



Overcoming Impostor Syndrome

Creating Inclusive Environments for Women

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Agenda

- ◆ Who I am
- ◆ What Impostor Syndrome is
- ◆ Why it tends to affect diverse groups more
- ◆ How to apply data to create a more inclusive environment

Jess Loeb

programmer level: beast mode



How I came to be in this industry

I decided to major in computer science pretty much the same day that I found out that making video games was actually a real thing that people do.



Why "Overcoming" vs "Overcame"

"Promise me you'll always remember:
You're braver than you
believe, and stronger
than you seem, and
smarter than you think."



Jess Loeb

Software Architect (Client Platform) | Advocacy Enthusiast

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I'm an engineer, who happens to be female, who happens to be in games.

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11 Comments



What is Impostor Syndrome?

- “Despite evidence of your accomplishments, you continually discount your success, thinking instead you must be fooling everyone”
- Individuals marked by an inability to internalize their accomplishments and a persistent fear of being found out as a fraud.

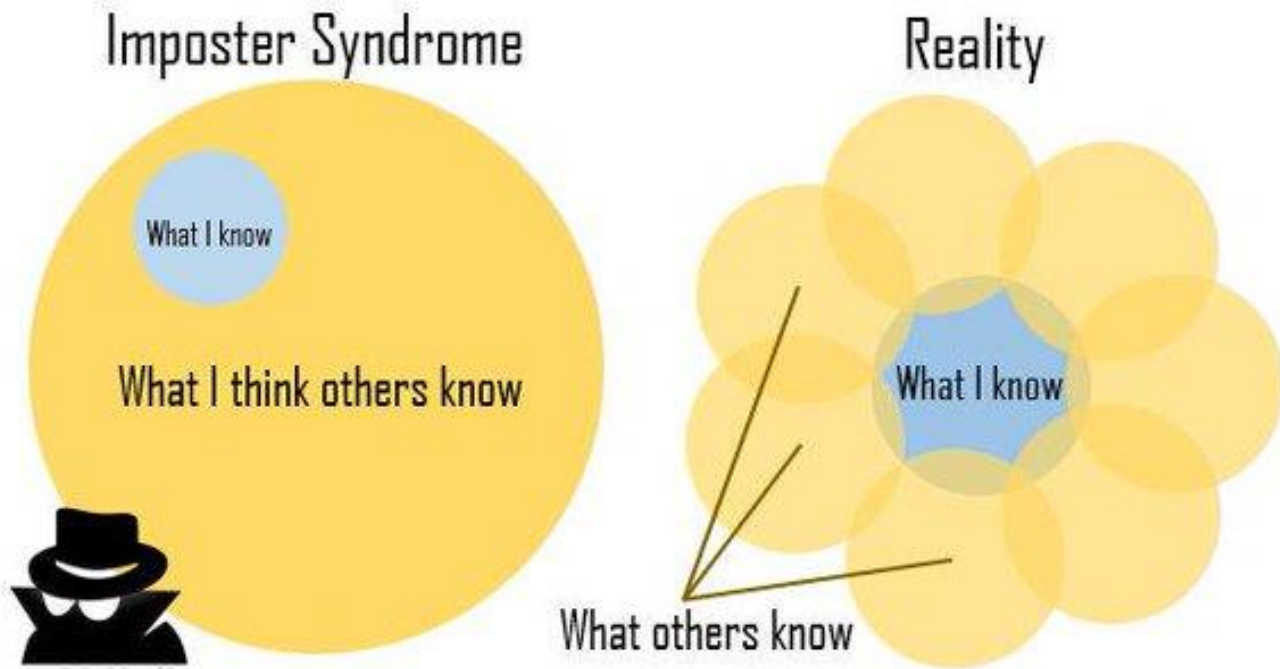
A word cloud featuring various English phrases. The word "just" is the largest and most central. Other prominent words include "wouldn't", "Nobody", "even", "really", "lucky", "weren't", "help", "Anyone could", "if", "be", "for", "got", "it else", "trying", "here", "done", "had", "what", and "have". The words are arranged in a circular pattern around the central word "just".

The "on paper" disconnect



"It's perfectly okay to occasionally feel like a fraud when it comes to your career. I'm just not sure you need to say that on your resume."

Acknowledging our impostors



Assume the best in people (especially yourself)



Why the symptoms affect underrepresented groups the most

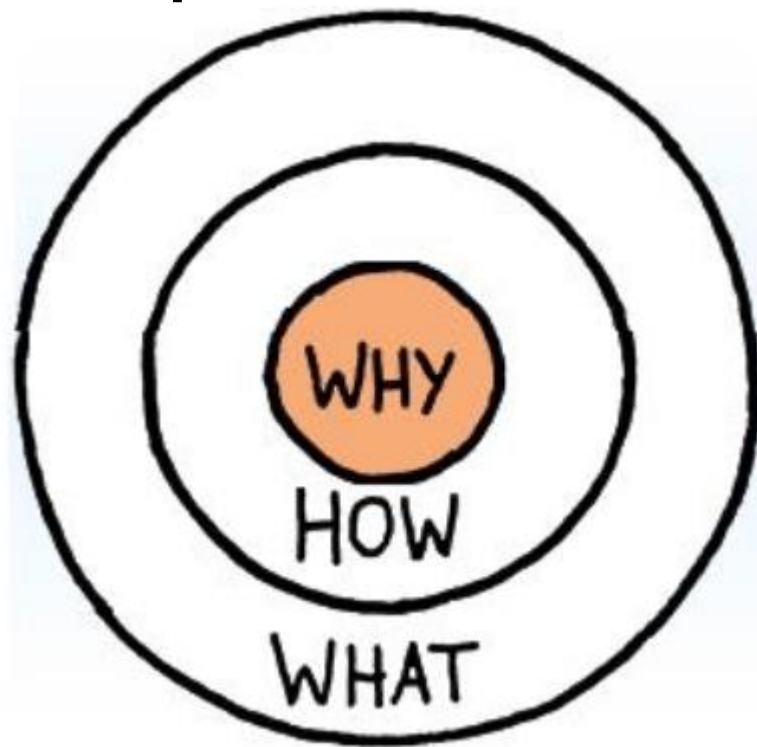
Moving forward with impostors

Asking the right questions

- What are we going to do about it?
- How do we fix it?
- Why do we care?

