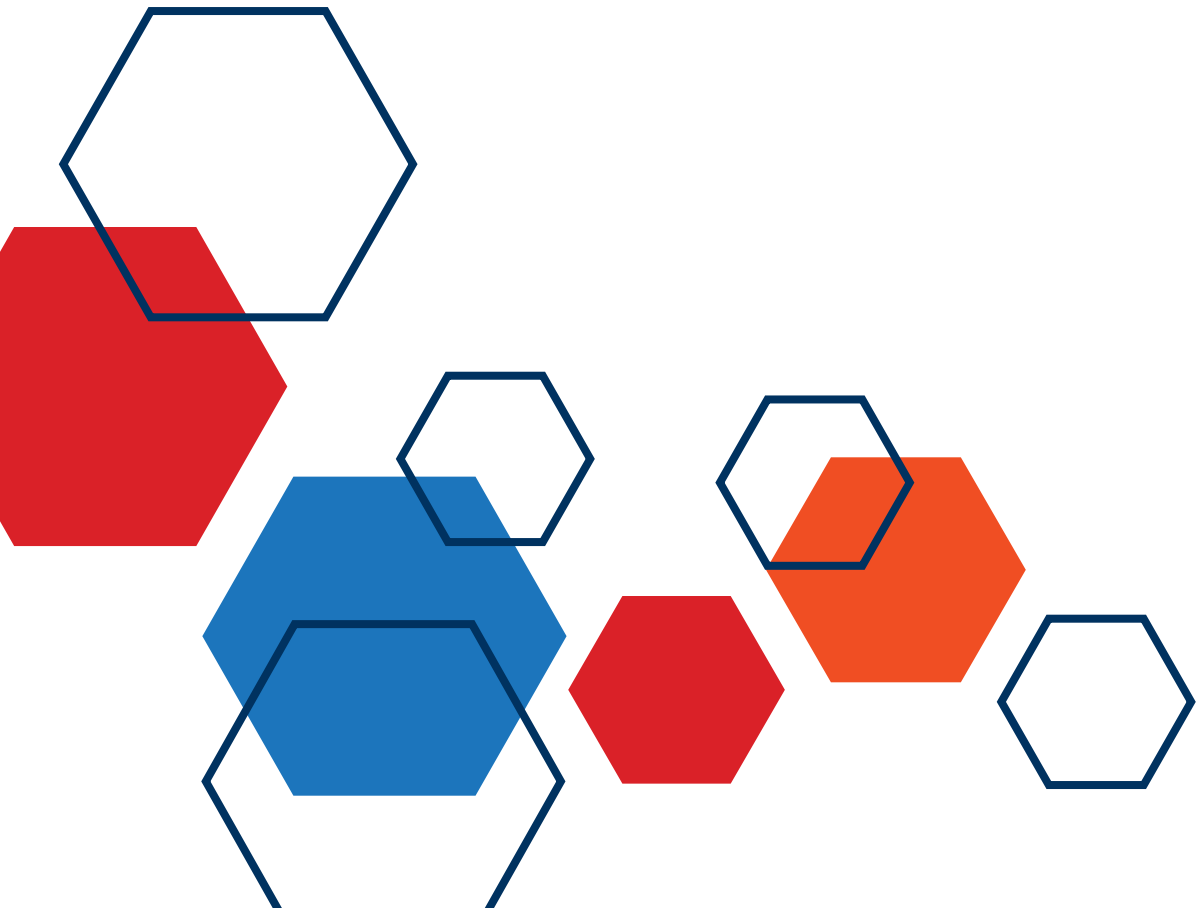
PBC HOGAN

Whitepaper

Unconscious Rater Bias

How your gender can influence how you rate others and how you are rated



Executive Summary

- Unconscious bias occurs when stereotypes we hold about groups influence how we perceive them.
- Bias in surveys that draw upon multiple rater perspectives has also been debated in the organisational psychology literature as it impacts upon the fairness of using such assessment tools to review worker performance.
- In this paper, access to a global Hogan 360° survey dataset that included gender related information about both ratees and raters enabled investigation of the impacts of unconscious bias upon the ratings assigned to different groups.
- Findings supported a very strong in-group bias for females, whereby women tended to rate women more highly on numerous leadership competencies compared to lower ratings they assigned to men.
- There was also some support for gender stereotyping in relation to the key development opportunities identified for men and women as perceived by men and women.
- These findings have implications for implementation of 360° surveys, feedback and interpretation of results, and more broadly for tailored training and development programs.

