

What's in an Author's Name? Differential Evaluations of Performance as a Function of Author's Name¹

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Three hundred college students (150 female, 150 male) were asked to evaluate an academic article in the field of politics, psychology of women, or education (judged masculine, feminine, and neutral, respectively) that was written by either a male, a female, or an author with a sexually ambiguous name. The results indicated that ratings of the articles were differentially perceived and evaluated according to the name of the author. An article written by a male was valued more positively than if the author was not male. Furthermore, subjects' bias against women was stronger when they believed that sexually neutral authors were female.

Research has indicated that part of the definition of sex roles in American society involves assumptions about the types of occupations which are held to be appropriate for men and women (e.g., Feather & Simon, 1975; Panek et al., 1977). The distinctions are congruent with traditional stereotypes about the personality characteristics of men and women (Rosenkrantz et al., 1968). Men have been described by a series of traits which reflect competence, assertiveness, and rationality (e.g., objectivity, independence, self-confidence). Male-appropriate occupations include lawyer, medical doctor, office manager, and police officer. Attributes such as emotional, submissive, subjective, dependent, tactful, and gentle have been used to describe women. Traditional female-appropriate occupations include elementary-school

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teacher, typist, librarian, and nurse. Both men and women rate masculine traits and occupations as more prestigious and more socially valued than feminine ones.

This prejudicial belief in overall male superiority was reflected in Goldberg's (1968) seminal research on performance evaluation. Employing Allport's (1954) definition of prejudice as the distortion of perception and experience, Goldberg tested the hypothesis that when confronted with an identical piece of work, women would value the professional work of men more highly than that of women. Goldberg's female subjects evaluated (in terms of persuasiveness, writing style, intellectual depth of article, competence of author) supposedly published journal articles on linguistics, law, art history, education, dietetics, and city planning. For each article, half of the women saw a male author's name (John T. McKay) and half saw a female's (Joan T. McKay). Results indicated that women rated the article (even ones in fields considered sex appropriate for women) more favorably when it was attributed to a male rather than a female author. Goldberg concluded that sensitivity to the author's name served to distort the women's judgment and prejudiced them against the work of other women.

Men have also been rated superior to women (by both male and female subjects) on tasks involving judgments of male and female art contestants (Pheterson et al., 1971), female art contestants, (Pheterson et al., 1971), applicants for a study abroad program (Deaux & Taynor, 1973), and medical school students (Feldman-Summers & Kiesler, 1974). Although this pro-male finding is considered to be well established, it has not always been replicated. For example, the male bias demonstrated by college females was not found in older, uneducated women (Pheterson, 1969). Furthermore, women are as likely to be evaluated as being competent as men when their performance is (a) acknowledged by an authoritative individual (Taynor & Deaux, 1975), (b) judged on explicit criteria (Issacs, 1981; Jacobson & Effertz, 1974), (c) judged by unqualified experts in the particular field (Ward, 1981), or (d) successful in male-appropriate occupations or activities (Taynor & Deaux, 1973). The latter finding suggests that the male superiority obtained by previous researchers reflected perceptions of sex-role inappropriateness or incongruence, not gender per se. It should be pointed out, however, that overall general conclusions are difficult to draw inasmuch as (1) investigators have not used the same measuring instruments (journal articles, paintings, scenarios), (2) a lack of replicability exists between college-age and non-college-age samples, and (3) methodological constraints due to repeated-measures designs are abundant. One additional weakness of this research concerns the fact that subjects have typically been asked to evaluate a male and/or a female. To date, there has been only one attempt to explore evaluations made of an individual whose sex was not known (Paludi & Bauer,

1982). In that study, authors of articles were presented as John T. McKay, Joan T. McKay, and J. T. McKay (considered neutral by the experimenters). J.T. was preferred over the female but not over the male author. Men and women treated J.T. more similarly to Joan than they did John, however. Furthermore, subjects' devaluation of an article was greater when they believed that J.T. was a female. This was true when the article was supposedly masculine, feminine, or neutral (designated by subjects in pilot work). Contrary to predictions, J.T. was not perceived as a neutral name. Accordingly, the present investigation sought to extend Paludi and Bauer's study by including a subject-defined sexually ambiguous author's name.

METHOD

Preliminary Work

Forty-five students (24 females, 21 males) participating in introductory psychology classes during the fall of 1981 served as subjects. They received course credit for their participation. Students were tested en masse by a male and female experimenter who shared in the distribution, administration, and collection of the test booklets.

