

'Implicit Bias' packet

2 FREE issues of Forbes

Log in | Sign up | Connect <

> | Help





Michael Morris and Susan Fiske

11/12/2009 @ 8:56PM

The New Face Of Workplace Discrimination

Discrimination at work has come a long way in recent decades. It has learned to conceal itself even from those who make it happen. But it's still there, despite decades of activism, legislation and human resources programs to counter it and to promote an appreciation of diversity.

Why is it so stubborn? Part of the problem is that we're used to thinking that all prejudice against stereotyped groups—whether based on race, creed, culture, gender, age or sexual orientation—looks alike. Most laws, policies and personal efforts to prevent stereotypes from affecting decisions are premised on the traditional view that prejudice arises from strongly negative attitudes and overtly derogatory beliefs about social groups or categories.

Emerging evidence in social psychology and neuroscience reveals, however, that prejudice comes in qualitatively different forms that have to be managed in different ways. In fact, the kinds of prejudice faced by most groups don't fit the traditional image. A recent Columbia Business School conference, "Inclusive Leadership, Stereotypes, and the Brain," brought together business leaders and academic researchers to share some of the new wisdom about the psychology of prejudice and the new ways that firms such as Altura Capital, Ernst & Young and Goldman Sachs have worked to become more inclusive.

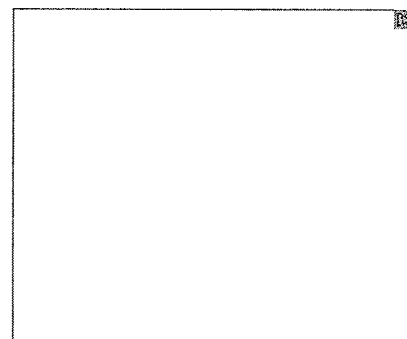
In the keynote presentation at the conference, Susan Fiske, a Princeton University psychologist (and one of the authors of this article), presented her finding that people judge others on two fundamental characteristics: warmth and competence. Warmth is a matter of positive or negative intentions. Another person is either friend or foe, with you or against you. Competence involves that person's effectiveness: He or she is either capable or not of realizing those intentions. Fiske's research across many countries has found that a group's place in the social structure predictably determines those assessments, which in turn determine our sometimes unconscious emotional responses and ultimately our discriminatory behavior toward members of a group. What's most striking about this view is that it identifies four different kinds of prejudice that can be destructive to workplace inclusiveness.

The four kinds of prejudice appear in the two-by-two quadrants made by crossing the model's dimensions of perceived warmth and competence. The model captures purely positive and negative prejudice as well as some more subtle forms of ambivalent prejudice. Groups such as the middle class fall into the high-warmth, high-competence quadrant. Members of groups seen this way evoke admiration and approach responses that in the workplace translate into getting hired and mentors. While such responses are no doubt warranted



WATCH SUCCESS STORY

Member FDIC



for many middle-class people, for others they amount to undeserved favoritism. In direct contrast, groups perceived as low-warmth, low-competence, for example in the United States groups such as homeless people and undocumented immigrants, evoke disgust and an urge to avoid them.

The ways people's decisions can be affected by the differing emotions evoked by these two types of groups were elucidated by studies presented at the conference involving functional magnetic resonance imaging of brain activity. Lasana Harris, a researcher at New York University, described how he had presented research participants with ethical dilemmas such as a crisis decision about train routing in which the only way to save the lives of a group of people would involve killing a specific single person. When that person was described as homeless rather than middle-class, the participants were more likely to decide to take the action that would kill him.

Moreover, Harris found, homeless vs. middle-class individuals evoked less activity in participants' brain centers associated with empathy or mind-reading. They also evoked fleeting micro-expressions of disgust and contempt, signs of implicit emotional reactions under the surface of participants' conscious thinking about the decision. Such findings confirm what many businesses have been realizing, that contemporary discrimination is often less a problem of overt derogatory beliefs than of implicit emotions that can tip decisions about people when there is no clear right answer.

The most novel observations from Fiske's work involve ambivalent prejudice. High-warmth, low-competence stereotypes, such as those of the elderly or the disabled, engender emotional responses based on pity, which produce behaviors that both help and harm.

A manager who views a new employee as disabled may feel extra motivation to help that person learn the job's tasks, yet may also reveal an expectation of low competence. Such a patronizing response could not be more different from the outright antipathy traditionally associated with prejudice, yet it can be just as harmful in the workplace.

The final quadrant in the model is another kind of ambivalent prejudice characterized by a different emotion. Groups perceived as low-warmth and high-competence, including, in the U.S. Asians and Jews, elicit envy, which combines admiration for what the group has attained with a desire to take it from them given the chance. As Fiske explained in her presentation, the (biased) perception is that these socioeconomically ascendant groups have achieved their success by elbowing their way to the top at the expense of others. They are respected for their apparent competence but resented and sometimes sabotaged for their alleged lack of warmth.

Aren't such prejudices anachronistic? Sure, in terms of the conscious beliefs that most managers endorse. Yet that doesn't make us immune to what we have absorbed from the popular culture. Prejudice in the workplace today takes the form of exclusion or overt hostility far less often than it did in our parents' or grandparents' time. It hides away instead in unconscious emotions of admiration, disgust, pity or envy that can color managers' everyday judgments and evaluations of other people.

