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Women in Science & Engineering Leadership Institute
University of Wisconsin-Madison

The Climate for Faculty of Color in the Biological & Physical Sciences at UW- Madison

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WISELI

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Climate

- The atmosphere or ambience of an organization as perceived by its members. An organization's climate is reflected in its structures, policies, and practices; the demographics of its membership; the attitudes and values of its members and leaders; and the quality of personal interactions. (UW-Madison, 2002).



Climate

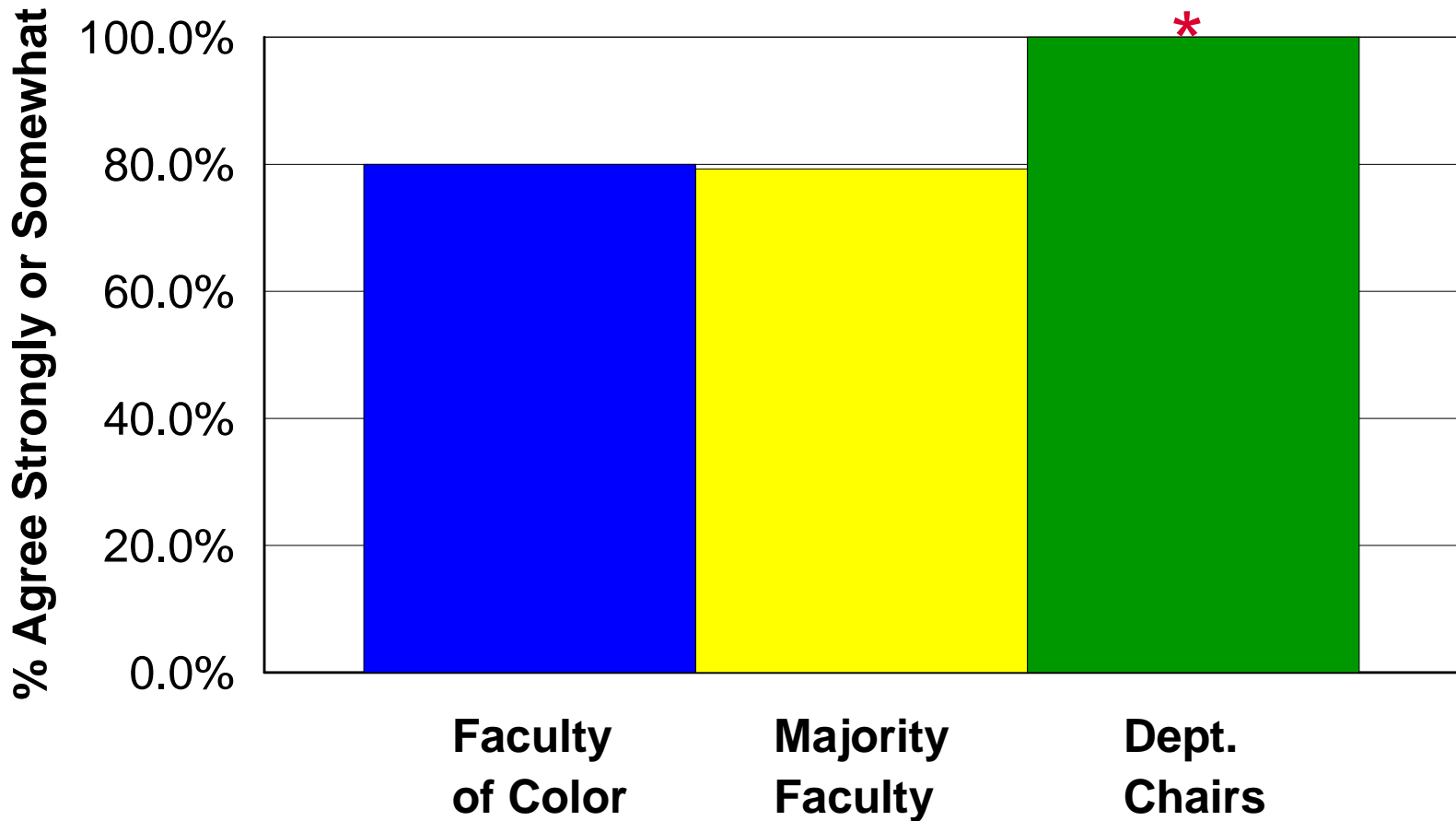
- Measurement
 - Department vs. University
 - “For me” vs. “For others”
 - Specific elements vs. general climate
- *Study of Faculty Worklife at UW-Madison*
 - 2003: 59.1% response rate
 - 2006: 54.4% response rate



Climate

- “The climate for faculty of color in my department is good”
 - Faculty of color vs. majority faculty
 - Department chairs vs. others

Figure 2. The climate for faculty of color in my department is good





Climate CHANGE

- Stages of change model
 - Precontemplation
 - Contemplation
 - Preparation
 - Action
 - Maintenance
- UW-Madison in *precontemplation* stage in 2003!



