

One-Year Update from the Editor-in-Chief

Bradley R. Postle and Jacqueline M. Fulvio 

Volume 33 Issue 1 of *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience* (*JoCN*) opened with a “Statement from the Incoming Editor-in-Chief” (Postle, 2021) that introduced some of the new policies and practices being ushered in by the new regime. These involved peer review, editorial rejection, gender bias in citation practices, and preregistration. Twelve months later, how are these working out for us?

PEER REVIEW AND EDITORIAL REJECTION

These modifications to our practices have worked well. Indeed, 2020 and 2021 have seen an uptick in the number of editorial rejections that we have issued, relative to “the Beforetimes”, perhaps in part because 18 months of global pandemic-related lockdown led stuck-at-home scientists to write up and submit articles that, for whatever reason, hadn’t until then been of high priority? Whatever the reasons, we are grateful to our newly assembled team of Consulting Editors for helping us work through this uptick in difficult decisions. Importantly, the fact that on many occasions a Consulting Editor has overruled an initial decision to editorially reject an article means that the decision-making process for editorial rejection has become fairer.

GENDER BIAS IN CITATION PRACTICES

Okay, now for the real reason for writing this 1-year update: One year into the introduction of the Gender Citation Balance tool, we have preliminary data to share! Volume 33 Issue 1 of *JoCN* also included the assessment, by Fulvio, Akinnola, and Postle (2021), of gender (im)balances in citation practices in *JoCN* from 2009 to July 2020. Is there any evidence that the introduction of the Gender Citation Balance Index (GCBI) tool (“GCBI-alizer”; <https://postlab.psych.wisc.edu/gcbializer/>) and the inclusion of a Diversity in Citation Practices statement, in which authors are encouraged to report their article’s gender citation balances, may have started to chip away at the longstanding bias favoring man-authored articles? To assess this, we (more specifically J.M.F.) have carried out two sets of analyses: First, how do the GCBIs for all articles published in Vol. 33 compare to those from Vols. 21 to 32 (as reported in Fulvio et al., 2021)? Second, for

authors publishing in Vol. 33 who chose to estimate and report their article’s GCBIs, did the “intervention” of encouraging authors to think about their article’s gender citation balance, and inviting reviewers to make suggestions, influence the published article’s GCBIs (relative to the GCBIs of the initial submission)?

First, we can undertake the purely descriptive exercise of documenting what happened during the past year. One hundred thirty-five articles were published in Vol. 33 of *JoCN*, and as illustrated in Figure 1, the gender breakdown of authorship teams—into M(an)-first/M-last (MM), W(oman)-first/M-last (WM), MW, and WW—was similar to what it has been for the past 10 years. Figures 2 and 3 re-present the GCBIs from Vols. 21–32 (cf. Figures 2 and 3 from Fulvio et al., 2021) and superimpose the GCBIs for the articles published in Vol. 33. It illustrates that, for all four categories, GCBIs have moved closer to a value of 0, which indicates a reduction of gender citation imbalances. To be clear, we cannot infer causation from these outcomes, only observe the data.

Reporting of gender citation balances is voluntary, and in Vol. 33, 30 author groups chose to participate. Despite the small n , we can draw stronger inference about the influence of the GCBI-alizer by comparing, for these articles, the GCBI of the initially submitted article against the GCBI of the final published article. Because a few of these articles were initially submitted before the GCBI-alizer had become available, this analysis could only be carried out on 24 articles. As illustrated in Figure 4, peer review and revision had almost no effect on the GCBIs of MM and WM articles, but appreciably reduced (i.e., made less-negative) the GCBIs for MW and (to a lesser extent) WW articles.

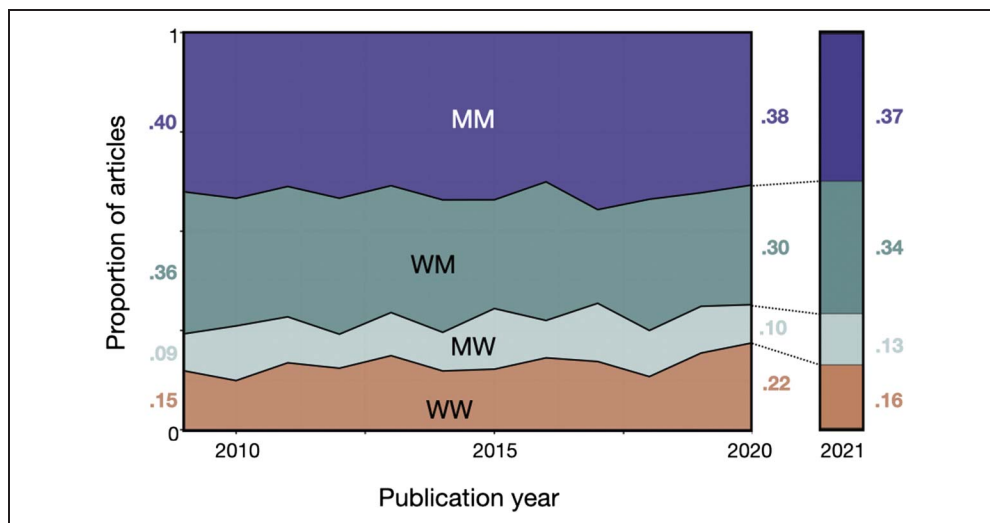
Thus, we are cautiously optimistic that the introduction of the Diversity in Citation Practices statement and the associated GCBI-alizer have been effective at combating, however modestly, this one systemic inequity in how we communicate our science.

