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Bias fx professional manual

ALISON BORODA: Welcome to HBR IdeaCast from Harvard Business Review. I'm Alison Beard. Most good bosses want diverse, shift-free teams. They want men and women of all ages representing different cultures and races. In practice, of course, such a melting pot is difficult to create. In some areas, industries and functions this may seem almost impossible. And then there's the other problem. Even if you achieve the kind of diversity you want, you can struggle to manage the group in a way that makes everyone feel engaged and valuable. The types of bias prevention programs that many companies use can be extremely ineffective. Prejudice runs deep and is hard to eradicate. But according to our guest day, you can interrupt it quite easily without spending too much time or political capital. The leaders she has studied do so in three areas, employing, day-to-day management and talent development. While jobs can never be open to prejudice, they can become better if bosses learn to lead anti-diversity thinking in the past. She's here to check us on the steps. Joan Williams is a professor and founding director of the Center for Work and Life Thought at the University of California Hastings College of Law, and author of the HBR article, How Best Bosses Interrupt Bias. Joan, welcome to the show. Joan WILLIAMS: It's good to be here, Alison. ALISON BORODA: So let's start with a brief retraining. What are some of the common types of biases we see in the workplace? What are we talking about here? Joan WILLIAMS: There are really four main patterns of bias. The first thing I call is prove it again. This is something that some groups need to prove themselves more than others. For example, some groups judge their potential. Others are about whether they've nailed it. The second I call a rope, and it is that, a narrower range of behavior is taken from some groups than others. This means that for those groups for which a narrower range of behavior is adopted, their office policy is a little more complicated. The third is called the maternal wall, and this gender bias associated with motherhood also affects fathers, by the way, if they show that they are actively involved in family care. And then the last is another race/gender model. This is when bias against the group to which the population was inspired creates conflict within that group. And again, as proven again and tightrope, this last picture, a tug of war, is caused by both race and gender. ALISON BORODA: And again, it's retraining, but why is bias such a big problem for corporate performance and performance? You know, besides wanting to be better people, why managers need to be acute on this one? Joan WILLIAMS: Well, now well documented, that well-managed groups just work better. They have a wider range of ideas. They're not an echo chamber. So this is a very important consideration. I mean, every manager wants their team to perform as well as they can. Diverse teams also have a higher collective intelligence that differs from a kind of individual brilliance, that is a kind of collective intelligence team. But, of course, that's why we assemble teams. Right? Because we need team skills. And of course, also, if you have different jobs, people tend to be more committed, and they are also better at solving problems. So they're simple, well-managed, diverse teams just work better. This is the key reason why managers should really care about bias, besides of course just want to be fair. ALISON NOD BEARD: This phrase had an important modifier, a well-managed diverse team. JOAN WILLIAMS: This is an important modifier, because if you bring different people into a team that don't share a whole set of cultural assumptions, for example, that can, without, and you don't manage them in a way that informs that everyone has been selected for a particular skillset, and is valued for a certain set of skills, and that team will judge how well they deliver as a team, then the discrepancies between different people are that you hired who do not share this set of assumptions that can lead to conflict and corrosion in performance. ALISON BORODA: Yes, and organizations have been trying to solve this problem. But first of all with learning to prevent bias. So why doesn't this approach work? JOAN WILLIAMS: Well, companies have tried to solve this problem through bias training, and I frankly think that bias trainings have gotten a bad rap. The work of Frank Dobbin and Sandra Kalev and Erin Kelly certainly famously showed, looked at the EEO records and showed that bias, one bias training, usually does not help. And if it is necessary, it may actually be taken in the wrong direction. But you know, they've studied a generation of bias trainings. Most of them had a kind of feel good sensitivity workouts. And it's kind of, you know, as we can say elegantly, low quality data, poor quality data out. There's a snappier expression, but I'm probably not going to use it. (LAUGHTER) So it's true that poor quality training bias probably doesn't help. And even excellent training, that is, the kind of training, for example, that we give our individual biases interrupters training that really focuses and teaches people how bias plays into everyday workplace interactions in super-specific ways, and their brainstorming of their own shift interruptors. Even that, you know, you can't change a culture by