

Chapter 3

Women and Editorial Leadership of Scientific and Academic Journals: An Explorative Study



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Abstract The gender balance/imbalance in the governance of academic journals tied to the different scientific areas (i.e., the editorial board composition) represents a rather under investigated topic among the literature stream on diversity in top academic positions. Starting from this premise, the work aims to detect the gender (im)balance within the most prestigious international journals of Accounting. After having traced the theoretical background, the research design includes the empirical investigation focused on the Accounting journals ranked in the list proposed by the Association of Business Schools (ABS) in 2015 and included in the Italian ANVUR list (2017). Results confirm the underrepresentation of women in the editorial team and leadership positions of Accounting journals, as it happens in other fields included among the STEMs (such as Medicine or Math) or non-STEM disciplines (i.e., Management and Marketing). The work has scientific implications since it points out the limited potential of women scholars in covering governing roles and gaining worldwide visibility. Editorial board membership is in fact both a professional honour in recognition of achievements and an opportunity for professional advancement. Under an operational and political perspective, it contributes to nurturing the debate on the presence of an insidious discrimination that is often not easily recognized.

Keywords Women • Scientific journals • Editorial board • Editorial team
Accounting

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3.1 Introduction

The *She Figures* 2015 report (EC 2016)¹ provides a comprehensive understanding of the current state of gender equality in research and innovation in the European Union. Women in the EU-28 have been significantly underrepresented in research (in terms of scientific publications and their quality/impact) and innovation outputs (patent applications for inventions). Despite a slow increase compared to a few years ago (starting from 2007), between 2011 and 2013 only 31% of publications had a woman corresponding author. Moreover, women have been shown to lag behind men in terms of the size and impact of their scientific production, as well as in their propensity to collaborate with colleagues in other countries (Sugimoto et al. 2015; Larivière et al. 2013; EC 2013, 2014). This issue is particularly serious since researchers must be increasingly competitive in terms of their scientific productivity assessed through the number and impact of papers. Both parameters are used in evaluation grids (i.e., in research assessment exercises) and grant competitions (Fletcher et al. 2007; Cabezas-Clavijo et al. 2013). Namely, the ARIF index (average of relative impact factors) is regarded as an indirect impact metric (being based on the publication venue instead of the actual publications of an entity) as well as an indicator of prestige because journals with the highest impact factors are cited more often, and more researchers want to be published in them. Consequently, being part of the *élite* of scientific journals (and/or academic associations) such as the editorial board is regarded as a being a gatekeeper for the success and endowment of high scientific prestige and visibility (Lee 1995, 1997; Williams and Rogers 1995). Editorial board membership is both a professional honour in recognition of achievements and an opportunity for professional advancement (Cho et al. 2014).

In light of this premise, the work aims to investigate the gender (im)balance in the composition of the editorial boards of scientific journals. We decided to focus our attention on the field of Accounting, since previous research in this area is rare (Broadbent 1995, 1998, 2016; Broadbent and Kirkham 2008; Hines 1992; Dambrin and Lambert 2006a, b; Baldarelli et al. 2016a), and a call for more research has also been made (Broadbent 2016; Siboni et al. 2016). Specifically, the work is finalised to assess the presence or the absence of women scholars in the leadership of the most prestigious international journals of Accounting and verify if there is a “glass ceiling” (Lehman 1992; Baxter and Wright 2000; Cotter et al. 2001; Goodman et al. 2003) or a “crystal cliff” phenomenon (Broadbent and Kirkham 2008) in the governance of scientific accounting journals.

¹Chapter 7 of the report explores the comparative contribution of women and men in research as well as gaps in their funding success rates through several indicators of gender balance/imbalance in how research is conducted, such as women to men ratio of scientific authorships, women to men ratio in terms of the average of relative impact factors of their respective publications (when acting as corresponding author) and the proportion of international co-publications.

