

The Elephant in the (Well-Designed) Room

An Investigation into Bias in the Architecture Profession

Joan C. Williams, JD, Rachel M. Korn, PhD, Rachel Maas, MPH



Acknowledgements

The Center for WorkLife Law would like to thank past and present AIA staff members Marcia Calloway, Nissa Dahlin-Brown, Jessyca Henderson, Kathleen McCormick, Erin Murphy, Jeffrey Ostrander, Jennifer Riskus, Del Ruff, Michele Russo, Kimberly Yoho, and Renée Byng Yancey for their support and indispensable assistance on this project.

The Center for WorkLife Law would also like to thank the following individuals for generously donating their time to this important work: Mikayla Boginsky, Anna Garfink, Sarah Williams Goldhagen, Peter Hart, Hana Kassem, and Sky Mihaylo.

Contents

Abstract	3
Executive summary	4
Results	11
Open racism and sexism	12
Impacts of bias	17
Tightrope bias	21
Prove-it-again bias	32
Maternal Wall bias	45
Tug of War bias	59
Racial stereotyping	68
Workplace processes and policies	89
Sexual harassment	121
Outcomes	134
Firm culture	143
Background	148
Methodology	152
Bias interrupters	157
Interrupting bias in hiring	160
Interrupting bias in assignments	165
Interrupting bias in performance evaluations	169
Interrupting bias in meetings	172
Interrupting bias in family leave	176
Interrupting bias in workplace flexibility	181
Glossary	184

Firm size (number of employees)

	Number of Participants
1	93
2–19	399
20–99	365
100+	498

Seniority

	Number of Participants
0–9 years	386
10–19 years	369
20–29 years	289
30+ years	317

Family care responsibilities

	Number of Participants
Dependent children	528
Elder care	218
Other family care	145
No care responsibilities	604

Scales

The report focuses primarily on the individual day-to-day experiences of bias faced by those in the architecture profession. As such, results are reported by question, grouped into sections reflecting the superordinate pattern of bias. However, for some of our statistical analyses, these individual questions were formed into scales. The types of bias we study are multifaceted: For example, Tightrope bias includes expectations about leadership ability, interruptions, pushback for assertive behavior, and more. To fully capture the experiences encompassed in each pattern of bias, we created a composite variable, or scale, that incorporates different questions that address the same central issue (for example, the questions addressing Prove-it-again bias were used to create a Prove-it-again scale). These scales were used in the regression analyses to examine the impacts of bias.

Analyses

Most of the quantitative survey data was collected using a 1–6 Likert scale: strongly disagree to strongly agree. The sexual harassment questions and demographic questions used relevant answer choices. To examine differences in the experiences of gender and racial/ethnic groups, we conducted one-way ANOVAs. To examine the impacts of the patterns of bias on outcome measures, simultaneous multiple regression analyses were conducted using the aforementioned scales, and controlling for race/ethnicity and gender.

We did not achieve sufficient statistical power to examine each gender and racial/ethnic group independently. Even when the Likert scale means were dramatically different, the low sample sizes made it difficult to achieve statistical significance when conducting ANOVAs for some groups. This study set out to examine the unique experiences of different underrepresented racial/ethnic groups in the architecture profession; it is difficult for us to study these groups simply because of their underrepresentation. Therefore, when

individual gender and racial/ethnic groups have experiences that differ from men or women of color as a whole, we highlight those differences in the report, even when the number of participants in the group made statistical significance impossible.

Reporting

For ease of understanding of our predicted report audience, we present the data in the form of percentages of agreement with each question. Although much of the data was collected on a Likert scale of 1–6, we recalculated percentages by using 1–3 (strongly disagree to slightly disagree) on the Likert scale as “no” and 4–6 (slightly agree to strongly agree) on the scale as “yes.” We report the percentages in the text, but all statistical analyses were conducted on the original Likert scale data.

Qualitative data

To begin our study of the architecture profession, we conducted focus groups and one-on-one interviews with architectural professionals. The experiences of these architectural professionals were used to confirm that the patterns of bias exist in the architecture profession, and to add variables of interest that are specific to the profession into the Workplace Experiences Survey (for example, questions focused on the allotment of design work). The survey also included two open-ended text boxes for participants to share more information about their experiences. These three sources of qualitative data—focus groups, interviews, and open-ended survey questions—are used throughout the report to provide detail and nuance to the quantitative data. Survey comments are presented verbatim, while focus groups and interviews were transcribed as closely as possible to the original speech.

Bias Interrupters:

Tools for architecture firms

Bias interrupters

TOOLS FOR ARCHITECTURE FIRMS

Architecture firms can improve their diversity metrics, foster a culture of belonging, and make progress toward eliminating bias by using the same tools that businesses use to solve any major problem: evidence, goals, and metrics. Research shows that diverse workgroups perform better and are more committed, innovative, and loyal.¹⁶⁹ Gender-diverse workgroups have higher collective intelligence, which improves the performance of both the group and of the individuals in the group, and leads to better financial performance results.¹⁷⁰ Racially diverse workgroups consider a broader range of alternatives, make better decisions, and are better at solving problems.¹⁷¹ Bias, if unchecked, affects many different groups: modest or introverted men, LGBTQ+ people, individuals with disabilities, professionals from nonprofessional backgrounds (“class migrants”), women, and people of color. We’ve distilled the huge literature on bias into simple steps that help you and your firm perform better.

We know now that workplaces that view themselves as being highly meritocratic often are *more* biased than other organizations.¹⁷² Research also shows that the usual responses to workplace bias—one-shot diversity trainings, mentoring, and networking programs—typically don’t work.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ E.g., Dahlin, K. B., Weingart, L. R., & Hinds, P. J. (2005). Team diversity and information use. *Academy of Management Journal*, 48(6), 1107-1123. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2005.19573112>; Ely, R. J., & Thomas, D. A. (2001). Cultural diversity at work: The effects of diversity perspectives on work group processes and outcomes. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 46(2), 229-273. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2667087>; Jehn, K. A., Northcraft, G. B., & Neale, M. A. (1999). Why differences make a difference: A field study of diversity, conflict and performance in workgroups. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(4), 741-763. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2667054>

¹⁷⁰ Richard, O. C., Barnett, T., Dwyer, S., & Chadwick, K. (2004). Cultural diversity in management, firm performance, and the moderating role of entrepreneurial orientation dimensions. *Academy of Management Journal*, 47(2), 255-266. <https://doi.org/10.5465/20159576>; Woolley, A., & Malone, T.W. (2011). What Makes a Team Smarter? More Women. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2011/06/defend-your-research-what-makes-a-team-smarter-more-women>; Glass Lewis. (2016). In-Depth: Board Gender Diversity. <http://www.glasslewis.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/2016-In-DepthGender-Diversity.pdf>

¹⁷¹ Phillips, K. W., Northcraft, G. B., & Neale, M. A. (2006). Surface-level diversity and decision-making in groups: When does deep-level similarity help?. *Group processes & intergroup relations*, 9(4), 467-482. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430206067557>; Antonio, A. L., Chang, M. J., Hakuta, K., Kenny, D. A., Levin, S., & Milem, J. F. (2004). Effects of Racial Diversity on Complex Thinking in College Students. *Psychological Science*, 15(8), 507-510. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0956-7976.2004.00710.x>; Richard, O., McMillan, A., Chadwick, K., & Dwyer, S. (2003). Employing an innovation strategy in racially diverse workforces: Effects on firm performance. *Group & Organization Management*, 28(1), 107-126. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601102250022>

¹⁷² Castilla, E. J. (2016). Achieving meritocracy in the workplace. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 57(4), 35.

¹⁷³ Kalev, A., Dobbin, F., & Kelly, E. (2006). Best practices or best guesses? Assessing the efficacy of corporate affirmative action and diversity policies. *American Sociological Review*, 71(4), 589-617. doi: 10.1177/000312240607100404

What holds more promise is a paradigm-changing approach to diversity: Bias interrupters are tweaks to basic business systems that are evidence-based and can produce measurable change. Bias interrupters change systems, not people.

Bias Interrupters apply to every firm, regardless of size, geographic location, or employee demographics—but there isn't a one-size-fits-all fix. Each toolkit contains a menu of bias interrupters to pick and choose from, depending on the needs of your firm.

Printed here are six toolkits for architecture firms, with information for how to interrupt bias in the following business systems:

-
1. Hiring
 2. Assignments
 3. Performance evaluations
 4. Meetings
 5. Family leave
 6. Workplace flexibility

For additional worksheets and information visit BiasInterrupters.org.

Our three-step approach

1. Use metrics:

Businesses use metrics to assess whether they have progressed towards any strategic goal. Metrics can help you pinpoint where bias exists, and assess the effectiveness of the measures you've taken to prevent or combat bias. (Whether metrics are made public will vary from firm to firm, and from metric to metric.)

2. Implement bias interrupters:

Bias interrupters are small adjustments to your existing business systems. They should not require you to entirely abandon your current systems.

