

ARTICLE

Publishing Public Law: Publication Trends in Law and Courts

Abigail A. Matthews^{1,*} , Alyx Mark^{2,*}  and Monica Lineberger^{3,*} 

¹University at Buffalo, SUNY, Buffalo, NY, USA; ²Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT, USA and ³University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, Whitewater, WI, USA

Corresponding author: Alyx Mark; Email: amark@wesleyan.edu

(Received 05 October 2024; Revised 10 July 2025; Accepted 10 July 2025)

Abstract

As expectations for research output evolve, tenure portfolios serve as valuable records of how a field gauges impact. We analyze the records of 184 Law and Courts faculty at PhD-granting institutions and find that the median portfolio has grown from seven to ten peer-reviewed articles, that scholars publish in a wider variety of outlets, and that coauthorship rates have doubled over our four-decade time period. We also note patterns of gendered collaboration and private-institution advantages. These trends suggest shifting tenure expectations, complicate traditional metrics of impact, and underscore the need to initiate data-driven conversations about scholarly impact in an increasingly multidisciplinary field.

Keywords: publication trends; coauthorship; tenure; interdisciplinary publishing; gender and collaboration

Scholars' tenure portfolios provide a rich archival record of a subfield's research output, revealing both the evolving scholarly values of its junior faculty and the standards of those who evaluate their work. While anecdotal evidence suggests that what constitutes a contribution has shifted over time, we lack systematic insight into how the subfield's understanding of impactful scholarship has changed, which contributions are prioritized, and how these priorities vary across different groups within in the Law and Courts subfield. Without periodically examining these shifts, the subfield risks misunderstandings about what constitutes meaningful scholarly contribution, hindering constructive discourse about the evaluation of research impact – at tenure time and beyond. Given evidence of the documented mental toll of the pre-tenure period, and the importance of contextualizing scholars'

*Authors are listed in reverse alphabetical order; all authors contributed equally.

contributions for evaluators, we offer descriptive findings intended to initiate a broader dialogue about publication trends within Law and Courts.

To examine the contours of scholarly contribution within the Law and Courts subfield, we analyze the tenure portfolios of 184 faculty members who earned tenure at US PhD-granting institutions between 1976 and 2021. Our analysis centers on publication records – specifically the number of publications, the outlets in which they appear, and the prevalence of coauthorship – in scholars' portfolios when they earned tenure. We focus on these metrics because evaluators view scholarly productivity as a key indicator of academic impact (Hesli, Lee, and Mitchell 2012), even though evidence suggests internal reviewers such as deans, university-wide tenure committees, and university administrators, seek to downplay the reliance on quantitative publication measures (Abbott et al. 2010).¹

Our findings confirm several expected patterns. The median tenure portfolio in our sample includes 9 peer-reviewed publications, and the number of publications scholars published to earn tenure has increased over time. Notably, the typical portfolio does not include a publication in one of the top-three political science journals: *American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, and *The Journal of Politics*. Instead, scholars in our subfield – which spans a diverse range of methodologies, perspectives, and substantive areas – publish in a wide range of journals, including generalist, subfield-specific, interdisciplinary, or other outlets outside of the field (Executive Committee 2008). Additionally, coauthorship has also become more prevalent: among recently tenured faculty, half of their publications are coauthored, compared to only one-quarter for those who earned tenure in earlier cohorts. Collectively, these trends underscore an evolving academic landscape characterized by heightened publication expectations and a growing emphasis on collaborative work, which may ultimately reshape evaluative criteria and improve our understanding of scholarly productivity within the subfield.

Beyond delineating these overall trends, we interrogate how these patterns intersect with gender to contribute to conversations about equity and inclusion within the subfield and political science and academia, more generally.² In each section of the analysis – overall trends, representation in the top-three and other journals, and coauthorship patterns – we disaggregate our descriptive findings by gender to motivate additional recommendations for future work and reflection. While the findings are not wholly unexpected nor unique to the Law and Courts subfield, they offer a critical entry point for exploring the underlying dynamics that drive scholarly productivity and representation, prompting further research and disciplinary reflection.

The article proceeds in three parts. The first section explains the data and the scope of the data collection. Next, we offer descriptive findings about the tenure portfolios in our sample and examine three publication trends: a steady rise in median publication counts, growing diversity in peer-reviewed outlets, and an increase in coauthorship. Throughout this section, we reflect on how the field could be responding to the trends we identify. We conclude by situating our research within the broader literature, highlighting key insights about shifting definitions of scholarly

¹Teaching and service are important components of a professor's responsibilities. While counting publications is not the only or best way to measure a scholar's contribution for tenure and promotion, academic publications are often the primary measure at PhD-granting institutions.

²Unfortunately, there is a lack of the diversity needed in the sample to explore how these differences might array themselves across race and ethnicity. This is a problem on its own and is outside the scope of our study, but diversifying the discipline should also be a priority for members of our field.

impact and the structural inequities that persist in publishing, and calling for greater transparency, equitable support, and recognition of the diverse ways scholars in this subfield contribute to our understanding of law and courts.

Data collection

In the following sections, we provide a snapshot of scholars' productivity, their publication choices, and collaborative practices, as observed through tenure portfolios of scholars at US PhD-granting institutions. Although our sampling strategy imposes limitations on the generalizability of our findings, the trends identified offer valuable insights. Notably, because tenure track scholars typically begin their academic careers as graduate students at PhD-granting institutions, their observations of faculty productivity likely shape their perceptions of what constitutes a meaningful scholarly contribution (Ehrenberg 2012; Johann, Raabe, and Rauhut 2022; Colby 2023). If these observations influence career trajectories and evaluative norms, such trends merit broader subfield reflection. Additionally, we contend that our analysis can function as a foundation for a more comprehensive data collection and evaluation efforts across diverse institutional contexts, ideally coordinated through a collective effort by the subfield itself.

To construct the dataset, we collected publication records of current Law and Courts scholars who earned tenure between 1976 and 2021 at PhD-granting institutions in the United States. We base our analysis of Law and Courts scholars' tenure portfolios on the assumption that scholarly productivity is the principal measure used for tenure and promotion at PhD-granting institutions (Hesli, Lee, and Mitchell 2012). First, we aggregate publication data at the scholar and university level and focus on examining trends within one broad class of institution to reduce variation in what might be defined a "contribution" at tenure time. We also do so to reduce variation in the availability of data sources necessary for our work – up-to-date tenure and promotion data is most readily available in scholars' CVs and/or faculty biographies on department websites for scholars at PhD-granting institutions, and we suspect that there are non-random reasons at the individual and institutional level for why scholars at other types of institutions would or would not have this information available online.