WISELI Interventions

- How did WISELI propose to affect departmental climate at UW-Madison?
 - *Enhancing Department Climate: A Chair's Role*
 - *Searching for Excellence & Diversity* workshops for search committee chairs and members
- Relationships between workshop participation and survey responses

Figure 6a. The Climate for Faculty of Color in My Department is Good

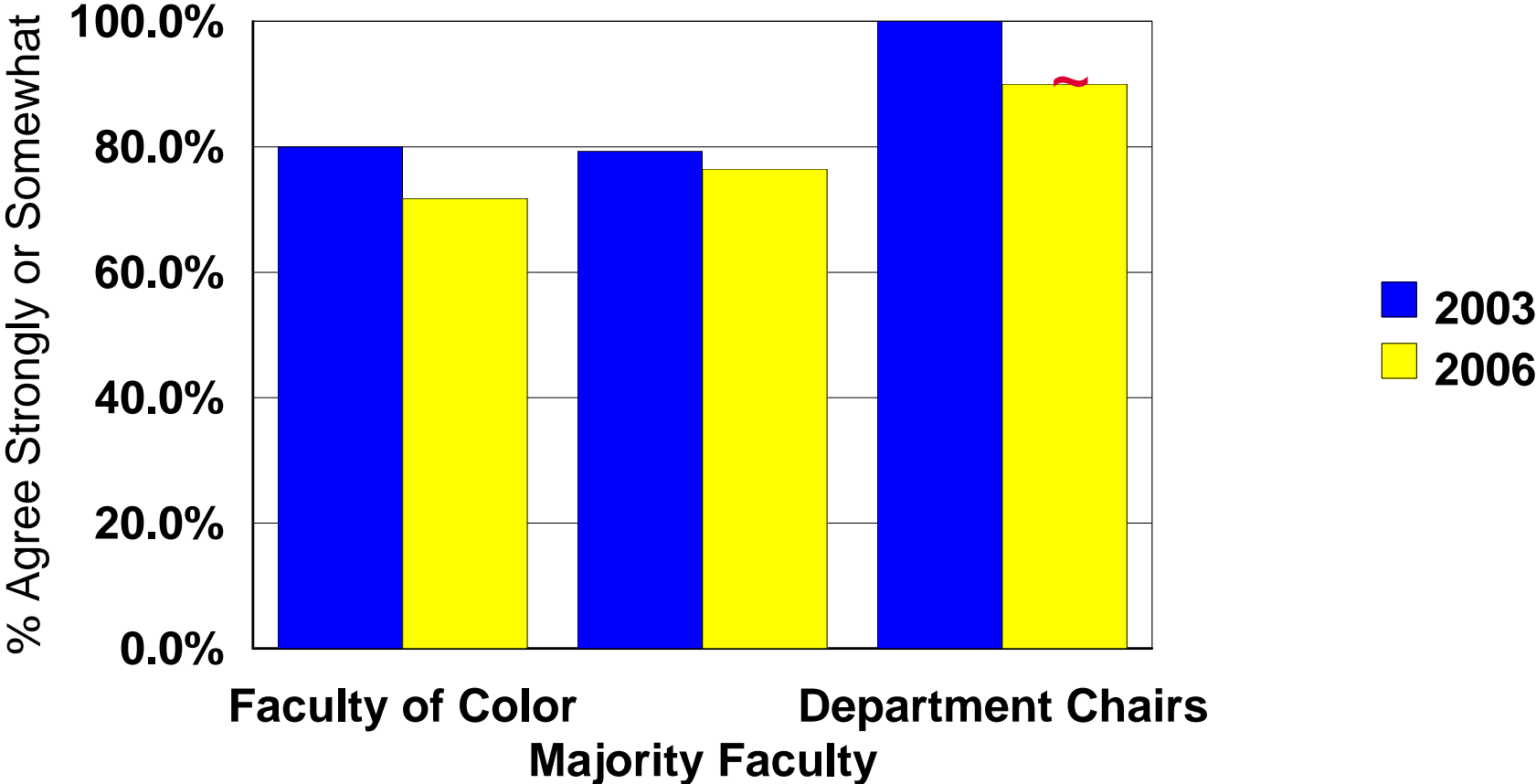
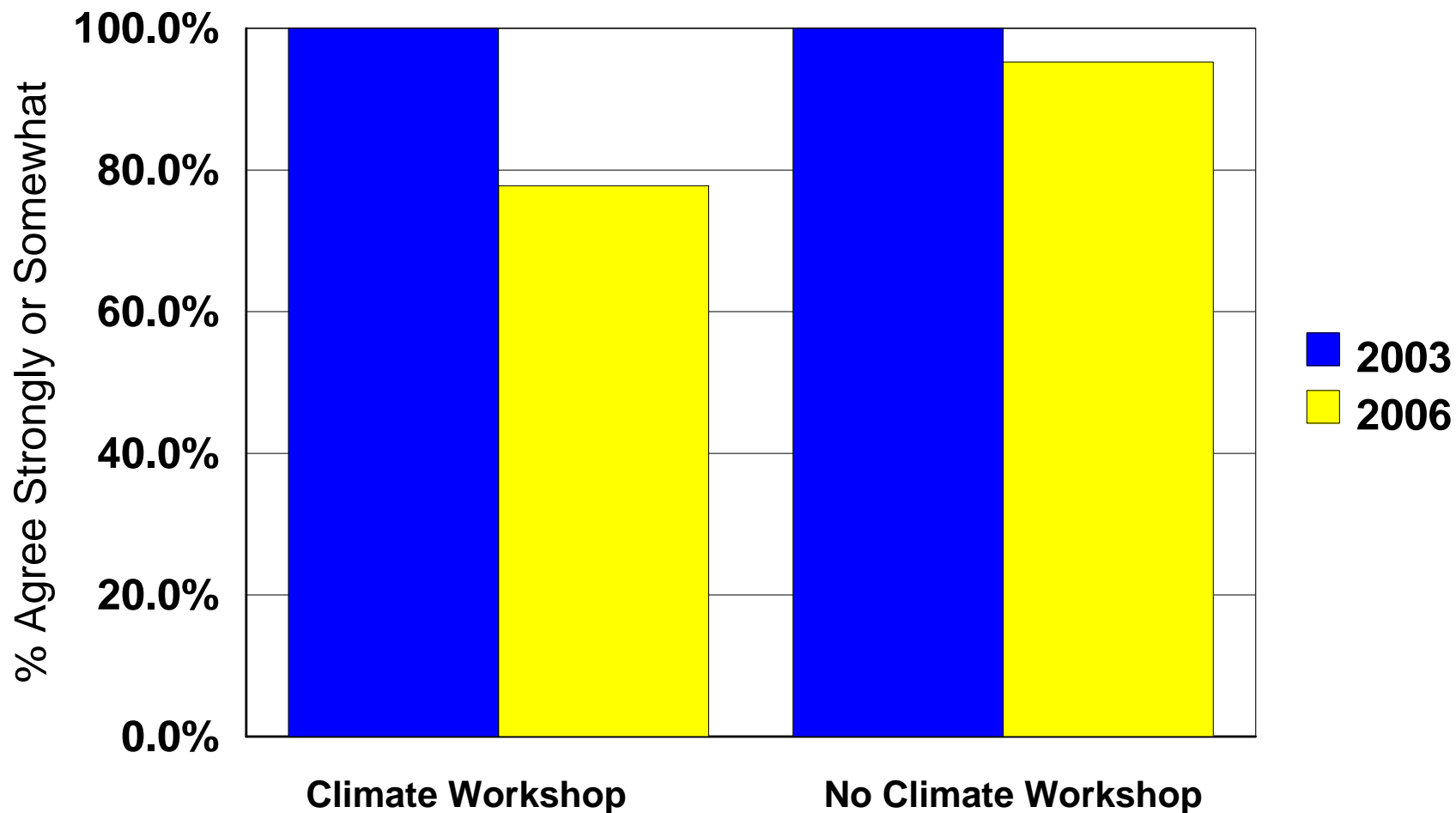
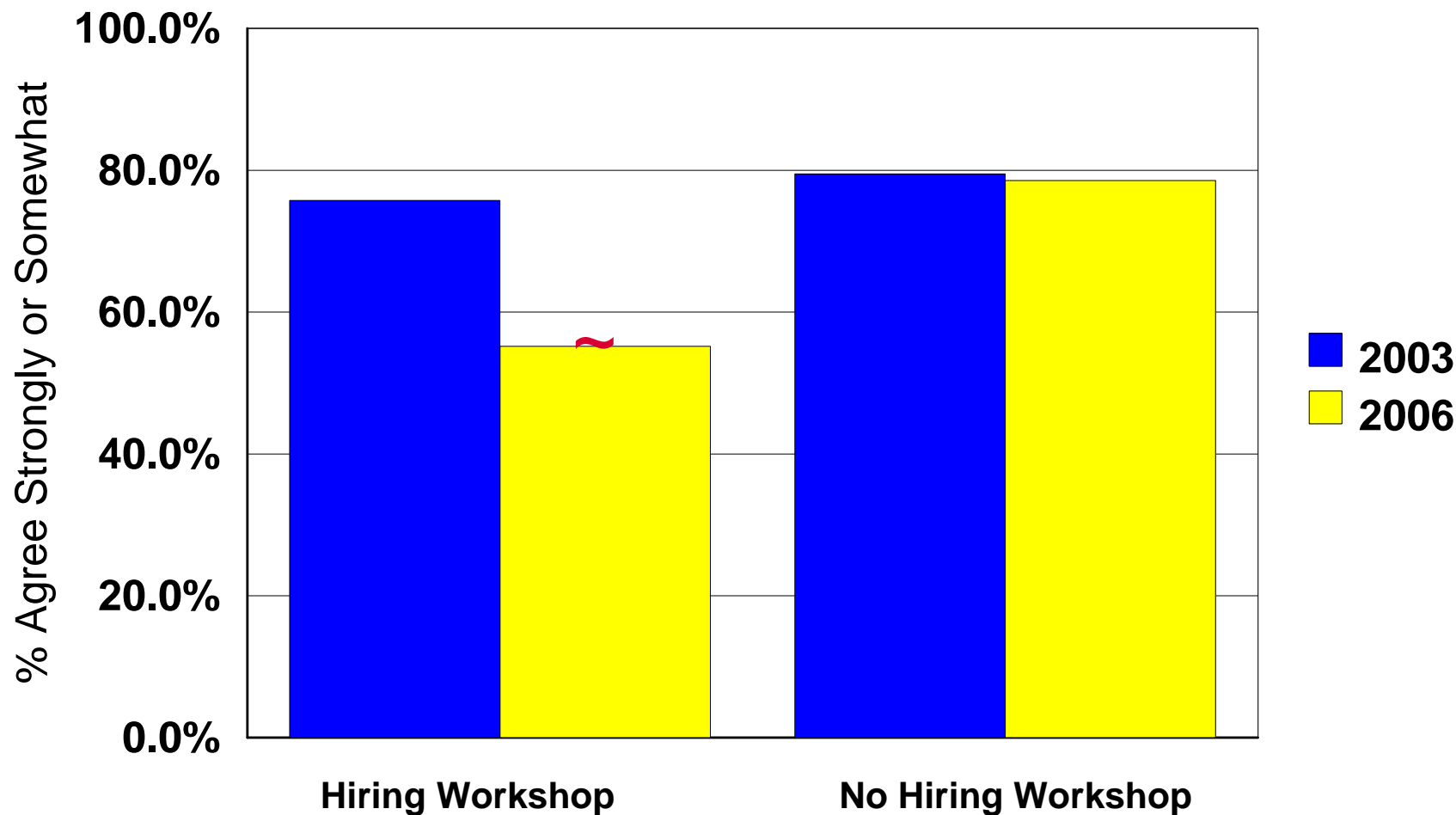