doing something once, even if it's perfect. And that's really the bottom line about why one bias just won't work to solve this problem because if you have a diversity problem, usually it's because you have these subtle forms of bias constantly passed through your core business systems, from hiring, performance assessments, meetings, assignments. And if bias is constantly transmitted day in and day out, again, just telling people about it once, without correcting bias in your business systems, it won't result in the result that you hoped for. ALISON NOD: Yes, once or even once a year, programs don't go far enough. Joan WILLIAMS: And that's why we have a bias interrupters website at www.biasinterrupters.com. These are basically complete, open source tools that provide often very simple settings for existing business systems that will seamlessly interrupt bias day after day or fix it shortly after it has happened. ALISON BEARD: Yes. So let's dig into interrupting bias. The idea is that there is this basic problem that is really difficult to solve. Right? You can't make everyone in your organization impartial. So you need to get around it and kind of create systems and processes that make the organization more inclusive? Joan WILLIAMS: Exactly. There has been a lot of attention, due to the implicit association test, the IAT, on changing automatic people's associations. It's extremely difficult. Fortunately, this is also not usually required in the workplace because, I mean, it may be required in, milliseconds of question in many police situations. But the pace in the workplace is more public, and so people need to have the tools to, once this automatic association emerges, to ensure that cognitive override and go like, no, that's, you know, that's my first reaction. This won't be my last reaction. So, an article about interrupting biases that people can use in their daily travels provides that cognitive override. ALISON BEARD: Yes. And this is important because your organization may not always be at the forefront of changing its hiring practices or development practices to make sure everyone is on the right track. So, sometimes it's on individuals, and especially managers. Joan WILLIAMS: Absolutely. And we've heard from managers saying, hey, my organization isn't quite there. But I'm loyal. What can I do? And that's really what spawned this article, excuse me, and that's really what spawned the article, how the best bosses interrupt bias in their teams. We've identified things that, you know, any individual manager can do, and they're not a heavy load, and they won't require a lot of political capital. And they will most likely help you get the best out of your team. LYED BEARD: Ok, so let's start addressing some of the a good boss can fight bias. First, we'll get it. How, if I'm a manager, can I take the prejudices out of a process that I haven't created and make sure I have a diverse team of people who want to be in it? Joan WILLIAMS: Well, first of all, insist on a diverse pool. And that doesn't mean just one person of color or a woman. Once they have shown that if there are at least two women in the final pool, women, you are 79 times more likely to end up hiring a woman, and that's even more for people of color. If there are at least two minority applicants in the finalist pool, you are almost 200 times more likely to end up hiring a minority. So this is the first one. If you ask most people what a good woman should be, they come up with something that comes down to, humble, selfless, good, good team player. If you recognize is that while many companies have had great success with the direction of hiring, people in your social network tend to like you. This is the strongest feature of social networks. So, if you want to replicate the demographics of your current organization, rely entirely on the direction of hiring. But if you don't want to replicate the demographics that you already have, you need to closely monitor which candidates are coming through the direction of hiring, and who are coming through other ways. And then look. You know, either it's a problem or it's not, but you have to set that informal metric to see if it's a problem. If it's a problem having a variety of slates, or if hiring through referrals is a problem, then you just need to do a little more work in the set for more diverse pools. And in most organizations, it doesn't have to be a heavy lift because there are already organizations that are developed, for example, we do a great job with the Society of Women Engineers. Thus, there are already organizations that can help you expand your pool. Then there's also a lot of things you can do that come in. And then create a column. It doesn't have to be fashionable. It's just basically qualifying. And then list people based on the rubric, how you experience your resume. And what it does is interrupt a lot of changing standards, and another model called randomness, where people can unconsciously apply different standards to the majority of the group and to anyone who is not within that majority group. And so if you set criteria, consistently use them, track where they're abandoned, because often there's a sobering pattern for which they're and it can go a long, long way. And we give the example of Alicia Powell, who was managing general counsel at PNC Bank, and she hired, and she just sat down and articulated what makes new team members successful in her