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The Gatekeeper Project: Crowdsourced Examination of the Gender Composition of Anthropology Journals

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The Gatekeeper Project: Crowdsourced Examination of the Gender Composition of Anthropology Journals

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Abstract

The editorial boards of academic journals act as gatekeepers to maintain the scientific integrity and standards of journals while identifying emerging and innovative research. We introduce The Gatekeeper Project as an attempt to crowdsource data collection on the composition of the boards. We seek to understand how and why board composition varies within and across disciplines and use these data to help scholars, academic societies, editors, and publishers in their efforts to make the boards of our journals more inclusive and diverse. In this presentation we address findings from an examination of 40 years of anthropology journals. Data on Editorial Board composition was collected in two databases. Role based analysis included individuals serving multi-year terms in one editorial role, however, each individual was only counted once. Time based analysis included all board members for each year, and individuals were counted independently each year. All data was analyzed and graphed with R version 3.3.2 with the gplots and corplot packages. Although the trend was towards improvement over time, particularly following the formation of the AAA Committee on Gender Equity in Anthropology (CoGEA) in 1995, there was surprising variation between journals, including those with similar disciplinary foci. We also address correlation between editorial roles and gender, where female Editors in Chief are drivers for female Editorial Boards. While demographic changes in academia may reduce these disparities over time, we argue journals should proactively strive for gender parity on their editorial boards.

Background

- Females on Editorial Boards are consistently showing a lack of representation.
- In 1972, women held 6.8% of editorial positions across 14 psychology journals, and it slowly improved to 17.8% in 1977 (Over 1981).
- By 1976, the United States had spent around 15 years trying to create gender equality with no obvious gender equality measures implemented well.
- In 1976, one of the first articles was published regarding editorial boards of journals found that editors were not chosen by gender and were instead characterized “by the distinction of their own work and by their expertise in the area under review” (Lindsey 1976).
- In 2002, The National Academy of Sciences and Institute of Medicine made a report on gender bias in science and engineering, calling for “reasonable representation of women on editorial boards and in other significant leadership positions.” (Jagsi 2008).
- A study was done regarding representation of women on editorial boards of 60 major medical journals, finding that only 17.5% of the editorial board members were women (Amrein 2011).
- According to NSF’s WebCASPAR, from 1966-2007, there has been a steady incline of female anthropology doctorates awarded, with the trend of females earning more anthropology doctorates than males beginning in 1987 (WebCASPAR).

References

- Amrein, Karin, et al. “Women Underrepresented on Editorial Boards of 60 Major Medical Journals.” *Gender Medicine* 8.6 (2011): 378-87.
- Jagsi, Reshma. “The Representation of Women on the Editorial Boards of Major Medical Journals: A 35-Year Perspective.” *Archives of Internal Medicine* 168.5 (2008): 544.
- Lindsey, Duncan. “Distinction, Achievement, and Editorial Board Membership.” *American Psychologist* 31.11 (1976): 799-804.
- “WebCASPAR” *Ncsesdata.nsf.gov WebCASPAR* US National Science Foundation (NSF).

Our Questions

- 1) What proportion of editorial board members were women between 1976 and 2016?
- 2) How did the representation of women on editorial boards change over this time period of 40 years?
- 3) Do the more recently established journals have a more equal gender ratio?
- 4) How many women served in leadership positions on the editorial boards? How many women served in clerical positions on editorial boards?

