Correspondence

Team diversity reduces bias

Over the past ten years, a research group at a Swedish university has operated under a set of standard core values that are founded on mutual cooperation, communication and respect. These are free of bias based on gender, ethnicity or hierarchy. This working culture has produced several 'generations' of principal investigators.

Leadership strategy can affect the well-being of laboratory members and group productivity. Newcomers joining the group might have very different cultural backgrounds, leading to communication clashes that can reduce group cohesion. So, when our SysBio group was formed, it was decided that a working culture should be defined rather than randomly created.

Since then, we have raised awareness of possible biases and misunderstandings by organizing regular workshops and assessments to determine how different individuals perceive the same viewpoints. We use the 'Lewis triangle' model of behaviour (see go.nature.com/2qa9mah) to identify variations in perspective and encourage open discussion.

In our experience, implementing the core values enhances the research performance of the individual and the group by fostering group diversity (see M. W. Nielsen *et al. Proc. Natl Acad. Sci. USA* **114**, 1740–1742; 2017).

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Lure China's postdocs home

China's leading universities are now recruiting more homegrown postdocs (see, for example, go.nature.com/2arizek; in Chinese). A three-year stint in a Chinese lab, together with the prerequisite overseas experience, can now help to secure a tenured position.

Zhejiang University and Wuhan University, for example, have doubled postdoc salaries in the past two years. A nationwide advertising campaign has boosted recruitment by 40% in my own field of hydrology alone.

This shift in recruitment policy should encourage more postdocs to return home, particularly as China is now established as an important contributor to international research.

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Rethink Brazil's drug policies

In our view, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro's stance on the country's addiction problems is too simplistic to counter the scale of the challenge. A national survey indicates that 1.3 million citizens were addicted to marijuana and 2.6 million were using crack cocaine last year (see go.nature.com/2qbhqks).

Bolsonaro has declared he will strengthen efforts against drug-trading organizations and to penalize them for any increases in drug-related violence. We are concerned that this merely reiterates the old 'War on Drugs' policy — namely, heavy repression of drug trafficking, punishment for users, racial discrimination, mass incarceration and limited access to treatment (see, for example, K. S. Fornili *J. Addict. Nurs.* **29**, 65–72; 2018). The evidence against the efficacy of this outdated approach is compelling (see, for example, go.nature.com/2d7cqmr).

What is needed now is urgent reform of Brazil's public-health system and new funding policies that will improve the structural and human resources necessary to tackle this nationwide problem.

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Institutional policy to boost data sharing

The benefits of sharing individual health-research data have been promoted by funders and journals, but the volume of shared data remains low (R. F. Terry *et al. F1000Research* **7**, 1641; 2018). As well as improving external incentives to share data, institutions and departments need to set up data-sharing policies that specify aims and data-request procedures.

These aims should be consistent with those of the institutions themselves. If an institution intends to strengthen research capacity, for example, the policy should do likewise. This alignment would help researchers to maximize usage of their data for primary and secondary analyses.

Such policies would provide a framework for data-sharing decisions — for instance, on which secondary use to support. They could also help in evaluating the impact of data sharing — for example, in determining how the data are being used to improve malaria treatment in national malaria-control programmes, or ascertaining how many postgraduate students are using the institution's data in their research.

Furthermore, having a data-sharing policy would strengthen an institution's position when applying for funding and submitting research papers for publication (see D. B. Taichman *et al. Lancet* **389,** e12–e14; 2017), and so enhance its academic reputation.

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How to make talks less boring

Experimental psychologists might point to two methodological flaws in Robert Ewers' (admittedly, tongue-in-cheek) analysis of boring scientific talks (*Nature* **561**, 464; 2018): experimenter bias and item-specific effects.

Experimenter bias arises from the easily bored listener, who might be more likely than less-impatient audience members to be stimulated by rapid delivery of key information (*Nature* **529**, 146–148; 2016). To avoid such bias, several independent judges should use objective boredom-measurement scales to classify correlated items.

Item-specific effects result from uncontrolled sequential dependencies. If highlights are delivered early in a talk, boredom is likely to rise midway through; presenters perceiving this boredom might adjust their delivery. In timed sessions, over-length talks at the start mean that subsequent presenters need to shorten their talks — artificially leading to denser, and perhaps more interesting, presentations. And the second of two talks with similar content that are presented equally well will inevitably seem less interesting than the first.

Counterbalancing the order of items and de-correlating form and content by combining relevant features (such as voice, rate, number and order of propositions, visualization quality) would allow experimenters to identify the techniques that generate the greatest interest. Endorsing these could make meetings more stimulating.

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