

Stereotypes or “schemas” bias the evaluations that are made of individuals, often in ways that advantage whomever is already dominant in an occupational group (e.g., male, white, able-bodied, heterosexual, etc.; Glass & Minnotte, 2010). Implicit bias leads to the use of a gender differentiated double standard for assessing competence and ability. Such biases can be embedded in seemingly objective supporting materials (recommendation letters, teaching evaluations; see Madera, Hebl, and Martin, 2009). Stereotyping can result in even harsher biases against women who are mothers. Further, implicit bias can be a pattern of thinking among all reviewers, regardless of their own identity (see Moss-Racusin, et al., 2012). We are all prone to biases; even well-intentioned, non-sexist people are capable of bias. Biasing processes are more extreme when:

- individuals are tired, rushed or otherwise cognitively burdened.
- women or members of underrepresented groups are rare in a unit (“tokens”).
- jobs are “typed” by a history of who has performed them.
- valid performance information is lacking.
- criteria are vague or ambiguous.

But there are steps you can take to reduce the influence of bias in the review of specific applicants. The most important activities in disrupting the tendency to use stereotypes as cognitive shortcuts include:

- Devoting adequate time for review and discussion: ensure that committee members are not rushed to make decisions they might not be able to make with unnecessary time constraints.
- Avoiding premature ranking of the applicants.
- Critically analyzing supporting materials (recommendation letters, teaching evaluations, research statements).
- Reading candidates work rather than relying solely on support materials.
- Being accountable—be prepared to explain your decisions and rankings
- Being transparent—what are the criteria? is it the same for men and women? is it the right criteria?
- Structuring diverse groups and allow for maximum participation, or specifically identifying someone who will be on the lookout for bias.
- Using a candidate evaluation form, and ensuring that information not represented on the form does not carry weight in the evaluation process (see reverse for a sample).

SU-ADVANCE has secured some additional training resources that rely on a hypothetical search committee meeting and the kinds of evaluative statements that might be made while discussing candidates. These resources also demonstrate the impact of cognitive shortcuts and poorly structured meetings on making hasty (and sometimes biased) decisions about candidates. Please contact SU-ADVANCE if you would like to access these resources.

Sample resources:

Glass, C, and Minnotte, K. L. (2010). Recruiting and hiring women in STEM fields. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 3(4), 218-229.

Madera, J.M., Hebl, M.R., and Martin, R.C.(2009) Gender and Letters of Recommendation for Academia: Agentic and Communal Differences, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 94(6), pp. 1591 - 1599

Moss-Racusin, C, Dovidio, J.F., Brescoll, V.L., Grahama, M. J., and Handelsman, J. (2012) Science faculty’s subtle gender biases favor male students. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences: Early Edition* 109(41), pp. 16474-16479. Available at: [www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.1211286109](http://www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.1211286109).