



Unconscious Bias

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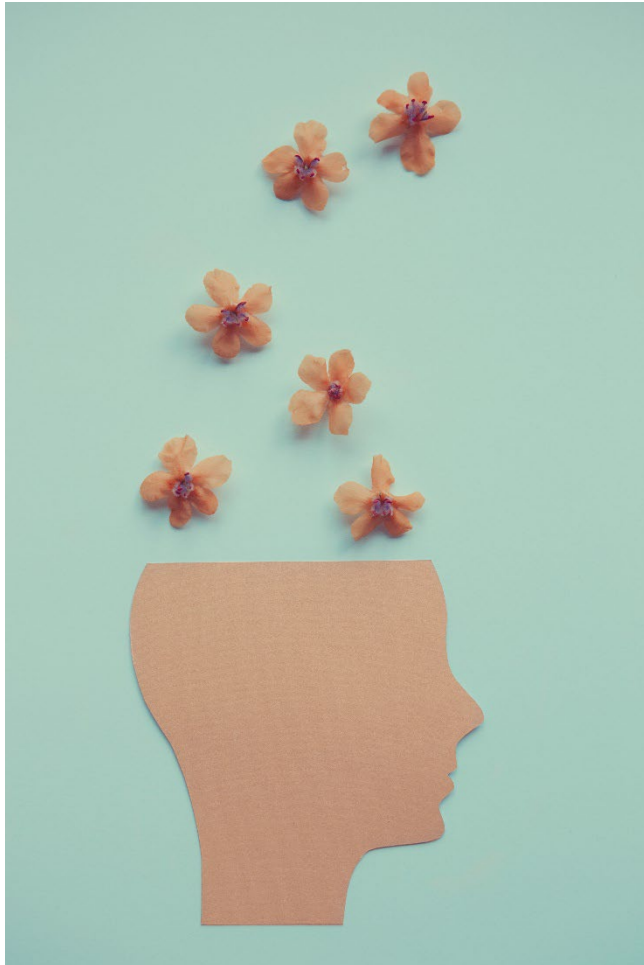
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Coordinator

Goals for Today

1. Learn what unconscious bias is
2. Learn why bias exists and the neuroscience behind it
3. Understand the effects of bias
4. Know how to identify potential areas of bias
5. Learn how to reduce your bias

First Thoughts

What words come to mind when you hear the words “unconscious bias”?



Unconscious bias refers to a bias that we are *unaware* of, and which happens outside of our control.

It is a bias that happens *automatically* and is triggered by our brain making quick judgments and assessments of people and situations, influenced by our background, cultural environment and personal experiences.

Definition Continued



- Unconscious bias is activated **involuntarily** and without awareness or intentional control.
- Bias can be positive or negative
- Our biases do not necessarily align with our declared beliefs or reflect the stances we would explicitly endorse.

Bottom Line: Unconscious biases impact our ability to be objective and impartial.

Ingroups and Outgroups

Most people show unconscious favoritism toward their **ingroup** (people they perceive to be like them) and negative bias towards the **outgroup** (people they unconsciously identify as other or different from them)



What the Research Says

Are Emily and Greg More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination

- Identical resumes were sent to the same companies
- Resumes with typically white sounding names received 50% more callbacks than those with typically black names.
- Average “typically white” named candidates received more callbacks than highly skilled “typical black” named candidates

University of Chicago Graduate School of Business (2004) Bertrand, Marianne and Mullainathan, Sendhil

What the Research Says Continued

- Major symphony orchestras in the US started using blind auditions in the 1970's. The number of women hired rose from 15% to 40%.
- People with disabilities are significantly less likely to be employed than non-disabled people. Over a third (36%) of people tend to think of disabled people as not as productive as everyone else.
- In mental health care, older individuals are assumed to be depressed because of their age, which can lead to low levels of care for depression and suicidality.

How do you see this applying to your work?

How might unconscious bias affect the way you serve your customers and not even be aware of it?



Are these tables the same size? Are they the same shape?

