# Search Committee Training

Bias and Inclusive Search Strategies

# Implicit Bias

Iris Bohnet, "What Works: Gender Equality by Design,"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=niH9wfKsUIc

# Types of Relevant Biases

- **Confirmation bias**: The tendency for people to seek out information that conforms to their preexisting views, and ignore information that goes against their views

- **Ingroup bias**: The tendency to favor members of your own group

- **Projection bias**: The thinking that others have the same priority, attitude or belief as you do

- **Selective perception**: The process of perceiving what we want to while intaking information, while ignoring stimuli that contradicts our beliefs or expectations

- **Status quo bias**: A preference for the current state of affairs

# Understanding Implicit Bias

Implicit or unconscious bias is bias of which we are not aware, but which can be detected in certain test situations, and can clash with our professed beliefs about members of social groups.

Implicit bias is a function of the way that our minds work.

Human beings naturally categorize things, including people. We "create schemas, mental frameworks of beliefs, feelings, and assumptions about people, groups, objects. Schemas help us made sense of the world."

We use these schemas to incorporate new information, "so that we do not have to treat all new information as thought it is totally unfamiliar, requiring slow, deliberate and thorough examination."

Schemas filter information, helping us determine what should be paid attention to and what can be disregarded.

# Implicit Bias Test

- One popular technique for enhancing awareness of one's unconscious bias is the Implicit Association Test (IAT). This test measures the reaction time of individuals to a series of words or pictures presented on a computer screen.

- Anonymous unconscious bias tests administered by Harvard University are publicly available at https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html. Over a million people have taken these tests, and results confirm that participants across a range of locations, ages, genders, races, and ethnicities hold unconscious stereotypes and prejudices regarding disability, sexual orientation, race, skin tone, age, weight, gender, ethnicity, and religion.

# Implicit Bias in Hiring

Implicit bias is problematic in the workplace, because by definition, an individual will most likely be unaware of its influence.

Bias in recruitment, selection, promotion, development, and everyday workplace interaction creates inequality, limits the potential value that can flow from a diverse workforce, increases legal and reputational risk, and threatens employee engagement, commitment, and productivity.

# Sites of Potential Bias

- Position Descriptions

- CV's

- Letters of recommendation

- Student evaluations

- Interviews

# Position Descriptions

Using previously published lists of gendered words, researchers at the University of Waterloo analyzed job listings for "male dominated" and "female dominated" professions and found that while male dominated fields tended to use more masculine words in job listings, female dominated fields didn't use more feminine words.

# Language Codes

### Masculine-coded words include:

- active
- adventurous
- challenge
- confident
- decision
- driven
- independent
- lead
- objective
- opinion

### Feminine-coded words include:

- agree
- commit
- cooperate
- depend
- honest
- interpersonal
- loyal
- support
- together
- understand

# Wording of Job Ads

**Gender:** " job advertisements for male-dominated areas employed greater masculine wording (i.e., words associated with male stereotypes, such as *leader, competitive, dominant*) than advertisements within female-dominated areas....

Next, the consequences of highly masculine wording were tested across 3 experimental studies. When job advertisements were constructed to include more masculine than feminine wording, participants perceived more men within these occupations..., and importantly, women found these jobs less appealing.... Results confirmed that perceptions of belongingness (but not perceived skills) mediated the effect of gendered wording on job appeal...." (Gaucher and Friesen, 2011)

# C.V. or Resume Studies

*Race*: [A study (by Bertrand and Mullainathan)](#) sent out resumes in response to help-wanted ads in Boston and Chicago. The study found that, in order to get a call back for an interview, applicants with typically black names (e.g., Jamal, Lakisha) had to send out 50% more resumes than did applicants with typically white names (e.g., Emily, Greg).

*Gender*: [A study by Moss-Racusin et al.](#) sent out applications for a lab manager position that had either a male or a female name. They found that the applications with male names were viewed as more competent and hireable, and were offered higher starting salaries.

*Gender*: Steinpreis et al. ([pdf link](#)) found that psychology professors (male and female) were more likely to hire someone named "Brian" as compared to someone named "Karen" for an assistant professor position.

- ***Sexual orientation***: [A study by Tilcsik](#) involved sending out resumes that were identical except that one indicated the applicant had been a treasurer in a gay student organization, whereas the other indicated that the applicant had been a treasurer in an environmental a progressive student organization. The "gay" applicant received 40% fewer call backs for interviews.

- ***Parental status***: [Correll et al.](#)  found bias against mothers, but not against fathers. They sent out a pair of resumes of applicants with the same qualifications, but where one indicated parenthood and the other did not. Non-mothers received call backs twice as often as mothers did. There was no difference for fathers vs. non-fathers.

# Letters of Recommendation

In letters for men, more agentic descriptors—ambitious, dominant, self-confident, more references to c.v., publications, colleagues.

