

Analyzing and Correcting Hidden Gender-Equity Problems

Virginia Valian
Department of Psychology
Hunter College and CUNY Graduate Center, New York, NY

Problem Type

- lack of knowledge about whether gender equity problems exist

Possible Solutions

- devote institutional resources to identifying and ameliorating problems (see visible problems handout)
- hire appropriate staff to interview individual students and faculty about perceived problems; follow-up with broad questionnaire
- give individuals release time to work on problems
- schedule annual reviews for problem areas
- learn from case studies and best practices

Problem Type

- lack of interest in gender equity on part of administrators, division heads, chairs, and others

Possible Solutions

- educate institution about gender schemas and accumulation of advantage
- make administrators at all levels accountable for gender equity
- make institutional rewards contingent on progress toward gender equity
- develop performance review criteria that include specific equity demands
- communicate benefits of equity (how it will help with other institutional goals)

Problem Type

- undergraduate students evaluate female TAs more negatively than male TAs despite equal or superior performance from females

Possible Solution

- conduct orientation sessions for undergraduates about how gender works: how and why they are at risk of undervaluing female and overvaluing male instructors (of any rank); convey the institution's confidence in the knowledge and competence of their instructors

Problem Type

- institutional practices with inadvertent disproportionate impact

Possible Solutions

- interview perceptive staff about practices that generally seem to limit the institution (e.g., only tenuring full professors); these are likely to have diversity consequences as well
- attempt to eliminate or control such practices

Problem Type

- gender disparities in: a) office space; b) laboratory space; c) knowledge of internal resources; d) access to internal research funds; e) access to technical and computer assistance; f) access to secretarial and research assistance; g) access to specialized equipment

Possible Solutions

- rectify space inequities
- interview highly successful individuals to determine what resources they draw upon
- create surveys and administer to all staff to determine knowledge and use of each resource
- where knowledge is lacking, create handbook to inform staff of resources
- require support staff to keep log of requests and date requests are filled
- require equipment gatekeepers to keep log of requests and date requests are filled

Problem Type

- criteria for success too narrow

Possible Solutions

- identify unheralded contributions that improve quality of institution
- include such contributions as criteria for advancement

Problem Type

- criteria for success not communicated equally to young men and women

Possible Solutions

- interview highly successful and less successful individuals to determine what information they receive and in what contexts they receive it
- create surveys of all staff to determine their knowledge of criteria and attempts to meet them
- require chairs to communicate criteria explicitly
- develop informal channels of communication for women that are parallel to those for men

Problem Type

- lack of knowledge about how gender schemas work to advantage men and disadvantage women
- lack of awareness of likelihood of overvaluing men and undervaluing women
- belief that excellence is transparent and obvious
- belief that meritocratic beliefs insure unbiased judgments

Possible Solution

- educate self and others via seminars, lectures, and workshops about gender schemas and
- accumulation of advantage

Problem Type

- underexplored research and teaching opportunities concerning gender equity

Possible Solutions

- incorporate academic work on schemas, attitude change, and organizational change into women's studies programs, management programs, science and technology programs, and so on
- support development of fundable projects to integrate basic and applied research on improving gender equity
- develop courses in which students integrate basic and applied research to devise interventions for specific institutional problems
- sponsor think-tank conferences to address gender equity

Problem Type

- unequal mentoring of women and men

Possible Solutions

- identify known good mentors; interview for mentoring techniques
- teach senior staff how to mentor; inform mentors about likely imbalances

Problem Type

- failure to highlight women's and men's accomplishments equally
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