What Works for Women at Work: Individual Strategies & Bias Interrupters

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Practical Advice
Real-life Situations
Social Science
"Joan Williams and Rachel Dempsey... provide easy-to-follow strategies.... This book can help women claim their seat at the table and lean in to their careers."

– Sheryl Sandberg
Gender Bias is Commonplace

Any of that sound familiar?

Four distinct kinds of bias:

Tightrope: 73%
Prove-It-Again!: 68%
Maternal Wall: 59%
Tug of War: 55%

Prove-It-Again! 68%

Some people even think that my research is better. Shortly after I changed sex, a faculty member said, ‘Ben Barres gave a great seminar today, but then his work is much better than his sister’s work.’”
Second Mechanism: In-Group Favoritism

What’s the most important factor in determining networks?

A. proximity \(\rightarrow 3\)
B. similarity \(\rightarrow 1\)
C. attractiveness (includes charisma) \(\rightarrow 2\)
D. social status
E. dissimilarity/diversity
Sponsorship

Information advantages

Who gets the benefit of the doubt?

Williams & Dempsey (2014)
“She is ‘lazy’ or not ‘tenurable material.’ He is ‘engaged in research that will take longer to reach the publication world.’”

“...yearly conferences within my field... not that I feel like the audience doesn't necessarily believe my results... I have to... defend it before I can even present it. I really don't think it's just because I'm a female. I think that that's secondary to my race.”

Prove-It-Again!  The Stolen Idea


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He’s skilled.

She’s lucky.

Women’s mistakes tend to be noticed more—and remembered longer.
“But I just saw six men do it that way!”

Biernat, Fuegen, & Kobrynnowicz, 2010; Bowles & Gelfand, 2010; Bauer & Baltes, 2002.
Women need to have achieved more to be judged equally competent

Black women much more likely to report prove it again problems (77% v. 66%)

Prove-It-Again!

Individual Strategies
“Let’s go back to the top of the pile.”

Stolen Idea:

“
I’ve been pondering that ever since Pam first said it....”

Nine requirements for promotion?
Keep careful, real-time records
What Works for Women at Work
Prove-It-Again! Individual Strategies

Compliments?
What Works for Women at Work

Tightrope 73%

• Women in mixed groups tend to
  – Hedge more
  – Talk less
  – “Don’t you think?”
• Men interrupt women more than vice versa

“I can even complete a whole sentence without being interrupted by a man.”

-Ben Barres

Smith-Lovin & Brody, 1989; Williams & Dempsey, 2014
• “Nice” work

• Women in mixed groups
  • Use tentative speech
  • Interrupt less

• Not claiming a seat at the table

Carney, Cuddy & Yap, 2010; Correll & Ridgeway, 2006; Ridgeway, 2001; Dovidio & Ellyson, 1985; Ridgeway, Berger, & Smith, 1985.
Prescriptive Stereotypes

♀ are expected to be...
• Nice, and
• “Communal”
  – Helpful
  – Modest
  – Interpersonally sensitive

♂ are expected to be...
• Competent, and
• “Agentic”
  – Assertive
  – Direct
  – Competitive
  – Ambitious

Eagly & Karau, 2002; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, Xu, 2002; Bettis & Adams (forthcoming)
“To get ahead here, you have to be so aggressive. But if women are too aggressive they’re ostracized... and if they’re not aggressive enough they have to do twice the work.”

• Pressure to be office mom, peacemaker, or dutiful daughter

• Organizational citizenship behavior
  – Women do more of it
  • And get less credit for doing it

Deaux; Allen, 2006.
• **Housework**
  - Planning parties

• **Admin work**
  - Meeting logistics, associate staffing, billing

• **Emotion work**
  - “She’s upset; can you help?”

• **Undervalued work v. glamour work**
  - Recruiting, talent management, closing checklist

*Williams & Dempsey, (2014)*
What Works for Women at Work

The Tightrope

Respected But Not Liked, Too Masculine Problems

• Direct
• Outspoken
• Assertive
• Competitive

Phelan, Moss-Racusin, & Rudman, 2008; Rudman & Phelan, 2008; Rudman & Fairchild, 2004; Rudman & Glick, 2001; Costrich, Feinstein, Kidder, Marecek, & Pascale, 1975.
“So if you’re stern... or you say no, you’re immediate reaction is to call that woman a b*tch, right? If you’re a man, it’s just a no.”