Does anyone care about “why” still?

- Why change the status quo is different when you are affected by it.
- How you developed it
- What are the “action items” to move forward?



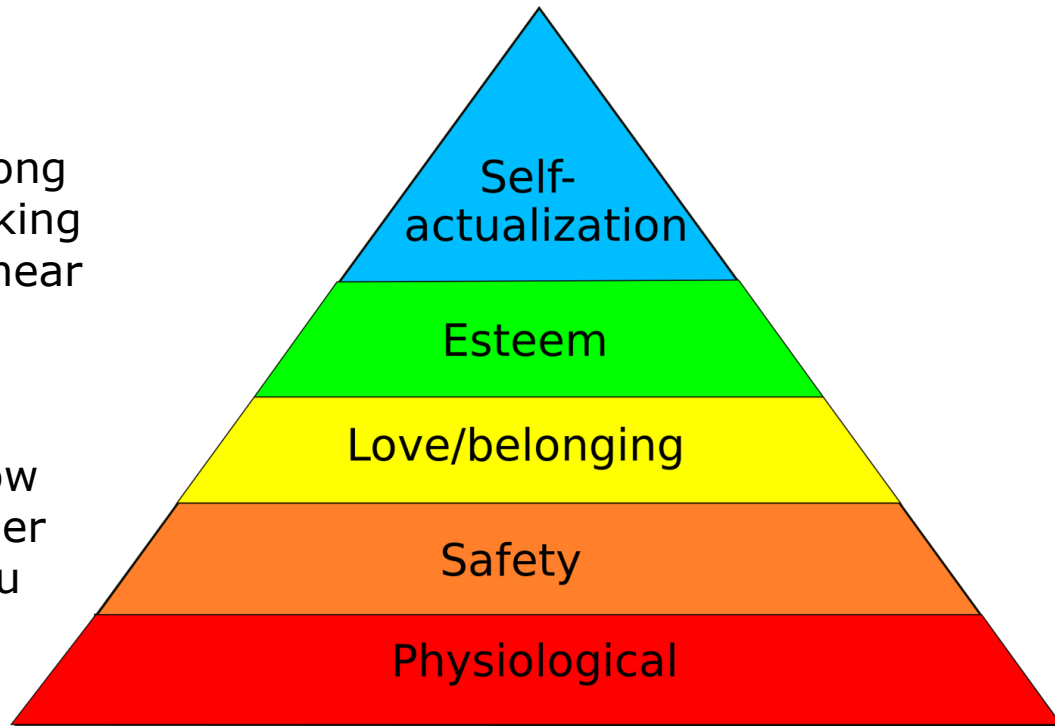
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Psych 101)

We work to fulfill our needs

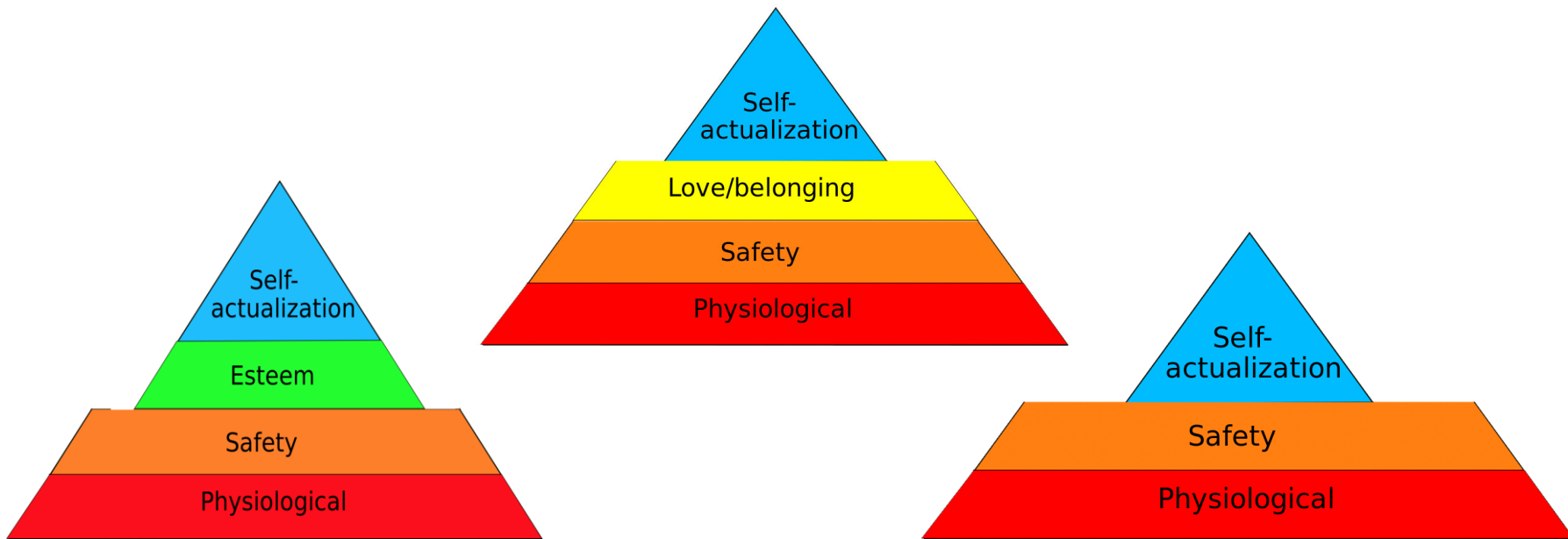
impostor syndrome makes it incredibly difficult to build out strong middle layers of the pyramid, making it much more difficult to achieve near the top.