Discrimination may be ever so slight, yet many of us have seen its effects. Two individuals of the same experience and capabilities but different backgrounds can be nudged along very different paths. Fiske explained that even slight favoritism accumulates to build dramatic discrepancies, "At every decision point in a person's career, these tiny biases multiply like compound interest," she said. (Moreover, there are few legal remedies for victims of this kind of bias, Susan Sturm, a professor at Columbia Law School, pointed out at the conference.)

Which all leads to a big challenge for managers: How do you address subtle instances of bias that are difficult to identify? One clear implication is that

diversity efforts focused merely on recruiting entry-level employees from a broad spectrum of ethnic, nationality and class backgrounds—what Laura Liswood, a senior adviser to Goldman Sachs, called the “Noah’s Ark approach”—are destined to fail.

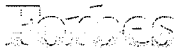
The problem is that discrimination, largely unintended and largely invisible, occurs in everyday activities such as task assignments, informal mentoring and performance appraisals. Liswood conducted focus groups of finance-industry professionals who were a mix of white men, white women, nonwhite men and nonwhite women. She found that the white men tended to believe their firms were meritocracies, but all the other groups cited many kinds of discrimination they had experienced and observed.

Why hadn’t the white men seen that? As Liswood said, those who thrive in a workplace that has subtle inequities tend not to notice that they are advantaged. When diversity efforts focus exclusively on recruiting, the result is too often that the firm hires people because they are different but then fails to promote them—precisely because they are the not the same.

So how can we as managers monitor our prejudicial impulses and prevent them from guiding our behavior? A good first step is to become aware that prejudice comes in different forms. We may act with prejudice toward groups that we think or feel positively about in some ways. Conversely, the people we mentor of different backgrounds will experience the same workplace differently, depending on the warmth and competence associations imposed on them because of their backgrounds.

Finally, we may need to acknowledge having been favored or given the benefit of the doubt ourselves because of implicit evaluations, more than we’d like to admit. In the business world, inclusive leadership means venturing beyond one’s own perspective. It’s not just a matter of fighting blatant, intentional acts of discrimination. That’s the easy part.

Michael Morris is the Chavkin-Chana professor of leadership at Columbia



New Posts

Most Popular

Lists

Video

Taylor Swift Vs. Katy Peri Africa's 50 Richest

Wisdom From The Jedi



*professor of psychology at Princeton University and received a 2009-'10
0* *veim Award for writing about the emotions of envy in people's social comparisons and scorn in their downward comparisons.*

Tweet

- 13 **Leadership Development** ▶ **Top 10 Leadership Qualities**
- Leadership Skills** ▶ **Team Building Activities**
- 0 **Management Chart** ▶ **10 Best Leadership Books**
- Leadership Skills Test** ▶ **Developing Leadership Skills**

5 *its are turned off for this post.*

G+

Tweet

13

115

G+

5

0

115

[Report Corrections](#)

[Reprints & Permissions](#)



Helping Courts Address Implicit Bias

4) Does Implicit Bias matter much in the real world?

A recent meta-analysis of 122 research reports found that one implicit measure (the IAT) effectively predicted bias in a range of relevant social behaviors, social judgments, and even physiological responses ($r = .274$; **Greenwald, Poehlman, Uhlmann, & Banaji, 2009**). Implicit bias can influence a number of professional judgments and actions in the “real world” (see **Jost, Rudman, Blair, Carney, Dasgupta, Glaser & Hardin, 2009**) that may have legal ramifications.

Some particularly relevant examples are:

Police Officers: The Decision to Shoot

Police officers face high-pressure, high-risk decisions in the line of fire. One seminal research report reveals that these rapid decisions are not immune to the effects of implicit biases. Specifically, college participants in this study played a computer game in which they needed to shoot dangerous armed characters as quickly as possible (by pressing a “shoot” button), but decide not to shoot unarmed characters (by pressing a “don’t shoot” button). Some of the characters held a gun, like a revolver or pistol, and some of the characters held innocuous objects, like a wallet or cell phone. In addition, half of the characters were White, and half were Black. Study participants more quickly chose to shoot armed Black characters than armed White characters and more quickly chose not to shoot unarmed White characters than unarmed Black characters. They also committed more “false alarm” errors, electing to shoot unarmed Black characters more than unarmed White characters and electing not to shoot armed White characters more than armed Black characters (**Correll, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2002**).

This research was inspired by the 1999 New York City shooting of Guinean immigrant Amadou Diallo: Police officers fired 41 rounds and killed Diallo as he



Helping Courts Address Implicit Bias

pulled out a wallet. Other studies produced similar results with police officers and community members, and also showed that training and practice can help to reduce this bias (e.g., **Correll, Park, Judd, Wittenbrink, Sadler, & Keesee, 2007; Plant & Peruche, 2005; Plant, Peruche, & Butz, 2005**).

Physicians: Treatment Decisions

Physicians routinely make crucial decisions about medical care for patients whose lives hang in the balance. In the face of such high stakes, it may be surprising to think that automatic associations can unknowingly bias professional decision-making. One study showed that the implicit racial biases of ER physicians predicted fewer thrombolysis treatment recommendations when the patient was described as Black as opposed to White (**Green, Carney, Pallin, Ngo, Raymond, Iezzoni, & Banaji, 2007**). The implicit racial biases of White physicians also seem to play a role in predicting how positively or negatively Black patients respond to the medical interaction (**Penner, Dovidio, West, Gaertner, Albrecht, Daily, & Markova, 2010**), which might lead to a greater incidence of malpractice lawsuits (cf. **Stelfox, Gandhi, Orav, & Gustafson, 2005**).

