

Gender Observations in the Swedish Research Council

- The purpose was to investigate and highlight any gender differences observed in the assessment process and for the awarded research grants.
- The material analyzed consisted of preliminary and final written evaluations as well as direct observations during one meeting for each panel

- From the observations it can be concluded that gender patterns existed but that they differed both in frequency, scope and expression in the different panels.
- In two of the groups men and women were treated differently in discussions, a difference which also appeared in the written material.
- The gender of women was one of the factors highlighted in the assessment of applications.
- Discussions regarding parental leave and independence or lack thereof occurred to a significantly greater extent for female candidates than for male candidates.

- Although the time spent discussing candidate's proposals was almost the same for men and women, discussions on independence vs. lack of independence took relatively more time for women.

”However, the panel had a lengthy discussion regarding the independence of the PI and her research proposal in comparison with the co-applicant, who also is co-author on many of the published papers and currently funded for a similar project from the VR. To be competitive for funding in the future, the panel advises the PI to more explicit demonstrate her independent research profile.”

”Competitive with good publication record, but the degree of independence is very unclear (works in a highly productive constellation).”

- There were also gender differences in the words that were used to describe an applicant.
- No attention was paid to men's gender.
- Among the highest ranking women, however, gender was less of an issue.

- These patterns did not recur in all panels.
- Awareness of gender issues meant that members at their own initiative, on some occasions, drew attention to situations where men and women risked being judged differently.

Conclusion

- Increased awareness of gender and assessment is desirable for panel members.
- The concepts of independence or lack thereof need to be defined and clarified.
- The importance of gender in assessment and success rate needs to be studied further.
- The existence and importance of any informal assessment discussions should be evaluated.
- It is recommended that observations should be conducted in additional panels to get a broader base for more general conclusions.

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