For women and minorities

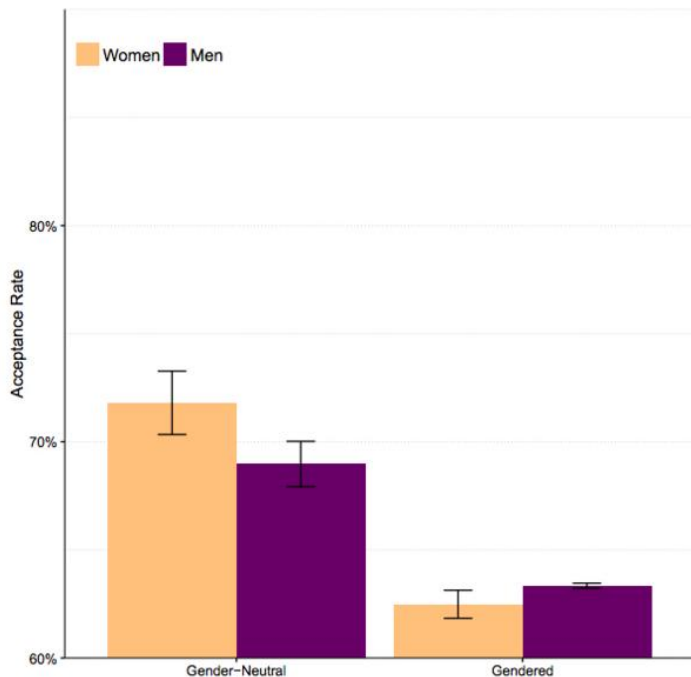
there's an extra blow to that yellow belonging layer when you're further isolated from the environment you wish to create esteem in.



The impostor's pyramid looks a little wonky

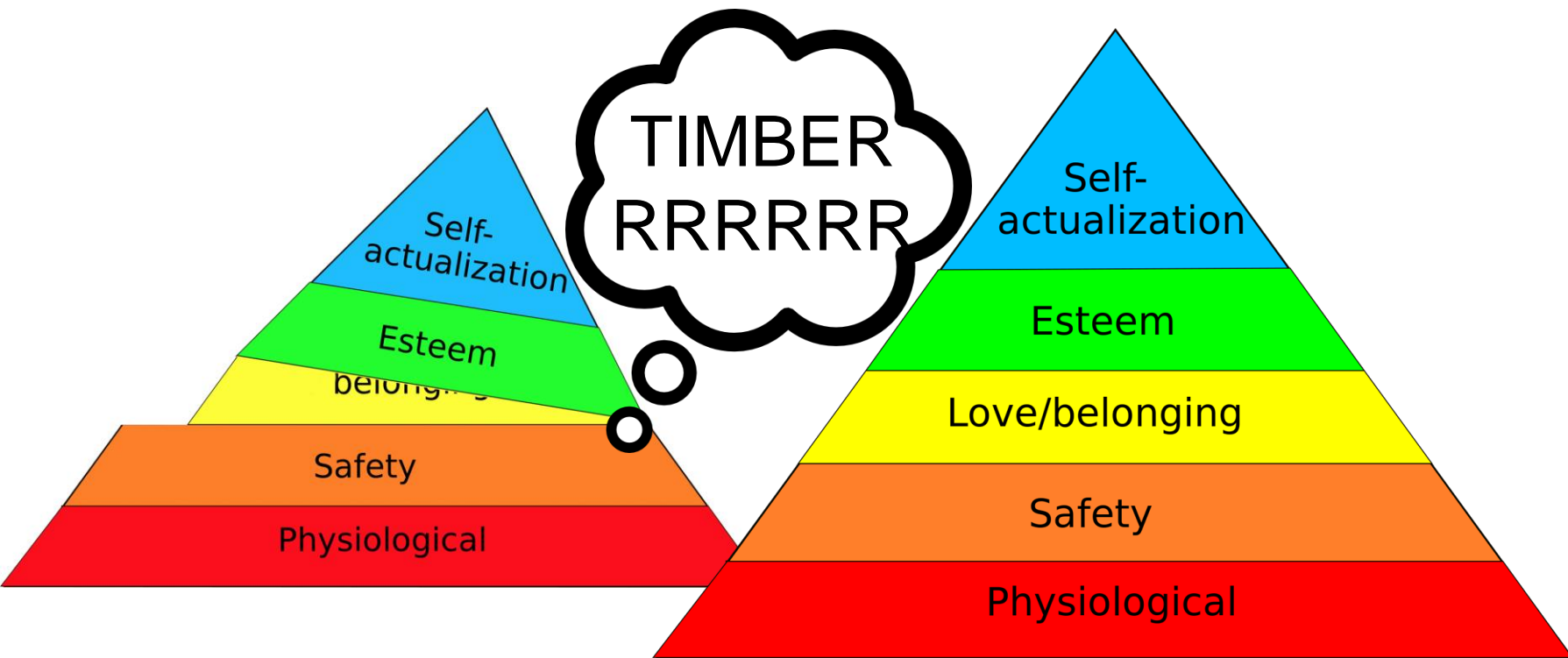


Data, to the rescue!

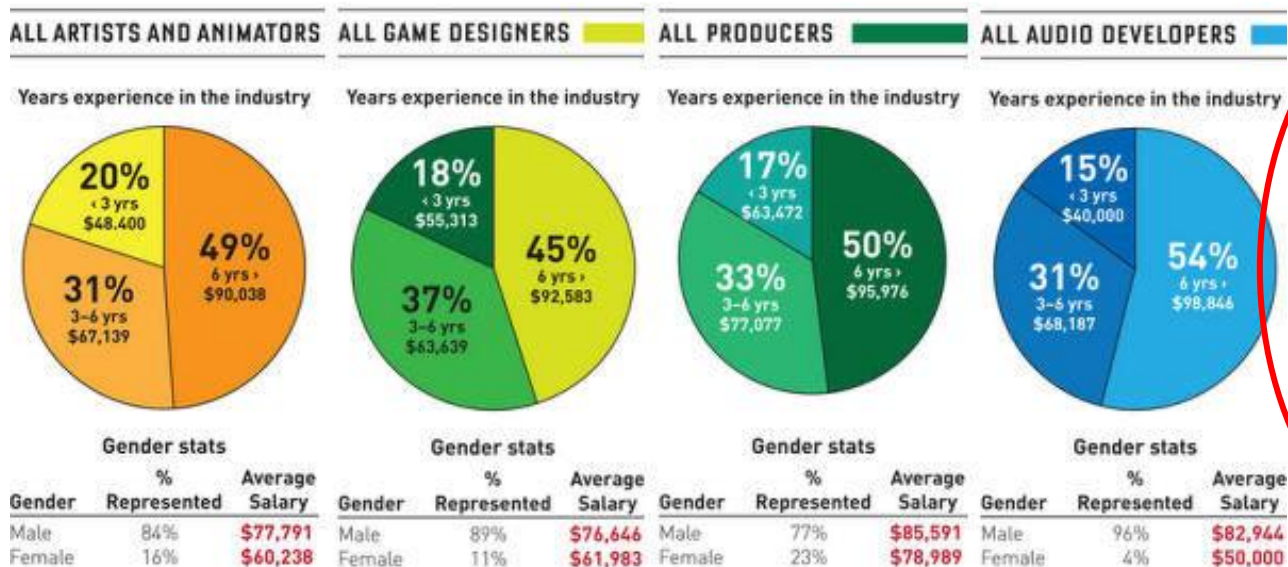


- When comparing acceptance rates of code contributions from anonymous contributors, women who used gender-neutral names had a higher outcome than men.
- When comparing contributions of gendered names, men had a higher acceptance rate.

