

This purpose of this document is to help you identify the ways in which implicit bias shows up in the recruitment process; and to identify equitable ways of mitigating implicit bias. The focus here is on the potential for bias after candidates have applied or are in the assessment stage of applications.

## Before you Begin: Important Biases to Consider

Often, we use **best fit** to describe a candidate, as we may focus on individuals who are similar to us and believe they are a better fit for the department than other candidates. This engages the affinity bias (where we prefer people who are like us) and the cloning bias (where we hire people like us).

Two Important First Steps:

1. Recognize that we all have implicit biases.
2. Accept the responsibility to identify and understand your biases, and control for the potential of bias, even if you are not sure what your biases are.

### How does Implicit Bias show up in Recruitment?

#### COMMON SHORTCUTS

**Shortcuts:** This can lead to biased assessments in evaluation if we are not motivated to avoid them and skilled in doing so. Shortcuts can lead to erroneous conclusions that underrepresented candidates are unqualified or a bad fit. For example, one may rely on a keyword search in applicants' materials. This is problematic since most descriptors for marginalized applicants focus on effort, and descriptors for dominantly situated candidates rely on expertise or achievements. Another potential example could include the focus on the length of reference letters. A recent study by ASU showed that dominantly situated applicants typically have letters of recommendation roughly 20% longer than do marginalized applicants.

**Cloning:** This practice seeks to replicate oneself by hiring someone with similar attributes or background. It can also refer to the undervaluing of a candidate's research, research methods, leadership etc., because these might be unfamiliar to the selection committee member; as well as expecting candidates to resemble someone whom the search committee is replacing. Cloning limits the scope and breadth of approaches and perspectives in research, teaching, and service.

**Snap judgements:** These occur when making judgements about a candidate with insufficient evidence. Dismissing a candidate for minor reasons or labelling a candidate "the best" and ignoring positive attributes of the other candidates.



**Covert Agenda:** Having a covert agenda, furthered by stressing something trivial or focusing on a few negatives rather than the overall qualifications, can occur when the hiring process feels rushed and/or lacks an equitable process.

**Fit/Bad Fit:** While it may be about whether the person can meet the programmatic needs for the position, this notion is often about how comfortable and culturally at ease hiring committee members feel. Questions for reflection can include, *'what are some deeply held beliefs that shape who I am and the work I do? Where do these beliefs come from? What around or within me upholds what I am tied to? How committed am I to these beliefs in contrast to learning and doing something different?'*

**Negative Stereotypes:** These are characterized by assumptions of incompetence. Research highlights, the work of members from historically underrepresented, marginalized or otherwise excluded groups is often scrutinized than the majority of faculty from the dominant group, at all stages of academic career.

**Positive Stereotypes:** Dominant group members are automatically presumed to be competent. Candidates from dominant groups often receive the benefit of the doubt, negative attributes are glossed over, and success is assumed. This is also called the "original affirmative action" because dominant group members are automatically presumed qualified and thereby given an unearned advantage. In the scholarship on implicit bias, this is often called credibility excess -- affording an unjustified excess of credibility to some (in this case, applicants), because of features of their identity irrelevant to the position.

**Elitist Behavior (also called "Raising-the-bar"):** This occurs when folks downgrade the qualifications of people from marginalized groups based on accent, dress, and demeanor. In short, prejudicial expectations are ascribed based on a candidate's social identity.

**Wishful Thinking:** This notion shows up when one insists racism, sexism and other forms of prejudice no longer exist.

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#### **EUPHEMIZED BIAS**

**Visionary:** This term is used to describe members of dominant groups who are often evaluated based on their potential whereas underrepresented groups are judged on their accomplishments and track record only. For example: "he has vision" or "she lacks vision".

**Star:** Used when the speaker is an infatuated fan of the candidate under consideration. When you hear it, ask the speaker to explain their use of the term and support it with evidence. For example: "she's not a star" or "it's clear he's a rock star".



**Committed, single-minded focus or hard worker:** these terms could be cloaking a bias against caregivers, those candidates who cannot depend on what Williams (2000) calls a “flow of family work” which allows ideal workers to log long hours in the office while still having their material needs met.

Making decisions rooted in bias, regardless of the intention, creates spaces of inequity. While we may want to believe that we are the exception, reality says, everyone holds implicit biases about various social and identity groups. These stem from one’s tendency to organize social worlds by categorizing them. While our tendencies typically go undetected, it is crucial to acknowledge and take accountability for the damage these biases can cause. Through consistent, active, and intentional learning and self-reflection, we can work to dismantle the power of these biases, leading to more diverse and inclusive communities.



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