Figure 21. Climate for Faculty of Color is Good Responses of Department Chairs



**Figure 23. Climate for Faculty of Color is Good
Responses of Majority (White) Faculty**





Conclusions

- Faculty of color in biological & physical sciences are noting a decreasing climate for faculty of color from 2003 to 2006
 - On campus overall, there is no change
- The decreasing percentage of workshop participants who agree that faculty of color have good climate indicates movement along stages of change → contemplation.



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The Impact of Unconscious Biases & Assumptions on the Faculty Hiring Process



Unconscious bias

- What is “unconscious bias”?
- How might unconscious biases affect the search process?
- How can a search committee overcome these tendencies?



What is “unconscious bias”

- Unconscious bias and assumptions
- Schemas
- Stereotyping
- Cognitive shortcuts
- Statistical discrimination
- Implicit associations

The tendency of our minds to judge *individuals* based on characteristics (real or imagined) of *groups*



Unconscious bias

- When shown photographs of people who are the same height, evaluators overestimated the heights of male subjects and underestimated the heights of female subjects.
- When shown photographs of men of similar athletic ability, evaluators rated the athletic ability of African American men higher than that of white men.
- When asked to rate the quality of verbal skills indicated by a short text, evaluators rated the skills as lower if they were told an African American wrote the text than if they were told a white person wrote it, and gave higher ratings when told a woman wrote it than when told a man wrote it.



Unconscious bias in the search process

- Applications/CVs/Résumés
- Reference Letters
- Evaluation of Leadership/Competence



Unconscious bias in the search process: Applications/CVs/Résumés

- 238 academic psychologists sent a curricula vitae with either male or female name
 - Entry level: more likely to vote to hire man, more likely to indicate man had adequate teaching, research, and service experience
 - High level: no gender differences
 - No differences between male and female evaluators
 - More write-in comments for women

