REDUCING STEREOTYPIC GENDER BIASES IN HIRING

Resource Page #8

Findings from research in social psychology on stereotypic biases

- Gender stereotypes or "schemas" bias the evaluations of individuals, often in "male advantaging" ways.
- Gender stereotypes function as cognitive shortcuts.
- Stereotyping often occurs through lack of awareness.
- Both men and women are prone to biases.
- Even well-intentioned people are capable of bias.
- Biasing processes are more extreme when:
    - Individuals are tired, rushed or otherwise cognitively burdened.
    - Women are rare in a unit ("tokens").
    - Jobs are "male-typed."
    - Valid performance information is lacking.
    - Evaluation criteria are vague or ambiguous.
    - The good news is that biases can be reduced.

How stereotypic biases disadvantage women

- Stereotyping leads to the use of a gender-differentiated double standard for assessing competence and ability.
- Stereotypic biases can be embedded in seemingly objective supporting materials (recommendation letters, teaching evaluations).
- Stereotyping can result in seeing successful women as unfeminine or difficult (the "double bind").
- Stereotyping can result in shifting evaluation criteria for women and men.
- Stereotyping can result in even harsher biases against women who are mothers.

What can be done?

- Underlying principle: disrupt the tendency to use stereotypes as cognitive shortcuts.
- Strategies/solutions:
    - Devote adequate time.
    - Read candidate's work rather than relying solely on supporting materials.
    - Critically analyze supporting materials (recommendation letters, teaching evaluations, research statements).
    - Be accountable – be prepared to explain your decisions and rankings.
    - Be transparent—What are the criteria? Are they the same for persons of different social identities? Are they the right criteria?
    - Structure diverse groups and allow for maximum participation.
    - Think about how the job ad and descriptions might impact the applicant pool and perceived fit of the candidates.
    - Use the candidate evaluation form based upon the matrix.