UNBIASED RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES

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DOES IMPLICIT BIAS TRAINING WORK?

• Yes!
  • Attitudes change
  • Behavior changes

• When does it work?
  • Awareness
    1. Become aware of own and other cultural assumptions, values, and biases
  • Skills
    2. Learn to monitor one’s own actions and show appropriate responses to specific group members

(Carnes et al., 2016; Devine et al., 2017)
IMPLICIT BIAS OF WHAT?

• Gender, age, race, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, handicap…..

=> The content of the training did not affect the results!

Bezrukova, Spell, Perry, & Jehn, 2016
OVERVIEW

Awareness
What are implicit biases and stereotypes?
Why should we avoid them?
How do they affect judgement and decision making?

Skills
How to counteract stereotypes?
How to minimize bias in recruitment?
How to create an inclusive environment?
MALE AND FEMALE RESEARCHERS AND PROFESSORS AT EPFL 2015-2019
Swiss Constitution

Article 8 – Equality before the law

3 Men and women have equal rights. The law shall ensure their equality, both in law and in practice, most particularly in the family, in education, and in the workplace. Men and women have the right to equal pay for work of equal value.
EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES - LEGAL ASPECTS

Federal Act on Gender Equality [Gender Equality Act (GEA)], 1995

• Act aims to **furthering true equality** between women and men. (Art. 1)
• **Prohibition of discrimination.** (Art. 3)

1  Employees must not be discriminated against on the basis of their **sex**, whether directly or indirectly, including on the basis of their marital status, their family situation or, in the case of female employees, of **pregnancy**.

2  Prohibition applies in particular to **hiring**, **allocation of duties**, setting of **working conditions**, **pay**, basic and continuing education and training, **promotion** and **dismissal**.

3  **Appropriate measures** aimed at achieving true equality are not regarded as discriminatory.
EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES - LEGAL ASPECTS

Federal Higher Education Act, (HEdA), 2015

Requirements for institutional accreditation (Art. 30)

> For institutional accreditation, higher education institutions must (...) ensure that

(...) tasks are carried out in a manner that encourages equal opportunities and true gender equality.

> Institutional accreditation is a prerequisite for federal funding (Art. 28)
ETH DOMAIN STRATEGY 2017-2020

Federal Council's objectives for ETH Domain
• Promote diversity and increase the proportion of women in leadership and decision-making positions.

ETH-Domain Gender Strategy
• Significant increase in number of female professors requires actions by all institutions, faculties or departments.
• Basic actions include proactive search for female candidates, training to mitigate unconscious biases, and proactive efforts to retain female faculty.
• Institutions regularly assess the gender balance in recruitment and promotion procedures.

EPFL Gender Action Plan
• Common standards for equal opportunities in recruitment procedures.
• Objectifs and specific actions by schools.
WHY ARE THERE NOT MORE FEMALE PROFESSORS?

• Women do not want that career
  • Other priorities in life
  • No job stability over a long period of time
  • Avoid a competitive work environment

• Those who hire are biased against women
  • Implicit bias
  • Work environment that makes women feel that they do not belong
WHY IS IT SO HARD TO FIND THE SOLUTION?

- Cognitive network

- Man
  - surgeon
  - leader
  - high status
  - specialist
IMPLICIT BIAS

Expectations or stereotypes that occur outside of conscious awareness and that affect judgment and behavior.
STEREOTYPE

Cognitive...

Emotional...

Behavioral...

... reaction to individuals pertaining to certain social groups.

→ stereotype

→ prejudice

→ discrimination
WHERE DO STEREOTYPES COME FROM?

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986)

- **Social categorization** = cognitive tool that enables one to organize and classify one’s social environment (endo-group et exo-group)

- Belonging to a social group creates a **social identity** (identification with values of the group and emotional attachment to the group)
DISTRIBUTION IN THE POPULATIONS

Frequency (how many people in the population)

- Southern European people
- Swiss people

Punctuality
STEREOTYPES AS DISTORTION OF REALITY

1. **Exaggeration**: The Swiss are *very punctual*, the people from the south are *not punctual at all*.