3. Repeat as needed:

After implementing bias interrupters, return to your metrics. If they have not improved, you will need to ratchet up to stronger bias interrupters.

Interrupting bias in HIRING

The Challenge

When comparing identical resumes, “Jamal” needed eight additional years of experience to be considered as qualified as “Greg,” mothers were 79% less likely to be hired than an otherwise-identical candidate without children, and “Jennifer” was offered \$4,000 less in starting salary than “John.”¹⁷⁴ Unstructured job interviews do not predict job success,¹⁷⁵ and judging candidates on “culture fit” can screen out qualified candidates who don’t look the same as majority of your existing employees.¹⁷⁶

Our study of architects and designers found disparities between the experiences of white men and other groups when it comes to hiring, indicating that this is a key issue architecture firms should focus on if they want to attract top talent.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Bertrand, M. & Mullainathan, S. (2004). Are Emily and Greg more employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A field experiment on labor market discrimination. *American Economic Review*, 94(4), 991-1013. doi: 10.1257/0002828042002561; Benard, S., & Correll, S. J. (2010). Normative discrimination and the motherhood penalty. *Gender & Society*, 24(5), 616-646. doi: 10.1177/0891243210383142; Correll, S. J., Benard, S., & Paik, I. (2007). Getting a job: Is there a motherhood penalty? *American Journal of Sociology*, 112(5), 1297- 1338. doi: 10.1086/511799; Moss-Racusin, C. A., Dovidio, J. F., Brescoll, V. L., Graham, M. J., & Handelsman, J. (2012). Science faculty's subtle gender biases favor male students. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 109(41), 16474-16479. doi: 10.1073/pnas.1211286109

¹⁷⁵ Dana, J., Dawes, R., & Peterson, N. (2013). Belief in the unstructured interview: The persistence of an illusion. *Judgment and Decision Making*, 8(5), 512.

¹⁷⁶ Rivera, L. A. (2016). *Pedigree: How elite students get elite jobs*. Princeton University Press.

¹⁷⁷ Williams, J.C., Korn, R.M., & Maas, R. (2021). *The Elephant in the (Well-Designed) Room: An Investigation into Bias in the Architecture Profession*.

Interrupting bias in HIRING

A Solution

1. Use metrics

Businesses use metrics to assess whether they have progressed towards any strategic goal. Clear metrics can help you pinpoint where bias exists, and assess the effectiveness of the measures you've taken. (Whether metrics are made public will vary from firm to firm, and from metric to metric.)

For each metric, examine:

- Do patterned differences exist between majority men, majority women, men of color, and women of color? (Include any other underrepresented group that your firm tracks, such as military veterans, LGBTQ+ people, people with disabilities, etc.)

Important metrics to analyze:

- Track the demography of the candidate pool through the entire hiring process: from the initial pool of candidates considered, to who survives resume review, who gets invited to interview, who survives the interview process, who gets job offers, who accepts those offers, and who doesn't. Analyze where underrepresented groups are falling out of the hiring process.
- Track whether hiring qualifications are waived more often for some groups.
- Track interviewers' reviews and/or recommendations to ensure they are not consistently rating majority candidates higher than others.

Keep metrics by: 1) individual supervisor; 2) department; 3) location if relevant; and 4) the firm as a whole.

2. Implement bias interrupters

All bias interrupters should apply both to written materials and in meetings, where relevant. Because every firm is different, not all interrupters will be relevant. Consider this a menu.

To understand the research and rationale behind the suggested bias interrupters, read the [Identifying Bias in Hiring Worksheet](#), which summarizes hundreds of studies.

Empower and appoint

- Empower people involved in the hiring process to spot and interrupt bias by using the [Identifying Bias in Hiring Worksheet](#). Read and distribute to anyone involved in hiring.
- Appoint bias interrupters. Provide HR professionals or team members with special training to spot bias, and involve them at every step of the hiring process. Training is available at [BiasInterrupters.org](#).

Interrupting bias in HIRING

A Solution

Assemble a diverse pool

- Limit referral hiring (“friends of friends”). If your existing firm is not diverse, hiring from your current employees’ social networks will replicate the lack of diversity. If you use referrals, keep track of the flow of candidates from referrals. If referrals consistently provide majority candidates, consider limiting referrals or balance out referral hiring with more targeted outreach to ensure a diverse candidate pool.
- Tap diverse networks. Reach out to underrepresented candidates where they are. Identify job fairs, affinity networks, conferences and training programs that are aimed at women and people of color in the profession of architecture and send recruiters.
- Consider candidates from multi-tier schools. Don’t limit your search to candidates from Ivy League and top-tier schools. This favors majority candidates from elite backgrounds and hurts people of color and professionals from nonprofessional backgrounds (class migrants).¹⁷⁸ Studies show that top students from lower-ranked schools are often similarly successful.¹⁷⁹
- Get the word out. If underrepresented candidates are not applying to your jobs, get the word out that your firm is a great place to work for women and people of color. One company offers public talks by women at their company and writes blog posts, white papers, and social media articles highlighting the women who work there.

- Change the wording of your job postings. Using masculine-coded words like “leader” and “competitive” will tend to reduce the number of women who apply.¹⁸⁰ Tech alternatives (see: Textio¹⁸¹) can help you craft job postings that ensure you attract top talent without discouraging women.
- Insist on a diverse pool. If you use a search firm, tell it you expect a diverse pool, not just one or two underrepresented candidates. One study found the odds of hiring a woman were 79 times greater if there were at least two women in the finalist pool; the odds of hiring a person of color were 194 times greater if there were at least two people of color.¹⁸²

Resume/Portfolio review

- Distribute the [Identifying Bias in Hiring Worksheet](#). Before resumes or portfolios are reviewed, have reviewers read the worksheet so that they are aware of the common forms of bias that can affect the hiring process.
- Pre-commit to what’s important—and require accountability. Pre-commit in writing to what qualifications are important, both in entry-level and in lateral hiring. When qualifications are waived for a specific candidate, require an explanation of why they are no longer important—and keep track to see for whom requirements are waived.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁸ Rivera, L. A. (2016). *Pedigree: How elite students get elite jobs*. Princeton University Press.

¹⁷⁹ Dale, S. B., & Krueger, A. B. (2002). Estimating the payoff to attending a more selective college: An application of selection on observables and unobservables. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 117(4), 491-1527. doi: 10.1162/003355302320935089; Dale, S., & Krueger, A. B. (2011). *Estimating the return to college selectivity over the career using administrative earnings data* (No. w17159). National Bureau of Economic Research.

¹⁸⁰ Gaucher, D., Friesen, J., & Kay, A. C. (2011). Evidence that gendered wording in job advertisements exists and sustains gender inequality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 101(1), 109. 10.1037/a0022530

¹⁸¹ <https://textio.com/>

¹⁸² Johnson, S. K., Hekman, D. R., & Chan, E. T. (2016). If there's only one woman in your candidate pool, there's statistically no chance she'll be hired. *Harvard Business Review*, 26(04). Retrieved from: <https://hbr.org/2016/04/if-theres-only-one-woman-in-yourcandidate-pool-theres-statistically-no-chance-shell-be-hired>

¹⁸³ Norton, M.I., Vandello, J.A., & Darley, J. (2004). Casuistry and social category bias. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87, 817-831. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.87.6.817; Brewer, M.B. (1996). *In-Group Favoritism: The Subtle Side of Intergroup Discrimination*. *Behavioral Research and Business Ethics*, 160- 170. Russell Sage, New York.; Tetlock, P. E., & Mellers, B. A. (2011). Intelligent management of intelligence agencies: beyond accountability ping-pong. *American Psychologist*, 66(6), 542.

Interrupting bias in HIRING

A Solution

- Ensure resumes or portfolios are graded on the same scale. Establish clear grading rubrics and ensure that everyone grades on the same scale. Consider having each resume or portfolio reviewed by two different people and averaging the score.
- Remove extracurricular activities from resumes. Including extracurricular activities on resumes can artificially disadvantage class migrants. A recent study showed that law firms were less likely to hire a candidate whose interests included “country music” and “pickup soccer” rather than “classical music” and “sailing”—even though the work and educational experience was exactly the same.¹⁸⁴ Because most people aren’t as aware of class-based bias, communicate why you are removing extracurricular activities from resumes.
- Avoid inferring family obligations. Mothers are 79% less likely to be hired than an identical candidate without children.¹⁸⁵ Train people not to make inferences about whether someone is committed to their job due to parental status and don’t count “gaps in a resume” as an automatic negative.
- Try using “blind auditions” where the evaluators don’t know who they are reviewing. If women and candidates of color are dropping out of the pool at the resume or portfolio review stage, consider removing information that would indicate demographics before review. This way, candidates can be evaluated based solely on their qualifications.

