

Bibliography

Banaji, Mahzarin and Anthony Greenwald. 2013. *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People*. New York: Delacorte Press. Additional information, including “Implicit Association Test” and links to [Harvard’s Project Implicit](http://blindspot.fas.harvard.edu/Book) are available at <http://blindspot.fas.harvard.edu/Book>.

Abstract: In *Blindspot*, Mahzarin Banaji and Anthony Greenwald explore hidden biases that we all carry from a lifetime of experiences with Blindspot approved social groups – age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, social class, sexuality, disability status, or nationality. “Blindspot” is a metaphor to capture that portion of the mind that houses hidden biases. The authors use it to ask about the extent to which social groups – without our awareness or conscious control – shape our likes and dislikes, our judgments about people’s character, abilities, and potential. In *Blindspot*, hidden biases are revealed through hands-on experience with the method that has revolutionized the way scientists are learning about the human mind and that gives us a glimpse into what lies within the metaphoric blindspot – the Implicit Association Test. The title’s “good people” are the many people – the authors included – who strive to align their behavior with their good intentions. The aim of *Blindspot* is to explain the science in plain enough language to allow well-intentioned people to better achieve that alignment. Venturing into this book is an invitation to understand our own minds.

Dutt, Kuheli., Danielle L. Pfaff, Ariel F. Bernstein, Joseph S. Dillard, and Caryn & Block. 2016. “Gender Differences in Recommendation Letters for Postdoctoral Fellowships in Geoscience.” *Nature Geoscience* 9: 805–808. <https://doi.org/10.1038/ngeo2819>.

Abstract: Gender disparities in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, including the geosciences, are well documented and widely discussed. In the geosciences, despite receiving 40% of doctoral degrees, women hold less than 10% of full professorial positions. A significant leak in the pipeline occurs during postdoctoral years, so biases embedded in postdoctoral processes, such as biases in recommendation letters, may be deterrents to careers in geoscience for women. Here we present an analysis of an international data set of 1,224 recommendation letters, submitted by recommenders from 54 countries, for postdoctoral fellowships in the geosciences over the period 2007–2012. We examine the relationship between applicant gender and two outcomes of interest: letter length and letter tone. Our results reveal that female applicants are only half as likely to receive excellent letters versus good letters compared to male applicants. We also find no evidence that male and female recommenders differ in their likelihood to write stronger letters for male applicants over female applicants. Our analysis also reveals significant regional differences in letter length, with letters from the Americas being significantly longer than any other region, whereas letter tone appears to be distributed equivalently across all world regions. These results suggest that women are significantly less likely to receive excellent recommendation letters than their male counterparts at a critical juncture in their career.

Houser, Chris, and Kelly Lemmons. 2018. "Implicit Bias in Letters of Recommendation for an Undergraduate Research Internship." *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 42.5: 585-595. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0309877X.2017.1301410>.

Letters of recommendation are commonly used to assess the potential of undergraduate students to be successful undergraduate research assistants/interns or their potential as graduate students. However, there is evidence to suggest that reference letters can include unconscious (or implicit) bias that can affect decisions and limit opportunities for under-represented minorities and students from non-research institutions. This study uses a text analysis software program to examine 457 letters of recommendation for undergraduate students applying to undertake international research experience to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference in the language used to describe the students accepted into the programme (n = 36 letters) compared to those who were not accepted (n = 421 letters). Results suggest that letters of recommendation for the accepted students describe the productivity of the students with greater certainty and include a greater number of quotes from student work. In comparison, the letters for those students who were not accepted into the programme include more positive emotion and describe the insight of the student, but include more words associated with discrepancy and tentative statements. Despite no statistically significant differences in grade point averages, a similar pattern was observed between male and female applicants, white and non-white applicants, and applicants from research and non-research institutions. Results suggest a need to standardise letters of recommendation to ensure that the biases are minimised and do not present a barrier to increasing diversity in undergraduate research.

Madera, Juan M., Michelle R. Hebl, and Randi C. Martin. 2009. "Gender and Letters of Recommendation for Academia: Agentic and Communal Differences." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 94.6: 1591–1599. Available: <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016539>.

Abstract: In 2 studies that draw from the social role theory of sex differences (A. H. Eagly, W. Wood, & A. B. Diekmann, 2000), the authors investigated differences in agentic and communal characteristics in letters of recommendation for men and women for academic positions and whether such differences influenced selection decisions in academia. The results supported the hypotheses, indicating (a) that women were described as more communal and less agentic than men (Study 1) and (b) that communal characteristics have a negative relationship with hiring decisions in academia that are based on letters of recommendation (Study 2). Such results are particularly important because letters of recommendation continue to be heavily weighted and commonly used selection tools (R. D. Arvey & T. E. Campion, 1982; R. M. Guion, 1998), particularly in academia (E. P. Sheehan, T. M. McDevitt, & H. C. Ross, 1998). (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2017 APA, all rights reserved)

Trix, Frances, and Carolyn Psenka. 2003. "Exploring the Color of Glass: Letters of Recommendation for Female and Male Medical Faculty." *Discourse & Society*, 14.2 (March): 191-220. Available: <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0957926503014002277>.

Abstract: This study examines over 300 letters of recommendation for medical faculty at a large American medical school in the mid-1990s, using methods from corpus and discourse analysis, with the

theoretical perspective of gender schema from cognitive psychology. Letters written for female applicants were found to differ systematically from those written for male applicants in the extremes of length, in the percentages lacking in basic features, in the percentages with doubt raisers (an extended category of negative language, often associated with apparent commendation), and in frequency of mention of status terms. Further, the most common semantically grouped possessive phrases referring to female and male applicants ('her teaching,' 'his research') reinforce gender schema that tend to portray women as teachers and students, and men as researchers and professionals.