

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING

Departmental Research Seminar

Identities Between the Lines: Re-aligning Gender and Professional Identities by Altering Job Advertisement Language By



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Date : 24 Nov 2022 (THU)

Time : 9 – 10:30 am

Venue : Online via Zoom

Abstract

Advertisements for male-dominated jobs tend to contain more masculine language, which can deter women from applying. Given that masculine language in job advertisements signals the valuation of masculinity, one potential intervention to reduce gender gaps in application rates for these positions is to “de-bias” job advertisements, or remove these signals of masculinity. In this paper, we explore the effectiveness of a gender de-biasing intervention on gender composition of applicant pools across various field contexts. Across a large database of 576 job postings and over 30,000 applicants from a large organization, a quasi-experiment in an organization, and a laboratory experiment, we find that removing masculine language from job postings leads to an increase in the proportion of female applicants in relation to male applicants. Furthermore, we also find that this de-biasing intervention did not result in decreased interest from male applicants. Theoretically, our research suggests the importance of aligning multiple identities when signaling who is welcome to apply for job opportunities. Specifically, we find that when organizations signal the importance of professional identity and tone down the importance of masculine identity, this removes barriers that traditionally prevent members of devalued groups (in this case, women) from applying. Practically, our results suggest that interventions aimed at reducing gendered language in job postings in recruitment could be effective in increasing the diversity of applicant pools.

Dr Sonia Kang holds the Canada Research Chair in Identity, Diversity, and Inclusion, and is an Associate Professor of Organizational Behaviour and Human Resource Management at the University of Toronto, where she is also a Faculty Research Fellow at the Rotman School of Management’s Institute for Gender and the Economy (GATE) and Chief Scientist, Organizations in the Behavioural Economics in Action Research Centre at Rotman (BEAR). Sonia is also the University of Toronto Mississauga’s Special Advisor on Anti-Racism and Equity. Sonia earned a PhD in Social Psychology from the University of Toronto and completed a SSHRC Post-Doctoral Fellowship at Northwestern University.

All interested are welcome.



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