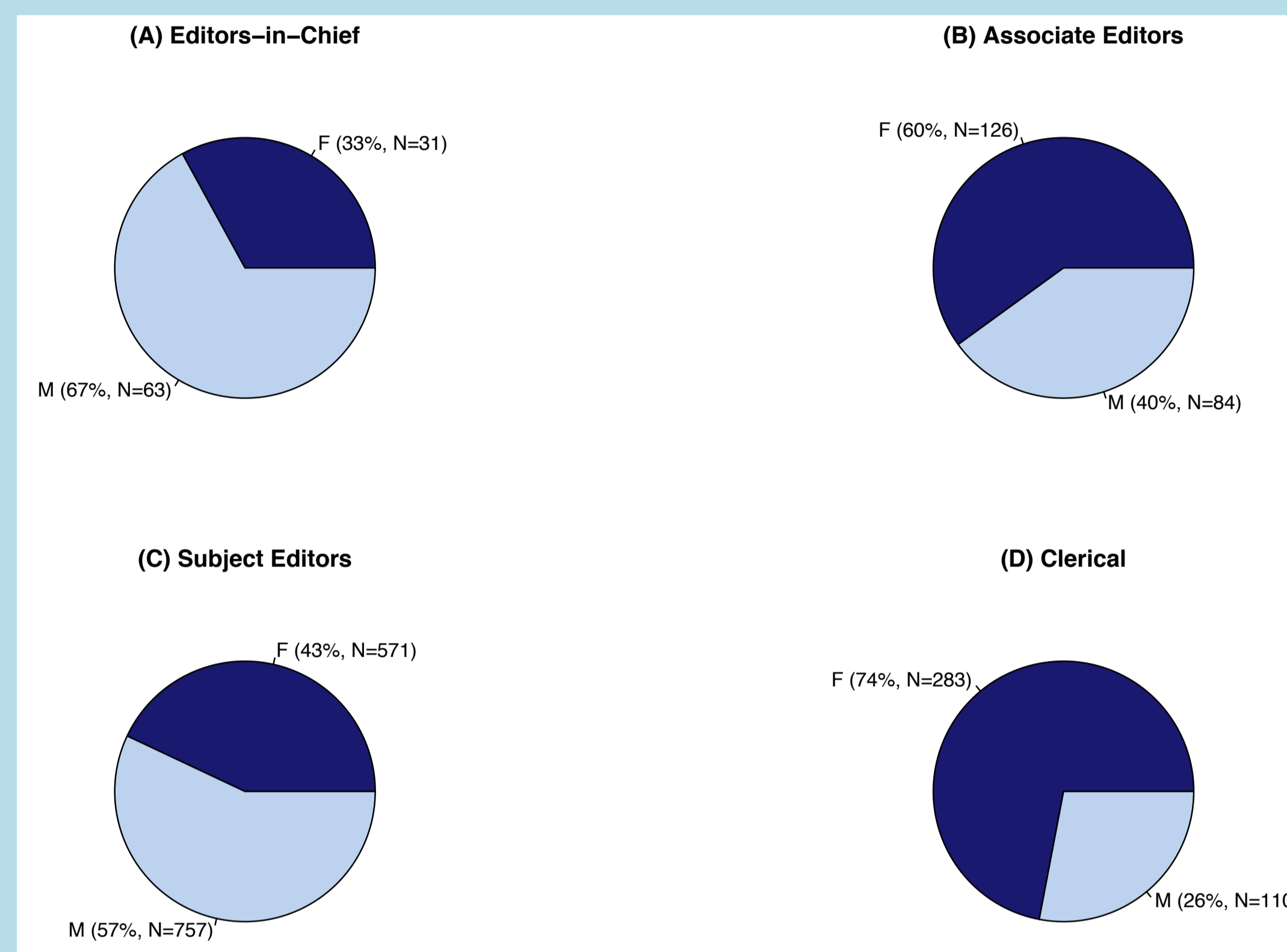


Figure 1. Gender representation on the editorial board of 10 journals in Anthropology. The non-duplicated portion of men and women who served as (A) Editors-in-Chief, (B) Associate Editors, (C) Subject Editors, or (D) Clerical, of 10 anthropology journals from 1976-2016.

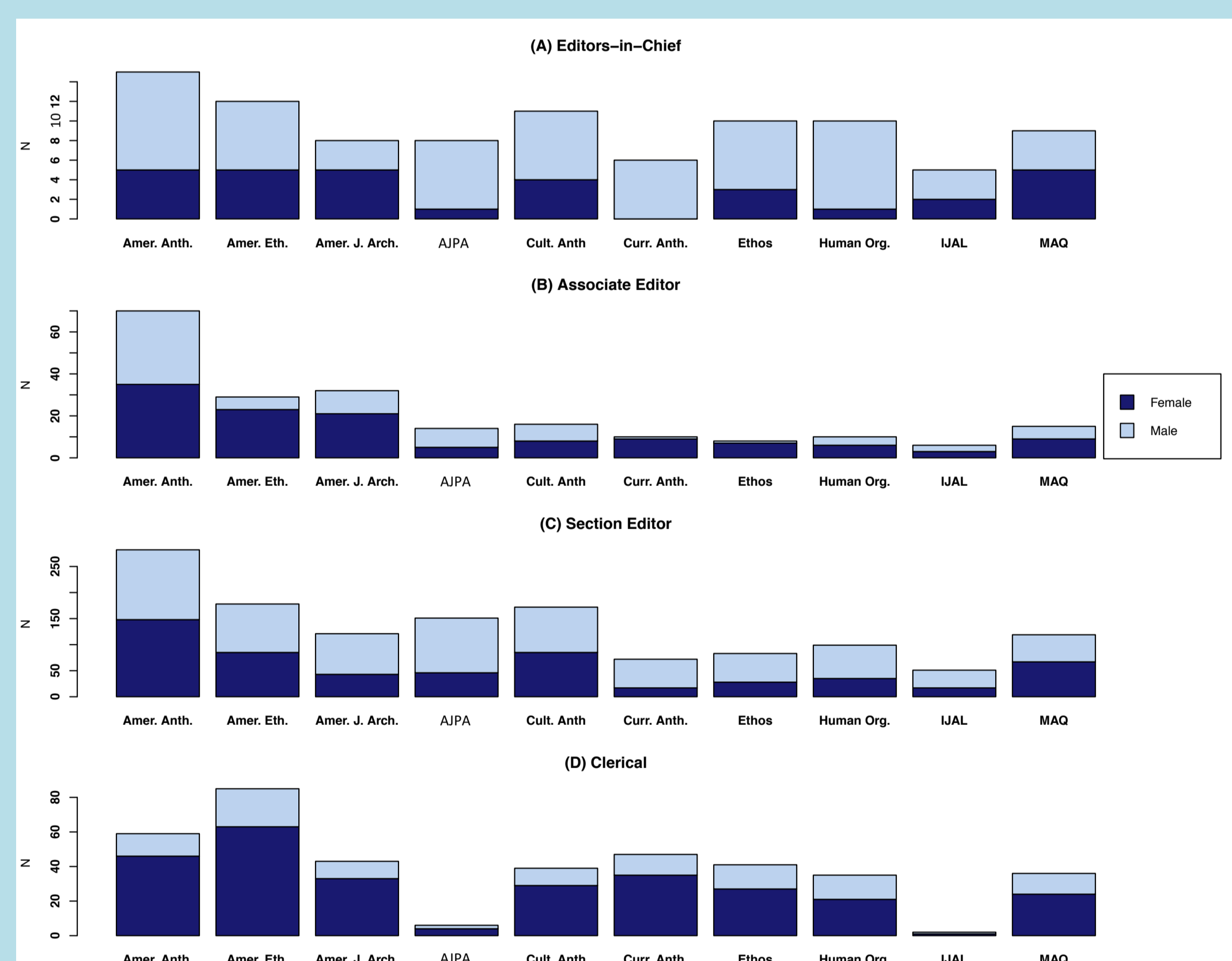


Figure 2. The total number of men and women who served as (A) Subject Editors, (B) Associate Editors, (C) Editors-in-Chief, or (D) Clerical staff, of 10 anthropology journals, from 1976 to 2016.

