

# SEG Women's Network Committee announces Annual Meeting workshop on bullying, bias

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To help SEG members identify and prevent bullying and bias at work, the SEG Women's Network Committee (WNC) has organized a postconvention workshop at the 2016 SEG Annual Meeting. The workshop, "W-7: Workplace navigating: How to recognize and avoid bias and bullying," features Sheryl Skaggs, professor of sociology in the School of Economic, Political, and Policy Sciences (EPPS) at the University of Texas at Dallas, as the facilitator and guest speaker. The WNC encourages both men and women to attend the session from 1:30 to 5 p.m. Thursday, 20 October 2016, at the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center in Dallas, Texas.

To encourage openness and sharing of information, the workshop will be conducted in accordance with the Chatham House Rule, which means participants may use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed without explicit permission from the speaker. All participants will be reminded of this by the facilitator and by signs on the doors of the event room.

We hope that people of both genders will participate in this postconference workshop. While gender continues to be a source of problems at work for a significant fraction of SEG members, we want to identify and develop methods for dealing with all types of bullying and bias, be it gender-neutral, gender-specific, or related to ethnicity or religion. The goal of this workshop is to provide participants with practical tactics for dealing with bias and bullying while minimizing the possibility of retaliation.

Bullying occurs when a person attempts to use superior influence or strength to intimidate, force, or threaten someone else into doing something. Incidents of bullying in the workplace tend to increase when people feel that they must keep

their job and therefore are willing to endure an unpleasant work environment. When a person can easily switch jobs to get away from unpleasant supervisors or coworkers, they tend to do so, limiting the amount of bullying they are willing to endure. With the huge drop in oil prices and large staff reductions in the petroleum industry, many people are now vulnerable to bullying.

In addition to being vulnerable to bullying because of the current economic situation, many people belong to a gender, religious, or ethnic group that is underrepresented in their workplace. These minorities may be disadvantaged and subject to harassment because of bias. Bias is an unfair inclination or prejudice against a person or group of people. It can be difficult to determine if the unpleasant behavior is a result of bullying or bias; in many cases, it may be a combination of both.

The SEG WNC conducted a survey to gauge the extent of bias and bullying incidents that SEG members have experienced during their professional careers. Of the 16,682 SEG members who were sent the survey, 413 (2.5%) completed it. Responses were received from 38 countries; the country of residence was not available for 63% of respondents.

SEG does not have good statistics on the percentage of the student plus professional membership who are female, but indications are that it is no more than 25%. Thus, it was surprising that 46.5% of survey responses were from women, and 52.9% were from men (Figure 1). Problems associated with bias were reported by 32% of women and 11.5% of men (Figure 2). Men did not usually report the specific nature of bias they experienced. In contrast, 64% of the women who reported bias explicitly described gender bias in their comments.

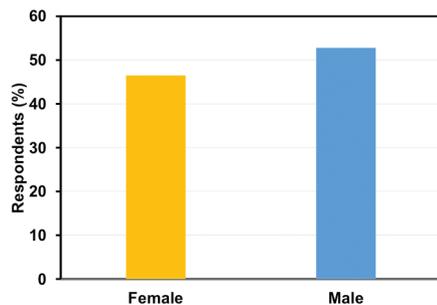


Figure 1. Response to survey on bias and bullying by gender.

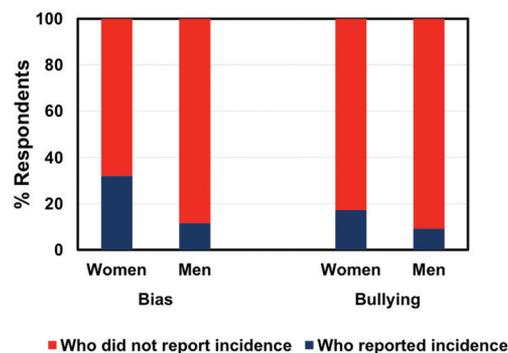


Figure 2. Response to incidence of bias and bullying by gender.

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Below are quotes from some of the women's comments.

- "I am frequently talked over, or my opinion is not consulted, with people asking male colleagues with less expertise on a topic for their thoughts instead."
- "Somehow my ideas become (other people's) ideas, and I don't receive the deserved recognition. Most of the time, white males are heard and given the exposure independently of their talent."
- "A normal occurrence is that when I make a comment in a meeting it is ignored; 10 minutes later, a male makes the exact same comment, and it is applauded for being such a great idea. This happens often, and more junior staff who do not hold the same bias as senior staff have commented to me ..."

A fewer number of men commented on similar issues. Below are some of their comments.

- "My opinions are squeezed out because others are more forceful in group discussions. My personal experience is related more to culture than gender (we're both of the same gender, but different culture). Speaking over others is acceptable in some cultures but unacceptable in mine. This is a common source of conflict."
- "Many technical personnel take credit for other's work and deceitfully discredit the contributions of others."

Seventeen percent of women and 9% of men responding to the survey reported that they had experienced bullying (Figure 2). In their comments, about half of the women revealed the gender of the people who bullied them. Of the 18 women who mentioned the gender of the bully, only one (5.6%) spoke of a female bully. In contrast, 25% of the men who reported being bullied mentioned the gender of the people who harassed them. When men mentioned the gender of the person bullying them, 60% identified the bully as a woman.

The short survey was meant to capture a quick assessment of the percentage of SEG members who have experienced bullying and bias. We encourage all members to participate in the postconvention workshop. Tickets for this workshop can be purchased online or at main registration only. For more information or to purchase a ticket, visit <http://seg.org/Events/Annual-Meeting/Education/Post-Convention-Workshops>. **ITE**

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