



WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP  
**EDGE**

An Initiative of the Center for WorkLife Law at UC  
Hastings College of the Law

Practical  
Advice

Real-life  
Solutions

Social  
Science

## *Bias Interrupters – Strategies for Male Allies*

Distinguished Professor Joan C. Williams  
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University of California, Hastings College of the Law

# Decades Of Effort

- “We have a problem? Let’s found a women’s (or diversity) initiative!”
- If there’s a problem, it’s probably because subtle forms of bias are playing out in everyday workplace interactions.
- *This will give you low-key ways to interrupt it.*

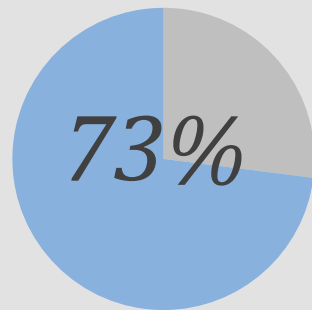


# “Any Of That Sound Familiar?”

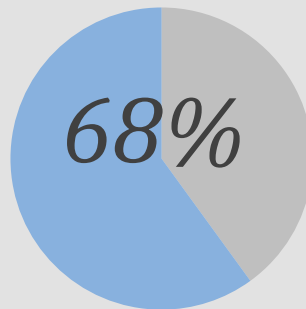


## Four distinct kinds of bias

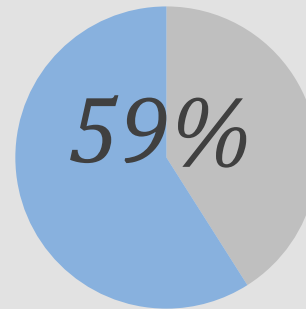
### Tightrope



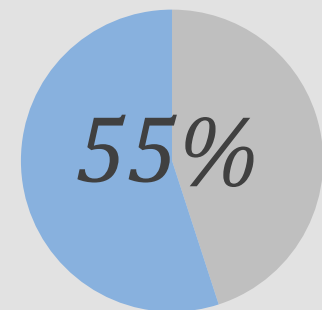
### Prove-It-Again!



### Maternal Wall

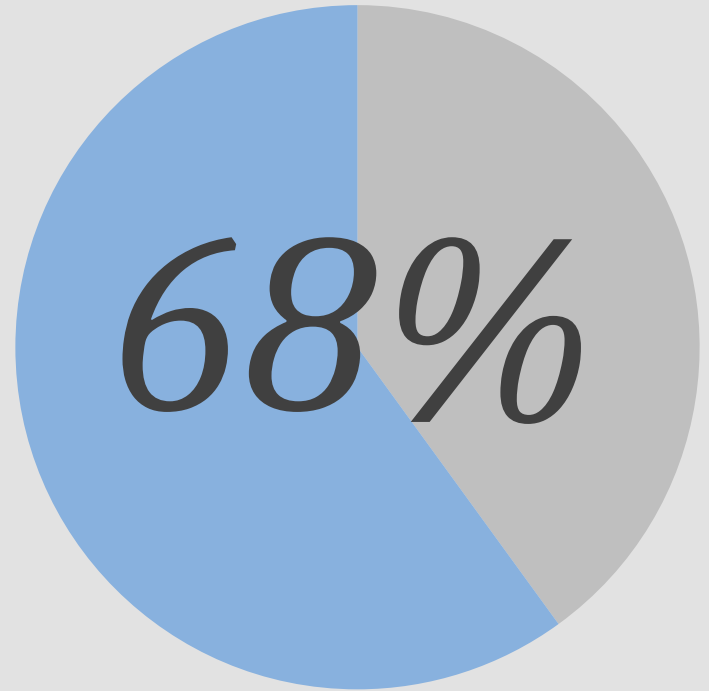


### Tug of War





# Prove-It-Again!



Knobloch-Westerwick, Glynn, & Huge, 2013; Moss-Racusin, Dovidio, Brescoll, Graham, & Handelsman, 2012; Roth, Purvis, & Bobko, 2012; Davison & Burke, 2000; Biernat & Kobrynowicz, 1997.

### Two different mechanisms:

1. In-Group Favoritism
2. Lack of Fit



# 1<sup>st</sup> Mechanism: In-Group Favoritism

What's the most important factor in determining who you have in your network?