The research design includes a theoretical analysis derived from a review of papers on gender imbalance in science and academia manifested in the scientific journal editorial leadership. On the other hand, the work introduces the empirical investigation based on the scientific journals in the field of Accounting ranked in the list proposed by the Association of Business Schools (ABS) in 2015 and included in the Italian ANVUR list (2017).

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 3.2 introduces the theoretical framework, while Sect. 3.3 describes the research methodology. Next, the findings of the empirical research focused on the editorial teams of Accounting journals are shown and discussed in Sects. 3.4 and 3.5. Implications for future research and conclusions are presented in Sect. 3.6.

3.2 Theoretical Background: The Governance and Editorial Leadership Within Academic Journals

The gender balance/imbalance at the highest levels of journal editorial leadership, such as editorial boards of academic journals, represents a rather under-investigated topic among the literature stream on diversity in top academic positions (Bagilhole 2002).

The editorial boards of academic journals are important gatekeepers and trend-setters in the creation and dissemination of knowledge (Pan and Zhang 2013). Membership on journal editorial boards usually signals scholarly stature and professional advancement (Beyer 1978; Topaz et al. 2016). To serve as a subject editor is a recognition that a scholar is respected in his/her discipline and represents a key step towards leadership positions because associate editors and editors-in-chief are typically selected from the subject editors (see Cho et al. 2014, p. 2). Moreover, the inclusion in editorial board is a driver for advancing one's scholarship, since editorial boards are important professional networks from which several benefits are generated: increased awareness of the latest advances in the field; gaining of insights into the writing and publication process; and the development of relationships with reviewers, authors, and other editors (Addis and Villa 2003; Pearson et al. 2006). "Serving on a board is therefore both an honor and a means of furthering one's research and career" (Cho et al. 2014: 2). "The editorial board—the human face of the journal—conveys that sense of balance and fairness. But I wonder why there are so few women on our boards?" Some female scientists have come forward to say that they increasingly look at the balance of the composition of an editorial team when deciding where to submit their best work, so that they feel less at risk of bias. Whether that bias is real or imagined, it is increasingly important" (Logan 2016: 2). The question raised by Deborah Logan—who serves as Publishing Director for Elsevier's Energy & Earth Science Journals' program—stresses what has been marked in STEM disciplines: women are underrepresented in upper-level positions in both academia and industry, despite the similar numbers of graduate degrees (Cho et al. 2014: 3; National Science Foundation 2004, 2012).

Prior studies of gender representation on editorial boards have been carried out in Medicine (Morton and Sonnad 2007; Amrein et al. 2011; Galley and Colvin 2013; Keiser et al. 2003), Environmental biology and Resource Management (Cho et al. 2014), Ecology (Fox et al. 2016), Science (Mauleón et al. 2013) and Information systems (Lamp 2007; Cabanac 2012), while a minor number of contributions have quantified the gender composition of editorial boards in Economics (Addis and Villa 2003), Political science (Stegmaier et al. 2011), Social sciences (Addis and Villa 2003; Green 1998; Stark et al. 1997), Management (Metz and Harzing 2009) and Business administration and management (Metz and Harzing 2012) journals.

The first comprehensive quantification of women in top leadership positions (based on 54 journal Editorial boards across 28 specialties) was provided by Morton and Sonnad (2007) who demonstrated that membership in a professional Medical society or editorial board is a marker of influence and prestige for those in academic medicine. Their results pointed out that women's representation on the professional society and editorial boards does not always reflect their presence in medical specialties and is critically lacking, since 83% of board members are male.

The same gap (a balance between men and women was detected in less than half the journals) emerged from Kennedy et al.'s study (2001) aimed to detect the numbers of women serving as editors, deputy editors, assistant editors and editorial board members of 12 major scientific journals in comparison to the number of women physicians included in the journals' specialties, as published by the American Medical Association (Levy 1987). Among the scientific journals published in the United States in the fields of Dermatology (Gollins et al. 2017), Family Medicine (Schrager et al. 2011), Psychology (Teghtsoonian 1974), Epidemiology and Public Health (Dickersin et al. 1998) the frequency of women serving as principal editor, associate editor, editor in chief, or member of the editorial board is always lower than their male colleagues. In addition, "4 out of 44 of the editors-in-chief of top impact journals in Psychiatry and Science education are women. And the situation is no different within other journals" (Roberts 2014: 391).

