the number of articles categorized by the latent Dirichlet allocation algorithm as most related to each topic.

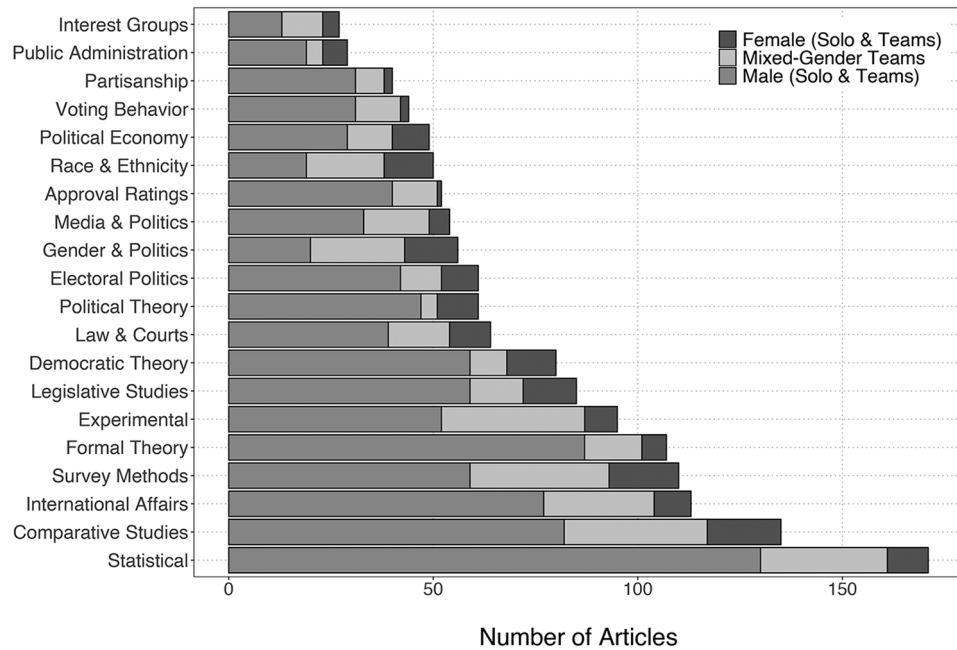


Figure 5. Topic by authorship type, 2000–2019. Bars represent the number of articles published from each topic. Each bar is shaded using the proportion of articles written exclusively by females, exclusively by males, and by mixed-gender teams.

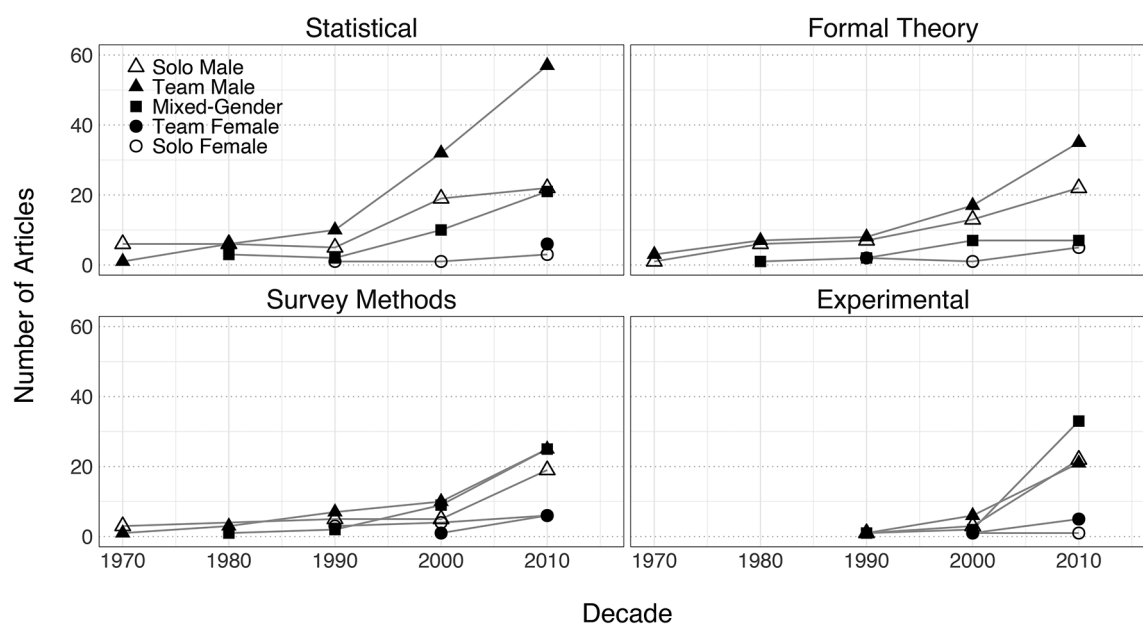


Figure 6. Quantitative topics by authorship type, 2000–2019. Lines indicate the proportion of articles published by authorship category over time. Points represent the average of each 10-year period.