- A. proximity
- B. similarity
- C. attractiveness
- D. social status
- E. dissimilarity/diversity



# 1<sup>st</sup> Mechanism: In-Group Favoritism

What's the most important factor in determining who you have in your network?

- A. proximity ← 3
- B. similarity ← 1
- C. attractiveness ← 2
- D. social status
- E. dissimilarity/diversity



# Prove-It-Again!

*In-Group Favoritism*

## How this plays out:

1. Sponsorship & opportunities
2. Access to information
3. Objective “requirements”
4. Who gets the benefit of the doubt?

Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Biernat, Fuegen, & Kobrynowicz, 2010; Bowles & Gelfand, 2010; Bauer & Baltes, 2002.

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**Slide 8**





# Prove-It-Again!

*Potential vs. Performance*

“

‘You have the network, but you don’t have the work.’ Whereas a man could just take clients out to dinner or golfing....”





# In-Group Favoritism Interrupter

**Who are your sponsoring? How can you widen that circle?**





# In-Group Favoritism Interrupter

**Who are your sponsoring? How can you widen that circle?**

**Is it weird to meet a woman you are sponsoring outside of the office?**





# In-Group Favoritism Interrupter

**Who are your sponsoring? How can you widen that circle?**

**Is it weird to meet a woman you are sponsoring outside the office?**

**No. Think: sister-in-law or niece.**





# In-Group Favoritism Interrupter

**“I don’t want anyone to get the wrong idea...”**

## Tips:

1. Breakfast, lunch or coffee vs dinner or drinks
2. Avoid overly personal topics: this is business



# Bias Interrupters

**A female colleague walks by and a male colleague turns to you and says, “Wow, she’s hot.”**





# Bias Interrupters

**A female colleague walks by and a male colleague turns to you and says, “Wow, she’s hot.”**

“Hey, she’s our colleague. That’s not how I view her, or how she would want to be viewed.”



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Mechanism: Lack Of Fit

“

Some people even think my research is better. Shortly after I changed sex, (someone) said,

*‘Ben Barres gave a great seminar today, but then his work is much better than his sister’s...’*”





# Prove-It-Again!

*Double Standards*

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

Knobloch-Westerwick, Glynn, & Huge, 2013; Moss-Racusin, Dovidio, Brescoll, Graham, & Handelsman, 2012; Roth, Purvis, & Bobko, 2012; Davison & Burke, 2000; Biernat & Kobryniewicz, 1997.

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# Prove-It-Again!

*Men vs Women's Successes*

*He's* skilled.

*She's* lucky.

Kulich, Trojanowski, Ryan, Haslam, & Renneboog, 2011; Garcia-Retamero & López-Zafra, 2006; Swim & Sanna, 1996; Igbaria & Baroudi, 1995; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1993; Taylor, Fiske, Etcoff, & Ruderman, 1978.

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# Prove-It-Again!

*Blacks vs Whites' Mistakes*

Spelling & grammar errors found in law firm associate memo

- 2.9/7.0 (White)
- 5.8/7.0 (Black)

Reeve, 2014; Bowles & Gelfand, 2010; Bauer & Baltes, 2002; Rothbart, Evans, & Fulero, 1979.