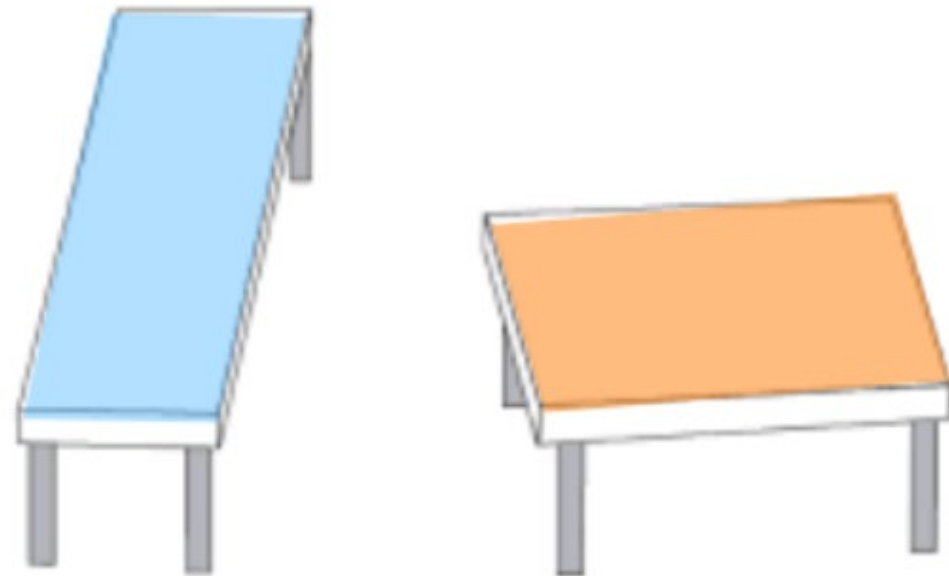
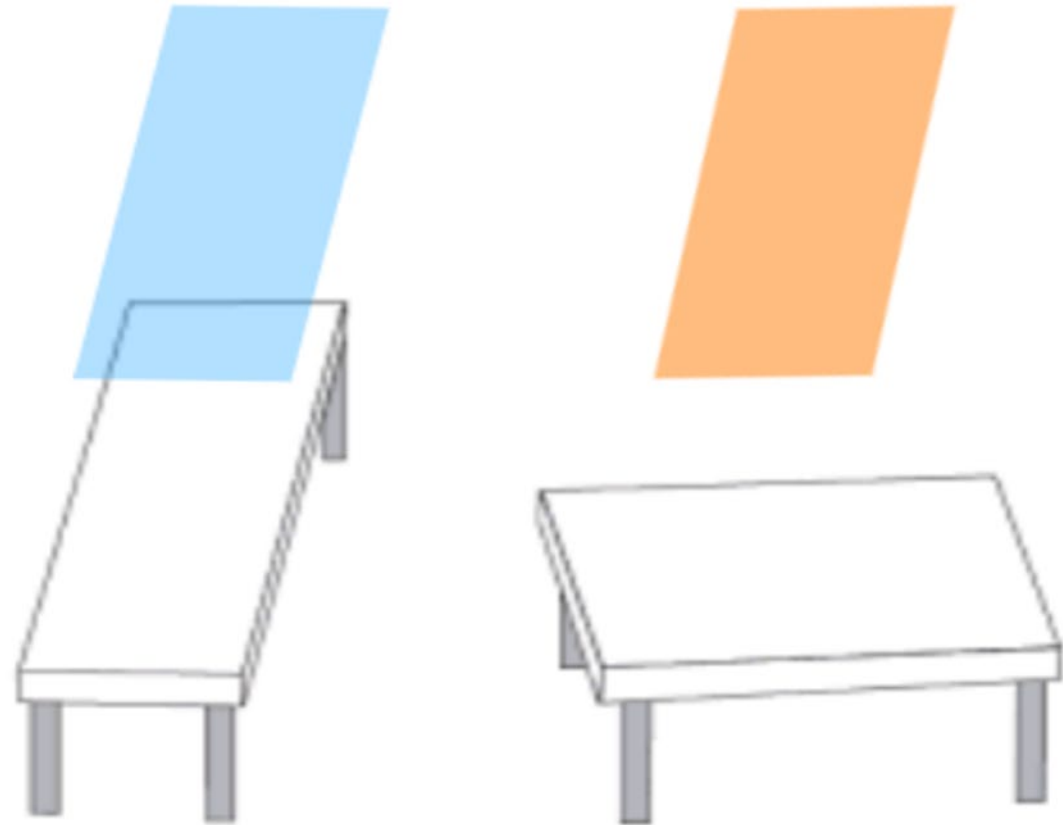


