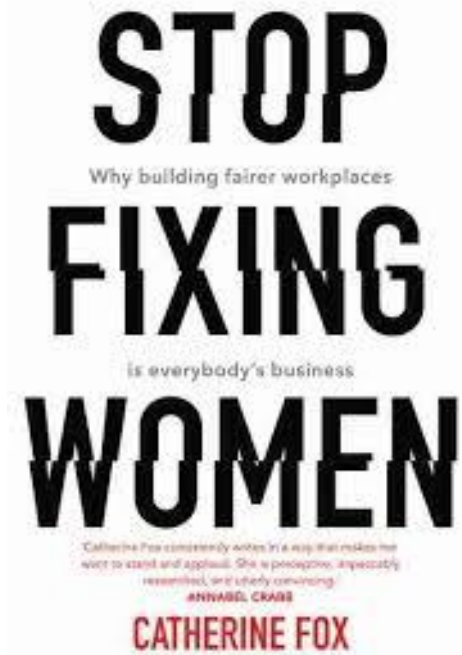


The myth of *merit*

CATHERINE FOX

Myth of Merit



Myth of merit

- ▶ We have the data to prove to men that gender equality is not a zero-sum game, but a win-win.
- ▶ *Michael Kimmel*

Myth of merit

- ▶ *These positions should be based on merit: PM Tony Abbott after announcing one woman in his 20 strong cabinet in 2013*

Myth of merit

- ▶ Two key 'merit' problems:
- ▶ 1 Everyone must have equal access to acquiring whatever quality is defined as "merit" – the 'level playing field'
- ▶ 2 People must be assessed only on criteria that predict performance

Myth of merit

- ▶ Even (and especially) when leaders proclaim a commitment to fairness in their organizations, stereotypes cause them to evaluate and treat equal performers differently *The merit paradox*

Myth of merit

- ▶ Affinity bias is a tendency to favour people who are like us, resulting in homogenous teams and group think
- ▶ Confirmation bias happens when we seek to confirm our beliefs, preferences or judgements, ignoring contradictory evidence
- ▶ Halo effect occurs when we like someone and therefore are biased to think everything about that person is good
- ▶ Social and group think bias is the propensity to agree with the majority or someone more senior to us to maintain harmony
- ▶ *In the eye of the beholder: the merit trap CEW/MCC*

Myth of merit

- ▶ Women were seen as less likeable, competent, less desirable as leaders, less likely to succeed in their careers even when seen as equally competent as their male peers. *And these negative findings are more pronounced in male dominated occupations.*

Myth of merit

- ▶ Challenge the backlash: it's unfair; you have to be a woman to get a job; they are taking our jobs
- ▶ Act as supporters not bystanders
- ▶ Clearly set out the capability required
- ▶ Identify & tackle bias in decision making

Myth of merit

- ▶ **M**ates
- ▶ **E**levated
- ▶ **R**egardless of
- ▶ **I**ntellect or
- ▶ **T**alent