

# Creating an Inclusive Culture at Work—A View from Psychology

# Academic institutions claim to represent core social values

- Search for truth
- Freedom to pursue all ideas
- Respect for knowledge and expertise
- Valuing of creativity and innovation
- Commitment to merit
- Access/Inclusiveness



- Problems in judging merit
- Exclusionary practices

# Creating inclusion

- Access is precondition for merit; fair judgments of merit are precondition for access
  - Structural issues affect who applies/has access
    - Differential information
    - Differential preparation
    - Culturally-shared schemas



# Access (part of inclusion) linked to merit via judgment

- Merit hinges on accuracy of judgment



- Academy requires many judgments of merit
  - Many informal judgments
  - Formal, consequential judgments
    - Of particular work (papers, books, grant proposals)
    - Of students in course of education
    - Of scholars over course of career

# Judgments of merit are intrinsically complicated

- Early on, include an element of forecast
  - Admission of students (to college, to major, to graduate school, etc.)
  - Hiring of faculty
  - Tenure and promotion of faculty
- Forecasts always include uncertainty
  - Weather
  - Earthquakes
  - Elections
  - Athletic competitions
  - Feelings

# Two threats to the validity of our forecasts

- Fundamental attribution error
  - Incomplete information
  - Overvaluing of some information
    - Attribution to person rather than situation
      - GPA vs. information about leniency of grading
  - Just World/Blaming the Victim
- Tendency to attribute success and failure to person
- Reliance on group based schemas/"implicit biases"
  - Resume studies demonstrate reliance on these schemas in hiring, salary setting, promotion
  - Applies to gender, race, sexuality and parental status
  - Some research on fellowships and grant applications
  - Leadership outcomes

# Probably cannot totally remove the influence of schemas

- Screens help with musical auditions
- “Blind review” may help (but so many internal cues make this difficult)
  - Evidence people search for cues even when blind
- More information does help
  - “individuating” information reduces reliance on schemas
  - schemas still have an effect



# Many other irrelevant factors influence judgment: Halo effects

- Halo effects
  - Appearance/likeability affects other judgments
  - One performance influences judgments of others
  - Influence of own mood





# Reliance on proxies for excellence: prestige (special case of halo)

- Prestige of institution predicted fate of resubmitted papers
- Structure of faculty hiring networks
  - 461 doctoral departments in North America (history, computer science, and business)
  - 19,000 faculty in those departments
    - 86% had received doctorate at one of the sample departments
    - 25% of the institutions produced 71-86% of the faculty
    - Top 10 institutions produce 1.6 to 3 times more faculty than the next 10, etc.
    - *Only 9-14% of faculty are placed at institutions more prestigious than their degree*

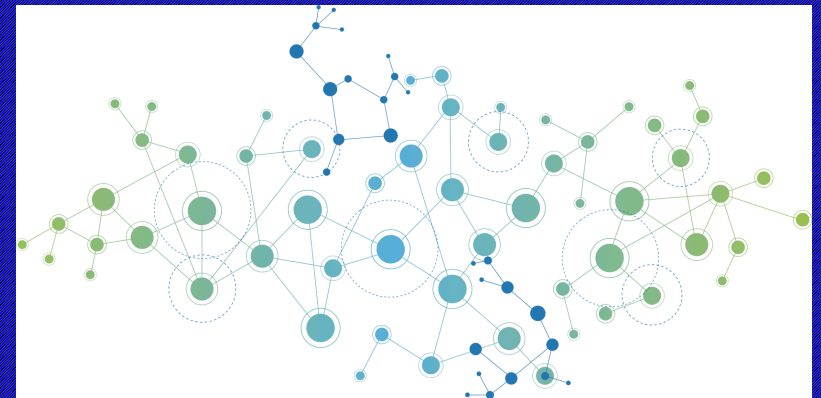
Peters, D. P. & Ceci, S. J. 1982. Peer-Review Practices of Psychological Journals: The Fate of Published Articles, Submitted Again. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 5, 187-255.

Clauset, A., Arbesman, S., & Larremore, D.B. (2015, 12 February). Systematic inequality and hierarchy in faculty hiring networks. *Science Advances*.



# Reliance on proxies for excellence: networks

- Networks play an important role in scholarly circles
- Homophily: “similarity breeds connection”
  - Affects nature of networks
    - Women have more women in their networks
    - Men have more men



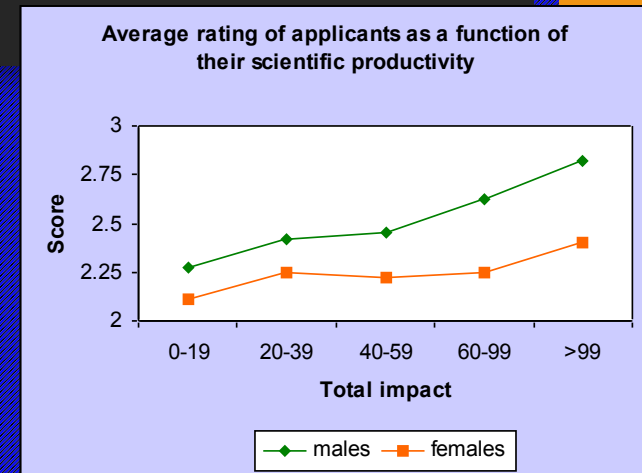
Belle, D., Smith-Doerr, L., & O'Brien, L.M. (2014). Gendered networks: Professional connections of science and engineering faculty (153-175). In V. Demos, C.W. Berheide, & M. Texler Segal (Eds.), *Gender Transformations in the Academy* (2014). UK: Emerald Group.

# Evaluation of fellowship applications: Gender

“...the success rate of female scientists applying for postdoctoral fellowships at the [Swedish Medical Research Council] during the 1990s has been less than half that of male applicants.”

Women applying for a post-doctoral fellowship had to be 2.5 times more productive to receive the same reviewer rating as the average male applicant.

*“Friendship bonus”: applicants affiliated with a committee member rated higher.  
Friendship and Gender had similar size effects.*



Similar findings:

- USA/GAO report on *Peer Review in Federal Agency Grant Selection* (1994)
- *European Molecular Biology Organization Reports* (2001)
- NIH Pioneer Awards: *Journal of Women's Health* (2005) & *Nature* (August 2006)

Wenneras & Wold (1997) *Nature*, 387, 341.

## Persistent impact of “nepotism” in peer review (homophily? proxy for excellence?)

- 10 years later estimated impact of gender and reviewer affiliation on research grants in Medicine
  - Gender no longer significant after practices altered
  - Reviewer affiliation equally significant

Sandström, U. & Hällsten, M. (2008). Persistent nepotism in peer-review. *Scientometrics*, 74(2), 175-189.

# Belief in our own expertise at decision-making

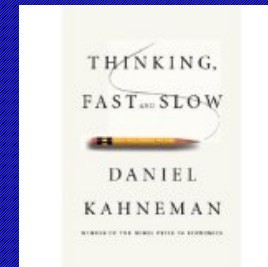
- Tetlock study of expert political pundits' predictions

- Worse than chance
- Specialists worse than non-specialists
- Resisted admitting wrong



- Kahneman

- Experts rely on (“fast”) intuition more than “slow” (deliberate) process and have high confidence
- Intuition is reliable when based on
  - An environment that is regular and predictable (a “high-validity” environment)
  - Opportunity for prolonged practice
- Fields differ
  - Compare Anesthesiology vs Radiology



Tetlock, P. E. (2005). *Expert political judgment: How good is it? How can we know?* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, fast and slow*. NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

# Some internal factors help some

- Recognition of uncertainty
- Commitment to consider role of situation in producing outcomes
  - Access to resources (human, time, and material)
  - Accumulation of advantage and disadvantage
- Examination of own process of developing opinions
  - Acknowledgment of irrelevant reactions/interpretations
  - Explicit consideration of alternative interpretations
  - Search for evidence to help decide
- Lower confidence in judgments

Thorngate, W., Dawes, R.M., & Foddy, M. (2009). *Judging merit*. NY: Psychology Press.