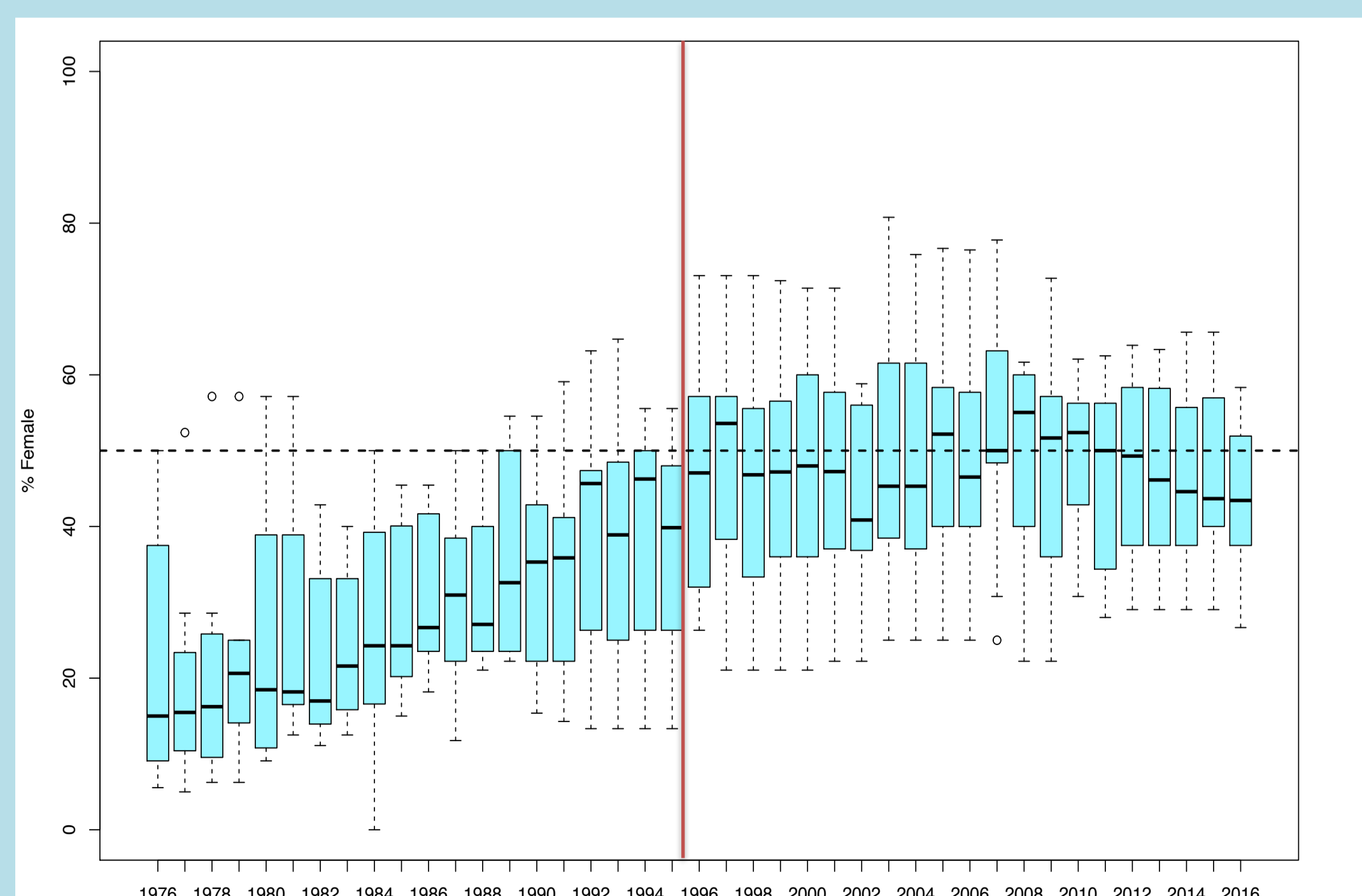


Figure 3. The percent of females to serve on the editorial boards of all 10 journals, per year, from 1976-2016. The red line indicates the conception year of the AAA Committee on Gender Equity in Anthropology, formed in 1995.

The Journals

We selected 10 high impact anthropology journals across the four subdisciplines of anthropology

(* indicates Journal Published by the American Anthropology Association):

- American Journal of Physical Anthropology
- American Journal of Archaeology
- American Anthropologist*
- American Ethnologist*
- Cultural Anthropology
- Current Anthropology
- Ethos*
- Human Organization
- International Journal of American Linguistics
- Medical Anthropology Quarterly*

Methods

For each journal we crowdsourced or requested via InterLibrary Loan, a PDF of the front matter of each year. The journal’s name, front matter year, board member’s name, and editorial position for each individual on the editorial boards were entered into an Excel spreadsheet. Editorial board positions were grouped into four categories: Editor-in-Chief, Associate Editors, Subject Editors, and Clerical. ‘Editor-in-Chief’ was used to denote Editors and International Editors. ‘Associate Editors’ was used to denote associate editors, book review editors, managing editors and production editors. ‘Subject Editors’ denoted editors of specific subjects, and ‘Clerical’ was used to denote editorial assistants and circulation managers. Binary genders of each individual (male or female) were selected for each individual following a Google search and review of pronouns on biographical or website webpages. If a gender pronoun was not present, the undergraduate researcher guessed the gender of the individual after reviewing a photo of the individual or common gender association given the name. Data was then analyzed and graphed using R version 3.3.2, corplot and gplot packages.

Results

- Although there has been improvement over 40 years, there is a current underrepresentation of women on anthropology editorial boards.
- The more recently established journals (most recent is Cultural Anthropology est. 1988) have a more equal gender ratio
- 33% of women served in Editor-in-Chief positions and 74% of women served in Clerical positions, taking each year into account.

Why does this matter?

Editorial Boards are distinguished levels of membership. If there is an underrepresentation of women in Anthropology Editorial Boards, it could demonstrate gender bias throughout the discipline, while an overrepresentation of women could demonstrate an attempt at an over-accommodation of the gender gap.

Editorial Board’s are a level of prestige and achievement that many scholars aim for, but women are not being represented fairly.

Women are extremely important in all fields but specifically important to Anthropological Editorial Boards because these highly coveted leadership positions are very influential and set the tone of anthropological research and discoveries for successive generations.

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