Illustration Continued

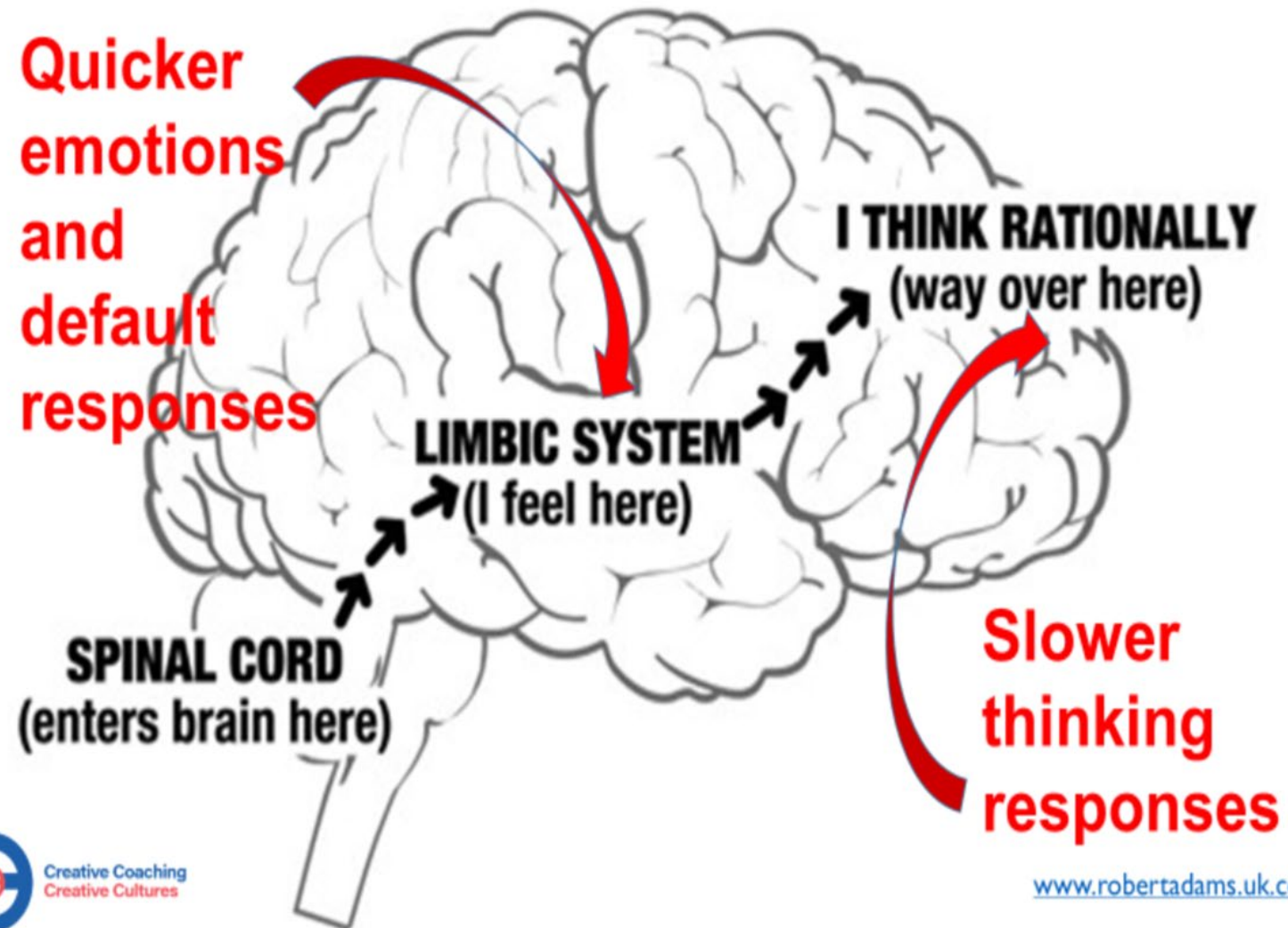
Yes!
So why do we think
that they are different?