roles. And it was very simple, a set of four or five criteria, clearly reported to the people on her team. That kind of thing. It's very simple. But it can make a big difference. Very similar to the interview level. Now, if the interview is just kind of a test for lunch, whether I want to go have lunch with you, it's going to have a likely negative effect, not just on gender and race, but also it's going to be at a disadvantage to the first generation of professionals, because if, you know, if you love hang gliding, and someone grew up in the heart of a blue-collar family, they're probably likely will not be able to talk about hang gliding with you. Also, I mean, hang gliding isn't really a skill to work, and so, again, the same thing. You have to find out what the skills and qualities that you are looking for are number one, these criteria. Design interview questions that are designed to test these qualities or these skills and then ask these questions, in fact, preferably research show in the same manner and score them right away on the rubric. So it's just providing a little more structure. And one more thing that is really important if you're trying to figure out if someone has specific skills, instead of asking them, you're arranging Excel, giving them data and telling them to do it. So, it's also, we're actually in my organization, we've moved on to skill assessment, and you know, hiring is always just a bit of a crap shoot. But we did it a lot less crappy shooting, and we got actually a whole series of what I call meteors, where people where we hire them on the same level, and then they're so phenomenal and their skills are so good and we've really identified what we're looking for, they kind of like raise three levels in one year. So, it's a little more work, not much. It pays off very, very much. ALISON BEARD: Yes. And it is obvious that the insistence on different pools is clearly related to bias. But everything else you describe shouldn't be a great announcement, we're looking for more diversity here. He just has to say, we rate everyone by the same criteria. Joan WILLIAMS: And that, it's a really important point that it all makes the system a little more formal, it will certainly interrupt to prove it again bias for bias and people of color. But it will also make sure that you choose people with a very specific background class, and frankly, it will also help people, especially men who are more introverted because they can't, for example, interviews with the same charisma as other people. But for certain professional skills, for certain work roles, it's actually not that important. Other things are more important. And so if you move on to a system that is just a little more analytically designed to choose what you need, surprise. You'll get more than you need. ALISON S BORODA: Let's move on to day-to-day management. You know, you hired, ideally, this very diverse team, but then you need to think about work assignments. And how you communicate with everyone, how the team communicates together. And this is where you see a lot of bias to play. Right? So how do you make sure it doesn't come in on these issues? Joan WILLIAMS: Yes, I mean, you assign, we have two different tools online. One is for jobs that, as you point out, are very important, and a lot of biases tend to creep in. A lot of biases tend to creep into meeting dynamics. And again, just a very prime example of why it's important to abort bias, one study found that men with experiences tend to be more influential at meetings, but that women with experience tend to be less influential in meetings. And why is that? It goes back to the rope that is actually my name for what is called prescriptive stereotypes. This is what we think, for example, a good woman should be. If you ask most people what a good woman should be, they come up with something that comes down to, humble, selfless, good, good team player. If you ask people, hey, what a go-getter in a guy, they go like, straight, competitive, ambitious. And so, what happens is that if a woman has experience in a context where bias is not controlled, she will be very difficult to speak and assert herself to bring her experience to the table, not seen as a prima donna or someone who is difficult or someone who dominates, because of this prescriptive stereotype that she should sit back and be humble, selfless and pleasant. And actually, it was really dramatic, for example. This kind of thing is also carried over to the job where we did some research in a large STEM facility that involved processing materials that were very dangerous. And one woman caught an error in an analysis of one of her male colleagues. And the reaction was so negative, I mean, she had to not assert her experience. She had to sit back and be humble, self-confident and sweet. She said, oh, I'm just going to keep my mouth shut and get some cookies. That's clearly what they want me to do. In this context, it is totally dangerous. ALISON BEARD: It's horrible. Joan WILLIAMS: It's totally dangerous. So it's really important to interrupt and in the dynamics of meetings. And I can start with both, no matter what works. ALISON BORODA: Speaking about meetings, when I was working with you on this article, I learned two new words. Bropreation and why. I knew menteruption. But can you explain all this to our listeners, and how can managers cope with them? Joan WILLIAMS: Yes. Yes, they have a simpler