



Are you unconsciously biased?

HRPA CONFERENCE - JANUARY 24, 2020

INTRODUCTION



Unconscious Bias?

Presentation Goals



- Learn about the effect of “unconscious bias” on the workplace
- Understand “unconscious bias”
- What can you do about it?
- Managing risks

Presentation Overview

- **Why understanding “unconscious bias” matters**
- The **need for diversity**, and with it inclusiveness, in all types of work environments
- **Unconscious bias as a barrier** to diversity and inclusiveness
- **Overcoming the challenges** of building and sustaining a diverse and inclusive work environment

Why understanding “unconscious bias” matters



- Do we value “diversity” and “inclusion”?
- Beyond “we value diversity” to actual diversity and inclusion

• Why we need diversity and, with it, inclusiveness in work environments





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Barriers: Unconscious biases



<http://www.challcon.com/index.html>

Barriers: Unconscious biases (cont'd)



WE DO NOT
SEE THINGS
AS THEY ARE,
WE SEE
THINGS AS
WE ARE.

Anais Nin

Culture affects our thinking and judgment – and affects our unconscious biases and blind spots.

Different kinds of biases

Affinity bias
Confirmation bias
Gender bias
etc.

Harvard University: Project Implicit

<https://implicit.harvard.edu>

 **Project Implicit®**
[LOG IN](#) [TAKE A TEST](#) [ABOUT US](#) [EDUCATION](#) [BLOG](#) [HELP](#) [CONTACT US](#) [DONATE](#)**Gender-Career IAT**

Gender - Career. This IAT often reveals a relative link between family and females and between career and males.

Gender-Science IAT

Gender - Science. This IAT often reveals a relative link between liberal arts and females and between science and males.

Weight IAT

Weight ('Fat - Thin' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to distinguish faces of people who are obese and people who are thin. It often reveals an automatic preference for thin people relative to fat people.

Sexuality IAT

Sexuality ('Gay - Straight' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to distinguish words and symbols representing gay and straight people. It often reveals an automatic preference for straight relative to gay people.

Unintended consequences of unconscious biases...

- Less diversity
- Less innovative thinking
- Less adaptability to change
- Less critical thinking
- Smaller talent pool – blind spots may prevent the hiring of actual best candidate
- More microaggressions

Listening to those who have spoken up:

- Aaren Jagadeesh – a financial services representative at CIBC, felt that success at the bank was not so much about merit, but more about biases and fitting into the culture.
- Michael Conway – the president of Starbucks Canada had over 1,000 Canadian locations close for anti-bias training after two black men were refused permission to use a Starbucks washroom
- Melinda Gates – Bill Gates' wife delivered a speech about the biases against women and women of colour in particular, and committed a billion dollars to expand women's power and influence.

