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12-1-2021

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### Recommended Citation

Wilson, Erin; Wilkinson, Kendall; and Langan, Margaret, "How College Students' Gender Stereotypes Affect Their Perceptions of Professors" (2021). *Psychology Student Research Showcase*. 60.  
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# How College Students' Gender Stereotypes Affect Their Perceptions of Professors

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## INTRODUCTION

- People's perceptions of others are guided by their developed basic cognitive structures about gender (Bem, 1981).
  - Froehlich et al. (2020) found that participants in their study assigned certain gender stereotypes to men and women. When shown a man who was in a male dominated career, they assigned agentic traits (e.g., independence and self-assurance), while a woman who was in a female dominated career was assigned communal traits (e.g., sympathetic and understanding).
- Research Hypotheses:**
- College students will experience more negative emotions towards female professors that deviate from gender stereotypes and will rate male professors higher on a scale of likelihood to enroll in their class.
  - Male students will be more likely to enroll in a male professor's class, while female students will be more likely to enroll in a female professor's class.
  - The effect of the participant's gender on how likely they are to enroll in a college course depends on the gender of the professor.

## METHODOLOGY

### Participants

- 76 college students recruited through social media
- Mean Age = 20.09 ( $SD = 1.06$ )
- Predominantly female (75%)
- Predominantly Caucasian (92.1%)
- Predominantly Juniors in College (43.4%)

### Procedure

- Participants were randomly assigned to read 1 of 2 biosketches (See Figure 1) and then completed measures.
- Conducted on Qualtrics online

### Measures

- Professor Biosketches**(Okimoto & Brescoll, 2009): Two biosketches were written to be the same except they differed in pronouns. One biosketch used she/her pronouns and the other used he/him pronouns. Participants were randomly assigned to one of these two groups. Shown in figure 1.
- Manipulation Check Question:** After reading the biosketch, the participants were asked "What was the gender of the professor you just read about?"
- Emotions Likert Scale:** The participants were asked about the emotions that they felt while reading about the professor on a scale of 1(not at all) to 7(very much).
  - Admiration
  - Enthusiasm
  - Dissatisfaction
  - Annoyance

## Figure 1

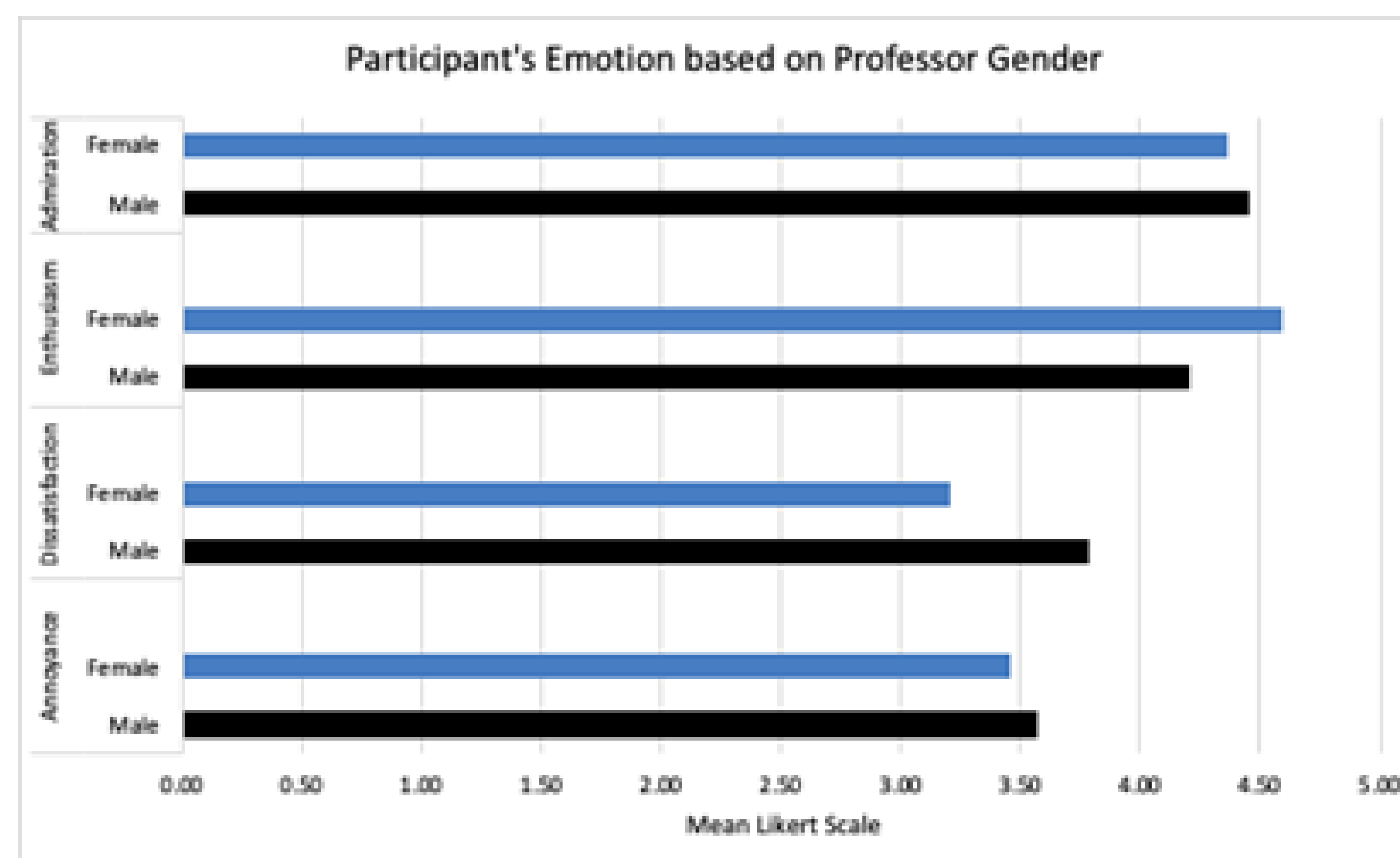
Participants were randomly assigned to read 1 of 2 biosketches:

**1. Male:** Dr. Smith is a professor at LakePoint University. He has been teaching for 22 years. His colleagues described him as "one of the most knowledgeable professors at their university. . . a professor that has always had command over the classroom." A student has been quoted as saying that "This professor's class was entirely lecture based. He uses most of the class time to talk instead of doing group discussion. He enjoyed talking about the subject. He has many passionate opinions that he/she is open to sharing." One review on Rate my Professor stated, "The only thing I would say is that he tends to ramble a lot. Sometimes it would cause us to fall behind or get off task."

**2. Female:** Dr. Smith is a professor at LakePoint University. She has been teaching for 22 years. This professor's colleagues described her as "one of the most knowledgeable professors at their university. . . a professor that has always had command over the classroom." A student has been quoted as saying that "This professor's class was entirely lecture based. She uses most of the class time to talk instead of doing group discussion. She enjoyed talking about the subject. She has many passionate opinions that she is open to sharing." One review on Rate my Professor stated, "The only thing I would say is that she tends to ramble a lot. Sometimes it would cause us to fall behind or get off task."

## TABLE 1

**One-Way Analysis of Covariance:** Testing group differences on emotion towards a professors after reading about either a male or female professor.



## RESULTS

- Using a one-way ANOVA, we found that the gender of the professor did not significantly impact the participants' emotions towards the professors (Table 1)
- Using a *t*-test, we found that the gender of the professor did not have a significant effect on the likelihood of a student to enroll in a course (Likert scale of 1-7).
  - Male Professor:  $M = 4.21$ ,  $SD = 1.37$
  - Female Professor:  $M = 4.37$ ,  $SD = 1.21$
- Using a 2x3 ANOVA, we found that there was no main effect of gender of the professor or gender of the participant on likelihood to enroll in a course. There was also no significant interaction between professor gender and participant gender.
  - Gender of Professor:  $F(1, 49) = 0.16$ ,  $p = 0.69$
  - Gender of Participant:  $F(2, 49) = 1.10$ ,  $p = 0.34$
  - Interaction:  $F(2, 49) = 0.09$ ,  $p = 0.91$

## DISCUSSION

- The current results suggest that students' emotions toward a professor are not related to the professor's gender.
- These results suggest that gender stereotypes do not play a role in college students' decision to enroll in a course.
- The perception of the professor is not affected by the gender of the college student.
- These results should be interpreted in the context of several limitations, such as the demographics of the sample (e.g., predominantly Caucasian, female college students) and the size of the sample.
- For the future, researchers should use a larger, more diverse sample size. They can also do a pilot test using the given biosketches to test how participants perceive the hypothetical professor.

## REFERENCES

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