We began by compiling a list of all political science PhD-granting institutions and identified scholars for our study by examining department faculty lists, websites, and CVs. We limited our collection to individuals whose research focus included Law and Courts or judicial politics, and excluded professors who retained secondary affiliations in political science departments, faculty who retired before 2021, and those whose work primarily fell into the subfield of political theory.³ Our final dataset includes 184 active and tenured Law and Courts professors at PhD-granting universities in the United States.

Most scholars in the sample work at public institutions (70%, or 128), and the majority are men (62%, or 114).⁴ Because our data collection spanned a year-long

³We include Law and Courts scholars who engage in empirical work but exclude those who exclusively conduct normative scholarship.

⁴Forty men work at private institutions and 74 men work at public universities. Sixteen women work at private universities and 54 women work at public universities.

period, we may have missed assistant professors who obtained tenure in 2020 and 2021. Although this does not impact the descriptive data we present, the count of tenured individuals for those two years may be lower than the actual number.

After collecting scholars' CVs, we coded the publications that would have counted toward their tenure file. We include all publications listed on the CV up to and including the year of their promotion.⁵ For example, if a scholar earned tenure in 2010, we include all publications listed for 2010. We acknowledge that this is an overinclusive approach and that scholars may exclude certain publications from their files, perhaps for strategic reasons as they consider promotion, but we erred on the side of overinclusion to account for publication delays. In cases where a scholar's tenure year was not clearly indicated, we assumed tenure was granted six years after receiving the PhD, which was the median time in our dataset.

One of our key variables of interest is each scholar's total number of publications at the time of the tenure decision. This includes peer-reviewed journal articles, monographs, and edited books. We calculated the count variable⁶ for publications by assigning each peer-reviewed publication a value of 1, and each book-length monograph equal to 3.⁷ We did not consider law reviews, book chapters, essays, blog posts, encyclopedia entries, book reviews, or similar publications, as these publication types may have less weight. Excluding these publications also helps mitigate potential bias in the dataset due to inconsistencies in listing them on CVs.

Empirical findings and interpretations

To assess the evolving landscape of scholarly contributions, we begin with an empirical analysis of basic publication patterns. The median Law and Courts scholars' tenure portfolio has 9 publications. Fifty percent of all publication records fell between 6 and 12 publications. The variation is quite large, as [Figure 1](#)'s box plot shows, with files mostly having between 2 to 21 publications. The distribution is slightly skewed, with a longer tail and a large outlier (28) at the upper end of the publication count. The median number of publications for female scholars is 9 publications (mean = 9.1), and for male scholars it is 8.5 (mean = 9.4). The distribution for both groups was comparable, with the 25th and 75th percentiles at 6 and 12 publications, respectively. [Table A1](#) in the [Appendix](#) offers alternative calculations of tenure portfolios.

⁵Our analysis of Law and Courts scholars' tenure portfolios required us to make choices about publication types while also accounting for publication dates. We're aware of the complexities involved in quantifying what constitutes a contribution to the field and acknowledge our approach may overlook indicators of specific publication impact, such as citations, as well as other areas of scholars' work such as teaching and service, which future studies could explore.

⁶We acknowledge that the weights we placed on these different types of publications may not be how all institutions conceive them, but we take this standardized approach to capture and reflect how PhD-granting institutions may weigh different publication types when evaluating a candidate's tenure file. For a discussion of approaches to publication weighting in different disciplinary contexts, see Braxton and Bayer (1986), Shin and Cummings (2010), or Combes and Linnemer (2003).

⁷Our measure for book monographs is guided by the consideration that some institutions accept three articles as an alternative to a book-style dissertation, implying a similar weight for books and articles in the tenure decision. When comparing tenure portfolios of scholars who exclusively publish articles and those who have published a book, assigning three publication points for each book, we find the two datasets yield similar distributions in weighted publications. This suggests a reasonable equivalency in capturing scholarly output.

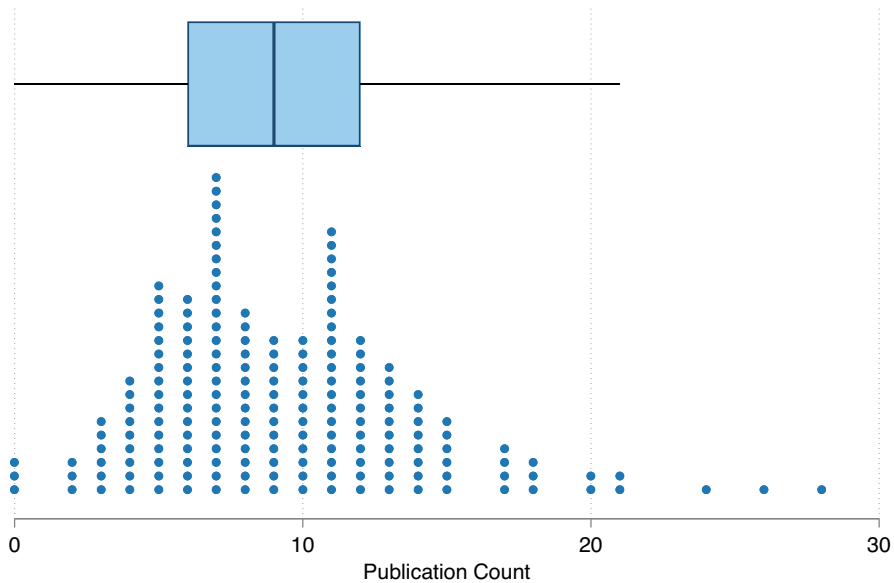


Figure 1. Distribution of Total Number of Publications in Tenure Portfolios, 1976–2021.

Table 1. Book vs. Article-Based Portfolios by Gender and Institution Type

| | One or more books | | Articles only | | N |
|--------------|-------------------|----------|---------------|---------|------------|
| | Public | Private | Public | Private | |
| <i>Men</i> | 47 (26%) | 24 (13%) | 27 (15%) | 16 (9%) | 114 (62%) |
| <i>Women</i> | 34 (19%) | 14 (8%) | 20 (11%) | 2 (1%) | 70 (38%) |
| <i>N</i> | 81 (44%) | 38 (21%) | 47 (26%) | 18 (10) | 184 (100%) |

Scholars generally focus their tenure portfolios on articles or books, and these two portfolios are quite distinct from one another. Table 1 provides the demographic breakdown between scholars who published books versus articles. A large majority of the portfolios, 65% (119 scholars) publish at least one book monograph as part of their tenure portfolio. This trend holds true when comparing groups of scholars based on their gender and institution type: a majority of men and women at both public and private institutions publish at least one book in their tenure portfolios. Notably, of the 16 women who earned tenure at a private institution, 14 published at least one book in their tenure profile.

The median Law and Courts scholar who published one or more books had one book in their portfolio, plus 4 peer-reviewed articles. The scholar in the 25th percentile who earned tenure published one book and three additional peer-reviewed articles. And the scholar in the 75th percentile published one book and eight peer-reviewed journal articles.⁸ While the median scholar publishing at least one book is generally representative of this category, Figure 2a demonstrates that these results are

⁸The median profile of scholars who published one or more books also contained one book chapter and no law review articles. The 25th percentile scholar did not publish in law reviews or in edited book volumes. And the scholar in the 75th percentile published two book chapters and two law review articles.

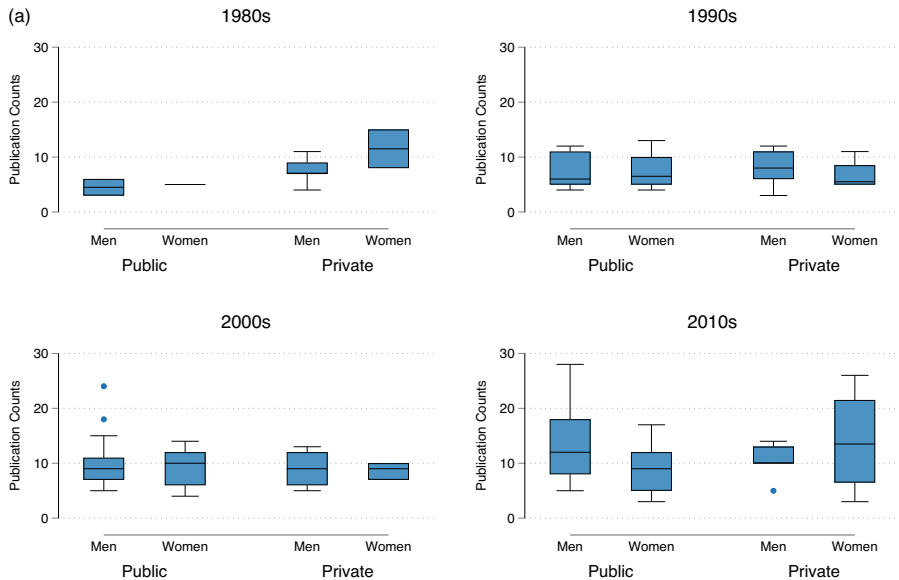


Figure 2a. Shifts in Portfolio Composition by Gender, Institution Type, and Cohort Decade, Scholars with One or More Books.

dependent upon gender, institution type, and even the decade in which the scholar earned tenure. The distribution of publication counts for book scholars is relatively compact between the 1980s, 1990s, and the 2000s: the floors and ceilings of publication counts do not stray too far from the median profile. A new pattern emerges in the 2010s. The median publication count for each category is higher, and the ceiling for the number of publications nearly doubles for men at public institutions and women at private institutions.

Of the 184 scholars in our dataset, 35% (65 scholars) focus their publishing profiles exclusively on articles. The median Law and Courts scholar who publishes only articles has eight peer-reviewed journal articles at tenure time. The scholar in the 25th percentile published six peer-reviewed articles while the scholar in the 75th percentile published 11 peer-reviewed articles.⁹

Figure 2b shows the distribution of publication counts by institution and gender over the four decades. Unlike in the distribution of publication counts for book-based tenure portfolios, the distributions between demographic categories and over decades is quite different for article-only files. The median publication count for men and women at public institutions does not show a linearly positive trend. In the 1990s, the median publication count for both genders was higher than the overall median of eight peer-reviewed articles, but in the 2000s, the median decreased by a substantial amount. The distribution between the 25th and 75th percentiles varies widely across decades as well. Men at private institutions do conform to the overall trend of

⁹The median scholar's profile also contains one book chapter and zero law review articles. Scholars in the 25th percentile had 0 law review articles and 0 book chapters. Profiles in the 75th percentile published two book chapters and one law review article.

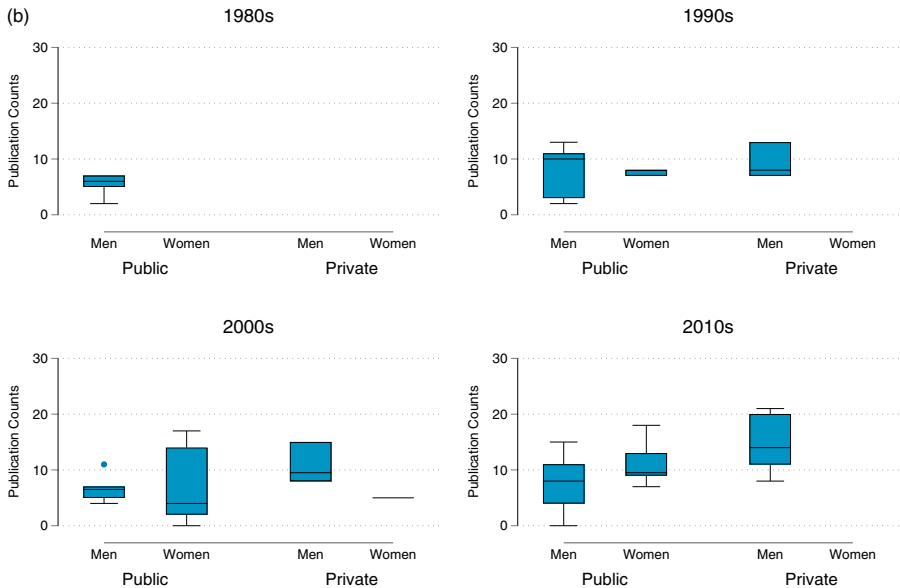


Figure 2b. Shifts in Portfolio Composition by Gender, Institution Type, and Cohort Decade, Scholars with Article-Based Portfolios.

increasing publication rates by decade. As a group, men at private institutions earning tenure in 2010 are highly productive.

Having established these fundamental productivity metrics, we now turn our attention to three evolving publication trends. First, our analysis reveals there is a steady increase in the median number of publications within tenure portfolios over time. Next, we document the diversity of peer-reviewed outlets in which Law and Courts scholars disseminate their work. Finally, we observe a marked rise in coauthorship, reflecting changing collaborative practices in the field. Although we acknowledge that these trends are not necessarily unique to our subfield or academia more broadly, their potential implications for scholarship and career trajectories merit further investigation and discussion.