Background

Bias can lead to discriminatory behaviour, prejudicial attitudes and stereotyping (Mackie & Smith 1998; Wilder & Simon, 2001). In all these cases, bias involves an interpretative judgement that yields a rating that is unfair, illegitimate, or unjustifiable, in the sense that it goes beyond the objective evidence of the situation (Brewer & Brown, 1998; Turner & Reynolds, 2001). Specific types of bias exist that affect the validity of 360° degree assessments. For example, the halo/horn error occurs when an individual is rated as good or poor based on subjective qualities (eg. appearance, popularity), rather than on actual behaviours observed (Yukl & Lepsinger, 1995). Recency effects can occur when raters give too much weight to behaviours observed a few months prior to the assessment rather than examining behaviours for the entire year. This bias occurs more often in organisations that do not prioritise regular performance or developmental assessments (McGarvey & Smith, 1993).

Most relevant to this research, is in-group bias which refers to the tendency to evaluate one's own group and its members more favourably than another group – the "out-group" – and its members (Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002). In-group bias is thought to stem from the tendency of people to seek other people who are similar to themselves and be comfortable with others they perceive as members of their own in-group (Fiske, 2002). Forms of in-group bias include stereotyping, discriminating, excluding or threatening out-group members (Hewstone & Cairns, 2001; Fiske, 2002).

Although in-group biases can be very public, they often are implicit (Hewstone, et al, 2002). Implicit bias operates without an individual's conscious awareness and can unintentionally influence judgements and behaviours towards members of out-groups in detrimental ways (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). In general, individuals who belong to the most socially valued groups have frequently been found to strongly and unconsciously favour their own group (Nosek, Banaji, & Greenwald, 2002; Rudman, Greenwald, & McGhee, 2001; Jost, Pelham, & Carvallo, 2002).

Gender Bias

In contrast to these findings, men are less likely than women to have an in-group bias (Nosek & Banaji, 2001; Richeson & Ambady, 2001; Rudman & Goodwin, 2004). Rudman and Goodwin (2004) measured gender preferences without directly asking the participants. Men and women participated in computerised tasks that measured automatic attitudes based on how quickly they categorised pleasant and unpleasant attributes associated with each gender. Both women and men had a more favourable view of women, however women's in-group bias was remarkably stronger than men. In other research, women were found to strongly prefer other women in rating exercises, while men did not show a significant preference for either gender (Nosek & Banaji, 2002; Richeson & Ambady, 2001).

Duehr and Bono (2006) obtained similar asymmetric gender bias ratings of management characteristics. Specifically, male managers rated men and women similarly with respect to management characteristics. In contrast, female managers showed an in-group bias. Female managers viewed women as more similar to successful managers than men.

This Research

Much research has focused on factors affecting self-other agreement, claiming that discrepancies can be explained by individual characteristics such as rater gender, race and age, as well as contextual factors such as rater-ratee similarity (Ostroff, et al, 2004). However this research is one of the first studies to examine the impact of the ratee's gender in addition to the same characteristics of the rater, on 360° survey results using a global sample.

The Hogan 360

Ratees in this study participated in a multi-rater feedback process using the Hogan 360°. The Hogan 360° is an online multi-rater assessment tool that gathers leadership feedback from a variety of key stakeholder groups. The tool is supported by research that demonstrates its reliability and validity (Peter Berry Consultancy, 2015). As shown in Figure 1 below, the tool covers four key domains.

Figure 1: The Hogan 360° Leadership Model

Each of the four Hogan 360° leadership model domains are defined below, each containing two to four competencies.

- **Self-Management:** being self-aware, self-regulating and able to manage stress; being transparent and authentic. Competencies include Integrity and Resilience.
- **Relationship Management:** achieving better results through better relationships. Competencies include Communication, People Skills, Team Player and Customer.
- **Working in the Business:** having the experience, ability and momentum to consistently deliver great results. Competencies include Capability, Efficiency, Results and Engaging.
- **Working on the Business:** adding extra value through innovation and strategic planning, and building motivated, accountable teams. Competencies include Accountability, Motivation, Strategy and Innovation.

Ratees received item ratings from 1 to 7 from raters classified as either Managers, Peers, Reports or Others. Ratees also rated themselves. Raters also selected the top strengths and opportunities of the person from a list of pre-determined characteristics.

Research Findings

There were significant differences between how men and women rated others depending on the ratee's gender across all four leadership domains. Specifically, analysis of Hogan 360° domain data found that:

- Women and men rated women more positively on all 4 domains
- Women rated women significantly more positively than:
  - women rated men
  - men rated men
- Men rated women more positively than
  - women rated men
  - men rated me

Figure 2 presents the data that support these findings.

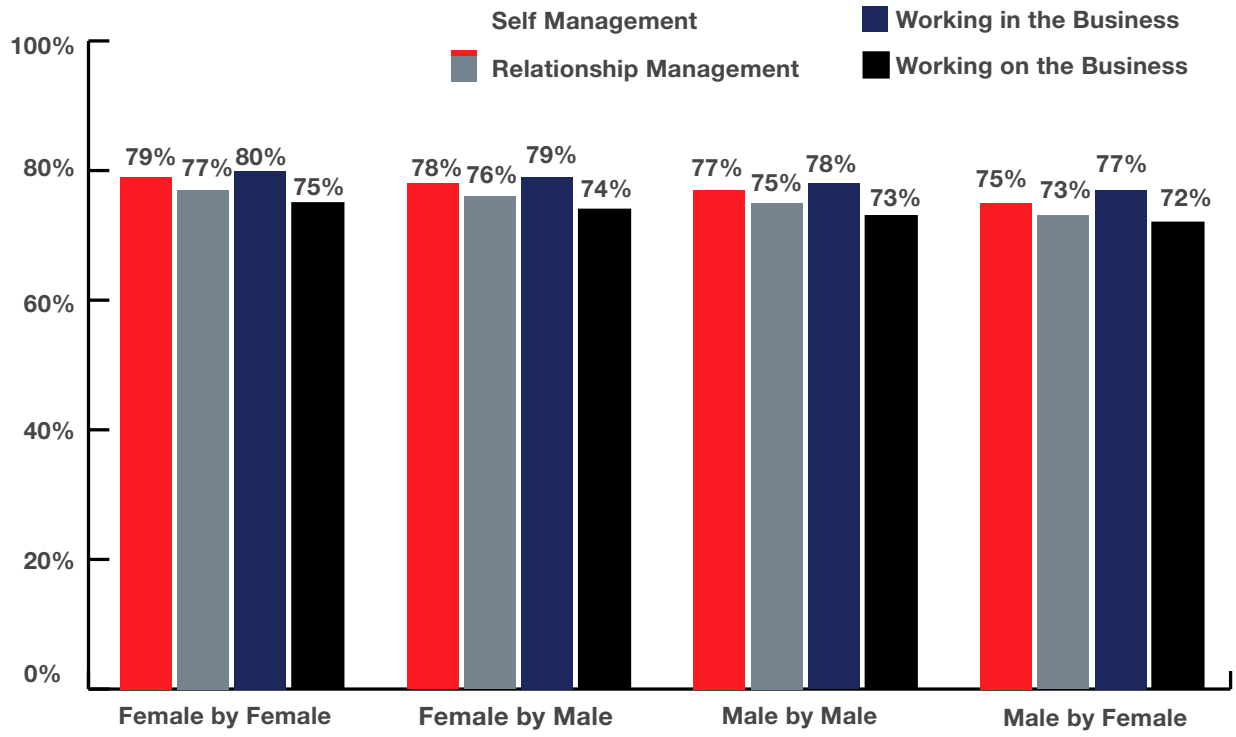


Figure 2: Percentage Ratings by Hogan 360° domain as rated by men and women

In relation to specific Hogan 360 competencies:

- Men rated women more positively than women rated men on all competencies except Resilience and Capability
- Women rated women more positively than men rated women on only one competency, Innovation

Analysis of the strengths and opportunities ranked options showed that:

Both men and women seen as having:

- A strong work ethic and working hard
- Solid technical ability, experience and knowledge
- A professional approach
- High ethical standards and integrity

Women seen as more:

- Organised
- Empathic
- Supportive

Men seen as more:

- Steady and calm under pressure
- Innovative
- Visionary and strategic

Both men and women need to:

- Stop taking on too much and spreading selves too thin
- Challenge poor performance
- Delegate more
- Show leadership on issues

Women seen as more:

- Listen more and let others have their say
- Look at the big picture

Men seen as more:

- Communicate better
- Improve their time management and organisational skills
- Improve their people and interpersonal skills

Combining rater and ratee genders, the following notable differences were observed:

- Compared to the views of men, women felt that both men and women needed to be more available and visible in the workplace and share knowledge and resources more.
- Compared to the views of women, men felt that women needed to be more assertive, look at the big picture more and acquire better job and/or industry knowledge.

Implications

This research has provided some strong evidence that gender can impact upon ratings given by raters in a multi-rater survey. Specifically, the gender of the rater and the person being rated can interact such that men and women rate men and women differently on particular behavioural characteristics. This study supported many earlier findings (Nosek & Banaji, 2001, 2002; Richeson & Ambady, 2001; Rudman & Goodwin, 2004) as a clear in-group bias was observed for women in our sample across most leadership behaviours as measured by the Hogan 360° multi-rater survey.

Implications arising from such findings based on a large global sample can be drawn at both the individual and organisational level. At the individual level, knowing that women may tend to rate other women more positively than they rate men, suggests that coaches/leaders may want to pay particular attention to this rating phenomenon when providing feedback to women versus men. Depending on how many women were in that person's group of raters, this may have over inflated her ratings if they were mostly women. This could be of particular interest should the person's key performance indicator results contradict their 360° survey results. Furthermore, if a man was rated mostly by women, his overall result may be less favourable than if he had been rated by men. This could have significant career implications for promotional practices that include 360° results in the decision making process.

At the organisational level, development actions could include developing more strategic thinking capacity in both men and women with regard to the looking more at the big picture and the organisation's overall goals. Both men and women also needed to improve their visibility in the workplace and share resources more. The results suggest that all participants in the sample were taking on too much work, not challenging poor performance, not delegating enough and not showing leadership on issues – all leadership skills that can be addressed through training, coaching and mentoring. Women may complete more development activity around innovation, while men may need to prioritise improving their time management skills. This could potentially have implications for survey design. Specifically, ensuring that there is an even spread of all leadership behaviours measured by the items would be important. For example, too many items tapping into process and operational planning may benefit women, while too many items measuring strategic and innovative thinking may benefit men.

From an implementation perspective, the findings from this research suggest that administrators of such surveys should try to attain a balance of men and women raters wherever possible. However, the priority is to have 10 to 15 raters who can comment on the behaviours being assessed with familiarity and can support their ratings if challenged. If the person has a large number of possible raters who are very familiar with their work, then there may be an opportunity to balance the gender of those raters.

While this research may suggest that there is some type of unconscious gender bias occurring in multi-rater surveys, it may be that women are actually better at demonstrating the required leadership behaviours than men. The only way to conclude that women are actually better performers than men would be to look at their performance data. As a 360° is about reputation at a point in time as viewed by a specific group of raters, we can not conclude that women are better performers – we can only conclude that they appear to be behaving to a high standard in relation to the behaviours sought by the assessing organisation. Future research would aim to correlate actual hard data such as job key performance indicators and 360° ratings to determine how tightly aligned their 360° ratings are with tangible outcomes. However, users must always remember that 360° results should not be used for performance reviews, but rather as an ongoing development tool.

This study is part of a broader collection of White Papers that have been developed using the Hogan 360° in 2016. The other titles are "Bench strength of the leadership pipeline: Exploring the 360° competencies that emerge at different leader levels" and "Ratee personality and multi-rater feedback: How does the personality of ratees relate to their multi-rater feedback outcomes?"

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About Peter Berry Consultancy (PBC)

PBC is a multidisciplinary global consulting firm with 30 years' experience in the delivery of solutions aimed at maximising the potential of individuals, teams, leaders and organisations. We undertake research to support our evidence-based solutions and have a network of partners and distributors globally.

PBC is the Australian and New Zealand distributor of Hogan Assessments and the authors of a range of diagnostics including the Hogan 360 suite, Agile suite, High Performing Team Assessment (HPTA), and co-authored the Hogan Safety Climate Survey.

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