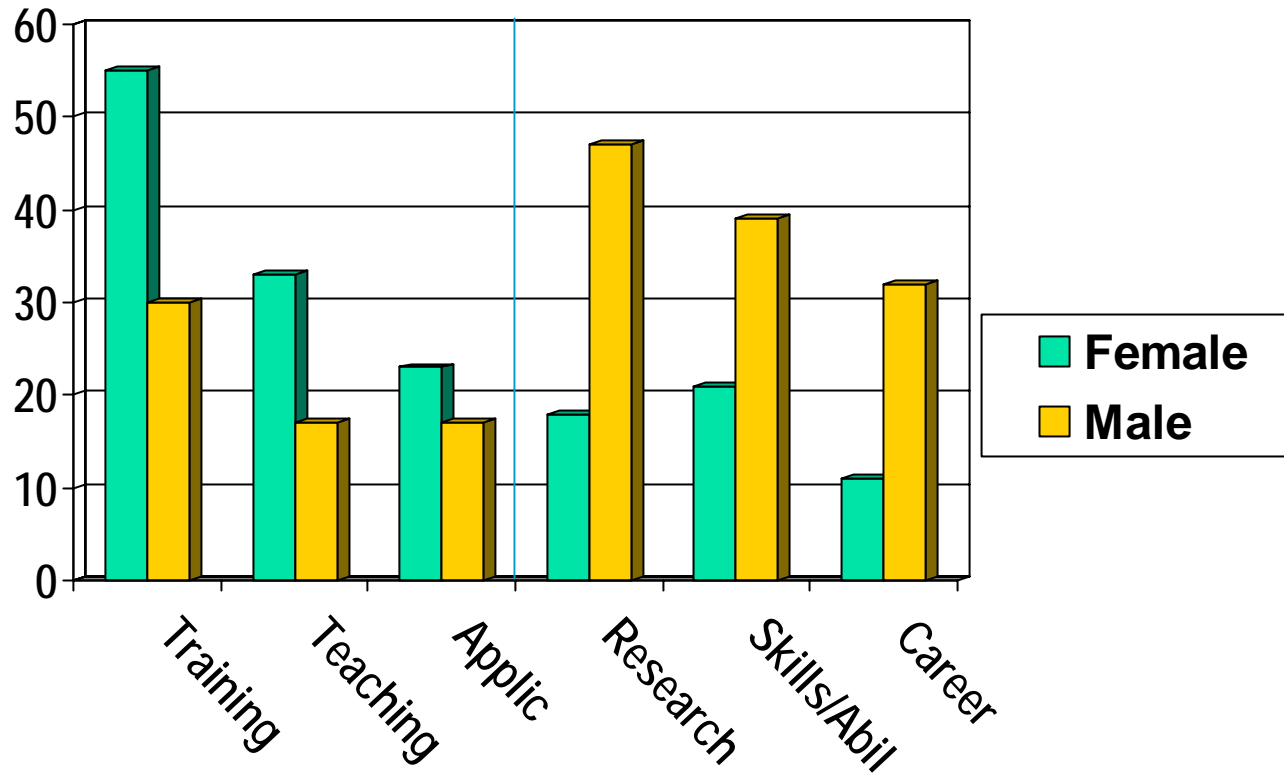


Unconscious bias in the search process: Reference Letters

- 312 letters of recommendation for medical faculty hired at a large U.S. medical school
- Women's letters compared to men's more often:
 - Were *shorter*
 - Offered *minimal assurance*
 - Used *gender terms*
 - Contained *doubt raisers*
 - Used *stereotypic adjectives*
 - Used *grindstone adjectives*
 - Used fewer *standout adjectives*
 - Contained less *scientific terminology*