Publication counts are on the rise

Our analysis of tenure dossiers reveals a significant upward trend in publication counts among Law and Courts junior scholars. Figure 3 illustrates an overall increase in the number of publications recorded from 1976–2021, providing initial evidence of this trajectory. To further explore this trend, we calculated the median publication count by decade, as summarized in Table 2. Scholars who earned tenure between 1976 and 2006 ($N = 90$) had a median of seven publications, while those who attained tenure between 2007 and 2021 ($N = 91$) had a median of ten publications – a difference that is statistically significant. These findings highlight the increasing emphasis on publication productivity in tenure evaluations and raise important questions regarding evolving scholarly expectations within the field.

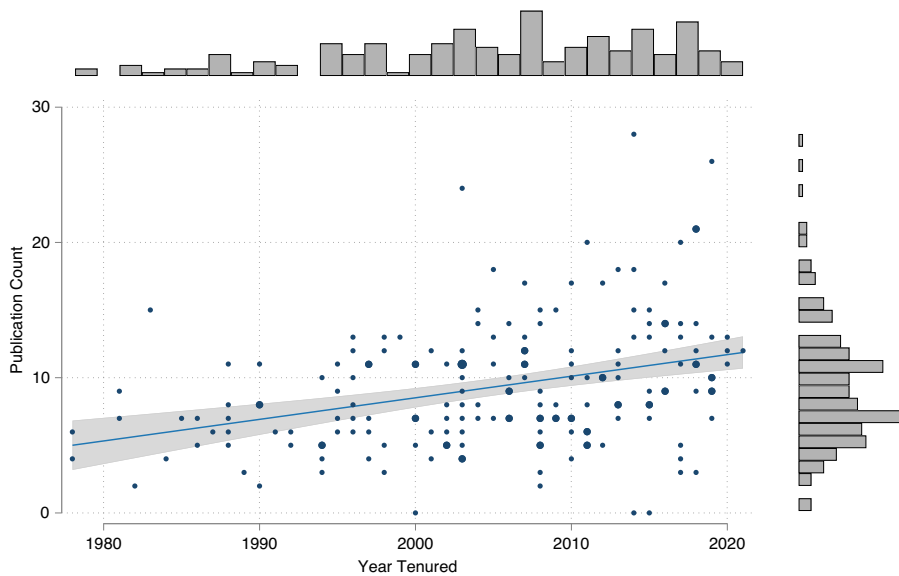


Figure 3. Total Number of Publications in Tenure Portfolios, 1976–2021.

Table 2. Median Publication Counts by Decade Tenured (1976–2021)

| Decade | Median publication count | Number of tenure portfolios |
|--------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1970s | 5 | 2 |
| 1980s | 7 | 15 |
| 1990s | 7 | 32 |
| 2000s | 8 | 64 |
| 2010s | 10 | 67 |
| 2020s | 12 | 4 |

This phenomenon is pervasive in academia and appears closely linked to prevailing conceptions of scholarly evaluation: both junior scholars and tenure evaluators alike view a strong publication record as central to a successful tenure case. For junior scholars, this expectation is instilled during graduate training, where the imperative to publish is emphasized as a means of distinguishing oneself in an increasingly competitive job market (Ehrenberg 2012; Johann, Raabe, and Rauhut 2022; Colby 2023). For tenure evaluators, despite downplaying the role of quantitative indicators in assessing junior colleagues, empirical research suggests that publication counts serve as proxies for assessing scope and productivity (Abbott et al. 2010). Consequently, the heightened emphasis on substantial publication records reflect broader trends in how the academy quantifies and values scholarship (DeRond and Miller 2005). In our analysis, the rise in publication counts is interwoven with other evolving trends.

Diversification of publication outlets

Law and Courts scholars target their work at an incredibly diverse collection of outlets: scholars publish in generalist, subfield-specific, interdisciplinary, judicial,

and journals outside of the discipline. The 184 scholars in the dataset published in over 300 unique outlets. This trend alone invites critical reflection on how the field defines and values various forms of scholarly contribution.

Beginning with law and courts-related journals, 66% of scholars have published at least one article in a judicial journal – a trend that is especially clear among recently tenured scholars. Judicial journals include outlets such as, *Journal of Law and Courts*, *Justice System Journal*, and *Judicature*, and also include *Law and Social Inquiry*, *Journal of Legal Analysis*, and *Law and Policy*.¹⁰ In fact, the median number of judicial journal publications has risen from one, for scholars earning tenure in the 1980s, to two publications in the 2010s. There are three scholars who published exclusively in judicial journals.

Despite the rising publication counts in judicial journals, the diversity of the publication outlets for scholars varies widely. To fully examine the types of journals in which scholars published, we classified all journals into five categories: generalist, judicial, subfield, other political science, and non-political science.¹¹ Generalist journals publish all methodologies and all fields of political science. Examples include the top-three journals, as well as *Political Research Quarterly*, *Political Science Research and Methods*, and *Research & Politics*. Subfield journals are the official publications of APSA's organized sections and include *Political Behavior*, *Politics & Gender*, and *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics*, among others. Any political science journal that was not identified as a generalist or subfield journal was coded as other political science journal. These include examples such as *American Politics Research*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, and *Electoral Studies*. The final category, other journals, are all non-political science journals, and include fields as vast as economics, health, sociology, and history.

Figures 4a and 4b depict the shifts in publication trends over the decades and by institution type and gender. Notably, 37% of all publications appear in outlets beyond the generalist, judicial, or subfield journals, demonstrating the field's engagement with a diverse range of academic audiences.¹² Over decades tenured, gender, and institution type, scholars frequently publish a large proportion of their tenure portfolio in these outlets.

Another metric of impact in a portfolio would be the proportion of their publications in a generalist journal, for instance, *The Journal of Politics*, *Political Research Quarterly*, or *PS: Political Science & Politics*. However, the overall proportion of articles published within the generalist journal category is relatively low, at 28%. Moreover, a little over one-third of scholars, 67, do not publish in any generalist political science outlet. Even though Figure 4 shows how the trends for publication outlets have shifted, one pattern that is robust over time and over publication categories is the propensity for a substantial proportion of a Law and Courts scholar's tenure portfolio to be published outside of both judicial and generalist political science journals.

This diversity in publication outlets reflects the multidisciplinary nature of Law and Courts scholarship, however, it also poses challenges for assessing scholarly contribution. Evaluators may struggle to gauge the impact of works disseminated

¹⁰For a full list of journals classified as Judicial, see Table A8 in the Appendix.

¹¹For a full list of journals categorized as generalist, subfield, other political science journals, and non-political science journals, see Table A8 and A9 in the Appendix.

¹²Noted as "Other" Journals in Figure 4.