Managers: Hiring Decisions

When screening a pool of job candidates, hiring managers must review hundreds if not thousands of resumes of qualified applicants. Studies show that interview and selection decisions reflect bias against minorities (e.g., **Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000; Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Ziegert & Hanges, 2005**). In one such study, hiring managers were three times less likely to call highly qualified Arab job candidates in for an interview compared to equally qualified candidates of the racial majority. Interestingly, the implicit racial bias scores of hiring managers predicted their likelihood of offering callbacks to the Arab job applicants (**Rooth, 2010**).



Helping Courts Address Implicit Bias

Judges and Jurors: Capital Punishment and Sentencing

If implicit biases can affect both the intuitive, split-second decisions of police officers and sway the more deliberate decisions of physicians and hiring managers, it stands to reason that judges and jurors may exhibit similar tendencies. Indeed, one archival study of 600 death-eligible cases in Philadelphia appears to support this possibility. Researchers identified all cases (n=44) in which a Black male defendant was convicted of murdering a White victim and presented a photograph of each defendant to participants, who in turn rated each defendant on how “stereotypically Black” he appeared to be. Stereotypicality of appearance predicted death penalty sentencing outcomes: 57.5% of those judged as more stereotypically Black were sentenced to death, compared to 24.4% of those who were perceived as less stereotypically Black (**Eberhardt, Davies, Purdie-Vaughns, & Johnson, 2006**). Eberhardt and colleagues explain this effect in the context of other empirical research (**Eberhardt, Goff, Purdie, & Davies, 2004**) that demonstrates a tendency to implicitly associate Black Americans with crime. Other studies further illustrate racial biases in the context of detain-release decisions, verdicts, and sentencing (e.g., **Gazal-Ayal & Sulitzeanu-Kenan, 2010; Sommers & Ellsworth, 2001**).

Voters and Other Decision-Makers

Other research also shows that implicit racial biases can predict voting intentions and behavior. In one study of 1,057 registered voters, pro-White implicit bias scores predicted reported intent to vote for McCain over Obama a week before the 2008 U.S. Presidential election (**Greenwald, Smith, Sriram, Bar-Anan, & Nosek, 2009**). Another study found that, after controlling for explicit prejudice, voters who were more implicitly prejudiced against Blacks were less likely to vote for Obama and more likely to abstain from the vote or vote for third party candidates (**Payne, Krosnick, Pasek, Lelkes, Akhtar, & Tompson, 2010**). Implicit biases may, in particular, help “tip the scales” for undecided decision-makers (e.g., **Galdi, Arcuri, & Gawronski, 2008**).

6) What can people do to mitigate the effects of Implicit Bias on judgement and behavior?

Once people are made aware of their own implicit biases, they can begin to consider ways in which to address them. Scientists have uncovered several promising implicit bias intervention strategies that may help individuals who strive to be egalitarian:

- Consciously acknowledge group and individual differences (i.e., adopt a multiculturalism approach to egalitarianism rather than a color-blindness strategy in which one tries to ignore these differences)
- Routinely check thought processes and decisions for possible bias (i.e., adopt a thoughtful, deliberative, and self-aware process for inspecting how one's decisions were made)
- Identify sources of stress and reduce them in the decision-making environment
- Identify sources of ambiguity and impose greater structure in the decision-making context
- Institute feedback mechanisms
- Increase exposure to stereotyped group members (e.g., seek out greater contact with the stigmatized group in a positive context)

For more detailed information on promising debiasing strategies, see *Appendix G in Casey, et al. (2012)*.

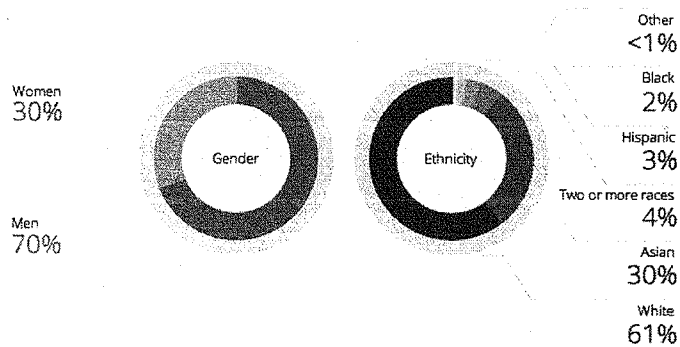


Ellen Huet Forbes Staff

I write about technology and how it affects us.

