

What is UNCONSCIOUS BIAS?

An implicit association or attitude—about race or gender, for example—that:¹

Operates beyond our control and awareness.

Informs our perception of a person or social group.

Can influence our decision-making and behavior toward the target of the bias.

BIAS IS PERVASIVE

Analyses of tens of thousands of tests on implicit bias have revealed:

People can be consciously committed to equality, and work deliberately to behave without prejudice, yet still possess negative prejudices or stereotypes.²

Showing bias:³



of white people had a pro-white or anti-black implicit bias



of heterosexuals showed implicit bias in favor of straight people over gays and lesbians

Minority Groups are Biased too:⁴

Minorities internalized the same implicit biases as majority groups.



of blacks showed a pro-white or anti-black bias.



of Arab Muslims showed an anti-Muslim bias.



of gays and lesbians showed a bias in favor of straight people over gays and lesbians.

UNCONSCIOUS BIASES ARE POWERFUL PREDICTORS OF BEHAVIOR

Implicit attitudes affect snap judgments, as well as decisions that are given careful conscious consideration.⁵

The effects of unconscious biases can be seen in action, especially if conscious controls over decision-making are lowered, for example when people are stressed, distracted, relaxed, or in competition.⁶

This is true even if unconscious biases are not aligned with conscious beliefs and convictions. For example, people with egalitarian views can harbor unconscious biases toward certain groups that affect their behaviors and decisions.⁷

BIASES CAN BE OVERCOME

Thinking about strong women leaders or seeing positive images of underrepresented groups can temporarily change unconscious biases.⁸

Working together in structured settings to solve shared problems can dramatically alter people's attitudes about diversity.⁹

A person with biases will not necessarily always act in biased ways; it is possible to consciously override bias.¹⁰

1. Anthony G. Greenwald and Mahzarin R. Banaji, "Implicit Social Cognition: Attitudes, Self-Esteem, and Stereotypes," *Psychological Review*, vol. 102, no. 1 (1995): p. 4-27; Erin Long-Crowell, "Implicit vs. Explicit Attitudes: Definition, Examples & Pros/Cons"; Anthony Greenwald and Linda Krieger, "Implicit Bias: Scientific Foundations," *California Law Review* vol. 94, no. 4 (July 31, 2006): p. 945-967; Ministry of Women's Affairs, *Realising the Opportunity: Addressing New Zealand's Leadership Pipeline by Attracting and Retaining Talented Women* (September 2013).

2. Shankar Vedantam, "See No Bias," *The Washington Post*, January 23, 2005; Teaching Tolerance, "Test Yourself for Hidden Bias."

3. Shankar Vedantam, "See No Bias," *The Washington Post*, January 23, 2005.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Teaching Tolerance, "Test Yourself for Hidden Bias."

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Shankar Vedantam, "See No Bias," *The Washington Post*, January 23, 2005.



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