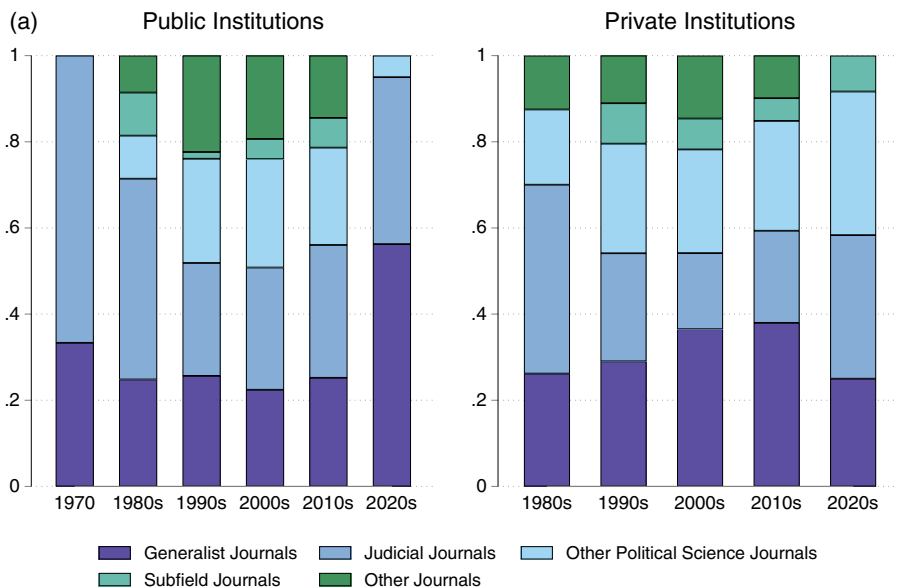


Figure 4a. Average Scholarly Publication Distribution by Institution Type Across Decades.

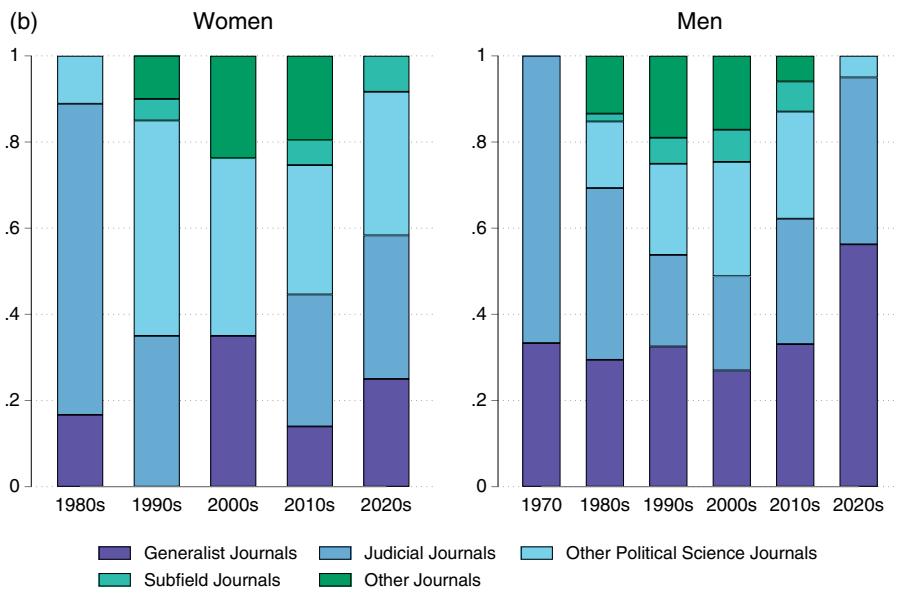


Figure 4b. Average Scholarly Publication Distribution by Gender Across Decades.

through less conventional or interdisciplinary venues, while scholars must invest additional time to contextualize their contributions for members of the field. In the following section, we examine trends in top-three journal publications in scholars' portfolios, with a particular focus on gender and institutional differences. This

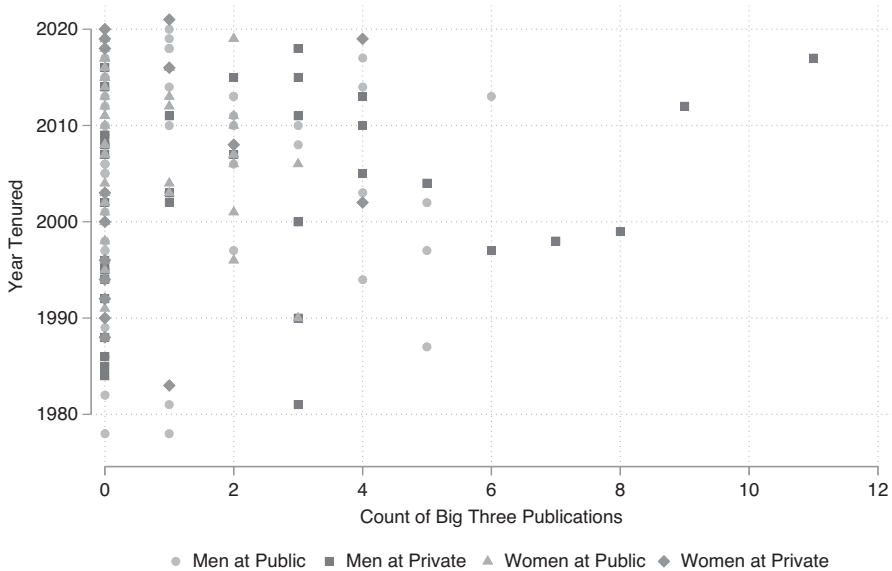


Figure 5. Total Number of Big Three Publications by Gender and Institution at Tenure 1976–2021.

analysis not only highlights gaps in our current understanding of publication patterns but also illuminates opportunities for future research aimed at refining evaluative criteria and capturing the multifaceted nature of scholarly impact.

Top-three journal publication trends

Although publication in the top-three political science journals is widely viewed as a strong signal of research impact, it is not reflective of the median Law and Courts tenure portfolio, which does not contain a top-three publication. However, our analysis reveals nuanced yet significant variations by gender and institution that diverge from the general trend. Among the most prolific scholars, men publish up to two-and-a-half times more top-three articles than women – a difference driven largely by men working at private institutions.¹³ Although men and women publish in top-three journals at similar rates overall, institutional type plays a significant role among the most productive scholars. Specifically, the median scholar at a public institution does not have a top-three publication at tenure, while their counterparts at private institutions typically do.

