

Recognizing Race, Power, and Injustice: *More About Stereotypes*

Quick Facts Sheet

This brief fact sheet is designed as a quick introduction to implicit racial bias. It selectively highlights several key ideas of how implicit bias operates and its effects.

- Implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.
- Implicit biases are activated involuntarily, unconsciously, and without one's awareness or intentional control (see, e.g., Greenwald & Krieger, 2006; Kang, et al., 2012; Nier, 2005; Rudman, 2004a).
- Our unconscious minds handle a tremendous amount of our cognition, even though we are completely unaware of it (Mlodinow, 2012). Some data indicates that the brain can process roughly 11 million bits of information every second. The conscious mind handles no more than 40–50 of these information bits, with one estimate as low as a mere 16 bits (Kozak; Lewis, 2011; H. Ross, 2008).
- Implicit biases are robust and pervasive (Greenwald, et al., 1998; Kang & Lane, 2010; Nosek, Smyth, et al., 2007). Everyone is susceptible to them, even people who believe themselves to be impartial or objective, such as judges. Implicit biases have even been documented in children (Baron & Banaji, 2006; Newheiser & Olson, 2012; Rutland, et al., 2005).
- Implicit biases and explicit biases are related yet distinct concepts; they are not mutually exclusive and may even reinforce each other (Kang, 2009; Kang, et al., 2012; Wilson, et al., 2000).
- Because implicit associations arise outside of conscious awareness, these associations do not necessarily align with individuals' openly-held beliefs or even reflect stances one would explicitly endorse (Graham & Lowery, 2004; Nosek, et al., 2002; Reskin, 2005).
- A 2012 study showed that as pediatricians' pro-White implicit biases increased, they were more likely to prescribe painkillers for vignette patients who were White as opposed to Black. This is just one example of how understanding implicit racial biases may help explain differential health care treatment, even for youth (Sabin & Greenwald, 2012).
- Most Americans, regardless of race, display a pro-White/anti-Black bias on the Implicit Association Test (Dovidio, et al., 2002; Greenwald, et al., 1998; Greenwald, et al., 2009; McConnell & Liebold, 2001; Nosek, et al., 2002).
- In the hiring process and other decision-making occasions, allowing adequate time to make decisions is vital. Research has demonstrated that time pressures create an environment in which unconscious biases can flourish (Bertrand, et al., 2005).
- Once an implicit association is activated, it is difficult to inhibit (Dasgupta, 2013). Despite what may feel like a natural inclination, attempts to debias by repressing biased thoughts are ineffective. Due to rebound effects, suppressing these automatic associations does not reduce them and may actually amplify them by making them hyper-accessible (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000, 2007; Macrae, et al., 1994). A great way to debias is to openly acknowledge biases and then directly challenge or refute them.
- Our implicit biases are not permanent; they are malleable and can be changed by devoting intention, attention, and time to developing new associations (Blair, 2002; Dasgupta, 2013; Devine, 1989).

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