# Gender Gaps in the Evaluation of Research: Evidence from Submissions to Economics Conferences

by Laura Hospido and Carlos Sanz

Discussion by
Nicola Fuchs-Schündeln
Goethe University Frankfurt
October 21, 2019

# Summary of Results

- All-male authored papers are 3.2 pp more likely to be accepted to conferences than all-female authored papers
- Holds after controlling for referee FEs, citations of paper, prominence and affiliation of (best published) author
- Result is driven by male referees
- Result holds only for "prominent" authors
- All-male authored papers also get higher referee grades

# Overview of Comments

- Paper extremely well written and well executed
- I will talk about the following:
  1. Analyzed setting
  2. Mechanism: Connections vs. implicit bias
  3. Some suggestions
  4. Policy implications

# Analyzed Setting

- 3 conferences: EEA Annual Congress, SEA Annual Meeting, SMYE
  - All three are large conferences
  - First go-to conferences for young researchers
  - Fairly high acceptance rates
- Given low prior information, implicit biases could play important role
- Yet, authors find stronger effects for prominent authors
- Would be very valuable to conduct same exercise at more prominent (but open) conferences: AEA Annual Meetings, or top field conferences (SED, etc.)
- Conference setting with fast refereeing could give large role to both implicit biases and connections

# Connections as Main Explanation?

- Authors suggest stronger male networks as most likely explanation
- What is underlying hypotheses:
  - Women are less connected (to any gender)?
  - Fewer cross-gender connections?
- If first: should we expect no effect for female referees?
- If second: Shouldn't we expect bias towards women of female referees?
  - Mengel et al. (2015): women are as connected as men, but same-gender connections more prevalent, and men reward more through networks

# Connections as Main Explanation (cont.)?

Table A3: The Impact of the Authors' Gender on the Probability of Acceptance, Non-linear Effects

| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Half Male Authors | 0.0459** | 0.00169 | 0.00256 | -0.000146 | -0.00254 | -0.00549 | 0.00395 |
| | (0.0211) | (0.0247) | (0.0247) | (0.0246) | (0.0245) | (0.0242) | (0.0238) |
| Majority Male Authors | 0.0608*** | 0.0427*** | 0.0453*** | 0.0433*** | 0.0406*** | 0.0299** | 0.0309** |
| | (0.0144) | (0.0145) | (0.0144) | (0.0145) | (0.0144) | (0.0144) | (0.0139) |

- Non-linear results: half-male/half-female papers as (un)likely to be accepted as all-female papers
  - Is this in line with connection story?
  - Shouldn't one male author be enough to establish connections?
- Connection explanation could be strengthened by using the number of male authors as explanatory variable

# Implicit Biases as Main Explanation?

- Prominence results are important, since they are an argument against implicit biases/stereotypes as explanation
- Robustness checks on "prominence" measure:
  - Right now, number of publications of most prolific co-author in top 35 journals
  - Use dummy of prominence$>0$ in interaction regressions:
    * Is 1 publication in top 35 enough to establish prominence?
    * Is this enough to capture setting with more connections?
- Does it matter whether prominent author is male or female (in mixed papers)?
- Job market sessions vs. general sessions in SEA probably very correlated with prominence dummy

# Implicit Biases as Main Explanation (cont.)?

- Are results stronger in male-dominated fields or not?
- Would be expected in stereotypes explanation
- Male fields: econometrics, theory, finance, macro, pol. econ.
- Could you do robustness checks?

Table 4: The Impact of the Authors' Gender on the Probability of Acceptance, by Masculinity of Field

| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sh. Male Authors | 0.0463** | 0.0361* | 0.0362* | 0.0345* | 0.0228 | 0.0211 |
| | (0.0188) | (0.0187) | (0.0190) | (0.0190) | (0.0189) | (0.0182) |
| Sh. Male Authors x Masc. Field | 0.0202 | 0.0233 | 0.0276 | 0.0242 | 0.0240 | 0.0264 |
| | (0.0296) | (0.0295) | (0.0289) | (0.0287) | (0.0286) | (0.0278) |

# In-Group Bias?

- Bias only arises for male referees: In-group bias?
- Mengel et al. (2019) find bias against female teachers from both female and male students in teaching evaluations
- Two differences in setting:
  - Superiors vs. subordinates
  - Later career vs. very early career
- Maybe female evaluators learn over time and overcome biases?

# Suggestions

- In some analyzed conferences, papers are assigned to two referees (average of 1.5 referees per paper):
  - Do within-paper analysis in mixed-sex refereeing couple
- Is effect present for single- and multiple-authored papers?
- Can you control for publications and affiliation of all authors?
- Additional measure of quality of paper: semantic measures used by Hengel (2018)

# Conclusion and Policy Implication

- Very nice and relevant paper
- Effect found here adds to other gender-effects found in literature:
  Small effects in each instance add up to large effect on career
- Policy implication:
  In this setting of large conference for mainly junior researchers,
  double-blind evaluation might be possible