



CoP Facilitator Training Series

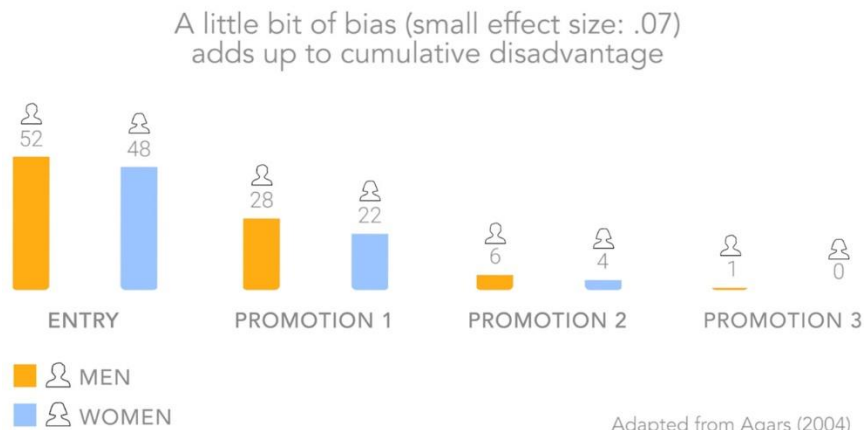
ACTonBias

Evidence-based Implicit Bias Interventions

Delivered by: **Dr Claartje Vinkenburg**

What is bias?

Bias is a **cognitive distortion** that results in favoritism for the dominant group. Often **implicit** and **unintentional**, bias becomes explicit in language and in numbers. A little bit of bias in every evaluation (around .07-.15 effect size on a 10- point evaluation scale) can have a cumulative effect explaining the overrepresentation of white men in senior positions (see figure and [ACT Video on career development](#)). Bias interventions are in high demand. They are one of the components of the Horizon Europe requirement for Gender Equality Plans. However, some decision makers, popular media, and scientific literature have voiced concerns about the effectiveness of bias interventions and that they can backfire. So, how to design a bias intervention that delivers?



What can you do?

- Realize that changing (or even eliminating) bias is impossible, we cannot fix people's minds.
- Decide whether you want to raise awareness about bias and/or whether you want to mitigate the effects of bias on organizational processes and outcomes. These goals are different but often confused.
- Use creative ways to raise awareness about the existence of bias, its often implicit (not unconscious) nature & its pernicious effects on workplace culture & careers, e.g., inspirations session, short videos, illustrative tweets, anecdotes.



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 788204



- Show examples of what can be done to mitigate bias effects, preferably in the context of the audience. Telling audiences they are biased (e.g. using IAT test results) and that everybody is biased removes responsibility to act on bias.
- Use counterstereotypes (e.g., fathers taking paternity leave), to avoid reproducing stereotypes.
- Use inclusive language taking into account various social categories (intersectionality).

Mitigate bias:

- Take a “deep dive into the shallow end” or a “small wins” approach (Correll, 2017) to find bias evidence and to decide what can be done to optimize decisions and fix the system
- If behavior is the problem (e.g., in interviews or committees meetings), provide behavioral solutions that focus on “habit changing” (Devine et al., 2017)
- Be prepared to meet resistance and respond using the arguments above (see [ACT Video on resistance](#))
- Redesign processes using behavioral insights & nudges (Bohnet, 2016)
- Stimulate experiential learning (Moss Racusin et al., 2018)
- Using video / role play (NWO inclusive assessment, CERCA recruitment bias)
- Make a moral appeal (Chugh, 2018)

Finding bias evidence:

- Look closely at the data, on representation & career progression, consider intersectionality
- Note critical transitions in careers or process steps, bifurcation points
- Listen to / read the language of performance evaluation

Design specifications for effective bias interventions (Vinkenburg, 2017):

- Engage gatekeepers: decision makers / power holders
- Enhance accountability and transparency
- Promote awareness and build competence in bias mitigation
- Improve decision making in selection, promotion, performance evaluation
- Focus on operationalization and application of criteria

Further Reading:

ACT on Career Advancement: <https://vimeo.com/601767409>

ACT on Resistance: <https://vimeo.com/493415371>

Agars, M.D. (2004) <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.2004.00127.x>

Bohnet (2016) ISBN 9780674089037

Correll (2017) <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243217738518>

Chugh (2018) ISBN 9780062692146

Devine et al. (2017) <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2017.07.002>

Moss Racusin et al. (2018) <https://doi.org/10.1037/xap0000144>

Vinkenburg (2017) <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886317703292>



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