Within Environmental science journals, the role of women as editors-in-chief has been investigated by Yeverino-Gutiérrez et al. (2017) who point out that gender inequality and gender bias are present, thus suggesting to extend the analysis to other journals in order to identify the causes of this outcome.

Similarly, Cho et al. (2014) detected the number of women included in the editorial boards and holding editorial leadership positions (i.e., associate editors and editors-in-chief). Their survey focused on 10 highly regarded journals in Environmental biology and demonstrated that gender imbalance in scientific publishing is still pervasive.

A claim for further research and new methods that enable large-scale studies of gender distribution in other fields has been made by Topaz et al.'s (2016) whose study provide a first measure of gender distribution on editorial boards in the Mathematical sciences: only 8.9% of the 13,067 editorships are held by women.

With regard to other—less investigated—fields and disciplines, a comprehensive and follow-up study on Management Journals has been performed by Metz and

Harzing (2012) who examined women's representation on the editorial boards of 57 journals over a period of 20 years (from 1989 to 2009). Their findings show an overall increase in women's inclusion within the board members, associate editor and editor in Chief levels in the last five years (2004–2009) equal to 22.4%. However, it continues to be inconsistent across several management fields, journal rankings and geographic regions.

We are not aware of previous studies aimed to inquire the gender composition of editorial boards in Accounting journals. However Lee's study (1997) offered interesting insights about the colonisation of the accounting knowledge production process by relatively few *élite* institutions in the USA. By examining the doctoral origins of the editorial board members of six major Accounting research journals² covering a period of 30 years (between 1963 and 1994), the author demonstrated the colonisation extent. The editorial domination is relevant for research and discussion, particularly contending that "as the accountancy profession attempts to respond to external challenges to its credibility, it is important that its research community is democratically open to alternative ideas for its practice" (Lee 1997: 11).

Indeed, both Lee (1995) and Williams and Rogers' researches (1995) reported on the dominant presence of an academic *élite* within the institutional structure of the American Accounting Association (AAA) and its main journal (*The Accounting Review-TAR*) and claim for the *élites* potential to bring closure to accounting knowledge production (Fletcher et al. 2007).

3.3 Research Design and Methodology

Following Cho et al. 2014 and previous research (Kennedy et al. 2001; Gollins et al. 2017; Morton and Sonnad 2007; Topaz et al. 2016; Metz and Harzing 2012; Teghtsoonian 1974), the empirical study addresses the following questions:

RQ1 (1) What proportion of editorial board members of Accounting journals are women?

RQ2 (2) How many women serve in leadership positions, i.e., as editors-in-chief or associate editors?

With regard to the choice of the scientific discipline, we focused on the accounting domains of research in order to provide insights useful to fill a gap in this specific area and verify whether there is a gender imbalance in the composition of the editorial teams of highly regarded journals of accounting. We then decided to take into consideration the ABS ranking list because it represents the most notable

²The journals are: The Accounting Review (TAR), Journal of Accounting Research (JAR), Journal of Accounting and Economics (JAE), Accounting, Organization and Society (AOS), Accounting and Business Research (ABR) and Abacus (ABA).