Interviews

- Use structured interviews. Ask the same list of questions to every person who is interviewed. Ask questions that are directly relevant to the job the candidate is applying for.¹⁸⁶
- Ask performance-based questions. Performance-based questions, or behavioral interview questions, (“Tell me about a time you had too many things to do and had to prioritize.”) are a strong predictor of how successful a candidate will be at the job.¹⁸⁷
- Try behavioral interviewing.¹⁸⁸ Ask questions that reveal how candidates have dealt with prior work experiences, as research shows that structured behavioral interviews can more accurately predict the future performance of a candidate than unstructured interviews.¹⁸⁹ Instead of asking, “How do you deal with problems with your manager?” say, “Describe for me a conflict you had at work with your manager.” When evaluating answers, a good model to follow is the STAR¹⁹⁰ model: The candidate should describe the Situation they faced, the Task that they had to handle, the Action they took to deal with the situation, and the Result.
- Do work-sample screening. If applicable, ask candidates to provide a sample of the type of work they will be doing in the job they will be filling.

¹⁸⁴ Rivera, L. A., & Tilcsik, A. (2016). How Subtle Class Cues Can Backfire on Your Resume. *Harvard Business Review*: <https://hbr.org/2016/12/research-how-subtle-class-cues-can-backfire-on-your-resume>

¹⁸⁵ Correll, S. J., Benard, S., & Paik, I. (2007). Getting a job: Is there a motherhood penalty?. *American Journal of Sociology*, 112(5), 1297-1338.

¹⁸⁶ Thorngate, W., Dawes, R., & Foddy, M. (2009). *Judging merit*. New York, NY, US: Psychology Press

¹⁸⁷ Bock, L. (2015). *Work Rules!: Insights from Inside Google That Will Transform How You Live and Lead*. Hodder & Stoughton.

¹⁸⁸ Boring, J. (2016). How to Create Behavioral Interview Questions That Don't Give Away The Answer. ERE. <https://www.ere-media.com/ere/how-to-create-behavioral-interview-questions-that-dont-give-away-the-answer/>

¹⁸⁹ Torrington, D. (2009). *Fundamentals of human resource management: managing people at work*. Pearson Education.

¹⁹⁰ Doyle, A. (2020). How to Use the STAR Interview Response Method. *The Balance Careers*. <https://www.thebalance.com/what-is-the-star-interview-response-technique-2061629>

Interrupting bias in HIRING

A Solution

- Develop a consistent rating scale and discount outliers. Candidates' answers (or work samples) should be rated on a consistent scale, with ratings for each factor backed up by evidence. Average the scores granted on each relevant criterion and discount outliers.¹⁹¹
- If “culture fit” is a criterion for hiring, provide a specific work-relevant definition. Culture fit can be important, but when it's misused it can disadvantage people of color, class migrants, and women.¹⁹² Heuristics like the “airport test” (Who would I like to get stuck in an airport with?) can be highly exclusionary and not work-relevant. Questions about sports and hobbies may feel exclusionary to women and to class migrants who did not grow up, for example, playing golf or listening to classical music. Google's work-relevant definition of “culture fit” is a helpful starting point.¹⁹³
- “Gaps in a resume” should not mean automatic disqualification. Give candidates an opportunity to explain gaps by asking about them directly during the interview stage. Women fare better in interviews if they are able to provide information upfront, rather than having to avoid the issue.¹⁹⁴
- Provide candidates and interviewers with a handout detailing expectations. Develop an Interview Protocol Sheet that explains to everyone what's expected from candidates in an interview, using our tips from the [Hiring Toolkit](#).
- When hiring, don't ask candidates about prior salary. Asking about prior salary when setting compensation for a new hire can perpetuate the gender pay gap.¹⁹⁵ (A growing legislative movement prohibits employers from asking prospective employees about their prior salaries.¹⁹⁶)

3. Repeat as needed

- Return to your key metrics. Did the bias interrupters produce change?
- If you don't see change, you may need to implement stronger bias interrupters, or you may be targeting the wrong place in the hiring process.
- Use an iterative process until your metrics improve.

¹⁹¹ Bock, L. (2015). *Work Rules!: Insights from Inside Google That Will Transform How You Live and Lead*. Hodder & Stoughton.; Thorngate, W., Dawes, R., & Foddy, M. (2009). *Judging merit*. New York, NY, US: Psychology Press.

¹⁹² Rivera, L. A. (2016). *Pedigree: How elite students get elite jobs*. Princeton University Press.

¹⁹³ Bock, L. (2015). *Work Rules!: Insights from Inside Google That Will Transform How You Live and Lead*. Hodder & Stoughton.: This is how Google defines it: “Googleyness:...enjoying fun, a certain dose of intellectual humility...a strong measure of conscientiousness...comfort with ambiguity...and evidence that you'd take come courageous or interesting paths in your life.”

¹⁹⁴ Hersch, J., & Shinall, J. B. (2016). Something to talk about: Information exchange under employment law. *U. Pa. L. Rev.*, 165, 49.

¹⁹⁵ NWLC. (2018) Asking for Salary History Perpetuates Pay Discrimination From Job to Job. <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Asking-for-Salary-History-Perpetuates-Discrimination-1.pdf>

¹⁹⁶ HR Dive. (2020). Salary History Bans. <https://www.hrdiver.com/news/salary-history-ban-states-list/516662/>

Interrupting bias in ASSIGNMENTS

The Challenge

Every workplace has high-profile assignments that are career-enhancing (“glamour work”) and low-profile assignments that are beneficial to the organization but not the individual’s career. Research shows that women do more “office housework”¹⁹⁷ than men.¹⁹⁸ This includes literal housework (ordering lunch), administrative work (scheduling meetings), emotion work (“She’s upset, comfort her.”), and behind-the-scenes work (preparing the PowerPoint for a presentation). When women and people of color don’t have access to the design work, architecture firms miss out on tapping all of their top talent.

- **Glamour work:** In our study of architects and designers, 88% of white men, but only 71.8% of women of color, 76.5% of men of color, and 82.4% of white women reported being able to develop and present design ideas in their firms.¹⁹⁹
- **Office housework:** Nearly 50% of white women and 44.6% of women of color reported that at work they more often play administrative roles such as taking notes for a meeting compared to their colleagues. Only 28% of white men and 35% of men of color reported this.²⁰⁰

When employees become “overburdened” with office housework, it reduces the amount of time that they can spend on more important career-enhancing work, which can hurt their compensation and chances for promotion.

Diversity at the top can only occur when a diverse pool of employees at all levels of the organization have access to assignments that let them take risks and develop new skills. If the glamour work and the office housework aren’t distributed evenly, you won’t be tapping into the full potential of your workforce. Most firms that use an informal “Hey, you!” assignment system end up distributing assignments based on factors other than experience and talent.

If women and people of color keep getting stuck with the same low-profile assignments, they will be more likely to be dissatisfied and to search for opportunities elsewhere.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁷ Williams, J. C., & Dempsey, R. W. (2014). *What works for women at work: Four patterns working women should know*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

¹⁹⁸ Misra, J., Lundquist, J. H., & Templer, A. (2012, June). Gender, Work Time, and Care Responsibilities Among Faculty 1. *Sociological Forum* (Vol. 27, No. 2, pp. 300-323). Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. doi: 10.1111/j.1573-7861.2012.01319.x; Mitchell, S. M., & Hesli, V. L. (2013). Women don't ask? Women don't say no? Bargaining and service in the political science profession. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 46(2), 355-369. doi: 10.1017/S1049096513000073; Porter, S. R. (2007). A closer look at faculty service: What affects participation on committees?. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 78(5), 523-541. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jhe.2007.0027>; Benschop, Y., & Doorewaard, H. (1998). Six of one and half a dozen of the other: the gender subtext of Taylorism and team-based work. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 5(1), 5-18. doi: 10.1111/1468-0432.00042; Ohlott, P. J., Ruderman, M. N., & McCauley, C. D. (1994). Gender differences in managers' developmental job experiences. *Academy of Management Journal*, 37(1), 46-67. doi: 10.5465/256769; De Pater, I. E., Van Vianen, A. E., & Bechtoldt, M. N. (2010). Gender differences in job challenge: A matter of task allocation. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 17(4), 433-453. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-0432.2009.00477.x

¹⁹⁹ Williams, J.C., Korn, R.M., & Maas, R. (2021). The Elephant in the (Well-Designed) Room: An Investigation into Bias in the Architecture Profession.

²⁰⁰ Williams, J.C., Korn, R.M., & Maas, R. (2021). The Elephant in the (Well-Designed) Room: An Investigation into Bias in the Architecture Profession.

²⁰¹ Babcock, L., Recalde, M. P., Vesterlund, L., & Weingart, L. (2017). Gender differences in accepting and receiving requests for tasks with low promotability. *American Economic Review*, 107(3), 714-47. doi: 10.1257/aer.20141734

Interrupting bias in ASSIGNMENTS

A Solution

Fair allocation of the glamour work and the office housework are two separate problems. Some architecture firms will want to solve the office housework problem before tackling the glamour work; others will want to address both problems simultaneously. We have created a [Road-Map for Implementation](#).

1. Use metrics

A. Identify and track

The first step is to find out if, and where, you have a problem. Find out:

- What is the office housework and glamour work in your organization?
- Who is doing what and for how long?
- Are there demographic patterns that indicate gender and/or racial bias at play?