Supporting evidence: Rudman & Phelan, 2008; Brett, Atwater, & Waldman, 2005; Rudman & Fairchild, 2004; Rudman & Glick, 2001; Costrich, Feinstein, Kidder, Marecek, & Pascale, 1975.
Showing anger tends to increase the perceived status of a *man*, but decrease that of a *woman*.

“You think highly of yourself, don’t you?”

Asian American women report more pressure to fulfill traditionally feminine roles—and more pushback if they don’t

Latinas report being called “angry” or “too emotional” when “I wasn’t angry; I just wasn’t deferential.”

If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.

But if people don’t take you seriously, you’re stuck with office housework or are getting pushback....
Office Housework?

Make a rotation

The strategic “No”

Make it work for you

“When he is almost done, you start to make your point, and if he doesn’t stop, you just say, ‘Oh, I’m sorry. I thought you were done.’”

Williams & Dempsey (2014).
Gender judo:

"Be warm Ms. Mother 95 percent of the time," a technology executive advised, "so that the 5 percent of the time when you need to be tough, you can be."
“It wasn’t clear to me whether this represents the top of the pay range.

I don’t know how typical it is for people at my level to negotiate salary, but I’m hopeful you will see my skill at negotiating as something important I will bring to the team.

My mentor stressed how it important it was for me to negotiate if there’s a pay range. He also stressed I should say I would like to be eligible for an end-of-year bonus.”
Round up a posse

Praise your team
“If I look angry, it’s because I am angry because you’ve jeopardized (insert shared goal here).”

Asian American women report more pressure to behave in feminine ways—and more pushback when they don’t.
Maternal Wall 59%

Maternal Wall

Motherhood triggers the strongest form of gender bias

- 79% < likely to be hired
- ½ as likely to be promoted
- Offered $11,000 less
- Higher performance & punctuality standards

Supporting evidence: Heilman & Okimoto, 2008; Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2004; Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004.
Indisputably competent and committed mothers

• Seen as less likeable
• Held to higher performance standards

Correll & Benard, 2010; Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007; Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2004; Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004.
“I know this is not a good time for you...”

Janet's perfect for that job. Because for that job, you have to have no life. Janet has no family. Perfect. She can devote, literally, 19, 20 hours a day to it.”

Maternal Wall

Individual Strategies
“You’d be perfect for this, but if it’s not a good time for you, just say so.”

Get over yourself

“There are a million ways to be a good mother—and no way to be a perfect one.”

When asking for flexibility, *use your negotiation skills*
When you return from maternity leave...
Trump bias with information

If you are willing to travel, *say so.*
If you are the primary earner, *say so.*
If your partner is willing to follow you, say so.
“My wife could never leave her kids.”

I’m sure that’s right for her but...
Tug of War 55%
“The [older] women...always very encouraging, very helpful and very kind to me.”

Hall, E.V. (2012, June).
Opportunities for women are very zero-sum. If one woman gets a prized position...another woman won’t. And so it breeds a sense of competition.”

“I’m not a girl at Google, I’m a geek at Google.”

- Marissa Mayer

“Females are harder on their female assistants, more detail oriented, and they have to try harder to prove themselves, so they put that on you.”
I’m on kind of a backlash mission ... I wear dresses, I bake cookies for my group meetings, I bring my child to class with me....I’m not going to compete as a boy because I’m not a boy.”

“There’s an expectation from female staff that the female supervisors...will be more nurturing, will be more understanding - for example, if they have to leave...because of their families....Staff are less tolerant of women who are not like that....I think that often causes problems between female staff and female supervisors.”

“People immediately assume that because I don’t have children that I should be the person who takes our colloquium guest every Thursday when we have a colloquium to dinner...because they all have their wives and their great husbands and their children to go back to ....”
How does this differ by race?

ToolsforChangeinSTEM.org

“[T]here is this Mexican woman telling them what to do.”
Tug of War
Individual Strategies
Conflicts among women?

*Ask yourself:*

*Are they a symptom of gender bias?*
Recognize the *limits* of *sisterhood*

... *do men* always support *men*?
Senior Women:
Remember younger women’s experience is different.

Young Women:
Remember senior women may not have as much power as you think.

You have access to webinars on womensleadershipedge.org:

- “She’s too Abrasive/Aggressive/Emotion” - Interrupting Bias In Performance Evaluations

- “Bias Interrupters: Strategies for Male Allies”

- “Taming Adrenaline: Surefire Strategies for Overcoming Speaking Anxiety” from Cara Hale Alter

- “Overwhelmed- Being A Serious Professional While Making Time for a Life” from Brigid Schulte

- And many more!