   ![Diagram showing mean difference between Southerners and Swiss in punctuality]

2. **Valence**: Punctuality is a *good and important* characteristic to possess.
STEREOTYPES AS DISTORTION OF REALITY

3. Distribution:

- **No overlap in distribution**: *All* Swiss are more punctual than *all* Southerners.
- **Increased in-group variability and restricted out-group variability**: We (the Swiss) are *so different*, they (the Southerners) are *all the same*.
ARE STEREOTYPES TRUE?

- Sometimes they have a bit of truth
  - Useful shortcuts (you are right more often than not)
  - But problematic because you think you are right all the time

- Problematic because important interpersonal decisions often concern one (or few) person(s) – and then you do not know from where of the distribution they stem

- Sometimes they have no truth at all
  - You take decisions that are wrong
WHAT THE RESEARCH SHOWS

• More feminine faces of female scientist professors are rated to be more likely a school teacher than a scientist – no effect for men (Banchefsky, Westfall, Park, & Judd, 2016)

• Genius and intelligence = men (Leslie et al., 2015)

• Typical scientific career with intense research activity, uninterrupted and in linear progression = men (Bagilhole & Goode, 2001)

• Young applicant: if man = dynamic, if women = unexperienced (Carvalho, 2010)

• Women are less likely to be awarded named professorships, particularly when the endowed chair is awarded to an internal candidate (Trevino et al., 2015)

• Student evaluations of university faculty teaching: women < men (random assignment, no relation to grades, male students, larger for mathematical courses, larger for junior women) (Mengel et al., 2017)
EXAMPLE: TEACHING EVALUATION

- Online course taught by either a man or a woman
- Information for the students about the gender of the teacher = perceived as woman or man (MacNell, Driscoll, and Hunt, 2015)
RESULTS

Teaching quality rated by students

- Male professor: 4.0
- Female professor: 4.0
- Perceived as male: 4.5
- Perceived as female: 2.5
RESULTS

• Bias even in objective behavior
  • Communication about grades 2 days after the exam

• Evaluation of responsiveness regarding grades
  • Professors perceived as female = 3.55
  • Professors perceived as male = 4.35

• Same behavior is evaluated differently
Professors in US universities were asked to assess an application for a job as laboratory manager.

Same application, first name changed into female or male.

Male applicants were rated as more competent and were proposed a higher starting salary.

The same result was found, regardless of the gender of the person assessing the application.

Moss-Racusin et al., 2012
QUESTIONS DURING THE INTERVIEW

How do you manage your teams so that the collaborators remain focused on the task to achieve good results in challenging projects?

A is a person who is rational

B is a person who is emotional

How do you manage your teams so that the collaborators maintain good relationship to achieve good results in challenging projects?
SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY

My verbal and nonverbal behavior towards the other

My expectations towards the other

The verbal and nonverbal behavior of the other towards me
HOW TO COUNTERACT STEREOTYPES?

1. Automatic activation
   - Unaware that stereotypes influence our thoughts and acts

2. Controlled cognition
   - 1. Become aware of the stereotypes
   - 2. Motivation to act against
   - 3. Cognitive resources available
IAT = IMPLICIT ASSOCIATION TEST

https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html
STRATEGIES TO BREAK THE STEREOTYPES (DEVINE ET AL, 2013)

1. Stereotype replacement
2. Counter-stereotypic imaging
3. Individuation
4. Perspective taking
5. Contact with out-group members
1. STEREOTYPE REPLACEMENT

• Identify a stereotypical response of yours
• Think of what you will do next time in that situation
**EXAMPLE**

