

Creating a Level Playing Field

with Shelley Correll, Professor, Stanford University

1. REFLECT *(First 10 minutes)*

Each person, write about your experience.

Think of a time when you felt someone underestimated you or your performance. Or, alternatively, a time when you underestimated another. Why do you think this happened?

What strategies could help you avoid this in the future?

Creating a Level Playing Field Key Take-Aways

Stereotypes are widely held, generalized beliefs about people. Stereotypes act as cognitive shortcuts when processing information and can lead to **bias**, or errors in decision-making.

WAYS GENDER STEREOTYPES CREATE BIAS AGAINST WOMEN
Create a harsher standard for women. Stereotypes can lead us to doubt women's expertise. As a result, their performance is more heavily scrutinized, and they are required to repeatedly prove their competence.

- **Shift the criteria** used to evaluate women in order to justify a more stereotypical decision.
- **Create a backlash** for women who do not meet our stereotypical expectations.

SIX STRATEGIES TO REDUCE BIAS

- **Educate** yourself and decision makers on bias. Raising awareness can reduce reliance on stereotypes
- **Establish clear criteria** in advance of making decisions
- **Scrutinize the criteria** being used. Are these the right criteria for the decision? Or, do they unintentionally screen out certain candidates or outcomes?
- **Hold decision makers—and yourself—accountable.** Explain decisions about people to others
- **Be transparent** in progress toward goals. Post numbers and keep track of progress
- **Vouch for the competence of all women**, especially women leaders. Talk about their accomplishments, skills and contributions as a means to counter bias

Stanford | Michelle R. Clayman Institute
for Gender Research
Voice & Influence Program

2. SHARE *(For the next 10 minutes)*

Now pair up. Share your reflections on bias with your partner. What challenges are you facing regarding bias? What strategies could help you navigate these challenges? How would using these strategies affect decision-making? *After 5 minutes, switch and let your partner share. Stick to the allotted time so everyone gets a turn.*

3. DISCUSS *(For the next 15 minutes, as a group)*

Each person, share one key take-away or reflection from this education module.

If time permits, select one situation where bias affects decision-making that you would like to discuss further. Then have group members share strategies they have used to address bias. *For this discussion, share experiences, do not give advice.*

4. ACTION *(For the final 10 minutes)*

Pick One Action you will do after the meeting. Imagine what, where, when and with whom it will happen. Each person share the One Action with the group. Plan to report back at the next meeting.

One Action: