1-2012

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Recommended Citation

Hoyt, Crystal L. "Gender Bias in Employment Contexts: A Closer Examination of the Role Incongruity Principle." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 48, no. 1 (January 2012): 86-96. doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2011.08.004.

Gender bias in employment contexts: A closer examination of the role incongruity principle

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I acknowledge and thank Aleah Goldin and Kelsey Greenfield for their contributions to this research.

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Abstract

This research extends the role incongruity analysis of employment-related gender bias by investigating the role of dispositional and situational antecedents, specifically political ideology and the salience of cues to the traditional female gender role. The prediction that conservatives would show an anti-female candidate bias and liberals would show a pro-female bias when the traditional female gender role is salient was tested across three experimental studies. In Study 1, 126 participants evaluated a male or a female job applicant with thoughts of the traditional female gender role activated or not. Results showed that when the gender role is salient, political ideology moderates evaluations of the female candidates such that conservatives evaluate her negatively and liberals evaluate her positively. Study 2 (89 participants) replicated this effect and showed that this political ideology-based bias does not occur when the non-traditional female gender role is made salient. Study 2 also demonstrated that the observed effects are not driven by liberals' and conservatives' differing perceptions regarding the female applicant's qualifications for the job. Finally, Study 3 (159 participants) both replicated the political ideology-based evaluation bias for female candidates and demonstrated that this bias is mediated by conservatives' and liberals' attitudes toward the roles of women in society.

Word Count = 8,831

Keywords: Gender bias, role incongruity, employment discrimination, political ideology, traditional gender roles, caregiving

Gender bias in employment contexts: A closer examination of the role incongruity principle

Gender bias in workplace evaluations and hiring decisions is subtle yet pervasive (Heilman & Eagly, 2008). The prejudice experienced by women in employment contexts often stems from gender stereotypes and the perceived mismatch between these gender-based expectations and perceptions of what is required to effectively fulfill the job role (Eagly, 2004). Previous workplace discrimination research has highlighted the gender requirements of the job or the gendered aspects of the applicants to demonstrate the bias at the intersection of inconsistent beliefs regarding group member attributes and social role requirements. The present research extends this work by testing the prediction that situational cues that serve to highlight the mismatch, or incongruency, between gender roles and workplace roles will result in gender-biased responses. Specifically, this research examines whether biased responses can be elicited by situational cues making the traditional female gender role salient during employment-related decision-making episodes. Additionally, this research tests the proposition that reactions to the perceived incongruency between gender stereotypes and role requirements can vary as a function of the perceiver. Namely, people who believe in and support the status quo are more likely to be motivated to defend it than those who are more likely to advocate for social change. The extent to which individuals reject or support tradition and the status quo is a fundamental dimension in the distinction between liberals and conservatives (Jost, Nosek, & Gosling, 2008). Thus, this current research examines the role of political ideology in moderating employment decisions when the traditional female gender role is salient.

Workplace Gender Prejudice and Gender Roles

Ample empirical evidence has demonstrated the gender bias that can permeate employment and workplace decisions (Heilman & Eagly, 2008). The present research situates

workplace gender prejudice within Eagly's (2004) inclusive framework for prejudice. Expanding upon the lack-of-fit model and role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001; Heilman & Eagly, 2008), this understanding of prejudice conceptualizes it as a "negative attitudinal shift that is elicited at the interface between individual beliefs and a social structure composed of social roles" (p. 45). Prejudice is viewed as emerging in particular social contexts, when stereotypic beliefs about members of a particular social group are viewed as being incongruent with a social role. Thus, workplace-related gender bias stems from the mismatch between gender stereotypes and the characteristics deemed crucial for success in the workplace.

Gender roles are consensually shared beliefs about what women and men usually do, the descriptive component, and what they should do, the prescriptive component (Eagly, 1987). Historically, women have held lower status positions and they are more likely to work in the home rather than participating as part of the paid workforce like men have conventionally done. According to social role theory (Eagly, 1987; Eagly, Wood, & Diekman, 2000), the gendered division of labor gives rise to gender stereotypes; by viewing women and men in particular roles, requiring particular behaviors, people begin to associate traits commonly linked to those behaviors to the person engaging in the behavior. Men's traditional participation in the paid labor force has resulted in them being stereotypically viewed as possessing agentic characteristics that emphasize confidence, self-reliance, and dominance. Likewise, women's greater involvement in domestic responsibilities and care-related employment has given rise to the stereotype that women possess communal characteristics that highlight a concern for others (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, & Rosenkrantz, 1972; Deaux & Kite, 1993; Eagly et al., 2000; Williams & Best, 1990).

Workplace discrimination can disadvantage both women and men when applying for jobs

stereotypically associated with the other sex (Heilman & Wallen, 2010; Riach & Rich, 2002). Women can face discrimination when they are seen as violating normative prescriptions (Cialdini & Trost, 1998) by applying for male-typed positions, including leadership positions (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Hoyt, 2010), or by behaving in stereotypically agentic ways (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Rudman & Glick, 1999, 2001). That is, workplace prejudice against women ensues from the incongruity between the female gender role and associated stereotypes and the perceived workplace role requirements (Eagly, 2004). These gender biases play a particularly detrimental role in employment related decision-making processes in part because the generally unstructured nature of those decisions allows for biased decisions without accountability (Powell & Graves, 2003). Oftentimes hiring criteria are not specific and detailed; this facilitates gender discrimination in hiring by enabling the biased construction of these criteria (Uhlmann & Cohen, 2005).

The present research extends upon this theoretical perspective on workplace-related gender prejudice by further examining the role incongruity principle in two ways. This perspective focuses on the important role of context, acknowledging that prejudice is elicited when individuals attempt to enter a social role for which they are stereotypically mismatched. Previous research examining workplace gender discrimination focuses on how the gendered requirements of the job (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992; Lyness & Heilman, 2006; Swim, Borgida, & Maruyama, 1989) or the gender stereotypicality of the applicant, exacerbated by factors such as applicant attractiveness or parenthood (Heilman & Stopeck, 1985; Heilman & Okimoto, 2008; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004), can evince the bias at the intersection of inconsistent beliefs regarding group member attributes and social role requirements. The first way the present research extends this framework is by maintaining and testing the prediction that

situational cues can also serve to highlight the mismatch, or incongruency, between gender role and job role expectations resulting in enhanced bias. Specifically, this research tests the impact of situational cues making the traditional female gender role salient on responses to female and male job applicants.

The traditional gender division of labor, such that women do the majority of housework and caregiving and men serve as the primary economic providers, has weakened but still persists particularly as it pertains to domestic labor. Although men are more likely than women to be the provider, women's participation in the paid labor force has increased dramatically over the past few decades with women representing over 47% of the paid workforce (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). However, the traditional gender roles regarding domestic work persists to a much greater degree. Men's participation in taking care of the children and household chores has increased significantly in recent years (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2008), however, women continue to do the majority, but not all, of the unpaid labor (Belkin, 2008; Craig, 2006; Pailhe & Solaz, 2006; Stevens, Kiger, & Riley, 2001). Indeed, "the primary responsibility for children is still culturally assigned to mothers rather than fathers" (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004, p. 687). Thus, after returning home from their first shift in paid employment outside of the home many women are burdened by a 'second shift' of domestic work (Artis & Pavalko, 2003; Hochschild & Machung, 1989; Milkie, Raley, & Bianchi, 2009). The gendered division of domestic labor is pervasive and situational cues that trigger thoughts of domesticity are likely to enhance the perceived incongruity between women and the workplace. This in turn will likely bias employment decisions regarding women. Importantly, these biased responses are likely moderated by an important predisposition of the decision makers relating to the extent to which they support or reject the gender role status quo: their political ideology.

