Journal sur l'identité, les relations interpersonnelles et les relations intergroupes
Journal of Interpersonal Relations, Intergroup Relations and Identity
Volume 17, Hiver/Winter 2024

Seeking a "Supportive" Leader: Gendered language in leadership job postings and women's leadership identification

Anna Reimer & Leah Hamilton, Ph. D.
Mount Royal University

Evidence suggests that women are underrepresented in leadership positions in Canada (MacDougall et al., 2021). While past research has shown that masculine wording reduces job attractiveness for women, few scholars have examined the effect of gendered language in a leadership context. First, we conducted a directed content analysis to assess the prevalence of gendered language in existing Canadian leadership job postings. This revealed that gendered language exists in job postings at expected levels, with masculine language occurring more frequently, especially in male-dominated industries. Second, we explored how gendered language impacts women's intentions to apply for leadership positions and the potential roles of stereotype threat and perceived self-efficacy. Results indicated that, for women with lower self-efficacy, feminine language in job advertisements leads to greater application intentions through its effect on leadership identification. These findings suggest that more inclusive, feminine language in leadership job advertisements may encourage more women to apply.

Keywords: gendered language, leadership identification, job advertisements, gender stereotypes, social role theory

Les données suggèrent que les femmes sont sous-représentées dans les postes de direction au Canada (MacDougall et al., 2021). Même si des recherches antérieures ont montré que les formulations masculines réduisent l'attractivité des emplois pour les femmes, peu de chercheurs ont examiné l'effet d'un langage genré dans un contexte de leadership. Premièrement, nous avons effectué une analyse de contenu dirigée pour évaluer la prévalence du langage genré dans les offres d'emploi de dirigeants canadiens existantes. Cela a révélé que le langage genré existe dans les offres d'emploi aux niveaux attendus, le langage masculin étant plus fréquent, en particulier dans les secteurs à prédominance masculine. Deuxièmement, nous avons exploré l'impact du langage genré sur les intentions des femmes de postuler à des postes de direction et les rôles potentiels de menace des stéréotypes et d'auto-efficacité perçue. Les résultats ont indiqué que, pour les femmes ayant une plus faible auto-efficacité, le langage féminin dans les offres d'emploi conduit à de plus grandes intentions de candidature grâce à son effet sur l'identification du leadership. Ces résultats suggèrent qu'un langage plus inclusif et féminin dans les offres d'emploi de leadership pourrait encourager davantage de femmes à postuler.

Mots clés : langage genré, identification du leadership, offres d'emploi, stéréotypes de genre, théorie des rôles sociaux

Women are grossly underrepresented in corporate executive leadership positions in Canada (MacDougall et al., 2021). For example, women make up just 10% of "Named Executive Officers" (e.g., Chief Financial Officer, Chief Operating Officer) at publicly traded companies in Canada and 5% of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) at TSX-listed companies (MacDougall et al., 2021; Rosenzweig & Company, 2021). These gaps are compounded for women who are racialized, Indigenous, LGBTQ2S+, or who have a disability (Burns et al., 2021; Longpré-Verret & Richards, 2021; MacDougall et al., 2021; Rosenzweig & Company, 2021).

Importantly, the representation of women decreases with every step up the corporate ladder (Burns et al., 2021). This representation gap can be partly tied to gender stereotypes that exist in many areas, often pointing to women being inherently less skilled or less ambitious than their male counterparts (Arnold & Loughlin, 2019; Carli & Eagly, 2001; Ellemers, 2017). A stereotype is an assumption about a certain group, with the expectation that the assumption applies to all members of the group. Stereotypes can be positive but are generally negative and ignore the diversity that exists within a group. For example, there

The authors would like to thank the study participants for their time and effort in contributing to this research. Additionally, we would like to acknowledge Dr. Matthew McLarnon for his consultation and input on the analysis. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Anna Reimer (areim179@mtroyal.ca).

are widely held stereotypes that women do not ask for raises, are not strong negotiators (Exley et al., 2020), do not want to be leaders, or lack the characteristics necessary to be strong leaders (Piscopo, 2018). Even beyond the corporate world, there are stereotypes that women are less skilled in math, science, and even driving (Barth et al., 2018; Moe et al., 2015; Plante et al., 2018). Such stereotypes may harm women in their careers and countless other aspects of their lives, from education to family life (Ellemers, 2017).

Stemming from gendered leadership stereotypes, the expected ideal characteristics of leaders are heavily masculine (Archer & Kam, 2022; Embry et al., 2008; Koenig et al., 2011; Powell & Butterfield, 2017; Shamloo et al., 2022). One way that the leadership stereotype may translate into workplace underrepresentation of women is through job postings. From the very start of when leadership positions are open and posted, these stereotypes may be converted into the gendered language used in job postings (Embry et al., 2008; Koenig et al., 2011; Powell & Butterfield, 2017). Indeed, these stereotypes are often reflected in the language used in leadership job postings, and this language has been shown to prevent women from applying (Gaucher et al., 2011). While evidence exists for the effect of gendered language on women's employment application intentions, little is known about the underlying process behind it.

The need to examine women's involvement in leadership positions has been exacerbated by the pandemic, which had unprecedented effects on women's involvement in the workforce, their income potential, and their ability to progress in their careers. Within just a few months, the crisis led to the lowest level of women's participation in the workforce in the past thirty years (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2022). According to the Labour Market Information Council (2022), these losses to labour market participation are reversing. However, the pandemic illustrated the precariousness of women's workforce representation, and the enduring effects of the pandemic. When women leave the workforce, and thus the path to leadership, they struggle to catch up at the highest levels of management (Thomas et al., 2020). There is an ever-present need for effective diversity practices in hiring and talent development, which underlines the importance of the current research.

Gender Stereotypes in Leadership

An overarching theme in the existing literature on gendered leadership stereotypes is that many of the characteristics associated with leadership are stereotypically masculine. Past studies have found that leadership stereotypes are consistently associated with masculinity, and individuals are more likely to assume that a leader is a man regardless of leadership style or effectiveness (Archer & Kam, 2022; Embry et al., 2008; Koenig et al., 2011; Powell & Butterfield, 2017; Shamloo et al., 2022). Powell and Butterfield (2017) surveyed 257 undergraduate business students and 202 part-time Master of Business Administration (MBA) students, asking each respondent to describe either a *bad manager or a good manager*. The survey utilized the *Short Form of the Bem Sex-Role Inventory*, which measures beliefs about whether a target person possesses masculine and feminine traits. The study findings indicate that individuals viewed both good and bad managers as having more masculine traits (e.g., defending their own beliefs, independent, assertive) than feminine ones (e.g., affectionate, sympathetic, warm), implying that both leader and non-leader figures tend to be associated with masculinity over femininity. Traditional gendered job titles, like "Chairman" vs. "Chair", also contribute to this association, with people being significantly more likely to assume a leader is a man when these kinds of titles are used (Archer & Kam, 2022).

Social role theory suggests that gender roles are based on the belief that men and women possess specific characteristics, predisposing them to fill certain roles (Eagly & Wood, 2011). Scholars have pointed to socialization and gender relations as the root of the dichotomy and how perceptions of status are applied to gender-associated traits (Appelbaum et al., 2003; Eagly, 2007; Leaper & Friedman, 2007). This socialization can cause stereotypes to be self-perpetuating, with men and women identifying with their assigned stereotypes (Ellemers, 2017; Leaper & Friedman, 2007). Some suggest that gender stereotypes are so pervasive that they may prevent women from reaching their full potential (Ridgeway, 2001). For example, Meister et al. (2017) conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with 21 women leaders across traditionally male-dominated industries in Australia. The findings revealed that women face challenges when their personal identity does not align with their professional identity, leading to distress and adverse career outcomes.

Role congruity theory posits that women leaders are negatively perceived based on inconsistencies with the stereotypes assigned to women and leadership (Eagly & Karau, 2002). That is, women do not fit the generally accepted model of leadership. The characteristics and competencies of "male-typed positions" (e.g., decisive, level-headed) misalign with women's characteristics and competencies (Brescoll, 2016; Gipson et al., 2017; Heilman & Caleo, 2018). These characteristics are based on what is known as the agentic–communal dichotomy, where "agency is a dimension related to the interests of the self, whereas communion is a dimension related to the interests of

other people" (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007). Many of the previous studies in this area examined perceptions of men and women leaders, and how people might describe these leaders. The current study aims to explore the impact of these perceptions and descriptions on women's leadership aspirations.

Gendered Language

In this paper, masculine language refers to agentic traits and characteristics generally associated with male stereotypes (e.g., decisive, self-reliant), while *feminine language* refers to communal traits and characteristics associated with female stereotypes (e.g., warm, supportive). Defining language is important because researchers have performed multiple studies to test job applicants' interpretations of language and their applications of stereotypes to language.

Askehave and Zethsen (2014) analyzed the text of executive job advertisements and asked study participants which words and expressions they considered male-biased or female-biased. The authors concluded that describing the "ideal" candidate using gendered leadership traits in job postings reinforces the gendered categorization of leadership and keeps women out of these positions due to a potential lack of identification with the traits described in the job posting. Furthermore, when positions are communicated with stereotypically male traits, feelings of belonging or "fit" and job attractiveness decrease for women (Gaucher et al., 2011; Oldford & Fiset, 2021; Wille & Derous, 2018). Subsequently, this may lead to women believing they are purely uninterested in the job rather than being subliminally alienated, thus exacerbating women's stereotype of being uninterested in male-dominated fields (Gaucher et al., 2011).