TECH 11/02/2015 @ 10:00AM | 8,398 views

Rise Of The Bias Busters: How Unconscious Bias Became Silicon Valley's Newest Target

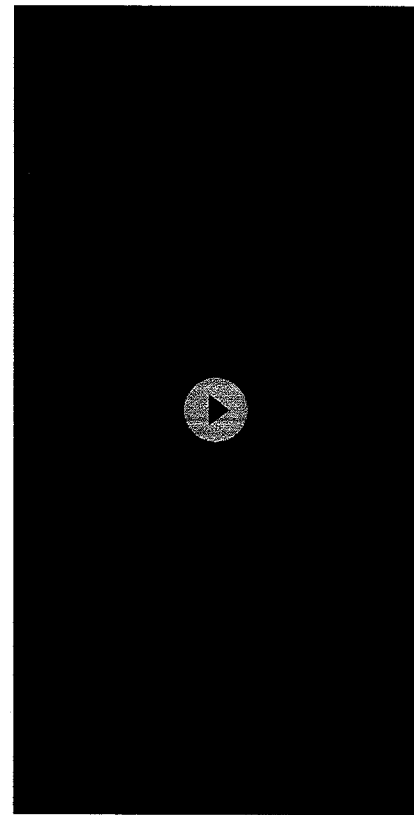


* Data from Jan 2014 - Gender data are global, ethnicity data are US only
** See our EEO-1 report for more information

Google's first set of diversity statistics, released in May 2014, set off an avalanche of similar disclosures from its Silicon Valley peers. Now, with the clock ticking, companies are hoping that ridding themselves of unconscious bias will improve their numbers. (Photo: Google)

Jon Bischke couldn't have timed it better. He was traveling in New York City to pitch the newest product to come out of his startup, Entelo: a service that scrapes the web to help companies find a diverse set of job candidates, released just three days earlier. When he stepped out of his hotel room that morning, he glanced down at the USA Today and gaped at its front page. It was May 30, 2014, and Google had revealed its pitiful workforce diversity numbers and pledged to improve them. Hours later, his phone was buzzing with calls from NPR and the [Washington Post](#).

Bischke couldn't have known it that day, but that was just the beginning. Before Google's move, most Silicon Valley companies resisted the idea, calling their diversity reports "trade secrets." (Intel and HP were notable exceptions.) Once Google changed its mind, though, everyone else tripped over themselves to follow suit. Facebook and Yahoo opened up in June, Twitter in July, Apple in August. In the past year and a half, the ritual has even spread down to hot private companies like Slack, Pinterest,



Pandora and Indiegogo. Most had the same skew: women held about a third of all jobs, and even fewer in technical and leadership roles. Asian workers were far overrepresented with about a third of jobs, while black and Hispanic workers had just a percent or two. The accompanying promises were so similar it's almost a joke: Here are our not-great stats. We're not where we want to be. We still have work to do.

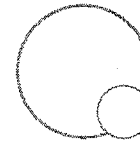
The clock started ticking. "Everyone expected Google to release its numbers the next year and the next year," Bischke said. "So it changed the conversation from, 'We're doing all these nice things around diversity' to, 'If we announce 20% this year, and a year from now we announce 19%, can you imagine the press storm?' ... So all these companies now have a huge incentive to improve."

But how? Google provided another trend-setting answer to that a few months later: unconscious bias. The search giant revealed it had put more than half of its then-50,000 employees through workshops on how to understand and stop unconscious bias, which is the set of deep-in-the-brain automatic preferences that almost all humans have. Unconscious bias influences your decisions in way you can't notice and can't control. It's what makes people who consider themselves champions for women in the workplace rate a man's resume as more qualified than the same resume with a woman's name on top. It explains, in part, how a company of well-educated, well-intentioned people could still end up hiring mostly young, white and Asian men.

The idea that you can methodically stamp out unconscious bias (also called implicit or hidden bias) has caught fire with tech companies because it's relatively new, data-driven and blameless – everyone is told they have it and can't avoid it, so no one is singled out or gets defensive. It's a vast improvement on the years when diversity training amounted to lawyers telling managers what to do to cover their backs from lawsuits, said Freada Kapor Klein, a longtime diversity advocate and partner at the Kapor Center for Social Impact. In truth, most of the old methods don't work. A 2009 review of hundreds of studies showed that the effects of most diversity efforts, including trainings, remain unknown, and a 2006 study looking at data from 708 private companies found that diversity trainings didn't produce more diverse workforces. It was time to try something new.

In the past year and a half, demand for bias-busting solutions, in the form of consulting firms and anti-bias hiring software, has shot through the roof. Vying to become the new leaders in the \$8 billion-a-year diversity training industry are hot consultants with waitings lists and at least a dozen software startups selling tech tools that promise more diverse ranges of candidates and less biased job descriptions. Venture capitalists have poured almost \$50 million into the sector, and many companies are just getting started. In the unconscious bias training video that Google released a year ago, its director of people analytics Brian Welle said, "We're probably the vanguard of what's going to happen in this space." He can drop the "probably" now.

Highest Paid Female CEOs



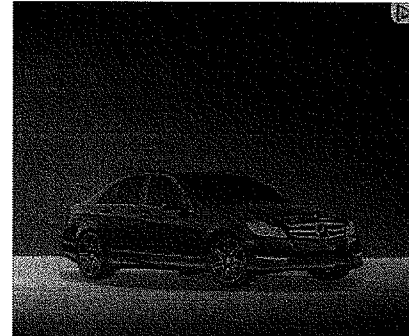
Marissa Mayer
Yahoo! Inc.