Top 3 semantic realms following the possessive for men and for women

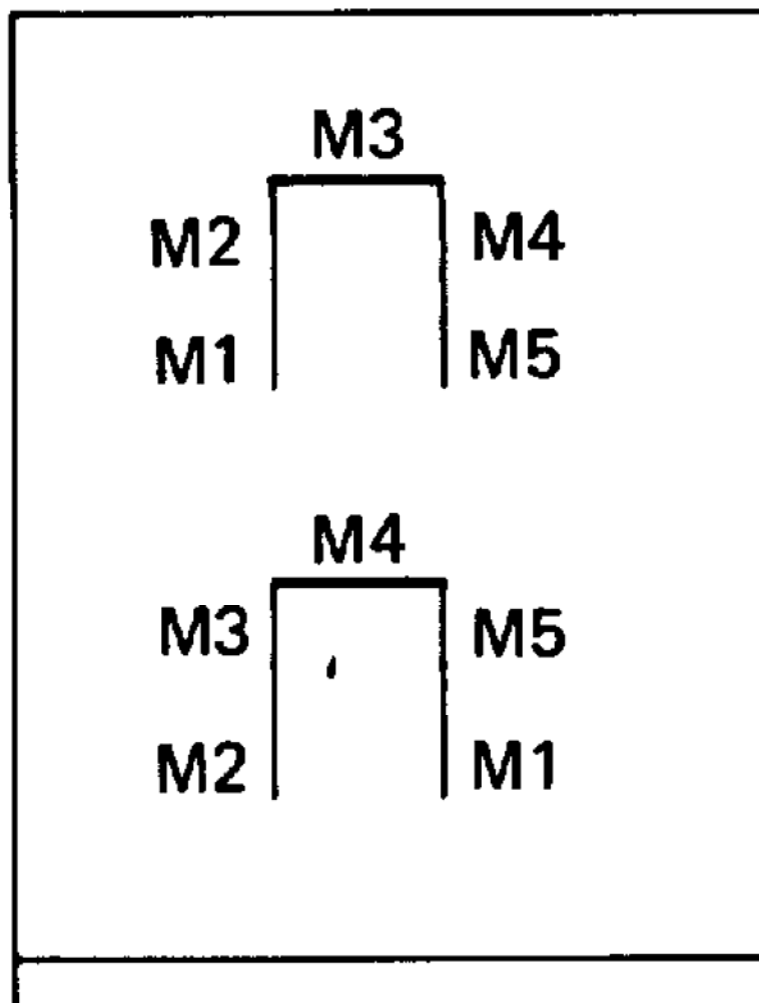




Unconscious bias in the search process: Evaluation of Leadership/Competence

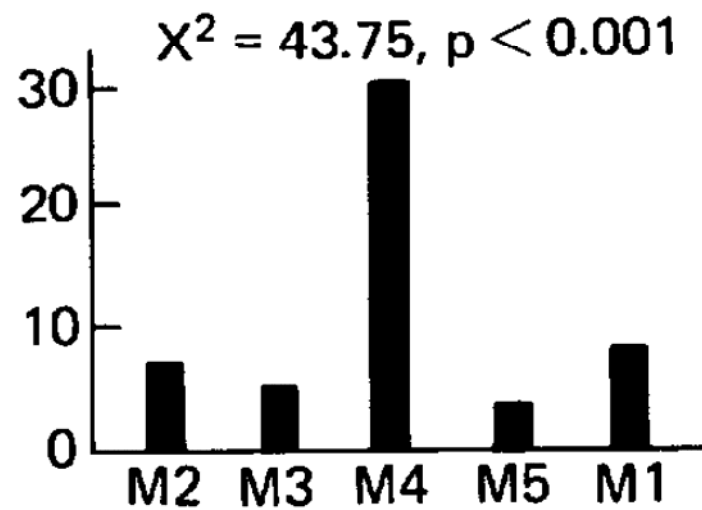
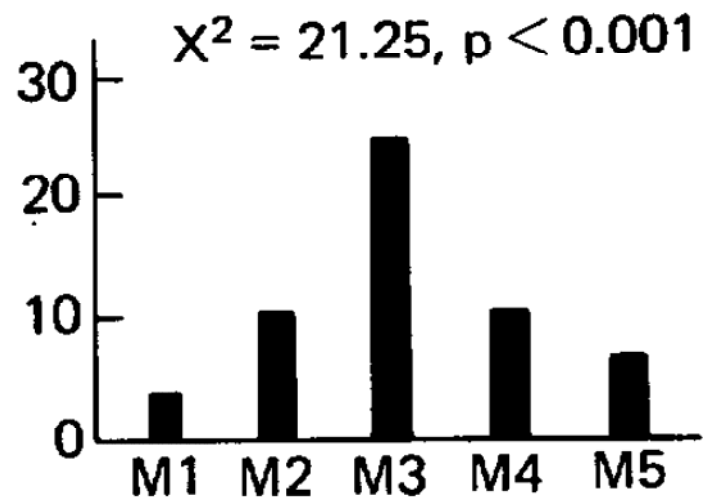
- Students seated around the table—when is the head of the table identified as the “leader?”

MALE

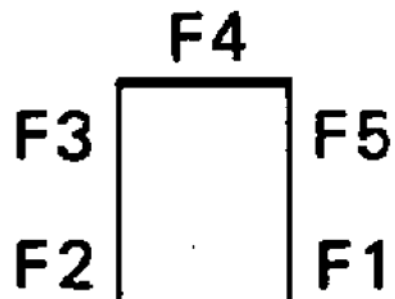
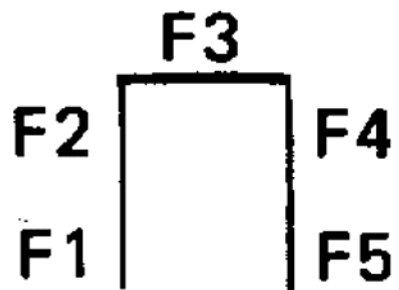


MALE

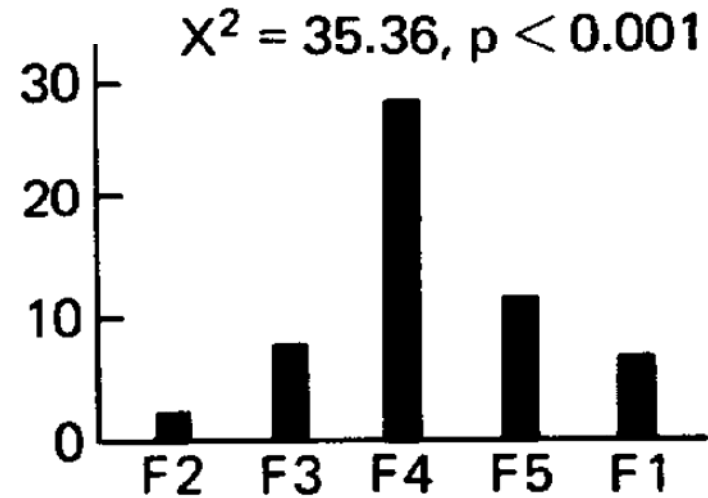
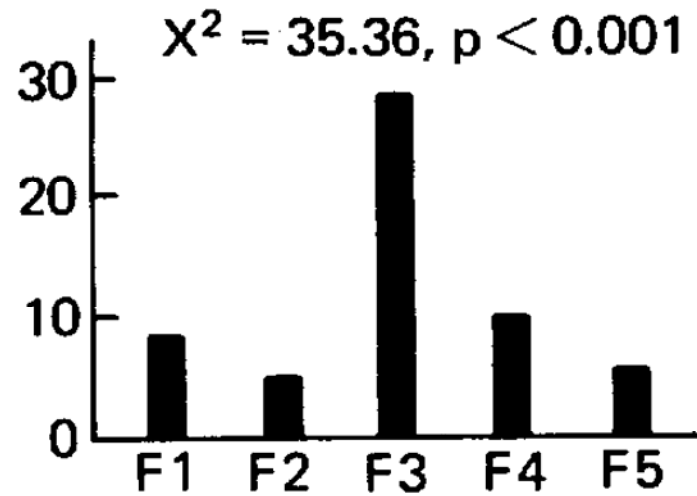
SAME-SEX STIMULUS GROUPS