Oldford and Fiset (2021) examined how the language of the job posting may influence the perceptions of a finance internship position through an experimental research design. Agentic (i.e., more masculine) and communal (i.e., more feminine) job postings were created, and the authors surveyed participants on their perceptions of goal congruency in response to reading the manipulated postings through measures of organizational fit, job appeal, and overall interest in applying for the position. Their results showed that women are more interested in applying to postings with high communal and low agentic language use (Oldford & Fiset, 2021). In contrast, men are interested in postings with more gender-neutral language, or low communal and agentic language use (Oldford & Fiset, 2021). Even if these findings are not specific to leadership positions, they highlight that men are less responsive to gendered language, and that men and women react differently to gendered language (Born & Taris, 2010; Gaucher et al., 2011; Hentschel et al., 2020; Oldford & Fiset, 2021; Rubini & Menegatti, 2014; Taris & Bok, 1998).

One study, however, noted that while masculine language negatively affects feelings of belonging and job attraction for women, it does not affect their perceptions of ability (Gaucher et al., 2011). In contrast, Hentschel et al. (2020) identified that expected success, along with feelings of belonging, negatively impacts intentions to apply. Smith et al. (2019) and Taris and Bok (1998) also point to the impact of language use on evaluations of ability. Traits listed in leadership job postings tend to be heavily masculine and are shown to be interpreted differently by men and women when determining their impression, possibly causing women to self-select out (Askehave & Zethsen, 2014; Hentschel et al., 2020; Horvath & Sczesny, 2016; Peterson, 2018; Smith et al., 2019; Taris & Bok, 1998).

While multiple studies have previously analyzed the scope and impact of gendered language in job postings, this study seeks to further that work by investigating the impact of gendered language in leadership job postings, specifically, an area that may be prone to even greater gender disparity. Additionally, we explored the role of stereotype threat and self-efficacy, which have not previously been applied in the context of gendered language in job postings.

Gender-Fair Language

Gender-fair language (GFL) generally seeks to reduce gender stereotyping and discrimination associated with language. GFL involves replacing gender-biased language forms with gender-neutral forms. There are several strategies with which this is done, such as paired forms, sometimes referred to as feminization, by including both gendered forms side-by-side (e.g., the default he replaced with *he/she*), and neutralization, by using existing gender-neutral words (e.g., singular *they/them* pronouns), or new gender-neutral words (e.g., *ze/zi*r pronouns; Lindqvist et al., 2018).

The benefits of GFL in terms of women's aspirations for male-dominated occupations have been well documented (see Gaucher et al., 2011; Olford & Fiset, 2021; Stout & Dasgupta, 2011; Vervecken et al., 2013; Vervecken & Hannover, 2015). Most of this research involves using GFL in pronoun use and job titles. The findings of Gaucher et al. (2011) and Olford and Fiset (2021) suggested that GFL could be used in job postings by pairing feminine and masculine words, usually adjectives, side by side in the content of the advertisement, similarly to paired forms such as he/she when referring specifically to individuals. The current study examines the neutralization form of gender-fair

language, adding to the literature by examining its use in the body of job postings rather than only in pronoun use or job titles.

Stereotype Threat and Self-Efficacy

In the context of the body of literature on gendered language in leadership job postings, the current research examines the prevalence and impact of masculine language in job postings on women seeking leadership roles as well as the roles of stereotype threat and perceived self-efficacy. Proposed by Steele and Aronson in 1995, stereotype threat describes the experience of a member of a stereotyped group when they feel they are at risk of being negatively evaluated based on their group membership, and the desire to avoid confirming the stereotype (Steele & Aronson, 1995). The three essential conditions required for the occurrence of stereotype threat are (a) membership within a stereotyped group; (b) stereotype salience or awareness of the negative stereotype; and (c) a situation that creates the risk of negative evaluation (Betz et al., 2013; Steele, 1997).

Stereotype threat has been found to primarily impact multiple areas of performance, including academic, workplace, and test performance (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016; Kalokerinos et al., 2014). Relevant to this study, stereotype threat may impact career aspirations and engagement. As Hoyt and Murphy (2016) point out in their review of the literature, women may self-select out of a career path in which they experience chronic stereotype threat. Women exiting the leadership pathway due to stereotype threat contributes to the lack of women available to fill high-level leadership roles, contributing to the "leaky pipeline", wherein women's representation continues to decline as the level of leadership increases. Kalokerinos et al. (2014) also affirm that chronic stereotype threats can decrease women's career aspirations and perception of available opportunities for advancement.

Picho-Kiroga et al. (2021) performed a meta-analysis to determine the validity and limitations of existing stereotype threat theory research. The authors found that stereotype threat rates and their impact may be overstated due to a lack of attention to the three essential conditions in many studies' experimental designs. In the case of women entering or advancing in leadership, the three essential conditions for stereotype threat are met, making leadership an appropriate context for the analysis of stereotype threat theory. First, ideal leadership characteristics, which are likely to be the characteristics expressed in a job posting, are heavily masculine (Embry et al., 2008; Koenig et al., 2011; Powell & Butterfield, 2017). Gendered language is rooted in these longstanding stereotypes about leadership as a male domain (Askehave & Zethsen, 2014). Second, gender stereotypes in leadership are persistent and salient due to socialization (Appelbaum et al., 2003; Eagly, 2007; Ellemers, 2017; Leaper & Friedman, 2007). Third, applicants are evaluated throughout the selection process. Thus, this study aims to add to the literature by examining stereotype threat that includes all essential conditions.

Self-efficacy theory, initially coined by Bandura in 1977, describes the role of belief in oneself in determining the extent and duration of an individual's coping strategies in aversive situations (Bandura, 1977). *Perceived self-efficacy*, measured in our study, was framed as the extent to which an individual believes in their ability to perform in a way that creates the desired outcome (Bandura, 1994). Higher self-efficacy levels translate to higher levels of commitment to achieve goals, no matter how challenging. Self-efficacy has been previously applied to situations of stereotype threat. Of note, it has been a moderating variable in the leadership context, with high levels of self-efficacy reducing the effects of stereotype threat or even causing reverse effects and increasing motivation and performance (Cadaret et al., 2017; Hoyt, 2005; Hoyt & Blascovich, 2010). Within the context of this study, we consider whether women's self-efficacy may mitigate their intentions to apply to leadership positions despite gendered language.

The Present Research

In the context of the body of literature on gendered leadership stereotypes, gendered language, stereotype threat, and self-efficacy, this paper consists of two linked studies that aim to analyze the use and effects of gendered language in Canadian leadership job postings.

Study 1, a content analysis of existing job postings, examines the prevalence of gendered language in leadership job postings, whether masculine- or feminine-coded language is used more often in these postings, and if the gender composition of an industry (male-dominated or female-dominated) affected the prevalence of gendered language. Using an experimental design, Study 2 examines the impact of masculine language in job postings on women seeking leadership roles through the lens of stereotype threat theory and perceived self-efficacy.

Findings from the two studies provide valuable insights for organizations implementing diversity strategies. While current practice suggests that masculine leadership characteristics are being reflected through masculine language in leadership job postings, increased use of feminine language could empower women to apply. Language choices could be limiting

their candidate pool from the earliest point in the recruitment process.

Study 1

As discussed in the previous section, overwhelming evidence points to language carrying gendered connotations and leadership as a masculine domain. Additionally, past studies have revealed the prevalence of gendered language in job postings in other contexts and countries (Arceo-Gómez et al., 2020; Askehave & Zethsen, 2014; Druglimo & Akselsen, 2018; Gaucher et al., 2011; Oldford & Fiset, 2021; Peterson, 2018). This literature forms the basis for the first study, a content analysis of existing Canadian leadership job postings to determine the prevalence of gendered language, whether masculine language is more commonly used in these postings, and if industry (men-dominated or women-dominated) has a role in the language used. We hypothesized that (a) gendered language will be found in Canadian leadership job postings, (b) masculine language will be more prevalent than feminine language, and (c) masculine language will appear more often in job postings in men-dominated industries than those in women-dominated industries.

Method

Sample

Job postings were collected from the publicly available job boards of Canadian executive search firms, Google Jobs, and Monster.ca from May to June 2021. Inclusion was based on job level/position (senior management, executive, or board level; see Table 1 for sample composition), geographic location (must be based in Canada), and language (must be English). All job postings that met these criteria were included, resulting in a sample of 407 job postings across Canada and a broad range of industries. Job levels/positions included in the sample were director (113), vice president (90), c-suite positions not including CEO (70), president/CEO (63), executive director (40), board of directors (13), managing director (7), senior vice president (5), senior director (4), and executive vice president (2).