Total Compensation: \$42.1 M













[View The List >](#)

PRESENTED BY



Critics of this new boom worry that companies are jumping on unconscious bias training without making sure it's being deployed correctly. A recent study even shows that trainings can backfire and make people more likely to stereotype because they're told everyone has bias. That makes it seem more socially acceptable and lessens the motivation to avoid it. And companies are paying millions of dollars for consultants and software products but aren't doing controlled tests to see whether they're producing the advertised effect. In its eagerness to embrace the unconscious bias lifestyle, is Silicon Valley ignoring the possibility that it doesn't work – or might make things even worse?

For unpleasant words and for African American children's faces, mark in the circle to the left. For everything else (pleasant words and European American children's faces) mark in the circle to the right. Start at top left, go from top to bottom doing all items in order, then do the second column. At bottom right, record the elapsed time in seconds.

unpleasant or Afr. Am. faces	pleasant or Eur. Am. faces	unpleasant or Afr. Am. faces	pleasant or Eur. Am. faces
<input type="radio"/> disaster <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> agony <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>  <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>  <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> hatred <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> smile <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>  <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>  <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> honest <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> sincere <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>  <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>  <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> grief <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> crash <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>  <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>  <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> lucky <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> diamond <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>  <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>  <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> peace <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> sweet <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>  <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>  <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> rotten <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> tragedy <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

A paper version of the implicit association test, which measures unconscious bias. Most people finish this test faster (or make fewer errors) when pleasant words are put on the same side as white faces. People have taken the online version of the test more than 16 million times, and it can be tweaked to measure bias against certain gender, races, ages and other groups. (Photo: *Blindspot*)

Tony Greenwald, a University of Washington psychology professor, started conducting unconscious bias research in 1994, when diversity programs were mostly point-and-blame. Some employees were bigoted while others were enlightened, trainings said. No one believed themselves to be racist or sexist, though, and overt discrimination was becoming rarer. Greenwald wanted to measure subtle bias instead. He developed the implicit association test, a five-minute speed exercise that cuts through your conscious ideas of your own biases to show you what is happening below the surface.

The implicit association test was revolutionary at the time, and it's still the cornerstone of Google and Facebook's workshops, which they released to the public. Both use the test as the opening technique to demonstrate to a room full of people that they're biased, even if they believe they're not.

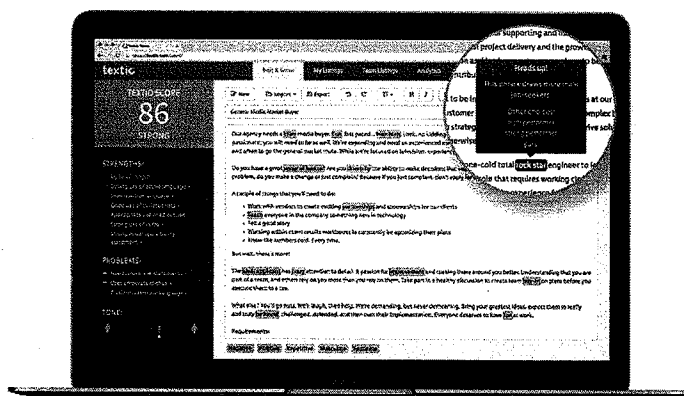
If you've never taken it before, take one now. It's deceptively simple: you're given two categories of words to sort into left or right buckets as quickly as you can. The innocuous example

gives test-takers a mix of words that are either insects or flowers, and either pleasant (“heaven, cheer”) or unpleasant (“hurt, poison”). Test-takers can quickly put flowers and pleasant words to the left and insects and unpleasant words to the right. When they’re told to sort flowers with unpleasant words and insects with pleasant words, however, they trip up – they take longer or make more errors. Because most people associate flowers with pleasant feelings, the first setup is easier. When switched, there’s “no mental glue available” to hold insects and happy feelings together, as Greenwald put it.

When the test is applied to sorting across race and gender instead of flowers and insects, the results are revealing and disheartening. About 75% of people who have taken the IAT online complete the test faster when white faces are sorted alongside pleasant words, when male words are sorted alongside career terms and when women are sorted with liberal arts studies, not science and tech. It matters only a little whether you’re white or black, a woman or a man, or the order in which you sort the categories. It’s a reflection of the messages the world gives you about the way things are.

Can unconscious bias be the key to making diversity efforts work this time around? Kapor Klein is optimistic but also remembers how diversity efforts in past decades quickly became a chore. She worries that the tech industry is “on a headlong path that looks eerily familiar to previous diversity efforts, mostly in Fortune 1000 companies,” she said. “I’ve seen this movie before.”

Even Greenwald, thrilled as he is that his research is making its way into tens of thousands of workplace trainings, is skeptical. The trainings and software solutions use strategies that have been proven in lab research settings, but no one has shown yet whether they actually make workplaces more diverse in practice. “Diversity training does not have a good track record in producing effectiveness,” Greenwald said. “And there’s no indication yet that this new wave based on implicit bias will do any better.”