To do this:

1. Distribute the [Office Housework Survey](#) to your employees to find out who is doing the office housework and how much of their time it takes up.
2. Convene relevant managers (and anyone else who distributes assignments) to identify what is the glamour work and what is the lower-profile work in the firm. Use the [Assignment Typology Worksheet](#) to create a typology for assignments, and the [Protocol](#) for more details.

3. Input the information from the typology meeting into the [Manager Assignment Worksheet](#) and distribute to managers. Have managers fill out the worksheets and submit them, identifying who they assign the glamour work and lower-profile work to.

B. Analyze metrics

Analyze survey results and worksheet for demographic patterns, dividing employees into: (i) majority men, majority women, men of color, and women of color; (ii) parents who have just returned from parental leave; (iii) professionals working part-time or flexible schedules; and (iv) any other underrepresented group that your organization tracks (veterans, LGBTQ+ people, individuals with disabilities, etc.). Identify:

- Who is doing the office housework?
- Who is doing the glamour work?
- Who is doing the low-profile work?
- Create and analyze metrics by individual supervisor.

Interrupting bias in ASSIGNMENTS

A Solution

2. Implement bias interrupters

C. Office housework interrupters

- Don't ask for volunteers. Women are more likely to volunteer because they are under subtle but powerful pressures to do so.²⁰²
- Hold everyone equally accountable. "I give it to women because they do it well and the men don't," is a common sentiment heard from managers. This dynamic reflects an environment in which men suffer few consequences for doing a poor job on office housework, but women who do a poor job are seen as "prima donnas" or "not team players." Hold men and women equally accountable for carrying out all assignments properly.
- Use admins. If possible, assign office housework tasks to admins, e.g., birthday parties, scheduling meetings, ordering lunch.
- Establish a rotation. A rotation is also helpful for many administrative tasks (e.g., taking notes, scheduling meetings). Rotating housework tasks like ordering lunch and planning parties is also an option if admins are unavailable.
- Shadowing. Another option for administrative tasks is to assign a more junior person to shadow someone more senior—and take notes.

D. Glamour work interrupters

- Avoid mixed messages. If your firm values such things as mentoring and committee work (like serving on the Diversity Initiative), make sure these things are valued when the time comes for promotions and raises. Sometimes firms say they

highly value this kind of work—but they don't. Mixed messages of this kind will negatively affect women and people of color.

- Conduct a rollout meeting. Gather relevant managers and supervisors to introduce the bias interrupters initiative and set expectations using our [key talking points](#).
- Provide a bounceback. Identify individual supervisors whose glamour work allocation is lopsided, hold a meeting with that supervisor, and bring the problem to their attention. Help them think through why they assign glamour work only to certain people or certain types of people. Work with them to figure out if either: 1) the available pool for glamour work assignments is diverse but is not being tapped fully; or 2) only a few people have the requisite skills for glamour work assignments. Read the [Responses to Common Pushback](#) and [Identifying Bias in Assignments](#) worksheets before the bounceback meetings to prepare. You may have to address low-profile work explicitly at the same time as you address high-profile assignments; this will vary by firm.

If a diverse pool has the requisite skills...

- Implement a rotation. Have the supervisor set up a rotation to ensure fair access to high-profile assignments.
- Formalize the pool. Write down the list of people with the requisite skills and make it visible to the supervisor. Sometimes just being reminded of the pool can help.

²⁰² Heilman M. E., & Chen J. J. (2005). Same behavior, different consequences: Reactions to men's and women's altruistic citizenship. *Behavior Journal of Applied Psychology*, 90(3), 431–441 doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.90.3.431; Allen, T. D. (2006). Rewarding good citizens: The relationship between citizenship behavior, gender, and organizational rewards. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 36(1), 120-143. doi: 10.1111/j.0021-9029.2006.00006.x; Babcock, L., Recalde, M. P., Vesterlund, L., & Weingart, L. (2017). Gender differences in accepting and receiving requests for tasks with low promotability. *American Economic Review*, 107(3), 714-47. doi: 10.1257/aer.20141734; Williams, J. C., & Dempsey, R. W. (2014). *What works for women at work: Four patterns working women should know*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

Interrupting bias in ASSIGNMENTS

A Solution

- Institute accountability. Have the supervisor track their allocation of glamour work going forward to measure progress. Research shows that accountability matters.²⁰³

If the pool is not diverse...

- Revisit the assumption that only one (or very few) employees can handle this assignment: Is that true or is the supervisor in question just more comfortable working with those few people?
- Analyze how the pool was assembled. Does the supervisor allocate the glamour work by relying on self-promotion or volunteers? If so, that will often disadvantage women and people of color. Shift to more objective measures to create the pool based on skills and qualifications.

If the above suggestions aren't relevant or don't solve your problem, then it's time to expand the pool:

- Development plan. Identify what skills or competencies an employee needs to be eligible for the high-profile assignments, and design a plan to help the employee develop the requisite skills.
- Succession planning. Remember that having “bench strength” is important so that your department won't be left scrambling if someone unexpectedly leaves the company.
- Leverage existing HR policies. If your organization uses a competency-based system, or has a Talent Development Committee or equivalent, that's a resource to help employees develop competencies so that career-enhancing assignments can be allocated more fairly.

- Shadowing. Have a more junior person shadow a more experienced person during the high-profile assignment.
- Mentoring. Encourage AXP (Architectural Experience Program) candidates to select an AXP mentor²⁰⁴ who can provide career advice and help them develop the requisite skills.

If you can't expand your pool, reframe the assignment so that more people could participate in it. Could you break up the assignment into discrete pieces so more people get the experiences they need?

If nothing else works, consider a formal assignment system. Appoint an assignments czar to oversee the distribution of assignments in your organization.

3. Repeat as needed

- Return to your metrics. Did the bias interrupters produce change?
- If you still don't have a fair allocation of high- and low-profile work, you may need to implement stronger bias interrupters, or consider moving to a formal assignment system.
- Use an iterative process until your metrics improve.

²⁰³ Tetlock, P. E. (1983). Accountability and complexity of thought. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 45(1), 74. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.45.1.74; Tetlock, P. E., & Mitchell, G. (2009). Implicit bias and accountability systems: What must organizations do to prevent discrimination?. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 29, 3-38. doi: 10.1016/j.riob.2009.10.002

²⁰⁴ <https://www.ncarb.org/gain-axp-experience/supervisors-mentors>

Interrupting bias in PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS

The Challenge

A recent study of performance evaluations in tech found that 66% of women’s performance reviews contained negative personality criticism (“You come off as abrasive”) whereas only 1% of men’s reviews did.²⁰⁵ Performance evaluations determine who is eligible for raises, high-profile assignments, and promotions, so it is essential that organizations strive to level the playing field for all employees.

Our study of gender and racial bias in the profession of architecture found that men of color and women of all racial/ethnic groups reported getting less fair, honest, and constructive performance evaluations than their white male counterparts.²⁰⁶ Performance evaluations help determine promotions and compensation, so ensuring fairness in this system will have lasting ripple effects throughout architecture firms.

²⁰⁵ Snyder, K. (2014, August 26). The abrasiveness trap: High-achieving men and women are described differently in reviews. *Fortune*. Retrieved from <http://fortune.com/2014/08/26/performance-review-gender-bias/>

²⁰⁶ Williams, J.C., Korn, R.M., & Maas, R. (2021). *The Elephant in the (Well-Designed) Room: An Investigation into Bias in the Architecture Profession*.

Interrupting bias in PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS

A Solution

What's a bounceback?

AN EXAMPLE: In one organization, when a supervisor's ratings of an underrepresented group deviate dramatically from the mean, the evaluations are returned to the supervisor with the message: "Either you have an undiagnosed performance problem that requires a performance improvement plan (PIP), or you need to take another look at your evaluations as a group." After implementing this bounceback message, the organization found that a few people were put on PIPs—but that over time supervisors' ratings of underrepresented groups converged with those of majority men. A subsequent survey of the organization found that employees of all demographics groups rated their performance evaluations as equally fair (whereas bias was reported in hiring—and every other business system).

1. Use metrics

Businesses use metrics to assess whether they have progressed towards any strategic goal. Metrics can help you pinpoint where bias exists, and assess the effectiveness of the measures you've taken. (Whether metrics are made public will vary from firm to firm, and from metric to metric.)

For each metric, examine:

- Do patterned differences exist between majority men, majority women, men of color, and women of color? Include any other underrepresented group that your firm tracks, such as military veterans, LGBTQ+ people, individuals with disabilities, etc.
- Do patterned differences exist for parents after they return from leave, or architectural professionals who reduce their hours?
- Do patterned differences exist between full-time and part-time employees?

Important metrics to analyze:

- Do your performance evaluations show consistent disparities by demographic group?
- Do women's ratings fall after they have children? Do employees' ratings fall after they take parental leave or adopt flexible work arrangements?
- Do the same performance ratings result in different promotion or compensation rates for different groups?
- Keep metrics by: 1) individual supervisor; 2) department; 3) location, if relevant; and 4) the firm as a whole.