Bearing the burden of a small sample size.



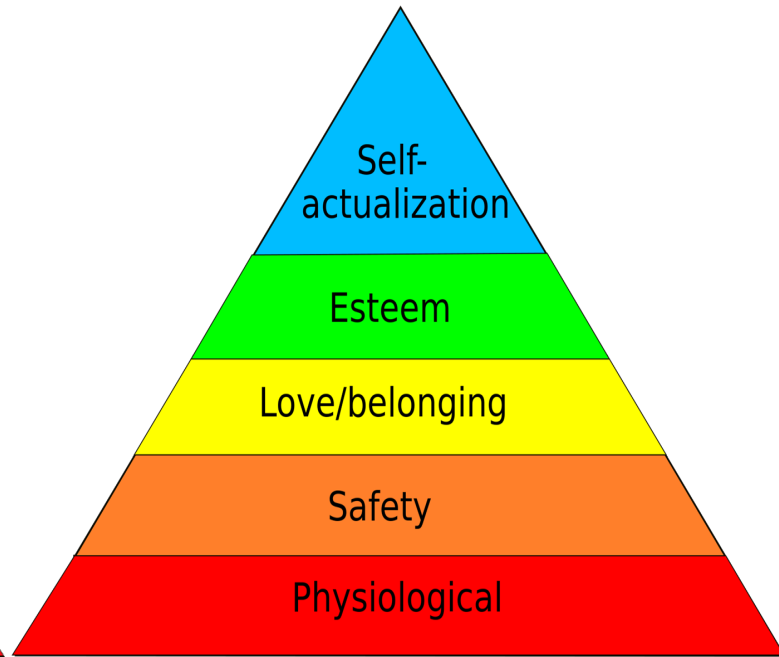
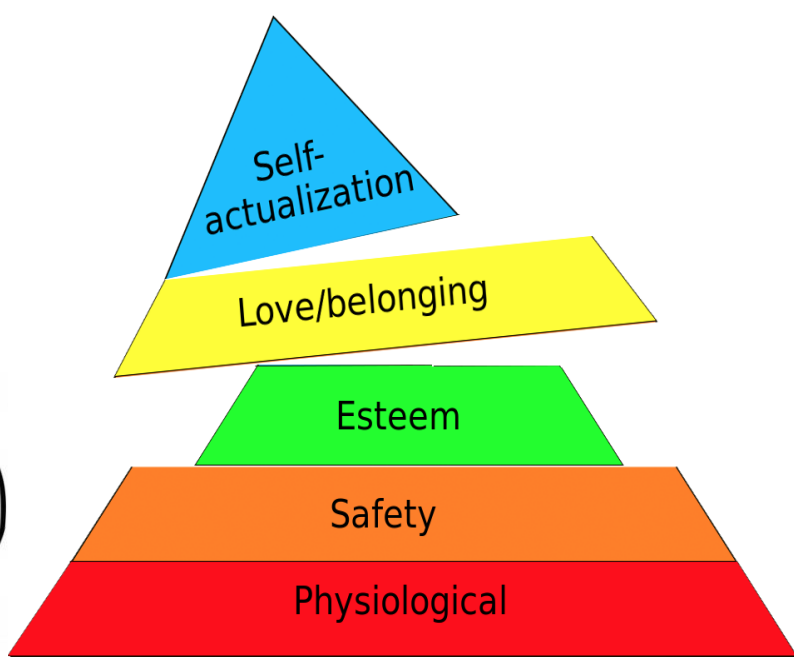
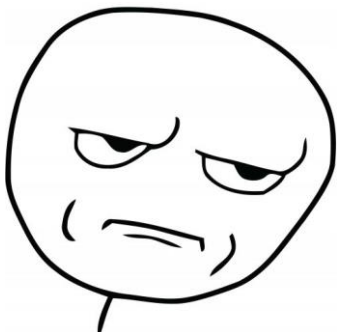
Even when you belong, you don't believe it.



Engineers?

?

