

Unconscious Bias

Aims of the session

- To explore our own stereotypes and prejudices and get an understanding of how they impact on the ways in which we react to other people
- To come up with ways of reducing the impact of our unconscious bias

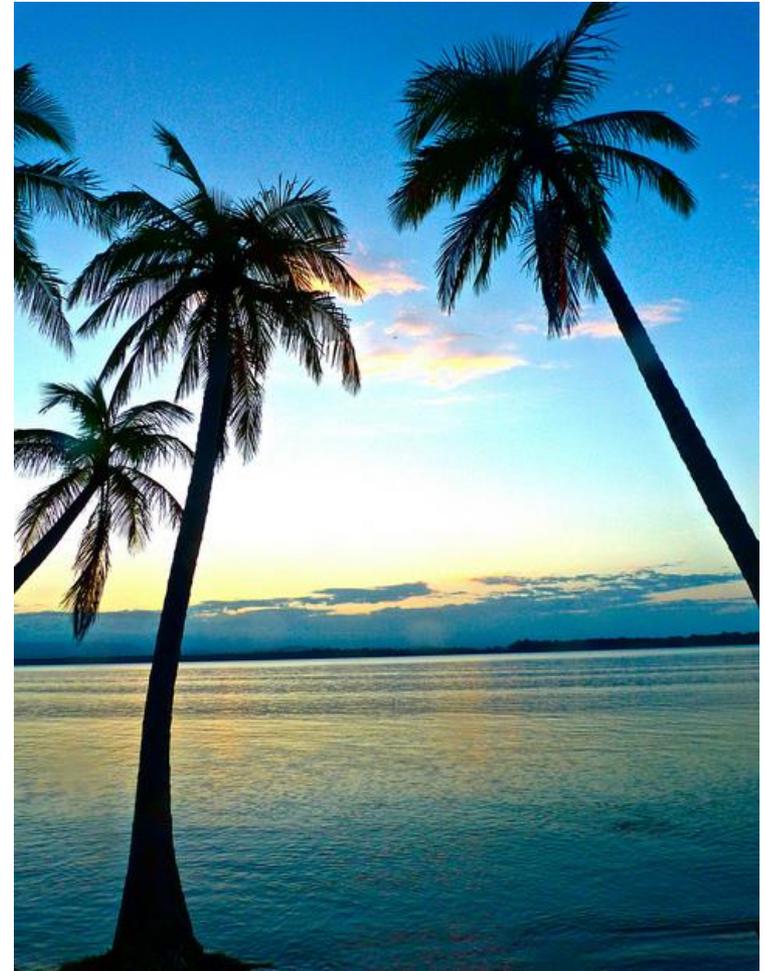
You've got to be carefully taught...

You've got to be taught
To hate and fear,
You've got to be taught
From year to year,
It's got to be drummed
In your dear little ear
You've got to be carefully taught.

You've got to be taught to be afraid
Of people whose eyes are oddly made,
And people whose skin is a different shade,
You've got to be carefully taught.

You've got to be taught before it's too late,
Before you are six or seven or eight,
To hate all the people your relatives hate,
You've got to be carefully taught!

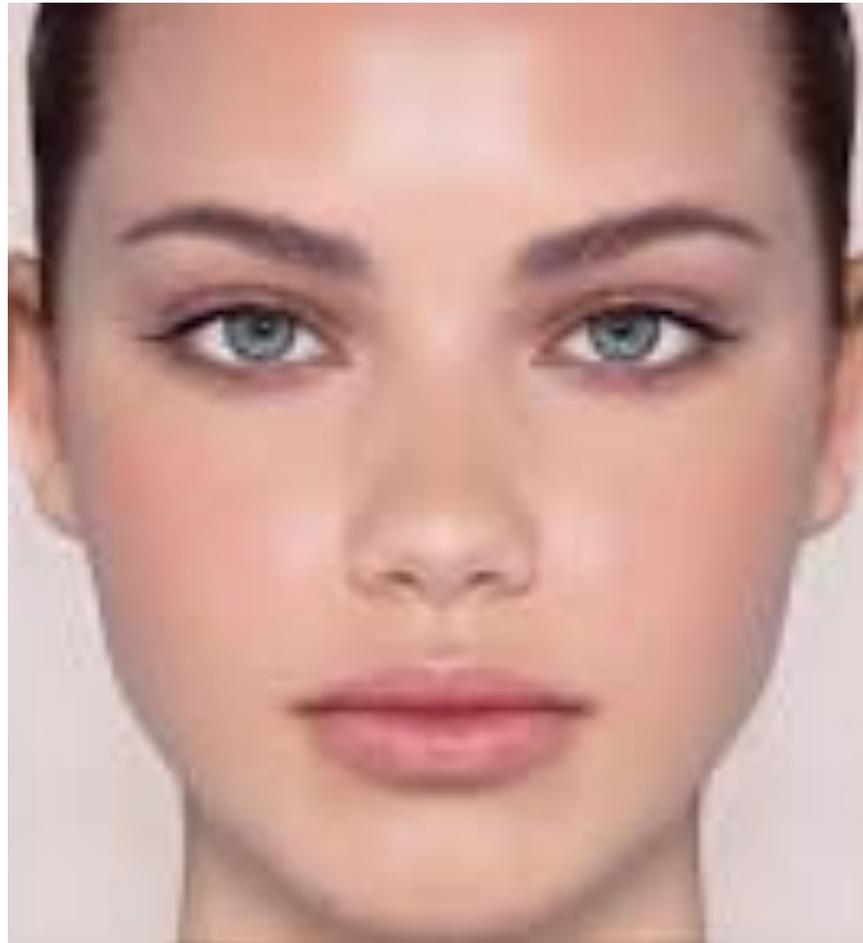
(Hammerstein, 1949)