Political Ideology

The present work also seeks to extend the role incongruity principle of prejudice by incorporating the role of the perceiver in these processes. Although the degree of inconsistency can vary as a function of the stereotypes, the role requirements, and the activation of those beliefs, it can also vary as a function of the perceiver. That is, certain individuals may be more or less inclined to validate and try to uphold the alignment between these beliefs. In particular, people who believe in and support the status quo are more likely to be motivated to defend the status quo than those who advocate for social change. The extent to which people support or reject the status quo is a fundamental dimension of political ideology (Jost et al., 2008). Political ideology is a powerful set of beliefs predicting a wide variety of attitudes, behaviors, and decisions (Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009; Jost et al., 2008). According to Denzau and North (2000, p. 24) "ideologies are the shared framework of mental models that groups of individuals possess that provide both an interpretation of the environment and a prescription as to how that environment should be structured." Although there are other models (for a review, see Jost et al., 2009), political ideology has long been thought to exist on a single left-right dimension ranging from liberal to conservative (Bobbio, 1996). Liberals and conservatives are thought to differ on two core dimensions: the extent to which they advocate for social change or prefer stability and resist change, and the extent to which they reject or accept inequality (Jost et al., 2008). Other characteristics associated with liberalism include progress and flexibility whereas other characteristics such as tradition and order are associated with conservatism.

Ample evidence shows that conservatives are more likely to support tradition, order, and the status quo in comparison to liberals who are more likely to support social change (Kerlinger, 1984). For example, in regards to traditional gender roles, liberals are significantly more likely

to hold positive attitudes towards feminists whereas conservatives are more likely to endorse traditional attitudes toward family and gender roles (Jost et al, 2008; Lye & Waldron, 1997). Moreover, conservatives are more likely than liberals to endorse and defend system-justifying ideologies and policy attitudes that serve to justify and bolster the existing social order and maintain that the current social arrangements are fair and desirable (Glaser, 2005; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004). This preference regarding maintaining or changing the status quo has even been demonstrated in implicit attitudes with the largest difference emerging between liberals' preference for feminism and conservatives' penchant for traditional values (Jost et al., 2008). In addition to being more enthusiastic about the traditional roles of women and men in society- at both the explicit and implicit level- conservatives are also more likely than liberals to stereotype and show prejudice against a variety of low-status and stigmatized social groups including women (Crandall, 1994; Eisenman, 1991; Federico & Sidanius, 2002; Sidanius, Pratto, & Bobo, 1996).

Thus, liberal and conservative decision makers are likely to respond dissimilarly when the female gender role is both made salient and relevant in the employment context. When role incongruities are highlighted, conservatives, who are more likely than liberals to uphold these traditional roles, are likely to show anti-female bias. However, liberals, who are more likely to advocate for social change and opening access to incongruent roles, are more likely to show pro-female bias. Thus, this research predicts bias from both liberals and conservatives, albeit qualitatively dissimilar bias. In employment contexts, situational cues to caregiving have the potential to make traditional gender roles salient. For example, applicants who have had a hiatus from the paid workforce, willingly or not, and have worked as caregivers often explain this on their application. This can serve as a cue to societal gender roles and can activate role congruity-

related biases. Indeed, the situational cue of caregiving has been shown to cue different patterns of gender bias among liberal and conservative decision makers (Biernat & Malin, 2008). Biernat and Malin showed that decisions by labor arbitrators regarding employees fired for child care responsibilities are dependent on political ideology such that conservatives favored the male grievant and liberals favored the female grievant. The current research examines the role of political ideology and the gender role status quo in evaluations of female and male job candidates. This research tests the prediction that political ideology will predict gender bias in candidate evaluations when there is a situational cue activating the female gender role status quo. An endorsement of traditional gender roles amongst conservatives will be demonstrated through less positive evaluations of women applying for employment whereas liberal participants, who are more likely to uphold non-traditional values, will show a pro-female candidate bias.

The Current Research

This research examines and extends the role incongruity principle of workplace-related gender bias by examining both situational and dispositional antecedents to bias. Specifically, this work assesses the role of both situational cues to the traditional female gender role and political ideology of the perceiver in workplace gender bias across three experiments. These studies tested the prediction that political ideology moderates evaluations of female job candidates when the female gender role is made salient. This prediction was tested in Study 1, with participants assigned to evaluate either a female or a male job candidate with half the participants presented a situational cue to activate the traditional female gender role. Taking a different approach to testing the hypotheses, Study 2 activated the female gender role in one condition and the non-traditional female gender role in the other. Study 2 also addressed a potential justificatory mechanism by assessing liberals' and conservatives' perceptions of the

candidates' qualifications for the job. Finally, Study 3 was designed to replicate the political orientation bias a third time and test the hypothesized process by determining if the different pattern of gender bias among liberal and conservative decision makers is indeed driven by adherence to or resistance to the traditional female gender role.

Study 1

In Study 1, participants were asked to read about and evaluate an ostensible job applicant for a position in middle management. The sex of the applicant was manipulated as was a situational cue designed to activate thoughts of the female gender role. Because the role of being a primary caregiver to children remains a highly gendered role (Lips, 2006), thoughts of the traditional female gender role were activated by describing the applicants as the primary caregiver of their children. This approach to triggering thoughts of the female gender role status quo was also chosen because of its applied relevance: explaining one's current position as a primary caregiver is a very real experience for many people, especially women, seeking employment. This experiment tests the moderating role of political ideology in evaluating female and male job candidates when the traditional female gender role is made salient.

Method

Participants and design. One hundred-forty three undergraduate students (51% female; median age = 20; range: 18-29) were recruited to voluntarily participate in an employee evaluation study. Participants were run individually and entered into a raffle for a chance to win a small monetary prize. The experiment employed a 2 (applicant sex: female, male) x 2 (female gender role situational cue: salient, not salient) between-participants design with trait political ideology as a continuous variable.

Procedure and manipulations. Participants were asked to assume the role of employer and to imagine they are looking to fill a middle management position in their company. They were asked to read a job candidate's application including the applicant's background, abbreviated resume, and excerpts from an interview transcript. Applicant sex was manipulated with the applicant name (either Sarah or Ben Williams) and the pronouns used in the description. The female gender role was made salient (or not) through the applicant background information. This information revealed that all applicants were laid off from their position as manager one year ago and have continued searching for full-time employment. All applicants were described as parents and half of the applicants were described as being the primary caregiver of their children during the past year (female gender role salient) whereas the other half were described as being a temporary freelancer (control). The brief resume and interview transcript were identical across all conditions. After reading the applicant's information participants were asked to evaluate the candidate's potential as a future employee. Finally, participants responded to the manipulation check items and indicated their gender, age, and political ideology.

Measures.

