

Linguistic Measures of Genre-Typicality Differentiate Between Critics' and Audiences' Ratings of Movie Scripts

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Introduction

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Film preferences of audiences and professional critics differ (Austin, 1983; Holbrook, 1999; Simonton, 2009; Simonton, 2011; Wanderer, 1970)
 - Audiences favor entertaining films that are easier-to-process on average
 - Critics more frequently favor complex, artistic films
- Genres represent these differences to varying degrees
 - For example, action movies often prioritize entertainment, whereas tragedies more often aim to be artistic

HYPOTHESES

- Audiences but not critics would prefer genre-typicality in films
 - Such differences between audiences and critics would be clearer for genres that aim to entertain rather than challenge

Method

SAMPLE

- 509 IMSDB Drama Scripts
 - Year of Release: 1932-2014
 - Sub-genres: Comedy, romance, thriller/suspense, action/adventure, science-fiction/fantasy, history/war, tragedy, family/kids

- Screenwriters' sex:
 - 87.4% male
 - 7.1% female
 - 5.5% mixed-sex teams

MEASURES

- LIWC (Pennebaker, Booth, Boyd, & Francis, 2015) measured relative frequency for each of the narrative arc-related language categories (% of total words used; Table 1)
- Composite Rating Variables
 - Critic ratings (*Rotten Tomatoes*) and audience ratings (*Rotten Tomatoes* and *IMDB*)

Table 1. Narrative Arc-Related Language Categories (Blackburn, 2015; Malin et al., 2014)

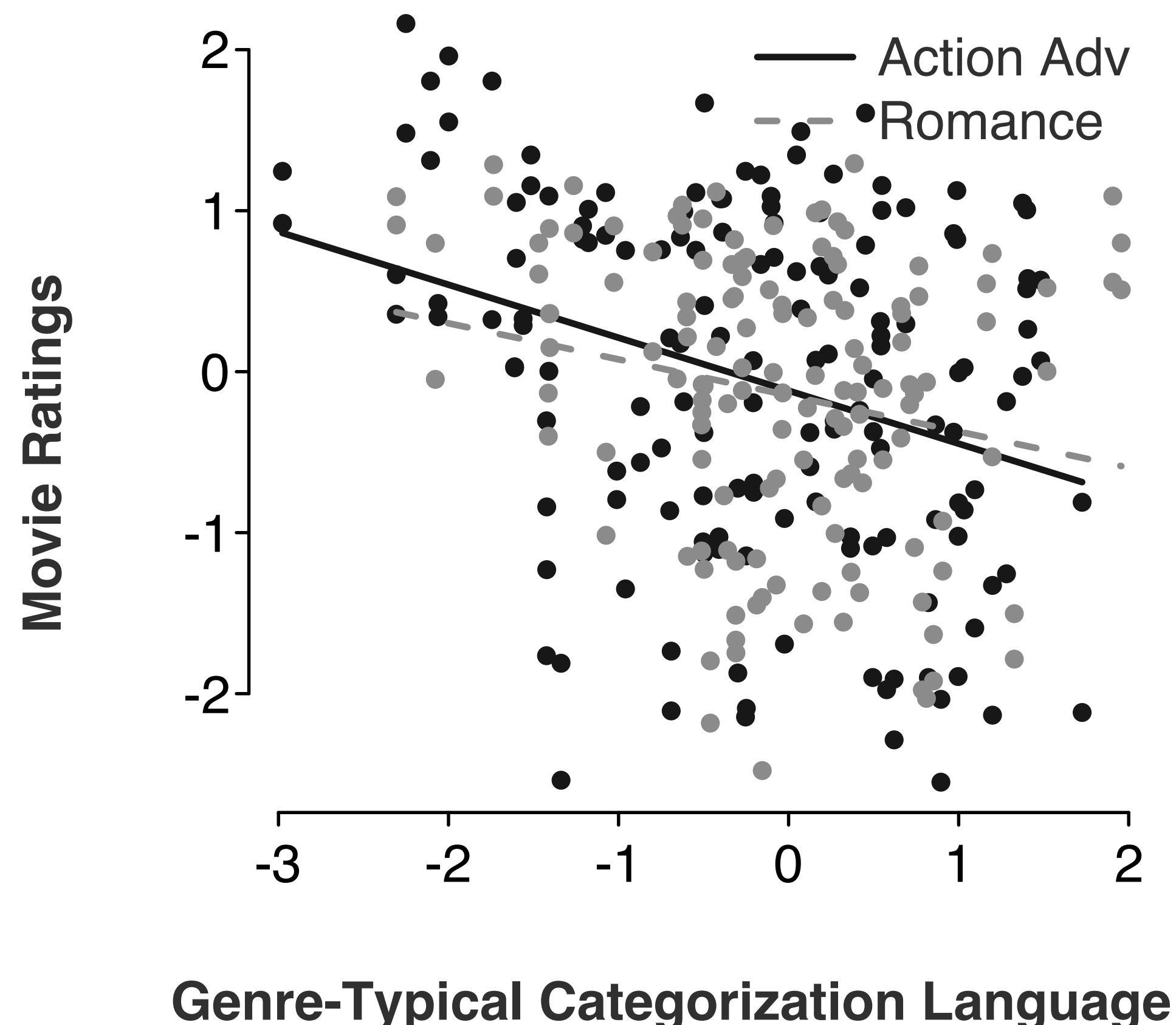
| Language Categories | Examples |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| Categorization | <i>a, the, about</i> |
| Narrative Action | <i>someone, already, become</i> |
| Cognitive Processes | <i>infer, obvious, alternative</i> |
| Negative Emotion | <i>dismay, unkind, lame</i> |
| Positive Emotion | <i>joy, hugs, romantic</i> |