Faces

- Write down two words to describe your reaction to the following faces
- The first word will be the one which immediately comes to your mind, but may be something that you do not want to share with the group
- The second word will be the one that you are happy to share with the group
- The two words may be different





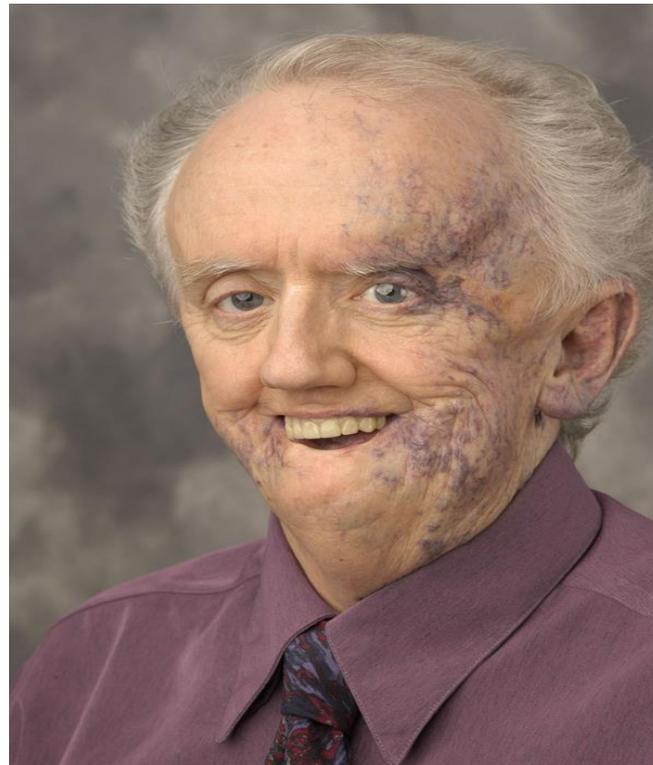
















Unconscious bias

- Nobody likes to think that they have prejudices, but we all do, whether these are conscious or unconscious
- We all are prone to thinking in stereotypes, particularly when it is about something we are not familiar with or we don't understand
- Think about some stereotypes that you hold and think about where these ideas come from.

- Often they have become entrenched into the way we think and they are held as the truth. Generally they are not the truth, but are perceptions developed over time until it is difficult to work out what is true and what is not
- Sometimes our biases may serve us well and not be problematic

- Our fundamental way of being in the world is driven by a hard wired mechanism for making unconscious decisions based on what feels safe. This includes decisions about people
- These perceptions can lead us to treat people in a certain way, making assumptions about what they need.
- Who decides about what a person needs?

