Title: Whose STEM? Disrupting the Gender Crisis Within STEM  
Authors: Jessica Haybach, Austin Pickup  
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Focus: STEM Pipeline Critiques

Key Concepts

Modern science, like all systems, is susceptible to the influences of the culture and environment in which it was contrived. The historical past impacts the present, they cannot be untangled from the widely pervasive assumptions that have been imposed about gender and one’s role in the field of STEM. The efforts to integrate more girls and women are performative at best and destructive at its worst due to the inability to effectively utilize feminist theory. Science has been loyal to protocols but allowing science to exist within a vacuum left it vulnerable to stagnate instead of innovating. We must challenge the idea that science is immune to change and more productively understanding the nuance present in feminist theory can led us into reclaiming that science is a collective effort of all humans regardless of gender. When we are unified under this notion, we can recognize that science has greater potential than we accommodate for.

The lack of female presence has been attributed to social factors like interpersonal relationships, presence of role models, lack of access and confidence but these approaches fall short. Misunderstanding feminist theory has led to misguided and ineffective efforts to retain female innovators who belong in science. It’s insulting to young girls and women to think that science must be feminized or diluted to be accessible. This problematic representation of gender hinders achievement and communicates that existing as a girl or woman is incongruent to the experience of innovation in STEM. Referring to the lack of female presence as a “gender crisis” frames the issue as though women and young girls are a problem that agitate the existing system. It’s incredibly perplexing to recognize the lack of girls and women yet ignore the historical context; science has uplifted the achievements of men but withholds the same opportunities, respect and accomplishments for women.

Historically, academia has not been equal access to all, therefore the standards by which we deem something to have scholastic merit is shaped by those who dominate the space. When we limit the scientific process to the mindset and ideals of one gender, we are ignoring the lived experiences of more than half of the population. From other disciplines, we know that diverse perspectives and a variety of data points give us a larger understanding of the work at hand. Feminist objectivity differs from what we have defined as scientific objectivity because it recognizes that we are limited by where we are and what we currently know. Science in this model is not done alone, it is a collective process in which we bring various perspectives together to develop knowledge. A feminine approach would bring a perspective that contributes to a more complete understanding of science; The prosperity of STEM is dependent upon removing barriers and challenging mindsets that burden us.