



In a hiring process, stereotypes, unconscious bias and communication styles can **unknowingly influence** impressions of candidates and jobs.

Women's behaviour tends to be stereotyped as **communal** (kind, thoughtful, sensitive to others' feelings, deferent), whereas men are stereotyped as **agentic** (competitive, decisive, aggressive, socially dominant).<sup>1</sup> Women also are encouraged to be more self-assertive, but discouraged from advancing their interests at the cost of others.<sup>1</sup>

Language can also be characterized as **feminine** or **masculine**; being more indirect, elaborate and emotional for the former, or more succinct, direct and instrumental for the latter.<sup>2</sup>

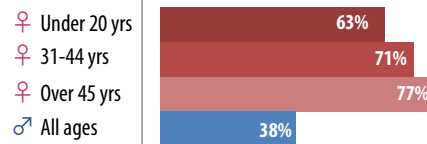
These stereotypes and assumptions can impact a hiring committee's assessment of a **candidate's abilities**, as well as the candidate's assessment of a job description and **their "fit"** within an organisation.

Job ads with masculine language are **less appealing** to women, regardless of job type, and decreased their **anticipated belonging** to the organisation.<sup>3</sup> Conversely, gendered language had **no impact** on men's anticipated belonging.<sup>3</sup>

### Gender Discrimination Exists

**Gender segregation** is the tendency for women to work in **systematically different occupations** and industries than men.<sup>4</sup> This often occurs at **critical career points**, which can dissuade women from continuing in male-dominated industries.<sup>3</sup>

Women grow more aware of the "**glass ceiling**" as they advance in their careers:



Percentage of workers who believe barriers that prevent women from reaching management level exist<sup>6</sup>



Women with children experienced **declines in earnings and hours worked**; men with children correlated with **increased earnings and virtually unchanged hours**.<sup>5</sup>

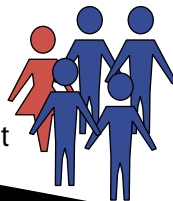


### Stereotypes & Their Effects

#### Stereotype: Men

#### Agentic:

competitive  
decisive  
aggressive  
socially dominant



#### Stereotype: Women

#### Communal:

kind  
thoughtful  
sensitive to others  
deferent



Traditionally, companies have valued agentic behaviour over communal behaviour



Agentic women are stereotyped as **competent**, but **interpersonally insensitive**.<sup>7</sup>

This is used to **justify** keeping them out of **male-dominated** management positions.<sup>1,3</sup>

*Some women counteract negative stereotypes by adopting a more masculine communication style.<sup>2</sup> This can be effective for some women, but not all. Agentic behaviours have social costs.<sup>2</sup>*

### Word Choice Matters

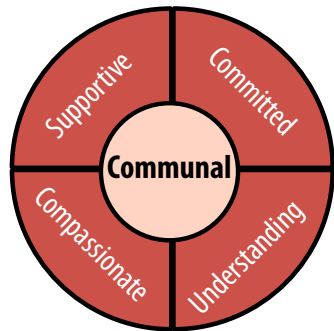
Gendered wording **subtly** signals who **belongs** and **who doesn't**. Below are examples of language in job advertisements and qualities of candidates.

#### *Feminine*

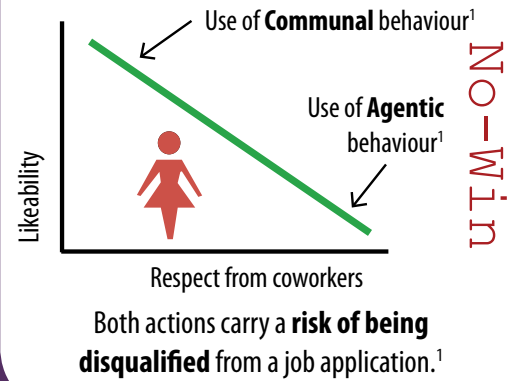
- a company's "**excellence**" in the market<sup>3</sup>
- "**understand** markets to **establish** appropriate selling prices"<sup>3</sup>
- "We are **committed** to providing top quality health care that is **sympathetic** to the needs of our patients"<sup>3</sup>

#### MASCULINE

- a company's "**dominance**" in the market<sup>3</sup>
- "**analyze** markets to **determine** appropriate selling prices"<sup>3</sup>
- "We are **determined** to deliver **superior** medical treatment tailored to each individual patient"<sup>3</sup>



### Women in Leadership Positions



### Observed Effects of Women Using Forced Agentic Behaviour

- ↑ Increase ♀'s **competence scores** to equally agentic men<sup>1</sup>
- ↓ Seem more **threatening**; less **persuasive** & less **influential**<sup>2</sup>
- ↓ Decrease **compliance** of workers for ♀ managers<sup>2</sup>

If women need to manage the impressions they give off, it can lead to **stress, anxiety and reduced task performance**.<sup>2,3</sup>

### Gendered Job Descriptions<sup>3</sup>

For an Engineer

<i>Feminine</i>	MASCULINE
" <b>Proficient</b> oral and written communication skills" <sup>3</sup>	" <b>Strong</b> communication and influencing skills" <sup>3</sup>
"Collaborates well, in a <b>team</b> environment" <sup>3</sup>	"Ability to <b>perform individually</b> in a <b>competitive</b> environment" <sup>3</sup>
" <b>Sensitive</b> to the clients' needs, can <b>develop warm</b> client relationships" <sup>3</sup>	" <b>Superior</b> ability to <b>satisfy</b> customers and <b>manage</b> company's association with them" <sup>3</sup>
"Provide general <b>support</b> to project teams in a manner complimentary to the company" <sup>3</sup>	" <b>Direct</b> project groups to <b>manage</b> project <b>progress</b> and <b>ensure</b> accurate task <b>control</b> " <sup>3</sup>

### "Qualified"

Only partially meet the advertised job requirements?

