Description: While it has been difficult to assess the mechanisms by which gender and other characteristics affect the performance assessments of individuals in actual workplace settings, this paper takes a first step in this direction. Through an analysis of the language of performance reviews written by managers at a Fortune 500 technology company, and the numeric performance ratings associated with those evaluations, we find that while performance reviews contain clear descriptions of meritocratic factors, there are nonetheless important differences in the language used to described men and women’s performances. Even more importantly, we find that some types of language, such as “taking charge,” are associated with the highest ratings for men but not women, thereby disadvantaging women when pay and promotion decisions are made.

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