This institutional advantage is especially pronounced for men at private institutions, whose median portfolio includes 1.5 top-three articles – a statistically significant difference compared to women at both public and private institutions, as well as men at public institutions (Figure 5). In fact, 58% of men at private institutions have

¹³The median male and female scholar both publish zero top-three articles by tenure time. However, this similarity of the median obscures substantial differences at the upper end of the distribution. At the 90th percentile, male scholars have published four top-three journal articles, compared to two for women. The gap continues to widen at higher percentiles: at the 95th percentile, men have six such publications versus three for women, and at the 99th percentile, the numbers are nine for men and four for women.

at least one publication in a top-three journal. By contrast, no other group has a majority of its members reaching this benchmark: only 39% of men at public institutions, 33% of women at public institutions, and 38% of women at private institutions have at least one top-three publication in their portfolios at tenure time. Among scholars with more than one top-three publication, men at private institutions again outperform all other groups – including men at public institutions, and women at both public and private institutions.¹⁴ Eight of the 12 male scholars who earned tenure in the 2010s published at least three publications in the top-three journals.

Figure 5 demonstrates the evolution of the publication trends in a top-three journal over the decades within our analysis. The markers on the graph plot the median number of publications in a top-three journal by the decade in which the scholar earned tenure, the institution type of where they earned tenure, and the scholar's gender. The two trends already discussed – rising publication counts and the gender-institution divide – are both clear in this figure. Generally, for each category, the median number of publications in a top-three journal rises over each decade. Notably, this exception is not true for women tenured at public institutions, whose median value of 0 top-three journal publications does not change over the four decades in our study.

The significance of institutional affiliation, particularly the public-private divide, aligns with findings in other disciplines. For example, recent research on accounting faculty (Burton et al. 2023) indicates that scholars at private institutions publish in more prestigious journals compared to their colleagues at public institutions (see also Swanson, Wolfe, and Zardkoohi 2007; Glover et al. 2012). Critically, Way and colleagues rule out competing explanations such as selection bias for these disparities in computer science, showing that institutional resources, rather than the selection of “inherently more productive faculty via hiring” (2019, 10731), drive higher publication outputs, suggesting that endogeneity concerns are not driving the results. In other words, factors such as prestige, location, resources, and organizational support at private universities help scholars become especially productive, underscoring the importance of institutional context when assessing scholarly productivity.

Our findings on the relationship between gender and institutional type suggest that a scholar's home department may interact with their gender identity to shape their research productivity. Prior research has shown that gender influences both publication output and journal selection strategies (Teele and Thelen 2017; Djupe, Smith, and Sokhey 2019). Additionally, studies indicate that early-career female scholars tend to be less prolific than their male counterparts (Holliday et al. 2014), potentially due to greater time spent on teaching, service, and advising responsibilities, which can limit research productivity (O'Meara et al. 2017; see also Frances 2018). In light of this literature, our findings suggest that pre-tenure women may adopt distinct publication strategies compared to men, and these differences may be further shaped by institutional context.

While our analysis sheds light on key publication trends among Law and Courts scholars, several data gaps suggest promising directions for future research. For instance, access to detailed submission and acceptance data from top-tier journals

¹⁴One scholar had eleven publications in a top-three journal at the time of their tenure. And of the top 5 scholars who published the most top-three articles, four of those were men at private institutions.

would enable us to discern whether observed disparities stem primarily from lower submission rates, reduced acceptance rates, or both. Similarly, richer data on scholars' publication strategies and their perceptions of the review process could clarify how junior scholars navigate venue selection and articulate their scholarly identities. For example, it remains unclear whether junior scholars exhibit greater risk aversion in their submissions or if they strategically target outlets that align more with their scholarly identities. Moreover, understanding how evaluators assess the reputational value of nontraditional and interdisciplinary outlets could further illuminate the relationship between publication venue and tenure outcomes. Finally, incorporating additional metrics – such as institutional resources, teaching loads, and demographic variables – will be essential for contextualizing these trends and addressing potential endogeneity concerns.

Coauthorship trends

The final major trend we highlight is the marked rise in coauthorship among Law and Courts scholars. In the mid-twentieth century, coauthorship was relatively rare among social scientists, with only 17.5% of articles featuring multiple authors (Wang and Barabási 2021). In recent decades, however, collaborative publishing has grown substantially, reflecting broader, cross-disciplinary shifts. This growth is partly attributed to technological advances that facilitate long-distance collaboration (Fisher et al. 1998; Wuchty, Jones, and Uzzi 2007; Saraceno 2020). In addition to becoming more widespread, coauthorship has also expanded in scale over time, with larger coauthor teams increasingly common in a number of fields, including political science, economics, and law (Fisher et al. 1998; Wuchty, Jones, and Uzzi 2007; Andrikopoulos, Samitas, and Kostaris 2016; Matthews and Rantanen 2025).

Beyond technological advances that make collaboration easier, scholars are also drawn to coauthorship for its tangible benefits. Coauthored publications are cited more frequently than solo-authored works, suggesting a higher impact for team-based research (Wuchty, Jones, and Uzzi 2007). Evidence from economics further supports this notion, showing that scholars who coauthor not only produce work with greater visibility, but also publish more frequently than their solo-authored counterparts (Hollis 2001). These changes in coauthorship patterns thus reflect a broader transformation in how knowledge is produced and disseminated in the social sciences.

Figure 6 illustrates the proportion of coauthored publications within tenure portfolios – if a scholar had eight peer-reviewed articles and four were coauthored, their file would have a ratio of 0.5. The data conforms to findings in other disciplines, revealing a substantial and statistically significant increase in the share of coauthored articles over time. As illustrated by the line and scatter plots, scholars who earned tenure in the more recent period are significantly more likely to coauthor than those in earlier cohorts.

In addition to examining the broad temporal trend, our analysis also highlights important gendered differences in the dynamics of coauthorship. While the overall propensity to collaborate is comparable – with 75% of men and 80% of women engaging in coauthorship – the composition of coauthor teams varies significantly by gender. Notably, 30% of male scholars published exclusively with male coauthors pre-tenure, compared to only 11% of female scholars who published exclusively with female coauthors. Figure 7 further illustrates this disparity by documenting the temporal shift from predominately all-male coauthorship teams to an increasing



Figure 6. Ratio of Publications That are Coauthored at Time of Tenure, 1976–2021.

