

Common Shortcuts

(Reproduced with permission from UW Center for Institutional Change, UW ADVANCE, "Interrupting Bias in Faculty Search Process")

Short cuts can lead to biased assessments in evaluation settings if we are not motivated to avoid them and skilled in doing so. These shortcuts can lead to erroneous conclusions that underrepresented candidates are unqualified or a bad fit. They operate to impose extra taxes on women and members of underrepresented groups and bestow advantages to members of dominant groups. All of the following occur in the film and are listed in order of the most common, easily recognizable shortcuts.

- **Cloning:**
 - Replicating oneself by hiring someone with similar attributes or background.
 - Also refers to undervaluing a candidate's research because it is not familiar, 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:**
 - Making judgments about the candidate with insufficient evidence.
 - Dismissing a candidate for minor reasons or labeling a candidate "the best" and ignoring positive attributes of other candidates.
 - Having a covert agenda furthered by stressing something trivial or focusing on a few negatives rather than the overall qualifications.
 - Often occurs when the hiring process feels rushed.

- **Negative Stereotypes:**
 - Characterized by presumptions of incompetence.
 - The work of women and underrepresented minorities is scrutinized much more than majority faculty, at all stages of academic career.

- **Positive Stereotypes:**
 - Dominant group members are automatically presumed to be competent.
 - Such a member receives the benefit of the doubt, negative attributes are glossed over and success is assumed.
 - Also called the "original affirmative action" because dominant group members are automatically presumed qualified and thereby given an unearned advantage.

- **Elitist Behavior:**
 - Increasing qualifications for women and minority candidates because their competency doesn't strike committee members as trustworthy.
 - Downgrading the qualifications of women and minorities, based on accent, dress, and demeanor.
 - In short, uneven expectations based on a candidate's social identity.

- **Wishful Thinking:**
 - Insisting racism, sexism, and other forms of prejudice no longer exist.
- **Good Fit/Bad Fit:**
 - While it may be about whether the person can meet the programmatic needs for the position, it often is about how comfortable and culturally at ease one feels.
- **Euphemized Bias:**
 - *Visionary* - Members of dominant groups are evaluated based on their potential whereas underrepresented groups are judged on their accomplishments and their 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 care-givers, those faculty members who cannot depend on what Williams calls a "flow of family work" which allows ideal workers to log long hours in the office while still having their material needs met.