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Sidela Nyuga  
*College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University*

Majel Baker  
*College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University*

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The Implications Of Gendered Wording In Job Advertisements
At CSB/SJU and Women’s Underrepresentation In STEM

Sidela Nyuga, Majel Baker PhD
College of Saint Benedict and Saint John’s University

Correspondence: Dr. Majel Baker, mbaker001@csbsju.edu. Presented at: Celebrating Scholarship & Creativity Day 2024, CSB/SJU

Introduction
Women’s underrepresentation in STEM fields is due to many factors, like systemic barriers, gender stereotypes, and lack of diverse perspectives in STEM environments (Schmader et al., 2023).

Gender-stereotyped language used in STEM job advertisements discourages women and men from applying to specific jobs. Masculine words (e.g., ambition, assertive) are more likely to be used within advertisement for male-dominated jobs than advertisement for female-dominated jobs. A study in job appeal showed that women found job ads that used masculine words less appealing than job ads with feminine words (e.g., compassionate, cooperative), and the reverse for men. Women also reported a greater sense of anticipated belongingness within occupation that were feminine-worded than masculine-worded (Gaucher et al., 2011).

Meta stereotype traits are defined as a person’s belief of how other people outside their group think of them. This explains why women or men will not apply to jobs that don’t align with the strengths and values they believe they don’t have (Wile & Derous, 2018).

Ad delivery optimization plays a role in skewed recipient distribution by gender or race even when the advertiser tried to make their ad inclusive. For example, LinkedIn provides targeting by job title, education, and job experience but Facebook also uses targeting options that enabled job and housing advertisers to discriminate by age, race, and gender (Imana et al., 2021).

As a result, women are less likely to be exposed to STEM job ads compared to men. Instead, they are more exposed to household purchase ads, which connects to the stereotype that women are their caretakers of the household. (Anja et al., 2019).

Methods
The Student Employment Office at CSBSJU provided the job titles and job descriptions for all student employment advertisements posted to their website within the last 2 years (Fall 2021 – Spring 2023) for CSBSJU STEM departments.

CSBSJU STEM departments posted a total of 30 student job ads during this period. We ran the text of the job description through an advertisement checker website (Dr. Kat Matfield’s Gender Decoder, https://gender-decoderkatmatfield.com/). This website counted the number of male-coded and female-coded words in the ad from a list of 52 potential male words and 50 potential female words. For example, male-coded words were strong, competent, objective, ambition, assertive, and self-sufficient. Female coded word examples were understanding, interpersonal, compassionate, and support. Then we compared the percentage of male words and female-gendered words in each department.

We also conducted informal interviews on student employment job search practices with two CSBSJU STEM department faculty and two department coordinator staff who often facilitate the hiring of students on campus.

Research Question
• What is the proportion of female- and male-stereotyped words used in student job ads in STEM departments at CSBSJU?
• Do job advertisements practices in STEM departments at CSBSJU align with recommendations for providing equal opportunities to apply?

Research
Women’s underrepresentation in STEM fields is due to many factors, like systemic barriers, gender stereotypes, and lack of diverse perspectives in STEM environments (Schmader et al., 2023).

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Discussion
Biology had the highest number of job ads and was the only department with a predominance of male-stereotyped words. Computer Science, Exercise and Health Science, Math, and Physics had more female-stereotyped words. It isn’t surprising that Chemistry had more female words given the increasing number of women studying the subject. However, for these four departments, they had a very small number of job ads to analyze (1–4 job ads per department over a 2 year period). Moreover, some of the ads were very short (e.g., one Math job ad had just 12 words in the job description ("To assist the instructor of a Calculus I, or Calculus II course"), which was not enough information to analyze. Most of these ads were used simultaneously for different jobs in the department, e.g., a single teaching assistant ad might have one job description for 3 courses seeking TAs.

Through interviews with professors, department coordinators, and Student Employment staff, we found that most professors advertised some positions by simply asking the students if they want that position, i.e., by word of mouth, thereby limiting access to the opportunity to other students.

Recommendations
• Before sending out ads to students, it’s important to carefully review the wording to ensure inclusivity and the ads are welcoming to all. This includes checking for any gendered language and adjusting as needed to ensure balance and neutrality. Additionally, incorporating inclusive language that appeals to students of all backgrounds and identities can help create an environment where everyone feels valued and respected.
• Make sure students have equal opportunities to access these job ads by making sure the students know about social media platforms (some departments of campus advertise their jobs on Instagram), or by sending out the ads to different clubs/oranizations on campus.
• Professors and departments should update the job ads every year and give more information in the job description.
• Future survey research should be conducted with students who are currently employed in STEM jobs on campus to see how they got their jobs, which could inform future recruitment efforts.

References

Percentage of Male-Stereotyped Words VS Female-Stereotyped Words in Each Department’s Job Advertisements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>N (job ads coded)</th>
<th>Male-coded words</th>
<th>Female-coded words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biology (N = 16)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry (N = 2)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Science (N = 3)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math (N = 3)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics (N = 1)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise and Health Science (N = 4)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N is number of job ads coded
Small numbers within bars indicate the total number of gendered words in each department's ads