- **Situation:** I am sometimes wrong about the gender of an author of a scientific paper, just say “he” without checking the name
- **Bias:** Highly published authors and professors are men
- **Correct:** Go and check the first name of the author (find our gender of the author)
- **Action plan:** Next time I put a citation on a slide, I check the gender of the person or I systematically add the first name to the author or a picture of the author

Next time when [the situation occurs], I will [action to counteract potential bias]!
2. COUNTER-StereotypIC IMAGING

• Identify what a counter-stereotypic example is for you
• Force yourself to imagine that counter-stereotypic example
3. INDIVIDUATION

- Think of when you rather think about a person’s group instead of to the person him- or herself
- Try to obtain as much personal information about that person as possible

**Example:**

- *Think of the group first than the person*: I hired a female PhD student from Iran and it took some time to see the person and not the Muslim woman
- *Individuation*: Getting to know her makes me think of her as her
STRATEGIES TO BREAK THE STEREOTYPES (DEVINE ET AL, 2013)

1. Stereotype replacement
2. Counter-stereotypic imaging
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1. JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

• Problem:
  • Often not enough female applicants

• Goal:
  • Increase the number of excellent female applicants
1. JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

• Measures:
  • Write the ad using broad research area
    • EPFL policy: gender neutral language and indicate that EPFL is an equal opportunity employer and a family friendly university and focus on core elements and refrain from adding e.g., narrow specialisation that can hinder excellent candidates from applying.
  • Contact the top 3 female researchers in the domain to announce the job opening in their network
    • EPFL policy: Active search: As soon as the announcement is published, the Chair requires [all] committee members to actively spot and contact female outstanding potential candidates
  • Rule of having at least one (EPFL: two outstanding) women on the short list (invited for an interview)
  • EPFL target: make 40% of offers to women
2. COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE

• Problem:
  • All male committees can be gatekeepers (preference for in-group)
  • No role model for female applicants during the process
• Goal:
  • Diversity in the composition of the committees
  • Consciousness raising about possible gender bias
2. COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE

• Measures:
  • At least 2 women in the committee
    • EPFL policy: *At least two members of the search committee must be women. Exceptions must be duly justified.*
  • President of the committee is in charge of consciousness raising about possible gender bias in the process
    • EPFL policy: *The Chair has the responsibility to inform search committee members about the EPFL policy for equal opportunities in faculty recruitment.*

• Challenge concerning the measures:
  • Increased demands for women professors concerning committee work
3. FIRST SELECTION OF THE APPLICANTS

Before the first session of the committee
• Define the selection criteria (before studying the applications)
  • Make sure that none of the criteria favors a certain group
• Use an evaluation cluster that contains only the selection criteria
• Members of the committee fill in the evaluation cluster before the meeting and before discussing in the committee
  • Ask each member to identify the best 3 female applicants and the best 3 male applicants, or compile separate lists for women and men applicants
  • Careful about the contribution of the reference letters, they are often written differently for female and male applicants
RECOMMENDATION LETTERS FOR FACULTY APPLICANTS

Letters for men:
- More agentic descriptors
  - ambitious, dominant, self-confident
- More references to...
  - CV
  - Publications
  - Colleagues

Letters for women:
- More communal descriptors affectionate, warm, kind, nurturing
- More references to personal life
- More comments that raise doubts:
  - “It’s amazing how much she’s accomplished.”
  - “It appears her health is stable.”
  - “She is close to my wife.”
- May reveal protected status, i.e. marital status, children, etc.
  - “She has overcome so much as a single mother with 2 kids.”

Communal characteristics have a negative relationship with hiring decisions in academia
(Madera & Hebl, 2009; Madera et al., 2018)
EXAMPLE FOR CRITERIA

- All members judge all applicants with respect to the criteria
- Calculate means and standard deviations
- Distribute this information at the outset of the first meeting of the committee (before the discussion starts)
- Advantage:
  - Easy to spot the worst applicants on which everybody agrees
  - Easy to spot the best applicants on which everybody agrees
  - Good base for discussion – good exercise in externalization of judgements

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WHAT TO USE AT EPFL?

