What Works for Women at Work—Individual Strategies and Institutional Solutions

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Practical Advice
Real-life Situations
Social Science

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1. INDIVIDUAL STRATEGIES
How bias plays out in everyday workplace interactions—and strategies individuals can use to navigate it successfully

2. INSTITUTIONAL SOLUTIONS
Organizational change to address subtle bias
127 interviews: Recited experimental findings “Any of that sound familiar?”

Four distinct kinds of bias

- **Tightrope**: 73%
- **Prove-It-Again!**: 60%
- **Maternal Wall**: 59%
- **Tug of War**: 55%

*Williams & Dempsey (2014)*
Overview

1. How bias plays out and individual strategies

2. Bias Interrupters model: Institutional solutions
4 Patterns & Individual Strategies

- Prove-It-Again!
- Tightrope
- Maternal Wall
- Tug of War

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Prove-It-Again! 68%
Lack of Fit

15% equity partners

NAWL, 2013
Prove-It-Again!

Women need to provide more evidence of competence than men to be judged equally competent.

"I was constantly told, ‘You have the network, but you don’t have the work.’ Whereas a man could just take clients out to dinner or golfing... he was given credit for that.”

Williams & Dempsey (2014)
Prove-It-Again!  
Men’s vs. Women’s Successes Confirmation Bias

He’s skilled.

She’s lucky.


© Copyright 2014. Joan C. Williams, Center for WorkLife Law.
“How quickly do you take her hero robe off?”

Women’s mistakes are more likely to be noticed and remembered...
Prove-It-Again! The Stolen Idea: Confirmation Bias

When a man loses a big client when a woman does...

Supporting evidence: Biernat, Fuegen, & Kobrynnowicz, 2010; Bowles & Gelfand, 2010; Bauer & Baltes, 2002.
What Works for Women at Work

Prove-it-Again!  Double Jeopardy?

Black women
Asian-American women
Latinas?

Prove-It-Again!
Individual Strategies and Interrupters
Double standards

“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

Memory and impressions? Handle with care
Sponsorship is so important

How you can help you sponsor

Tightrope 73%
The Tightrope

That brilliant lawyer?

Liked but not respected “too feminine”

or

Respected but not liked “too masculine”

Supporting evidence: Biernat, Tocci, & Williams, 2012; Okimoto & Brescoll, 2010; Phelan, Moss-Racusin, & Rudman, 2008; Rudman & Phelan, 2008; Bowles, Babcock, & Lai, 2007; Rudman & Glick, 2001; Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Costrich, Feinstein, Kidder, Marecek, & Pascale, 1975.
The Tightrope

Pressure to Behave in Feminine Ways

• Doing the office housework
  • Taking notes
  • Organizing parties
  • Cleaning up the debris

Allen, 2006; Williams & Dempsey, 2014
The Tightrope

Pressure to Behave in Feminine Ways

- “Organizational citizenship behavior”
  - Women expected to do more; men get more credit for doing it
  - Service partner
  - Organizing off-sites
  - Committee work

Allen, 2006; Williams & Dempsey, 2014
• 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, your immediate reaction is to call that woman a b*tch, right? If you’re a man, it’s just a no."

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-Americans
Blacks
Latinas

Tightrope
Individual Strategies and Interrupters
The Tightrope

How to Intervene On Behalf of a Colleague

Not a team player
Sharp elbows
What a witch!
She really flew off the handle
A real self-promoter
The money’s not that important to her
“Would we be saying this if she were a man?”
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?
Do not volunteer
Make a rotation

Allen, 2006
Office Housework?  
The strategic “No”  
Your sponsor can help!
“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.’”
Power posing

Carney, Cuddy and Yap, 2010
"Be warm Ms. Mother 95 percent of the time, so that the 5 percent of the time when you need to be tough, you can be."

Are women leaders more communal?
Make the request communal
Express concern for relationships
‘Blame’ it on someone else

Form a posse

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

Your sponsor is part of your posse

...Is it weird? No.
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...”

Maternal Wall | Flexibility Stigma

For women...

For men...

Williams, Glass, Berdahl, 2012.
Maternal Wall
Individual Strategies and Interrupters
Remember that time…?  
She’s not here again!

She’s only part time

Her husband supports her
“You’d be perfect...
Is it a good time for you?
If not, no worries....”
Counter *bias* with *information*.

When you return from maternity leave...
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.
Maternal Wall | Individual Strategies

Time norms conflate face time with commitment

Making the business case for PT

Don’t apologize

When is it important to be there?
“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.”

“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’ve seen lots of senior women behave that way, [not only] working long hours, but even adopting male mannerisms [and being] really aggressive…”

“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.”

“I worked long hours and my kids are fine.”

**Childfree:** “They are just reinforcing stereotypes.”

**Childless:** “I had to make hard choices.”
Tug of War
Individual Strategies and Interrupters
Conflicts among women?

Black women less likely to feel women support each other

Ask yourself:

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

... *do men* always support *men*?
Make an enemy into an ally.

“My sense—and I may be wrong— is that you do not always see me in the best light ...”
Senior Women

Remember younger women’s experience is different.
Younger Women
Remember senior women may not have as much power as you think.
Get **women** working together with **women**, and not just on women’s issues.
With your admin...
Black and white

“It’s personal...”
Organizational change

Institutional Interrupters
Metrics-Driven Bias Interrupters

Organizational Change

1. Do a 4 patterns assessment: is bias playing out in everyday work interactions?
2. Develop an objective metric
3. Implement a bias interrupter
4. If metric doesn’t change, ratchet up
Example: Promotion Rates

1. Assessment
2. Metrics showed difference in promotion rates
3. Bias interrupter: have someone trained to spot bias read all performance evaluations
4. Redesign evals/provide workshops
Example: Office Housework

1. Assessment
2. Metric: glamour work/housework
3. Gentle interrupter: training
4. See if metric changes; if not, ratchet up
Want To Take This Information Back To Your Organization?

Visit [www.womensleadershipedge.org/](http://www.womensleadershipedge.org/) to learn about WorkLife Law’s new membership program.

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