

# **Exploring Reflections and Conversations of Breaking Unconscious Racial Bias**

**Sydney Spears Ph.D., LSCSW**

# **Race the Power of an Illusion: The Difference Between Us**

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7\\_YHur3G9g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7_YHur3G9g)

## **Racial Prejudice**

Intergroup preconceptions- attitudes & emotional responses

## **Racial Stereotypes**

Cognitive component of intergroup bias- → negative & positive

## **Unconscious Racial Bias**

Automatic hidden reactions to racial material in favor of or against a person or group that is typically unfair or harmful

# **Stories of Blindspots**

**OUR Hidden *Unconscious*  
Bias**

# **Our Hidden Iceberg: Our Unconscious Stories**



# Neuroplasticity

- **What we experience, do, & repeatedly thinking about becomes internalized in the brain/mind as our reality.**
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- **Held in the limbic system of memory & emotion as well as areas of frontal cortex**
- **What wires together Fires together, but flexible**
- **Neural network firing—strengthens**
- **Associations and Repetition**

# **Unconscious Bias Researchers**

**Implicit Association Test (IAT)**  
**measure strength between associations**  
**Harvard, Virginia, and Washington**

**Mahzarin Bangji, Anthony Greenwald & Malcom Gladwell**

**David Amodio**  
**Neuroscientist, Researcher, and Psychologist**

**Susan T. Fiske**  
**Researcher of Psychiatry, Social Psychology**

# **Neuroscience-Based Research**

**Prejudiced reactions are linked to structures in the brain that activate rapidly**

**Mirror neurons: Dominant groups/individuals tend to mirror others less than non-dominant groups or individuals**

**Dominant → More Power & Less Empathy**



# **Racial Stereotypes**

- **Cognitive component of intergroup bias**  
**negative or positive cognitive associations**
- **Encoded/storage associations influence one's perception and behavior**
- **Supported by the anterior temporal lobes (social knowledge retrieval)**
- **Medial and dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (social impressions)**

# **Racial Prejudice and Bias**

## **Research Findings—Unconscious Racial Bias**

- **Only 12 percent of prejudice/bias expression is overt**
- **Unconscious (automatic) bias -> Can result from one situation**
- **Automatic detection of fear, threat, or mistrust**
- **Supported by the amygdala (early threat or reward processing)**
- **Fear conditioning involving the amygdala**

# Neuroscience & Bias

- Amygdala activation is frequent when subjects view members of racial outgroups mainly supported by:
- **Orbital frontal cortex (processing affective cues & judgments)**
- **Insula (visceral reaction and related emotions) higher activity**
- **Medial prefrontal cortex (empathy and social impressions)**
- **Striatum (approach response)**

# **Role of the Amygdala (Am) in Unconscious bias**

- **White subjects viewing images of black faces or mouse tracking**
- **Amygdala activation was greater in response to darker than light**
- **(Am) Response is stronger with initial or brief exposures**
- **(Am) response in some studies may show anxiety about appearing prejudiced**

# **Neuroscience & Bias**

- **Pairing an unrelated task while viewing images of racial outgroup, race will not drive the (Am) response (i.e. identifying team members, preferences)**

**Pairing social traits will activate the amygdala (i.e. age)**

**Some studies found no (Am) activation in response to racial groups**

**Methods focused on tasks rather than directly upon race**

# **Neuroscience & Bias**

**Literature suggests (Amygdala) activation is from a conditioned threat and mistrust reactivity to racial outgroups**

**Increase of bias when stressed, approved by authority, or peer pressure**

**Inconsistencies between subject's perception of prejudice and behavioral bias expression found from research measures such as the IAT**

**IAT → conceptual association, intentions, and cognitive control**

# **Shooter studies**

**University of Chicago Study  
Psychologist, Joshua Correll**

**Police officers, community members, and students playing video game**

**Whites tended to shoot armed Blacks faster than other armed Whites**

**Faster to avoid shooting an unarmed white man than unarmed White man**

**Biases register on the brain as quickly as one-fifth of a second**

# **Unconscious mind-brain Bias Regulation**

**Difficult to detect, control or change→**

**Cultural reinforcement, emotional/cognitive associations, and the subconscious—unconscious nature of the mind**

**Biased tendencies regulated from brain structures for cognitive control, perspective taking, empathy, & conflict processing, response inhibition (PFC: anterior/posterior cingulate cortex)**

**Subjects with positive attitudes toward POC showed greater activity in the left Prefrontal Cortex-**

**(cognition control, attention, and cognitive processing)**

**Top down regulation needed for regulation of automatic bias**



# **Brain-mind Hardwired Biases –Why?**

**Safety/Protection**

**Scanning the Environment**

**Certainty**

**Comfort and Inclusion**

**Sameness/similarities to self**

**Attraction to noticing novelty**

**Negativity**

**Confirmation: Evidence of personal perspective**

**Category-Making with Complexity (race, gender)**

**Patterns (quick processing)**

**Tribe/closeness**

# **Brain-mind Hardwired Biases**

- **Fast Brain (Emotional)→ Quick Generalizations w/o details**
- **Reporting-Recall→ Selective Attention**
- **Associations**
- **Repetition**
- **Default Mode Network**
- **Connection to Others**
- **Cooperation**
- **Fairness**

# **Unconscious Bias Story Mitigation**

- **Left Prefrontal Cortical activation-slow brain-reflection**
- **Common Humanity—Compassion**
- **Acknowledge your biases**
- **Self-awareness of reacting differently to certain racially diverse people**

# **Unconscious Bias Mitigation**

- **Mindfulness: Pause, notice & label your own potentially biased language and thinking: Curious about Discomfort**
- **Awareness of racial generalizations (i.e. “some”)**
- **Prior to decision-making, judgments, evaluations, or responses assess for potential racial biases**

# **Unconscious Bias Mitigation**

- **Disguise names or other racially identifying information during hiring**
- **Considering another's POV or a check-in buddy**
- **New linkages/associations → Positive traits**
- **Challenge stereotypes and racial biases**

# **Unconscious Bias Mitigation**

- **Increase exposure interpersonal cross-racial experiences**
- **Common humanity, self-compassion, and compassion for others**
- **Challenge organizational racial explicit and implicit biases (policies, procedures, communication, practices)**
- **Notice what our children are absorbing**