The EPFL e-recruitment platform uses 3 rating levels for the appreciation of candidates:

- **A** = to be invited for an interview
- **B** = to be kept on the list for possible future consideration
- **C** = no further interest; to receive a rejection e-mail
- **☐** = abstention

- Double check female applicants rated B (or C), to make sure that they are really below the male dossiers rated A
During the session of the committee

- President of the committee:
  - Recall the selection criteria to all members before starting the discussion
  - Show the ratings of all candidates according to the individual assessment of each committee member before starting the discussion

- Instruct the committee members **not** to discuss personal or informal information about the applicants
- Make transparent the relationships of the committee members with the applicants
- Start the discussion first with all the female applications (often less time used for discussing female applications)
- Try to identify the 3 best female applicants and the 3 best male applicants or make a separate list of female and male applicants
  - **EPFL policy:** There should be at least two women on the short list of candidates to be interviewed. Additionally, the proportion of women candidates to be interviewed should be comparable or higher than that of female PhD students in the relevant field at EPFL.
4. INTERVIEW WITH APPLICANTS

- Define the interview questions beforehand and base on selection criteria
- Ask the same questions to all applicants, and only those questions
- In accompanying information provided to candidates when they are invited for a job talk:
  - EPFL policy: Ahead of the interview, candidates are informed when and where they can find information on services for families, the negotiation process and the start-up package. They are informed that EPFL is responsive to the needs of dual career couples.
5. DELIBERATION OF THE COMMITTEE

Monitor the discussions

• Draw your colleagues’ attention to potential biases in the appreciation of the applicants or if you think stereotypes are used
  • Bias is often easier to spot in others than in oneself
• Avoid global judgments, judge the specific selection criteria
• Make transparent the links between the members of the committee and the applications
5. DELIBERATION OF THE COMMITTEE

Take your time to come to a conclusion

- Spend equal amounts of time on female and male applications
- Take a step back: slowing down the recruitment process helps to overcome stereotypes and use rational, conscious thinking and decision making
5. DELIBERATION OF THE COMMITTEE

Strategic measures

• If there are two equivalent applicants: place the woman higher
  • EPFL policy proposal to Direction: *If candidates appear equivalent, female candidate should be prioritized.*
  • *The diversity of candidates along the process must be critically assessed and accounted for in the record of the search process. Template available on the Affaires professorales (APR) webpage.*
  • *The Direction shall refuse considering the proposal if the effort to obtain female candidates is considered insufficient or if in its view recruitment procedure violated principles and practices enunciated here.*
5. DELIBERATION OF THE COMMITTEE

Strategic measures

• The report of the committee contains a table and a paragraph with statistics about each step of the selection procedure
  • EPFL policy: To assess the impact of its policy, EPFL monitors its recruitment procedures and the evolution of the proportion of women professors.
STEREOTYPE THREAT

If a person feels evaluated according to a stereotype and fears to confirm the stereotype, this fear puts the person under pressure which can hamper performance.

More pronounced when the domain is important for the person.
EXAMPLES OF DOMAINS IN WHICH STEREOTYPE THREAT HAS BEEN SHOWN TO EXIST

• Women students on math tests (Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999)
• African Americans on standardized tests (Steele & Aronson, 1995)
• Women MBA students on negotiation tasks (Kray, Galinsky, & Thompson, 2002)
• Game described as using intelligence: Whites outperform Blacks; same game described as using athletic skills: Blacks outperform Whites (Stone, Lynch, Sjomeling, & Darley, 1999).
HOW CAN WE OVERCOME STEREOTYPE THREAT?

• Give people the feeling of belonging
• Use and make available out-group role models
HOW TO CREATE AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

1. Show leadership
2. Criterion-based evaluations
3. Monitor signals in the environment