

Mitigating Unconscious Bias

Ruby Garrett (she/her)

Assistant Director of MOSAIC

What is Unconscious Bias?

- Also known as implicit bias, is a learned assumption, belief, or attitude that exists in the subconscious and can involuntarily affect the way we think and act.
- Can develop overtime through life experiences and exposure to different stereotypes.



Implicit Association Test

- Uses Belief (stereotypes) and evaluations (attitudes) associated with social groups.

Directions: In your seat, hit your right or left leg with your hand to choose the side the word in the middle needs to be.

Solve this!

A man and his son are driving in a car one day when they get into a fatal accident. The man is killed instantly. The boy is knocked unconscious. He is still alive and is rushed to the hospital for immediate surgery. The doctor enters the emergency room, looks at the boy, and says "I can't operate on this boy, he is my son."

Types of Unconscious bias

- **Affinity Bias (similarity):** Gravitate towards people similar to ourselves.
 - Ex. If you're working with an employee who went to the same college or grew up in the same town, you may be more likely to smile or offer encouraging words, compared with an employee with whom you don't share similarities.
- How to avoid affinity bias:
 - Having a diverse panel
 - Take note of your similarities with others
- **Attribution Bias:** How we assess others and their achievements.
 - Ex. When someone cuts a driver off, the individual who was cut off is more likely to attribute their actions to the other driver's inherent personality traits (i.e. recklessness, rudeness, incompetence) rather than the situational circumstances (i.e. the driver was late to work).
- How to avoid attribution bias:
 - Get more information; let others share their full story. Do not be quick to judge.

Types of Unconscious bias

- **Halo Bias:** Develop an overall positive impression of someone because of one of their qualities or traits.
 - Ex. An example of this effect in recruitment is when a hiring manager sees that a candidate graduated from a prestigious school and assumes that they excel at their job.
- How to avoid halo bias:
 - Look at all qualities, learn more about the person.
- **Confirmation Bias:** Seeking out and using information that confirms one's views and expectations.
 - Ex. For example, a product developer comes up with a product idea for the athletic market. Although market research shows little interest in the product, they try to validate the idea by reaching out to athlete friends who they know will support the idea.
- How to avoid confirmation bias: Be fair

Types of Unconscious bias

- **Conformity bias:** Changing your opinion or behaviors to match that of a bigger group, even if it doesn't match your opinion. Peer pressure.
 - Ex. Conformity bias often occurs in recruitment. If most people feel one way about a candidate, but you feel differently, you may feel that you slowly start to align with the group's opinions and views.
- **Groupthink:** occurs within a group of people in which the desire for harmony in the group results in an irrational or dysfunctional decision-making outcome.
 - Challenger Space Shuttle disaster: engineers knew about some faulty parts month before takeoff, but they did not want negative press.
- How to avoid conformity & groupthink bias:
 - Anonymous votes or surveys to provide feedback.
 - Asking for opinions in advance to avoid persuasion.

Types of Unconscious bias

- **Perception Bias:** Our perception is skewed based on inaccurate and overly simplistic assumption about a group a person “belongs” to.
 - Ex. A team member doesn’t invite a teammate to an after-work social event because they assumed that they wouldn’t share similar interests with the group.
- How to avoid perception bias:
 - “How well do I really know that person or the group they belong to?” Don’t let preconceived notions prevent you from meeting or including new people.
 - When you find yourself using strong words like “all,” “always,” and “never” to describe a certain group, pause and take a moment to ask yourself how accurate the description is.

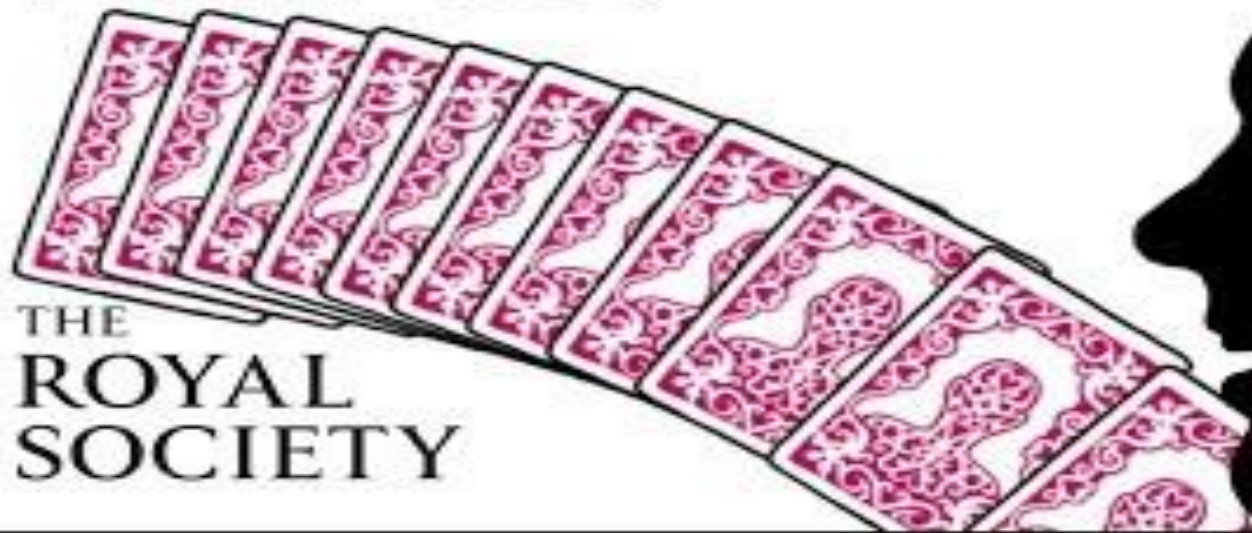
Other Biases

- Gender Bias
- Ageism
- Name Bias
- Beauty Bias
- Horns effect-opposite of halo. Looking at the negative
- Contrast effect-judgments off of comparisons
- Status quo bias
- Anchor bias-using the first information we have to base decisions
- Authority bias
- Overconfidence bias

Action steps

- Ask questions rather than making assumptions.
- Address misunderstandings and resolve disagreements.
- Whenever you have a strong reaction to someone (positive or negative), ask yourself why.
- Take the Harvard Implicit Association Test.
- Give back, mentor someone different than yourself.
- Collect and use data effectively.

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS



Thank you!

Ruby Garrett (she/her)

Phone:
940-397-4937

Email:
Ruby.garrett@msutexas.edu

Follow:
@msutx_mosaic