



HER RESOURCES

A collection of resources designed to provide practical tools for women undergraduate students.

Recognizing Gender Bias

I know that in the past, I have found myself failing to recognize gender bias or that I allowed myself to overthink the question, "Did he say that because I'm a woman?" It's difficult not to hesitate when considering this question because you don't want to appear guilty of bringing gender into the equation, especially if the gender bias was unconscious to begin with. It's important to be able to recognize bias so that it can be addressed and you can put a stop to this behavior. In this issue of Her Resources, you will learn some tips on how to recognize early warning signs of gender bias in your university environment.

"WHEN A MALE CLASSMATE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY PROGRAMS AIMING TO ENCOURAGE WOMEN, LIKE GIRLS WHO CODE, WERE NECESSARY, I WAS SHOCKED. HE SAW THE PROGRAM AS AN UNFAIR ADVANTAGE TOWARDS WOMEN, BUT WHAT HE FAILED TO UNDERSTAND WAS THAT THESE PROGRAMS WOULDN'T BE NECESSARY IF GENDER EQUALITY HAD ALREADY BEEN ACHIEVED. EXPERIENCING THIS MADE ME REALIZE THAT GENDER BIAS IS MORE WIDESPREAD THAN I HAD PREVIOUSLY THOUGHT."
- COMPUTER SCIENCE MAJOR



Tools

1

If your comment goes unnoticed, but a male classmate's copied comment gains attention, that's an early warning of gender bias. Multiple studies conducted by Harvard Business Review demonstrate that this is common for women in the working environment; it's not uncommon in the classroom either. This offense is not due to miscommunication skills on your part; it is an early warning sign of, usually unconscious, bias. When this happens try saying, "as I pointed out and personA agreed, we should do xyz". It is important to be clear and not appear defensive. Also, you can combat this by standing up for your female classmate whose idea was previously overlooked by saying, "Wow, personB's idea is amazing. I'm glad we're discussing it."

3

If you feel like you have to keep proving yourself, that's an early warning of gender bias. Being the minority of the group sometimes makes women feel that all eyes are on them and that they're mistakes will be more noticed. In a world where men are judged by their potential and women are judged more on their deliverables, women feel that they need to work harder to prove themselves. To combat this, keep track of your successes and share them with your support system.

2

If you're working on a team with men, and they receive more praises than you, that's an early warning of gender bias. Previous studies have shown that women receive more credit when they work alone or with other women than with men. It's important to recognize that you're not being acknowledged in the same way and to speak up when this happens. Take initiative and take credit *on behalf of the team*. This might be a step out of your comfort zone, but it is one that will help you get the praise that you deserve.

4

If you feel like it is difficult for you to be both respected and well-liked, that's an early warning of gender bias. It's the double edged sword of adapting assertive characteristics to be respected, only to be less liked for this behavior by your peers. Studies have shown that both men and women respect female leaders that are empathetic - incorporate this trait into your leadership style. However, don't undermine your own position by constantly apologizing or appearing unconfident. Don't apologize for your ideas or requests. Instead of saying, "I'm sorry that I asked you to do this part of the project." say, "Thank you for handling this part of the project. I knew that your skills were perfect for the task!"

Tips inspired by - "[Gender Bias and How to Recognize and Navigate Warning Signs](#)" by Carren Merrick | Forbes

Further Reading

"[4 Kinds of Gender Bias Women Face at Work](#)" by Joan C. Williams | Lean In

"[What is Gender Bias in the Workplace](#)" by Bailey Reiners | BuiltIn

"[Breaking Barriers: Unconscious Gender Bias in the Workplace](#)" by ACT/EMP | ILO

A note from the author

Unconscious gender bias can be tricky to tackle as we don't want to quickly jump into defense mode. Gender bias takes many forms and most of your peers may not know that they're perpetuating this behavior. This is why I believe it is important to recognize, acknowledge, and inform so that this behavior does not continue. Bias is difficult to navigate, but once again, you have allies and a supportive community behind you. Don't let this bias be a roadblock. Remember, that you have control over your own reactions. Their bias doesn't affect your incredible abilities. -Kaitlin Gili, CEO