Over to you

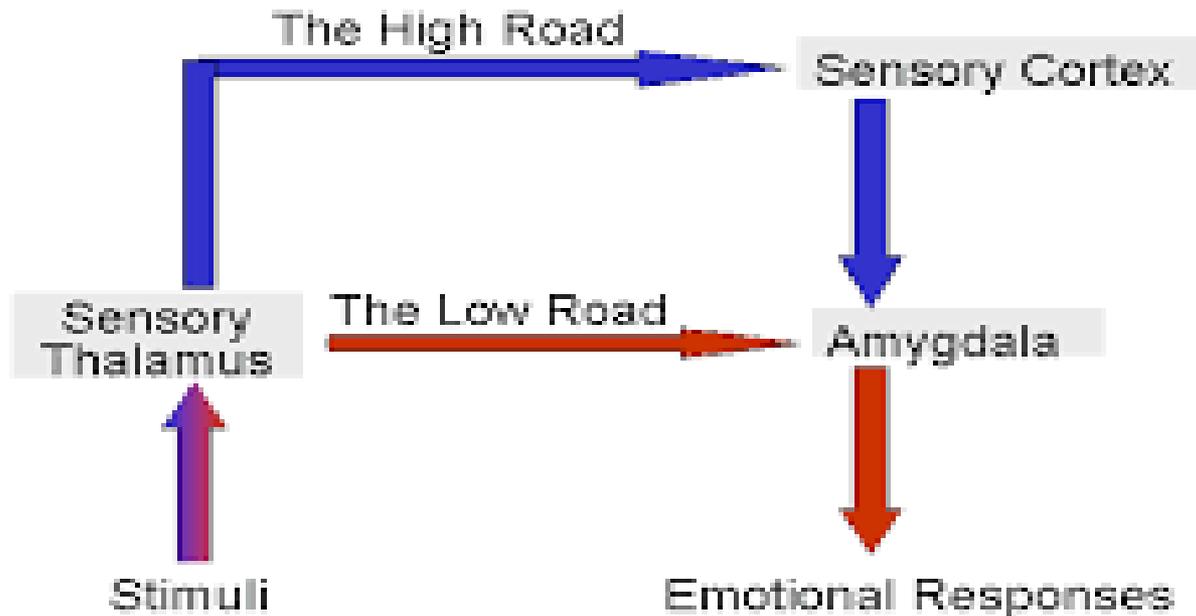
- In pairs or threes have a brief discussion about some of your own stereotypes biases.
- Where do they come from?
- How much of this biased is based on fact?

A definition

“...implicit people preferences, formed by our socialisation, our experiences, and by our exposure to others’ views about other groups of people”

The theory bit – Joseph Le Doux

- Neuroscientist, Joseph Le Doux has published widely on what he calls the ‘emotional brain’



More from Le Doux...

- What makes us who we are? What do we know and what do we not know?
- How do we incorporate what we don't know?
- Does that make us fearful?
- Unconscious bias can be a way of keeping ourselves safe from what we do not understand
- Fight, flight or freeze

Daniel Kahneman

- Kahneman further developed the concept of fast thinking and slow thinking
- Fast thinking – our emotional responses and thoughts, this is where our stereotypes and perceptions sit
- Slow thinking – a more reflective process which allows us to separate out some of our unconscious processes by bringing them into consciousness

Howard Ross

‘People can be consciously committed to egalitarianism, and deliberately work to behave without prejudice, yet still possess hidden negative prejudices and stereotypes. When encountering a person for the first time, our brains automatically make note of detectable human differences. But, if we are hardwired to discriminate, are we all doomed? The answer is a resounding no.’

Diversity, Inclusion and the Concealed Mind (Part 1)

Howard Ross, 2012

More from Ross...

‘An awareness of unconscious bias allows and requires us to fundamentally rethink the way we approach leadership, training, organizational policy and culture on a number of different levels. Organizations have focused a great deal on finding ways for people to ‘get’ diversity. ‘Getting it’ on a conscious level may have little or no impact on our unconscious beliefs, and more importantly, on our behaviour’

Remember ...

- These beliefs are in our unconscious and we may not always realise they are there
- The behaviours associated with them are often driven by lack of understanding
- Unconscious bias can lead to misunderstanding and a breakdown in relationships

Impact in the workplace

- If we are unaware of our biases, how can we treat everyone fairly?
- Unconscious bias can create a set of circumstances where choices are made that make no sense, but are driven by prejudices
- Each of us has a group of people that we consciously feel uncomfortable with, even though we know that this cannot be justified.

What do you think about ways to mitigate against unconscious bias?

- Now you have a chance to think about unconscious bias what do you think?
- Work in pairs to see if you can come up with some ideas about how you can guard against your own unconscious biases having a negative impact on your interactions with people
- We will pick out the key themes as a large group

Steps for dealing with unconscious bias

Six conscious steps to help you 'check in' with your own unconscious bias:

1. Tell the truth to yourself and notice what influences your decisions
2. Gather information about yourself
3. Stretch your comfort zone

4. Stimulate your curiosity about others
5. Expand your constellation of input
6. If you mess it up, clean it up

So what?

- In your pairs, think about how you can change your practice to mitigate against allowing your unconscious biases to influence your perceptions of others
- Come up with one thing that you can commit to doing as a result of this session

Any questions or comments?

