Fostering Diversity and Inclusion in Engineering and Leadership

Sybil Dunlop
1. What is implicit bias?

2. How is it impacting our professional lives?

3. How can we combat it?
What is implicit bias?

The bias in judgment and behavior that results from subtle cognitive processes that operate below conscious awareness and without intentional control.
OUR BUSY BRAINS SEE FACES EVERYWHERE
We don’t just see things that aren’t there: Our brains also perceive things that aren’t there.
The color of a coffee mug can alter the way coffee tastes.
Is there a way to measure thoughts outside of our conscious awareness and control?
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Immaculate perception: Jerry Kang at TEDxSanDiego 2013
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Implicit Association Test

invented by
A.G. Greenwald
filth
pain
hurt
sick
beauty

gift

happy

joy

filth

pain

hurt

sick
Immaculate perception: Jerry Kang at TEDxSanDiego 2013
Pervasive

Immaculate perception: Jerry Kang at TEDxSanDiego 2013
HOW DID YOUR PRESENTER DO?

Here is your result:

Your data suggest no automatic preference between Old people and Young people.
The sorting test you just took is called the Implicit Association Test (IAT). You categorized good and bad words with images of African Americans and European Americans.

Here is your result:

Your data suggest a slight automatic preference for European Americans over African Americans.

Your result is described as an "Automatic preference for African Americans over European Americans" if you were faster responding when African Americans and Good are assigned to the same response key than when European Americans and Good were classified with the same key. Your score is described as an "Automatic preference for European Americans over African Americans" if the opposite occurred.

Your automatic preference may be described as "slight", "moderate", "strong", or "no preference". This indicates the strength of your automatic preference.
Why does this happen?
Cognitive biases impact decision making
The Linda Problem
CAUTION: LABELS CAN BE MISLEADING...

- implicit
- automatic
- fast
- efficient
- uncontrollable
- multiple systems
- unconscious

- explicit
- deliberate
- slow
- resource-consuming
- controllable
- unified
- conscious

CAUTION: LABELS CAN BE MISLEADING…
Let’s take GENDER as an example...
How does implicit bias impact us at work?
CONFIRMATION BIAS

I've heard the rhetoric from both sides... time to do my own research on the real truth.

Googie

Search for "detailed topic"

Found 80,000 results.

Literally the first link that agrees with what you already believe

Completely supports your viewpoint without challenging it in any way

Another link

Don't worry about this one.

...jackpot
Well-written, funny, informative, uplifting, but ran a bit long.
OBSERVATIONAL SELECTION BIAS
CURRENT MOMENT BIAS
IMPLICIT BIAS IN HIRING

IMPLICIT BIAS IN EVALUATION
EVIDENCE OF BIAS IN HIRING:

Subjects given identical resumes from applicants with white or black sounding names are significantly more likely to recommend white candidates.
EVIDENCE OF BIAS IN HIRING:

Auditions behind a screen result in 25% to 46% increase in number of women hired for orchestral jobs.
Evidence of Bias in Evaluation:

• Law firm partners were asked to evaluate a research memo containing 22 different errors.

• Half were told that the author was African American and half were told that the author was Caucasian.

• On a five-point scale, reviews for the same memo averaged a 3.2 for the “African American” author and 4.1 for the “Caucasian” author.
The comments were also telling:

“Caucasian” Thomas Meyer
- “generally good writer but needs to work on . . .”
- “has potential”
- “good analytical skills”

“African American” Thomas Meyer
- “needs lots of work”
- “can’t believe he went to NYU”
- “average at best”
Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP

• Actively recruited and hired more than thirty African-American associates from 1989 to 1996, but was unable to retain any of them.

• When surveyed about their experiences, the associates mentioned “a subtle yet pervasive tendency by almost exclusively white partners to favor those who looked like themselves.”
Implicit bias is also documented to create specific impacts on women in the workplace:

- Women are routinely told to smile more, yet women who do are often viewed as less professional.

- Men are ranked higher than women in most qualities associated with leadership simply because they are men.
1. Prove-it-again
2. The Tightrope
3. Maternal Wall
4. Tug-of-war
5. Isolation
Prove it Again
68% of women experience Prove-It-Again bias

**PROVE-IT AGAIN!**

**WOMEN** have to provide more evidence of competence than **MEN** in order to be perceived as equally competent

- Potential vs. achievement
- Women’s mistakes remembered longer versus men’s
- Women’s successes versus men’s
- Objective requirements applied **rigorously to women but leniently to men**
- Polarized evaluations
The Tightrope
75% of women report experiencing the Tightrope
The Maternal Wall
MATERNAL WALL

Women are able to reach a certain point in their career but hit a wall when there is any consideration of motherhood.
59% of women report experiencing the “Maternal Wall”

When subjects were given identical resumes (motherhood being the only distinguishing factor), non-mothers received 2.1 times as many callbacks and were recommended for hire 1.8 times more.

Recent studies have shown that mothers are subject to descriptive biases that lead others to see them as warm but not competent.
Isolation
Imposter Syndrome
Fake it until you make it.
Fake it until you make it.
Changing your posture for two minutes can affect testosterone and cortisol levels in the brain.
Objectivity is not the answer. Simply affirming merit-based system isn’t enough.

*Biases will be perpetuated unless they’re intentionally interrupted*
Problems can be addressed:

- Researchers posted two versions of announcements for jobs in stereotypically masculine businesses—NASCAR, football, and basketball. One version said nothing about salary; the other said “salary negotiable.”

- “Salary negotiable” language closed the pay gap between the male and female hires by 45%.
Framework:

• Research indicates that responsibility for diversity should be spread across the institution rather than focused in a single individual or administrative office and that “top management should be both diverse and committed to diversity.”
Not everyone is allowed to advocate for their own group.
Identify Key Metrics:

- Hiring?
- Hours?
- Evaluation?
- Assignments?
- Assignments after maternity/paternity leaves?
- Compensation?
- Office housework?
Address problems:

• Evaluate hiring practices;
• Use checklists;
• Consider explicit pre-determined criteria;
• Make decisions when cognitive resources are not restrained;
• Write instead of discussing off-the-cuff;
• Reconsider evaluations;
• Develop objective criteria/metrics; and
• Reconsider assignment system.
Several studies have shown that exposure to members of minority groups in roles of authority can help eliminate implicit bias.

Racial diversity has the potential to destroy stereotypes about the intellectual capacity and viewpoints of both minority and majority members.
SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH ON DEBIASING IS ONGOING.
Discussion
Discussion

• Do we typically hire the same type of person?

• Which of our past hires were successful, and what can we learn from choices that didn’t work out?

• Where is there room for bias within our current hiring processes?

• Are there systems that we can put into place to eliminate room for biases?
Discussion

• Who gets assigned to work on and lead teams?
• Are the same people always chosen?
• What do these folks have in common?
Discussion

• How do we evaluate our employees?
• Does this process leave room for bias?
• Are there systems that we can put into place to eliminate room for biases?
Discussion

• How do we identify candidates for promotion?
• Does this process leave room for bias?
• Are there systems that we can put into place to eliminate room for biases?