PREREGISTRATION

This is a publication practice that, despite its merits (as extolled, e.g., by Postle, 2021), hasn’t yet caught fire at *JoCN*: During the past year, there was a total of two articles submitted for review as Stage 1 Preregistered Research Articles, and as of the time of this writing, *JoCN* has one Stage 1-accepted article.

University of Wisconsin–Madison

Figure 1. Gender-category breakdowns of authorship teams publishing in *JoCN* for 2009–2020 (for which GCBIs were reported in Fulvio et al. [2021], and for 2021 [corresponding to Vol. 33]).



WHAT'S NEW? NONHUMAN PRIMATE NEUROPHYSIOLOGY

Not yet conceived in January 2021, we have more recently added the policy that *the factor of number of animals included in the experiment does not carry special status relative to other aspects of the experimental procedure that are also evaluated when an article is being considered for publication*. Pragmatically, this means that it is an

explicit policy that *JoCN* will consider *n*-of-1 case studies for this type of experiment.

WRAP UP

As always, we welcome input from the community about how we might consider improving editorial practices at *JoCN*.

Figure 2. GCBIs for all articles published in *JoCN* from 2009 to 2020 (solid bars, reproduced from Fulvio et al., 2021) and for all articles published in Vol. 33 of *JoCN* (i.e., with a publication date of 2021; dashed lines). GCBIs for Vol. 33 were less imbalanced for all categories except MW, for which it was unchanged from the previous decade.

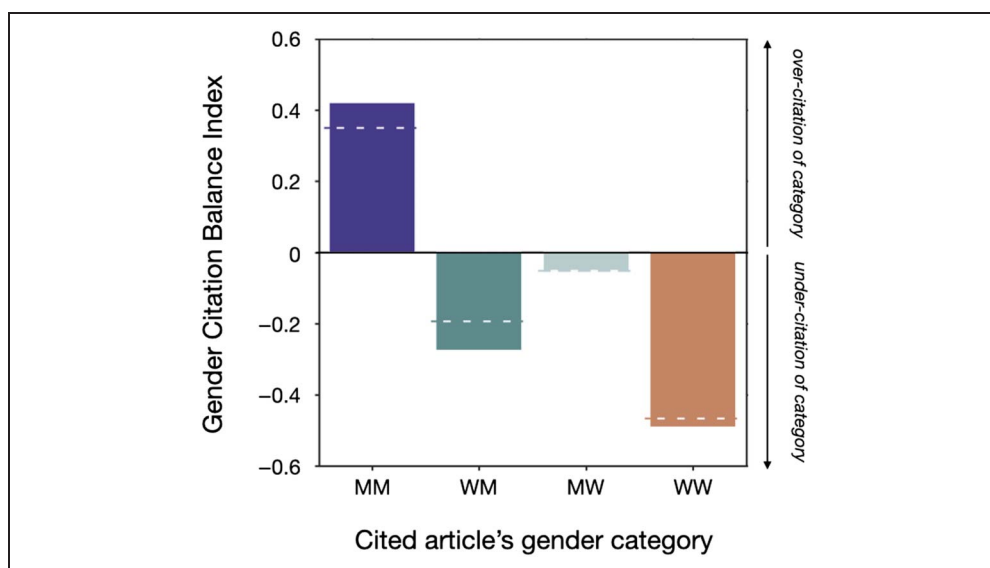


Figure 3. Same data from Figure 2, but broken out by authorship teams (i.e., these are the GCBIs for articles published by MM author groups, by WW author groups, by WM author groups, and by MW author groups). Graphical conventions are the same as Figure 2.