Hireability. Using a 9-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 9 (strongly agree), participants indicated the perceived hireability of the candidate on an 8-item measure. Sample items include: "This is a very strong candidate for the position," "I would choose to interview the applicant for the job," and "This candidate would be a dedicated employee" [see Appendix for full scale which is a modified and expanded version of the hireability scale used in Rudman and Glick (1999)]. Responses to the eight items were averaged and higher scores mean better potential as a future employee ($\alpha = .91$).

Political ideology. Political ideology was assessed using a single left-right continuum. Measuring political ideology on a single continuum has been shown to be both theoretically useful and empirically valid (Jost et al., 2009). Participants indicated their political ideology on a 9-point scale ranging from 1 (liberal) to 9 (conservative). The sample had a combination of both liberal and conservative participants with the political ideology mean nearly at the scale midpoint of 5 (see Table 1).

Manipulation check. After completing the dependent measure participants were asked to indicate both the sex of the candidate and what support the candidate provided their family during the past year. Only participants who completed both questions correctly were retained for analyses.

Results

Table 1 presents the scale ranges, means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for the variables in all studies. Fourteen participants were excluded for failing to answer or incorrectly answering at least one of the two manipulation check items and three participants failed to fully complete the measures leaving a final sample size of 126. Because political ideology was measured at the end of the study, a univariate ANOVA was conducted to test if the manipulations had independent or interactive effects on reported ideology. Results confirm that ideology was not influenced by the manipulations (all ps > .05).

A hierarchical regression analysis, predicting hireability scores, was used to test the hypotheses. Participants' political ideology (mean centered), candidate sex (-1 = male, 1 = female), female gender role salience (-1 = not salient, 1 = salient), and participant sex (as a control variable)[1] were entered in the first step, the two-way interactions were entered in the second step, and the three-way interaction was entered into the equation in the third step. Effects

coding was used because the interaction of interest involved two categorical variables and significant interactions were further explored using simple slopes analyses (Aiken & West, 1991). All reported t-test results are 2-tailed. Statistics from all steps of the analysis are reported in Table 2.

The second step of the analysis revealed a significant interaction between political ideology and candidate sex ($\beta = -.22$, $p = .012$; see Table 2). Tests of simple slopes in the female and male candidate conditions revealed a significant association of political ideology with hireability for those in the female candidate condition ($\beta = -.19$, $p = .003$) but a non-significant association for those in the male candidate condition ($\beta = .04$, $p = .522$). As conservatism increased, participants reported lower hireability ratings for female candidates. There was also an interaction between political ideology and gender role salience ($\beta = -.167$, $p = .059$). Simple slopes analyses revealed a significant association between political orientation and perceived hireability for those in the salient condition ($\beta = -.14$, $p = .027$) but not for those in the control condition ($\beta = .04$, $p = .609$). Increases in participant conservatism are associated with decreased hireability ratings for those in the female gender role salience condition.

Finally, as predicted there was a three-way interaction between political ideology, applicant sex, and gender role salience ($\beta = -.169$, $p = .055$). To decompose the three-way interaction, the effects of political ideology and candidate sex were evaluated within the gender role salience conditions. As can be seen in the top panel of Figure 1, candidate sex and political ideology had no impact on hireability ratings when the female gender role was not made salient (control condition; $ts < 1$, $ps > .60$). However, in the gender role salient condition political ideology predicted hireability ($\beta = -.292$, $p = .011$) and this effect is qualified by a significant interaction between political ideology and candidate sex ($\beta = -.370$, $p = .001$). Simple slopes

analyses revealed that, in the female gender role salient condition, political ideology predicted responses to the female candidate ($\beta = -.341$, $p < .001$) but not the male candidate ($\beta = .04$, $p = .607$). More conservative participants reported lower hireability ratings of the female candidate compared to more liberal participants.

Discussion

Results confirm the prediction that political ideology moderates evaluations of female job candidates when the traditional female gender role is made salient. Specifically, more conservative political ideologies were associated with more negative evaluations of female candidates who were described as primary caregivers. Importantly, there was no political orientation bias demonstrated toward the female candidate in the temp worker (control) condition. In addition, evaluations of the male candidate were not moderated by political ideology or the situational cue to the female gender role. Thus, this first study supports the contention that workplace bias against women stems from the inconsistency between the traditional female gender role and the workplace role and it provides preliminary evidence supporting the important role of both situational (cue triggering the female gender role) and dispositional (political ideology) antecedents to gender bias in workplace decisions.

Study 2

Study 1 provided an initial demonstration that political ideology moderates evaluations of female candidates when the traditional female gender role is made salient. Study 2 was designed to replicate these findings using a different approach and to test a potential justificatory mechanism: the observed effects may be driven by liberals' and conservatives' differing perceptions regarding the female applicant's qualifications for the job.

First, Study 2 takes a novel approach to demonstrating that the activation of the traditional female gender role is driving the political orientation bias toward female candidates. Whereas in Study 1 the traditional female gender role was made salient or not, this study uses an alternative control condition: activating the non-traditional female gender role through the use of a counterstereotypical exemplar. This control was chosen based on the literature demonstrating the efficacy of counterstereotypic information in undermining stereotypic attitudes (Blair & Banaji, 1996; Blair, Ma, & Lenton, 2001; Columb & Plant, 2011; Dasgupta & Asgari, 2004). Thus, activating the non-traditional female gender role through exposure to a counterstereotypical female exemplar is expected to undermine the effectiveness of the caregiving trigger in making the female gender role salient in the participants' minds.

Second, this study tests a potential justificatory mechanism for these hiring biases by testing if the effects are driven by conservatives' and liberals' perceiving the qualifications of the female applicant differently. Consistent with a role incongruity perspective (Eagly, 2004), perceiving role incongruity may cause people who support the status quo to suspect that the role incongruent person does not have the required attributes for success in the role whereas those who rebuke the status quo may perceive that individual as being more than equipped to thrive in the role. That is, liberals may view the applicant as more qualified and conservatives may view her as less qualified, thus justifying their biases in favor or against hiring her, respectively. Accordingly, perceptions of the applicants' qualifications are also assessed in this second study.

Method

Participants and design. Ninety-nine undergraduate students (50% female; median age = 20; range: 18-62) were recruited to voluntarily participate in an employee evaluation study with a chance to win a small monetary prize. The experiment employed a 2 (applicant sex:

female, male) x 2 (female gender role situational cue: traditional, non-traditional) between-subjects design with political ideology as a continuous predictor.

Procedure and manipulations. Procedures for this employee evaluation study were similar to those in Study 1 with all applicants described as being primary caregivers (see below). But rather than having a control condition that does not activate gender roles, in this second study the comparison condition makes the non-traditional female gender role salient with a female CEO who serves as a counterstereotypical exemplar (Dasgupta & Asgari, 2004) and is expected to undermine the effectiveness of the caregiving trigger. Because all applicants are described as primary caregivers, the male CEO condition is similar to the salient female gender role condition in Study 1. Although in Study 1 the sex of the CEO was not specified, unless specified otherwise there is an assumption of maleness in top leadership positions (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Before evaluating the job candidate, participants were given hiring-relevant information about the company and its CEO and they were asked to write a few sentences about the CEO in order to reinforce the manipulation of the CEO's sex. Specifically, participants were told:

> Imagine that you are looking to fill a middle management position in your company. Your company is an advertising agency in New York City that prides itself on commitment to its clients. Your company CEO, Jennifer/James Miller, is an award-winning leader who maintains excellent company performance in part by stressing that only the best and brightest are to be offered positions. As the CEO, she/he is the strength of your company and her/his values are highly regarded. Please use two-three sentences to describe, in your own words, what you believe Jennifer/James Miller would view as essential qualities in potential job applicants.

