

## **What is Gender Decoder for Job Ads?**

<http://gender-decoder.katmatfield.com/>

This is a publicly available free online tool inspired by a research paper published in 2011 in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology entitled *Evidence That Gendered Wording in Job Advertisements Exists and Sustains Gender Inequality*.

The research referenced documents how gender coded language is manifest in job advertisements, and significantly affects women in terms of both the job appeal and a sense of belonging in that occupation. This, in turn, likely perpetuates gender inequality in male-dominated fields.

In the context of active recruitment and the quest for larger qualified and diverse talent pools, the research points to a need to be cognizant of gendered wording to achieve that goal. The **Gender Decoder** allows the authors of a job advertisement to analyze their text through the prism of the published research, and obtain actionable information.

Using the **Gender Decoder** tool is very fast and easy. All that is needed is to visit the website (<http://gender-decoder.katmatfield.com/>), copy and paste the advertisement text, and then run an analysis. The result appears instantly, and identifies the gender coded words that appear, and the overall tendency of the advertisement. This analysis aligns with the published research and consists mainly of a tally of masculine and feminine words used in the advertisement. Despite its simplicity, the result gives the user a means to identify any unconscious/implicit bias in the wording of the advertisement, and make modifications to encourage a broader response. The report is shareable.

A list of the gender-coded words employed in the research as well as in the online tool is featured on page 2.

## **The Research**

[\*Evidence that gendered wording in job advertisements exists and sustains gender inequality \(2011\)\*](#)

### **Authors**

Danielle Gaucher, Dept. of Psychology, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

Justin Friesen, Dept. of Psychology, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

Aaron C Kay Dept. of Psychology & Neuroscience and Fuqua School of Business, Duke University

### **Summary**

The hypothesis this study sought to empirically prove or disprove was whether gender wording in job advertisements represents an institutional-level mechanism of inequality maintenance in line with social dominance theory. A healthy body of work from the early 2000's already exists on defining gendered wording.

### **Research conclusion**

Masculine wording in job advertisements leads to less anticipated belongingness and job interest among women, which likely perpetuates gender inequality in male-dominated fields. Alternatively, feminine wording in job advertisements does not lead to less anticipated belongingness and job interest among men. The use of gendered wording in job advertising amounts to an institutional-level feature with impacts on the maintenance of inequality.

The research project is comprised of five (5) studies:

#### **Study 1:** Determine if gendered wording exists in job advertisements

- **Method:** Used Dept. of Labor stats and major online job boards to establish baseline of word usage among 11 occupational categories that were either male or female dominant. Nearly 500 ads reviewed.
- **Conclusion:** Ads in male-dominated fields had more masculine words; correlation between # of masculine words and proportion of men in that job.

#### **Study 2:** Test study 1 to control against occupational idiosyncrasies

- **Method:** Accessed University of Waterloo's co-op job ads (N=3640) organized by faculty vs. job title.

- **Conclusion:** Confirmed results of study 1 and clearly indicated Social Dominance Theory (SDT) at work

**Study 3:** The effect of gendered wording on diversity perceptions

- **Method:** Job ads were created for traditionally male, female, and neutral occupations. Masculine and feminine coded versions of each were drafted and presented to study participants. These were asked “how many women work at the company?”, and “how many women work in the advertised position?”
- **Conclusion:** participants perceived more men within jobs that had masculine-worded advertisements than jobs that had feminine-worded advertisements, regardless of participant gender or whether that occupation was traditionally male or female dominated

**Study 4:** Job Appeal and Belongingness --institutional-level biases

- **Method:** 96 participant reviewed ads from Study 3 and were prompted to answer a series of questions designed to assess the appeal of the job, and sense of belongingness (“fit”).
- **Conclusion:** Women anticipated less belongingness in jobs that were masculinely worded, and these mediated the effects on appeal--women found masculinely worded jobs less appealing than same jobs femininely worded. The opposite scenario for men did not have significant affect.

**Study 5:** Effect of gendered wording on perceptions of qualification and skill

- **Method:** 118 all-female participant group reviewed neutral occupation ads coded in masculine or feminine versions. Participants were prompted to assess personal skill required to perform job.
- **Conclusion:** While confirming the results of Study 4, coding of the ad did not affect women’s perceived level of personal skill required for the job

**Coded Words**

**Masculine –coded words**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• active</li> <li>• adventurous</li> <li>• aggress</li> <li>• ambitio</li> <li>• analy</li> <li>• assert</li> <li>• athlet</li> <li>• autonom</li> <li>• battle</li> <li>• boast</li> <li>• challeng</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• champion</li> <li>• compet</li> <li>• confident</li> <li>• courag</li> <li>• decid</li> <li>• decision</li> <li>• decisive</li> <li>• defend</li> <li>• determin</li> <li>• domina</li> <li>• dominant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• driven</li> <li>• fearless</li> <li>• fight</li> <li>• force</li> <li>• greedy</li> <li>• head-strong</li> <li>• headstrong</li> <li>• hierarch</li> <li>• hostil</li> <li>• impulsive</li> <li>• independen</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• individual</li> <li>• intellect</li> <li>• lead</li> <li>• logic</li> <li>• objective</li> <li>• opinion</li> <li>• outspoken</li> <li>• persist</li> <li>• principle</li> <li>• reckless</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• self-confiden</li> <li>• self-relian</li> <li>• self-sufficien</li> <li>• selfconfiden</li> <li>• selfrelian</li> <li>• selfsufficien</li> <li>• stubborn</li> <li>• superior</li> <li>• unreasonab</li> </ul>
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**Feminine-coded words**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• agree</li> <li>• affectionate</li> <li>• child</li> <li>• cheer</li> <li>• collab</li> <li>• commit</li> <li>• communal</li> <li>• compassion</li> <li>• connect</li> <li>• considerate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cooperat</li> <li>• co-operat</li> <li>• depend</li> <li>• emotiona</li> <li>• empath</li> <li>• feel</li> <li>• flatterable</li> <li>• gentle</li> <li>• honest</li> <li>• interpersonal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interdependen</li> <li>• interpersona</li> <li>• inter-personal</li> <li>• inter-dependen</li> <li>• inter-persona</li> <li>• kind</li> <li>• kinship</li> <li>• loyal</li> <li>• modesty</li> <li>• nag</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• nurtur</li> <li>• pleasant</li> <li>• polite</li> <li>• quiet</li> <li>• respon</li> <li>• sensitiv</li> <li>• submissive</li> <li>• support</li> <li>• sympath</li> <li>• tender</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• together</li> <li>• trust</li> <li>• understand</li> <li>• warm</li> <li>• whin</li> <li>• enthusias</li> <li>• inclusive</li> <li>• yield</li> <li>• share</li> <li>• sharin</li> </ul>
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