Unconscious Bias

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These slides at

tomstafford.staff.shef.ac.uk/talks/
Bias?
Mechanisms of implicit bias

Stereotype accessibility

Automatic associations

Priming

Osgood & Luria (1954)
‘Mental Contamination’

The 450 foot Capilano Suspension Bridge

Image: Maarten Van Horenbeeck
Idris Elba is ‘too street’ to play 007, says James Bond author

He thinks the actor isn’t ‘suave’ enough
An applicant for the police chief job is described as highly educated, but not streetwise. The gender of the applicant affects which characteristics people judge are important for the job (but not which they are perceived to have).


Image: Cameron Moll, twitter @cameronmoll
We are all biased
The ‘Implicit Association Test’ (IAT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>White People</th>
<th>Black People</th>
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<td>or</td>
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<td>Good</td>
<td>Bad</td>
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The ‘Implicit Association Test’ (IAT)
Mean IAT Scores of White Participants

*Countries with n<100 (SLO,MCO,LUX,AD,LI) are ignored to pick arbitrary break point.*
Bias

Rationality
Anti-bias strategies
Norman doors


Image: Cameron Moll, twitter @cameronmoll
International building regulations: crash bars

Image: By Scott Brody - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=55516950
What you can do about bias - a framework
Effect on bias - Does your strategy...

Mitigate bias

Insulate against bias

Remove bias
Who it affects - Is your strategy...

Personal

Interpersonal

Institutional
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A 3x3 model</th>
<th>Mitigate</th>
<th>Insulate</th>
<th>Remove</th>
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### A 3x3 Model

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- **Tracking outcomes; predeclared criteria; recording process of decisions; norms of fairness**
- **Procedures that remove bias activating information;**
- **Avoiding biased outcomes (e.g. quotas / shortlisting requirements)**
A 3x3 model

Mitigate

Insulate

Remove

Identifying others’ biases is easier; challenging conversations

Subdivide tasks to ensure independence of procedures; reveal identifying information last

Exposure to diversity ("Contact hypothesis")

Tracking outcomes; predeclared criteria; recording process of decisions; norms of fairness

Procedures that remove bias activating information;

Avoiding biased outcomes (e.g. quotas / shortlisting requirements)

Personal

Interpersonal

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A 3x3 model

Mitigate
- Avoid risk factors (hunger, fatigue), articulate reasoning, ‘imagine the opposite’
- Identifying others’ biases is easier; challenging conversations
- Tracking outcomes; predeclared criteria; recording process of decisions; norms of fairness

Insulate
- Remove information that activates bias
- Subdivide tasks to ensure independence of procedures; reveal identifying information last
- Procedures that remove bias activating information;

Remove
- Cognitive training (e.g. relearning associations)
- Exposure to diversity (“Contact hypothesis”)
- Avoiding biased outcomes (e.g. quotas / shortlisting requirements)

Personal

Interpersonal

Institutional
Addressing bias is like healthy eating
Need for collective approaches

Elderly apple tree, Awnells, Much Marcle. (c) Bob Embleton CC licence
Reserve slides
(for discussion etc)

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Why bias mitigation hard (1)

- Easier to see biases in other people than ourselves

Cartoon Reproduced with kind permission of Grizelda and Private Eye Magazine

“Well, you’re the only one who thinks we’re a sexist organisation.”
- "97 percent of judges (thirty-five out of thirty-six) believed that they were in the top quartile in “avoid[ing] racial prejudice in decision making”"

Why bias mitigation hard (2)

- Source(s) of bias hard to locate
- Extent of bias hard to assess
What doesn’t work on its own
- Ignoring social identity (e.g. “colour blindness”)
- Trying to be objective / suppression
- Awareness raising (on its own)

Focussing on individuals
Error
Failure of rule following

E.g. confirmation bias, errors in reasoning about probability, errors due to choice structure

‘Cognitive bias’

Inconsistency
Unwanted influences

E.g. “implicit bias”, contamination, priming due to group membership, stereotypes, etc

‘Social biases’
Bias, in the legal sense
General Pinochet's hearing may have suffered from bias

Law Lords have attacked their colleague Lord Hoffmann who failed to declare links with a human rights group before ruling in a key hearing on General Augusto Pinochet.