Next, participants were asked to read through the application including the candidates' background and abbreviated resume. Like in Study 1, applicant sex was manipulated with the applicant name (either Sarah or Ben Williams) and the pronouns used in the description. In this study the background and resume information was identical (except pronouns) across participants and it revealed that they were laid off from their position as manager one year ago, have continued searching for full-time employment, and all applicants were described as being the primary caregiver of their children during the past year. After reading about the applicants, participants were asked to evaluate the qualifications of the candidate as well as their potential as a future employee (i.e., hireability), and subsequently respond to the manipulation check and demographic questions.

Measures.

Hireability. The hireability scale was expanded in Study 2 to include four additional items. Participants responses to these 12 items ($\alpha = .89$) using a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Additional items include: "The applicant would likely be hired for the job," and "This candidate would be committed to the job" (see Appendix for entire scale).

Political ideology. Participants indicated their political ideology on a 9-point scale ranging from 1 (liberal) to 9 (conservative). Again, the mean response and the fact that the full range of the scale was used (see Table 1) indicates that the sample did not lean either conservative or liberal.

Qualification Indices: Competence and social skills. Similar to the approach taken by Rudman and Glick (1999), participants rated the job candidate's qualifications on both a competence index and a social skills index. Participants responded to all items using a 6-point

scale from *not at all* to *extremely*. The competence scale consisted of 8 items including: competent, ambitious, and self-sufficient ($\alpha = .87$). The social skills index consisted of 9 items including: supportive, kind, and sensitive to the needs of others ($\alpha = .88$). Not only are both of these attributes important for hiring decisions (Rudman & Glick, 1999), they are also gendered. Thus, these indices will also enable a test of whether gender role salience and political ideology influence perceptions of the male and female applicants' qualifications in a gender stereotypical fashion.

Manipulation check. After completing the dependent measure participants were asked to indicate the sex of the candidate, the sex of the company CEO, and what support the candidate provided their family over the past year.

Results

Participants who did not answer or incorrectly answered at least one of the three manipulation check items were excluded leaving a final sample size of 89. Again, the manipulations did not have independent or interactive effects on reported ideology (all *p*s > .05). To test if political ideology predicted or interacted with either candidate sex or female gender role salience to predict qualifications, two regression analyses were conducted testing both the competence and social skills indices. Participants' political ideology (mean centered), candidate sex (-1 = male, 1 = female), female gender role salience (-1 = non-traditional role salient, 1 = traditional role salient), and participant sex (as a control variable) were entered in the first step, the two-way interactions were entered next, and the three-way interaction was entered into the equation on the final step. The results showed no significant effects of conditions on either of the indices. The only effect was for participant sex on ratings of competence such that female participants rated all candidates as having greater levels of competence than male participants.

Thus, these results indicate that perceptions of applicant qualifications do not vary as a function of political ideology, applicant sex, or cues to traditional or non-traditional female gender roles.

Next, the primary hypotheses were tested using a hierarchical regression analysis similar to that used to predict qualifications, however, in this analysis both indices of qualification were also entered in the first step (see Table 2). Although entered as control variables, both competence ($\beta = .43$, $p < .001$) and social skills ($\beta = .40$, $p < .001$) were significant positive predictors of hireability; this supports the importance of both of these qualification indices in hiring decisions.

The predicted three-way interaction between political ideology, applicant sex, and CEO sex was significant ($\beta = .19$, $p = .015$). To decompose the three-way interaction, the effects of political ideology and candidate sex were evaluated within the gender role salience conditions. As can be seen in Figure 2, although political ideology predicted hireability ($\beta = -.23$, $p = .040$), there is no interaction between political ideology and candidate sex when the non-traditional role is salient ($\beta = .11$, $p = .291$). However, when the traditional role is salient there is a significant interaction between political ideology and candidate sex ($\beta = -.22$, $p = .042$). Simple slopes analyses revealed that political ideology predicted responses to the female candidate ($\beta = -.36$, $p = .035$) but not the male candidate ($\beta = .06$, $p = .590$). Thus, more conservative participants reported lower hireability ratings of the female applicant than more liberal participants when the traditional gender role is activated (caregiver applicant, male CEO) but this was not found when the non-traditional female gender role was activated (female CEO).

Discussion

This study conceptually replicates the gender bias demonstrated in Study 1 with liberals demonstrating a pro-female candidate bias and conservatives an anti-female bias when the

traditional female gender role is salient. Study 2 demonstrates that these biases are evinced when the candidate is described as having been the primary caregiver of her family and the CEO of the company is male, both consistent with traditional gender roles and akin to the traditional gender role condition of Study 1. However, when thoughts of the non-traditional female gender role were activated, by making apparent that the company CEO is a woman, political ideology no longer moderated participants' hireability evaluations of the female candidate. Furthermore, this study revealed that liberals and conservatives do not differentially perceive the female candidate's qualifications in terms of either competence or social skills and the bias demonstrated by liberals and conservatives is not driven by differing perceptions of the candidate's qualifications. In sum, this second study corroborates the first study and together they extend the role congruity perspective to workplace-related bias by showing the importance of both situational cues (triggering the female gender role) and dispositional (political ideology) antecedents to gender bias in workplace decisions.

Study 3

Taken together, Studies 1 and 2 support the contention that both liberals and conservatives demonstrate bias toward female applicants when the traditional female gender role is salient. When either the female gender role is not activated or the non-traditional female gender role is activated these biases are not demonstrated. Furthermore, Study 2 showed that these effects are not driven by people perceiving the qualities of the applicants differentially across conditions. In addition to replicating the bias demonstrated in the first two studies, this third study aims to more precisely examine the role congruity principle by testing the mediating role of adherence to, or rejection of, traditional gender roles in the bias demonstrated toward the female candidate. Thus, in this third study participants evaluate female and male job applicants

with traditional gender roles activated and their attitudes toward the rights and roles of women in society are also assessed.

Method

Participants and design. One hundred-sixty seven undergraduate students (51% female; median age = 20; range: 18-28) were recruited to voluntarily participate in an employee evaluation study. The experiment employed a 2 group (applicant sex: female, male) between-subjects design with political ideology as a continuous predictor.

Procedure and manipulations. Similar to the first two studies, participants were asked to read the applicant's background and abbreviated resume. Again, applicant sex was manipulated with the applicant name (either Sarah or Ben Williams) and the pronouns used in the description. To test if candidate evaluations would differ based on the attributes of the position, the job position was varied to test whether the political ideology-based bias regarding female applicants would be exacerbated when applicants were applying for a leadership position, which is stereotypically associated with men (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Hoyt, 2010), compared to when they were applying for an entry-level position. However, the differing job labels ("entry-level position" versus "mid-level leadership position") had no impact on any of the results. Thus, job position is simply entered as a covariate in analyses.

