

Gender bias and masculine norm in scholarly gatekeeping: a feminist analysis of reviewer feedback

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The role of reviewers and journal or book editors as gatekeepers of academia and of science is highly determinant on scholars' career. The peer review process may have an impact not only on scholars' publications record, but also on their psychological and emotional well-being, on their conception of academia, and on their decisions concerning their profession, among other aspects (Teele & Thelen, 2017). Given its significance, an analysis of the peer review process should be conducted as part of the reflection of which values the academia should be guided by. If (gender) equality is a priority in academia, peer review should be a gender-safe process. In this paper, we analyse the feedback our work has received from different reviewers throughout our career in academia. Adopting a critical discourse analytic and feminist perspective, issues of sexism, power asymmetries and (gender and sexual) identity construction through discourse are explored. Drawing on Butler's (1990) idea of *performativity* and based on Tannen's (1990) research on the differences in male and female communication styles, results suggest that (1) academic gatekeeping is a process that contributes to the imposition and perpetuation of the masculine norm in academia, which is presented as self-legitimate; (2) reviewers' communicative style often aligns with this masculine norm; (3) scholars' expression of their (gender) identities in their written works are inhibited and shaped by gatekeepers following such masculine norm.

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