Analysis

Using the software Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC; Pennebaker et al., 2015), we analyzed the frequency of gendered language in existing leadership job postings through a directed content analysis approach (Frey, 2018). Job postings were uploaded to LIWC and analyzed using a dictionary of masculine-associated words (e.g., determined, goal-oriented, and driven) and feminine-associated words (e.g., communal, compassionate, and understanding)

Table 1

Study 1: Sample Composition – Industry and Geography

Characteristic	*n*	%
Industry		
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	66	16,2
Healthcare and Social Assistance	60	14,7
Public Administration	49	12
Educational Services	33	8,1
Finance and Insurance	33	8,1
Information, Culture, and Recreation	30	7,4
Business, Building and Other Support Services	29	7,1
Manufacturing	25	6,1
Utilities	15	3,7
Construction	13	3,2
Wholesale and Retail Trade	13	3,2
Confidential	12	2,9
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	11	2,7
Transportation and Warehousing	8	2
Other Services (except Public Administration)	4	1
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	3	0,7
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	2	0,5
Accommodation and Food Services	1	0,2
Province		
Ontario	163	29,7
British Columbia	97	17,7
Alberta	66	12
Québec	33	6
Saskatchewan	33	6
Manitoba	29	5,3
New Brunswick	23	4,2
Yukon	21	3,8
Northwest Territories	20	3,6
Nova Scotia	20	3,6
Nunavut	16	2,9
Prince Edward Island	15	2,7
Newfoundland and Labrador	13	2,4

validated in the existing literature (Cheryan & Markus, 2020; Gaucher et al., 2011; Peterson, 2018; see Appendix A for a complete list of coded words). The output from LIWC provides a gendered (combined masculine and feminine), masculine, and feminine score for each job

posting, representing a percentage of total words in the posting (e.g., a masculine score of 5 indicates 5% of the words used in the job posting were masculine).

Results

The job postings contained, on average, 4.56% gendered language (a sum of 2.53% masculine and 2.03% feminine). A paired samples t-test found a statistically significant difference between the prevalence of masculine language *(M* = 2.53, *SD* = 1.05) and feminine language (*M* = 2.03, *SD* = 0.77) with a small to medium effect size; $t(406) = 7.81$, $p < .001$; $d = 0.39$. Additionally, an independent samples t-test showed a statistically significant difference in masculine language prevalence between the male-dominated industries (*M* = 2.92, *SD* = 1.24) and the female-dominated industries (*M* = 2.37, *SD* = 0.69, $t(46.51) = 2.57$, $p = .013$). Interestingly, the test also revealed that feminine language appears significantly more often in leadership job postings in female-dominated industries (*M* = 2.38, *SD* = 0.72) than those in male-dominated industries (*M* = 1.69, *SD* = 0.76, $t(129) = -4.87$, $p < .001$).

Discussion

The purpose of the first study was to determine if the prevalence of gendered language in job postings found in other studies extends to the leadership domain. We were also interested in whether masculine language was used more often and if the prevalence of masculine and feminine language differed between industries. We hypothesized that (a) gendered language will be found in Canadian leadership job postings, (b) masculine language will be more prevalent than feminine language, and (c) masculine language will appear more often in job postings in male-dominated industries than those in female-dominated industries.

The results of Study 1 suggest that gendered language does exist in Canadian leadership job postings, supporting the first hypothesis. The quantity of gendered language found in this study is considerably higher than what was found in the analysis performed by Gaucher et al. (2011) of lower-level job postings, where those job postings contained an average of 1% gendered language. Further, it suggests that gendered language, and masculine language, in particular, may be used more heavily in postings for leadership roles than in lower-level positions.

Masculine language was found in the sample more than feminine language, and masculine language appeared most often in male-dominated industries. These findings are in line with Oldford and Fiset (2021) and Gaucher et al. (2011), where results showed masculine language to be more prevalent in male-dominated occupations and industries.

While we did not explicitly inquire about feminine language, the results show that feminine language appears significantly more often in leadership job postings in female-dominated industries than in male-dominated industries. This suggests that language may not be a barrier to entry for leadership positions in female-dominated industries like education and health care. However, feminine language is associated with communal traits, which are more desirable in industries like education and health care, which could also explain these findings. These results are consistent with Gaucher et al.'s (2011) findings that feminine wording was used more often in female-dominated occupations than in male-dominated occupations.

While gendered language associations have decreased over time, they still exist in the public consciousness (Jones et al., 2019). The abstract nature of language and implicitness of gendered language associations mean the use of masculine descriptions may occur inadvertently (Hentschel et al., 2020; Menegatti & Rubini, 2017; Rubini & Menegatti, 2014). As indicated by past research, this use of gendered language may hinder efforts to increase women's representation in certain occupations and industries.

Study 2

The second study examines the effects of gendered language on application intentions and the potential roles of stereotype threat and perceived self-efficacy through a between-subjects experiment. The study design is inspired by Gaucher et al.'s (2011) previous work on gendered language in job advertisements and Emerson and Murphy's (2015) work on stereotype threat induced by company mission statements and websites. We hypothesize that (a) the use of masculine language in job advertisements for leadership positions will decrease women's application intentions, (b) the association between the use of masculine language and women's application intentions will be mediated by stereotype threat, and (c) women's perceived self-efficacy will moderate the effect of stereotype threat on their application intentions for leadership positions.

Method

Ethics Statement

This study received approval from the Mount Royal University Ethics Board (Application No. 102525).

Participants

A total of 210 Canadian working women were

recruited using a Qualtrics research panel. Women had to have completed a college or university education, as we were seeking out working professionals in order to address a gap in a body of work heavily reliant on university student subjects (Burnette et al., 2010; Cortland & Kinias, 2019; Wille & Derous, 2018). Additionally, with this study's focus on leadership, working professionals may be more likely to have leadership aspirations. Participants were also required to be Canadian and over 18. The participants' demographics are presented in Table 2. Participants were excluded for failing attention check items, extensive missing data, or if the time to read the job posting was too short (below 25th percentile for time, <5 seconds) or too long (outliers). Participants who identified their current job level as "retired" were also excluded. As a result, 122 participants were included in the analysis.

Table 2

Study 2: Participant's Demographics

Characteristic	*n*	%
Education		
Bachelor's degree	69	55,2
Master's degree	25	20
College diploma	13	10,4
Some progress towards graduate degree	7	5,6
Some progress towards undergraduate degree	6	4,8
Doctorate degree (PhD)	5	4
Ethnicity		
White	73	58,4
East Asian	18	14,4
Southeast Asian	10	8
South Asian	8	6,4
Latin American	6	4,8
Mixed	5	4
Black Caribbean	2	1,6
Black African	1	0,8
Prefer not to answer	2	1,6
Age		
21-34	35	28
35-44	32	25,6
45-54	22	17,6
55-75	36	28,8
Sexual orientation		
Straight	95	76
Asexual	5	4
Bisexual	5	4
Lesbian	1	0,8
Prefer not to answer	17	13,6
Marital status		
Married	55	44
Single, never married	40	32
Living common-law	15	12
Divorced	11	8,8

Procedure

In an initial consent form, participants were told that the study was investigating leadership recruitment strategies. This partial disclosure of the research purpose prevented drawing attention to the language used and did not mention gender to avoid biasing responses.

Each participant was randomly assigned to one of three conditions (masculine, feminine, or gender-neutral) and presented with the corresponding job posting. After viewing the job posting, participants answered questions to measure their application intentions, stereotype threat susceptibility, and perceived self-efficacy. The application intentions questionnaire included a suspicion check asking what influenced their position assessment to determine if the participants suspected the study's true purpose (Gaucher et al., 2011). The study ended with a debriefing letter that explained the study's real purpose and why partial disclosure was necessary.

Materials

The job posting was created using excerpts from existing advertisements from Study 1 and altered using masculine and feminine associated words identified in the existing literature to create three job postings corresponding to the three experimental conditions. A sample of masculine and feminine words is given in Table 3 and a complete list is located in Appendix A.

All feminine-associated words were removed and replaced with masculine-associated alternatives for the masculine wording condition. The opposite procedure was performed for the feminine wording condition. All masculine- and feminine-associated words were removed and replaced with context-relevant words with no known gender association for the gender-neutral condition. Table 4 presents examples of sentences that were modified to fit each experimental condition.

As a manipulation check, the resulting job postings were analyzed through the LIWC software (Pennebaker et al., 2015). This analysis confirmed the masculine job posting contained masculine words but

Table 3

Sample of Masculine and Feminine Words

Masculine words	Feminine words
Determin*	Creative
Stubborn	Poised
Persist*	Compassion*
Aggress*	Support*
Innovat*	Communal
Goal-oriented	Involved
Analy*	Sincere
Ambitio*	Relational
Driven	Imaginative
Competitive	Cooperat*

Note. * Indicates that all variations of the word may be included.

Table 4

Examples of sentences modified to fit each experimental condition

Experimental condition	Example sentence
Masculine	…ensure **enduring** partnerships with both internal and external stakeholders
Feminine	…ensure **collaborative** partnerships with both internal and external stakeholders
Gender-neutral	…ensure **effective** partnerships with both internal and external stakeholders

no feminine words (Masc = 8.28%, Fem = 0.00%)[1], the feminine job posting contained feminine words but no masculine words (Masc = 0.00%, Fem = 8.31%), and the gender-neutral job posting did not contain any gendered words (Masc = 0.00%, Fem = 0.00%). Gaucher et al.'s (2011) method of including approximately 8% of gendered language was followed.

Measures

Stereotype Threat Susceptibility. Stereotype threat susceptibility was assessed using a modified version of Picho and Brown's (2009) *Social Identities and Attitudes Scale* (SIAS), with the domain identification subscale adapted to the leadership domain. The original domain identification subscale of the SIAS is tailored to math identification, and the authors of the scale encourage its adaptation to capture stereotype threat across different domains (Picho & Brown, 2011). The modifications to each item on the subscale are detailed below in Table 4. The ethnic identification, ethnic stigma consciousness, and negative affect subscales were removed as they were not relevant for this study. The gender identification and gender stigma consciousness subscales were not modified.