The background and resume information was identical (except pronouns) across participants. In the background information, all applicants were described as choosing to quit their job after the arrival of their second child to be the primary caregiver of their children and they have just now begun searching for full-time employment. Participants were asked to evaluate the candidate's potential as a future employee. Finally, participants responded to the

manipulation check, completed the Attitudes Toward Women scale and indicated their gender, age, and political ideology.

Measures.

Hireability. The hireability scale was expanded in Study 2 to include ten additional items. Participants responses to these 18 items ($\alpha = .94$) using a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Additional items include: "The candidate would likely be hired for the job," "This candidate would be committed to the job," and "Once hired, this applicant would rise quickly within the organization's hierarchy."

Political ideology. Participants indicated their political ideology on an 8-point scale ranging from 1 (liberal) to 8 (conservative). The sample was again representative of the political spectrum as indicated by the mean response and participants' use of the full range of the scale (see Table 1).

Attitudes Toward Women Scale. Participants completed the 15-item form of the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS; Spence & Helmreich, 1972, 1978). The AWS measures attitudes regarding appropriate responsibilities, rights, and roles for women versus men in society (Eagly & Mladinic, 1989; Spence & Hahn, 1997). Responses were given on a 6-point response scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Seven of the items indicate egalitarian attitudes toward women such as "Women should assume their rightful place in business and all the professions along with men." The remaining items indicated anti-feminist attitudes such as "It is ridiculous for a woman to run a business and for a man to cook and clean;" these items were reversed scored and the items were averaged ($\alpha = .85$). Thus, higher scores on the AWS represent more progressive attitudes toward women's roles.

Manipulation check. After completing the dependent measure participants were asked to indicate the sex of the candidate.

Results

Participants who did not answer or incorrectly answered the manipulation check item were excluded leaving a final sample size of 159. A multivariate ANOVA was conducted to test if the manipulation had any effect on either reported ideology or attitudes toward women. The manipulation did not significantly impact attitudes toward women ($p > .05$) but it did impact reported ideology ($p = .03$) such that participants rating female candidates reported slightly more conservative ideologies than those rating male candidates. Because this was not found in the first two studies, it is likely that by chance slightly more conservative people were randomly assigned to the female compared to male applicant condition; this finding, however, neither works for not against the moderation hypotheses.

As in Study 1, the hypotheses were tested using regression analyses predicting hireability scores. Participants' political ideology (mean centered) and candidate sex (-1 = male, 1 = female) were entered into the first step along with participant sex and position as control variables and the interaction term was entered into the equation on the second step.

There was an effect for political orientation ($\beta = -.16$, $p = .051$; see Table 2) such that conservatism is associated with lower ratings. Next, the predicted interaction between political ideology and candidate sex was significant ($\beta = -.16$, $p = .038$). As shown in Figure 3, tests of simple slopes in the female and male candidate conditions revealed a significant association of political ideology with hireability for those in the female candidate condition ($\beta = -.29$, $p = .009$) but a non-significant association for those in the male candidate condition ($\beta = .00$, $p = .99$). As conservatism increased, participants reported lower hireability ratings for female candidates.

Mediational analyses. Finally, to test the prediction that traditional attitudes toward women mediate the impact of political ideology on impressions of female candidates, a mediational analysis using the bootstrapping approach as advocated by Shrout and Bolger (2002) was conducted. Although the traditional Sobel test supports the predictions, it is known to be problematic when used with small samples and to make unrealistic assumptions regarding the shape of the sampling distribution of indirect effects (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Using Preacher and Hayes' (2008) macro, a bootstrap-based bias corrected and accelerated confidence interval (95%) for the indirect effect was generated by taking 1,000 samples from the original data set. These estimates were used to calculate estimates of the conditional indirect effect of political ideology on hireablity scores through attitudes toward women. The bias-corrected and accelerated confidence interval was {-.18, -.01}. Thus, the cutoff value in the upper-tail of the bootstrap distribution of conditional indirect effects was below zero indicating that the conditional indirect effect is significant. In sum, the direction of the paths indicate that more conservative ideologies are associated with more anti-feminist, traditional attitudes toward women, which in turn predict lower hireability scores (see Figure 4).

Discussion

Results from this third study replicate those from the first two: political ideology moderated evaluations of female, but not male, job candidates when the female gender role status quo was activated. Again, the results demonstrated that people with conservative political ideologies evaluated the female candidate more negatively whereas liberal participants evaluated her more positively. Importantly, this study also examined the hypothesized mediational process and results showed that adherence to, or rejection of, the traditional female gender role mediated the bias demonstrated toward the female job candidate. That is, liberals' more egalitarian views

of gender roles were associated with their pro-female applicant bias whereas conservatives' more traditional views predicted their anti-female bias.

General Discussion

Conflicting gender role and job role expectations have been shown to contribute to gender bias in employment contexts (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Heilman & Eagly, 2008). This research was designed to examine employment-related gender bias from a role incongruity perspective (Eagly, 2004) by extending this analysis to include the roles of situational cues to traditional gender roles and the perceiver's political orientation in eliciting bias. Across three studies, this research shows that evaluations of female, but not male, candidates were moderated by political ideology when the traditional female gender role was salient compared to when this role was not salient or the non-traditional female gender role was made salient. Specifically, when the female gender role was activated conservative evaluators rated the female candidate more negatively than the liberal evaluators. Furthermore, Study 3 examined the mediating role of adherence to or rejection of the traditional female gender role in the biased evaluations of female candidates by the liberal and conservative evaluators. In accordance with predictions, liberals' more positive evaluations and conservatives' more negative evaluations of the job candidate were driven by their denunciation of or support of, respectively, the traditional female gender role.

This research points to the complexity and subtlety of employment gender bias and has a number of implications for psychological theory. To begin with, this research substantiates the importance of examining both dispositional and situational antecedents when examining people's responses to role incongruities (Eagly, 2004). In terms of dispositional antecedents, this research emphasizes the crucial role of political ideologies in employment gender bias. Although

previous research has shown that conservatives are more likely than liberals to show prejudice toward low-status groups including women (Crandall, 1994; Eisenman, 1991; Federico & Sidanius, 2002; Sidanius et al., 1996), the current research shows a more nuanced view of ideology-related biases. First, this research demonstrates that the biased evaluation of the female candidate only occurs when there is a situational trigger cueing the female gender role; when no cues are present or the non-traditional female gender role is salient this political orientation-based bias does not occur. Furthermore, this research extends Eagly's conceptualization of prejudice as an attitude toward group members in a role incongruent context by both taking the perceiver into account and demonstrating the capacity for positive attitudinal change. The bias demonstrated in this research was not simply a negative evaluation of the female candidate. When the incongruity between the female gender role and the employment role was made salient, conservatives demonstrated a negative attitude toward the females in the role incongruent context (as job candidates). However, under these conditions liberals showed a bias in favor of the female candidate. Thus, while conservatives demonstrated the prejudice that can emerge at the intersection of stereotypes and social roles (Eagly, 2004), liberals appear to favor the female candidate's access to incongruent roles.

