Subtle Gender Bias at Work

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Overview

1. Conceptual Framework
2. Gendered Structure of Careers
3. Evaluations of Women & Men
   - Biased Assessments
   - Valuable Work
4. Potential Responses
Overheard…

Female associate professor in chat with a student, referring to female assistant professor:

*I understand that she wanted to have a child and that can’t wait forever. But now she’s having a second. Really, how serious is she about getting tenure?*
Overheard…

- Male full professor in hiring discussion, referring to female associate professor being considered for open senior position: *All she’s done is publish a paper a year in one of the top 2 journals, for the past 10 years.*
Overheard…

- Male department chair to female assistant professor (a woman of color) who won a research leave from her college:

  *I know it isn’t ideal, but we really need your perspective on the search committee this year.*
Conceptual Framework

- Gender as a Multi-Level System
- Mutually Reinforcing

Diagram:
- Assessments
- Interactions at Work
- Organizational Policies & Practices
- Broad Cultural Beliefs
Conceptual Framework

- Mostly unintentional, often unconscious
- Institutionalized policies from another era

Diagram:

- Broad Cultural Beliefs
- Organizational Policies & Practices
- Interactions at Work
- Assessments
  - Evaluations of Others
  - Evaluations of Self
  - Overt Prejudice or Animosity
Gendered Structure of Careers
Ideal Worker Norm

- Continuous, full-time paid work – from training to retirement
- Primacy of work on a daily basis
- Expectation of long hours
- Travel and relocation as requested


Increased Work Hours for Some

- For family as unit, because more dual-earners

- For dual-earners:
  - 1970 Couples working 100+ hours per week:
    - 9.5% of childless dual-earners
    - 8.2% of dual-earner parents
  - 1997 Couples working 100+ hours per week:
    - 16.5% of childless dual-earners
    - 12.8% of dual-earner parents

Penalties for Time Out

- Gradual rebound but lasting negative effect
- 20 years after a break (of 6+ months): women who had a break earn 5-7% less than comparable women with no break
- Maternity leaves → shorter breaks & return to same employer → less wage loss
- Some research finds that leave-takers earn less and are less likely to be promoted than others.


What’s Gender Got to Do with It?

- Gender differences in time spent on family work and market work
- Different gender beliefs – expectations, scripts, schemas – for mothers and fathers in the larger culture
- “Competing Devotions” vs. “Package Deal”


Who Does the Family Work?

Who Does the Family Work?

![Chart showing hours per week on housework for married mothers and fathers from 1965 to 2000.]

Gender & Wage Trajectories

- Women: 5% wage penalty per child
- Men: Small wage premium upon marriage
- “Net and fixed effects” after accounting for human capital (education, training, seniority, work hours, previous breaks), occupational traits, and stable differences across individuals
- Hidden productivity differences or bias?


General Gender Beliefs

- Assessments of competence – women lower (less agentic)
- Assessments of warmth – women higher (more communal)
- Takes more evidence for an individual to defy stereotype than to confirm it
- Most studies find that gender beliefs are held equally by women & men


Double Bind as Leaders

- “Autocratic” women rated very low.
- When women’s and men’s leadership styles are identical, women perceived as more task-oriented.
  - Successful women leaders seen as more hostile and less rational than successful male leaders.
- Attractive men rated as especially capable; attractive women rated as less capable and less deserving of their success.

Bias against Mothers


- Lab experiment – equivalent resumes rated in pairs (mother / other woman, father / other man)
  - Recommended for hire, for management training, starting salary, competence, commitment

- Audit study – equivalent cover letters & resumes sent to companies listing marketing job in newspaper
  - Called back for interview
Correll et al. Lab Study

Statistically significant differences by parental status for women & men.
Correll et al. Lab Study

Statistically significant differences by parental status for women & men.
Correll et al. Audit Study

Statistically significant differences by parental status for women only.

Proportion called back

Mothers: 0.0313
Other Women: 0.0656
Fathers: 0.0503
Other Men: 0.0283
Mothers’ Competence, Commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mothers</th>
<th>Other Women</th>
<th>Fathers</th>
<th>Other Men</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>5.75**</td>
<td>5.51</td>
<td>5.44</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>67.0</td>
<td>79.2**</td>
<td>78.5</td>
<td>74.2**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Assessments of competence and commitment mediates – partially explains – sex differences in hiring decisions, salary recommended, etc.
Evaluations by Mentors

In successful letters of recommendation for medical school faculty, women were:

- Twice as likely to receive a “letter of minimal assurance” (no specifics).
- Twice as likely to have a “doubt raiser” in the text.
- Half as likely to be called “successful.”
- 4x less likely to have the words “accomplishment” or “achievement” mentioned.
- 4x more likely to have “compassion” and positive relationships with patient and staff discussed.
- 1.5 x more likely to have “grindstone” adjectives.

TEXT 6. EXAMPLES OF CATEGORIES OF DOUBT RAISERS

negative language
While Sarah has not done a lot of bench type research. She has a somewhat challenging personality. Although his publications are not numerous as you know. While not the best student I have had,

hedges
It appears that her health and personal life are stable. He appears to be a highly motivated colleague.

potentially negative
As an independent worker she requires only a minimum amount of supervision. Bright, enthusiastic, he responds well to feedback.

unexplained
Now that she has chosen to leave the laboratory.

faint praise
She worked hard on projects that she accepted. I have every confidence that Bill will become better than average. He is void of mood swings and temper tantrums.

irrelevancy
She is quite close to my wife. He is very active in church.
Trix & Psenka Letters

**FIGURE 3.** Semantic realms following possessives. Rank-ordered within gender sets from equal numbers of letters ‘her training’; ‘his research’
Evaluations by Those Hiring

What Work is Recognized as Valuable?

- Relational work: collaboration and extended mentoring
- Not recognized as work, seen as being “nice” (or needy)
- Nurturing at work seen as natural for women, not as skill or result of effort

Distribution of “Service” Work

- Women assumed to be interested and/or particularly needed as women, especially as women of color
- Increases work load but little pay-off
Potential Responses
Diversity Practices that Work

- Data from 800 private-sector firms in U.S. from 1972 – 2002 matched with EEO-1 records
- Effects of diversity policies and programs on the proportion of managerial positions filled by white men, white women, black men, black women, Hispanic men, and Hispanic women
- Diversity task force, diversity staff – greatest increases in representation of women, black men.
- Mentoring and networking – moderate increases for women. *May be key for professionals, though.*
- Diversity training - generally low pay-off.

Work-Life Policies and Women in Management

- Same data on >800 private sector firms in U.S.
- **Child care benefits** (expense accounts, on-site centers) increase women’s share of managerial positions.
- **Flextime** increases women’s share of managerial positions.
- **Part-time options** associated with more white men in management.
- **Maternity leaves** increase women’s share of managerial positions only after 1993 federal leave law in effect.

Other Ideas for Faculty...