2. Implement bias interrupters

All bias interrupters should apply both to written evaluations and in meetings, where relevant. Because every firm is different, not all interrupters will be relevant. Consider this a menu.

To understand the research and rationale behind the suggested bias interrupters, read the [Identifying Bias in Performance Evaluations Worksheet](#).

Empower and appoint

- Empower people involved in the evaluation process to spot and interrupt bias by using the [Identifying Bias in Performance Evaluations Worksheet](#). Read and distribute.
- Appoint bias interrupters. Provide HR professionals or team members with special training to spot bias, and involve them at every step of the performance evaluation process. Training available at [BiasInterrupters.org](#).

Tweak the evaluation form

- Begin with clear and specific performance criteria directly related to job requirements. Try: "She contributes valuable ideas to design discussions, collaborates well with the rest of the design team, and avoids 'architecture speak' but instead communicates well with the clients and consultants to advance those ideas in the development of design," instead of: "She's a great designer."

Interrupting bias in PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS

A Solution

- Require evidence from the evaluation period that justifies the rating. Try: “This year, he did a great job in helping us win X project, writing a clear client proposal that defined a tight scope and communicated our fee structure in a way that was carefully and strategically considered,” instead of: “He’s great at helping us win projects.”
- Consider performance and potential separately for each candidate. Given the tendency for majority men to be judged on their potential while others are judged on their performance, the two criteria should be evaluated separately.
- Separate personality issues from skill sets for each candidate. Personal style should be appraised separately from skills because a narrower range of behavior often is accepted from women and people of color. For example, women may be labeled “difficult” for doing things that are accepted in majority men.

Tweak the evaluation process

- Level the playing field by ensuring everyone knows how to promote themselves effectively and sending the message that they are expected to do so. Distribute the [Writing an Effective Self-Evaluation Worksheet](#).
- Offer alternatives to self-promotion. Encourage or require supervisors to set up more formal systems for sharing successes, such as a monthly email that lists employees’ accomplishments.
- Provide a bounceback. Supervisors whose performance evaluations show persistent bias should receive a bounceback (i.e., someone should talk through the evidence with them).
- Have bias interrupters play an active role in calibration meetings. In many organizations, managers meet to produce a target distribution of ratings or cross-calibrate rankings. Have

managers read the [Identifying Bias in Performance Evaluations Worksheet](#) before they meet. Have a trained bias interrupter in the room.

- Don’t eliminate your performance appraisal system. Eliminating formal performance evaluation systems and replacing them with feedback-on-the-fly creates conditions for bias to flourish.

3. Repeat as needed

- Return to your key metrics. Did the bias interrupters produce change?
- If you don’t see change, you may need to implement stronger bias interrupters, or you may be targeting the wrong place in the performance evaluation process.
- Use an iterative process until your metrics improve.

Interrupting bias in MEETINGS

The Challenge

Having expertise increases men's influence—but decreases women's.²⁰⁷ This is just one way subtle biases play out in meetings.

Men tend to interrupt in meetings more than women.²⁰⁸ This is exactly what we found in our study on gender and racial bias in the profession of architecture: Women of all racial/ethnic groups were dramatically more likely to be interrupted than white men, with men of color falling in the middle.²⁰⁹

Another pattern is that sometimes other people get the credit for an idea originally posed by a woman. In our survey of architects and designers, women—and women of color to an even greater degree—reported this stolen idea phenomenon at a much higher rate than men.²¹⁰

If organizations don't interrupt bias playing out in meetings, they may lose the talent and insight they pay for.

²⁰⁷ Thomas-Hunt, M. C., & Phillips, K. W. (2004). When what you know is not enough: Expertise and gender dynamics in task groups. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 30(12), 1585-1598. doi: 10.1177/0146167204271186

²⁰⁸ Smith-Lovin, L., & Brody, C. (1989). Interruptions in group discussions: The effects of gender and group composition. *American Sociological Review*, 424-435. Zimmermann, D. H., & West, C. (1996). Sex roles, interruptions and silences in conversation. *In Amsterdam Studies in the Theory and History of Linguistic Science Series 4* (pp. 211-236).

²⁰⁹ Williams, J.C., Korn, R.M., & Maas, R. (2021). The Elephant in the (Well-Designed) Room: An Investigation into Bias in the Architecture Profession.

²¹⁰ Williams, J.C., Korn, R.M., & Maas, R. (2021). The Elephant in the (Well-Designed) Room: An Investigation into Bias in the Architecture Profession.

Interrupting bias in MEETINGS

A Solution

1. Use metrics

Businesses use metrics to assess whether they have progressed towards any strategic goal. Metrics can help you pinpoint where bias exists, and assess the effectiveness of the measures you've taken. (Whether metrics are made public will vary from company to company, and from metric to metric.)

Options for finding out whether you have a problem are listed from least to most time-consuming.

1. Employ new technologies: Who is talking during your meetings?
 - GenderEQ: an app that analyzes the ratio of men and women speaking time
2. Use our [free two-minute downloadable survey](#) to assess bias issues.
3. Appoint a bias interrupter to gather metrics over the course of several meetings. Metrics to gather:
 - Who speaks at meetings: Is it representative of who attends?
 - Interruptions: Is there a culture of interrupting in your meetings? If so, is there a gender or racial difference between who does the interrupting and who gets interrupted?
 - Stolen idea. Research shows that women and people of color report that others get credit for ideas they originally offered much more than white men do.²¹¹ Keep track of who gets credit for ideas offered and who originated them.
 - Are the right people getting invited? Be sure everyone who has a part to play is at the meeting.

- Ideas implemented: Whose ideas get implemented?
- Office housework. Track who takes the notes, who keeps the minutes, who gets coffee, and other office housework tasks.
- Meeting scheduling: Are meetings scheduled at times or at locations that make it difficult or impossible for parents and caregivers to attend?

2. Implement bias interrupters

Because every organization is different, not all interrupters will be relevant. Consider this a menu.

To understand the research and rationale behind the suggested bias interrupters, read our [Identifying Bias in Meetings Worksheet](#), which summarizes hundreds of studies.

- **Rotate office housework tasks.** Women are more likely to be asked to do the “office housework” tasks for meetings: taking notes, scheduling the conference rooms, ordering lunch/snacks for meetings, cleaning up afterwards. If admins are available to do these tasks, use them. If not, don't ask for volunteers. Instead, figure out a fair way to spread the housework tasks evenly by rotating based on arbitrary criteria (birthday, astrological sign, seniority, etc.). For more bias interrupters about office housework, see the [Interrupting Bias in Assignments Worksheet](#).

Interrupting bias in MEETINGS

A Solution

- **Mind the “stolen idea.”** Make sure people get credit for ideas they offered. When you see ideas get stolen, you can say, “I’ve been thinking about that ever since Pam first said it. You’ve added something important, Eric, here’s the next step.”
- **Avoid personality double-standards.** Make sure women and people of color can speak up without backlash. Decades of research have shown that women face social pressures to hedge (for example, “Don’t you think?”). Both women and people of color may face backlash for speaking in a direct and assertive manner.²¹² Have your team read [Identifying Bias in Meetings](#) to help level the playing field.
- **Ask people to speak up.** Women and people of color often face social pressure to speak in a tentative, deferential manner. If someone isn’t speaking up, ask them to weigh in. And if you know someone has expertise in an area, ask them directly.²¹³ This strategy can help class migrants and introverts feel included.
- **Have a policy for interruptions.** Create and enforce an overall policy for interruptions. One option is a no-interruptions policy, where you make it clear that interruptions are not to be tolerated, and ding people when they interrupt. A gentler policy is to keep track of who is continually interrupting and getting interrupted, and talk about the problem.
- **Don’t give interrupters free reign.** If a few people are dominating the conversation, address it directly. Take them aside and explain that your workplace employs a broad range of people because you need to hear a broad range of viewpoints. Point out that some people are good at “shooting from the hip” while others need to be given more time and space to feel comfortable speaking up. Some may not even realize they’re frequent interrupters.
- **Schedule meetings appropriately.** Schedule meetings in the office, not at the golf course. For an off-site, schedule lunch or afternoon coffee. Overall, stick to working hours and professional locations for work meetings. Otherwise, you’re putting mothers and other caregivers at a disadvantage.
- **Avoid arranging furniture in ways that signal an in-group.** When there is an inner and outer circle of chairs, it can create hierarchy.²¹⁴ Pay attention: Do all the men sit in the inner circle and the women sit in the outer circle, or is race/ethnicity playing a role? If this happens routinely, have everyone trade places with the person in front of them, or rearrange chairs so there is only one circle.
- **Establish agreements for diverse groups.** When meetings are diverse, people may fail to speak up: Individuals belonging to in-groups may fear offending individuals in out-groups, while individuals in out-groups may fear rejection or retaliation. To combat this, simply state at the beginning of the meeting that everyone should try their best to speak in a way that’s respectful and mindful of the diversity of experiences represented in your working group (aka, “politically correct”). Research shows that this simple statement can decrease uncertainty and increase creativity from participants.²¹⁵

²¹³ Kim, S., Phillips, K. W., Thomas-Hunt, M. C., & Cabrera, S. F. (Forthcoming). Giving her the floor: How solicitation helps female experts be more influential Ridgeway, C. L., & Nakagawa, S. (2017). Is deference the price of being seen as reasonable? How status hierarchies incentivize acceptance of low status. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 80(2), 132-152. doi: 10.1177/0190272517695213

²¹⁴ Sandberg, S. (2013). *Lean in: Women, work, and the will to lead*. New York, NY, US: Alfred A. Knopf.

