

Common Shortcuts

Adapted from Joann Moody, [Rising Above Cognitive Errors: Guidelines to Improve Faculty Searches, Evaluations and Decision-Making, 2007.](#)

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

Facilitation Notes: All shortcuts described below should be discussed in the full 90-minute session. If facilitating an abbreviated 40-minute session, some shortcuts may be omitted (as noted below).

CLONING

Replicating oneself by hiring someone with similar attributes or background. Also refers to undervaluing a candidate's research because it is not familiar, as well as expecting candidates to resemble someone whom the search committee is replacing. Cloning limits the scope and breadth of approaches and perspectives in research, teaching and service.

SNAP JUDGMENTS

Making judgments about the candidate with insufficient evidence. Dismissing a candidate for minor reasons or labeling a candidate "the best" and ignoring positive attributes of the other candidates. Having a covert agenda furthered by stressing something trivial or focusing on a few negatives rather than the overall qualifications. Often occurs when the hiring process feels rushed.

GOOD FIT/BAD FIT

While it may be about whether the person can meet the programmatic needs for the position, it often is about how comfortable and culturally at ease one feels.

NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES

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

POSITIVE STEREOTYPES

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

ELITIST BEHAVIOR (also called "Raising-the-Bar")

(This shortcut can be omitted during abbreviated 40-minute session.)

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

WISHFUL THINKING

(This shortcut can be omitted during abbreviated 40-minute session.)

Insisting racism, sexism, and other forms of prejudice no longer exist.

INTERRUPTING BIAS in the faculty search process

EUPHEMIZED BIASs:

- Visionary: members of dominant groups are evaluated based on their potential whereas underrepresented groups are judged on their accomplishments and their track record only. For example: “He has vision” or “She lacks vision.”
- Star: Used when the speaker is an infatuated fan of the candidate under consideration. When you hear it, ask the speaker to explain their use of the term and support it with evidence. For example: “She’s not a star” or “It’s clear he’s a rock star.”
- Committed, single-minded focus or hard worker: These terms could be cloaking a bias against caregivers, those faculty members who cannot depend on what Williams (2000) calls a “flow of family work” which allows ideal workers to log long hours in the office while still having their material needs met.