

# Put On Your Blinders: Could Transcription Eliminate Gender Bias in Interviews?

Rachael Pyram<sup>1</sup>, Connor Eichenauer<sup>1</sup>, Ann Marie Ryan<sup>1</sup>, Andreas Frintrup<sup>2</sup>, & Alexandra Funk<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Psychology, Michigan State University

<sup>2</sup>S&F Personalpsychologie, Stuttgart, Germany

## Introduction

- Gender bias is the conscious or unconscious associations of traits with a gender identity group; gender bias in hiring contexts can result in discriminatory decision-making<sup>1</sup>.
- Technological advancements in structured interviews are purported to decrease gender bias, and one method to achieve this is to make evaluators (either human or algorithms) blind to candidate demographic information, like gender<sup>2</sup>.
- It is unclear the extent to which concealing explicit references to candidate gender reduces gender bias in hiring evaluations.
- As implicit references to candidate gender can be inferred from language styles<sup>3,4</sup>, this study sought to assess whether indirect information about gender derived from interview transcripts might impact hiring evaluations (Research Question 1) and if hiring managers can consciously discern gender from interview transcripts (Research Question 2).

## Method

- 263 working adults with hiring experience were surveyed via Prolific.
- The study used a 2 (male vs. female) x 3 (low-, med-, high-quality response) between-subjects experimental design.
- Participants evaluated three candidate response transcripts measuring three competencies: ability to structure work, perseverance, and assertiveness.
- Transcripts were manipulated to include male vs. female preferential language styles and varying levels of response quality.
- Participants provided competency ratings after each question. At the end, they rated the candidate's competence, warmth, and overall hireability, made a hiring recommendation, and guessed the candidate's gender.

## Experimental Manipulation Example

The ability to structure competency question asked "In the course of your training, you probably had to work on something that was completely new to you. For example, for a new program, a presentation, or a term paper. Please describe how you proceeded in this or a similar situation."

### Male Candidate

During an internship, I had to give a presentation to another team in the company on a project I had just joined. **I wasn't familiar with the topic, so I had to prepare prior to the presentation.** I began preparing by doing some background research. First, **I spoke to a colleague on my team who had given a similar presentation in the past to familiarize myself with the content.** Next, I conducted an internet search of reputable sources to better understand the topic area. **This approach was efficient because it ensured I was focusing on the most relevant content.** I created a draft presentation that covered the key concepts I'd found in my search and then **practiced with my supervisor.** After incorporating feedback, I delivered the presentation. **I knew it went well, and afterwards I received excellent reviews.**

### Female Candidate

During an internship, I had to give a presentation to another team in the company on a project I had just joined. **I didn't really know much about the topic area, so I felt a little intimidated and figured I had to prepare prior to the presentation.** I began preparing by doing some background research. First, **I wanted to get a better understanding of the topic, so I met with a colleague who had actually done a similar presentation. She was even nice enough to share some materials with me.** Next, I conducted an internet search of reputable sources to help me understand the topic area. **Based on my colleague's prior work and my internet search, I did my best to highlight points that were most likely to be relevant.** After creating a draft presentation that covered the key concepts I'd found in my search, **my supervisor was nice enough to let me practice with them and receive feedback, which was super helpful.** **The final presentation seemed to go well, and afterwards the team told me I did an excellent job.**

## Results

- Participants correctly guessed candidate gender only 52.9% of the time.
- There were no differences in ratings for either the ability to structure or perseverance competencies by gender condition or in the gender-quality interaction.
- For the assertiveness competency, the male gender condition was rated higher than the female condition. Additionally, the gender-quality interaction showed that men received higher assertiveness ratings in the high- and low-quality conditions, but not the medium-quality condition.
- There were no differences in ratings of warmth by gender, but women were rated higher in the low-quality condition.
- Men were rated higher in competence than women.
- Hiring evaluations and hiring recommendations frequencies did not differ by gender.

