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What is Gender Bias in Grant Peer-review?

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The peer review process is central to research grant allocation, shaping scientific careers and knowledge production. Despite increased gender diversity in academia, disparities in research funding success rates suggest the persistence of bias in grant peer review (Wittman et al., 2019). While gender bias in academia has been widely studied, research on grant peer review remains fragmented, often focusing on individual disciplines and neglecting the multi-stage nature of selection processes.

This paper explores gender bias in grant peer review by identifying key mechanisms, including implicit and explicit biases (Greenwald & Lai, 2020) and stereotypical beliefs (Hengel, 2017). The study distinguishes between expert panels, responsible for initial selections, and external reviewers, who evaluate full proposals, and examines how gendered perceptions influence decision-making.

Additionally, this analysis considers the broader academic ecosystem, where gender disparities in faculty hiring, manuscript review, and professional networks amplify bias in grant funding (Huang et al., 2020). Women's underrepresentation in senior academic positions limits their access to leadership roles and funding opportunities, further reinforcing career disadvantages. Moreover, biases in grant allocation perpetuate gender gaps in academia.

A major challenge in addressing gender bias in grant peer review is the lack of publicly available data on reviewer decisions and funding outcomes. Increased transparency and structured evaluation criteria are necessary to identify and mitigate bias. Standardized scoring rubrics and reviewer training programs could help reduce subjective bias and promote fairness in funding decisions.

By synthesizing interdisciplinary research, this study contributes to discussions on equity in grant peer review and proposes a framework for analyzing bias in funding decisions. Addressing these biases is crucial for fostering a fair and inclusive scientific ecosystem where funding decisions are based on merit rather than gendered perceptions.

References:

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