Specifically, the issue raised is that top journals seem to privilege deductive mathematical techniques and statistical methods that men have, historically, been more likely to engage with (Breuning and Sanders 2007; Evans and Moulder 2011). By their count, the *JOP* was one of two journals that published both the most qualitative articles and the fewest female authors (442). Relatedly, research presented by Brown et al. (2020) suggests that members of the discipline have taken note of these proclivities. In an original survey of APSA members, they find that quantitatively oriented scholars report being significantly more confident in their publication prospects at the *JOP* when compared to other journals.

A benefit of the computational approach employed here is that we can examine topics identified by the LDA algorithm as heavily employing quantitative methods. This includes content classified as Experimental, Statistical, or Survey Research. I also opt to include Formal Theory in this analysis, although it is often considered distinct from quantitative methods. In examining these topics, I find that they have, indeed, become increasingly common over the past few decades. The data reveal that the share of articles under these headings has increased by roughly 20 percentage points in the last 30 years—from 16.6% in the 1990s to 36.7% in the 2010s. This indicates that, for more than a third of articles published today, considerable space is allocated to quantitative analysis. Moreover, these topics constituted four of the top six most frequently occurring over the last decade.

By focusing specifically on articles defined by their usage of quantitative methods, we are also offered a more granular understanding of how groups have engaged with the varied approaches. Figure 6 plots the authorship structures for the quantitatively oriented topics outlined above. In looking at the trends of published content, we observe that men have been more likely than women to use these methods. Across all four topics, the number of works published exclusively by females (solo and team) continues to be very low. As noted in Shames and Wise (2017), this may be, in part, a function of societal feedback loops that have traditionally encouraged women to self-select out of male-dominated spaces.⁸ Given the ever-increasing share of journal space occupied by work of this nature, it is all the more important to pause and consider how this may have downstream consequences on publication prospects and, thus, career advancement.⁹

The largest gender gap exists in Formal Theory—with exclusively male authors (solo male and team male) publishing 81% of all articles since 1960. In the most recent decade, only 11% of all Formal Theory authors were women.

8. Barnes (2018) writes that factors contributing to the gender gap also include recruiting and retaining female graduate students at lower rates, a lack of role models from underrepresented groups, and difficulty accessing research networks.

9. See Stauffer and O'Brien (2018) for an overview of feminist scholarship that has employed quantitative methods in studies of American political development, political behavior, political institutions, and public policy.