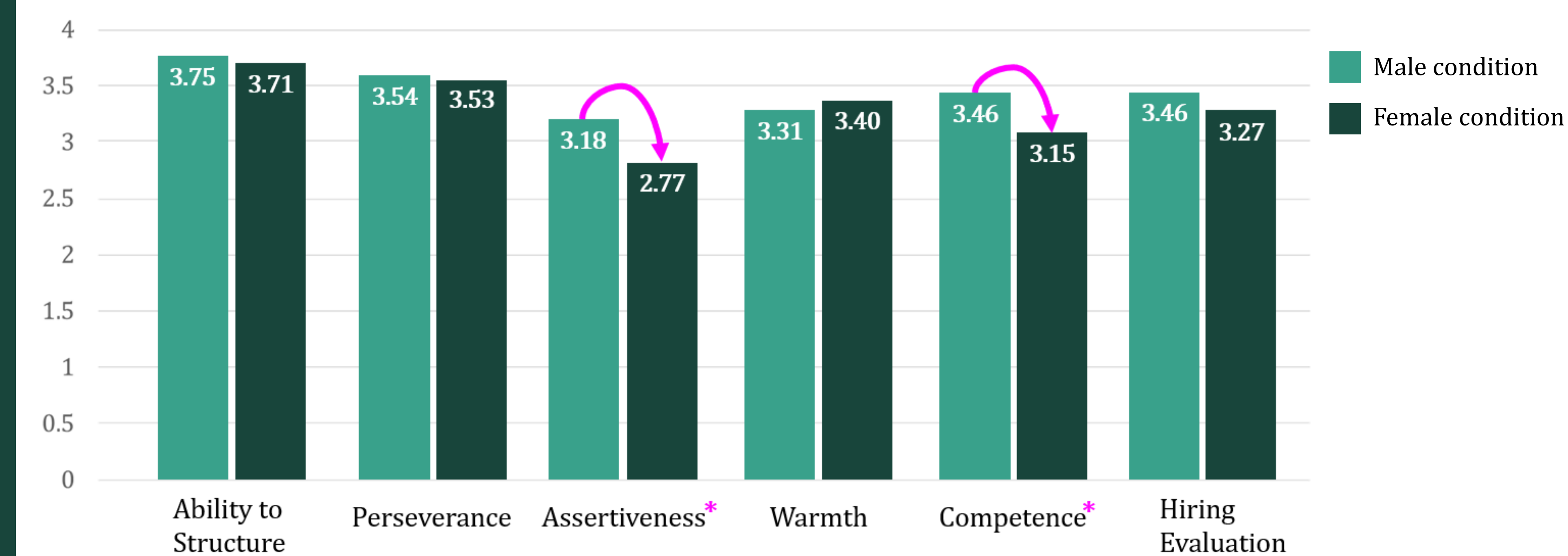
## Discussion

- Hiring managers' guesses about candidate gender did not result in different ratings between the candidate gender conditions, providing some support that technology-mediated interviewing methods that restrict direct references to candidate gender may decrease the incorporation of gender bias in hiring evaluations.
- However, while not significant, differences in hiring recommendation frequencies favored men. Considering the differences in ratings for assertiveness and competence, there is evidence that indirect influences of gendered language influenced hiring manager ratings to some extent.
- As our candidate interview responses were manipulated to reflect gender differences and quality differentiation, future research should use actual candidate interview responses to determine the extent to which gendered language differences are present across many candidates.

**References:** <sup>1</sup>Heilman & Eagly (2008); <sup>2</sup>Kantrowitz et al. (2023); <sup>3</sup>Bigler & Leaper (2015); <sup>4</sup>Koch et al. (2005); <sup>5</sup>Thomson et al. (2001); <sup>6</sup>Meier et al. (2021); <sup>7</sup>Weinberg et al. (2019)

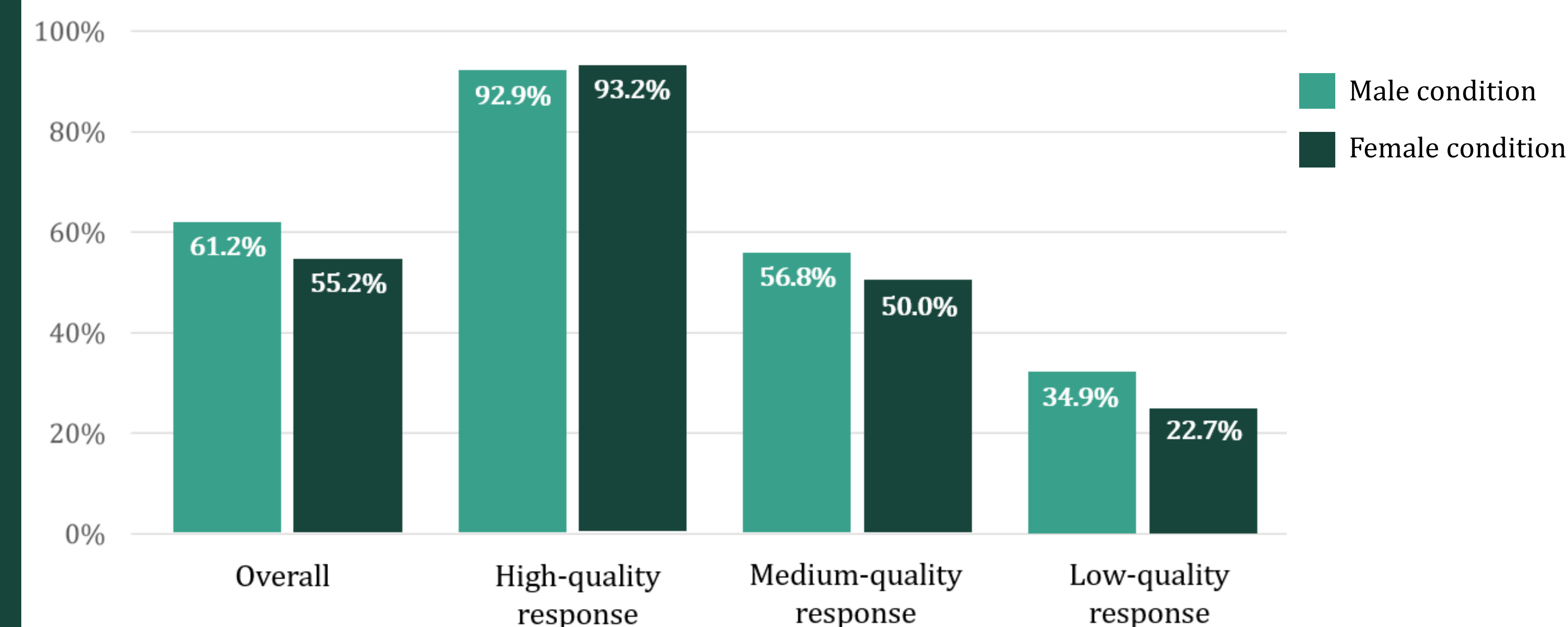
# Interview transcription effectively obscured candidate gender from hiring managers but did not eliminate gender bias in interview evaluations

Figure 1  
Hiring manager ratings



Note: When assessing assertiveness and competence, the male condition was rated significantly higher than the female conditions. All other measures were not significantly different.

Figure 2  
Hiring recommendation frequencies



Note: There were no significant differences in recommendations to hire, but in all conditions except for the high-quality condition, male candidates were favored.

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