Table 3.1 Title and ISSN of selected accounting journals

Journal Title	ISSN
Accounting and Business Research	0001-4788
Accounting Horizons	0888-7993
Accounting Review	0001-4826
Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal	0951-3574
Accounting, Organization and Society	0361-3682
British Accounting Review	0890-8389
Contemporary Accounting Research	0823-9150
Critical Perspectives on Accounting	1045-2354
European Accounting Review	0963-8180
International Journal of Accounting Information System	1467-0895
Journal of Accounting and Economics	0165-4101
Journal of Accounting and Public Policy	0278-4254
Journal of Accounting Research	0021-8456
Journal of Accounting, Auditing and Finance	0148-558X
Journal of Business Finance and Accounting	0306-686X
Management Accounting Research	1044-5005
Review of Accounting Studies	1380-6653
Sustainability Accounting, Management and Policy Journal	2040-8021

and influential list in the context of UK business schools. The ABS's list is a "guide to the range, subject matter and relative quality of journals in which business and management academics publish their research" (ABS Guide 2015, p. 5). The guide includes a total of 1401 journals based on three impact factors related to citation information (JCR, SJR and SNIP). In addition, we used a second list, namely the ANVUR (Italian) list of class A journals in the scientific area 13 (updated 09/03/2017). Selecting the journals included in both lists using "accounting" as the keyword, we identified 18 accounting journals (Table 3.1). For each journal, we considered the last issue published in 2017, chosen as starting point to depict a "state of the art" because there are no previous studies.

In the period ranging from October 2017 to January 2018, drawing from the websites of each journal and the consultation of the Italian catalogue of periodicals (ACNP), we collected data relative to the journals' organs. Due to a great variety of editorial board titles, we firstly listed all the positions. Secondly, we assigned editorial board members to the following categories based on their responsibilities: (1) Editor-in-Chief (EIC)-the EIC oversees the journal and is ultimately responsible for editorial policy, standards and practice, including appointing members of the Editorial Board; (2) Associate Editors (AE); (3) Editors (Es); members serving the (4) Editorial Board (EB), who are referred to collectively by a variety of titles, including Board of Editors and the Editorial Committee; and other positions included among the (5) others (Os) (e.g., special editors, production editors, managing editors, editorial assistants, production staff members; see Cho et al. 2014). We, therefore,

conducted our analyses on a subsample of journals using only EICs, AEs, Es and EB, and throughout our manuscript and analyses we use the term ‘Editorial team’ to refer to the group collectively made up of the afore mentioned categories.

Subsequently, according to *She Figures 2015* (EC 2016), we collected data relative to the sex through Google search to understand the gender of each editorial board member. Finally, we detected data relative to the publishing house the country of the journal, the year of foundation and the impact factor for the year 2016. Data have been organised in excel files sheets and analysed through the use of descriptive statistic tools.

3.4 Findings

Firstly, the composition of the editorial team of each journal has been identified. We can note that the most diffused positions are: the editor, the editorial board and the associate editors. In all these positions, women are in a significant minority (Table 3.2).

Most of the journals taken into consideration (7 out of 18) are published by Elsevier (publishing house), based in Amsterdam (Holland), followed by Taylor &

Table 3.2 Editorial team composition of accounting journals

Editorial Team (Organs/Positions)	Men	%	Women	%	Total
Editor in Chief	5	0.33	1	0.07	6
Deputy Editor in Chief	1	0.07	0	0.00	1
Editor	71	4.74	19	1.27	90
Senior Editor	0	0.00	1	0.07	1
Editor Emeritus	2	0.13	0	0.00	2
Founding Editor	4	0.27	0	0.00	4
Associate Editor	106	7.08	32	2.14	138
Editorial Board	643	42.92	210	14.02	853
Editorial Advisory Board	162	10.81	64	4.27	226
Editorial Advisory	100	6.68	56	3.74	156
Consulting Editor	8	0.53	2	0.13	10
Editorial Manager	0	0.00	1	0.07	1
Editorial Office	1	0.07	0	0.00	1
Literary Editor	1	0.07	0	0.00	1
Advisory Editor	1	0.07	0	0.00	1
Content Editor	2	0.13	0	0.00	2
Book Review Editor	2	0.13	0	0.00	2
Editorial Assistant	1	0.07	0	0.00	1
Editorial Support Team	0	0.00	2	0.13	2
Total	1110	74.10	388	25.90	1498

Francis (England), Emerald (England) and Wiley (United States). As afore mentioned, we detected the foundation year, being the seniority useful to investigate the presence of women within the editorial teams of the historical journals. The timeline starts with *The Accounting Review* (founded in 1926) and ends with the *International Journal of Accounting Information* (set up in 2000).