SOME RECENT EXAMPLES

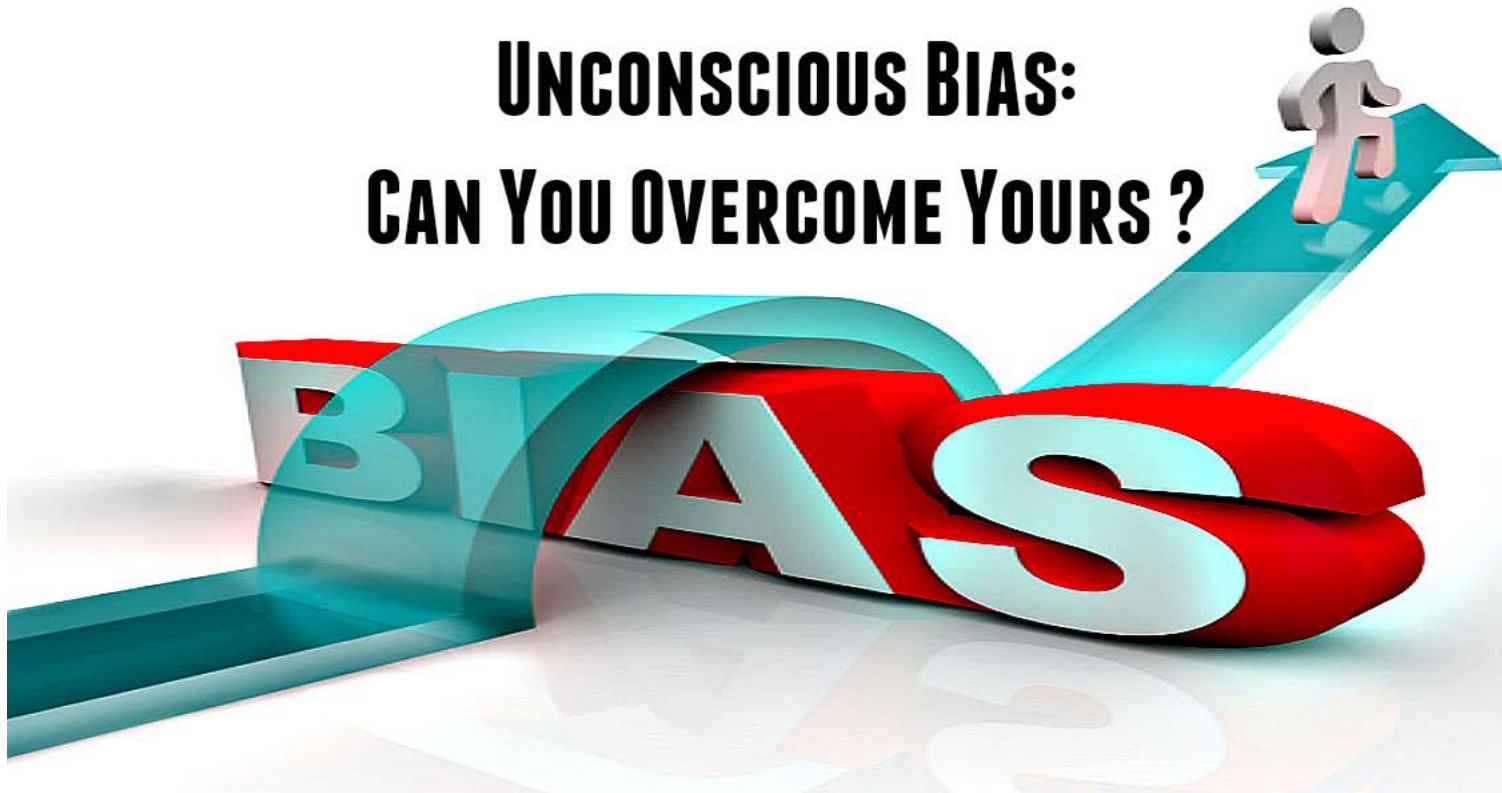


- You can be well-meaning, and still act on unconscious biases and discriminate.



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UNCONSCIOUS BIAS: CAN YOU OVERCOME YOURS ?



Role of every person as agent for change

- Culture is not static.
- Increase your cultural competencies, and improve your ability to see beyond your own cultural background and step into someone else's.
- Control for biases, be open, and revise your views when facts warrant.
- Start by avoiding snap judgments!



Role of organizations as agents for change

- Is your workplace making progress on diversity?
- Businesses wanting to increase diversity and also seeing the need for it, may wish to consider a self-assessment test to measure their progress.
- The “myth of meritocracy”



Three A's of change:

- ✓ **Acknowledge:** Each of us comes to any situation with our own biases. Acknowledge the role of unconscious biases and how they lead to discrimination and inequality.
- ✓ **Actively Listen:** Listening is being open. Give legitimacy to the lived experiences of others and learn.
- ✓ **Act:** Act at both the individual and institutional level.



ACTION STEPS:

- ✓ Training on diversity and unconscious bias, creation of committees and policies
- ✓ Changes to recruitment: Hire for skills and not personal characteristics
- ✓ Rotation of work assignments / assignment of mentors and champions
- ✓ Changes to evaluations and criteria for promotions

“We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their color.”

- Maya Angelou



Questions?

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