

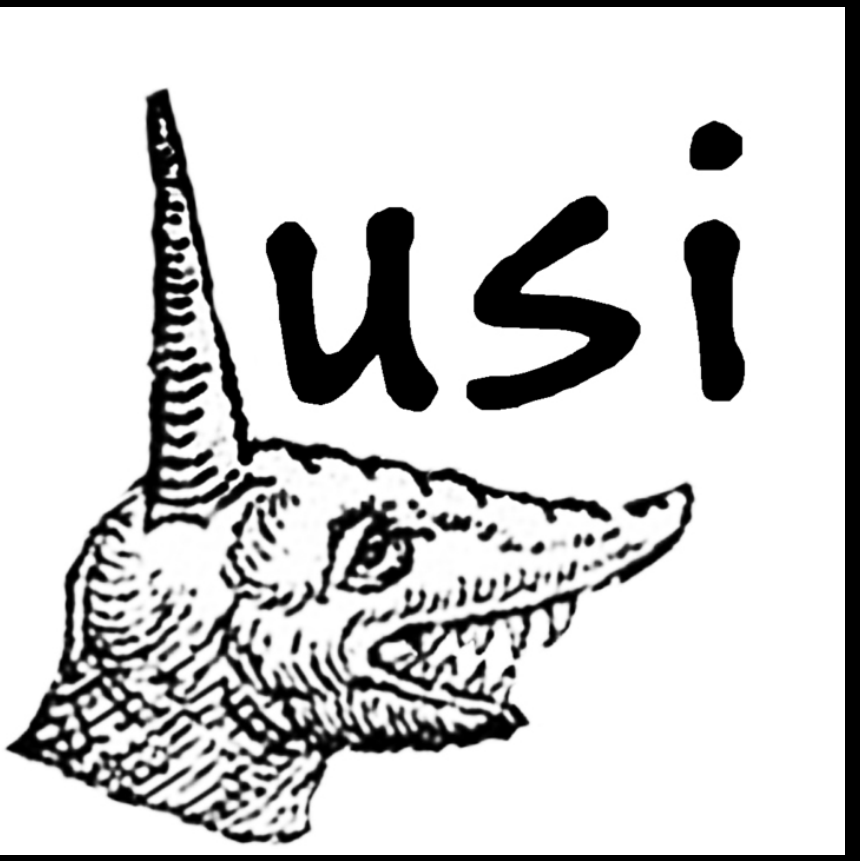


Power and Achievement Language in Written Evaluations Reveals Gender Role Biases in Hiring Decisions