Secondly, we identified the gender composition of all members belonging to the editorial teams. Women are in a minority position in all editorial teams of the journals: out of a total of 1498 individuals in the editorial teams of the journal, only 388 are women. The women who are part of the editorial team of all the journals are on average a quarter compared to their men colleagues.

Taking into consideration the editorial team as a whole (that is, the total number of members of the editorial positions of each journal), women represent less than half of each journal, thus highlighting their reduced visibility and a gender imbalance. Among the editorial team of the selected journals, out of 6 individuals in the role of Editor-in-chief and only 1 (17%) is held by a woman. Out of 90 individuals serving as Editor, only 19 (21%) are women. Accordingly, out of a total of 138 Associate editors, 32 (23%) are women. Finally, out of 853 members of the Editorial boards, only 210 (25%) are women.

Among the women who are part of the editorial team of the 18 journals, only 7 serve as Editorial boards of more than one journal. Moreover, only one woman serves both as Associate editor and Editor in different journals.

For all female/male components of the editorial team of the journals characterized by the highest impact factor (for the year 2016), namely the *Journal of Accounting and Economics* (3839), *Journal of Accounting Research* (3) and *Management Accounting Research*, the h-index has been identified through the use of Scopus. Findings show that both women and men who held a leadership position (i.e., editor-in-chief, editor, associate editor), have on average an h-index higher than people that make up the other organs. It has also been found that women have on average a lower h-index than men playing similar roles in the governance of the journals.

3.5 Discussion

Following the first research questions of the paper (RQ1—What proportion of Editorial board members of Accounting journals are women?) the analysis of the gender composition of the Editorial teams of the selected Accounting journals highlights a low presence of women scholars. Results confirm the underrepresentation of women and their reduced visibility in the governance of accounting journals, as it happens (and happened) in other fields included among the STEM (such as Medicine or Math) or non-STEM disciplines (such as Management and Marketing).

Being the Accounting field part of the Social Sciences our findings confirm the gap that has emerged in previous studies (Morton and Sonnad 2007; Amrein et al.

2011; Galley and Colvin 2013; Keiser et al. 2003; Fox et al. 2016; Mauleón et al. 2013; Cabanac 2012; Stegmaier et al. 2011; Addis and Villa 2003; Green 1998; Stark et al. 1997; Metz and Harzing 2009, 2012; Pan and Zhang 2013; Lee 1995, 1997; Williams and Rogers 1995).

About the second research question (RQ2 How many women serve in leadership positions, i.e., as Editors-in-Chief or Associate Editors?) findings confirm a gender bias from the quantitative point of view; currently, most of the Editors-in-chief are men. In turn, 76% of the members of the Editorial teams are men.

The membership of an editorial board and editorial leadership positions, such as editor-in-chief, Editor and associate editor, represent a recognition for the acquired scientific maturity (Cho et al. 2014).

A confirmation of the relationship between the leadership in scientific career paths and editorial leadership is provided by the analysis of the h-index scores held by the members of the editorial teams. The h-indexes of both men and women included among the editorial team indicated that the most prestigious editorial positions are held by scholars who have acquired/gained high scientific productivity in terms of quantity and quality of publications (Cole and Zuckerman 1984; Zuckerman et al. 1991). Scientific productivity is the criterion for the promotion and advancement of scholars in the university and academia; therefore ordinary professors usually have a greater h-index that allows them to access editorial staff; vice versa a leadership editorial increase h-index. This “circle” seem to be “vicious” with regard to women and creates a gender imbalance attributable to social and cultural factors affecting the research culture, the research capital and the research production process (Fletcher et al. 2007) that have been pointed out in previous studies concerning the field of Accounting (Hopwood 1987; Lehman 1992; Kirkham 1992). The predominant culture in the Accounting and business administration field, both in the scientific and academic context, is based on a male-dominated culture (Broadbent 1995, 1998, 2016) and lies on informal rules “stated” and shared within “élite” (Lee 1995, 1997; Metz and Harzing 2012) and networks often consolidated over time and built on historical ties (Fox 1991). It can be argued that at the time of selection, editors preferred individuals of their own sex by virtue of the mechanisms empirically assessed in previous research that generate gender imbalance, and can be considered discriminatory deriving from the fact that the inclusion of women scholars in prominent editorial positions determines a greater percentage of women also in the other organs (Cho et al. 2014).