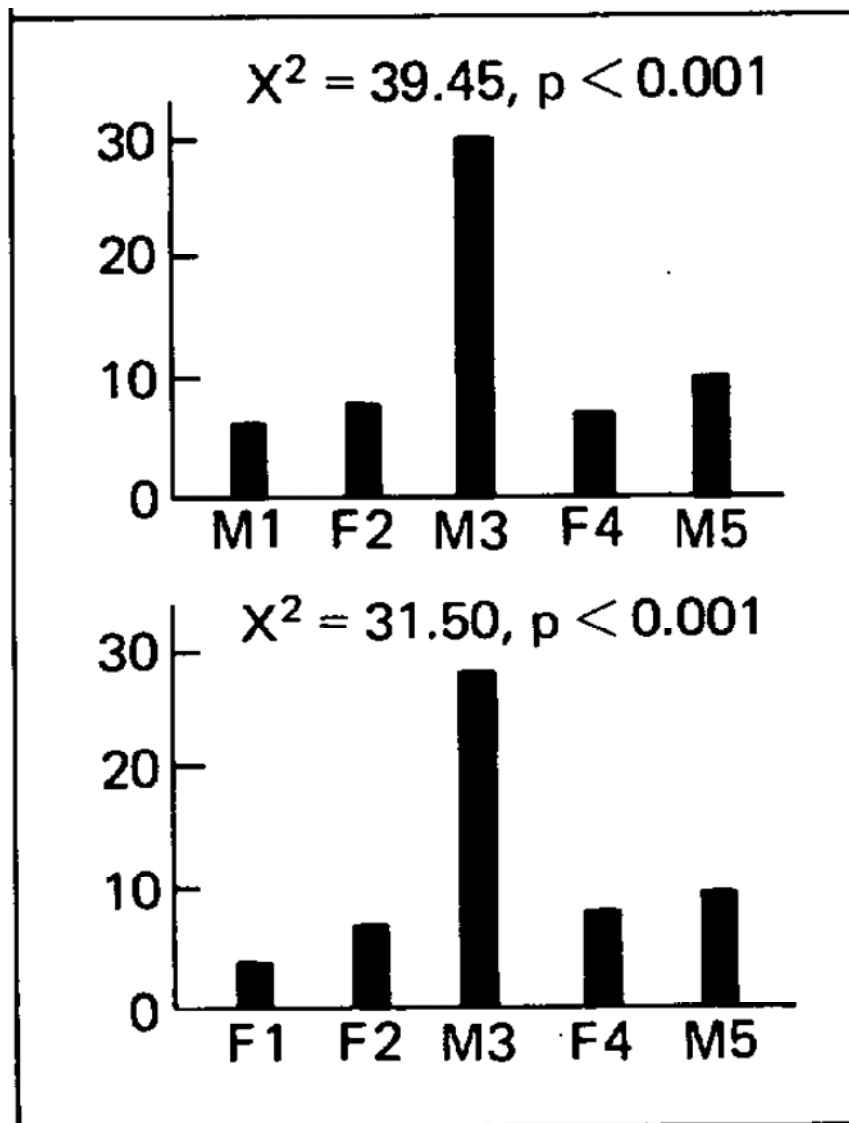
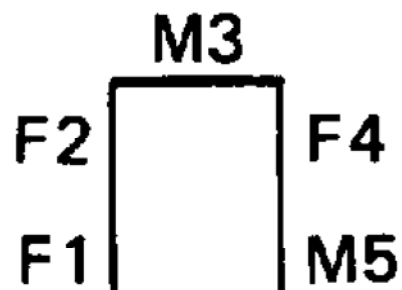
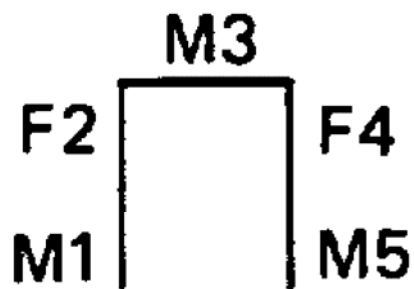