name. We just call it a stolen idea. And that's what's out there, in a subtle way, often what our research shows is that if you ask people at work to see you as a leader, something like 87% of white men say yes in some of our samples. A much smaller percentage of women and people of color. But if you ask people, people at work see you as a working bee, just the opposite is happening. So, white people are coming, I'm not a working bee. But two other groups, like, yes, people see me as a working bee. And so that one of the things that goes is that in meetings, often white men feel very comfortable jumping with their ideas at the beginning, and the pattern that we find is that women and people of color report at much higher rates that other people get credit for ideas that I originally suggested. It's a romance or why. Now, as a rule, this is not done maliciously. This is usually done unconsciously because of the so-called confirmation bias. You'll notice a brilliant idea when it's put forward by someone you'd expect to have brilliant ideas, someone who is a leader, not just a worker bee. But it is a very important and widespread, super-general form of bias that affects meetings. This is widely discussed in a gender context. But like many things, our researcher believes that this also happens in a racial context. And so as a number one manager, you just have to keep an eye on him. And once you do that, you can, you see it. You start to see it because I'm afraid you probably will. You can interrupt it without embarrassing anyone. You can say something like, you know, Tim, I liked the idea when Pam first said it. You know, you've added something intriguing. I wonder if Pam has the next step. And you can do it in a very gentle way, but in a way that interrupts the pattern. And in fact, I tell the article that a member of mine, a friend of mine who was on the boards of public companies was in a situation where it was just her and another woman and everyone else was a man. And she found that this stolen idea happens all the time. So they had a meeting with another woman before the meeting, and it's happening. Yes, I think so. Yes, it does happen. So they decided it was really happening. And then they decided to interrupt it for each other, like, oh, you know, like Jane said, yes, Tim. You mentioned and I loved him from the moment Jane said it. And he started doing things like that. And then, like male allies, they saw what they were doing, and they started doing it, too, and then they disappeared very quickly. It's something that can have a profound effect, because obviously it's easy to interrupt, because obviously if other people get credit for your ideas, you have to have a heck of a lot more ideas in order to end up in the same place. So it's powerful and it's easy to interrupt. The other thing you can do is, and it's important, in fact, for three groups. This is important for Asian Americans. It's important for women. And this is important for first-generation professionals. All of these groups were brought up with what is often referred to as the modesty of the mandate. So, for example, if you have the first generation of Asian Americans, they were most likely brought up in a family where the kind of braggadocio is a sign of someone, it's like a character defect. And so, this, they were brought up often in a context where there is a lot of expectation that you don't toot your own horn, and you are respectful to those above you. It's actually that the modesty of the mandate is a problem for the manager. And you have to run over your head and say, OK, that's a challenge. How can I get this person to contribute? Because that's why I hired them so they could contribute. ALISON BOROD: So, how do you do that? Joan WILLIAMS: So one way to do that is, if you find someone has a problem of the kind of jumping, it's very simple. Just ask people to weigh in. You know, Camilla, you have experience with this. What are we missing here? What do you think? And you can even, if the person is super shy, you can even tell you know I've noticed that you're not jumping into areas that we really need to hear from you. So you can totally, you can start jumping, or I can make it a little easier for you by bringing you in. What would you prefer? And such signals to her that you expect that she will not conform to the modesty of the mandate, but be, bring the skillset to the table. So you can work with someone and find a way that they feel comfortable. There are other ways that work in

narrower contexts. You can just say, you know, X, you haven't been silent. What do you think here? Or, you can have a norm that no matter the subject you say, the person who is the expert speaks first, or says the latter. But it's just, again, it's worth remembering. And then, a few other things just plan meeting inclusive. So obviously intense business meetings in the men's locker room probably not a good idea. Equally unobvious, always having a super important meeting at a time when, it will now tend to men as well as women, they will go, they just can't make meetings because they are taking the kids to school, or taking them out of the orphanage. ALISON NODOW: Yes, people know that my schedule should be meetings from ten to four. Joan WILLIAMS: Yes. And that's something that can happen unconsciously, but it can have a big effect. On the other hand, we have the example of Emily Gold Sullivan, who led labor law for several