Building on the “esteem” that comes first



Reinforcing the “prove your cred” culture

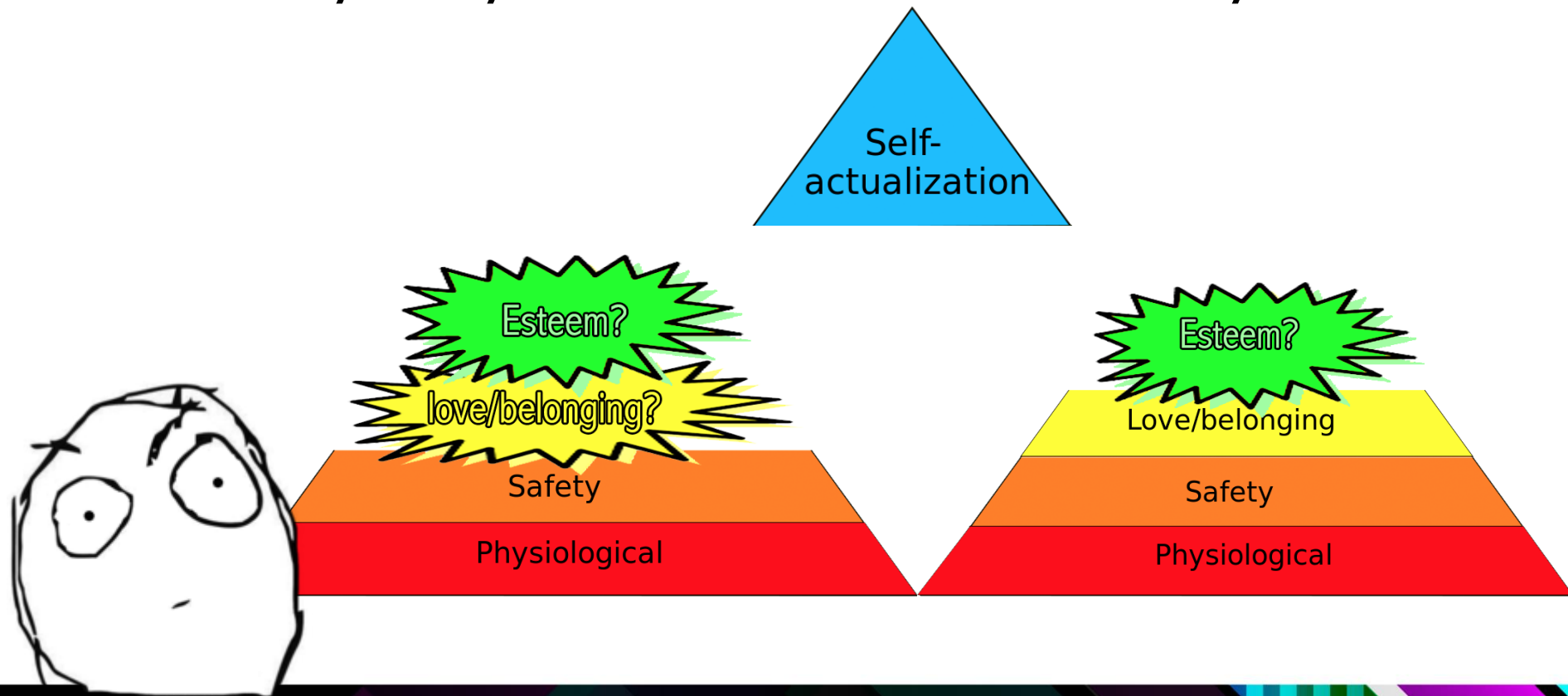
“The best thing you can do is excel, and to push through whatever boundaries you see in front of you. Just continue to push and be great. It will be twice as hard for you, but you can make a big difference in your company”

-Alan Eustace, Male Allies Panel

Grace Hopper 2014



But *everybody* has to fake it 'till they make it!



Passion isn't enough to beat the impostor

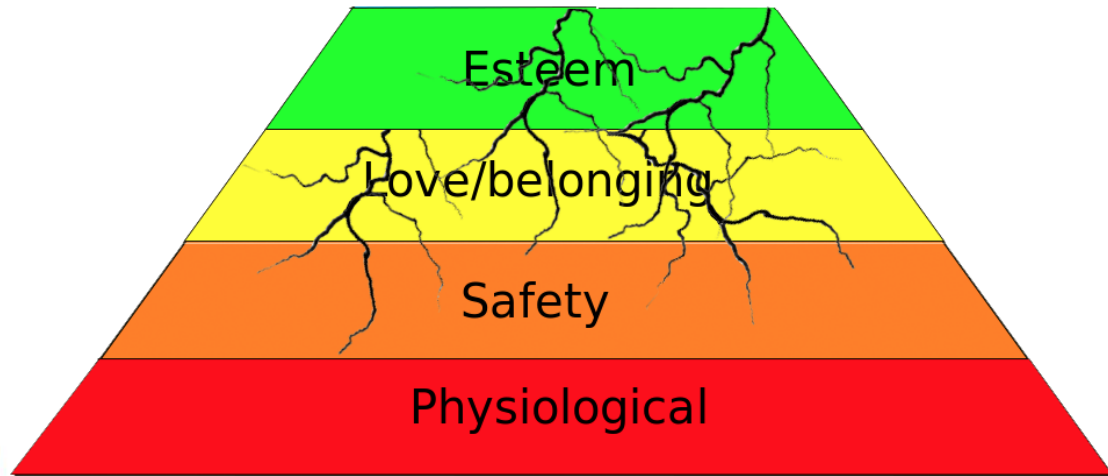
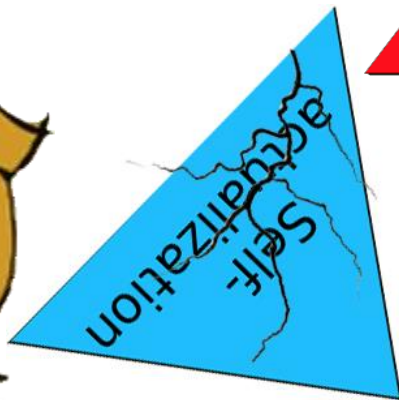
“When a guy has an idea, he gets really pumped up about it, really vocal about it. Back to that notion of speaking up, if you have an idea ... tell people your story and then execute it.”

-Blake Irving, Male Allies Panel

Grace Hopper 2014



Often, the system "wins"



Addressing these problems by
creating a more inclusive
environment

Facts and Opinions



Study:

- men vs women on a virtual jury
- Male sounding names used all caps to argue against the participant with 20% success rate in changing their view
- Female sounding names used the same exact text but with 0% success

Study:

- Virtual pitch to VC using voices only
- Men funded 68% of the time, vs women funded 31% of the time.
- Attractive men funded a very disproportionate amount.
- Male pitches were said to be more "analytical"