Five names were selected from "names for babies" books for prospective parents. These five were selected by the experimenters with one criterion: the name had to appear in both the category appropriate for "girls" and the category of names appropriate for "boys." The names selected were the following: Terry, Pat, Lee, Chris, and Jesse. Subjects were instructed to do the following:

On the next few pages you will find pairs of names commonly used for *both* males and females.

Read each name, then circle the one of the pair that you believe is the more sexually neutral, that is, the name which would be more acceptable for *both* males and females.

Example:

Dana

Robin³

If you believe the name Robin is the more sexually neutral, you would indicate this belief as follows:

Dana

Robin

³The names Dana and Robin were also considered appropriate for both males and females from the "names for baby" books. They were randomly selected to be used as stimulus names for the instructions to the subjects.

The psychological scaling technique that appeared best suited for this study was the method of paired comparisons (Thurstone, 1927). In a complete paired-comparison matrix for five stimuli there are 10 pairs to be judged. Names were thus presented in pairs, two pairs per page in the test booklets. Each name was presented an equal number of times on the right and left side. In addition, the names were presented in different orders to different subjects. Each pair of names was counterbalanced according to optimal orders identified by Ross (1934).

Scale values were obtained for each name using Thurstone's (1927) Case V model. The scales were constructed to order the names from most to least preferred for both males and females. For both sexes, the name Chris was judged to be the most sexually neutral and was thus selected for use in the experiment proper.

Experiment Proper

Subjects

Three hundred students (150 female, 150 male) taking introductory psychology during the fall of 1981 participated. None of these subjects took part in the pilot study. They all received course credit for their participation.

Stimulus Materials

Three articles, each abridged to 1500 words, were employed in this study. These articles were identical to those used by Paludi and Bauer (1982). They represented the fields of politics, psychology of women, and education (judged masculine, feminine, and neutral, respectively, by 56 men and women in pilot work conducted by Paludi and Bauer).

Articles were written by either John T. McKay, Joan T. McKay, J. T. McKay, or Chris T. McKay or were unauthored (i.e., no name accompanied the article).

Procedure

A male and female experimenter tested subjects in groups of 50 (25 women, 25 men). Ten subjects of each sex were administered 1 of the 15 possible author/article combinations. Subjects were asked to rate the article from 1 (highly favorable) to 5 (highly unfavorable) on the following nine dimensions (adapted from Goldberg, 1968): value of article, persuasiveness

of article, intellectual depth and insight of article, writing style of article, professional competence of author, professional status of author, ability of article to sway reader's opinion, knowledge of the field as expressed in this article, and quality of article.

Subjects who were administered an article written by Chris or J.T. or an unauthored article were instructed after they completed their evaluations to indicate (1) whether they believed the author of the article was male or female and (2) the reasons for their choice.

RESULTS

Evaluations of Articles

The mean evaluation scores given by the men and women to the articles are presented in Table I. A 2 (sex) \times 5 (author) \times 3 (sex appropriateness of article) analysis of variance of the data in Table I revealed that men and women did significantly differ from each other in terms of their overall

Table I. Mean Evaluation Scores of Women and Men

Group	Author of article					Mean
	John T.	Joan T.	J.T.	Chris T.	Unauthored	
Masculine article						
Women	1.8	3.1	2.7	2.1	1.9	2.3
Men	2.3	3.5	2.5	2.4	2.2	2.6
Mean	2.1	3.3	2.6	2.3	2.1	
Feminine article						
Women	2.2	3.6	3.2	2.4	2.3	2.7
Men	2.4	3.0	3.1	2.5	2.6	2.7
Mean	2.3	3.3	3.2	2.5	2.5	
Neutral article						
Women	1.9	2.6	2.8	2.1	2.3	2.3
Men	2.5	3.1	2.9	2.7	2.7	2.8
Mean	2.2	2.9	2.9	2.4	2.5	
Mean						
Women	2.0	3.1	2.9	2.2	2.2	
Men	2.4	3.0	2.8	2.5	2.5	

evaluations [$F(1,270) = 4.34, p < .05$]. Men ($M = 2.69$) devalued the articles significantly more than did women ($M = 2.47$). In addition, there were overall differences in the evaluations of the five authors [$F(4,270) = 11.52, p < .001$]. Articles written by Joan were evaluated least favorably ($M = 3.15$), while those authored by John were rated most superior ($M = 2.18$). Mean evaluation scores for the three remaining authors were as follows: J.T., 2.87; Chris, 2.37; and unauthored articles, 2.33. Post hoc Scheffé tests indicated no statistically significant differences in mean evaluation scores between the article written by Chris and the unauthored article, (2) the article by Chris and that by J.T., or (3) the article by J.T. and the unauthored article. Furthermore, no statistically significant differences in mean evaluation scores were obtained between the article written by John and (1) the unauthored article, (2) the article written by Chris, and (3) the article authored by J.T.