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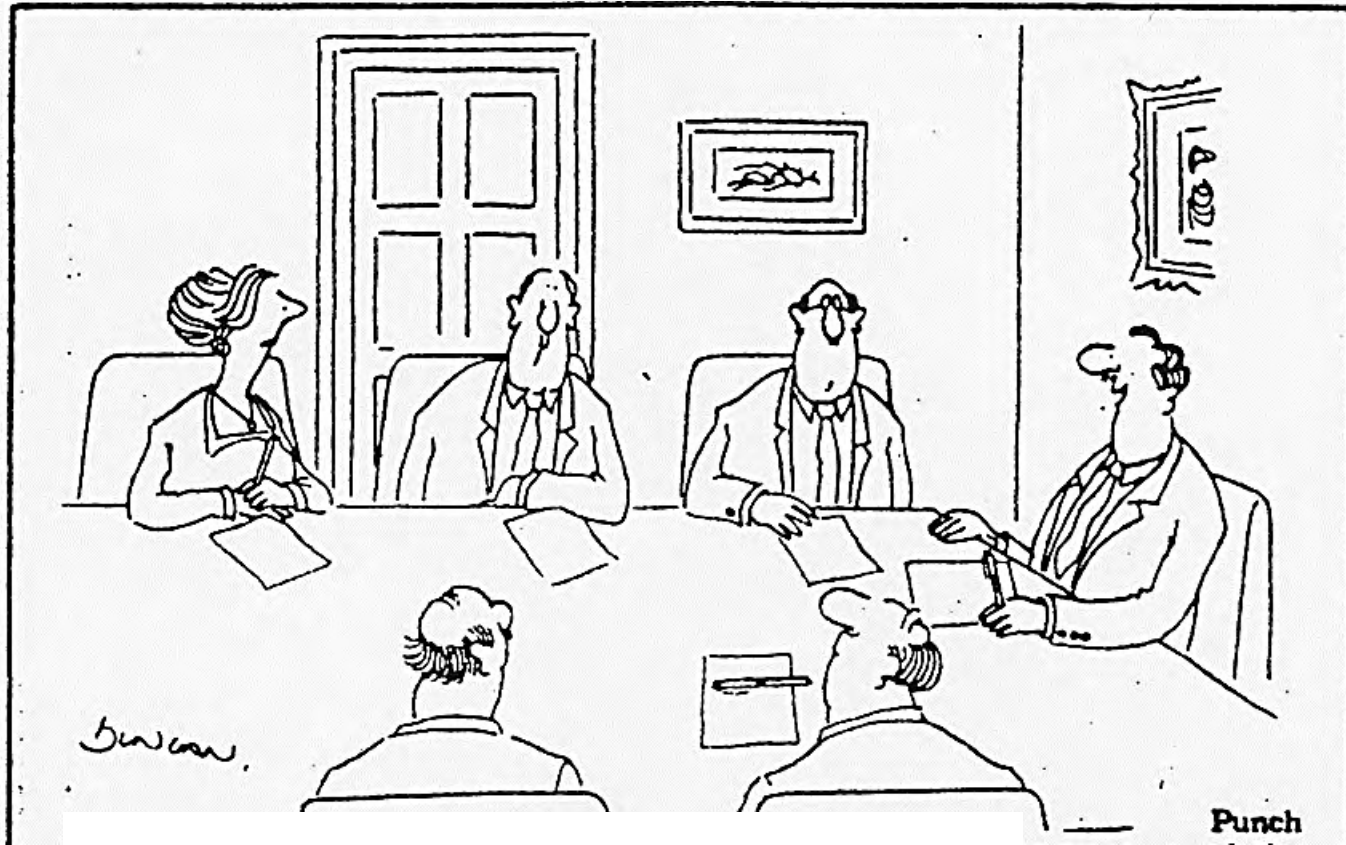
## Education or experience?

*Less weight given to both education and experience when women had them*



# Prove-It-Again!

*Stolen Idea:  
Confirmation Bias*



*“That’s an excellent suggestion Miss Trigg.  
Perhaps one of the men here would like to make it.”*

Duncan, 1988.

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# Stolen Idea Interrupters

**You are sitting in a meeting and you see the stolen idea occur. How do you intervene?**





# Stolen Idea Interrupters

**You are sitting in a meeting and you see the stolen idea occur. How do you intervene?**

“I’ve been pondering that idea ever since Pam first said it. You’ve added something important...”





# Prove-It-Again! Interrupters

**You are sitting in a meeting and you see men being judged on their potential; women on their performance. How do you intervene?**







# Prove-It-Again! Interrupters

**You are sitting in a meeting and you see men being judged on their potential; women on their performance. How do you intervene?**