Keep bias from confusing fact and opinion

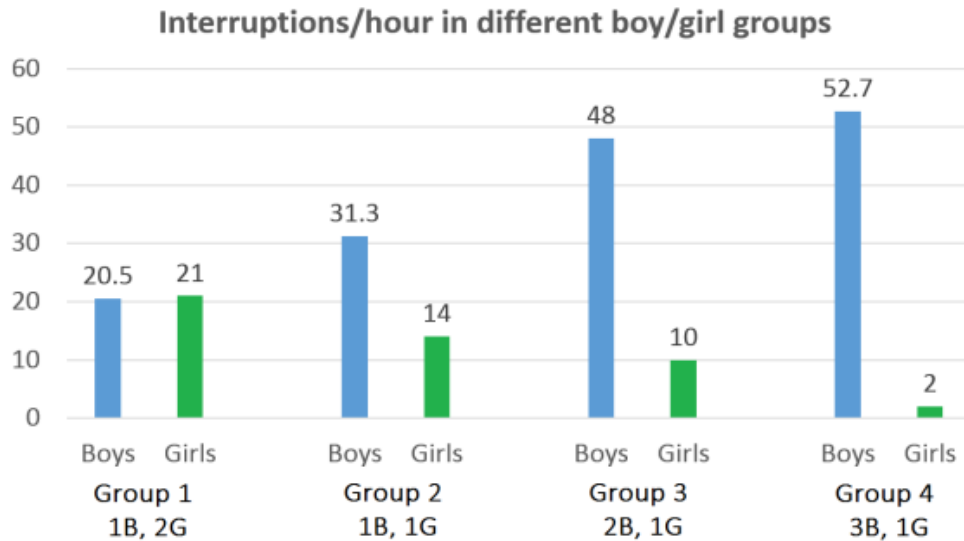
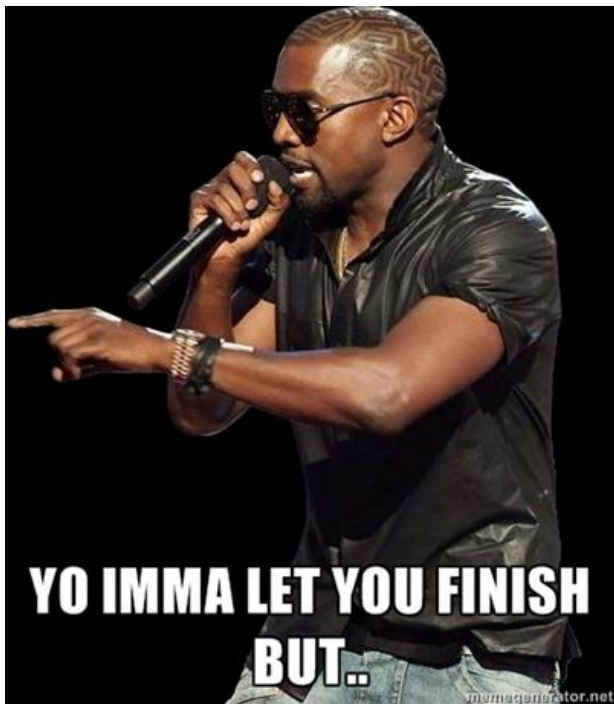
Proactive Tactics

1. Source data on facts when presenting them.
2. Identify opinions and cite the facts that they are based on
3. Allow people to digest data outside meeting formats (in their own voices)

Reactive Tactics

1. Redirect criticism towards ideas and processes when targeted at people
2. When fact and opinion are cited incorrectly, use phrases that indicate what it actually is.
3. Ask those who have been quiet for their opinions

Data: Males more likely to interrupt females



Collaborative credit loss feeds the impostors



How to make sure everyone's voice is heard

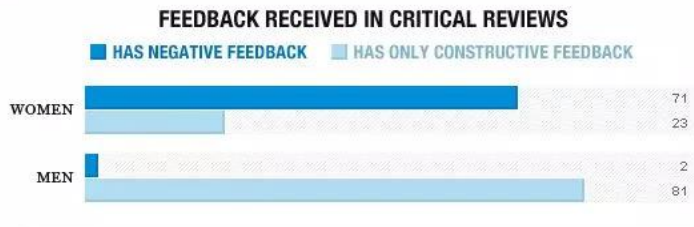
Proactive Tactics

1. Assign meeting moderators
2. Provide a brief but clear summary of the meeting goal
3. Indicate why people are invited to the meeting

Reactive Tactics

1. Discourage interruptions as they happen.
2. Identify ideas that are being built upon as they happen or get interrupted.
3. Interject opportunities for more opinions before moving on

Study: Language in performance reviews

**248**

REVIEWS

141 BY MEN / 107 BY WOMEN

FROM

180

PEOPLE

105 MEN / 75 WOMEN

FORTUNE.COM



How to talk across the double standard

Proactive Tactics

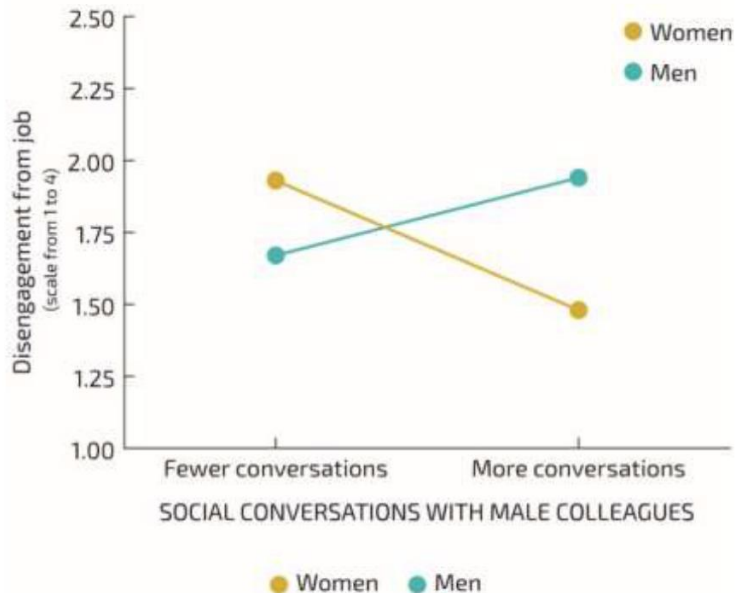
1. Evaluate performance review processes
2. Try to be constructive in **any** kind of feedback
3. Structure communication in a collaborative format
4. Learn body language cues

Reactive Tactics

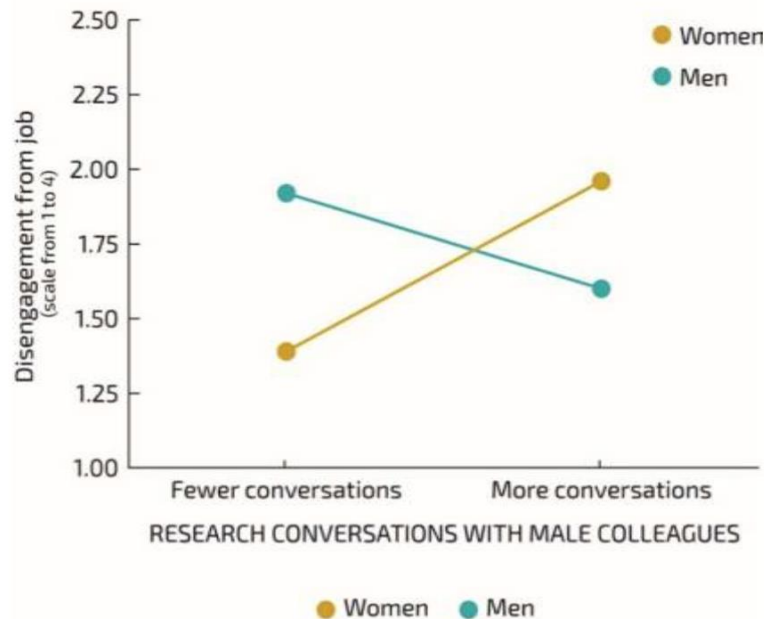
1. Clarify ambiguous or patronizing terminology
2. Take colleagues aside and discuss inclusiveness issues 1:1
3. If you or someone is being defensive, identify why
4. Hit the reset button when conversations aren't going well.