Finally, these preliminary results of the study benefits from the insights that have emerged from previous research based on the social network analysis (Drago et al. 2014) and innovative statistical techniques applied in the context of gender studies that highlight how the social capital, relational and the network of contacts contribute to increasing the productivity of individuals and groups of people (Granovetter 1983) and how the relational capital nurtured by social and professional networks is an important source of information, connection and power that favours access to top positions (Baldarelli et al. 2016a, b).

3.6 Implications for Future Research and Conclusions

In recent decades, gender inequalities and gender imbalance within the university system, in general, and in academia, in particular, have begun to emerge as important topics in the national and international scientific and political debate (Blum 1991; Sala 2008; Sala and Bosisio 2007; Broadbent 1995; Broadbent and Kirkham 2008; Siboni et al. 2016; EC 2016). “Discrimination in science leaves power amongst those who have handled it since ever: men. It is practised by a series of rules and structures that have been built by men according to their needs and behaviours” (Genova et al. 2014: 16).

Several factors (i.e., childbearing, forming a family, gender expectations, lifestyle choices and career preferences) that contribute to the underrepresentation of women in science and the scientific area (Forster 2000; Ward and Wolf-Wendel 2004; Yeveirino-Gutierrez et al. 2017) have been pointed out (Ceci and Williams 2011). In this context, the issue of gender balance/imbalance in editorial leadership of different areas and scientific fields is currently under-investigated and needs to be deepened.

Previous research has pointed out that gender equity in editorial leadership has not yet been reached and still represents a challenge (Gollins et al. 2017). Therefore, attempts by journals to strive for gender parity would greatly increase the number of women afforded the opportunities and benefits that accompany board membership, as well as increase the number of female role models and mentors for early career scientists and students seeking guidance on scientific publishing (Cho et al. 2014; Galley and Colvin 2013; Mauleón et al. 2013). In summary, a greater representation of women on editorial boards is to the benefit of the research community at large, to individual women, and to the future.

Monitoring women’s representation on editorial boards and their part in leading editorial positions (such as Editor-in-chief or Associate editors) of Accounting journals is only one of the steps needed for successful change to occur (Metz and Harzing 2012). However, it represents a necessary and basic step. Accordingly, our study serves two main purposes. First, it provides a snapshot of gender on the editorial teams of Accounting journals, which to our knowledge has not before been measured. Second, it provides a benchmark to which future measurements can be compared, thus enabling longitudinal assessments of any changes over time.

Despite the scientific and practical implications, the study suffers from some limitations that could be overcome through additional research. First, results are tied to an explorative step. Consequently, they should be deepened using more sophisticated statistical tools. Secondly, in addition to the role and the university of affiliation, it would be important to strengthen the study taking into consideration, other significant variables, such as the academic position, the age and the country of origin of the women scholars included among the editorial teams. Even more significant would be to compare the women editorial leadership and the frequency of publication of works written by women scholars in the same scientific journals in order to identify a possible relationship between the gender composition of the

editorial teams and the genders of authors who publish in the journals (Borus 2014). Finally, a future research effort could be addressed at comparing the gendered editorial team composition of journals tied to disciplinary sectors, belonging to the same or different scientific areas.

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