**“Let’s go back to the top of the pile...”**





# Organizational Interrupters

Pre-commitment

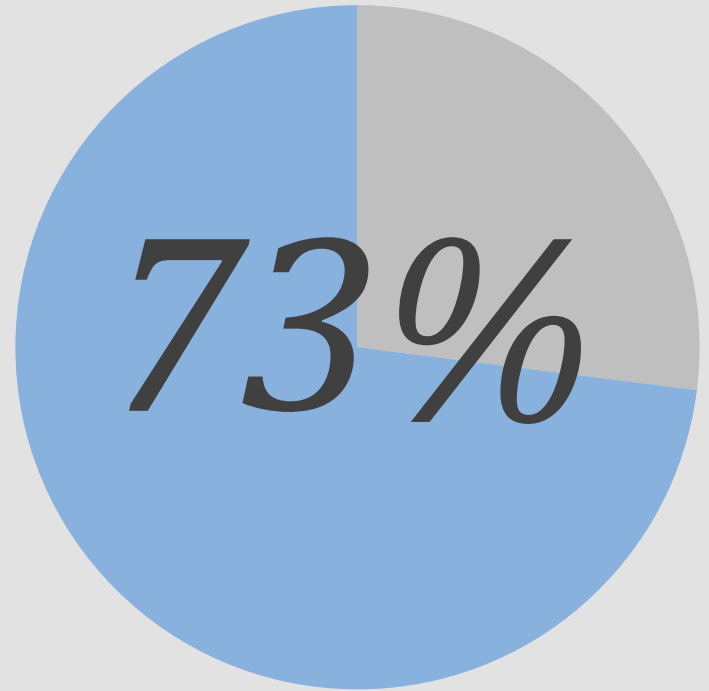
Remind people of criteria

Accountability





# Tightrope



# Prescriptive Stereotypes

♀ are expected to be...

- Nice, and
- “Communal”
  - Helpful
  - Modest
  - Interpersonally sensitive

♂ are expected to be...

- Competent, and
- “Agentic”
  - Direct
  - Assertive
  - Competitive
  - Ambitious



- Men tend to interrupt women a lot more than women interrupt men

“

By far, the biggest difference is that people treat me with far more respect. I can even complete a whole sentence without being interrupted by a man.”

-Ben Barres





# Interruption Interrupters

**You're in a meeting and you see that women are being interrupted far more than men. How do you intervene?**





# Interruption Interrupters

**You're in a meeting and you see that women are being interrupted far more than men. How do you intervene?**

“

Susan, I think you had a thought there?  
Eager to hear your thought, but let's let Susan finish first.



# Interruption Interrupters

## ➤ Other ideas

Talk to interrupter off-line.

No interrupting rule.

Assign people to speak/report – specific issues.

Allow people to contribute after the meeting.

Circulate the agenda beforehand.

*.....will also help introverted men!*





# Tightrope

*Likability/Competence  
Trade-Off*

- Liked but not respected *“too” feminine*
- Respected but not liked *“too” masculine*

Haselhuhn & Kray, 2012; Bowles, Babcock, & McGinn, 2005; Heilman & Chen, 2005; Glick & Fiske, 2001; Taylor, 1981; Kanter, 1975.

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- Pressure to be deferential or play office mom or dutiful daughter
- Organizational citizenship behavior
  - Women do more of it
    - And get less credit for doing it



- **Housework**
  - Planning parties, getting gifts
- **Admin work**
  - Taking notes, scheduling meetings
- **Emotion work**
  - Mentoring
- **Undervalued, behind-the-scenes work**
  - “We do the task lists”





# Office Housework Interrupters

**How can try to ensure that women and men have equal access to glamour work and office housework?**



# Office Housework Interrupters

- Literal housework and admin work
  - DON'T ask for volunteers
  - DO establish a rotation
  - OR assign to support personnel



# Office Housework Interrupters

- Glamour work vs. undervalued work?
  - Figure out who's doing what
  - Everyone do their own?
- If a woman is getting stuck, help her develop transition plan



- Direct
- Outspoken
- Assertive
- Competitive

Phelan, Moss-Racusin, & Rudman, 2008; Rudman & Phelan, 2008; Rudman & Fairchild, 2004; Rudman & Glick, 2001; Costrich, Feinstein, Kidder, Marecek, & Pascale, 1975.

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*“It is important to set proper guidance around priorities...”*

*Bossy, abrasive, strident, aggressive*  
*Emotional, irrational”*





Showing anger tends to increase the perceived status of a *man*, but decrease that of a *woman*.



“Angry black man/woman”

Latina/os “too emotional,” “angry,”  
“crazy”



Women get penalized for self-promotion

Men for modesty

- Seen as having < leadership ability, ambition & confidence



“  
*In most Asian cultures, being modest is the number one virtue.*”



“

*Boasting and self-promotion and credit hogging are wrong and unseemly”*





# Bias Interrupters

**Your department relies heavily on self-promotion to get the word out about accomplishments. You notice that there's a specific demography to who self-promotes. How can you intervene?**



# Tightrope Bias Interrupters

- Self-promotion
  - Set up alternative systems
  - Norm against self-promotion except in formal contexts
  - *These also will help Asian-Americans, veterans, and anyone from a blue-collar background...*





# Tightrope Bias Interrupters

**When you review performance evaluations for your department, you notice women received a lot more negative comments about their personalities than men. How can you intervene?**







# Tightrope Bias Interrupters

**When you review performance evaluations for your department, you notice women received a lot more negative comments about their personalities than men. How can you intervene?**

- “Are we being consistent here?”
- “How different is this from what Jeff did?”