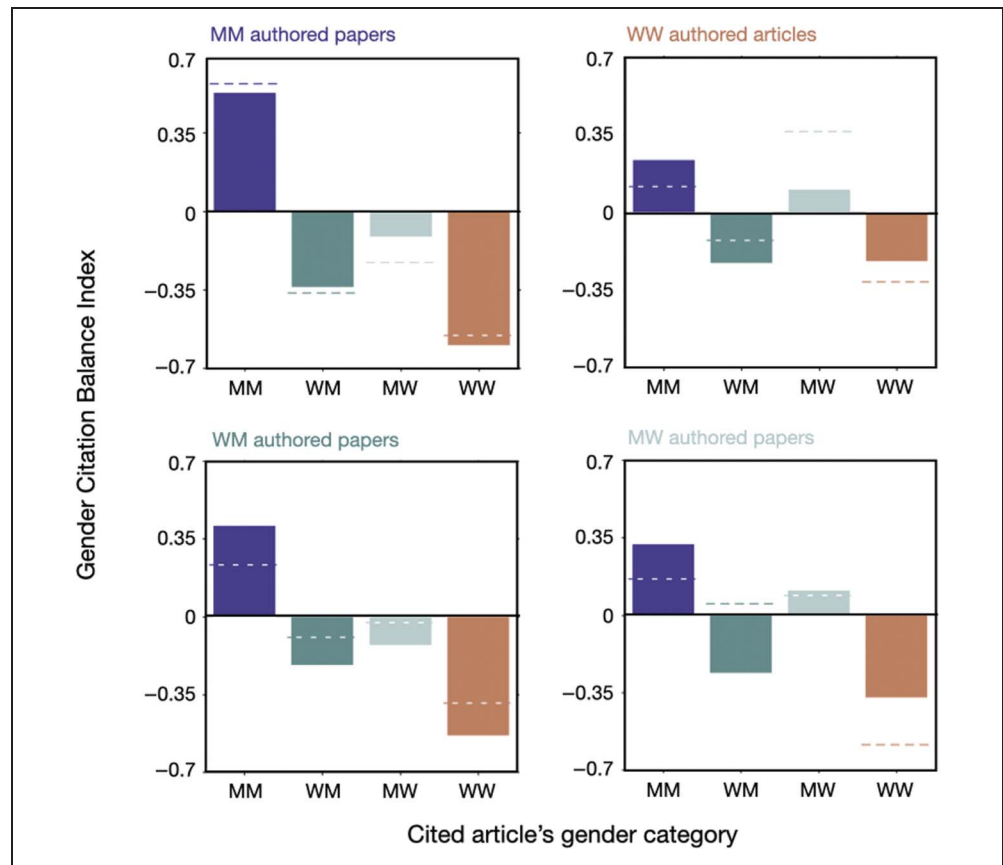
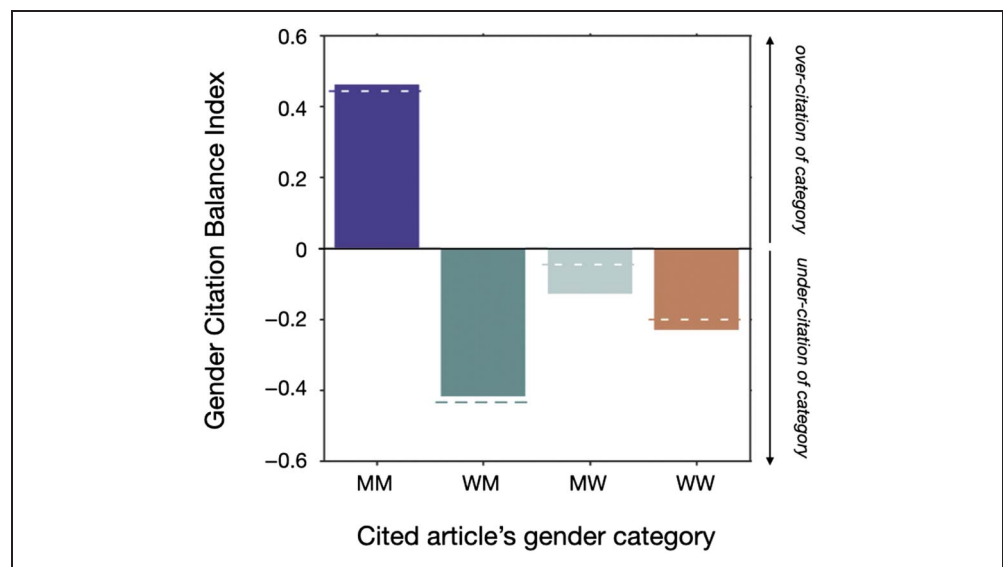


Figure 4. GCBIs for the 24 articles published in Vol. 33 of *JoCN* for which the authors chose to estimate and report these data for their initial submission (solid bars) and for the subsequently published article (dashed lines). This shows that peer review and revision had almost no effect on the GCBIs of MM and WM articles, but that it improved the GCBIs of MW and, to a lesser extent, WW articles.



REFERENCES

Fulvio, J. M., Akinola, I., & Postle, B. R. (2021). Gender (im)balance in citation practices in cognitive neuroscience. *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 33, 3–7. https://doi.org/10.1162/jocn_a_01643, PubMed: 33078992

Postle, B. R. (2021). Statement from the incoming editor-in-chief. *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 33, 1–2. https://doi.org/10.1162/jocn_a_01650, PubMed: 33226298