Implicit Bias: Aligning Interests & Outcomes

Strategies to Prevent Unconscious Threats to Neutrality and Equitable Outcomes

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About Us: Kirwan

“Create a just and inclusive society where all people and communities have the opportunity to succeed.”

HOW KIRWAN APPROACHES OUR WORK

RACE AND COGNITION
STRUCTURAL RACIALIZATION

Objectives

- Explain key elements of social cognition, distinguishing implicit and explicit biases, and neutralizing the word “bias”
- Describe the impact of our implicit associations on our actions and decisions based on research.
- Demonstrate actions individuals can take to change their own implicit associations to better align their explicit intentions with outcomes.
Defining Implicit Bias

Is it Just a Coincidence?

Leadership and Physical Stature

Kirwan’s Definition
“The unconscious attitudes or stereotypes that impact our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.”

Implicit bias can turn even our best intentions into unwanted outcomes

Intent ➔ Effects of Implicit Bias ➔ Outcome

Implicit vs. Explicit

Conscious Mental Processing (7 ± 2 bits of info)

Unconscious Mental Processing (Millions/potentially unlimited bits of info)

WE HAVE LIMITED CONSCIOUS PROCESSING CAPACITY

Implicit vs. Explicit

Implicit Processing
  - Efficiency
  - Exposure
  - Associative Memory

Explicit Processing
  - Deliberate Processing
  - Executive Functioning

Origins of These Associations

Family, friends, & early life experiences
Media messaging: both traditional & social
Implicit Bias can be Activated on any Perceived Social Identity:
- Race/Ethnicity
- Gender
- Age
- Socioeconomic Status
- Sexual Orientation
- Ability Level
- Religion

All People Involved Can be Susceptible:
- Families
- 3rd-Party Mediator
- Jury / Arbitrator
- Administrative Staff
- Parties Involved
- Judges

Understanding Racial Inequities:
- Cognitive & Interpersonal Barriers
- Structural & Institutional Barriers
Barriers to Neutrality: Review of Research

What the Research Shows:

- Bias & Perceptions of Competence
- Evaluating “Race-Neutral” Information
- Other Cognitive Biases

Humans are not logical or objective

Implicit Bias and Perceptions of Competence
Implicit Bias and Perceptions of Competence

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<th>Spelling Errors</th>
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How our Bias Shapes our Evaluations

"African American" Thomas Meyer
- "needs lots of work"
- "can’t believe he went to NYU"
- "average at best"

"Caucasian" Thomas Meyer
- "generally good writer but needs to work on..."
- "has potential"
- "good analytical skills"
Benefit of the Doubt
Partners expected more errors and lower quality in the memo written by the African American male.

AND/OR
Partners expected fewer errors and higher quality in the memo written by the Caucasian male.

Confirmation Bias
Tendency to see evidence to support what you implicitly think while overlooking other evidence.

Anchoring Bias
Over-reliance on the first piece of information received in a situation.
**Affinity Bias**

Implicit preference for people similar to you.

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**We all make automatic judgements**

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<tr>
<th>WARMTH (Our perception of their intentions)</th>
<th>COMPETENCE (Our perception of their ability)</th>
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<td>Kind, Friendly, Good-natured</td>
<td>Efficient, Capable, Skillful</td>
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<td>Sincere, Honest, Moral</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
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<td>Helpful, Fair, Understanding</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
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**Bias & Perceptions: Neighborhood Level**

How does the racial composition of a neighborhood impact how individuals perceive it?
Bias & Perceptions: Neighborhood Level

- Housing Costs
- Safety
- School Quality
- Property Upkeep
- Future Property Values

Bias & Perceptions: Skews our Evaluations

- For White participants, simply seeing Black residents in a neighborhood elicited more negative evaluations of the neighborhood conditions — even when all aspects except race were comparable between neighborhoods

Strategies & Solutions
1) Know Your Bias

2) Change Unwanted Bias

Mindfulness

*Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present, and non-judgmentally. – Jon Kabat-Zinn*
Intergroup Contact

"But if I go over there and get to know them as individuals, what am I supposed to do with my stereotypes?"


3) Reduce Susceptibility at Key Decision-Making Points

- Time Constraints
- Compromised Cognitive Control
- High Ambiguity
- Overconfidence in Objectivity

Question Your Objectivity
Be an Active Bystander

IDENTIFY the emergence of bias
DECIDE to address the situation
SPEAK OUT
FOLLOW UP

Call to Action

Continually Commit To Doing Your Best Work
Learn & Get Involved

Implicit Bias Review

Interested in discussions about race and equality? Join us Thursdays from 3:45 to 7:45

Learn & Get Involved: Equity & Justice

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