

The literature shows that even those individuals openly and deeply committed to equity can hold unconscious or implicit biases.¹ Having biases is human nature. Ignoring this inhibits our ability to mitigate these biases; the literature shows that individuals who rated themselves as highly objective prior to reviewing candidate materials in fact showed more incidents of bias than individuals who were not asked to rate themselves.²

IMPLICIT RACIAL BIAS CAN AFFECT HOW CANDIDATES ARE REVIEWED

A study in which researchers submitted two highly-qualified resumes, one with a white-sounding name and one with an African-American-sounding name, to over 5000 job postings found that the white-sounding name received 50% more callbacks for interviews than the African-American-sounding name.

Furthermore, if a highly-qualified and a poorly-qualified resume, both with white-sounding names, were submitted to available job postings the highly-qualified resume received more callbacks, unsurprisingly.

However, a highly-qualified resume with an African-American-sounding name received a statistically-equivalent number of callbacks to a poorly-qualified resume with an African-American-sounding name.

This suggests that implicit bias prevented reviewers from objectively identifying qualitative differences between perceived members of an underrepresented minority.³

SO DOES GENDER BIAS

In a study, male post-docs with stronger publication records were accurately judged more meritorious, but female post-docs received statistically-equivalent ratings of merit across a wide range of publication output and success.⁴

GENDER BIAS CAN EXIST REGARDLESS OF THE GENDER OF THE EVALUATOR

In a national study in which evaluators reviewed a CV whose name had been changed to suggest either a male or female gender, both male and female evaluators gave a supposedly-male vita better evaluations for teaching, research, and service than the identical, but supposedly-female, vita.⁵

BIAS CAN BE BASED ON THE PARENTAL STATUS OF APPLICANTS

When evaluating equally-qualified applicants who differed only in their parental status, mothers

- were rated significantly less-committed to their careers than non-mothers,
- were recommended for hire only 47% of the time, compared to non-mothers at 84%, and
- were recommended for a lower starting salary than non-mothers.

By complete contrast, fathers

- were judged to be *more* committed to their careers than non-fathers,
- were more-likely to be recommended for hire than non-fathers, and
- were recommended for higher starting salaries than non-fathers.⁶

BIAS CAN BE BASED ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION

A study of pairs of matching resumes sent to 1769 ads for five different occupations in 7 different states found that gay applicants received 40% fewer callbacks.⁷

Materials adapted principally from:

University of Wisconsin-Madison, WISELI. "Searching for Excellence and Diversity: A Guide for Search Committees, Second Edition". 2012.
Available at http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/docs/SearchBook_Wisc.pdf.

See also:

University of Wisconsin-Madison, WISELI. "Reviewing Applicants: Research on bias and assumptions". 2012.
Available at: http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/docs/BiasBrochure_3rdEd.pdf.

Notes:

1. John F. Dovidio, "On the Nature of Contemporary Prejudice: The Third Wave," *Journal of Social Issues* 57;4 (2001): 829–849; Mahzarin R. Banaji, Max H. Bazerman, and Dolly Chugh, "How (Un)Ethical Are You?" *Harvard Business Review* 81;12 (2003): 56–64.
2. Eric Luis Uhlmann and Geoffrey L. Cohen, "'I Think It, Therefore It's True': Effects of Self-Perceived Objectivity on Hiring Discrimination," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 104;2 (2007): 207–223.
3. Marianne Bertrand and Sendhil Mullainathan, "Are Emily and Greg More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination," *American Economic Review* 94;4 (2004): 991-1013.
4. Christine Wennerås and Agnes Wold, "Nepotism and Sexism in Peer-Review," *Nature* 387;6631 (1997): 341–343.
5. Rhea E. Steinpreis, Katie A. Anders, and Dawn Ritzke, "The Impact of Gender on the Review of the Curricula Vitae of Job Applicants and Tenure Candidates: A National Empirical Study," *Sex Roles* 41;7/8 (1999): 509–528.
6. Shelley J. Correll, Stephen Benard, and In Paik, "Getting a Job: Is there a Motherhood Penalty?" *American Journal of Sociology* 112;5 (2007): 1297-1338.
7. András Tilcsik, "Pride and Prejudice: Employment Discrimination against Openly Gay Men in the United States." *American Journal of Sociology* 117:2 (September 2011): 586-626.