

Title: Putting a Counterweight

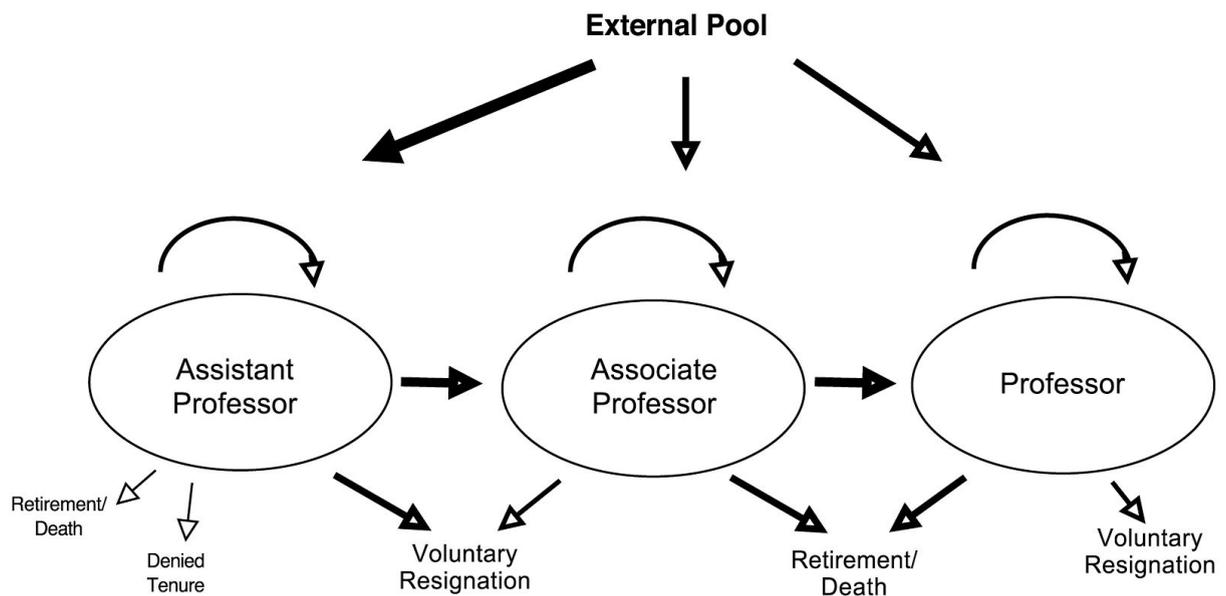
Catch phrase for twitter: #Endsciencesexism, #self-awareness, #balanceChromosomes3X1Y

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### Putting a Counterweight

Even if you are not a scientist, you probably have heard of the only person who has won Nobel Prizes in two different scientific fields – the legendary Marie Curie. Her contribution to the fields of physics and chemistry is so undeniable, we have remembered her. But next we ask the question – is she remembered enough? Would we hear her name more often if she was male? If you ask any other person, it's highly suspicious they will know the name of any other female scientist who made groundbreaking discoveries (even if you assume you find someone who knows about her). But we certainly know a lot about Einstein, Bohr, Pavlov. Have we asked – why? Is it because their work was more significant or because we don't give women enough credit? There have been historical women scientists whose work has been credited by men. We know that much has changed during past few decades. However, much remains to be done.

Gender inequality has been part of our society since the beginnings of the organized civilization. Gender roles were designed by evolution leaving women as the children and house caregivers, and men as the head of household and economic providers. However, our society has evolved and nowadays we have different ideals and needs within our diverse population. Throughout the years women have gained access to things that were not part of their former role in society, including being the economic provider at home. This means that the job industry in the field of science, for instance, has opened opportunities for women. However, women are still underrepresented in higher levels of the hierarchy within the scientific field. According to research referring to data of the JSTOR-network-database and the Nature Index revealed, that only about 1/3 of the publications were performed by women [1]. Moreover, another research shows that only 1/5 of a total of 63 editorial board members were found to be female [2]. How can this disgrace even be possible? The most popular answer to this issue is that women cannot commit to a long-lasting career because they are destined to have children and raise them, leaving less time to dedicate to the professional life. Even if this would be the only reason, this is not an acceptable excuse to stop women from reaching the top of their professional career. Rather than covering with excuses, something has to be done in the way the system works. It's undeniable that due to historical society structures suppressed women in the scientific field leading to an underrepresentation. Even if all of the historical reasons would have been removed, predominance of men in leading positions would persist. Thomas et al. explains this persistence with a memory-based model:



[3]

How could we disrupt this?

There have been many solutions applied which have proven their worth in practice.

One possibility demonstrated by the German Leibniz Association, uses a quota system depending on the merit of the lower levels. This system ensures a steady adjustment to a gender equilibrium reaching the entire hierarchy [4].

To transfer this into funding level, the European Commission should set gender-evaluation criteria as a condition for funding programmes and this would provide female scientists with required funding to achieve the necessary qualification to apply for higher positions.

Furthermore, the Commission has to stand up and speak out to abolish unequal gender opportunities. And this will only be possible, by truly believing that women are prepared enough, capable and great candidates to occupy higher positions in the field of science. This statement can even sound offending but sadly, our society has unconsciously implanted the opposite idea, not only in men but also in women. The best way to break down paradigms and fight against gender inequality, is in fact, self-awareness.

Despite the progress in the last century, a gender imbalance remains due to the mind-set and the maintained inequality of that time. Progress is too slow but as demonstrated, there are ways to solve this issue. All of us can start propagating a new ideology to stop sexism, with the actions we take at work, with our own family, but most of all with ourselves.

There is no excuse for not doing it!

References:

[1] West et al. and Bendels et al.

(<http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0066212>

<http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0189136>)

[2] Amrein et al.

(<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1550857911002282?via%3Dihub>)

[3] Thomas et al.

<http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0139767>

[4] Mühlenbruch et al.

(<https://www.nature.com/articles/495040a>)

Dear all,

Please use this document to work your blogposts. Blogposts are 500-750 words long (excluding refs) and have at least one graphical element (picture, graph, figure, video, infographic etc) and of course a catchy title. Make sure that you also provide a catchphrase that can be used for a tweet (i.e. 280-23 chars for the link itself=257 chars).

The blog posts at least have to reflect: a precise description of the problem associated with the topic, its impact/relation to (translational) medicine and a outlook to the future. As this is a blogpost, do not use references too much (max 7),and use links for the references. Use open sources as much as possible; everything behind a paywall has to be earmarked as such, [like this](#) (paywall)

A hint: first write as much as you can to see what the story is you want to convey. After that, edit and redact the text where you can.

Use the comments to discuss with each other. Also use the chat function. See also: <https://support.google.com/docs/answer/2494891?hl=en> A great way to work on this together is to set up a certain time point that all members of your group are going to work on the google doc simultaneously, so that you can have direct interaction with each other. However, how you organise your collaboration is up to you. We will be monitoring your progress and to what extend everybody chips in. If you do not participate, you disqualify as an author of the blog post.

Have fun and good luck!

Bob and Rene