These studies also further our understanding of the cues than can serve to highlight role incongruities and elicit biases in response to individuals attempting to enter stereotypically incongruent social roles. Previous research has focused primarily on characteristics of either the individual or the role that highlight the role mismatches (Eagly et al., 1992; Heilman & Stopeck, 1985; Heilman & Okimoto, 2008; Lyness & Heilman, 2006; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004; Swim et al., 1989). This research focused on a situational cue to make the traditional female gender role salient: presenting the job candidates as primary caregivers of their family. This caregiver

approach to activating thoughts of the female gender role was chosen for both theoretical and practical reasons: not only does the primary caregiver role remain heavily gendered (Lips, 2006), but many people, especially women, find themselves explaining their current position as a primary caregiver to potential future employers. This research also points to the powerful role that exposure to a counterstereotypic female exemplar can play undermining the effect of the caregiving cue in eliciting bias. Thus, as confirmed in both this and related research, caregiving scenarios do appear to activate gender stereotyping and result in distinct patterns of gender bias among liberals and conservatives (Biernat & Malin, 2008). Furthermore, this research substantiates the claims made by Biernat and Malin (2008, p. 895) that "though conservatism might generally predict bias in favor of high status groups (and though liberalism might generally predict bias in favor of low-status groups), these patterns may require additional situational triggers…to be expressed."

In addition to examining both dispositional and situational antecedents to role incongruity-based bias, this research sought to examine the hypothesized process. It was predicted that the situational cue to the female gender role would result in different biases from liberals and conservatives that are driven by the extent to which they uphold or rebuke traditional roles. Thus, this research tested and supported the moderating role of participants' attitudes regarding appropriate responsibilities, rights, and roles for women versus men in society in the observed biases. Additionally, this research tested a potential justificatory mechanism involved in this process: the effects may be justified by differing perceptions regarding the female applicant's qualifications for the job. That is, conservatives and liberals might have perceived the qualifications of the female applicant differently. This potential mechanism was not supported- perceptions of applicant qualities were not moderated by political orientation and the bias

persisted even when controlling for perceptions of the candidate's qualifications. Thus, these data suggest that the different patterns of bias demonstrated by liberals and conservatives are driven primarily by their support of either social change or traditional social organization in regard to sex roles and are not justified by differing perceptions of the candidate's qualifications. That is, even though both conservatives and liberals similarly rate the female candidate's qualifications, they diverge on their ratings of her hirability with those who endorse traditional female gender roles (conservatives) rating her as less hireable and those who denounce those roles (liberals) rating her as more hireable.

Further theoretical and practical advancements can be made by addressing some of the limitations of the current manuscript. It would be valuable to examine these ideology-based bias processes across occupations that vary in the extent to which they are male- or female-dominated. The first two studies employed middle management positions in an attempt to present a job position that is not dominated by one sex (Eagly & Carli, 2007). However, whether people actually perceive middle management positions as gender-neutral remains unclear and is an empirical question. In the third study, an attempt was made to manipulate the type of position by presenting it as an entry-level or mid-level leadership position. This, however, had no impact on any of the results. The simple manipulation may have been too subtle and thus ineffectual or there actually may be no difference across these employment positions. Perhaps future research can hone in more specifically on gendered occupations without varying the level of the position (e.g., testing nurse versus carpenter positions). It would be of both theoretical and practical import to further examine if and how the gendered nature of the job position influences the effects observed in this research. In addition to testing whether the type of position moderates the

bias demonstrated against female applicants, this would also allow for a test of role incongruity-based bias against men in the workplace (in female-dominated occupations).

A broader examination of situational triggers will also help further elucidate this role incongruity bias in employment contexts. It would be theoretically and practically informative to examine a variety of situational cues to the female gender role, such as pregnancy, and to examine both factors that are directly associated with the applicant (e.g., serving as a caregiver, being pregnant) and those that are not directly associated with the applicant (e.g., the decision-maker having a co-worker who is leaving for maternity leave). Although motherhood has been demonstrated to strongly contribute to gender inequality in the workplace (Anderson, Binder, & Krause, 2003; Heilman & Okimoto, 2008), this research did not reveal a general motherhood penalty. Based on the current research, motherhood alone does not appear to activate the traditional female gender role in a manner that evokes political ideology-based bias. Applicants in all conditions were described as parents thus if motherhood alone served as a powerful enough situational cue to activate the bias there would have also been an interaction between candidate sex and political ideology observed in the control conditions. However, it is possible that cueing parenthood in a more overt and gendered manner would activate the different patterns of gender bias among conservatives and liberals. Finally, although this research focused on the traditional female gender role (which is the role that is incongruent with workplace roles), it would be of interest to determine whether situational cues focused on the traditional male gender role could also serve to highlight the incongruity between females (and their traditional role) and the workplace.

This research suggests that gender role stereotypic thoughts were undermined when thoughts of a non-traditional, female CEO were salient. However, the impact of non-traditional

female role information is likely both complex and multifaceted. In Study 2 a situational trigger not directly associated with the candidate, the company's female CEO, was used to activate counter-stereotypic thoughts regarding gender with the goal of undermining traditional female gender stereotypic thoughts (Blair & Banaji, 1996; Blair, Ma, & Lenton, 2001; Columb & Plant, 2011; Dasgupta & Asgari, 2004). It is possible, however, that certain non-traditional, or counterstereotypical, situational triggers may instead serve to activate traditional gender stereotypic thoughts. For example, counterstereotypic triggers that are directly associated with the candidate may result in the candidate primarily being perceived as violating gender-role expectancies which may result in backlash effects (Rudman & Glick, 1999; 2001).

Although this research demonstrated that evaluations of female candidates were impacted by the evaluator's political ideology and the female gender role situational cue, evaluations of the male candidate were not. Thus, even though by spending time as a caregiver the male candidate was violating the prescriptive male gender stereotype, the stereotypic beliefs about the attributes of men that prescribe how they should, or ought to, be (Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Glick & Fiske, 1999; Heilman, 2001), he was neither punished nor given preferential treatment for doing so. This bolsters the role congruity argument that the activation of the female gender role, emphasizing the association of women with the private sphere, only serves to impact evaluations of women in an employment (public sphere) context because of the incompatibility of the social roles. Assessing evaluations of women and men in domestic, as opposed to workplace, contexts would allow for a further test of the role of political ideology in responses to role incongruity.

In addition to the theoretical advancements, this research has important applied implications. Although this research was conducted with undergraduate students and not

employers, researchers have shown substantial external validity of experimental work in organizational behavior (Stone-Romero, 2002). There is "strong and convincing evidence of the similarity of laboratory and field research" in areas including decision making and employee evaluations and the "criticisms of laboratory research are often based upon stereotypes about such research, not on objective evidence of its supposed deficiencies" (Stone-Romero, 2002, p. 79). Further, by merging the literatures on workplace gender bias and political ideology, these studies contribute to the growing literature on family responsibilities discrimination and offer further research support for the role of stereotyping and implicit bias in illegal gender discrimination (Williams & Bornstein, 2008).