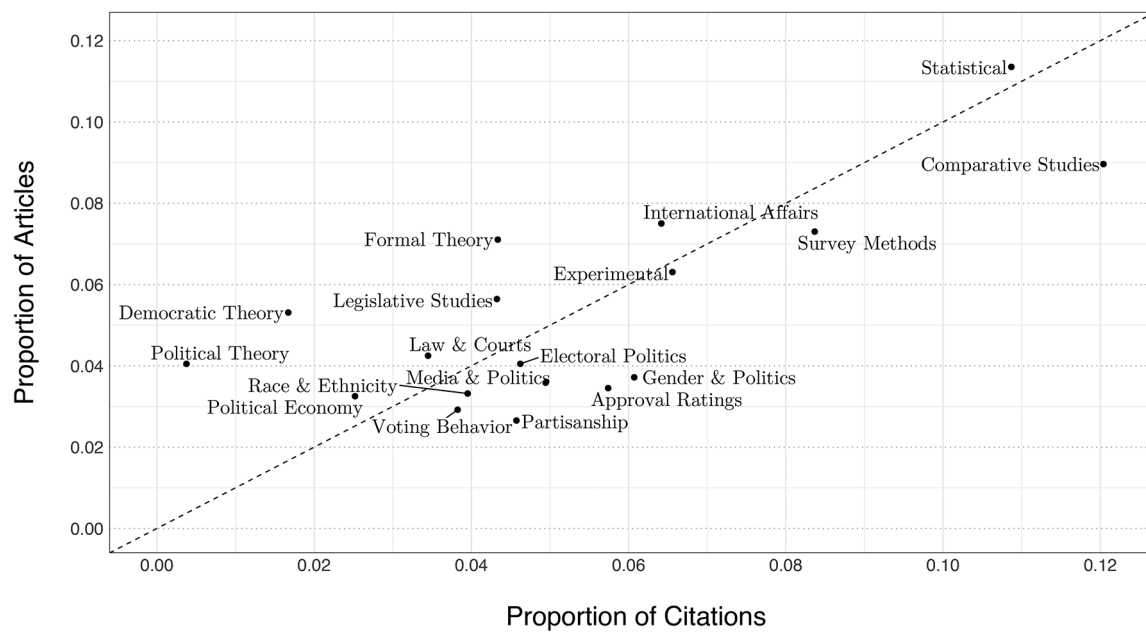


Figure 7. Topics by share of all articles and citations, 2000–2019. Citation information is taken directly from the *Journal of Politics* website.

This is similar to the trend observed in the topic Statistical, where only one in five articles published in the last 10 years had any female author. By comparison, women have published somewhat more frequently in Experimental and Survey Research. Mixed-gender collaborations have been the modal authorship structure within each of these topics since the mid-2000s. It is worth noting, however, that articles classified as Experimental and Survey Research also averaged the highest number of authors—2.3 and 2.1, respectively.

CITATION SHARES

Although the number of quantitatively oriented articles has increased markedly in the *JOP* over the last 20 years, it is unclear whether this is a function of heightened demand for that type of content. One way to evaluate this is by comparing the proportion of all articles that are about a topic to the share of all citations those articles collectively received. While the citation counts provided on the journal's website are not a perfect metric, they do give some sense of the type of *JOP* content scholars have tended to engage with. I present these data for all topics with more the 40 articles published over 2000–2019 in figure 7. When a topic appears to the left of the 45° line, it may be considered overpublished relative to its share of citations. For instance, whereas 4% of all published articles were classified as Political Theory, that topic received less than 0.4% of all citations. Conversely, topics to the right of

the line might be thought of as receiving more citations than might be expected by their share of all published articles.

We observe that Statistical and Formal Theory appear to be somewhat overpublished relative to the share of citations they received. Whereas the former was published slightly higher than it was cited (11.3% vs. 10.8%), the latter topic constituted roughly 7.1% of all 2000–2019 articles while garnering only 4.3% of all citations during that same period. This compares to Survey Methods, which was published at lower rates than it was cited (7.3% vs. 8.3%), and Experimental, which had nearly identical shares of each (6.3% vs. 6.5%). Interestingly, I find that several topics with the greatest share of female authors were also among those most underpublished relative to their proportion of citations. These include Comparative Studies (8.9% vs. 12.1%), Gender and Politics (3.7% vs. 6.1%), and Race and Ethnicity (3.3% vs. 3.9%). In contrast, the topics with notable differentials in the opposite direction are Political Theory (4% vs. .3%), Democratic Theory (5.3% vs. 1.6%), Formal Theory (7.1% vs. 4.3%), and Legislative Studies (5.6% vs. 4.3%).

CONCLUSION

This article presents a series of descriptive findings related to who and what has been published in the *Journal of Politics* over the last 80 years. I show that female political scientists have consistently published at rates below what might be expected by their various shares within the discipline.

Although steps have been made in the right direction, this disparity persists through 2019, with women constituting less than a quarter of all published *JOP* authors. The data also reveal that increasing rates of coauthorship have resulted in the unparalleled success of research with multiauthored bylines. Both of these findings comport well with existing research. However, data availability has limited the scope of past studies in identifying where in the process this was occurring. With the aid of *JOP* submission data, I shed light on the issue by showing that, despite women submitting more infrequently than men, they were also published at rates somewhat below what was submitted. Men, in contrast, were overpublished relative to their share of submitted manuscripts. This was particularly the case for teams of men who published, on average, at a rate 7.3 percentage points higher than they submitted annually.

In the latter half of the article, I employ a topic modeling algorithm to systematically identify the kind of work that has been prioritized in the pages of the *JOP*. My results suggest that the type of content published by the journal has changed in ways that work both in favor of and against women. Namely, the greater inclusion of comparative and international relations studies has, to some extent, increased the publication prospects of women, who are frequent participants in these debates. At the same time, the increased number of quantitatively oriented works, particularly those classified as Statistical and Formal Theory, has disproportionately benefited male scholars. I also provide evidence of a discrepancy between the shares that topics are published and subsequently cited at. For instance, the constitutive articles of topics like Gender and Politics and Comparative Studies were cited at rates considerably higher than might be expected, given their share of all published manuscripts. These findings raise important questions about how flagship, generalist journals may best capture the diverse perspectives and approaches that are essential to knowledge production.

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