²¹⁵ Goncalo, J. A., Chatman, J. A., Duguid, M. M., & Kennedy, J. A. (2015). Creativity from constraint? How the political correctness norm influences creativity in mixed-sex work groups. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 60(1), 1-30. doi: 10.1177/0001839214563975

Interrupting bias in MEETINGS

A Solution

- **Encourage idea contribution.** It's tough to speak up against a majority opinion—especially for someone who's not in the majority group.²¹⁶ Research shows that people are more likely to voice different opinions when at least one other person expresses a different opinion—even if the new opinions don't agree with each other.²¹⁷ Some ideas that make it easier to voice different opinions:
 - Great ideas can come from anywhere. When it comes to design, there is no right or wrong answer—new design ideas encourage innovation and creativity. And, in a situation where multiple designs are to be shared with a client, new approaches are essential to the success of a project.
 - Support people who diverge from the majority. If someone starts to voice an opinion and senses that nobody wants to hear it, s/he will likely pipe down. If you see this happening, say, “Let's hear this idea out.”
- **Empower people** to spot and interrupt bias by reading our [Identifying Bias in Meetings Worksheet](#). Read and distribute the worksheet to help you understand the rationale behind the steps suggested below.
- Return to your key metrics. Did the bias interrupters produce change?
- If you don't see change, you may need to implement a stronger bias interrupter.
- Use an iterative process until your metrics improve.

3. Repeat as needed

²¹⁶ Asch, S. E. (1956) Studies of independence and conformity: A minority of one against a unanimous majority. *Psychological Monographs: General and Applied*, 70(9), 1-70. doi: 10.1037/h0093718

²¹⁷ Asch, S. E. (1956) Studies of independence and conformity: A minority of one against a unanimous majority. *Psychological Monographs: General and Applied*, 70(9), 1-70. doi: 10.1037/h0093718

Interrupting bias in FAMILY LEAVE

The Challenge

In our study of architects and designers, women in the profession of architecture reported being likely to work part-time or even change jobs after having children.²¹⁸ The 2018 Equity in Architecture study found a similar pattern: Women in architecture firms were less likely to be mothers, while sole practitioners were more likely to have children.²¹⁹ Architecture firms can avoid losing top talent by improving their family leave policies.

According to a report by Better Life Lab at New America, nearly half of parents didn't take two days off work after the birth or adoption of a child.²²⁰ Studies show that paid parental leave can reduce infant mortality rates and improve long-term child and maternal health.²²¹

Family leave is not just about children. While 30% of Americans say they anticipate needing to take leave to care for a new child, twice that many (60%) say they anticipate needing to take at least some family leave in the future (including caring for ill, disabled, or aging family members).²²² In fact, one-sixth of Americans spend an average of 20 hours a week caring for a sick or elderly family member.²²³

The need for family leave policies is already here, and with a rapidly aging population, these needs are only growing.²²⁴ In order to retain the best workers, companies need to step up and create comprehensive leave and work/life balance policies that work. While employers are expected to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws regarding leaves of absence, employers can and should do more to truly support and retain a diverse workforce with caregiving responsibilities.

These best-practice policies may be challenging or impossible for very small firms to implement. Note that the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) does not apply to many small employers²²⁵ although some states require smaller employers to offer leave, or paid leave.²²⁶ Smaller employers may find it impossible to offer the same leaves as larger employers do, although they should offer as much as they can in order to avoid losing valued employees to employers with more generous policies.

²¹⁸ Williams, J.C., Korn, R.M., & Maas, R. (2021). The Elephant in the (Well-Designed) Room: An Investigation into Bias in the Architecture Profession.

²¹⁹ Pitts, A., Sheng, R., Nicholson, K., & Monti, M. (2019). Equity By Design: Voices, Values, Vision! 2018 Equity in Architecture Survey Early Findings Report. Retrieved from: <http://eqxdesign.com/equity-in-architecture-survey-2018>

²²⁰ A. Lenhart, H. Swenson, & B. Schulte, Lifting the Barriers to Paid Family and Medical leave for Men in the United States, December 2019. *New America: Better Life Lab*. <https://www.newamerica.org/better-life-lab/reports/lifting-barriers-paid-family-and-medical-leave-men-united-states/>

²²¹ Arijit Nandi et al., The Impact of Parental and Medical Leave Policies on Socioeconomic and Health Outcomes in OECD Countries: A Systematic Review of the Empirical Literature, 96 *The Milbank Quarterly* 434–471 (2018). <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1468-0009.12340>; Paid Family Leave Policies And Population Health, *Health Affairs Health Policy Brief*, March 28, 2019: https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hpb20190301.484936/full/HPB_2019_RWJF_09_W.pdf

²²² A. Lenhart, H. Swenson, & B. Schulte, Lifting the Barriers to Paid Family and Medical leave for Men in the United States, December 2019. *New America: Better Life Lab*. <https://www.newamerica.org/better-life-lab/reports/lifting-barriers-paid-family-and-medical-leave-men-united-states/>

²²³ Paid Leave US, "Making Caregiving Work for America's Families," https://drive.google.com/file/d/1K_4Eyd6rZi_om8qvRnzAeYiLwmW1Wnyl/view

²²⁴ 10,000 Americans turn 65 every day. - Paid Leave US, "Making Caregiving Work for America's Families," https://drive.google.com/file/d/1K_4Eyd6rZi_om8qvRnzAeYiLwmW1Wnyl/view

²²⁵ The FMLA applies to employers with 50 or more employees for each working day over 20 or more calendar workweeks in the current or preceding calendar year. 29 U.S.C.S. § 2611.

²²⁶ State laws regarding leave vary widely by type and by coverage. States may provide several forms of leave for parents including, but not limited to, family leave, pregnancy leave, parental leave, or adoption leave. For example, in California, employers with 5 or more employees are covered under Pregnancy Disability Leave Law and the California Family Rights Act. Cal. Gov't Codes §§ 12945, 12945.2. In the District of Columbia, all employers with paid employees are covered under the Parental Leave Act, D.C. Code § 32-521.01(1), and employers with 20 or more employees are covered under the D.C. Family and Medical Leave Act, D.C. Mun. Regs. tit. 4, § 1601.1. New York's Family Leave covers employers with one or more employees for at least 30 calendars days during any year. N.Y. Comp. Codes R. & Regs. tit. 12, § 355.4. Check out your state's laws by visiting: <https://www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/state-family-and-medical-leave-laws.aspx>

Interrupting bias in FAMILY LEAVE

A Solution

1. If you offer disability leave, you need also to offer it for childbirth (otherwise, that's pregnancy discrimination). Typically, this means that six weeks of leave will be covered by your disability policy for a vaginal birth; eight weeks for the cesarean section.

2. Determine the maximum paid parental leave your firm can afford. Keep in mind that typically few employees will have children in any given year, but without paid leave you will often lose one employee after another when they have children. Don't assume you will only lose women; increasingly, we hear from men who insist on taking parental leave and walk away from companies that don't provide it (although men often don't tell the companies they're leaving for this reason). Some states have paid laws to help cover the company's costs and extend the available paid leave time.²²⁷

3. Offer equal parental (not "primary caregiver") leave and allow intermittent leave. So-called "primary caregiver" leave reflects a breadwinner/homemaker model that does not fit most families today, and opens a firm up to potential liability if someone openly states that primary caregivers are expected to be women, not men. Determine the amount of time your firm can afford to offer equal parental leave to all parents, men as well as women, and adopted as well as birth parents.²²⁸ Also, allow leave to be taken in small chunks rather than all at once; leave-takers can work with their supervisors to create schedules that work for their teams.

4. Offer equal leave for everyone, including hourly workers (who are typically less able to afford replacement care). Again, paid parental leave is critical for helping families balance work and caregiving responsibilities, and is tied to better maternal and child health.²²⁹

5. Offer leave for all types of caregiving responsibilities. Offering leave only to parents risks breeding resentment on the part of those who need to care for elders, or a family member with a disability or illness. If your firm is worried that non-birth-related caregiving leave will be abused, require permission from HR or supervisors to ensure substantial caregiving responsibilities exist.²³⁰

6. Set strong norms that everyone is expected to take their entire paid leave for childbirth/adoption. Leaders need to send a strong message that employees are encouraged to take the full amount of paid leave available to them, and that taking additional unpaid leave will not count against them. The best way to do this is to celebrate a pregnancy/adoption announcement (for employees of any gender identity) by offering a company-logo onesie and group announcement signaling that children are something to be celebrated, not hidden. Once that norm is set, pregnancy/adoption announcements can be followed by having HR (or supervisors, if they are on-message) tell men as well as women that they are expected to take their full leave. Supervisors may need training to do this effectively. If there is a cultural expectation to come back early, then that is exactly what most employees will do. If men are not taking leave, your messaging is not effective, and men who want work-life balance are likely leaving your company for this reason.

