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Peer Review

Review of: "A Blueprint for Gender-Equitable Conferences"

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This manuscript by Cox and colleagues is a valuable and potentially influential commentary. Its central argument: that gender inequality at academic/scholarly conferences is substantially shaped by organisational decisions - is persuasive for a broader readership across scholarly communities. The recommendations to invite women early, avoid all-male panels, distinguish speaking from chairing roles, address logistical barriers, and actively manage unequal participation could be readily incorporated into conference guidance. The manuscript would be considerably stronger if the authors addressed some textual revisions for better understanding and included a concise implementation checklist for conference organisers.

The manuscript focuses primarily on women and men as two internally uniform categories. A short statement should clarify how “women” and “gender” are being used and acknowledge transgender, non-binary, and gender-diverse researchers. Organisers and session chairs should not be encouraged to classify gender based on names, photographs, or appearance.

The authors appropriately state that gender is not the only basis of exclusion, but an intersectional qualification should be incorporated into the practical guidance. Women are not a homogeneous group, and barriers may be compounded by race or ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic position, sexuality, nationality, geographical location, career stage, caring responsibilities, and precarious employment situation. The article need not become a comprehensive account of conference inclusion, but it should acknowledge that aggregate gender balance may coexist with the continued exclusion of particular groups of women.

The logistics section is useful and could be strengthened through a concise checklist of provisions that directly affect who can participate:

- childcare or dependent-care grants

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- travel bursaries and transparent honoraria
- predictable and prompt reimbursement
- sufficient notice for visa and caring arrangements
- scheduling that avoids systematically disadvantageous hours
- accessible venues, platforms, and presentation materials
- lactation and quiet-room facilities
- meaningful participation for remote attendees, and
- a published anti-harassment code with confidential reporting, clear responsibilities, and enforceable consequences.

Hybrid participation should not be treated as automatically inclusive. Although it can reduce travel and caring barriers, remote speakers and attendees may be disadvantaged in networking and discussion unless their participation is actively supported by chairs and organisers.

The following revisions would improve precision and presentation:

- Replace “women-rich fields” with “fields in which women constitute a substantial proportion of researchers.”
- Replace “None of this is difficult to do” with wording that acknowledges differences in conference resources and the fact that some measures require funding and advance planning.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.