

application process through LORs should prompt critical review of future letters, avoiding gender stereotypes.

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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Supplementary material associated with this article can be found in the online version at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.urology.2019.05.065>.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

The authors provide an interesting analysis of the language used in letters of recommendation for urology residency applicants, specifically the differences between the language used to describe male and female applicants. It was discouraging to read that male letter writers tended to describe characteristics more desirable in a surgeon, such as drive and power, more commonly for male applicants than for female applicants. Those of us that write these letters should take note of these tendencies. References to an applicant's leadership abilities and professionalism were particular areas that were more commonly attributed to male applicants. Indeed, we still observe some lingering bias against female leadership and professionalism being interpreted as "bossy" rather than the positive traits they actually represent.

The fact that some of these differences were not present when the letter writer was female is encouraging. Certainly 1 message is that applicants would be wise to seek out a female faculty member for one of their letters. A more global solution, such requiring all letter writers undergo some bias training, or at least read this manuscript, is a valid recommendation from the authors.

Avoiding bias is also the responsibility of those reviewing letters of recommendation. When reading a letter that may contain language of a biased nature on any applicant, reviewers are reminded to be aware of the possibility of bias. We enjoy a unique benefit as academic urologists. The specialty is small enough that we typically know the letter writers personally and know the types of letters each individual tends to provide. A brief but positive letter from 1 urologist may significantly enhance an application. Another urologist may routinely write lengthy, glowing letters that are the same for every applicant and, therefore, less helpful. Those of us reviewing applications annually, learn who writes what type letter and, generally, how to interpret the recommendations. Despite this advantage, subtle bias in the language employed can still infiltrate our letters and our opinions of applicants. All applicant reviews should take into consideration the entirety of the applicants' qualifications and not base opinions solely on letters of recommendation.

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