²²⁷ Check out your state's laws by visiting: <https://www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/state-family-and-medical-leave-laws.aspx>

²²⁸ For example, Kentucky requires every employer to provide at least 6 weeks of personal leave for adoptions of children under age 7. Ky. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 337.015.

²²⁹ Leave can and should be prorated based on how many hours the part-time employee regularly works.

²³⁰ Some states, such as NY and NJ, provide paid family leave programs. New York State Paid Family Leave; N.J. Stat. Ann. § 34:11B-3.

Interrupting bias in FAMILY LEAVE

A Solution

FMLA

FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT requires employees to give their employer 30 days' notice prior to leave that is foreseeable. Ideally, your employees who can foresee their need for leave will notify you at the same time that they notify their larger network of friends. By creating a workplace culture that is welcoming and encouraging of taking leave, employees will be more likely to give you notice earlier in the process. Consider adding this model policy into your employee handbook, and reference leave availability and your leave transition process in employee onboarding trainings to set the right tone from the start.

7. Eliminate the flexibility stigma. Effective policies depend on cultural shifts in your organization. If you tell employees—and you should—that taking leave won't undercut their progress in the organization, then walk the talk. Make sure to plan for leaves effectively so that employees don't feel slighted when they return, and their colleagues don't feel like they are taking on undue burdens.

8. Don't violate the Family and Medical Leave Act. It is illegal to interfere with or discourage any employee, regardless of gender, from taking leave under the FMLA. Although employers are not completely forbidden from contacting employees while they are on leave, these calls should be limited to brief necessary business-related calls. Communications to return to work early, weekly status checks, or calls to perform work while on leave can make an employer liable for interference with FMLA rights.²³¹ Calls to employees out on leave should be managed through Human Resources. It is illegal to penalize employees for requesting or taking leave, either before or after they do so.

9. Use a three-meeting model for off-ramping. Effective on- and off-ramping is vital, both to ensure smooth transitions and to eliminate the flexibility stigma.

1. After a pregnancy announcement, the employee's supervisor should ask for a meeting, congratulate the future parent, hand out the company onesie (see #6 above), and say: "We expect everyone to take their full paid leave—and the entire amount of unpaid leave available to them if they wish. We will develop a transition plan that works for you." At the initial meeting, assign a leave liaison if you have that program (see #12).

If your employee is an adopting or foster parent, or if your employee is taking family leave for eldercare or medical reasons, the two meetings may be on an accelerated schedule.

2. Three months before the leave is set to start, the employee's supervisor should schedule a meeting, saying: "Come prepared with a list of all your ongoing projects and who you think might be a good fit to take them while you're on leave. If no one comes to mind, don't worry. We can figure it out together at the meeting, even if we need to hire temporary help—your list is just a jumping-off point."
3. Shortly before the expected leave date arrives, meet again to finalize the plan for transitioning job duties.²³² The supervisor should ask about the employee's thoughts about post leave (understanding that plans may change). Are they thinking about returning on a part-time or flex schedule? For equity and legal reasons, make sure everyone taking family leave, regardless of gender, is asked the same questions.

10. Don't forget to ramp up when they return. Often women return for maternity leave and find it is very difficult to gradually work up to their previous workload due to assumptions that they have limited time, and perhaps limited commitment, to work. That's why it's important to schedule a meeting immediately when someone returns, with at least two weekly check-ins thereafter, to ensure that an employee returning from leave isn't being sidelined for projects because colleagues are benevolently (or not so benevolently) concerned about the returned employee's workload. Doing this helps avoid attrition—and helps prevent Maternal Wall bias from becoming a legal problem.

²³¹ Massey-Diez v. Univ. of Iowa Cmty. Med. Servs., 826 F.3d 1149, 1158 (8th Cir. 2016) (Some courts have found that "asking or requiring an employee to perform work while on leave can constitute interference.").

²³² A good practice is to have most if not all of the pregnant employee's work transitioned about a month before their leave is scheduled.

Interrupting bias in FAMILY LEAVE

A Solution

11. The best practice is a gradual-return-to-work policy. The best way to ensure that employees do not return to an overwhelming wall of work, and end up leaving the company, is a gradual-return-to-work policy. Typically these start with a 50% schedule and gradually build back to full-time. Without a formal policy, companies often find that some supervisors handle the return-to-work well, but that others do so poorly, resulting in high attrition.

12. Designate leave liaisons. Create a workplace mentorship program that links leave-takers with mentor colleagues. Mentors then act as guides on issues like off- and on-ramping and the transition into parenthood. Some firms expand these programs by offering employees outside coaching sessions or classes for new parents and paid travel expenses for care support, enabling parents to bring their children on work-related travel. See #9 for more ideas.

13. Broaden the scope of support. Organizations can continue to support all employees beyond leave by offering family caregiving benefits. To start, here are some ideas:

- Flexible and part-time schedules; see our Toolkit for Workplace Flexibility for guidance.
- Get your employees a membership for regular or backup childcare through providers like Care@Work or, better yet, offer on-site childcare.
- You can also offer eldercare services through providers like Bright Horizons.²³³

- Help employees navigate pregnancy and postpartum with platforms like Mahmee or Maven.
- Offer a travel allowance for caregivers on work-related travel and breastmilk overnight mailing services.

14. Schedule the time to review your family leave and work/life balance policies. Like anything else that's a priority, add discussions on these policies to your strategic plan and budget meetings.

15. If you sense that an employee is struggling to balance work and life, ask what they need. Many employees may be afraid to ask for what they need and instead will leave the firm. Sometimes, a leave may be appropriate, but other times, a temporary shift in work hours or the ability to work from home for a period of time may be sufficient. Employees should feel encouraged to work with the firm to meet the firm's needs and the needs of their family.

Interrupting bias in FAMILY LEAVE

A Solution

Breastfeeding employees need support as well: All relevant major medical associations in the U.S. recommend breastfeeding for at least the first year of life,²³⁴ and businesses that support breastfeeding employees' basic needs [realize cost savings](#) from increased loyalty and retention, reduced sick time, and decreased health care and insurance costs. Architectural professionals who are lactating will need to express milk at regular intervals throughout the workday to maintain their milk supply and avoid painful health complications.

Legal protections for lactating employees vary from [state to state](#). As of June 2021, all employees who are eligible for overtime are protected by the federal [Break Time for Nursing Mother's](#) provision of the Fair Labor Standards Act, but while that may cover many staff members, it typically excludes architects. The PUMP for Nursing Mothers Act ([H.R. 3110](#) and [S. 1658](#)) is under consideration in Congress and would expand coverage of the federal law to include all employees. Nursing architects are often covered by state laws; the majority of states have a law requiring employers to provide private break time and space for pumping, and/or provide reasonable accommodations to meet the needs of lactating employees, which can also include accommodations beyond basic time and space. Lactating employees are also protected from discrimination and may be entitled to accommodations under the Pregnancy Discrimination Act (Title VII).

Typically, workplace lactation laws require lactating employees be provided a space to express milk that is not a bathroom and is free from view and intrusion by others. The standards usually apply anywhere the employee is expected to work, including on construction sites, and there are [creative solutions](#) to meet the legal standards in every setting. Of course, best practice lactation spaces exceed the minimum legal requirements and include a comfortable chair, a flat surface to rest the breast pump, electric outlets and close proximity to a sink. The [AIA guidelines for lactation space](#) offer detailed, best-practice guidance.

Depending on what the breastfeeding employee's needs are, what is provided to other employees, and where the workplace is located, nursing architects may be entitled to reduced billable hour requirements to account for the time spent pumping. Best practice is to adjust hours requirements and any other time-based metrics so as to not penalize employees for addressing this health need.

To learn the law in your state, visit the [Center for WorkLife Law's workplace breastfeeding law resource](#).

