

APPENDIX IV – 75

Unconscious Bias and Diversity in Hiring

Unconscious Bias

- Traditional thought assumed that discrimination was conscious – “people know better”
- Efforts have been aimed at finding the “bad people” and “fixing” them as if they make choices

Unconscious Bias

- But what if people make choices that discriminate without realizing it?
- And further, what if it goes against their own conscious beliefs?
- Now a vast body of research conducted at Harvard, Yale, MIT, among others, shows the same thing: Unconscious Bias underlies many of our patterns of behavior

The Unconscious

- Many of our brain functions, emotional responses, and cognitive processes fall outside of our conscious awareness
- Freud knew that the unconscious was more vast and powerful than the conscious - but even he underestimated it



Conscious Brain/Hidden Brain

- Conscious Brain – used for new situations – rational, careful, analytical, slow, deliberate, understands exceptions
- Not efficient to use this every time – exposed to 11 million pieces of info – can only process 40 at one time

Conscious Brain/Hidden Brain

- Hidden Brain – takes over after the rules have been learned – automatic, fast, instant adjustments
- It can apply shortcuts to situations in **which they don't work**
- Sometimes applies rules to complex situations inappropriately

Conscious Brain/Hidden Brain

- Let's say that we learn and internalize society's biases and prejudices
- Or we remember what we've first been told – and then when we are told it isn't true, it just doesn't seem to "stick" as well
- One example of this is the Clark's "Doll Test"
- Functional MRIs

What is Unconscious Bias?

- The Hidden Brain - A host of brain functions, emotional responses, and cognitive processes that happen outside our conscious awareness but have a decisive effect on how we behave. – Shankar Vedantam
- A kind of prejudice you have that you aren't aware of, that affects the kinds of impressions and conclusions that you reach automatically, without thinking. – Malcolm Gladwell, in Blink

What is Unconscious Bias?

sometimes referred to as Unconscious Prejudice or Hidden Bias

- Unconscious bias may lead a person to act in a way that is at odds with their intentions.
- Unconscious bias influences people subtly, **not overtly.** It derives much of its power from the fact that people are unaware of it



What is Unconscious Bias

- On a conscious level, most of us would say that we do not discriminate; our “hidden” brains may, though
- Just because you may possess hidden biases, prejudices, or stereotypes does not mean that your practices are discriminatory
- However, there is plenty of evidence that suggests that more subtle, covert types of discrimination do occur in our field

Who's most likely to be the CEO?



Examples

- A poll of half of the Fortune 500 companies* showed that:
 - 58% are six feet or over while in the general population of men, only 14.5% are six feet or over
 - 30% are six 6'2" or taller; 3.9% of the general population are 6'2" or taller
- *Fortune 500 CEOs are overwhelmingly white men

Examples

- Is this deliberate prejudice?
- There may be some association with leadership ability and imposing physical stature in our unconscious
- The stereotype of what a leader is **“supposed” to look like is powerful and may blind us to other considerations**

Examples

- Numerous experiments have shown that people believed they were acting fairly, honorable, and wisely, but their actions were at odds with their intentions (i.e. ethnic-sounding names on resumes)



Examples

- They meant to do one thing but did something else – and were not aware of it until it was pointed out
- “Our blindness to bias seems willful – until you remember that the central feature of unconscious bias is that it’s unconscious”!!

Examples

- Lilly Ledbetter and the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company
- Her salary = \$44,727/yr
- Others managers = \$51,432-\$62,832
- Same job/same experience
- One of the first bills signed into law by President Obama was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009

Examples

- Dukes v Wal-Mart Stores
- Largest EEOC suit in history

How Women's Earnings Compare With Men's at Wal-Mart
As wages and authority increase, the number of women decreases.

<u>Position</u>	<u>Average earnings</u> Women / Men	<u>%Women / %Men</u>
Store manager	\$89,300 / \$105,700	14.3% / 85.7%
Co-manager	\$56,300 / \$59,500	22.8% / 77.2%
Asst. manager	\$37,300 / \$39,800	35.7% / 64.3%
Mgt. trainee	\$22,400 / \$23,200	41.3% / 58.7%
Cashier	\$13,800 / \$14,500	92.5% / 7.5%

Source: Drogin Kakigi & Assoc.

Impact of Unconscious Bias In the Workplace

- May put your company at risk of a lawsuit due to perceived discriminatory practices such as:

recruiting interviews hiring decisions
mentoring job assignments training
promotions reviews pay increases

Impact of Unconscious Bias In the Workplace

- The Courts are receptive to unconscious bias arguments and large settlements have occurred
- The EEOC explains that intentional discrimination includes conscious and unconscious stereotypes



Impact of Unconscious Bias in the Workplace

- Poor hiring decisions which may lead to increased turnover, which may be detrimental to your business
- May foster a non-inclusive work environment
- May lead to a lack of a diverse workforce



Overcoming Hidden Biases

- 1) Being aware that there is such a thing as an unconscious or hidden biases/discrimination
- 2) Taking an honest “look” into your unconscious
- 3) Taking steps to minimize impact

Overcoming Hidden Biases

- 1) Learning about unconscious bias
 - Search out information and educate yourself and your hiring managers
 - Perhaps you could share this presentation with them; print out articles from the SHRM website and distribute to managers; numerous websites, books, etc.

Overcoming Hidden Biases

- 2) Looking into your own unconscious
 - Implicit Association Test – timing unconscious mental associations - www.implicit.harvard.edu
 - Take note of your first thought when encountering people – “all” or “every” may indicate a bias (even if the thought is positive)
 - Explore how you may have learned biases

Overcoming Hidden Biases

- Thought stopping
- Inhibiting expression
- Unlearning biases – must acquire accurate information and experiences
- Reframing from “discrimination” to focus on fair treatment and respect

Overcoming Hidden Biases

- Cultural Experiences
- “Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime.” –Mark Twain

Overcoming Hidden Biases

3) Minimizing Risk

- Interviews – structured interview with two managers; scoring
- Conduct an analysis of hiring, promotion, pay increase practices, etc.; share the results
- Educate hiring managers about unconscious bias*
- Require cultural diversity training
- Be a role model; take action

Overcoming Hidden Bias

- *The “Self-Check” Technique
 - Will this decision adversely affect the employee?
 - Is the employee in a protected class?
 - What potential biases (cs or uncs) could affect my judgment?
 - Am I doing this for the right reason or is a bias influencing my decision?

Discussion/Ideas

- What are you doing at your site to try to overcome hidden biases?

Resources

- [The Hidden Brain](#) – Shankar Vedantam
- [Blink](#) – Malcolm Gladwell
- SHRM website
- unconsciousbias.org
- [Facebook.com/unconsciousbias](https://www.facebook.com/unconsciousbias)
- Harvard.implicit.edu