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Introduction

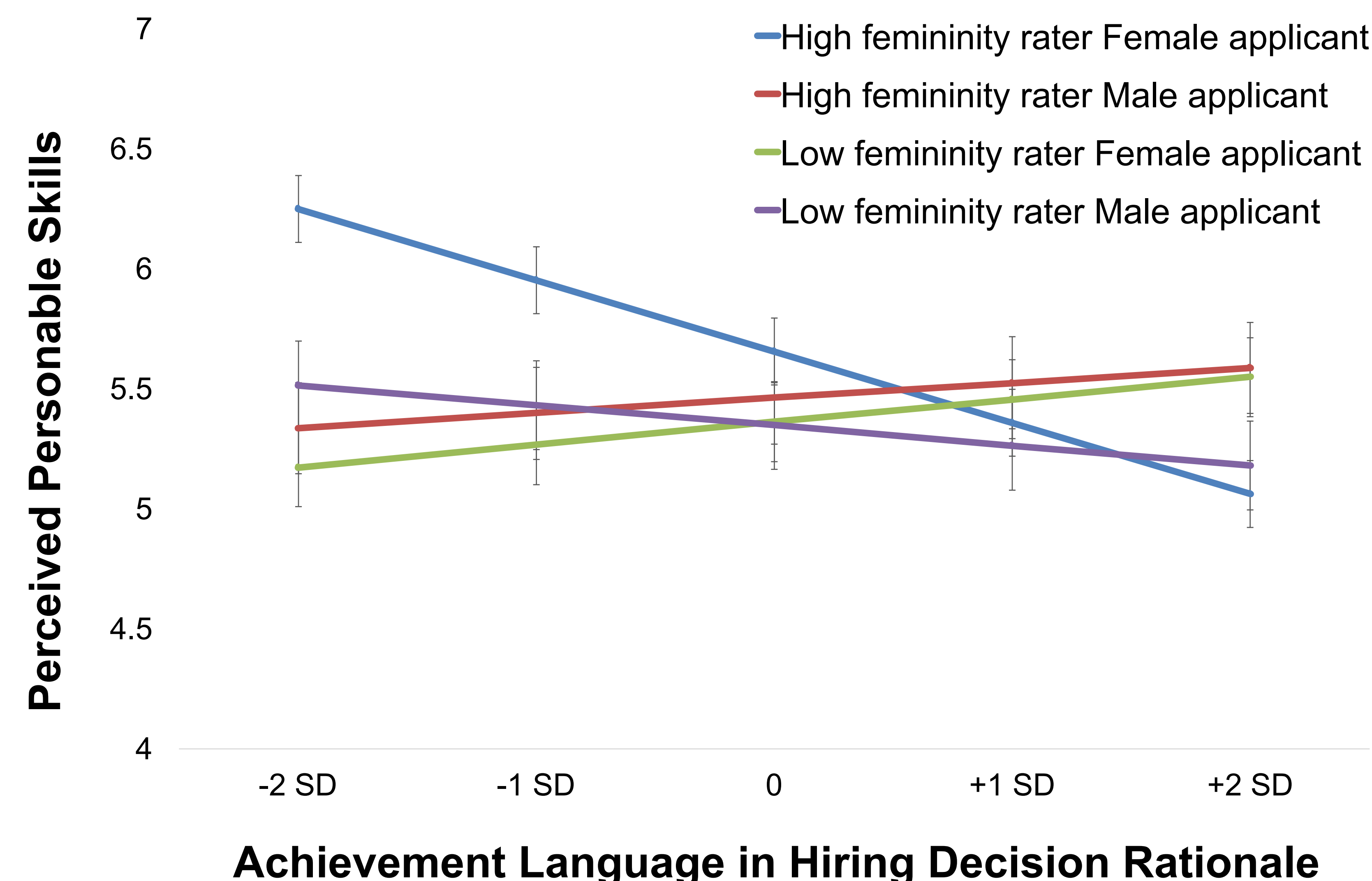
- Previous research on workplace decision-making has focused largely on the applicant rather than the evaluator.
- Hiring biases exacerbate gender discrepancies in STEM fields and leadership positions.
- We examined interactive effects of evaluator and applicant characteristics on a hiring recommendation, focusing on evaluators' gender roles and language use and applicants' gender.
- Language use can be useful in examining implicit biases regarding gender and gender stereotypes (see Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010).

Method

PROCEDURE & MATERIALS

- Participants completed an evaluation of **two résumés**, one characteristically **feminine** and one characteristically **masculine**, applying for a hypothetical university leadership position.
- Rated how **personable** (e.g., "Cares about students") and **competent** (e.g., "Is well qualified") they would be.
- Described their impression of the candidate **in their own words** (analyzed by **LIWC 2015**; Pennebaker, Booth, Boyd, & Francis, 2015), then provided an overall hiring decision.
- Completed the **Big Five Inventory** (John & Srivastava, 1999) and **Dimensions of Gender Role Stereotypes** (Diekmann & Eagly, 2000).