These studies indicate that subtle factors serving to activate the female gender role have a substantial impact on women's, and not men's, perceived hireability: liberals give preferential treatment to women, which might come at the expense of competing male applicants, whereas conservatives penalize them. The fact that a significant number of women take time from their paid jobs to take care of children and can find themselves explaining this employment gap to employers puts women in a precarious situation. These employment-related gender biases are particularly worrisome because employment decisions are generally unstructured and allow for biased decisions without accountability (Powell & Graves, 2003; Uhlmann & Cohen, 2005). These findings only serve to strengthen the call for both workplace reforms aimed at increasing objectivity, thereby reducing the impact of conscious and unconscious biases, in evaluations and hiring and promotion decisions (Eagly, & Carli, 2007) as well as continued research investigating how to curtail biases during the hiring and evaluation processes.

Summary

Gender role expectations have been shown to play a prominent role in employment-

related gender prejudice. The perceived mismatch between gender role expectations and perceptions of what is required to effectively fulfill the job role has been shown to result in gender-based discrimination (Eagly, 2004; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Fiske & Lee, 2008; Heilman, 2001). This research tested the role of both situational and dispositional factors in influencing the nature of these biased responses. Specifically, this work tested and supported the prediction that when the traditional female gender role is made salient during employment decision-making episodes, individuals who support the gender role status quo, conservatives, discriminate against women in employment decisions whereas individuals who actively reject the status quo, liberals, show favor toward female candidates. Furthermore, this research suggests that these different patterns of bias are driven by relative adherence to or rejection of traditional gender roles by conservatives and liberals. This work theoretically contributes to a role incongruity interpretation of gender workplace prejudice by taking into consideration both situational and dispositional factors. Additionally, it has important practical significance for helping to identify and understand employment bias. Hopefully this initial investigation taking a combined dispositional and situational approach and merging gender role and political ideology perspectives within an employment gender bias context will foster future research to facilitate practical application.

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Footnotes

[1]Participant sex was included as a covariate in analyses both because women and men have been shown to evaluate male and female candidates differently (Eagly & Carli, 2007) and because there is evidence that women score more liberal in their political orientation than do men (Pratto, Stallworth, & Sidanius, 1997).

Table 1

Scale Ranges, Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations

Variable	Range	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3
Study 1						
1. Ideology	1-9	4.79	1.97	-		
2. Hireability	1-9	7.29	1.07	-.12	-	
Study 2						
1. Ideology	1-9	4.26	1.98	-		
2. Hireability	1-6	4.66	.76	-.27*	-	
3. Competence	1-6	4.40	.88	-.18	.62**	
4. Social skills	1-6	4.55	.76	-.14	.58**	.37**
Study 3						
1. Ideology	1-8	4.36	1.65	-		
2. Hireability	1-6	4.44	.72	-.14	-	
3. Att. Women	1-6	5.00	.83	-.50**	.19*	

Note. $N\_study1 = 126$, $N\_study2 = 89$, $N\_study3 = 159$; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

Table 2
Regression Analyses Predicting Candidate Evaluations

	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3	
Regression Term	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
Study 1						
Participant sex (Cov)	.159	.094	.184*	.092	.182*	.091
Political ideology	-.118	.048	-.111	.047	-.098	.047
Candidate sex	.055	.094	.045	.092	.038	.091
Role salience	-.072	.095	-.079	.092	-.074	.091
Cand sex x role salience			.028	.092	.031	.091
Ideology x cand sex			-.223*	.047	-.192*	.047
Ideology x role salience			-.167*	.047	-.188*	.047
Ideology x candsex x role salience					-.169*	.047
Multiple R	.220		.359		.395	
Adjusted R^2	.017		.077		.098	
R^2 change	.048		.08		.027	
Regression F (df)	1.54 (4,121)		3.63* (3,118)		3.76* (1, 117)	
Study 2						
Participant sex (Cov)	.066	.062	.062	.062	.059	.060
Competence (Cov)	.429**	.077	.431**	.078	.458**	.076
Social skills (Cov)	.396**	.081	.385**	.081	.373**	.079
Political ideology	-.133	.030	-.124	.030	-.140	.029
Candidate sex	.000	.058	-.010	.058	.019	.057
Role salience	.007	.059	.011	.059	.028	.057
Cand sex x role salience			.110	.059	.110	.057
Ideology x cand sex			-.071	.030	-.076	.029
Ideology x role salience			-.035	.030	-.025	.029
Ideology x cand sex x role salience					.186*	.029
Multiple R	.742		.765		.777	
Adjusted R^2	.516		.522		.552	
R^2 change	.550		.022		.032	
Regression F (df)	16.31** (6,80)		1.31 (3,77)		6.17* (1, 76)	
Study 3						
Participant sex (Cov)	.140	.059	.144	.058		
Position (Cov)	-.082	.058	-.075	.058		
Political ideology	-.142	.037	-.157	.037		
Candidate sex	.013	.059	.016	.058		
Ideology x cand sex			-.163*	.037		
Multiple R	.230		.281			
Adjusted R^2	.028		.049			
R^2 change	.053		.026			
Regression F (df)	2.14 (4,154)		4.37* (1,153)			

Note. Cov: covariate. * $p \leq .05$. ** $p < .01$.

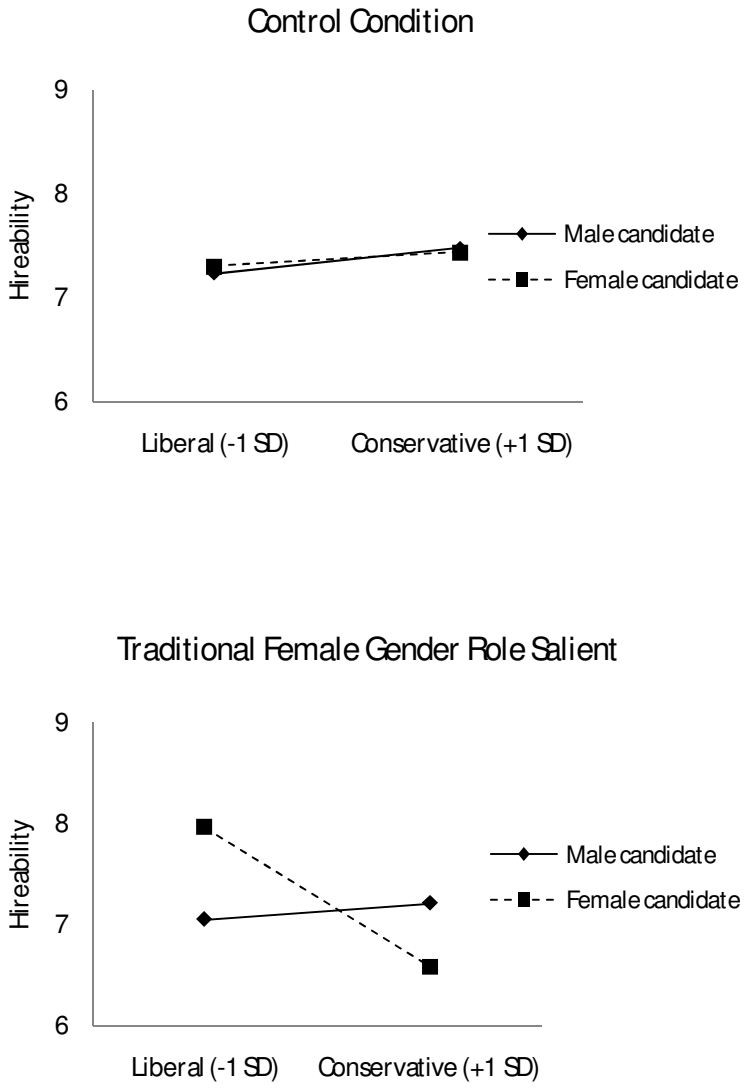


Figure 1. Study1: Predicting hireability from political ideology and candidate sex by gender role salience. Hireability scale ranged from 1-9.