The SIAS has been used extensively in assessments of stereotype threat, and its reliability and validity have been evaluated amongst diverse populations (Picho & Brown, 2011; Smith & Cokley, 2016). The modification resulted in a 15-item 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), measuring leadership identification, gender identification, and gender stigma consciousness. The definitions for these subscales, also referred to as the factors of stereotype threat according to Picho & Brown (2011), are as follows:

- Leadership Identification: "Individuals who value [leadership], have the skills to succeed in it, and perceive it as being useful to their future career."
- Gender Identification: "The extent to which one's gender forms a central part of one's self-concept."
- Gender Stigma Consciousness: "Extent to which one is chronically self-conscious of stigma attached to one's gender."

Sample items include *Advancing to leadership in my career matters to me* (leadership identification), *My*

[1] Masc = proportion of masculine wording; Fem = proportion of feminine wording

Table 5

Modifications to SIAS – Domain Identification Subscale

Original subscale item	Adapted subscale item
Math is important to me	**Leadership** is important to me
Being good at math will be useful to me in my future career	**Leadership skills** will be important to my career
My **math abilities** are important to my **academic success**	My **leadership abilities** are important to my **current success**
Doing well in math matters to me	**Advancing to leadership in my career** matters to me
I **value math**	I am a **leadership-oriented person**
Doing well in math is critical to my future success	**Being skilled in leadership** is critical to my future success

gender is central in defining who I am (gender identification), and *My gender influences how my superiors interpret my behaviour* (gender stigma consciousness). Higher numbers reflect greater stereotype threat susceptibility.

Higher stereotype threat susceptibility of the sample ensures that two of the three essential conditions for stereotype threat occurrence are met—group identification and stereotype awareness—allowing us to attribute a change in the dependent variable to stereotype threat effects.

Each subscale included in the current study had good reliability estimates, with leadership identification (adapted from math identification in the original measure) items at $\alpha = .95$ and gender stigma consciousness at $\alpha = .81$. The gender identification subscale used for this study had poor reliability ($\alpha = .56$). Upon further analysis, the issue seemed to be due to participants not paying adequate attention to the wording of the reverse coded items, as it appeared that participants may have been responding to reverse-keyed items as though they were positively keyed items. Further separation of the subscale to positively coded and reverse coded items resulted in $\alpha = .84$ and $\alpha = .62$, respectively, which was sufficient. Thus, the subscale was retained.

Perceived Self-Efficacy. Perceived self-efficacy was measured using Schwarzer and Jerusalem's (1995) *Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale* (GSE), consisting of 10 items on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Sample items include *I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough, It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals, and I can usually handle whatever comes my way*. This measure of perceived self-efficacy showed high reliability ($\alpha = .94$). The GSE is widely used and is consistent in its reliability and validity across cultures, disciplines, and applications (Scholz et al., 2002). Higher scores reflect greater perceived self-efficacy.

Application Intentions. Application intentions were measured using the *Application Intentions subscale* of Cropanzano et al.'s (2005) *Application Intentions Scale* (AIS). The AIS is designed to measure multiple areas related to application intentions, including perceptions of organizational policies like affirmative action that were not relevant to this study, so only the Application Intentions subscale was used. The items in this subscale are *I would be interested in this position*, *I would send an application for this position*, and *I would probably accept a job offer for this position*. The measure uses a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The reliability for this scale was excellent ($\alpha = .96$). Higher scores reflect greater application intentions.

Results

Preliminary Analysis

Table 5 contains descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among the variables. The three subscales (leadership identification, gender stigma consciousness, gender identification) of stereotype threat were analyzed separately, with gender stigma consciousness further broken down by positive and reverse coded items based on exploration of the scale's factor structure. The leadership identification subscale of stereotype threat had a strong, positive correlation with self-efficacy ($r = 0.70$, $p < .01$) and application intentions ($r = .63$, $p < .01$). In addition, self-efficacy had a moderate, positive correlation with application intentions ($r = .40$, $p < .01$). This correlation suggests that higher self-efficacy and leadership identification levels were associated with greater application intentions.

The reverse coded items of the gender identification subscale of stereotype threat had a weak, negative correlation with leadership identification ($r = -.26$, $p < .01$). However, the positively coded items of the gender identification subscale had a weak, positive correlation with leadership identification ($r = .22$, $p < .05$). These contradictory findings may be a consequence of participants' inattention to the wording of the items.

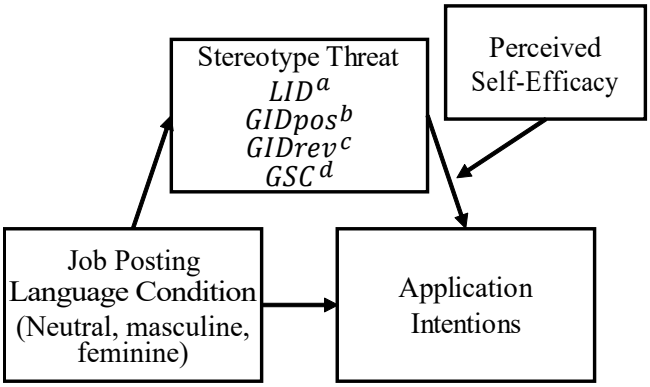
Primary Analysis

We used a moderated mediation analysis to estimate the direct and indirect effects of the job posting language condition (neutral, feminine, or masculine) on application intentions through stereotype threat, as moderated by perceived self-efficacy (Hayes, 2018; SPSS PROCESS model 14, bootstrapped with 5,000 samples). The hypothesized moderated mediation model can be seen in Figure 1. Since the independent variable (job posting language condition) was multicategorical, indicator coding was used with neutral language as the reference group. Again, the three subscales (leadership identification, gender stigma consciousness, gender identification) of stereotype threat were analyzed as individual potential mediators within the same model. Gender stigma consciousness was further broken down by positive and reverse-coded items. The model's direct and indirect effects were considered significant when zero was absent from the confidence intervals (Hayes, 2018).

The results from the analysis did not confirm the hypothesized moderated mediation model. The index of moderated mediation for the four stereotype threat moderators (gender stigma consciousness, leadership identification, and gender identification, positive and reverse coded) did not reveal any noticeable variation in the effect of stereotype threat on application intentions at differing levels of self-efficacy. For the first stage of the model, the gender association of the language used in the job posting used in the study did not show any significant effect on the subscales of stereotype threat. No moderating effect of self-efficacy was detected.

Figure 1

Hypothesized Moderated Mediation Model



Note. [a] Leadership identification. [b] Gender identification, positively coded items. [c] Gender identification, reverse coded items. [d] Gender stigma consciousness.

The results from the analysis did not confirm the hypothesized moderated mediation model. The index of moderated mediation for the four stereotype threat moderators (gender stigma consciousness, leadership identification, and gender identification, positive and reverse coded) did not reveal any noticeable variation in the effect of stereotype threat on application intentions at differing levels of self-efficacy. For the first stage of the model, the gender association of the language used in the job posting used in the study did not show any significant effect on the subscales of

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations Among Variables

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5
1. Gender stigma consciousness	3.26	1.37	–				
2. Gender identification (RC)	2.54	1.63	0.01	–			
3. Gender identification (PC)	5.24	1.43	0.10	0.11	–		
4. Leadership identification	5.05	1.51	-0.08	-.26**	.22*	–	
5. Self-efficacy	5.45	1.01	-0.17	-.18*	.19*	.70**	–
6. Application intentions	4.55	1.90	-0.02	-.19*	0.12	.63**	.40**

Note. RC = reverse coded items; PC = positive coded items.
*$p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

stereotype threat. No moderating effect of self-efficacy was detected. Additionally, the gender association of the language in the job posting used for the study did not show any direct relationship with application intentions.

As shown in Table 6, the results did identify leadership identification as a positive and significant predictor of application intentions, regardless of the language used in the job posting. However, there was no evidence of a significant effect of the other stereotype threat susceptibility subscales.

Exploratory Analysis

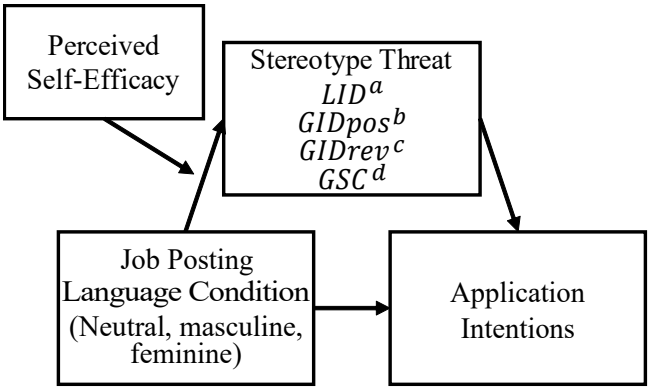
Past research has found self-efficacy to be a moderator of stereotype threat in the leadership context (Cadaret et al., 2017; Hoyt, 2005; Hoyt & Blascovich, 2010). Thus, to further explore the role of self-efficacy and potential relationships between gendered language, stereotype threat, and application intentions, we conducted an exploratory moderated mediation analysis where self-efficacy moderates in the first stage of the model (Hayes, 2018; SPSS PROCESS model 7, bootstrapped with 5,000 samples).

We were particularly interested in whether perceived self-efficacy moderated the relationship between gender-associated language in the job posting and stereotype threat susceptibility and whether application intentions were influenced through this mechanism. Instead of self-efficacy moderating the effect of stereotype threat, this model assessed whether it moderated the effect of the language condition on stereotype threat activation. The exploratory model can be seen in Figure 2.