DESIGN

- To test whether audiences and critics differed in their preferences for genre-typical language patterns, we regressed film ratings on Fisher's z-transformed profile correlations and rater role (audience or critic) separately for each genre

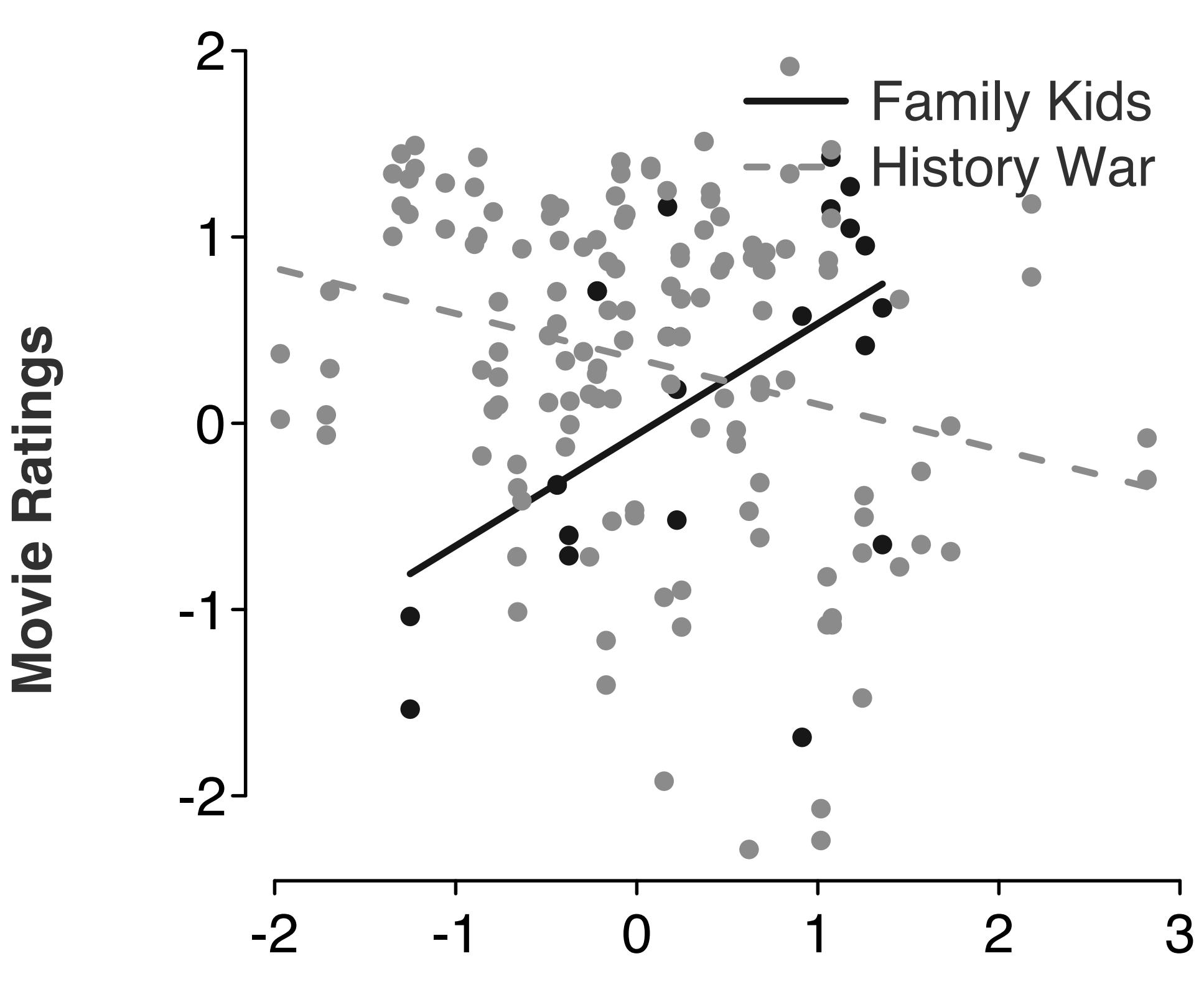
Results

- There were several main effects for genre-typicality while controlling for rater role as well as a two-way interaction effect:



Genre-Typical Categorization Language

Figure 1. Main effects of genre-typical categorization language for action/adventure and romance movies



Genre-Typical Positive Emotion Language

Figure 2. Main effects of genre-typical positive emotion language for family/kids and history/war movies

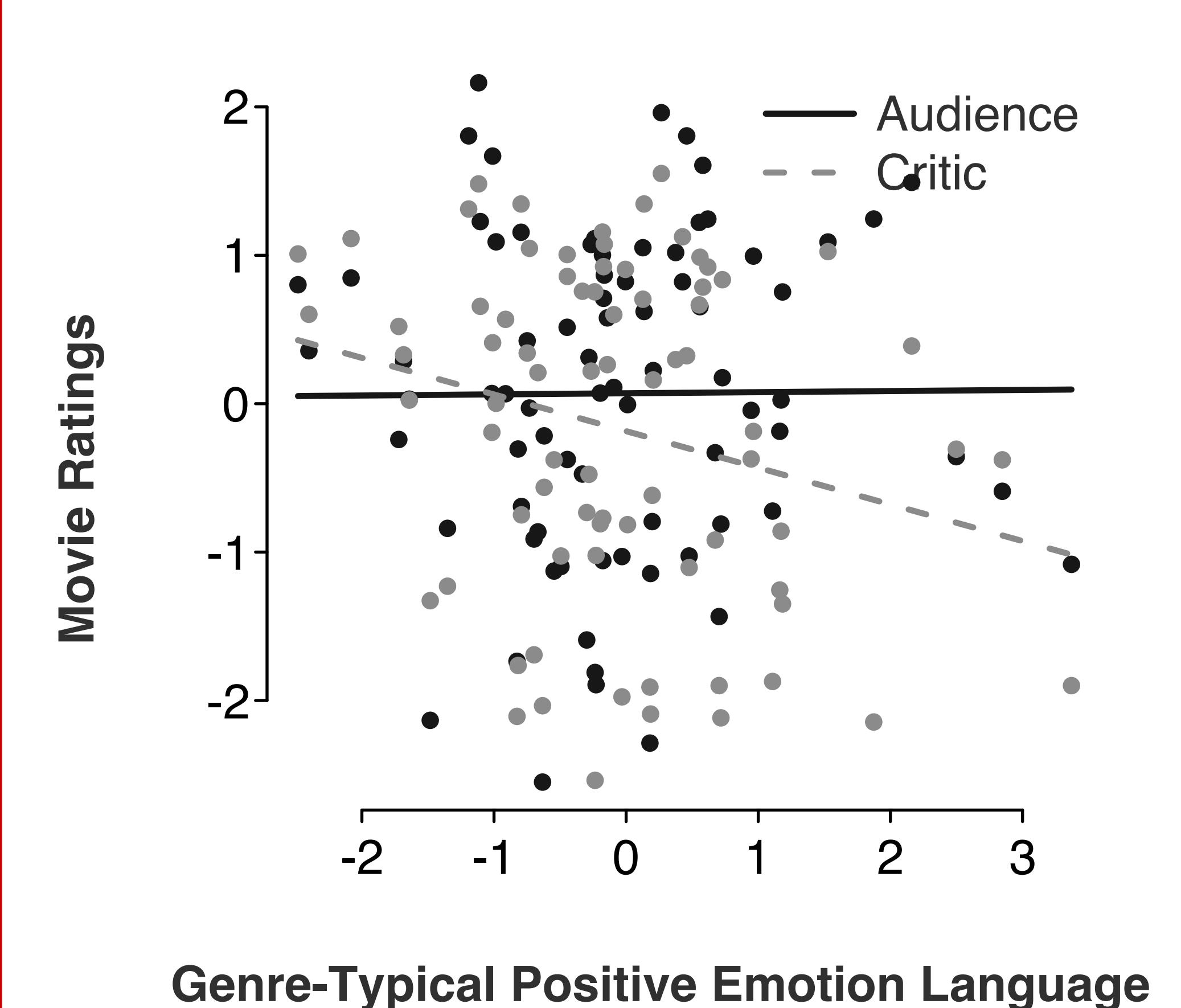


Figure 3. Action/adventure movie ratings as a function of rater role and genre-typical positive emotion language

Conclusions

- Partly consistent with our predictions, professional critics preferred less genre-typical positive emotion trajectories in action films, which coincide with research suggesting that critics may be drawn to more complex and artistic films (Austin, 1983; Holbrook, 1999; Simonton, 2009; Simonton, 2011; Wanderer, 1970)
- Contrary to our hypotheses and prior research findings that individuals prefer stimuli that can be processed more fluently (e.g., a familiar image, sans serif fonts; Kaspar, Wehlitz, von Knobelsdorff, Wulf, & von Saldern, 2015; Reber, Schwarz, & Winkielman, 2004), audiences preferred less genre-typical (and theoretically harder to process) language patterns in most genres