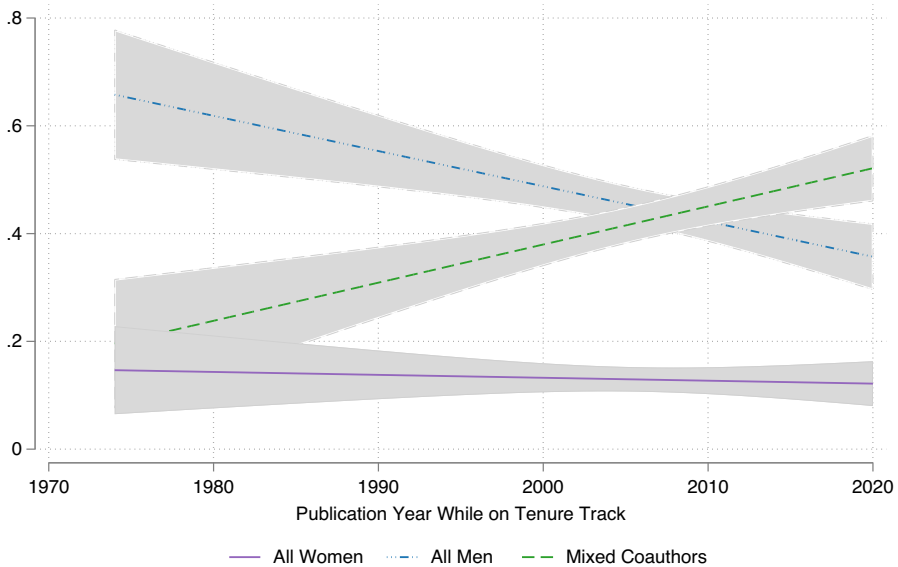


Figure 7. Coauthorship Teams by Gender, 1976–2021.

prevalence of mixed-gender collaborations, while the incidence of all-female teams has remained consistently low.¹⁵

¹⁵Figure A1 in the Appendix displays publication records by gender and institution.

Although the dynamics of gendered collaboration remain underexplored in the Law and Courts subfield, research in related disciplines has documented how gender preferences in collaboration influence recognition, tenure, promotion outcomes, and subsequent collaborative networks (Smith et al. 2025; see also Rossiter 1993; Knobloch-Westerwick, Glynn, and Huye 2013). Smith and colleagues contend that “if authors in the largest and/or most well-connected subgroups enjoy higher recognition and increased rewards and these subgroups are predominately men, women’s contributions to scientific endeavors may be overlooked furthering a cycle of gender disparities in rewards for scientific research” (Smith et al. 2025, 11). In light of our findings, a more in-depth exploration of these trends is warranted.

Prior research indicates women coauthors often receive less credit or are perceived as less competent than their male coauthors (Sarsons 2017; Clarke, Hurst, and Tomlinson 2024). In response to these biases, evidence from economics suggests that women are more inclined to pursue solo authorship than men (Boschini and Sjögren 2007), a pattern that is even more pronounced at top departments (McDowell, Singell, and Stater 2006). Furthermore, Boschini and Sjögren (2007) demonstrate that gendered patterns in coauthor network formation persist even after controlling for specialization, seniority, and institutional affiliation. Emerging research also indicates that current coauthorship trends disproportionately benefit male and not female scholars (Teele and Thelen 2017; Djupe, Smith, and Sokhey 2019; see also McDowell, Singell, and Slater 2006; Boschini and Sjögren 2007; Sarsons 2017; Clarke, Hurst, and Tomlinson 2024). For example, Hospido and Sanz (2021) found that papers authored by all-women teams were nearly 7% less likely to be accepted to several major economics conferences compared to those papers authored by men or all-male teams.

Discussion and conclusion

Our descriptive analysis revealed four publication trends that invite reflection and motivate a conversation about evolving scholarly values and expectations within the Law and Courts subfield.

First, our data indicate that the number of publications in tenure portfolios has increased over time, reflecting broader shifts in scholarly expectations and academic norms. Second, scholars publish in a diverse array of journals, a development that complicates traditional metrics of research impact and raises questions about how research impact is assessed within the field. Third, although publishing in the top-three political science journals is uncommon for Law and Courts scholars, institutional type and gender play a significant role in this dynamic – with men at private institutions exhibiting a distinct advantage. Finally, while coauthorship has increased over time, gendered patterns persist in collaborative practices, raising concerns about potential disadvantages women face in recognition and career advancement.

Our findings raise several key implications for the subfield. The upward trend in publication counts and the evolving norms around coauthorship suggest tenure expectations are shifting, potentially impacting scholars differently based on institutional affiliation and demographic characteristics. Moreover, as scholars diversify their publication outlets, evaluators must grapple with how to fairly assess research impact across generalist, subfield, and interdisciplinary outlets. The observed institutional advantages in top-tier publishing and gendered coauthorship trends underscore the need for policies that promote equitable career trajectories.

These results suggest multiple avenues for future research. Access to more granular data on submission behaviors and acceptance rates could help disentangle whether observed publication gaps are driven by differences in submission rates, editorial biases, or other structural factors. Additionally, examining how institutional resources – such as research support, teaching loads, and mentorship opportunities – shape publication strategies could yield deeper insight into disparities in scholarly productivity. Further investigation should explore how early-career publication strategies influence long-term career trajectories, including promotion to full professor and leadership roles within their universities and the discipline.

Furthermore, while our analysis is based on tenure portfolios of scholars who have successfully navigated the tenure evaluation process, we recognize that these records do not capture the full contextual narrative of scholars' work. We posit that portfolios featuring a broader range of journal outlets, including interdisciplinary publications, may require distinct forms of identity justification. Our subfield would benefit from initiatives that help junior scholars better articulate how their publication strategies contribute to their overall scholarly identity.

More broadly, these findings prompt a call to action for greater transparency in journal submission and acceptance data, and for institutional policies that support diverse scholarly contributions. As the subfield continues to evolve, it is imperative that we consider ways to ensure that coauthorship dynamics do not disproportionately disadvantage certain groups, particularly women scholars at public institutions. Ultimately, describing these patterns is a valuable exercise, as it contributes to our understanding of what the field considers to be “impactful” scholarship in a general sense, and because it offers a foundation for further inquiry into how these trends intersect with a range of factors that influence how we assess scholars' contributions.

Supplementary material. The supplementary material for this article can be found at <http://doi.org/10.1017/jlc.2025.10007>.

Acknowledgments. The authors would like to extend very special thanks Susanne Schorpp, who contributed greatly to the idea, motivation, and data collection for this paper. We'd also like to thank Wendy Martinek and the Law and Courts Women's Writing Groups for their support on earlier versions; Julia Crainic, Izzy Bailey, and AnnaBelle Medina at Wesleyan University, and Ian Roma and Sarah Krzemien at the University at Buffalo for their research assistance; as well as the editors and anonymous reviewers for their helpful feedback.

Data availability statement. Replication code and data can be found at the *Journal of Law and Courts* Dataserve, <https://dataserve.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/YE9CLN>.

Financial support. This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. (SES2147840) and American Political Science Association Centennial Fund.