Shooting the Breeze vs Talking Shop

FIGURE 19. SOCIAL CONVERSATIONS WITH MALE COLLEAGUES AND LEVEL OF JOB DISENGAGEMENT, BY GENDER



MALE COLLEAGUES AND LEVEL OF JOB DISENGAGEMENT, BY GENDER



How to be a great ally to all impostors

Proactive Tactics

1. Look for small acts of inclusion
2. Go out of your way to give recognition to coworkers
3. Take an active interest in the culture of your workplace

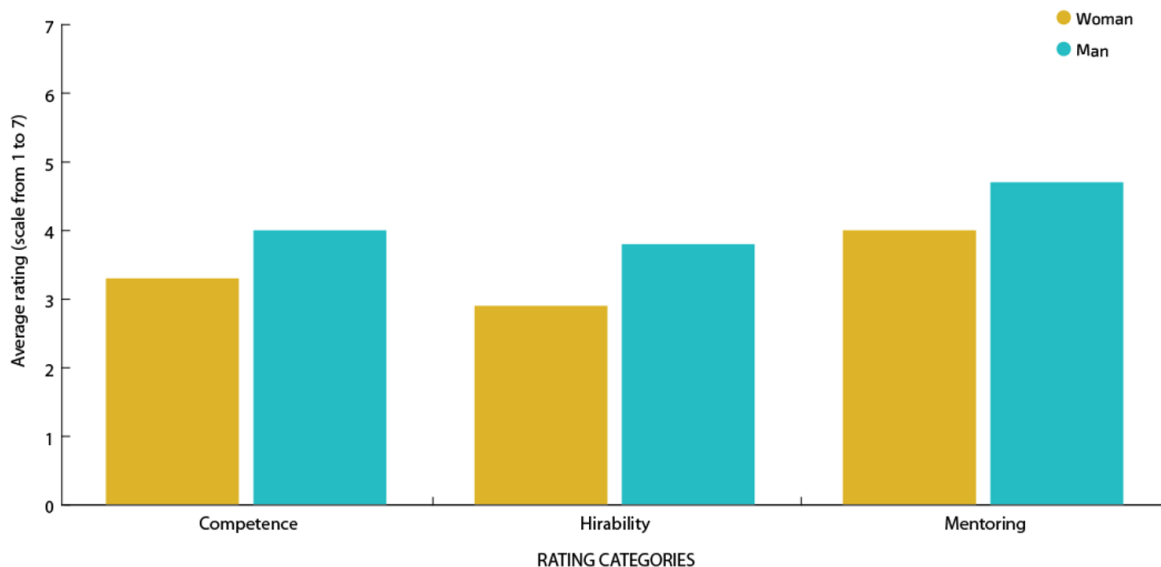
Reactive Tactics

1. Share credit for ideas with other contributors
2. Encourage/help when you see someone trying to speak up
3. Stand up for the minority if you see stereotypes being used

There is bias in the hiring pipeline

- Identical job applications with only a name change
- The candidates with female sounding names were perceived as less competent in every category.

FIGURE 14. FACULTY RATINGS OF LAB MANAGER APPLICANT, BY GENDER OF APPLICANT

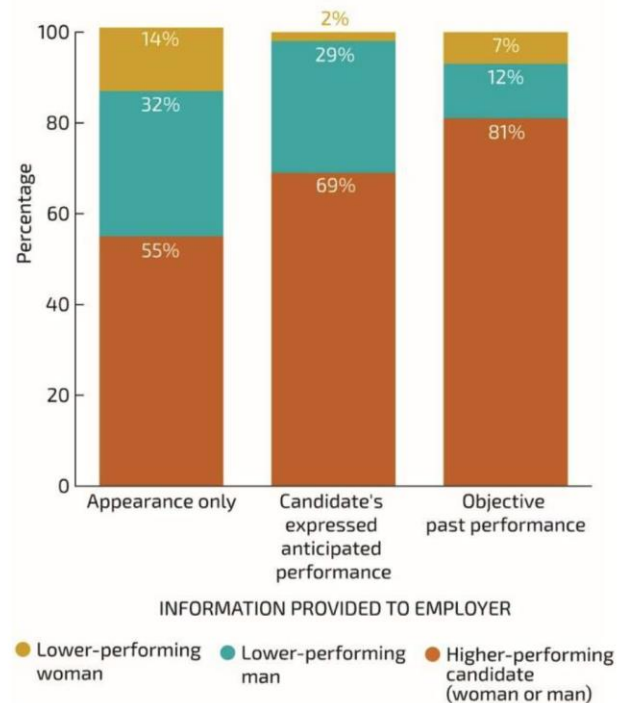


Source: Moss-Racusin, Dovidio et al. (2012a).

Hiring for potential vs “proof”

- Men are hired for potential
- Women are more likely to be hired if they can “prove” their track records
- Even with “proof” men are still hired at almost a double rate over the out-performing female candidate.

