Performance Bias Examples

**Gender**
- Gender bias is as prevalent in women as in men—even when applied to other women. Mothers systematically overestimate their sons’ crawling compared to their daughters’.

**Race/Ethnicity/National Origin**
- In Mexico, researchers sent out 1000 comparable resumes in response to an online job posting. The resumes, including photos, represented Caucasian, Mestizo (light brown skin), and Indigenous (dark brown skin) applicants. Caucasian women received 23% more callbacks than Indigenous women.
- A study in Buenos Aires sent out fictitious resume photos of candidates in their 20s. The resumes were of equal quality, but the faces were made more or less attractive through photographic manipulation. More attractive candidates received 35% more callbacks.

**Sexuality**
- A study by the Williams Institute reports that gay men earn 10%-32% less than similarly qualified heterosexual men.

**Ability**
- According to the US census bureau people with severe disabilities working full-time earn approximately $1,000.00 less per month than non-disabled workers.
- 13.3 million people with disabilities age 16-64 have experienced difficulty finding employment because of their disability.
Performance Attribution Bias Example

**Example 1**
At Facebook, there’s the perception by some that underrepresented groups got jobs because of our commitment to diversity and affirmative action laws, not because of their qualifications.

**Example 2**
A survey of several thousand potential political candidates, all with the credentials to run for office, found that the men were 60% more likely to think they were “very qualified.”

**Additional Findings**

- Research shows that when men and women work together on tasks, women are given less credit for a successful outcome, viewed as having made smaller contributions to it, and blamed more for failure.
- A UK study asked managers to explain the cause of a success or failure they had experienced at work. Women managers were significantly less likely than male managers to attribute their success to their skills and abilities.
- UN Women reports that although women make up 49.6% of the world’s population, only 11 women served as heads of state in 2015, while 10 served as heads of government.
Competence/Likeability Tradeoff Example

Cross-cultural studies of over 30 countries find that men are thought to possess the characteristics perceived to be associated with more successful leaders:

• Self confidence
• Ambition
• Competitiveness

Additional Findings

• According to research in the Harvard Business Review women are 1.4 times more likely to receive critical subjective feedback (as opposed to either positive feedback or critical objective feedback).

• Catalyst reports that in 2011 women constituted only 2.2% of Fortune 500 CEOs and about 15% of these companies’ board seats and corporate officer positions. The gap widened for women of color, who accounted for about 12% of the managerial and professional labor force, but a scant 3% of the 500 CEOs.
Maternal Bias Findings

Identical resumes with one difference: identifying as being a coordinator for a parents’ group.

Mothers are:
• 79% less likely to be hired
• Only half as likely to be promoted
• Offered an average of $11,000 less in salary

Additional Findings

A number of studies, including one by the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, and reported on by The Washington Post, show that working mothers are “a lucrative asset for companies.” These women are more productive than their peers over the course of their careers.
Managing Bias
Participant Guide (US)

Affinity Bias

The “mini-me syndrome” causes managers to hire employees who are similar to themselves in age, style, experience, gender, and race. They also supervise their own gender more frequently. Men have 68.5% male reports. Women have 63.8% women reports.

Employees tend to recognition peers like themselves and praise colleagues of their own gender more often. Females receive 64% from other females. Males receive 51% from other males.

Additional Findings

- Culture fit is the likelihood that someone will reflect and be able to adapt to the core beliefs attitudes, and behaviors that make up your organization. The problem with a hiring process built around “culture fit” is that it facilitates bias and leads to a homogeneous culture.

- According to the Workplace Diversity Report 2018 of 175,000 employees across 1,000 industries, both male and female managers supervise employees of their own gender more often than those of a different gender—63.8% for women and 68.5% for men.

- In a study of top investment banks, management consultancies, and law firms, Professor Lauren Rivera at Northwestern University’s Kellogg School of Management found that job offers were strongly influenced by interviewers’ perception of fit, as they hired candidates who they’d most enjoy having a beer with or being stuck with in an airport. By seeking “playmates,” they overlooked more skilled professionals with greater long-term potential at the company.

- While diversity discussions often focus on gender, any number of other personal traits can also impact workplace experiences. Forbes’ findings reveal that inclusive workplace culture and policies benefit everyone, including anyone whose personal traits differ from the majority.
Vignettes—What would you do?

Each of these vignettes may be interpreted as more than one type of bias. As you read through a scenario, note the type of bias you’re identifying.