Our brain is shaped by our life experiences.

- How, where, by whom we were raised
- School, community, religion
- Politics, media
- Racism, and other -isms prevalent in our society and in the structures of our institutions

The Brain Continued



The Brain: Mental Maps

When faced with situations or people, we use **mental maps** and patterns to classify them by making a number of **automatic associations**.

These automatic associations are not always correct.



Implicit Associations

- Connections made in our minds that happen without our awareness
- Shape our feelings and attitudes about dimensions of identity such as race, ethnicity, age and appearance
- Develop over the course of a lifetime through exposure to direct and indirect messages
- Media and news programming cited as origins of implicit associations

Example: When I say peanut butter, you say _____!

Impact of Bias

Creates Mental Shortcuts:

- Implicit biases are mental shortcuts to judging a person or categorizing people
- Can create blind spots that prevent us from seeing vital pieces of information

Leads to Unintended Consequences:

- Microaggressions
- Discriminatory treatment/practices
- Negative business culture
- Lack of workforce diversity
- Lack of innovation/engagement

When Bias Happens

When are we most likely influenced by our biases?

- During stressful situations
- When hard decisions need to be made
- When information is vague or questionable
- When we are distracted



When Bias Happens - Reflection

Think about a decision that you made recently where you were under stress, distracted, or given vague information.

- What impact did the conditions have on your decision?
- Did unconscious bias play a part in your decision?
 - If so:
 - How did bias influence your decision?
 - What effect did your decision have on others?

Changing the Brain's Connections

The connections in our brains are ingrained, but can be changed through:

- Active reflection
- Increasing our intercultural competence
- Practicing inclusive behaviors
- Information gathering
- Staying curious

Identifying Potential Bias: Inner Circle Exercise

Reflection Exercise: Who's in Your Inner Circle? More Importantly, Who Isn't?											
Name of family member or close friend	Different Religion	Different First Language	Different Race/Skin Tone	Different Gender Identity	Different Sexual Orientation	Different Political Party	Different Physical Ability	Different Caregiver Status	Different Military Status	Different Criminal Background	Different Socio-economic Status
Significant Other											
Parent/Guardian											
Best Friend											
Best Work Friend											
Close Friend											

Evidence Based Behavioral Strategies to Reduce Bias

- **Stereotype replacement:** Think about a stereotype that you hold and consciously replace it with accurate information
- **Positive counter-stereotype imaging:** Picture someone who counter-stereotypically fills a traditionally stereotyped role
- **Individuation:** Gather specific information about a person or specific event to prevent group stereotypes from leading to bias

Mitigating Unconscious Bias

In the moment:

1. Watch your first thoughts in order to spot potential biases.
2. Acknowledge the bias
3. Hit the pause button to allow your rational brain to kick in.

Over time:

- Learn more about yourself – ask others for candid feedback
- Change your behaviors to act in ways that counter your bias.
- Cultivate common ground with people different from yourself.

Your Next Steps - Reflection

Select at least one thing you will do to address your unconscious bias and reflect on how to make it happen:

- Build time into your day to identify and counteract bias
- Increase your personal self-awareness
- Cultivate common ground with people different from yourself
- Move from stereotypes to generalizations
- Have something else in mind? What other ways can you mitigate unconscious bias?

- Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People, by Mahzarin Banaji and Anthony Greenwald
- Sway: Unravelling Unconscious Bias, by Pragma Agarwal
- [Danger of a Single Story](#) TED Talk, by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
- [Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity](#)
- [Are Emily and Greg More Employable Than Lakisha and Jamal?](#)
- [Race Forward](#)
- [Center for Social Inclusion](#)
- [Racial Equity Tools](#)

Questions?