FIGURE 15. PROBABILITY OF SELECTING THE BEST CANDIDATE FOR A MATHEMATICAL TASK



How to help impostors through the pipeline

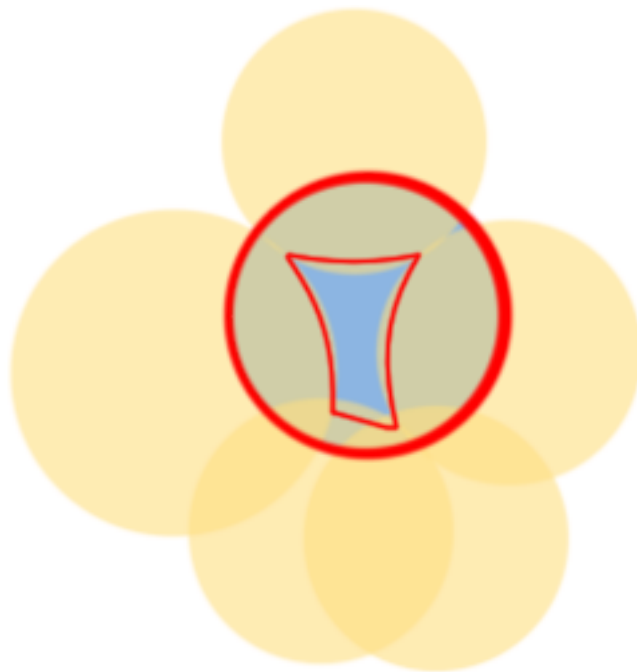
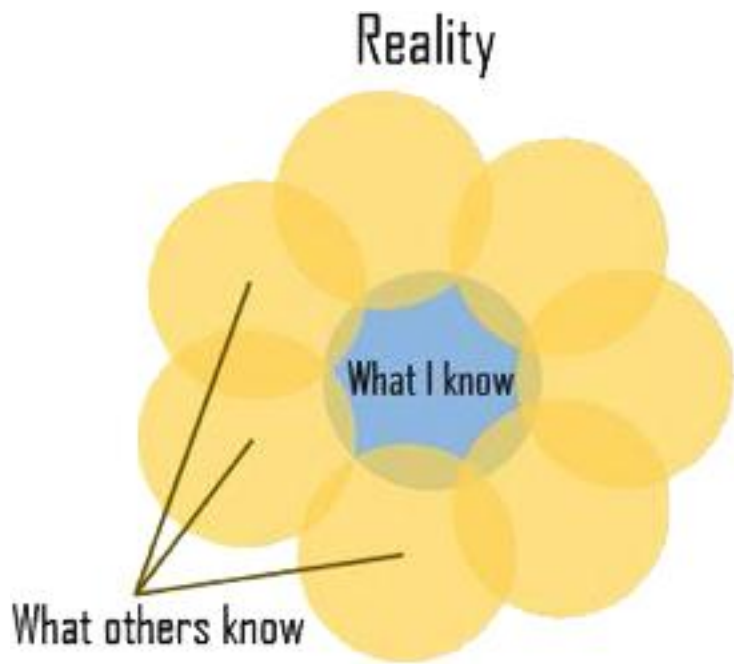
As an Impostor

1. Assume positive intent
2. Work on projecting confidence as well as competence
3. Communicate your needs and concerns during the interview process
4. Shadow interviews at your current job if you can!

Industry Practices

1. Inclusive descriptions/ ads
2. Focus on candidate experience no matter how they do.
3. Look for "culture add" instead of "culture fit"
4. Examine bias points in process
5. Objectivity of feedback

A Revised Picture of the Impostor



Questions

Resources & References

Data Based Studies/Articles

[Men & Women on a Digital Jury](#)

[Men Interrupt More than Women](#)

[Boys Interrupt More than Girls](#)

[Investors prefer pitches from \(attractive\) men](#)

[Talking Shop v. Shooting the Breeze](#)

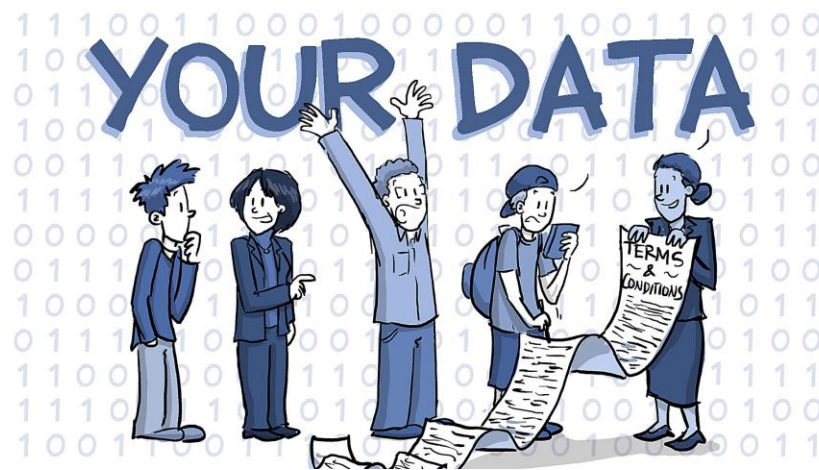
[Performance vs Potential](#)

[Men vs Women in Performance Reviews](#)

[Implicit bias test](#)

[Impostor Phenomenon Test \(1985\)](#)

[CTI SET/STEM statistics on attrition](#)



Female Imposters

(anecdotal data on/from women)

[The Confidence Gap](#)

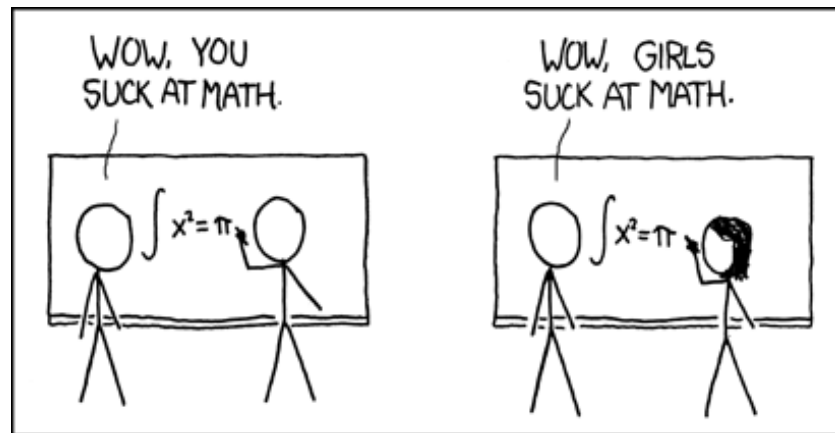
[NY Times Article](#)

[I'm an Engineer who happens to be female](#)

[The Female Impostor](#)

[What Works for Women at Work](#)

[Paradigm Whitepaper on Managing Unconscious Bias](#)



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