All other main effects and interactions failed to reach significance. Analyses of the nine rating dimensions independently yielded similar results.

Perceived Sex of J.T., Chris, and the Writer of the Unauthored Article

As was described previously, subjects who were administered an article written by J.T. or Chris, or the unauthored article were asked to indicate the sex of the author. When the author's name was given as J.T., 95% of the men and 93% of the women attributed the masculine article to a male author, 88% of both sexes attributed the feminine article to a female writer, and 63% of the men and 58% of the women indicated that the neutral article was written by a male.

The author Chris was perceived as male by 87% of both sexes when the article was masculine, as female by 96% of the men and 98% of the women when the article was feminine, and as male by 65% of the men and 62% of the women when the article was sex neutral.

When the article was unauthored, 96% of the men and 94% of the women attributed the masculine article to a male, 93% of the men and 96% of the women attributed the feminine article to a female, and 60% of the men and 64% of the women perceived the neutral article's author to be male.

Explanations given by subjects for their decisions about the author's sex centered around traditional stereotypes: "Men are associated with economics, business, and politics"; "The author seemed to have insight to the woman's feeling and could relate. I don't think a man would have that kind of insight"; "It's by a man—it's very deep and it talks about what men in big business always talk about"; and "Male—because the style was abrupt and to the point. Had it been a female, it probably would have been a little

more artistic or deal more with the effects of the policies on the average American family.”

Finally, statistically significant point-biserial correlation coefficients were obtained between subjects' perceived sex of J.T., Chris, and the unauthored article and their evaluations. Subjects' bias against women was stronger when they believed that these authors were female ($r_{pb} = .79, p < .0001$ for J.T., $r_{pb} = .73, p < .0001$ for Chris and $r_{pb} = .75, p < .0001$, for the unauthored article).

DISCUSSION

The present research gives continued support to the notion of a pervasive devaluation of women in relation to men. Articles representing the fields of politics, psychology of women, and education (judged masculine, feminine, and neutral, respectively) were differentially perceived and evaluated according to the name of the author. An author who was identified as a male was more attractive and “his” article was evaluated more favorably than when the author was identified as a female. This pro-male bias was present even for articles in feminine and sex-neutral fields. Furthermore, this bias was more evidenced when subjects perceived a sexually ambiguous author's name to be female instead of male. An explanation that can be offered for this bias is related to the effect of gender as a status characteristic, as was mentioned in the introduction. In North American culture the role of the male is more highly valued by both men and women than the role of the female (Baumrind, 1972; Lockheed & Hall, 1976). As a result, men's behavior is valued more even when their behavior is compared to the identical behavior exhibited by women. Men are thus seen as more competent than women for the same behavior.

This overall prejudice has been found to be greater in males, who maintain more stereotypic values than females (e.g., Meyer & Sobieszek, 1972). This may be related to the present finding that men devalued the articles significantly more than women. This result reflects one characteristic of performance evaluation research: determining quality is a difficult judgment to make. This is especially the case when an individual is not highly trained in or familiar with the task. Individuals may thus rely on their stereotypes concerning an academic article's style, persuasiveness, and quality. Men may have relied more on stereotypic judgments than women. The more favorable evaluations made by female subjects may have represented an increase in positive appraisals and a conscious denial of the inferiority of female's performance. This would be consistent with the results obtained by Ward (1981).

The present study extends the research on sex differences in performance evaluation in a methodological manner by taking into account (1) sexually ambiguous author's names as well as male and female ones and (2) sex-neutral fields in addition to stereotypically masculine and feminine areas of expertise. The results of the present research are consistent with previous studies suggesting a general belief in male superiority and female inferiority. Evident is the need to determine developmental discontinuities in the differential evaluation of male and female performance as well as factors other than sex-role stereotypic beliefs which contribute to this differential evaluation.

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