In letters for women, more communal descriptors—affectionate, warm, kind, nurturing; more references to personal life; more comments that raise doubts. (Madera, Hebl, and Martin)

# Teaching Evaluations

A study of online instructors, where names were assigned to make students believe the teacher was male or female. "Students gave professors they thought were male much higher evaluations across the board than they did professors they thought were female, regardless of what gender the professors actually were." (MacNell, Driscoll, and Hunt)

Benjamin Schmidt's online tool for analyzing the language of teaching evaluations on RateMyProfessor.com based on the gender of the instructor. http://benschmidt.org/2015/02/06/rate-my-professor/

# Bias in Interview and Selection

Biases for or against a candidate because of perceived affinities or lack thereof.

**What Are Micro-Affirmations?**

- Micro-affirmations are tiny acts of opening doors to opportunity, gestures of inclusion and caring, and graceful acts of listening. Micro-affirmations lie in the practice of generosity, in consistently giving credit to others – in providing comfort and support when others are in distress, when there has been a failure at the bench, or an idea that did not work out, or a public attack.

- Micro-affirmations – apparently small acts, which are often ephemeral and hard-to-see, events that are public and private, often unconscious but very effective, which occur wherever people wish to help others to succeed.

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# Discussion

**Small Groups**

 o How does your department traditionally conduct searches?

 o Where might implicit bias be present?

**Report to whole group.**

# Practices for Avoiding Bias

# Suggestions

- Discuss implicit bias with the rest of the Search Committees

- Providing search committees with recommended procedures and strategies

- Providing candidate access to a third party, unaffiliated with the search, for work-life questions
    Smith, Handley, Zale, Rushing, and Potvin (2013)

# Take Time

- We tend to fall back on stereotypes and schemas when we are pressed for time.

- Give each dossier a good amount of time as you evaluate the materials.

- Don't use the usual indicators as short cuts—this is where bias comes in.

# Reducing Unconscious Bias In Job Descriptions

- Are all of the "required" criteria listed necessary for doing this job well?

- Do the criteria allow candidates to demonstrate important life experiences that may not show up on traditional resumes?

- Do any of the criteria reflect unnecessary assumptions or biases about the "kind of person" who usually does this job?

- Do you include criteria such as "ability to work on diverse teams or with a diverse range of people"?

- Could additional criteria be included that would open up possibilities for a wider range of excellent candidates?

- Does any of the language in the description describe people rather than behaviors or subtly reflect stereotypes (e.g., "results-driven," "action-oriented," "people-person")?

- Follow the law

- Post opportunities widely and creatively

- Represent positive and welcoming climate in all documents

- Describe Benefits (as related to LGBT concerns)

- Avoid: not make assumptions based on sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, disability, etc.

    o President's Council on LGBT Issues (2003)

# Criteria

- Scholarly impact

- Research productivity

- Research funding

- Ability to attract and mentor graduate students

- Ability to teach and supervise undergraduates

- Ability to attract, work with, and teach diverse students

- Commitment to collaboration with colleagues

- Relationship to department priorities

- Ability to make a positive contribution to the department's climate

- Ability to be a conscientious department citizen

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- Develop evaluation criteria prior to evaluating candidates at any step in the process
- Be able to justify every elimination or advancement decision
- Periodically evaluate judgments by asking
  - Are women and minority candidates subject to different expectations?
  - Have women or minority candidate accomplishments been undervalued by attributing them to colleagues or research directors?
  - Are assumptions about family responsibilities or structures influencing assessments of merit?
    - [www.feministphilosopers.wordpress.com](www.feministphilosopers.wordpress.com) (2008)

# Anonymizing

Cover letters

C.V.'s

Research statements

Writing samples

- Establish clear criteria before reviewing materials and have them available during reviews and apply them uniformly

- Observe that bias may be present in the way criteria are weighted

- Provide unaffiliated third party resource for arranging or accommodating special on campus needs

- Routinize candidate information checklist – for all candidates

- Script interview questions and predetermine:

  o Follow ups?

  o Who asks?

  o Order of discussion

- Screen dossiers and submitted material for bias triggers by unaffiliated third party; flag potential triggers for ways bias may be activated

  o In reference letters (consider replacing with references)

  o Based on material that leads to assumptions about social identity rather than professional qualification

  o Based on elements of equity, status, prestige, privilege

- Provide questions in advance (to not privilege specific response skill sets)
- Assure that the audience for the interview reflects the diversity of the department
- Frame the campus visit as a supplement to the dossier, not a substitution
- Apply predetermined criteria at all levels of deliberation

- Olberding, et al. *APA Newsletter, Feminism and Philosophy* (2014)

# Discussion

How might your department incorporate some of these suggestions into your search process?

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