Ross, H.J. (2014). *Everyday bias*. NY: Rowman & Littlefield.



# Our judgments can be improved

- Some situational factors help
  - Comparative pool (haloes very likely when no comparisons)
  - Enough information
  - Avoidance of “evidence” that is likely to include bias
  - Avoidance of proxies for excellence
- Some situational constraints help
  - Establishment a priori of detailed criteria that can be observed
  - Reliance on specific evidence in judging each criterion
  - Avoidance of halos, intuition, and global judgments
  - Disciplined evaluation of criteria across individuals
  - If a group process
    - Diversity in group membership
    - Enough time
    - Explicit process for correcting inaccuracies

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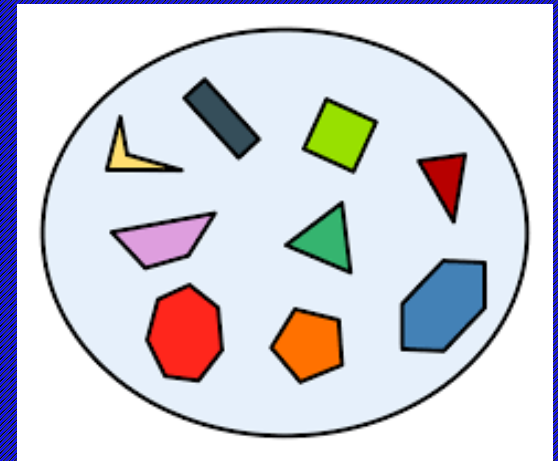
# Can adopt practices that enhance equal access

- Development of fuller information and careful distribution of it
  - For admissions
  - For applications for all positions (more careful directions to applicants)
- Education of faculty about the importance of adopting careful practices to enhance fair judgment
  - Assess practices that may introduce biases
  - Include more reliance on good evidence
- Adoption of practices that enhance fair judgment
  - One thing leads to another: bystander education



# Creating Inclusion

- Once have access, success depends on additional factors
  - Capacity for fair judgments within institution
    - Practices that increase likelihood
  - Others' expectations (implicit biases)
    - Patronizing feedback vs. “wise” feedback
    - Absence of stereotype threat
      - About performance
      - About potential racism/sexism/homophobia, etc.
  - Sense of belonging



# Practices that Create Inclusion

## Capacity for fair judgments

- Practices that increase likelihood

## Others' expectations (implicit biases)

- Patronizing feedback vs. “wise” feedback
- Absence of stereotype threat
  - About performance
  - About potential racism/sexism/homophobia, etc.

## Sense of belonging

- Adopt fair evaluation practices
  - Explicit transparent criteria
  - Multiple performance opportunities
- Educate faculty and graduate students on how to give wise feedback and danger of patronization
- Reduce ambient cues of not belonging
- Increase ambient cues linking success with people with many different social identities'
- Normalize anxiety about performance

# Optimal feedback: “wise” mentoring

- Black and White students both reported enhanced identification with skills and careers, when mentors:
- Provide critical feedback, and at same time:
  - Invoke high standards
  - Express confidence student can meet them



Cohen, Steele & Ross, 1999

# Making Changes Stick

- Focus on policies and practices.
- Adopt changes widely, provide educational and informational support widely and quickly.
- *Increase chances of living up to academic ideals and having institutions that reflect them*

# An Inclusive Academy

Achieving Diversity and Excellence

Abigail J. Stewart and Virginia Valian

MIT Press, 2019