I Have Unconscious Biases?

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Bias . . .

is a tendency or inclination, particularly one that prevents unprejudiced consideration of a question.
How well have we done in the past 10 years?

Salary of women will achieve equity in 2105

Women in management will achieve equity in 2100
Recent breakthroughs in the cognitive sciences tell us how our minds work.
Shifting from Content…

Wondering whether we are good people?

…to Context!

Understanding the way we think!
We are hardwired for unconscious bias...all of us.

Unconscious bias is a response that is hidden, automatic, and natural.

The ability to distinguish ‘safe’ from ‘dangerous,’ gives order to a world that constantly confronts us with a cacophony of information and stimulus.
Bias is the process by which the brain uses "mental associations that are so well-established as to operate without awareness, or without intention, or without control."

Source: Project Implicit, Harvard University
Background

Excitement

Roller coasters are fun!!

Fear

Roller coasters are scary!!
Background frames the world we see.
How clearly do we see the world through our lenses?

- Culture
- Group
- Institutional
- Individual
Same Picture, Different Cultural Lens!

PEST

PET

APPETIZER
To make sense of the world around us, we put things into groups and remember relationships between objects and actions or adjectives
Our brains rely on past experience to “fill in the blanks” between the things we see. We “understand” by weaving together the information we have with the threads of information that our brains remember.
We make associations very quickly, based on our experience or beliefs, and more slowly when we see something counter to our experience or beliefs.
Implicit bias often conflicts with conscious attitudes and intentional behavior.

...even educated, culturally sensitive, egalitarian individuals can activate and use their biases without being aware they are doing so.
Our unconscious gives us...

• What we see...
• What we don’t see...
• What we hear...
• What we think is real!
Patterns of Unconscious Behavior
10 Patterns of the Unconscious

1. Diagnosis Bias
2. Pattern Recognition
3. Value Attribution
4. Confirmational Behavior
5. Automatic Perception
6. Selective Attention/Inattentional blindness
7. Priming effect
8. Commitment confirmation/loss aversion
9. Stereotype Threat
10. Anchoring Bias
Diagnosis Bias

The propensity to label people, ideas or things based on our initial opinions of them.
Value Attribution

The inclination to imbue a person or thing with certain qualities based on initial perceived value.
Confirmational Behavior

The tendency to look for what confirms our beliefs and to ignore what contradicts our beliefs while disregarding the truth.
Automatic Perception

The reflexive reaction to a particular person, object or situation based on unconscious associations and expectations.
Selective Attention/Inattentional Blindness

The propensity to see some things and not others dependent upon what a person has their attention on at a particular moment.
Priming Effect

The inclination to respond to something based on expectations created by a previous experience or association.
Anchoring Bias

The common tendency to rely too heavily, or "anchor," on one trait or piece of information when making decisions.
Unconscious bias can lead to Micro-Inequities and Micro-Advantages.
Micro-Inequities

“The ways in which individuals are either singled out, or overlooked, ignored, or otherwise discounted based on a characteristic such as race, age or gender.”
Micro-Advantages

A micro-affirmation (micro-advantage), is the reverse phenomenon.

Micro-affirmations are subtle or apparently small acknowledgements of a person's value and accomplishments.
The Good News Is:
the Unconscious is Malleable
8 Ways to Impact the Unconscious
You have bias... yes you... and so do I!
2

Develop and practice “Constructive Uncertainty”
3 Explore awkwardness, or discomfort
Develop the capacity to use a flashlight on yourself!
A quick way to check your reactions:
Take a P.A.U.S.E.
P.A.U.S.E.!

• Pay attention to what’s actually happening, beneath the judgments and assessments
• Acknowledge your own reactions, interpretations and judgments
• Understand the other possible reactions, interpretations and judgments that may be possible
• Search for the most empowering, productive way to deal with the situation
• Execute your action plan
Engage with those people you consider “others”
Get feedback and data
Guilt is what you feel because of what you did…*

*Tim Wise

Responsibility is what you take because of the kind of person you are*

*Tim Wise
Make it a cultural thing!
Points to remember

• Bias is part of being human
• If left unchecked, bias is part of our automatic reactions and the basis for many decisions
• Slow down decision making, and have robust, evidence based dialogue
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