Is blinded review enough? How gendered outcomes arise even under anonymous evaluation

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Even when a scientist's gender wasn't revealed, female scientists got a lower score than males for grant proposals they submitted for review, according to a working paper led by Southern Methodist University professor Julian Kolev.

The study found that female scientists were more likely to use narrower, more topic-specific language than male applicants for grant research proposals they sent to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Men, on the other hand, tended to use less precise terms, which reviewers gave higher scores for.

The findings suggest that different communication styles are a key driver of the gender score gap, Kolev told Science Magazine in a recent interview.

"Broad words are something that reviewers and evaluators may be swayed by, but they're not really reflecting a truly valuable underlying idea," said Kolev, an assistant professor of strategy and entrepreneurship at Southern Methodist University's Cox School of Business and the lead author of the study. It's "more about style and presentation than the underlying substance."

More information: Katie Langin. Scientists' grant writing styles vary by gender. That can lead to bias, *Science* (2019). DOI: 10.1126/science.caredit.aax9105

Holly Else. Male researchers' 'vague' language more likely to win grants, *Nature* (2019). DOI: 10.1038/d41586-019-01402-4

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