Table 7 presents the results of the exploratory moderated mediation analysis predicting application intentions. The index of moderated mediation was significant for the feminine language condition relative to the neutral language condition, indicating that there was an indirect effect of language on application intentions via leadership identification that varied at different levels of perceived self-efficacy. This relative conditional indirect effect of feminine language was significant for those with relatively low self-efficacy. The same relative conditional indirect effect was not found for the masculine language condition compared to neutral. The effect of leadership identification on application intentions, when X was constant, was positive and significant. Analysis of the first stage of the model showed a significant conditional effect of self-efficacy at the mean on leadership identification. Like in the primary analysis, there was no significant effect of any other subscales of stereotype threat susceptibility.

Figure 2

Exploratory Moderated Mediation Model



Note. [a] Leadership identification. [b] Gender identification, positively coded items. [c] Gender identification, reverse coded items. [d] Gender stigma consciousness.

Discussion

This study aimed to extend previous research on gendered language in job postings by explicitly investigating the leadership domain and exploring the potential roles of stereotype threat theory and perceived self-efficacy. We hypothesized that (a) the use of masculine language would decrease women's application intentions, (b) stereotype threat would mediate the relationship between masculine language

Table 7

Conditional Effect of Leadership Identification on Application Intentions

B	*se*	*t*	*p*	95% CI	
				LL	*UL*
0.81	0.14	5.97	< .001	0.54	1.08

Note. *B* = unstandardized regression coefficient. *CI* = confidence interval. Coefficient represents the conditional effect at the mean on self-efficacy.

Table 8

Results of Exploratory Moderated Mediation Analysis Predicting Application Intentions

Index of moderated mediation					
		Index	*se*	Bootstrap 95% *CI*	
Job posting language condition				*LL*	*UL*
Feminine language (relative to neutral)		-0.29	0.16	-0.65	-0.02
Relative conditional indirect effects of feminine language on application intentions via leadership identification					
		Effect	*se*	Bootstrap 95% *CI*	
Self-efficacy				*LL*	*UL*
Low		0.52	0.26	0.06	1.09
Middle		0.22	0.18	-0.1	0.58
High		-0.08	0.21	-0.5	0.35
Conditional effect of self-efficacy at the mean on leadership identification					
	B	*se*	*t*(116)	95% *CI*	
Variable				*LL*	*UL*
Self-efficacy	1.27	0.17	7.42	0.93	1.6
Direct effect of leadership identification on application intentions					
	B	*se*	*t*(115)	95% *CI*	
Variable				*LL*	*UL*
Leadership identification	0.77	0.1	7.74	0.58	0.97

Note. *B* = unstandardized regression coefficient. *CI* = confidence interval. Continuous variables used to define products were mean centered prior to analysis. Values for the moderator are the mean and plus/minus one SD from the mean.

and women's application intentions, and (c) women's perceived self-efficacy would moderate the effect of stereotype threat on application intentions. None of these hypotheses were supported by the results.

The exploratory analysis revealed some interesting new hypotheses despite insufficient statistical evidence supporting the study hypotheses. When participants with low self-efficacy viewed job postings with feminine language, when compared to participants who viewed neutral language, leadership identification positively predicted application intentions. This result suggests that women with low self-efficacy may be more likely to identify with leadership when viewing a job posting with feminine language than neutral language, making them more likely to apply. However, the same effect was not found for participants with average or high self-efficacy. Additionally, a relative conditional indirect effect on application intentions was not found for the masculine language condition compared to neutral. This result could mean that self-efficacy does not moderate in the same way when masculine language is used in the job posting.

It is important to note that, for this sample, participants reported an average score of 5.5 out of 7 on the self-efficacy scale. Schwarzer (2014) indicated that many samples report a mean of approximately 2.9 for self-efficacy. Past research on this topic has examined samples of university students, and this study utilized a sample of university graduate professionals. One of the most influential sources of self-efficacy beliefs, according to Bandura (1997) is "enactive mastery experience", which represents the perceived success or failure of past experiences. Put simply, "learning by doing" is one of the best ways to increase self-efficacy as it indicates your capabilities. Thus, individuals who have spent some time as a working professional and may have more work and life experience and have spent more time "learning by doing", may generally report higher perceived self-efficacy. Past studies have revealed associations between efficacy, stereotypes, and leadership identification such that higher levels of leadership efficacy are associated with higher leadership identification (Hoyt, 2005). As perceived self-efficacy was also associated with application intentions in the current study, a higher overall level of self-efficacy in the sample could partly explain the lack

of a noticeable effect of masculine language on application intentions.

The lack of evidence of a significant effect of the other stereotype subscales means that stereotype threat was not a significant predictor within this model. The manipulations of the job postings may not have made the gender connotations salient enough for stereotype threats to occur. While the design intended to make gender implicit, a future direction based on this limitation could be to make gender more explicit in the experimental conditions. For example, adding a condition where a group of participants is told that the study is examining differences in leadership aspirations for men and women may be more effective in eliciting stereotype threat as it would make the relevant gender stereotype more salient. Additionally, Picho-Kiroga et al. (2021) recommend utilizing stereotype threat susceptibility as a criterion for inclusion in stereotype threat studies. A sample of women with high overall stereotype threat susceptibility could have led to a more concrete understanding of whether stereotype threat has a role in women's leadership application intentions.

As previously mentioned, Hoyt (2005) found that higher levels of leadership efficacy are associated with higher leadership identification. In the same study, exposure to the gender stereotype increased leadership identification for women with high leadership efficacy but had no noticeable effect on low-efficacy women. In the current study, the masculine language condition (the condition intended for stereotype activation) had no noticeable effect on leadership identification at any level of self-efficacy. However, the feminine language condition increased leadership identification for low-efficacy participants.

General Discussion

The goal of this research was to explore whether masculine language, stereotype threat, self-efficacy, and the associations between them played a part in the leadership gender gap. However, more broadly, this research sought to explore the role of gender stereotypes in leadership.

Study 1 extended past research measuring gendered language use in job postings by exploring leadership as a male-dominated occupation and showed that masculine language is used more often in a leadership context than feminine language. Based on other studies, this practice has the potential to inadvertently exclude women and reinforce leadership as a male domain (Gaucher et al., 2011; Oldford & Fiset, 2021). Study 2, which examined the effects of gendered language on application intentions and the potential roles of stereotype threat and perceived self-efficacy, resulted in seemingly contrasting findings. The experimental results suggested that, while the women in this sample were largely unaffected by masculine language, feminine language may improve leadership identification for women, thus increasing their likelihood of applying for a leadership role.

Ultimately, rather than the initial hypothesis of masculine language invoking stereotype threat and preventing women from applying, the experimental analysis in Study 2 points to a new theoretical contribution: feminine language in a leadership job posting may empower women to apply through its effect on leadership identification. This suggestion builds on past work, including the findings of Gaucher et al. (2011) where women ranked jobs most highly and indicated higher anticipated feelings of belonging when the job posting included words that matched their gender. Oldford and Fiset (2021) also found that women experience more "position fit" when postings use more feminine language. To illustrate this point, participants in Study 2 were asked to describe what influenced their assessment of the job posting. Consistent with Gaucher et al. (2011), none of the participants identified the gendered language as influencing their assessment. The gender associations of language are so abstract and socialized that they go unnoticed, but their influence is present. The hypothesis suggested by the present work builds on these prior findings but is unique in that it suggests that feminine language in leadership job postings may increase women's identification with leadership in general.

Despite a lack of evidence for the effect of masculine language on women's leadership application intentions, the combined results of Study 1 and Study 2 point to the potential for feminine language in addressing the leadership gender gap. If feminine language increases application intentions, increasing feminine language in leadership job postings may empower more women to apply for these roles. However, based on the findings from Study 1, this does not appear to be the current practice.

Practical Implications

The benefit of gender diversity for individual organizations has long been established, particularly for women's participation in corporate leadership, such as executive or board positions. Organizations with gender-diverse leadership teams (i.e., approximately equal representation of men and women) are more likely to outperform their peers on several metrics such as financial sales performance and profitability (Badal, 2014; Dixon-Fyle et al., 2020; Hoobler et al., 2018; Hoogendoorn et al., 2013). These benefits are seen with existing gender diversity and improve when gender diversity is increased (Cassells & Duncan, 2020).

Women in leadership positions have also been associated with happier, more engaged employees, as women are more likely than men to support their employees and offer mentorship (Burns et al., 2021; Clerkin, 2017). Additionally, women in leadership roles spend more time than men on work focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion, pointing out their particular importance as contributors to organizations seeking to improve efforts in these areas (Burns et al., 2021). Workforce diversity enhances innovation within organizations due to the diversity of viewpoints and expertise brought together (Badal, 2014).

The primary implication of the current research, that feminine language in the job posting may increase the likelihood of women applying, lends itself to the practical suggestion of organizations adopting gender-fair language (GFL). The current practice of higher masculine language than feminine language in leadership job postings not only perpetuates masculine leadership constructs and stereotypes but also may cause organizations to miss an opportunity to attract qualified women. GFL, in this context, would operate similarly to the strategy of paired forms (e.g., he/she) by placing masculine and feminine words, or agentic and communal job requirements, side-by-side in the job posting. Table 8 provides fictional examples of this practice built from the job postings created for this study.

