

# Unconscious bias

Your attitude is  
showing

Suzanne Marshall



# What are you talking about?



- unconscious  
lacking awareness
- bias  
a preference or  
inclination that  
inhibits impartiality.

# But, I'm a self-aware person!



- we tend to categorize people using limited pieces of information and then act on this information, even though most of our inferences have not been confirmed
- this process is called making perceptual inferences since we are required to diagnose our situation and make rapid inferences about it from scanty clues.

# Pause for thought

- Have you ever experienced someone making an assumption about you?
- What do you think the assumption was based on?
- Was it accurate?
- Can you think of any examples of stereotyping you have encountered, either professionally or personally?
- Is there such a thing as a positive stereotype?
- What have been the major influences on how you feel and think about difference?



# Where do these biases come from?

- messages we receive as we grow
- early experiences
- upbringing
- family
- peers
- religion or lack of
- media
- society norms.




# Diversity wheel




# Messages on:

- gender
- race
- disability
- age
- sexual orientation
- Religion.




 **Messages on Race**

 mySupermarket  
Groceries

Search

Shopping icons: star, lock, leaf, bread, banana, bottle, leaf, snowflake, oven, jar, bowl, magnifying glass, trash, location pin

Tesco > Self Tan > Dove



**Dove Summer Glow Body Lotion  
Normal to Dark Skin (250ml)**

★★★★★ [Write the first review](#)

£4.99  
(£2.00/100ml)

[Add to basket](#) [Add to list](#)

**Description**  
The unique combination of active Dove moisturisers and a hint of self tanning agents will gradually build a light tan and leave your skin silky smooth.  
For great results after about 5 days, [more](#)



**AP** Associated Press

A young man walks through chest deep flood water after looting a grocery store in New Orleans on Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2005. Flood waters continue to rise in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina did extensive damage when it

**AFP**

Two residents wade through chest-deep water after finding bread and soda from a local grocery store after Hurricane Katrina came through the area in New Orleans, Louisiana. (AFP/Getty Images/Chris Graythem)



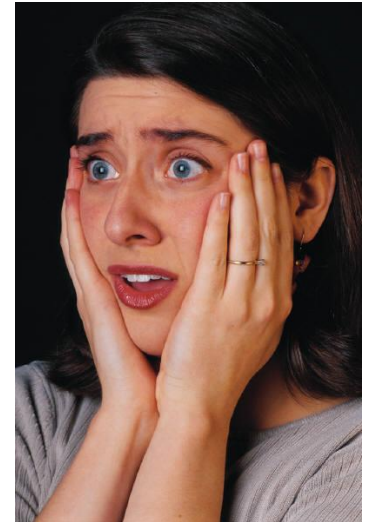




- What cultural rules, values, behaviours and traditions did I learn growing up?
- How have these shaped my teaching/professional practice?

## But, I'm not biased!

- bias is unavoidable, as it is part of human nature
- even nice people have biases
- biases do not make us bad people
- members of any group can have biases
- bias, when unconscious is the shadow side of intuition.



## Did you know?

Individuals send anywhere from 40–150 micro-messages to each other in an average 10 minute conversation.



# But discrimination is unlawful!

- Scientific research has demonstrated that biases thought to be absent or extinguished remains as ‘mental residue’ in most of us. Studies show people can be consciously committed to equality, and deliberately work to behave without prejudice, yet still possess hidden negative prejudices or stereotypes.
- So even though we believe we see and treat people as equals, hidden biases may still influence our perceptions and actions.



# Psychological hokum?

Implicit Association Test

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit>



‘Blink’ by Malcolm Gladwell

‘Our Racist Heart’ by Geoffrey Beattie

‘Blind Spot: Hidden Biases of Good People’  
by Mahzarin Banaji and Anthony Greenwald

‘The Hidden Brain’ by Shankar Vedantam

## How does this affect me?

- think about the decisions we make every day on an unconscious basis when it comes to what we think about others
- the effects of bias are so subtle as to be sometimes barely noticeable and this results in micro behaviours, which although they are barely perceptible, remain.

# Micro behaviours in relation to:

- work practices, processes and policies (dealing with complaints)
- organisational culture
- recruitment and promotion decisions
- line management and performance appraisals
- student admissions
- student guidance
- student assessment
- body language/institutional body language
- interactions with others.

# Scenarios





# Eliminating bias

- recognise our own vulnerabilities: our traits and people biases
- recognise the contexts when our biases may be most active
- watch our micro-behaviours and try to re-balance them
- assume bias will be at play, pause and think
- stop beating ourselves up about it.

# Contact Details

**Tel: 01786 892046**

**suzanne.marshall@cdn.ac.uk**

**www.collegedevelopmentnetwork.ac.uk**

**Follow @ColDevNet on Twitter**

**[facebook.com/collegedevelopmentnetwork](https://facebook.com/collegedevelopmentnetwork)**