# Tightrope Bias Interrupters

**Sharp elbows**

SHE REALLY FLEW OFF THE HANDLE

**A real self-promoter**





# Tightrope Bias Interrupters

- Climate: Do you tolerate screamers?





# Organizational Interrupters

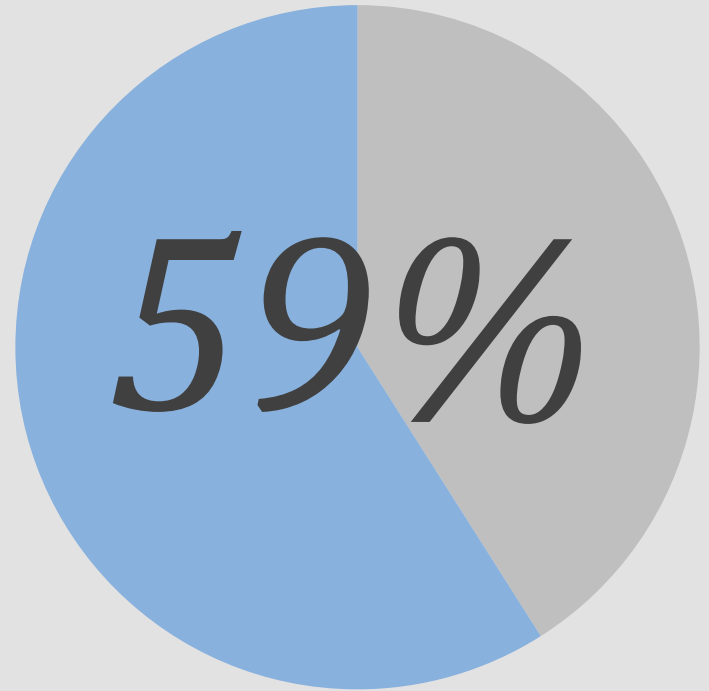
*Self-promotion at Google*

*Use EY system for performance evaluations*





# Maternal Wall



# Maternal Wall

*Negative Competence and  
Commitment Assumptions*

- 79% less likely to be hired
- Only half as likely to be promoted
- Offered \$11,000 less in salary
- Held to higher performance and punctuality standards

Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007; Heilman & Okimoto, 2008; Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2004; Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004.

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# Maternal Wall

*Hostile Prescriptive Bias*

“I don’t know how you can leave your kids. My wife would never do that.”





# Maternal Wall

*Benevolent Prescriptive Bias*

“

This is not a good time for her.”







# Maternal Wall Bias Interrupters

**One of your reports recently returned from maternity leave. You have a career-enhancing assignment she'd be perfect for her—but it will be time-consuming. What should you do?**



# Maternal Wall Bias Interrupters

“You’re perfect for this... If it’s not a good time for you, just say so. These things come around from time to time.”

➤ *Tip:* Set a time to revisit



# Maternal Wall Bias Interrupters

“Women get pregnant. This is a real disadvantage and risk for any project leader...”



# Maternal Wall Bias Interrupters

- Train your team to leave views & assumptions re family life at home
- Assume everyone—men and women—will take parental leave
  - *72% of Millennial men (vs. 59% of Boomer men) would take a full 3 months paid paternity leave if offered*





# Maternal Wall Bias Interrupters

- Encourage men to take their full leave; discuss concerns if hesitant
- Some men prefer to take intermittent leave, or leave after their wife returns to work



# Maternal Wall Bias Interrupters

- “I didn’t take leave and I’m a good father!”



# Do's And Don'ts

## DO's:

### Small talk

- Congrats!
- Due date?
- Boy or girl?
- Convey NBD attitude – handled before, can do it now

### Content

- Leave policies (HR & handbook/policy provisions)
- Plan to help transition to/from leave
- Speak up if needs accommodations

## DON'Ts:

- “Again!?!”
- “Oh no, how am I gonna get through this?”
- “You’re the third one in our dept.!”
- “Wow, you’re fertile” (or any reference to bodily functions)



# Organizational Interrupters

Harvard  
Business  
Review

PERSONNEL POLICIES

## Need a Good Parental Leave Policy? Here It Is.

by Joan C. Williams

NOVEMBER 23, 2015



SAVE



SHARE



COMMENT



TEXT SIZE



PRINT



Williams, 2016.

