
2008 CRA Snowbird Conference

**PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS TO A CONTINUING PROBLEM:
SEXUAL HARASSMENT & GENDER DISCRIMINATION**

PANELISTS

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IMPLICIT BIAS

- ❑ Most of us carry prejudices we are unaware of
- ❑ We often perceive, treat, and judge people based on our expectations related to race, gender or social status
- ❑ Implicit bias is an almost pervasive phenomenon
- ❑ While unintentional, it can be damaging to an individual's career

EVALUATING APPLICATIONS (1)

Review of vitas done by 238 male and female psychologists [3]:

- ❑ When evaluating identical application packages for a junior position, male and female psychology faculty preferred 2:1 to hire a male applicant than a female applicant with identical record
- ❑ For men and women with highly competitive vitas, they were equally likely to choose a male and female candidate

EVALUATING APPLICATIONS (2)

Labor market study in Chicago and Boston (5000 résumés sent in response to over 1300 ads) [1]:

- ❑ African American-sounding names had fewer callbacks compared to identical resumes of White-sounding names: an average one callback for 10 résumés compared to 15
- ❑ White sounding-names with a high quality résumé received 30% more callbacks than white names with a lower quality résumé. The quality of the résumé had no significant effect for callbacks for AA-names

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION (1)

Examination of over 300 recommendation letters for medical faculty in a large US Med School [4]:

- ❑ 22% of the medical faculty was female; 42% of the students were female
- ❑ 85% of the letters writers were male, 12% female, 3% not identified
- ❑ 89 letters were written for women, 222 for men
- ❑ Letters were analyzed according to length, naming practices, negative language/doubt raisers, gender-linked terms, repetition of standout-adjectives

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION (2)

- ❑ Letters written for females were *shorter*
- ❑ 15% of the letters for females were “letters of minimal assurance” (only 6% of the letters for males)
- ❑ Letters for women contained on average 1.7 *doubt raisers* per letter; letters for males contained 1.3
- ❑ Standout adjectives were found in the same percentage of letters (about 66%); letters for males repeated standout adjectives more often (2 times versus 1.5 times)
- ❑ Letters for female applicants contained more references to their personal life

AUDITIONS IN ORCHESTRAS

Blind auditions increase the probability of a woman advancing and getting hired [7]:

- ❑ Blind audition increase by 50% the probability that a woman will advance from the preliminary round
- ❑ Blind auditions increase the proportion of female hires by 30%
- ❑ For orchestras with blind auditions, the number of female musicians in orchestras increased 26-46%

HARASSMENT

- ❑ Incidence of explicit bias and open harassment have diminished
- ❑ There is generally significant uneasiness about reporting incidents
- ❑ An individual experiencing harassment may be unsure
 - at what point the legal threshold has been crossed
 - how to react in situations that feel uncomfortable.

REFERENCES

- [1] Marianne Bertrand and Sendhil Mullainathan, "Are Emily and Greg More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination," The American Economic Review, October 2004.
- [2] Committee on Strategies and Tactics for Recruiting to Improve Diversity and Excellence (STRIDE), ADVANCE Program, <http://sitemaker.umich.edu/advance/stride>
- [3] Rhea E. Steinpreis and Dawn Ritzke, Katie A. Anders, "The Impact of Gender on the Review of the Curricula Vitae of Job Applicants and Tenure Candidates: A National Empirical Study" [Sex Roles: A Journal of Research](#), 41, [Oct, 1999](#).
- [4] Frances Trix and Carolyn Psenka, "Exploring the Color of Glass: Letters of Recommendation for Female and Male Medical Faculty, Discourse & Society, Vol. 14, No. 2, 191-220, 2003.
- [5] Virginia Valian, Hunter College, Gender Equity Project, <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/genderequity/index.html>, <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/gendertutorial/tutorials.htm>
- [6] Beyond Bias and Barriers: Fulfilling the Potential of Women in Academic Science and Engineering, National Academies Press, http://books.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=11741, 2007.
- [7] Claudia Goldin and Cecilia Rouse, "Orchestrating Impartiality: The Impact of "Blind" Auditions on Female Musicians," The American Economic Review, Vol. 90, 715-741, 2000.

Scenario 1: Hiring

The department has made an effort to recruit female faculty and the upper administration is very supportive.

While about 20% of the applications are female applicants, the department has been unable to hire women in recent years. Most of those who apply are deemed as poor fits for the departmental hiring goals or are considered not as qualified as the male applicants. Those who come for interviews didn't seem to shine relative to their male counterparts.

The two females who were made offers chose to go elsewhere, something that didn't surprise the faculty given the strong competition for women.

The department believes it is highly unlikely they will make female hires in the future.

Scenario 1.1: Review of applications

An associate professor is the only female member of the hiring committee (all others are full professors).

The female member is disturbed by the bias she encounters within the committee.

- For some female applicants the claim is made that the Ph.D. work is driven by the advisor and not the student.
- A female applicant publishing with someone having the same last name is right away labeled as having a 2-body problem.

She raises the concern to the chair of the committee. He dismisses it as imaginary and ensures her that the committee supports diversity.

The female faculty feels she will have to accept the comments made as the status quo.

Scenario 2: Male dominance

A male faculty member continues to undermine a female faculty member. This includes interrupting her at meetings, excluding her from relevant decisions and belittling her research contributions. The male faculty member denies that this is based on gender bias and feels that his actions are appropriate based on her contributions.

The male faculty member is starting to gain support for his negative views even though it seems unfounded based on objective and subjective measures.

This hostile environment is having a deleterious impact on the female faculty member.

Scenario 3: Predator-like behavior

A faculty member is known for being “very friendly” with students. There have been several unofficial complaints from students over the years and a number of rumors have circulated. The faculty member is well aware of the law and what constitutes sexual harassment and always stays just within the limits of those boundaries.

This faculty member publicly volunteers to host female faculty candidates and asks to serve as a mentor for female junior faculty.

The faculty member is very interested in leadership positions like serving as the graduate program director or undergraduate program director.

Scenario 4: Hostile research environment

The only faculty member in a research area X runs a "take no prisoners" research laboratory, where students are encouraged to aggressively tear apart the weaknesses in their contemporaries' ideas and presentations.

Many of the male students thrive in this environment and have gone on to be quite successful. However, hardly any women graduate students continue to work with this professor after a semester or two, often feeling inadequate and dropping out of graduate school.