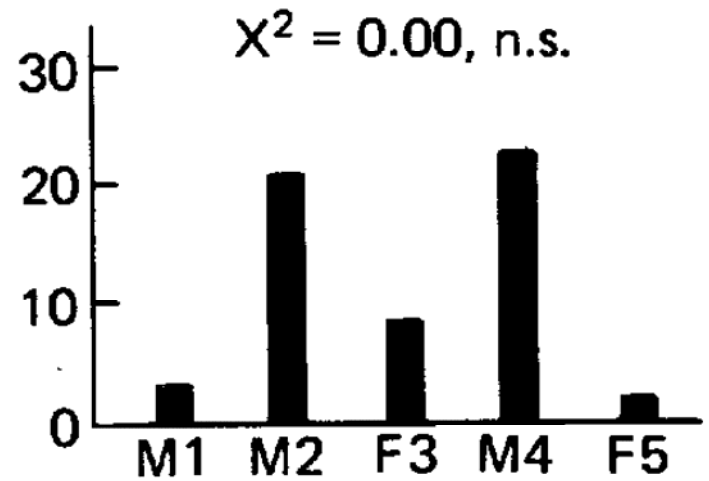
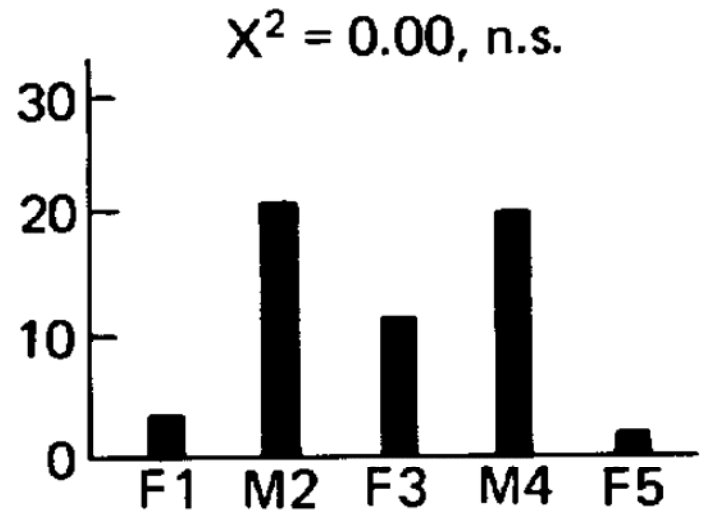
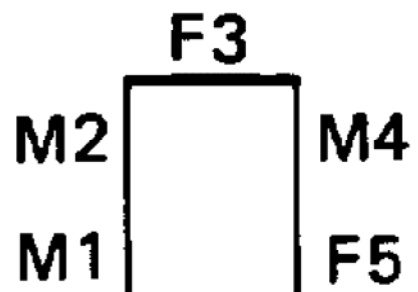
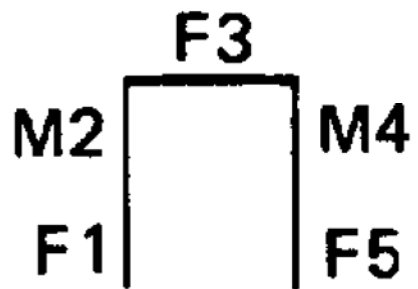
FEMALE



FEMALE









Unconscious bias in the search process: Evaluation of Leadership/Competence

- Finding not affected by conscious beliefs
- For female leaders, “warmth” negatively correlated with leadership



Unconscious bias in the search process: Evaluation of Leadership/Competence

Prescriptive Gender Norms

■ Men

- Strong
- Decisive
- Assertive
- Tough
- Authoritative
- Independent



■ Women

- Nurturing
- Communal
- Nice
- Supportive
- Helpful
- Sympathetic



Unconscious bias in the search process: Evaluation of Leadership/Competence

- Evaluate fictional Assistant Vice Presidents
 - Male-assumed job—company makes engine products and other AVPs are men
 - Rated under two conditions: performance clear and performance ambiguous
 - Characteristics rated:
 - Competence, personality, likeability, interpersonal hostility



Unconscious bias in the search process: Evaluation of Leadership/Competence

- Competence
 - Performance clear—no gender difference
 - Performance ambiguous—women less competent
- Likeability
 - Performance clear—women less likeable
 - Performance ambiguous—no gender difference

Only women were “unlikable” for being competent at their jobs!



Overcoming unconscious bias—best practices

- Learn about research on biases and assumptions—consciously strive to minimize influence of unconscious tendencies on your evaluations Kruglanski and Freund 1983
- Spend sufficient time evaluating each applicant Martell 1991
- Reach out to applicants from under-represented groups individually Wenneras & Wold 1997
- Increase the proportion of women and minorities in the applicant pool Heilman 1980



Overcoming unconscious bias—best practices

- Do not depend too heavily on any one element of a portfolio
Trix and Psenka 2003
- Develop evaluation criteria prior to evaluating candidates and stick to the criteria. Periodically review evaluation decisions and ensure that criteria continue to guide the selection of candidates.
Biernat and Fuegen 2001
- Switch the gender/race “thought experiment”
Valian 1998



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