Startups like *Unitive* and *Textio* (shown) say they can find companies more diverse candidates by flagging and fixing language in job descriptions that might turn people away. (Photo: Textio)

If any tech companies can heal themselves of soft bigotry, it would be Facebook and Google, which have more PhDs than most small colleges and have designed their own internal bias workshops. Everyone else is scrambling for outside help – even startups that would have previously scoffed at pursuing anything but growth. “It went from zero interest, ‘we have a

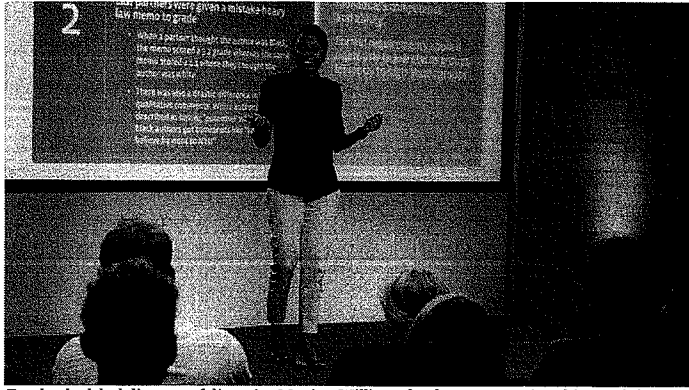
business to run,' to the newest check-the-box, me-too thing," said the Kapor Center's Kapor Klein, who has given customized talks at a couple dozen tech companies including Square and Yelp. Venture capital firm Kleiner Perkins Caulfield and Byers, having just emerged from Ellen Pao's month-long gender discrimination trial, brought Google's Brian Welle to train 150 of its portfolio CEOs this summer. The Stanford Clayman Institute for Gender Studies' executive director Shelley Correll has been doing trainings since 2003 but said demand in the last year and a half has "skyrocketed." She gets at least two requests a week for trainings and has done in-person workshops with 10,000 managers in the last two years.

Paradigm, a diversity consultant company, is less than a year old and already is in full partnerships with Slack, Pinterest and a half-dozen other companies. Their unconscious bias trainings cost \$3,000 to \$5,000 a pop for 30 to 50 people, though companies can get a volume discount. Months-long partnerships with Vaya, another consulting firm, can cost \$50,000 to \$100,000. All the consultants say they are selective about whom to work with and careful not to do trainings that will be treated as a one-and-done solution. But the demand is there. Vaya "could have made thousands of dollars a month if we had agreed to just do trainings, 75% of which would have been unconscious bias trainings, but we were fundamentally not interested in helping companies check a box," said Nicole Sanchez, who founded Vaya and joined GitHub in May.

A rash of startups, buoyed by the same rising interest in tackling bias, is betting that software can address some of training's weaknesses – usually for less money, so smaller companies can afford it. These bias-buster products focus on one step of the employee lifetime, like recruiting, hiring or retention. Want to broaden your pipeline and search specifically for candidates that are women or underrepresented minorities? Entelo's diversity product will scrape public data and make educated guesses about whether a candidate falls into that pool for about \$12,000 per recruiter per year. Piazza Careers will let you comb through college students to nab fresh hires in particular categories as well, for anywhere from \$15,000 to \$150,000, depending how many you're aiming for. Want to make sure your job descriptions aren't turning away certain groups with words like "rockstar" or military analogies like "mission critical"? Textio and Unitive will flag them and suggest better options. Unitive, which wants to be a full-service product, also has a slick resume randomizer that prompts hiring managers to reiterate what they want most to see in a candidate before it shows them resumes – stripped of names and non-essential information that studies show can trigger bias. Want blind coding interviews, so you can recreate the famous study where blind orchestra auditions led to a huge jump in the number of female musicians? GapJumpers and Interviewing.io are already on it.

Kapor Klein and others see these startups as the first wave of powerful sea change in using artificial intelligence and big data to make hiring less biased. "The best of these tech startups ... get a new set of candidates through the first hurdle," she said. "Then, the impression is set that this person aced the first one or two sets of the hiring process." It doesn't solve everything. That impression still has to live side-by-side with someone's

appearance and background once they move further in the process. But it can be an important head start – one that the startups hope will translate into many paying clients.



Facebook global director of diversity Maxine Williams leads an unconscious bias training workshop that Facebook made available to the public online in July. (Photo: Facebook)

As tantalizing as unconscious bias training is, it faces serious limits – ones that companies might be choosing to ignore. Google and Facebook released their trainings publicly despite saying there's no evidence yet they led to increased diversity. Sanchez said she's had many firms come and ask her just to have a training session with no follow-up – “that's a red flag,” she said. Google's Welle admitted that the company's unconscious bias training is more explanatory and “not very practical.” Google has built a second workshop that trains people to step in when they see biased interactions, but it's just getting rolled out – only about 5% of their employees have gone through it.

The central contradiction of hidden bias training is that you can't train something you can't control. The classes suggest that you can become more objective just by learning about and thinking about your unconscious biases, but it's not that easy. “Understanding implicit bias does not actually provide you the tools to do something about it,” said Greenwald, the University of Washington psychologist. He thinks there may be another reason driving companies to do trainings: publicity. “Perhaps the main value of this training to Google and Facebook is to put a desirable appearance on their personnel activities by indicating their (commendable) awareness of problems and implying that they're doing something to effectively address the problems,” he wrote in an e-mail.