Several tools exist for efficiently evaluating the presence of gendered words in the content of a job posting. The software Gender Decoder (2016) was inspired by the work of Gaucher et al. (2011) and checks job advertisements for the words included in that study through a simple copy and paste of the text. Textio is another tool created to help organizations write more inclusive job postings (Halloran, 2017). This tool, described as "augmented writing", highlights phrases and words in the text that may contain bias and gives suggestions for improvement.

An essential consideration in implementing this strategy is the avoidance of male-firstness. Criticisms of gender-fair language through feminization are that paired forms tend to default to the male form first (i.e., he/she is much more common than she/he; Vergoossen et al., 2020). This effect should be avoidable with the proposed strategy, as the gender association of the words is more implicit than the gender association of pronouns. Thus, the order in which they appear should be easily alternated.

This implication could be valuable to firms interested in implementing equitable hiring practices. The use of masculine language in job postings could be preventing women from applying from the very first point of contact with the role or the organization (Askehave & Zethsen, 2014; Gaucher et al., 2011; Hentschel et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2019; Taris & Bok, 1998; Wille & Derous, 2018). However, our exploratory results suggest that using feminine language may empower women to apply. Therefore, paying closer attention to the language used in job postings, and adding feminine language, may improve an organization's chances of attracting qualified women candidates.

Theoretical Contributions

While this research did not find evidence for stereotype threat theory as a driver of the leadership gender gap, this work ties into social role theory and role congruity theory through its findings related to leadership identification. Some authors suggested that men and women possess dichotomous attributes that situate them in their respective gender roles (Eagly & Wood, 2011). The persistent socialization of these perceptions results in men and women often identifying with their assigned stereotypes (Ellemers, 2017; Leaper & Friedman, 2007).

Additionally, prejudice toward women leaders is

Table 9

Examples of Paired Gender-Fair Language in a Leadership Job Posting

Example excerpt	Masculine word	Feminine word
Act as a driver and nurturer of change...	Driver	Nurturer
Reliable and results-driven	Results-driven	Reliable
Strong interpersonal communication skills	Strong	Interpersonal
...a straightforward, humble, and agenda-free approach	Straightforward	Humble
...an imaginative and driven executive...	Driven	Imaginative
...ensure enduring and collaborative partnerships...	Enduring	Collaborative

based on the incongruity between leader and gender roles. Eagly and Karau (2002) have suggested that using masculine terms to describe leadership roles reinforces the incongruity between the female gender role and the leadership role. Further, they suggest that using more feminine terms, or communal traits, in descriptions of leadership roles would create more congruence between the female gender and leadership roles, subsequently weakening the negative perceptions of women as leaders.

The exploratory results of the current study suggest that feminine language in leadership job postings, or language that reflects the communal leadership traits that are stereotypically associated with women, is associated with higher leadership identification. Women identify more with leadership when it is described using the words and traits they have been socialized to identify with. The current work adds to role congruity theory by suggesting that feminine language in leadership job postings could, over time, help shift societal associations of gender and leadership, working to close the leadership gender gap.

More generally, most existing studies were conducted using samples of university students. While these samples have practical applications—they are often close to or actively job-seeking—this study sought to investigate the impact of gendered language on a sample with different educational backgrounds and career levels. The current sample allowed us to further examine the processes behind qualified women failing to make leadership claims and reactions to gendered language in the communication of desired traits in job postings (Burnette et al., 2010; Cortland & Kinias, 2019; Gaucher et al., 2011; Shen & Joseph, 2020; Wille & Derous, 2018).

Limitations and Future Directions

The primary limitation of Study 1 is that the examining word frequency does not consider the context or location of the words. Limiting the analysis to individual word frequency could miss important meanings inferred from the order of words (Payne & Payne, 2004). Thus, future research could explore the gender connotations of broader phrases and their frequency of use.

A limitation of Study 2 is that the participants viewed a single job posting at a single point in time. While the job postings contained a little over 8% of their respective gendered language, the highest amount of gendered language found in the sample for Study 1 was 9.52%, with an average of 4.56%. The experimental job postings thus presented higher rates than most job postings for leadership positions in Canada. Based on this limitation, a future direction could explore the reaction over time when viewing multiple job postings with varying levels of masculine or feminine language. In particular, it would be important to test whether the positive effect of feminine language found in this study grows if more job postings over an extended period are viewed containing this type of language.

Relatedly, participants in Study 2 either viewed a posting with masculine language, feminine language, or neither. A future direction could be exploring whether feminine language produces the same effect when paired with more masculine or agentic words, such as in the proposed gender-fair strategy. As discussed, given that much of the work on gender-fair language strategies examines masculine and feminine associated job titles, investigating the use of gender-fair language in the content of the job posting could provide a new direction. While this research highlights the critical role of language in combating gender stereotypes, future research should examine whether there is a causal role of feminine language in women's leadership identification and the role of self-efficacy.

As we aimed to address a gap in the literature by recruiting working professionals, Study 2 inadvertently collected a sample of women with relatively high perceived self-efficacy and found no noticeable effect of masculine language on application intentions in the sample. Future research could examine the relationships between self-efficacy, leadership identification, and leadership aspirations in more depth. This research avenue may provide a more robust understanding of how women with leadership aspirations can be best supported in achieving their goals.

Most discussions of feminization in the gender-fair language literature focus on titles and pronouns. Strategies for feminization include using the feminine form of nouns or pronouns in languages with grammatical gender, using other forms of feminine-masculine word pairs (e.g., woman professor) or creating feminized versions of words (e.g. stewardess, comedienne; Formanowicz et al., 2013; Harris et al., 2017; Lindqvist et al., 2018; Sczesny et al., 2016). The current research builds on past work by suggesting feminization, using feminine-associated and masculine-associated English adjective pairs in the content of leadership job postings to improve the likelihood of women applying for the role. Future research could further explore the effects of this strategy of feminization in this and other contexts.

Additionally, feminization as a gender-fair strategy in the uses mentioned earlier is controversial (Harris et al., 2017; Vergoossen et al., 2020). For example, "woman professor" implies that professors are male by

default, and feminized forms are generally more complex, which stifles their everyday use. These forms of feminization are also criticized as reinforcing binary views of gender. Thus, future research could examine the effects of the feminization strategy of masculine-feminine adjective pairs on individuals with diverse gender identities (i.e., people who identify both within and outside the gender binary).

Finally, an intersectional approach would benefit this and other research on issues of gender equity. For example, the leadership gender gap is worsened when intersecting identities of race and disability are accounted for (Burns et al., 2021; Longpré-Verret & Richards, 2021; MacDougall et al., 2021; Rosenzweig & Company, 2021). Additionally, despite the current paper's focus on the binary view of gender, people with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations are uniquely influenced by gender stereotypes (Howansky et al., 2021; Sandfort, 2005; Valentova et al., 2011). Future research on the use of gender-fair language should also consider examining the use of more inclusive pronouns such as "they/them" and other gender-neutral pronouns.

Conclusion

The impetus for changing the gender gap is increasingly put on individual women, with arguments attributing gender gaps to women not asking for what they want, apologizing too much, failing to claim opportunities, and not "leaning in" (Arnold & Loughlin, 2019). These arguments fail to acknowledge the structural barriers women face that make it impossible for them to lean in. Masculine constructions of leadership lead to perceptions of incongruity between the feminine and leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Ellemers, 2017). Awareness of the role of stereotypes in leadership intentions is a critical step in reducing workplace bias. As Ellemers (2017) suggests, "As long as people fail to recognize that gender stereotypes—rather than individual merits and choices—lie at the root of such differences, change is very unlikely" (p. 291).

References

Abele, A. E., & Wojciszke, B. (2007). Agency and communion from the perspective of self versus others. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *93*(5), 751–763. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.93.5.751

Appelbaum, S. H., Audet, L., & Miller, J. C. (2003). Gender and leadership? Leadership and gender? A journey through the landscape of theories. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, *24*(1), 43–51. https://doi.org/10.1108/01437730310457320

Arceo-Gómez, E. O., Campos-Vázquez, R. M., Badillo Salas, R. Y., & López-Araiza, S. (2020). Gender stereotypes in job advertisements: What do they imply for the gender salary gap? *Journal of Labor Research*, *43*, 65–102. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12122-022-09331-4

Archer, A. M. N., & Kam, C. D. (2022). She is the chair(man): Gender, language, and leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *33*(6), 101610. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2022.101610

Arnold, K. A., & Loughlin, C. (2019). Continuing the conversation: Questioning the who, what, and when of leaning in. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, *33*(1), 94–109. https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.2016.0153

Askehave, I., & Zethsen, K. K. (2014). Gendered constructions of leadership in Danish job advertisements. Gender. *Work & Organization*, *21*(6), 531–545. https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12053

Badal, S. B. (2014). *The business benefits of gender diversity*. Gallup. https://www.gallup.com/workplace/236543/business-benefits-gender-diversity.aspx

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, *84*(2), 191–215. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.84.2.191

Bandura, A. (1994). Self-efficacy. In V. S. Ramachaudran (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of human behavior* (Vol. 4, pp. 71–81). Elsevier.

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. W.H. Freeman and Company.