Fortune 500 companies. She became very tuned if there is one person who she shares and interest, for example, they are both on the exercise regime, so they like walking meetings, she asks herself who is on the same level that I do not see as often? And it actively aligns it. Otherwise, people who happen to share your interests will artificially benefit, and worse, from the boss's perspective, people who arbitrarily don't share your interests, you probably won't get a better job of them. So, again, it's all just done once you know what the model is and you provide that cognitive override. So it all deals with everyday interactions in the workplace. And then there are the jobs. ALISON BEARD: Yes, so it seems that many of these others will actually apply to assignments, too. You know, don't just look at people from the dominant group who are more likely to raise their hands, make sure you reach out for important projects and important tasks, and of course all that high visibility for people who are in minority groups, or may face bias. And then just making sure you don't play favorites. Right? Joan WILLIAMS: Yes. Yes, there is a very strong pattern that our research has documented and in fact, we invented the term, office work on housework, which is now widely recognized. According to the women's report, they do more office work at home than their counterparts, 20% higher than men. It's really dramatic. ALISON BEARD: Like the women on another podcast always say I don't want Alison doing office work on the house here. So, I'm just very conscious. Joan WILLIAMS: Yes, it's the power of naming. So you, we're actually, on our site, it's very easy, we have an open source poll where you can just ask your team, hey, to fill out this poll. It's very short. To find out who's doing office work around the house. And then you need to sit down as a manager and find out what is actually a career-enhancing assignment. And then I would very much urge you, just for a while, to keep a rough track of whoever gets them. And then look for patterns. And if the models that you see are not the patters that you would like when it comes to the office one really important message, don't ask for volunteers, because if you do, women will be under intense informal volunteer pressure. Men will actually be under intense informal pressure not to volunteer. He doesn't know what's being valued here. Sometimes people go, well, I end up giving this stuff to women because they do it well and men do a bad job. And it's, in fact, an artifact of bias, because somehow men have picked up that it's going to be expensive for them to do a bad job. And it's the easiest way to sluff off that cut job, while women know they'll be judged if they're doing a bad job. So you have to say, in a very specific way, if you find a sobering office house pattern, is to set a rotation, for example, who takes note of people at a certain level, preferably people for whom it is a development opportunity, maybe they wouldn't necessarily be at a meeting if they didn't take note. So, this, and then when it comes to glamorous work, office, career-enhancing work, our research shows that not only do women report less access to this, men of color too. So, again, you have to run these jobs over your head and track for a while, write down who gets plum assignments. ALISON BEARD: Yes. And then these plum tasks tend to lead to more development. Right? Joan WILLIAMS: Absolutely, yes. ALISON BORODA: Training, promotion, yes. Joan WILLIAMS: Absolutely. ALISON BORODA: Big and best jobs. So how can managers better take bias out of these decisions? Joan WILLIAMS: Well, in terms of your team's development, first of all, again, it's, at the company level, please don't eliminate performance ratings. I know it's something new that's hot. But it's basically a petri dish for bias to eliminate performance scores. Because our research shows that, then, in this context, white men will end up getting a lot more feedback, and probably helpful developmental feedback, than women and people of color. And doing things on the fly is just when automatic associations and stereotypes just completely dominate. So, first, I hope your organization still has official performance scores, but if they don't, just make yourself a very simple little shape, and make sure you sit down with people once or twice a year and tell them how they do, measured based on the skills that requires work. So, it's very important to start by saying that, again, it's the same thing, I sing the same tune here from Industrial Organizational Psychology, clarify the criteria for evaluation and provide concrete evidence that executed or not. And what you really have to keep yourself with, and the performance performance as a manager, to have clear criteria and then provide enough evidence that the criteria will be met, so that the third person reading the assessment will go like, yes, I see that has been met. Yes, I see it wasn't that cool. Because it is more useful for you that you will judge people based on evidence and objective criteria rather than stereotypes. It's also much more useful for a person to get a performance rating, especially if you're making statements, specific data, not, she writes well. You know, she wrote X well, and that's how I know. Thus, she can write an effective summary decision in a short time, for example, as a lawyer, something much more specific. ALISON BORODA: Yes, this