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*Managing Mothers &  
Fathers*

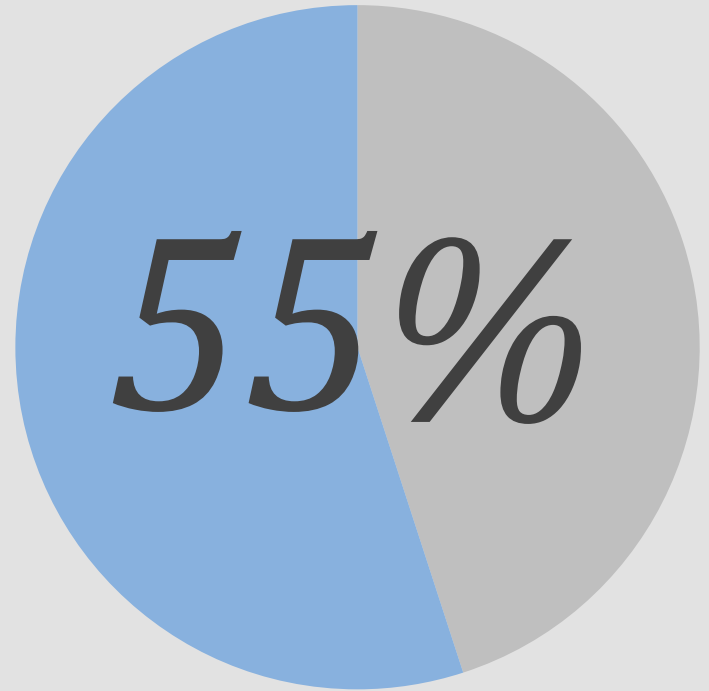
[womensleadershipedge.org/managing-  
mothers-and-fathers-webinar](http://womensleadershipedge.org/managing-mothers-and-fathers-webinar)

Password: *advancingwomen*





# Tug of War



# Tug Of War

*“The [older] women... are always very encouraging, very helpful and very kind to me.”*



# Tug Of War

## *Tokenism*

*“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.”*

Williams & Dempsey, 2014; Zatz, 2002; Ely, 1994a & 1994b; Keller & Moglen, 1987; Kanter, 1997a & 1997b.

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# Tug Of War

## *Loyalty Tax*

“

*I'm not a girl at Google, I'm a geek at Google.”*

- Marissa Mayer



# Tug Of War

*Prove-It-Again Pass Through*

“  
*She had to work extra hard and so  
expects other women to have done as  
much as she has.”*





# Tug Of War Bias Interrupters

- Freighted relationships? Ask yourself whether they reflect gender bias
- Make sure there's not just one “woman's spot”



# Tug Of War

*Prove-It-Again Pass Through*

“

*Female lawyers are harder on their female assistants...and they have to try harder to prove themselves, so they put that on you.”*







# Tug Of War Bias Interrupters

**How can you make sure the women and people of color in your department receive the same level of support from administrative personnel?**





# Tug Of War Bias Interrupters

- Ask the women
- If there's an issue,
  - Send clear messages to support personnel
  - And to individuals involved
  - Examine (and adjust) incentive systems



# Tug Of War

## *Maternal Wall Pass Through*

“

Janet's perfect for that job. Because for that job, you have to have no life. Janet has no family. Perfect. She can devote, literally, 19, 20 hours a day to it.”



Speigel, 2011.

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# Tug Of War Bias Interrupters

- Make sure women without children don't carry an unequal burden
- Make sure long hours, weekends, holiday work shared fairly
- Respect all workers' personal lives and responsibilities (reason-neutral)



# Metrics Driven Bias Interrupters



Williams, 2014b.

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# Bias Interrupters

## Four-Step Process

1

Do evidence-based assessment

2

Develop objective metric

3

Implement bias interrupter

4

Return to metric, ratchet up as needed



# Example

1. *4 patterns assessment: housework*
2. *Objective metric: measure who's getting what assignments*
3. *Implement bias interrupter*
4. *Return to the metric, and ratchet up as needed*





# Q & A Session | Questions and Comments

Q & A  
Session

#AdvancingWomen  
@worklifelawctr



*questions@womensleadershipedge.org*



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