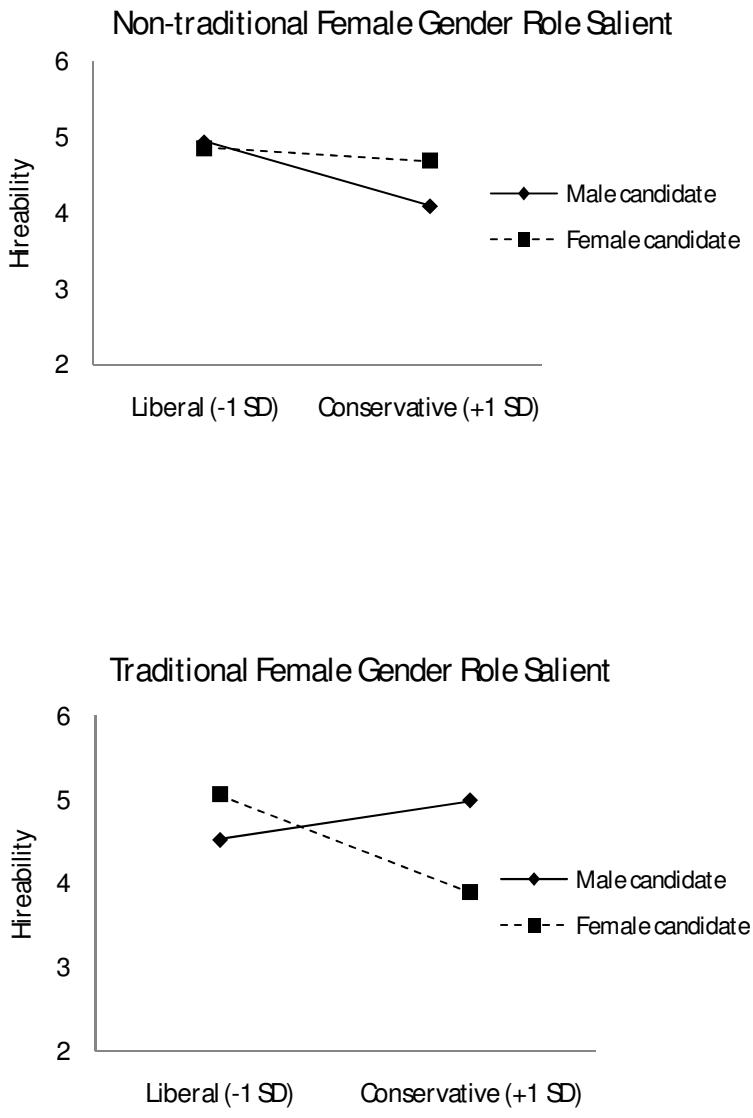


Figure 2. Study2: Predicting hireability from political ideology and candidate sex by gender role salience conditions. Hireability scale ranged from 1-6.

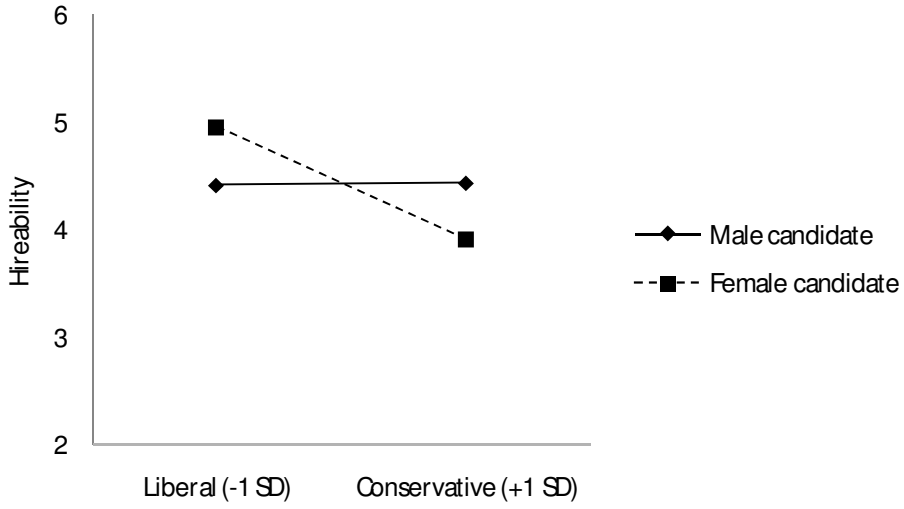
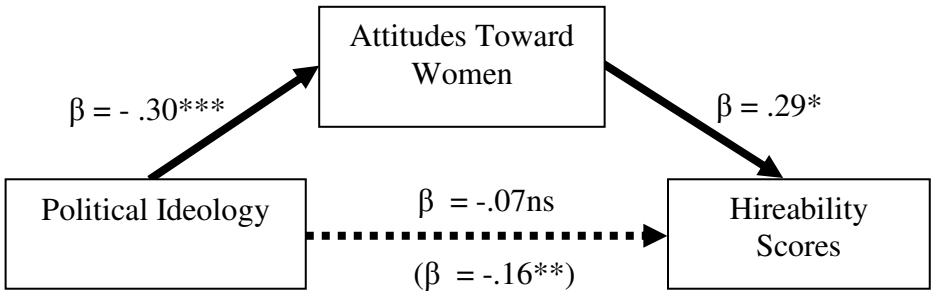


Figure 3. Study 3: Predicting hireability from political ideology and candidate sex. Hireability scale ranged from 1-6.



*= p<.05; ** = p< .01; *** = p < .001

Figure 4. Attitudes toward women as a mediator of political ideology on participants' ratings of female applicants. Higher scores mean more conservative political ideologies, more non-traditional, pro-feminist attitudes toward women's rights, and more positive candidate evaluations.

Appendix

Hireability scale.

1. This is a very strong candidate for the position.
2. This candidate would be a dedicated employee.
3. I respect the applicant.
4. I would choose to interview the applicant for the job.
5. Many people would have respect for this applicant.
6. I would hire the applicant for the job.
7. I hope the applicant finds employment soon.
8. This candidate deserves to make a good salary.
9. This candidate would work well with others.
10. The applicant would likely be hired for the job.
11. This candidate would be committed to the job.
12. This candidate would sacrifice a lot for the job.
13. The applicant deserves this job.
14. Once hired, this applicant would rise quickly within the organization's hierarchy.
15. Once hired, I would quickly promote this applicant.
16. I would offer this candidate top salary.
17. I would entrust this candidate with important projects.
18. This candidate would be a good team player.

Note: Study 1: Items 1-8; Study 2: Items 1-12; Study 3: Items 1-18.

This scale is a modified and expanded version of Rudman and Glick's (1999) scale. It was developed across three studies, each addition enhancing content validity by allowing for more detailed measurements regarding hireability. This scale was highly reliable across all studies, with the highest reliability coming from the complete 18-item scale.