Competing interests. The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

References

- Abbott, Alison, David Cyranoski, Nicola Jones, Brendan Maher, Quirin Schiermeier, and Richard Van Noorden. 2010. “Do metrics matter?” *Nature* 465(7300): 860–863.
- Andrikopoulos, Andreas, Aristeidis Samitas, and Konstantinos Kostaris. 2016. “Four decades of the Journal of Econometrics: Coauthorship patterns and networks.” *Journal of Econometrics* 195(1): 23–32.
- Boschini, Anne, and Anna Sjögren. 2007. “Is Team Formation Gender Neutral? Evidence from Coauthorship Patterns.” *Journal of Labor Economics* 25(2): 325–365.

- Braxton, John, and Alan Bayer. 1986. "Assessing faculty scholarly performance." *New Directions for Institutional Research* 50(1): 25–42.
- Burton, Hughlene, Suzanne Krail Sevin, and Marcia Weidenmier Watson. 2023. "Assessing the Publication Records of Accounting Faculty Successfully Tenured and Promoted." *Journal of Accounting Education* 63: 100841.
- Clarke, Jean, Cheryl Hurst, and Jennifer Tomlinson. 2024. "Maintaining the Meritocracy Myth: A Critical Discourse Analytic Study of Leaders' Talk About Merit and Gender in Academia." *Organization Studies* 45(5): 635–660.
- Colby, Glenn. 2023. "Data snapshot: Tenure and contingency in U.S. higher education." American Association of University Professors. <https://www.aaup.org/article/data-snapshot-tenure-and-contingency-us-highereducation>. Accessed 2024.
- Combes, Pierre-Philippe, and Laurent Linnemer. 2003. "Where are the Economists Who Publish? Publication Concentration and Rankings in Europe based on Cumulative Publications." *Journal of the European Economic Association* 1(6): 1250–1308.
- DeRond, Mark, and Alan N. Miller. 2005. "Publish or perish: Bane or boon of academic life?" *Journal of Management Inquiry* 14(4): 321–329.
- Djupe, Paul, Amy Erica Smith, and Anand Edward Sokhey. 2019. "Explaining Gender in the Journals: How Submission Practices Affect Publication Patterns in Political Science." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 52(1): 71–77.
- Ehrenberg, Ronald G. 2012. "American Higher Education in Transition." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 26(1): 193–216.
- Executive Committee of the Law and Courts Organized Section of the American Political Science Association. 2008. "Section Bylaws." <http://lawcourts.org/wordpress/section-by-laws/>.
- Fisher, Bonnie, Craig Cobane, Thomas Vander Ven, and Francis Cullen. 1998. "How Many Authors Does It Take to Publish an Article? Trends and Patterns in Political Science." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 31(4): 847–856.
- Frances, Carol. 2018. "The Status of Women in American Higher Education." *Sociology and Anthropology* 6(9): 695–708.
- Glover, Steven M., Douglas F. Prawitt, Scott L. Summers, and David A. Wood. 2012. "Publication Benchmarking Data Based on Faculty Promoted at the Top 75 U.S. Accounting Research Institutions." *Issues in Accounting Education* 27(3): 647–670.
- Hesli, Vicki, Jae Mook Lee, and Sara Mitchell. 2012. "Predicting Rank Attainment in Political Science: What Else Besides Publications Affects Promotion?" *PS: Political Science & Politics* 45(3): 475–492.
- Holliday, Emma B., Reshma Jaggi, Lynn D. Wilson, Mehee Choi, Charles R. Thomas Jr, and Clifton D. Fuller. 2014. "Gender Differences in Publication Productivity, Academic Position, Career Duration, and Funding Among U.S. Academic Radiation Oncology Faculty." *Academic Medicine* 89(5): 767–773.
- Hollis, Aidan. 2001. "Co-authorship and the Output of Academic Economists." *Labour Economics* 8(4): 503–530.
- Hospido, Laura, and Carlos Sanz. 2021. "Gender gaps in the evaluation of research: Evidence from submissions to economics conferences." *Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics* 83(3): 590–618.
- Johann, David, Isabel J. Raabe, and Heiko Rauhut. 2022. "Under Pressure: The Extent and Distribution of Perceived Pressure Among Scientists in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland." *Research Evaluation* 31(3): 385–409.
- Knobloch-Westerwick, Silvia, Carroll J. Glynn, and Michael Hugu. 2013. "The Matilda effect in science communication: an experiment on gender bias in publication quality perceptions and collaboration interest." *Science Communication* 35(5): 603–625.
- Matthews, Abigail A., and Jason Rantanen. 2025. "Legal Research as a Collective Enterprise: An Examination of Data Availability in Empirical Legal Scholarship." *The Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 41(2): 570–603. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jleo/ewae001>
- McDowell, John M., Larry D. Singell Jr., and Mark Stater. 2006. "Two to tango? Gender differences in the decisions to publish and coauthor." *Economic Inquiry* 44(1): 153–168.
- O'Meara, KerryAnn, Alexandra Kuvaeva, Gudrun Nyunt, Chelsea Waugaman, and Rose Jackson. 2017. "Asked More Often: Gender Differences in Faculty Workload in Research Universities and the Work Interactions That Shape Them." *American Educational Research Journal* 54(6): 1154–1186.
- Rossiter, Margaret W. 1993. "The Matthew Matilda effect in science." *Social Studies of Science* 23(2): 325–341.

- Saraceno, Joseph. 2020. "Disparities in a Flagship Political Science Journal? Analyzing Publication Patterns in the Journal of Politics, 1939–2019." *Journal of Politics* 82(4): e45–e55.
- Sarsons, Heather. 2017. "Recognition for group work: Gender differences in academia." *American Economic Review* 107(5): 141–145.
- Shin, Jung, and William Cummings. "Multilevel analysis of academic publishing across disciplines: research preference, collaboration, and time on research." *Scientometrics* 85(2010): 581–594.
- Smith, Amy E., Norma M. Riccucci, Kimberley R. Isett, Leisha DeHart-Davis, and Rebekah St Clair Sims. 2025. "Where power and scholarship collide: Gender and coauthorship in public administration research." *Public Administration Review* 1–17.
- Swanson, Edward P., Christopher J. Wolfe, and Asghar Zardkoohi. 2007 "Concentration in Publishing at Top-Tier Business Journals: Evidence and Potential Explanations." *Contemporary Accounting Research* 24(4): 1255–1289.
- Teele, Dawn, and Kathleen Thelen. 2017. "Gender in the Journals: Publication Patterns in Political Science." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 50(2): 433–447.
- Wang, Dashun, and Albert-László Barabási. 2021. *The Science of Science*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Way, Samuel F., Allison C. Morgan, Daniel B. Larremore, and Aaron Clauset. 2019. "Productivity, Prominence, and the Effects of Academic Environment." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 116(22): 10729–10733.
- Wuchty, Stefan, Benjamin F. Jones, and Brian Uzzi. 2007. "The increasing dominance of teams in production of knowledge." *Science* 316(5827): 1036–1039.