Worse than doing nothing, hidden bias training may even backfire and cause more prejudiced behavior. A [2014 study](#) from professors at Washington University in St. Louis and University of Virginia showed that telling people everyone is biased makes them more likely to act on those biases. “People tend to do whatever other people are doing,” said Melissa Thomas-Hunt, one of the paper's authors. “If we say that everyone stereotypes, the norm has become that people stereotype. Now I'm not that motivated to change my behavior because everyone's doing it.” She said the findings left diversity advocates and scholars surprised and disarmed. “This has been seen as the cure to all the ills of stereotyping and why people are not advancing,” she said. “And now to suggest that this might be flawed as a mechanism, people are caught off guard and don't know where to turn.”

Looming over this growing practice is an even bigger problem: very few firms are measuring the effects of trainings or software, and even fewer are doing it in controlled settings. Many of the software startups are so young they haven't had time to field-test their products. Instead, services like Unitive are targeting clients with 60,000 employees or more to be able to do large-scale testing within the workplace — but results won't come for months. For companies who have released their diversity numbers — and feel a pressure to show some improvement in a year — testing each new tool or training is a luxury they don't have time for. Instead, they try several tactics at once and see if numbers improve.

"I don't know that we'll ever be able to know exactly what did it for us," said Anne Toth, vice president of people and policy at Slack, which recently started doing company-wide unconscious bias training alongside several other initiatives. "But if the data indicate we're trending in a way that's positive for our company, then I think we're going to be happy with that outcome."

Some firms can't even point to a correlation between training and improvement, let alone causation. This summer, as companies started to release a second round of diversity numbers, the changes were often 1% — or no change at all. Google has been able to measure and show, using control groups, that Googlers who went through unconscious bias training felt more aware of unconscious bias and felt more motivated to stop it. But does it mean that they — or any others who are being taught about bias — are less likely to make biased decisions? Beyond a handful of positive anecdotes, there's not much evidence yet that the answer is "yes."

Follow me on Twitter at [@ellenhuet](#), find more of my stories on [Forbes](#) and send me tips or feedback at [ehuet@forbes.com](#).

RECOMMENDED BY FORBES

['It Is Time To Move On': Ellen Pao Ends Her Lawsuit Against Kleiner Perkins](#)

[World War Uber: Why The Ride-Hailing Giant Can't Conquer The Planet \(Yet\)](#)

[Google's Self-Driving Car Gradually Meets The World, Wearing Its Cutest Fa...](#)

[On Fundraising As A Female Entrepreneur: 'You Have To Ask'](#)

[25 Best Places To Retire In 2015](#)

[Surprise Galaxy S7 Leak Reveals Massive Samsung U-Turn](#)

[The World's Highest-Paid Actors 2015](#)

[10 Questions You Should Ask In A Job Interview](#)

This article is available online at: <http://onforb.es/1M6PP2d>

2015 Forbes.com LLC™ All Rights Reserved

The CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients, or customers. Visit www.csmonitorreprints.com for samples and additional information. [Order a reprint of this article now.](#)

Amid anti-Muslim backlash in US, a call for compassion

Following the attacks in Paris, anti-Islamic sentiment has surged in the US. But some are pushing a message of compassion and courage.

By Jessica Mendoza, Staff writer | NOVEMBER 18, 2015

When Zeinab Khalil first heard about Friday night's terrorist attacks in Paris, she received an anxious phone call from her mother.

"I was in New York City and my mom called me telling me to stay indoors, that it may not be safe to be outside right now," writes Ms. Khalil, a graduate student of global affairs and public policy at Yale University, in an e-mail.

But it wasn't terrorists her mother feared.

"I wear a hijab and she worries that this visible marker makes me more vulnerable to discrimination or attacks, which has certainly happened in the past," Khalil continues.

Khalil's story is emblematic of how many Muslim Americans have come to respond in the wake of high-profile terrorist attacks, when hostility tends to rise and hate crimes to spike against Muslim communities across the United States. And even as local leaders work to form pockets of tolerance and compassion throughout the nation, radical political rhetoric combined with the amplifying power of social media have only exacerbated the public's fears about Islam and those who practice it, advocacy leaders say.

"The everyday Muslim, they're thinking, 'Here we go again,'" says Edgar Hopida of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), based in Plainfield, Ind. "It's like a fire drill. It's time to hide under the table again."

The concern is hardly misplaced. Following the Paris massacres Friday night, two mosques in Florida's Tampa Bay area received threatening phone messages, one of which involved talk of a firebombing. At the University of Connecticut Saturday, someone scrawled the phrase, "killed Paris," on the door of a Muslim student's dorm room. And in an Austin, Texas suburb, leaders of a local Islamic center on Monday found a Quran torn up and covered in feces at the door of the mosque.



A member of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community of Connecticut walks past the Baitul Aman mosque in South Meriden, Conn., where police and the FBI had been investigating reports of multiple gunshots fired at the mosque during the weekend. It was empty at the time of the incident and there were no injuries. The Council on American-Islamic Relations, the largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy group in the country, reports a spike in anti-Muslim acts in the US, since the attacks in Paris. (Dave Zajac/Record-Journal via AP)

Such incidents are not exclusive to the Paris tragedy, says Mr. Hopida. "It's a cyclical kind of thing. There'll be a period of calm, and as soon as something happens [the violence] gets ratcheted up again," he says.

'I want to wear a T-shirt that says, Not in my name'

For some Muslim Americans, such responses have resulted in a near-constant struggle to dissociate themselves and their faith from the acts of extremists.