Barth, J. M., Kim, H., Eno, C. A., & Guadagno, R. E. (2018). Matching abilities to careers for others and self: Do gender stereotypes matter to students in advanced math and science classes? *Sex Roles*, *79*(1), 83–97. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-017-0857-5

Betz, D. E., Ramsey, L. R., & Sekaquaptewa, D. (2013). Gender stereotype threat among women and girls. In M. K. Ryan and N. R. Brandscombe (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of gender and psychology* (pp. 428–449). SAGE. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446269930.n26

Born, M. P., & Taris, T. W. (2010). The impact of the wording of employment advertisements on students' inclination to apply for a job. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, *150*(5), 485–502. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224540903365422

Brescoll, V. L. (2016). Leading with their hearts? How gender stereotypes of emotion lead to biased evaluations of female leaders. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *27*(3), 415–428. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2016.02.005

Burnette, J. L., Pollack, J. M., & Hoyt, C. L. (2010). Individual differences in implicit theories of leadership ability and self-efficacy: Predicting responses to stereotype threat. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, *3*(4), 46–56. https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.20138

Burns, T., Huang, J., Krivkovich, A., Rambachan, I.,

Trkulja, T., & Yee, L. (2021). *Women in the workplace 2021*. McKinsey & Company. https://womenintheworkplace.com/

Cadaret, M. C., Hartung, P. J., Subich, L. M., & Weigold, I. K. (2017). Stereotype threat as a barrier to women entering engineering careers. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *99*, 40–51. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2016.12.002

Canadian Women's Foundation. (2022). *The facts: Women and pandemics*. https://canadianwomen.org/the-facts/women-and-pandemics/

Carli, L. L., & Eagly, A. H. (2001). Gender, hierarchy, and leadership: An introduction. *Journal of Social Issues*, *57*(4), 629–636. https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00232

Cassells, R., & Duncan, A. (2020). *Gender equity insights 2020: Delivering the business outcomes*. The Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre and the Australian Government Workplace Gender Equality Agency. https://bcec.edu.au/assets/2020/06/BCEC-WGEA-Gender-Equity-Insights-2020-Delivering-the-Business-Outcomes.pdf

Cheryan, S., & Markus, H. R. (2020). Masculine defaults: Identifying and mitigating hidden cultural biases. *Psychological Review*, *127*(6), 1022–1052. https://doi.org/10.1037/rev0000209

Clerkin, C. (2017). *What women want—and why you want women—in the workplace*. Center for Creative Leadership and Watermark. https://cclinnovation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/whatwomenwant.final_.pdf

Cortland, C. I., & Kinias, Z. (2019). Stereotype threat and women's work satisfaction: The importance of role models. *Archives of Scientific Psychology*, *7*(1), 81–89. http://doi.org/10.1037/arc0000056

Cropanzano, R., Slaughter, J. E., & Bachiochi, P. D. (2005). *Application Intentions Scale* [Database record]. https://doi.org/10.1037/t09256-000

Dixon-Fyle, S., Dolan, K., Hunt, V., & Prince, S. (2020). *Diversity wins: How inclusion matters*. McKinsey & Company. https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters#

Druglimo, R., & Akselsen, A. S. H. (2018). *Implicit gender bias in job advertisements: The interactive influence of masculine wording, and gender and professional closeness of the contact person on job appeal* [Unpublished master's thesis]. BI Norwegian Business School. https://biopen.bi.no/i-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2580341/2034639.pdf?sequence=1

Eagly, A. H. (2007). Female leadership advantage and disadvantage: Resolving the contradictions. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *31*(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.2007.00326.x

Eagly, A. H., & Karau, S. J. (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. *Psychological Review*, *109*(3), 573–598. https://doi.org/10.1037//0033-295X.109.3.573

Eagly, A. H., & Wood, W. (2011). Social role theory. In P. van Lange, A. Kruglanski, & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *Handbook of theories in social psychology* (pp. 458–476). SAGE.

Ellemers, N. (2017). Gender stereotypes. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *69*(1), 275–298. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-122216-011719

Embry, A., Padgett, M. Y., & Caldwell, C. B. (2008). Can leaders step outside of the gender box? An examination of leadership and gender role stereotypes. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, *15*(1), 30–45. https://doi.org/10.1177/1548051808318412

Emerson, K. T. U., & Murphy, M. C. (2015). A company I can trust? Organizational lay theories moderate stereotype threat for women. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *41*(2) 295–307. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167214564969

Exley, C. L., Niederle, M., & Vesterlund, L. (2020). Knowing when to ask: The cost of leaning in. *Journal of Political Economy*, *128*(3), 816–854. https://doi.org/10.1086/704616

Formanowicz, M., Bedynska, S., Cisłak, A., Braun, F., & Sczesny, S. (2013). Side effects of gender-fair language: How feminine job titles influence the evaluation of female applicants. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *43*(1), 62–71. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.1924

Frey, B. B. (2018). *The SAGE encyclopedia of educational research, measurement, and evaluation.* SAGE. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781506326139.n149

Gaucher, D., Friesen, J., & Kay, A. C. (2011). Evidence that gendered wording in job advertisements exists and sustains gender inequality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *101*(1), 109–128. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022530

Gender Decoder. (2016). *About this tool*. https://gender-decoder.katmatfield.com/about

Gipson, A. N., Pfaff, D. L., Mendelsohn, D. B., Catenacci, L. T., & Burke, W. W. (2017). Women and leadership: Selection, development, leadership style, and performance. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, *53*(1), 32–65. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886316687247

Halloran, T. (2017, July 18). Watch your (gender) tone: How Textio reveals the unconscious bias that's lurking in your job postings. *Textio*. https://textio.com/blog/watch-your-gender-tone/13035166463

Harris, C. A., Blencowe, N., & Telem, D. A. (2017). What is in a pronoun? Why gender-fair language matters. *Annals of Surgery, 266*(6), 932–933. https://doi.org/10.1097/SLA.0000000000002505

Hayes, A. F. (2018). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach* (2nd ed.). The Guilford Press.

Heilman, M. E., & Caleo, S. (2018). Combatting

gender discrimination: A lack of fit framework. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, *21*(5), 725–744. https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430218761587

Hentschel, T., Braun, S., Peus, C., & Frey, D. (2020). Sounds like a fit! Wording in recruitment advertisements and recruiter gender affect women's pursuit of career development programs via anticipated belongingness. *Human Resource Management*, *60*(4), 475–702. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.22043

Hoobler, J. M., Masterson, C. R., Nkomo, S. M., & Michel, E. J. (2018). The business case for women leaders: Meta-analysis, research critique, and path forward. *Journal of Management*, *44*(6), 2473–2499. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206316628643

Hoogendoorn, S., Oosterbeek, H., & van Praag, M. (2013). The impact of gender diversity on the performance of business teams: Evidence from a field experiment. *Management Science*, *59*(7), 1514–1528. https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.1120.1674

Horvath, L. K., & Sczesny, S. (2016). Reducing women's lack of fit with leadership positions? Effects of the wording of job advertisements. European *Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, *25*(2), 316–328. https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2015.1067611

Howansky, K., Wilton, L. S., Young, D. M., Abrams, S., & Clapham, R. (2021). (Trans)gender stereotypes and the self: Content and consequences of gender identity stereotypes. *Self and Identity*, *20*(4), 478–495. https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2019.1617191

Hoyt, C. L., & Blascovich, J. (2010). The role of leadership self-efficacy and stereotype activation on cardiovascular, behavioral and self-report responses in the leadership domain. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *21*(1), 89–103. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2009.10.007

Hoyt, C. L. (2005). The role of leadership efficacy and stereotype activation in women's identification with leadership. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, *11*(4), 2–14. https://doi.org/10.1177/107179190501100401

Hoyt, C. L., & Murphy, S. E. (2016). Managing to clear the air: Stereotype threat, women, and leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *27*(3), 387–399. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2015.11.002

Jones, J. J., Amin, M. R., Kim, J, & Skiena, S. (2019). Stereotypical gender associations in language have decreased over time. *Sociological Science*, *7*, 1–35. https://doi.org/10.15195/v7.a1

Kalokerinos, E. K., von Hippel, C., & Zacher, H. (2014). Is stereotype threat a useful construct for organizational psychology research and practice? *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, *7*(3), 381–402. https://doi.org/10.1111/iops.12167

Koenig, A. M., Eagly, A. H., Mitchell, A. A., & Ristikari, T. (2011). Are leader stereotypes masculine? A meta-analysis of three research paradigms. *Psychological Bulletin*, *137*(4), 616–642. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0023557

Labour Market Information Council. (2022). *Women in recovery: COVID-19 and women's labour market participation*. https://lmic-cimt.ca/women-in-recovery-covid-19-and-womens-labour-market-participation/

Leaper, C., & Friedman, C. K. (2007). The socialization of gender. In J. E. Grusec and P. D. Hastings (Eds.), *Handbook of socialization: Theory and research* (pp. 561–587). Guilford.