²³⁴ Am. Acad. of Pediatrics, Policy Statement, Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk, 129 PEDIATRICS e827, 32 (2012), available at <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/early/2012/02/22/peds.2011-3552.full.pdf>; Am. Acad. Fam. Physicians, Policy Statement, Breastfeeding (2012), <http://www.aafp.org/about/policies/all/breastfeeding.html>; Am. Acad. Of Fam. Physicians, Policy Statement, Breastfeeding (1988, 2017 COD); Am. Coll. of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, ACOG COMMITTEE Opinion #756 Optimizing Support for Breastfeeding as Part of Obstetric Practice; Am. Pub. Health Ass'n. A Call to Action on Breastfeeding: A Fundamental Public Health Issue. Policy No. 200714 (2007) <https://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policystatements/policy-database/2014/07/29/13/23/a-call-to-actionon-breastfeeding-a-fundamental-public-health-issue>

Interrupting bias in WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY

The Challenge

Surveys show time and time again that employees want more flexibility at work, with one finding that 96% of white-collar professionals say they need flexibility²³⁵ Workers value workplaces that value them. In one study, attrition was cut in half when workers went remote, and telecommuting employees took fewer sick days and less time off.²³⁶

There is a widespread narrative that women leave the profession of architecture because of long hours—and that long hours are indispensable, so there is nothing to be done about it. This narrative actually doesn't hold water because most architectural professionals aren't working wildly long hours.²³⁷ Yet some are—and even those who don't work long hours all year often have to during a charrette. There is ample evidence that women professionals do have more caregiving responsibilities than male professionals as a group,²³⁸ although increasing numbers of younger men are equal caregivers and are willing to leave their employers for reasons of work-life balance.²³⁹ So it is in the employers' best interest to retain not only women but all young people by providing time flexibility in the workplace.

When workplaces rely on an outdated model of a breadwinner who is always available for work, not only do they exclude most people working today, they also hurt the company's bottom line. According to Cisco, their mobile or remote employees have a voluntary attrition rate a third the size of their office-based employees.²⁴⁰ Cisco credits this lower attrition rate with \$75 million in annual savings for recruiting, hiring, and training replacements.²⁴¹ Other studies have found sharp gains in productivity when workplaces move to telework or build-your-own schedules.²⁴²

²³⁵ A. Dean & A. Auerbach, "96% of U.S. Professionals Say They Need Flexibility, but Only 47% Have It," June 2018. *Harvard Business Review*, <https://hbr.org/2018/06/96-of-u-s-professionals-say-they-need-flexibility-but-only-47-have-it>.

²³⁶ S. Mautz, "A 2-Year Stanford Study Shows the Astonishing Productivity Boost of Working From Home," April 2018. *Inc.*, <https://www.inc.com/scott-mautz/a-2-year-stanford-study-shows-astonishing-productivity-boost-of-working-from-home.html>.

²³⁷ Pitts, A., Sheng, R., Nicholson, K., & Monti, M. (2019). Equity By Design: Voices, Values, Vision! 2018 Equity in Architecture Survey Early Findings Report. Retrieved from: <http://eqxdesign.com/equity-in-architecture-survey-2018>

²³⁸ K. Parkert, "Women more than men adjust their careers for family life," October 2015. Pew Research, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/10/01/women-more-than-men-adjust-their-careers-for-family-life/>

²³⁹ A. Keshner, "More American men clamor for paternity leave: 'A father shouldn't have to be lucky to form a bond with his child,'" July 2019. MarketWatch, <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/more-american-men-clamor-for-paternity-leave-a-father-shouldnt-have-to-be-lucky-to-form-a-bond-with-his-child-2019-07-26#:~:text=Some%20high%2Dprofile%20men%20are,afford%20to%20take%20time%20off.>

²⁴⁰ P. Leet, "How Telework Helps Cisco Recruit and Retain Employees," June 2013. Cisco Blogs, <https://blogs.cisco.com/ciscoit/how-telework-helps-cisco-recruit-and-retain-employees>.

²⁴¹ P. Leet, "How Telework Helps Cisco Recruit and Retain Employees," June 2013. Cisco Blogs, <https://blogs.cisco.com/ciscoit/how-telework-helps-cisco-recruit-and-retain-employees>.

²⁴² Shana Lynch, "Why Working from Home is a 'Future-Looking Technology,'" June 2017. Stanford Graduate School of Business, <https://www.gsb.stanford.edu/insights/why-working-home-future-looking-technology>.

Interrupting bias in WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY

The Challenge

In our study of architects and designers, we found that over a third of women, and approximately a quarter of men, thought that asking for flexible arrangements would hurt their careers. This data was collected before COVID-19 hit, and the long-term impact of the pandemic remains to be seen.²⁴³

The profession of architecture has seemingly had an intensely face-time culture—with the accepted wisdom that because architecture is indisputably a team sport, it had to be done in the office. Because of COVID-19, people now see that this isn't true.²⁴⁴ Even people who long opposed remote work have been working remotely successfully for months. Going forward, this is an opportunity for employers to change norms and understandings. There has historically been an unnoted generational conflict between older architectural professionals who just didn't believe in remote work and younger architectural professionals who believed it was both possible and desirable. Hopefully, remote work during COVID-19 has bridged the generation gap and there will be more flexibility for telework moving forward.

Building a flexible workplace enables employers to promote people based on their talent instead of their schedule.

²⁴³ Williams, J.C., Korn, R.M., & Maas, R. (2021). The Elephant in the (Well-Designed) Room: An Investigation into Bias in the Architecture Profession.

²⁴⁴ Williams, J.C. "The Pandemic Has Exposed the Fallacy of the Ideal Worker," May 2020. *Harvard Business Review*, <https://hbr.org/2020/05/the-pandemic-has-exposed-the-fallacy-of-the-ideal-worker>

Interrupting bias in WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY

A Solution

1. Recognize the difference between crisis work and full-time/part-time telework. Working remotely in the midst of a crisis, like the COVID-19 pandemic, is not the same as telework during normal times. The first steps to successful telework are childcare and a place to work. Organizations designing a permanent telework scheme typically will balance the productivity gains of telework with the innovation gains of in-office work. For tips on creating a telework policy that works for your organization visit: <https://trello.com/remote-work-guide>.²⁴⁵

2. Allow for flex time. Flex times allows employees to start and end work at times of their own choosing, often within limits (e.g., start times between 7–11 a.m.). Don't assume hourly employees can't participate: Having one receptionist work 8 a.m. –5 p.m. and another work 9 a.m. –6 p.m., for example, often benefits an organization.

3. Use reduced schedules to expand your talent pool. Offer reduced scheduling to employees without compromising career advancement opportunities by offering proportional pay, benefits, and advancement. This strategy has been used successfully in law firms, enabling part-time attorneys to become partners. Only 18.2% of professional women and less than one-third of men work more than 40 hours per week, so if your workplace isn't offering a reduced schedule with advancement opportunities, you're missing out.²⁴⁶

4. Consider offering a wider range of work arrangements. Are you able to make some positions project-based? This enables employees to take on as much or as little work as they want, giving the company their best on select projects. Elite part-time track programs

that continue to offer glamour work assignments to employees with lower hours help level the playing field and ensure that the plum work opportunities continue going to the best-suited for the job. What makes these programs effective is that employees are still able to transition into more senior roles within the organization.

5. Eliminate the flexibility stigma. Don't stigmatize people based on schedule. Message clearly and often that promotion depends on talent and work, not on "face time" at the office—and practice what you preach.

6. Don't overvalue overwork. Encouraging your employees to regularly burn the midnight oil hurts more than it helps. Studies dating back to World War I find that chronic overwork (more than 40 hours a week) hurts productivity, and more recent studies find that working less than 40 hours a week can increase productivity.²⁴⁷ In one study, managers couldn't tell the difference between employees who actually worked 80 hours a week and those who pretended to.²⁴⁸ Pay attention to what an employee's efforts lead to, not how many hours it takes them to get there.

7. Your benefits send a message; make sure it's the one you want. Look again at your work culture and employee benefits. Do they match up with the work-life balance values your company claims? Having a power-napping room, dry-cleaning, and free dinner for those who work after 8pm are great, but if those are your only employee benefits, you are sending a strong message that you only value a certain group of employees. Provide a range of benefits that will appeal to employees from different demographics, if that's what you want to attract and retain.

²⁴⁵ For additional remote work tools: <https://blog.trello.com/topic/remote-work>.

²⁴⁶ Gender Inequality, Work Hours, and the Future of Work; Institute of Women's Policy Research 2019 (<https://www.empowerwomen.org/es/resources/documents/2019/11/gender-inequality-work-hours-and-the-future-of-work?lang=en>)

²⁴⁷ Jill Duffy, "What wartime 'munitionettes' can teach us about burnout," September 2019. BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20190912-what-wartime-munitionettes-can-teach-us-about-burnout>; "The Six-Hour Work Day". Ohio University Online Masters Blogs, <https://onlinemasters.ohio.edu/blog/benefits-of-a-shorter-work-week/>; John McNamara, "Create a culture of working less hours and you'll boost productivity. Here's why," February 2018. Sage, <https://www.sagepeople.com/about-us/news-hub/creating-culture-working-less-boost-productivity/#>

²⁴⁸ Sarah Green Carmichael, "The Research is Clear: Long Hours Backfire for People and Companies," August 2015. *Harvard Business Review*, <https://hbr.org/2015/08/the-research-is-clear-long-hours-backfire-for-people-and-for-companies>



Published November 2021 by:

The American Institute of Architects

1735 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20006
aia.org

© 2021 The American Institute of Architects

All rights reserved.

Report prepared by:

**The American Institute of Architects and
The Center for WorkLife Law**

Design by:

Polygraph