"I go to the grocery store after these attacks and I want people to know that this is not something that's part of my faith at all," says Celene Lizzio, a Muslim scholar and educator and member of the chaplaincy team at Tufts University in Somerville, Mass. "I want to wear a T-shirt that says, 'Not in my name.' "

For others, such as Khalil, there's a fear of backlash, either for themselves or their loved ones. Her sister, Aya, for instance, worries about how her two young children would perceive discrimination or acts of violence against their mother.

"This is one of my biggest fears: being physically attacked in front of my children because I wear the hijab and then having to explain to my children why that happened," she wrote in a separate e-mail. "How do you explain to a 3-year-old that people hate you because of how other people acted?"

As much as it serves as a tool for spreading empathy and compassion, social media, too, has become a platform for intolerance.

"I feel very disappointed when I see ... anti-Islamic comments online," says Irfan Rhydan, an architectural designer from San Jose, Calif., who for years served as a board member at the South Bay Islamic Association. "It's very disappointing that people are thinking like that, and not trying to understand [us]. They just spew hate."

Such an environment takes a toll on individual Muslims as well as their communities, Khalil writes. "We are always then placed on the defensive, trying to protect ourselves, defend ourselves, and get through the day, instead of focusing on our work and what we love, instead of building our homes and communities."

It doesn't help that the current political climate is one that fosters divisions, advocates say.

The Paris killings – and reports that one attacker may have had a Syrian passport – have led to a largely partisan debate about the US government's plans to resettle as many as 10,000 Syrian refugees over the next year. But even before that, critics say, presidential candidates and others had already made headlines with remarks that painted Muslims and Islam in broad, negative strokes.

"Muslim identity has been so politicized," says Catherine Orsborn, campaign director for Shoulder to Shoulder, a national initiative that promotes interfaith dialogue to end anti-Muslim sentiment. "That politicization has created this climate where people resist learning about Islam and Muslims."

That, experts warn, is exactly what terrorist groups such as the Islamic State, which took credit for the Paris attacks, seek to encourage.

"Terrorism as a strategy rests on the use of symbolic violence, particularly violence that provokes," said Randall Law, associate professor of history at Birmingham-Southern College, and the author of "Terrorism: A History," to the Monitor's Husna Haq. "And one of the most effective ways to do this is by using provocative violence that destroys the middle ground, that destroys the possibility of compromise, condominium, and negotiated settlement – the very backbone of life in a modern, multiethnic, multifaith liberal democracy."

He added, "This has become the essence of modern terrorism. And it has become a staple of radical Islamist and jihadist violence."

Data shows that the strategy is, in many ways, effective. Since 9/11, white extremists have perpetrated more than twice as many acts of domestic acts of terrorism than jihadists, according to data released in June by the Washington-based think tank New America.

Yet while the total number of religion-based hate crimes dipped by about a third between 2002 and 2014, the percentage of anti-Islamic offenses rose by about 5 percent during the same period, according to data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

In response, community and interfaith leaders are pushing a message of compassion and courage – a message they've directed as much to the general public and the country's most visible politicians as to the Muslim community.

"Freedom and equality – those are shared values" among all Americans, regardless of religion or politics, Ms. Orsborn of Shoulder to Shoulder says. "If we react to fear instead of those values, we're submitting to what those who perpetrate violence want."

"If we don't respond by upholding those values, we're allowing them to win," she adds.

Signs of support

In some ways, that message is being heard. In October, a series of anti-Muslim demonstrations set to be held nationwide fizzled, and instead inspired interfaith rallies to support the mosques being protested, the Monitor's Harry Bruinius reported.

In Oklahoma City, "people have become more public about their acceptance of Muslims," says Adam Soltani, executive director of the region's Council on American-Islamic Relations. In the wake of big tragedies, locals call, bring flowers, and even give hugs, he says.

After the Paris attacks, he adds, "there was an outpouring of love and concern" in the form of e-mails and messages from residents, other faith communities, and even the local police department.

The same is true for ISNA in Indiana, where Hopida says e-mails showing support came in following the attacks.

Other support came in more concrete forms. On Wednesday, Connecticut Gov. Dannel Malloy welcomed into the state a mother, father, and their 5-year-old from Syria after officials in Indiana objected to resettling the family there, NBC News reports.

“There’s been progress in certain areas,” Mr. Soltani says.

The challenge, he and others say, is in keeping that progress going by getting the broader public to focus on the values Muslims share with other groups, instead of those that set them apart.

At Tufts, for instance, Ms. Lizzio, the chaplain, organizes events that teaches students to broaden their perspectives. “We want to help [students] recognize the human connection before any connection to identity or politics,” she says.

To some degree, the burden rests on the Muslim community to make the effort to be heard.

“We have to make ourselves available [for dialogue],” says Nicol Ghazi, outreach coordinator at the Noor Islamic Cultural Center just outside of Columbus, Ohio. “Not everyone will take to it, but if we touch two or three people at a time, there can be a ripple effect.”

But more importantly, others say, it’s about encouraging all Americans to overcome ignorance and fear and make thoughtful decisions about the nation’s future.

“The threat is real, but we as a community should stop going by fear,” Hopida says. “We cannot let fear dictate our policies or how we treat others.”

© The Christian Science Monitor. All Rights Reserved. Terms under which this service is provided to you. Privacy Policy.