Lindqvist, A., Renström, E. A., & Sendén, M. G. (2018). Reducing a male bias in language? Establishing the efficiency of three different gender-fair language strategies. *Sex Roles*, *81*, 109–117. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-018-0974-9

Longpré-Verret, L. M., & Richards, E. (2021). *Diversity among board directors and officers: Exploratory estimates on family, work and income.* Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2021005-eng.pdf?st=DcSzov8D

MacDougall, A., Valley, J., & Jeffrey, J. (2021). *2021 Diversity Disclosure Practices – Diversity and leadership at Canadian public companies*. Osler. https://www.osler.com/en/resources/governance/2021/report-2021-diversity-disclosure-practices-diversity-and-leadership-at-canadian-public-companies#mid-year-results-women-in-executive

Meister, A., Sinclair, A., & Jehn, K. A. (2017). Identities under scrutiny: How women leaders navigate feeling misidentified at work. The *Leadership Quarterly*, *28*(5), 672–690. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2017.01.009

Menegatti, M., & Rubini, M. (2017). Gender bias and sexism in language. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*. Online only publication. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.470

Moe, A., Cadinu, M., & Maass, A. (2015). Women drive better if not stereotyped. *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, *85*, 199–206. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aap.2015.09.021

Oldford, E., & Fiset, J. (2021). Decoding bias: Gendered language in finance internship job postings. *Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Finance*, *31*, 100544. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbef.2021.100544

Payne, G. & Payne, J. (2004). *Key concepts in social research. SAGE*. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849209397.n10

Pennebaker, J. W., Boyd, R. L., Jordan, K., & Blackburn, K. (2015). *The development and psychometric properties of LIWC2015* [Unpublished manuscript]. University of Texas at Austin.

Peterson, H. (2018). From "goal-orientated, strong and decisive leader" to "collaborative and communicative listener". Gendered shifts in Vice-Chancellor ideals, 1990–2018. *Education Sciences*, *8*(2), 90. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci8020090

Picho, K. & Brown, S. W. (2011). Can stereotype threat

be measured? A validation of the social identities and attitudes scale (SIAS). *Journal of Advanced Academics*, *22*(3), 374–411. https://doi.org/10.1177/1932202X1102200302

Picho, K., & Brown, S. W. (2009). *Social Identities and Attitudes Scale* [Database record]. https://doi.org/10.1037/t16302-000

Picho-Kiroga, K., Turnbull, A., & Rodriguez-Leahy, A. (2021). Stereotype threat and its problems: Theory misspecification in research, consequences, and remedies. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, *32*(2), 231–264. https://doi.org/10.1177/1932202X20986161

Piscopo, J. M. (2018). The limits of leaning in: Ambition, recruitment, and candidate training in comparative perspective. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, *7*(4), 817–828. https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2018.1532917

Plante, I., O'Keefe, P. A., Aronson, J., Frechette-Simard, C., & Goulet, M. (2018). The interest gap: How gender stereotype endorsement about abilities predicts differences in academic interests. *Social Psychology of Education*, *22*(1), 227–245. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-018-9472-8

Powell, G. N., & Butterfield, D. A. (2017). Linking leader anti-prototypes and prototypes to gender stereotypes. *Gender in Management*, *32*(2), 128–140. https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-06-2016-0130

Ridgeway, C. L. (2001). Gender, status, and leadership. *Journal of Social Issues*, *57*(4), 637–655. https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00233

Rosenzweig & Company. (2021). *The 16th annual Rosenzweig report*. https://www.rosenzweigco.com/media-1/the-16th-annual-rosenzweig-report

Rubini, M., & Menegatti, M. (2014). Hindering women's careers in academia: Gender linguistic bias in personnel selection. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *33*(6), 632–650. https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X14542436

Sandfort, T. G. M. (2005). Sexual orientation and gender: *Stereotypes and beyond. Archives of Sexual Behavior*, *34*(6), 595–611. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-005-7907-8

Scholz, U., Gutiérrez Doña, B., Sud, S., & Schwarzer, R. (2002). Is general self-efficacy a universal construct? Psychometric findings from 25 countries. *European Journal of Psychological Assessment*, *18*(3), 242–251. https://doi.org/10.1027//1015-5759.18.3.242

Schwarzer, R. (2014). *Everything you wanted to know about the general self-efficacy scale but were afraid to ask*. https://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~health/faq_gse.pdf

Schwarzer, R., & Jerusalem, M. (1995). Generalized Self-Efficacy scale. In J. Weinman, S. Wright, & M. Johnston (Eds.), *Measures in health psychology: A user's portfolio. Causal and control beliefs* (pp. 35–37). NFER-NELSON.

Sczesny, S., Formanowicz, M., & Moser, F. (2016). Can gender-fair language reduce gender stereotyping and discrimination? *Frontiers in Psychology*, *7*(25), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00025

Shamloo, S. E., De Cristofaro, V., Pellegrini, V., & Salvati, M. (2022). Masculinity and leadership effectiveness (self-)perceptions: The case of lesbian leaders. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *19*(24), 17026. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph192417026

Shen, W., & Joseph, D. L. (2020). Gender and leadership: A criterion-focused review and research agenda. *Human Resource Management Review*, *31*(2), 100765. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2020.100765

Smith, D. G., Rosenstein, J. E., Nikolov, M. C., & Chaney, D. A. (2019). The power of language: Gender, status, and agency in performance evaluations. *Sex Roles*, *80*, 159–171. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-018-0923-7

Smith, L. V. & Cokley, K. (2016). Stereotype threat vulnerability: A psychometric investigation of the social identities and attitudes scale. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development*, *49*(2), 145–162. https://doi.org/10.1177/0748175615625752

Steele, C. M. (1997). A threat in the air: How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. *American Psychologist*, *52*(6), 613–629. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.52.6.613

Steele, C. M., & Aronson, J. (1995). Stereotype threat and the intellectual test performance of African Americans. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 69*(5), 797–811. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.69.5.797

Stout, J. G., & Dasgupta, N. (2011). When he doesn't mean you: Gender-exclusive language as ostracism. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *37*(6), 757–769. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167211406434

Taris, T. W., & Bok, I. A. (1998). On gender specificity of person characteristics in personnel advertisements: A study among future applicants. *The Journal of Psychology*, *132*(6), 593–610. https://doi.org/10.1080/00223989809599292

Thomas, R., Cooper, M., Cardazone, G., Urban, K., Bohrer, A., Long, M., Yee, L., Krivkovich, A., Huang, J., Prince, S., Kumar, A., & Coury, S. (2020). *Women in the workplace 2020*. McKinsey & Company. https://wiw-report.s3.amazonaws.com/Women_in_the_Workplace_2020.pdf

Valentova, J., Rieger, G., Havlicek, J., Linsenmeier, J. A. W., & Bailey, J. M. (2011). Judgments of sexual orientation and masculinity-femininity based on thin slices of behavior: A cross-cultural comparison. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, *40*(6), 1145–1152. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-011-9818-1

Vergoossen, H. P., Renström, E. A., Lindqvist, A., &

Sendén, M. G. (2020). Four dimensions of criticism against gender-fair language. *Sex Roles*, *83*, 328–337. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-019-01108-x

Vervecken, D., & Hannover, B. (2015). Yes I can! Effects of gender fair job descriptions on children's perceptions of job status, job difficulty, and vocational self-efficacy. *Social Psychology*, *46*(2), 76–92. https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-9335/a000229

Vervecken, D., Hannover, B., & Wolter, I. (2013). Changing (s)expectations: How gender fair job descriptions impact children's perceptions and interest regarding traditionally male occupations. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *82*(3), 208–220. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2013.01.008

Wille, L., & Derous, E. (2018). When job ads turn you down: How requirements in job ads may stop instead of attract highly qualified women. *Sex Roles*, *79*(7), 464–475. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-017-0877-1

Received September 4, 2022
Revision received January 12, 2024
Accepted February 11, 2024 ■

Appendix A

Full List of Masculine and Feminine Associated Words Used in Analyses

Masculine words	Feminine words
Active	Creative
Adventurous	Poised
Agentic	Compassion*
Aggress*	Support*
Ambitio*	Communal
Analy*	Involved
Assert*	Sincere
Athlet*	Kinship
Authoritative	Relational
Autonom*	Imaginative
Boast*	Commit*
Bold	Polite
Brave	Cooperat*
Brilliant	Agreeable
Career oriented	Helpful
Challeng*	Reasonable
Charismatic	Humble
Compet*	Expressive
Competent	Reliable
Competitive	Kind
Confident	Submissive
Consensus builder	Selfless
Context-independent	Build trust
Courag*	Respon*
Daring	Socially responsible
Decide	Encouraging
Decision*	Pleasant*
Decisive	Emotiona*
Determin*	Restrained
Direct	Nurtur*
Distinctive	Team player
Domina*	Loyal*
Driven	Interpersona*
Dynamic	Good listener
Enduring	Empath*
Focused	Friendly
Force*	Considerate
Goal-oriented	Sympath*
Greedy	Flatterable

Masculine words	Feminine words
Gutsy	Articulate
hardworking	Warm*
Headstrong	Trust*
Hierarch*	Quiet*
Hostil*	Down to earth
Impulsive	Collaborative
Independen*	Open to new ideas
Individual*	Conscientious
Influencing	Understand*
Innovat*	Perceptive
Intellect*	Adjusting
Lead*	Nag
Logic	Social
Logical	Modest*
Masculine	Child*
Natural leader	Interdependen*
Objective	Follower
Opinion	Together*
Outspoken	Cheer*
Perseverance	Other-promotional
Persist*	Context-dependent
Powerful	Gentle
Principle*	Tender*
Progressive	Affectionate
Rational	Loving
Reckless	Yield*
Resilient	Holistic
Restrained	Community oriented
Results-driven	Flexible
Risk-taker	Passive
Self-confiden*	Adaptable
Self-promotional	Depend*
Self-relian*	Honest
Self-sufficien*	Sensitiv*
Separate	Whin*
Straightforward	Feminine
Strong	Patient
Stubborn	Honest
Superior	Connect*
Tough	

Note. * Indicates that all variations of the word are included in the analysis. Based on Cheryan & Markus, 2020; Gaucher et al., 2011; Peterson, 2018.