Men are more likely to apply, regardless.<sup>6</sup>

85% of women would only apply to a job if they met the job description "**fully**" or "**pretty well**."<sup>6</sup>

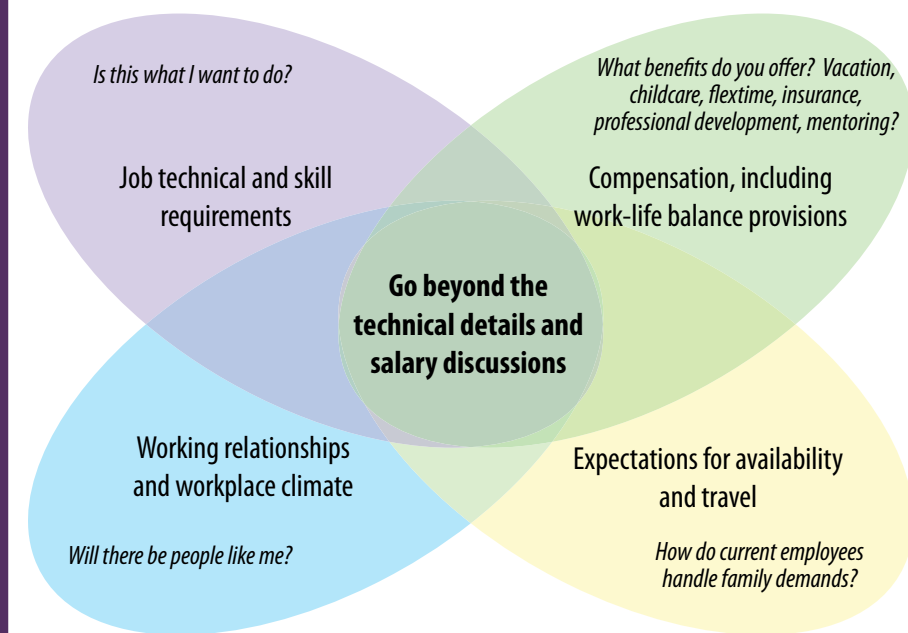
Women are also less likely to apply for masculine-stereotyped jobs.<sup>4</sup>

### Deciding to Apply

3 main factors when individuals decide to apply:<sup>4</sup>



### Interview Best Practices<sup>4</sup>



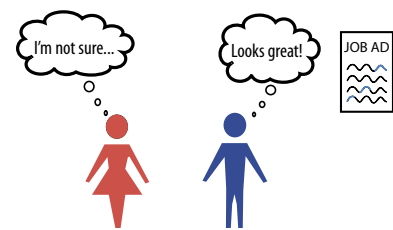
Interview best practices help you find the best employee, and are **universally helpful, regardless of gender**.<sup>10,12</sup> Lifestyle and workplace climate discussions are particularly important to women<sup>9</sup> and young workers<sup>8,11</sup> (Millenials / Gen Y).

### What Can We Do?

Gendered language is not a deliberate process - most job ads only contain 1% gendered language<sup>3</sup> - but impact women's application decisions. Increasing **feminine language** in job descriptions can **increase women's interest** in the job.<sup>7</sup>

Organisations need to rethink their hiring process, and should ensure career advancement **reflects skills and capabilities** instead of emphasising time served.<sup>6</sup> When attracting women to a job, **flexible working hours** and **work-life balance** are important,<sup>4</sup> as well as ensuring they have a **sense of anticipated belonging** in the organisation.<sup>3</sup> In the study of MBA graduates, women were no less likely to receive offers in masculine jobs; the segregation occurred in the application process where **women self-selected the jobs** they believed they fit.<sup>4</sup>

Women's leadership potential should be maximized through **professional development, mentoring, and proactively identifying** talented individuals and encouraging them to apply for upper level jobs.<sup>6</sup> The negative effects of communal communication stereotypes can also be eliminated through **self-affirmation exercises**.<sup>2</sup>



Gendered language has **no impact** on men's decision to apply, but may dissuade women.<sup>3</sup>

It also goes **unnoticed** in job advertisements; even when explicitly pointed out.<sup>3</sup>



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### Recommended Readings

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### About SCWIST and Make Possible

SCWIST is a non-profit association that promotes, encourages and empowers women and girls in science, engineering and technology. The MS Infinity Program introduces girls to exciting career options and positive female role models in science and technology. The IWIS (Immigrating Women in Science and Technology) Program provides support to immigrating professional women including resources, skill development workshops and networking opportunities. Program details at [www.scwist.ca/](http://www.scwist.ca/)

The Make Possible Mentoring Network is part of the Government of Canada's Status of Women Initiative to help attract and retain women in technology and advance the digital economy. Make Possible provides mentoring support, networking connections, professional development and leadership opportunities to help women reach their full potential in the technology sector and all STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields. The Make Possible vision is a world where aspiration, opportunity and diversity intersect. The Make Possible mission is to help women connect, collaborate and lead through a dedicated mentoring network in STEM. For more information: [contact@makepossible.ca](mailto:contact@makepossible.ca) or visit <http://www.makepossible.ca/>