Results

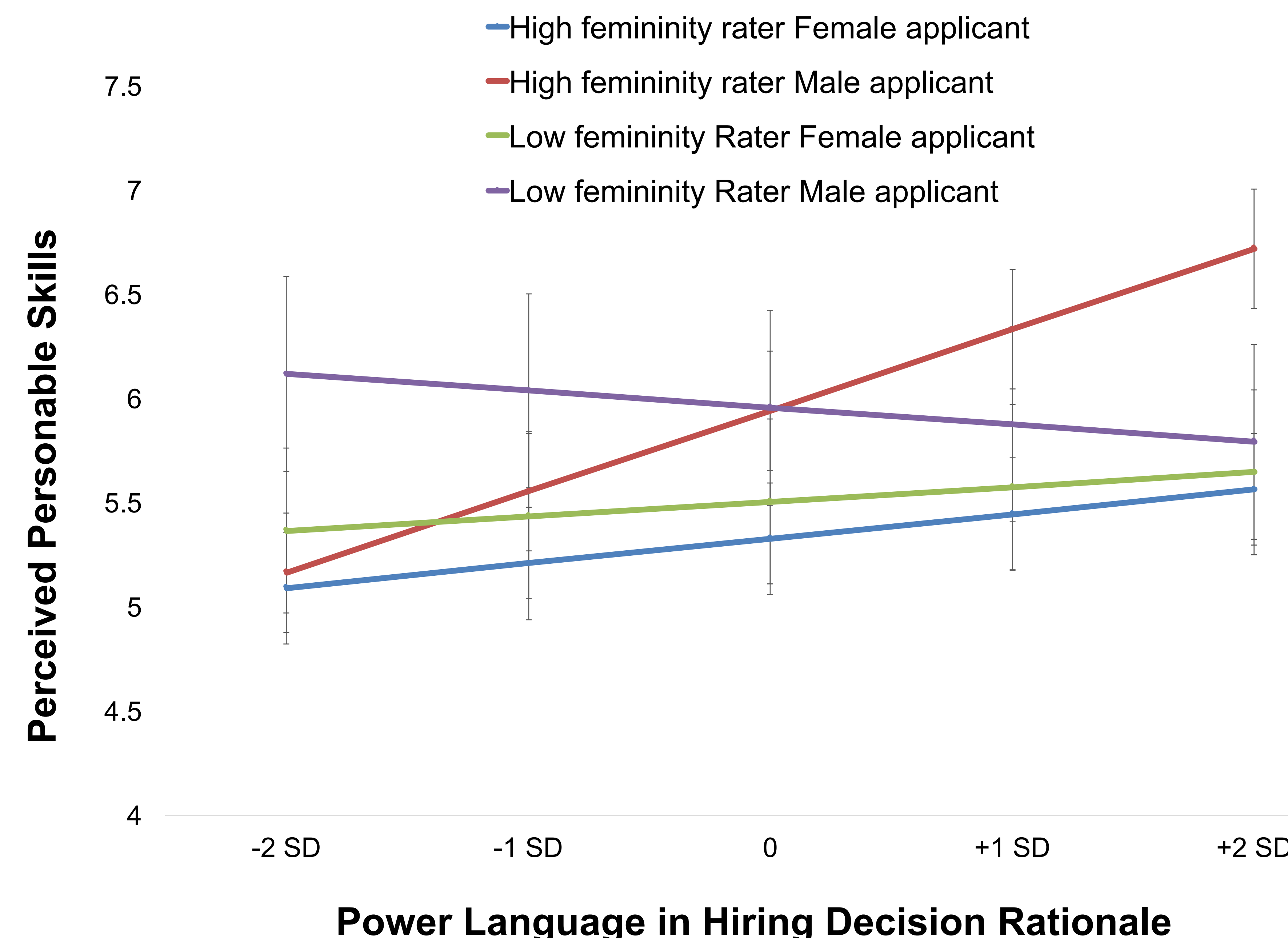


ACHIEVEMENT LANGUAGE

- Participants with higher self-reported femininity scores, controlling for participant sex, rated the presumed female applicant as **less personable** ($t = -2.13, p = .042$) and were **less likely to recommend them for the job** ($t = -2.81, p = .009$) to the degree that they described them using more **achievement language** (e.g. *ambitious, winner*).
- Those associations were absent for the presumed male resume and for masculine participants rating either applicant (all $p > .50$).

POWER LANGUAGE

- Participants with higher self-reported femininity scores, controlling for participant sex, rated the presumed male applicant as **more personable** to the degree that they described him using **power-related words** (e.g., *assertive, strong, superior*) ($t = 2.67, p = .012$).
- Power was uncorrelated with personableness for other femininity-applicant gender combinations, all $p > .30$.



Conclusions

DISCUSSION

- Results suggest that, regardless of biological sex, feminine people are more likely to judge others based on adherence to their respective gender role norms in a hiring situation.
- If they see a woman as accomplished, they rate her as colder or less personable (and overall less hireable); if they see a man as dominant, they rate him as more personable or socially skilled.
- Consistent with Role Congruity Theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002), our findings indicate that women may experience backlash when their behavior deviates from traditional gender norms, such as being achievement focused.
- Likewise, men may be penalized if they are not seen as sufficiently powerful or dominant.

IMPLICATIONS & THE FUTURE

- Such biases may be particularly costly in hiring or promotion, where applicants must highlight their accomplishments.
- Unclear whether these specific biases are limited to hiring scenarios.
- Future studies will manipulate gender adherence of application content and analyze transcripts of dyads' conversations about applicants.