1. Fernanda informs her manager, Mariana, that she’s pregnant. Mariana is very happy for Fernanda and lets her know that. Mariana suggests that Fernanda will probably want to start reducing her workload because she’s going to have to deal with morning sickness and being tired all of the time. Mariana tells Fernanda, “When I had my son, I took the full four months off, and even before that, I had to slow way down to deal with all of the doctors’ appointments and other pregnancy stuff.” After this conversation, Fernanda notices that Mariana immediately starts to give the most desirable projects to other team members.

   A. What type of unconscious bias is potentially happening?
   B. How are intent and impact not aligned here for this manager?
   C. If you’re Fernanda’s teammate noticing Mariana’s decision-making on projects, what would you say to interrupt this bias?

2. You’re a member of a team that recently launched a very successful campaign for advertisers. Paola, one of your teammates, was instrumental in driving key features of the launch. At the GMS All Hands, a group of you on this team are speaking to the org’s VP who is interested in the details of the launch. When he asks, “How on earth did you guys pull this off so smoothly?” Eduardo, another team member, says, “We considered all kinds of approaches, chose one, and, basically, got lucky that it worked.” Paola says nothing and no one acknowledges her role in the project.

   A. What type of unconscious bias is potentially happening?
   B. What are the impacts?
   C. As Paola’s teammate, what could you do or say to the VP, Eduardo, or the team?
   D. What could you suggest Paola do to get people to acknowledge her role without coming across as self-promotional?

3. In the course of a four-person interview loop for a community operations job, Alfredo, one of the interviewers, gives a black candidate a “No Hire” rating, stating the reason as, “Jamil is not a good culture fit.” José, a peer of Alfredo’s, feels uncomfortable about Alfredo’s feedback but isn’t sure what to do, as he has frequently heard people use this phrase to reject candidates since he joined last year.

   A. What negative impacts could result from Alfredo’s assessment of Jamil?
   B. What can Jose say or ask Alfredo to mitigate this potential bias?
4. When you’re working out of the MPK office, someone stands up at his desk and asks, “Hey, does anyone speak Spanish? I’m looking at the website of a potential client in Colombia, and need some help translating.” Before you have a chance to volunteer to help, Colin from a few desks over says, “I bet one of the guys from Facilities would be able to read it. Ask one of them.”

A. What type of unconscious bias or implicit association is potentially happening?
B. What are the potential negative impacts that could result from this kind of implicit association?
C. Should you talk to Colin about his comment? If so, what would you say?

5. Johan is a senior lead on your team, based in Sao Paulo. He’s a non-native Portuguese and English speaker and communicates very well, although he has a heavy accent in both languages. You’ve noticed in weekly team meetings that people disconnect when he speaks. On more than one occasion, team members have either spoken over him, or continued the discussion without any acknowledgement of his contribution. You overhear him complaining to a colleague, who tells him, “You need to learn to speak better as it’s hard for people to understand you.”

A. What type of unconscious bias or implicit association is potentially happening?
B. What would you do as Johan’s teammate, after overhearing this?
C. What would you do as Johan’s manager?

6. You’re eating at your desk and overhear two of your teammates talking about the newest member of your team, who just transferred from another team last week. One of them mentions viewing the new teammate’s public FB page and says, “I discovered that she’s liked [political figure]’s FB page since last year. I can’t help but wonder if she’s going to be a good fit with this team.”

A. What negative impacts may result because of this bias?
B. What would you do and say to interrupt the potential bias happening here?

7. Danilo runs a high-performing sales team that consistently meets quotas. In one particular quarter, Danilo’s team is having a hard time reaching the goal because its highest-spending client is reducing its spend. After several meetings with the client, led by male team members, Danilo asks Daniela, known affectionately to her colleagues as the “beauty queen of the team,” to “dress up nicely” and go see the client, in person, to convince the client not to pull out its investment.

A. What type of unconscious bias is potentially happening? What are the impacts?
B. What negative impacts may result because of this bias?
C. As Daniela’s teammate, what would you do after hearing this?
D. If you were Daniela, what would you do in this situation?
Managing Bias
Participant Guide (US)

8. One of your cross-functional partners is not being considered as the presenter for a really important, upcoming client meeting. Rumors are surfacing that the reason is because this individual publicly posts about his political views outside of FB, and people are nervous that his viewpoints will be connected to, and reflect negatively on, the FB brand. Yesterday, you overheard the project lead saying, “It’d be risky to put him up there. What if he says [...]?”

A. What are the impacts?
B. What would you do and say to interrupt the potential bias and assumption-making that is happening in this situation?