

# Scientists question representation of women in international journal

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Three leading cognitive scientists from Carnegie Mellon University are questioning the gender representation of invited contributors in the special February 2015 issue, "The Changing Face of Cognition," published by the international journal *Cognition*.

*Cognition*, a highly regarded scientific journal, publishes theoretical and experimental papers on the study of the mind - a topic that has been a research strength of CMU for decades and that is receiving intense focus through the [federal government](#)'s BRAIN Initiative.

In an opinion piece to appear in *Cognition*, Roberta Klatzky, Lori Holt and Marlene Behrmann write that they were "struck by the fact that among the 19 authors listed for the 12 articles, only one female author was present."

Holt, professor of psychology and a member of the Center for the Neural Basis of Cognition (CNBC), said, "As [cognitive scientists](#), we know that subtle, even unconscious, biases shape decision making. We hope that by calling attention to the gender disparity in invited scientific contributions we can raise awareness and contribute to developing inclusive strategies. It is very important that the new generation of women in cognitive science, and STEM fields generally, recognizes that their contributions are critical."

The authors felt compelled to address this issue publicly to initiate a larger conversation.

"It has been suggested that one reason young women fail to enter STEM fields is the paucity of females at senior levels who could serve as models. This problem is perpetuated when women scientists are not recognized in publications that are intended to shape the future of their research area," said Klatzky, the Charles J. Queenan, Jr. Professor of Psychology who holds additional appointments in the Human-Computer Interaction Institute and the CNBC.

According to 2013 statistics from the National Science Foundation, more than 50 percent of Ph.D. degrees in [cognitive psychology](#), psycholinguistics, neuropsychology and experimental psychology were awarded to women. Yet, invitations to contribute do not necessarily reflect this gender parity. In their piece, the authors examine the gender distribution of the editors and authors for the four most recent special issues of *Cognition* and find a prevailing male dominance. The authors argue that although authorship should not be based on the number of men and women in the discipline, the contributions and vision of female scientists should not be ignored.

"The fate of women in science continues to be problematic and, although some progress has been made, many challenges remain. These challenges go beyond authorship and journals, and concerted efforts need to be mustered to address this issue of disproportionate gender distribution in cognitive science and in science more generally," said Behrmann, the George A. and Helen Dunham Cowan Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience and CMU co-director of the CNBC.

Carnegie Mellon's Department of Psychology in the Dietrich College of Humanities and Social Sciences - the academic home department to Klatzky, Holt, Behrmann and a long-time leader in cognitive science research - has 11 women on its current roster of 26 core faculty members. Several women have or are currently holding leadership positions, including Klatzky, who served as head of the Psychology

Department from 1993-2003, and Behrmann, who leads the CNBC, a joint project between CMU and the University of Pittsburgh devoted to investigating the neural mechanisms that give rise to human cognitive abilities. Holt spearheads a training program funded by the National Institutes of Health and plays a major role in the training both graduate and undergraduate students in CMU's Psychology Department.

In line with the federal government's emphasis on brain research, Carnegie Mellon recently launched BrainHubSM, a global initiative that focuses on how the structure and activity of the brain give rise to complex behaviors. As the birthplace of artificial intelligence and cognitive psychology, CMU has been a leader in the study of [cognitive science](#), brain and behavior for more than 50 years. The university has created some of the first [cognitive](#) tutors, helped to develop the Jeopardy-winning Watson, founded a groundbreaking doctoral program in neural computation, and completed cutting-edge work in understanding the genetics of autism. BrainHub builds on CMU's strengths in biology, computer science, [psychology](#), statistics and engineering.

Provided by Carnegie Mellon University

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