emphasis on objectivity, fairness, justice, specific examples, it's all an effort to counter accusations of reverse discrimination. Right? You know this idea that in protecting women and minorities from bias, you are creating a new bias against the dominant group? Joan WILLIAMS: Yes. Well, as well, it's just a choice to design and promote people based on what is actually valued in the workplace. I mean, it's just literally the best practice for everyone, including white men. So, for example, if someone is a coder, you're not going to talk, you know, this guy really doesn't have a fire in his stomach. What the hell does that mean? Right? That could mean he's not an extrovert. You don't need an extroversion in the coder, often. So it's going to help everybody. The other thing that our research shows is really strong that, and that's one of the reasons that these informal performance assessments are a kind of petri dish, is that women and people of color are much, much more likely to judge that they move that rope right. They are much more likely to get comments about their performance and specific feedback about this kind of development, which is actually helpful rather than, it's friendly and everyone loves it. How about saying something like, she's a strong employee who can manage complex projects in multiple teams. ALISON BEARD: Yes. In your experience and judging by the people you've worked with, how long does it take for a manager to get used to doing all these things, just as a matter of routine? Joan WILLIAMS: You know, I wouldn't, if I was a manager, I wouldn't do them all. I wouldn't try to do it all at once. I would like to start with some simple things. And do them for a few months until I felt comfortable and then I would take on some other stuff. And just make it part of a long-term sort of self-development program to make you a more effective talent manager, charges have been filed. ALISON BORODA: And have you seen a lot of managers do it yourself in the absence of organizational support? Joan WILLIAMS: Yes, I mean, I think some people, you know, we've heard from managers who frankly like crawling on walls like, I did waiting for the organization to do that. And one of the problems that we've found with bias breakers is that the organizational structure of diversity is basically you hire someone and give them diversity and inclusion portfolio. Well, it makes sense if diversity and inclusion of the portfolio is to hire outside speakers, teach women how to negotiate well, and create a group of staff resources, all of which are important. But if you aim is to break the bias in core business systems that organizational structure is difficult because, as a rule, the head of diversity and inclusion does not own these other organizational structures. Maybe not even your own hiring. Of course, it has no jobs. Thus, the business needs more time than we hoped to do at the organizational level. And I think for people listening, what's really important is that you can start doing it tomorrow. ALISON BEARD: Yes, and you make a good point that organizations probably have control over the hire to some extent and have control over promotion and development in that they can track what's going on across the company, you know, take certain mandates. But the job assignment thing is a day-to-day job that actually jobs every manager. Joan WILLIAMS: And you can write a performance score. You have only two options. Writing performance ratings that are constantly influenced by bias, and crimpling some people's careers and artificially lifting others. Or you write performance scores with not much more effort that is actually going to identify and develop the best talents. What do you want to do? You don't have to wait until the organization reworks performance estimates. What you need to do is start doing it by seeing that it works and then we're going to create a situation where we're going to have a lot of examples, hey, it's not that hard. And it works. ALISON BEARD: Yes. So, start doing it yourself and then get all your peers to do it and then expand it from there. Joan WILLIAMS: You know, I think in terms of strategy, a big strategy is to start doing it yourself and then start communicating with the head of diversity and inclusion, or someone in the human resources department who is receptive and say, you know, I did it. It didn't take, it wasn't a heavy lift. I just handed out this sheet and it really made a difference. What to do if we think about Is it an organization wide? My experience is that leaders are diversity and incorporating love bias interruptors. But what they are they is to help create an organizational change movement to use offset breakers. That's why we're so focused on managers right now. ALISON BORODA: Joan, thank you very much. I really enjoyed talking to you. Joan WILLIAMS: Okay, great, thank you very much. And I say, thank you for all your work on this. We had a big, big bounce from that. I hope it's done for you too. ALISON BORODA: Joan Williams is a professor and founding director of the Center for Life Rights at The Hastings College of Law at the University of California. Hastings College of Law, and author of the HBR article, How Best Bosses Interrupt Bias. You can find it in HBR.org. The episode was produced by Mary Doe. We're getting technical help from Rob Eckhart. Adam Buckholts is our audio manager. 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