

How Does It Operate?

MYTH: I am not biased; I have diverse friends and I believe in equal treatment.

BUSTED

Actually, we all have implicit biases. Research shows that all individuals are susceptible to harnessing implicit associations about others based on characteristics like race, skin tone, income, sex, and even attributes like weight, and accents. Unfortunately, these associations can even go as far as to affect our behavior towards others, even if we want to treat all people equally or genuinely believe we are egalitarian.

MYTH: I am fully aware of my thoughts and actions, and I make all of my decisions based on facts and evidence; therefore, implicit bias does not affect my behavior.

BUSTED

By their very nature, implicit biases operate outside of our conscious awareness. Thus, it is possible that your thoughts and actions are

being influenced by implicit associations beyond your recognition. **In fact, researchers have found that sometimes implicit associations can more accurately predict behavior than explicit beliefs and thoughts.**

MYTH: I'm Black; I can't have bias against Black people. I'm also a woman, so it does not make sense that I would have implicit biases against my own sex.

BUSTED

Researchers have discovered that many Americans, regardless of race, display a pro-White/anti-Black bias on the Implicit Association Test. Similarly, some research has documented the prevalence of pro-male/anti-female implicit biases in both men and women. **This occurs because implicit biases are robust and pervasive affecting all individuals**, even children. We are all exposed to direct and indirect messages throughout the course of our lifetime that can implicitly influence our thoughts and evaluations of others.

What Can We Do About It?

MYTH: If bias is natural, there is obviously nothing we can do about it.

BUSTED

Just because bias is a natural tendency does not mean that we are helpless to combat it. Indeed, **unwanted implicit biases can be mitigated**. Researchers have demonstrated the efficacy of various intervention strategies, such as intergroup contact, perspective-taking, and exposure to counter-stereotypical exemplars. By taking the time to understand your personal biases, you can begin to mitigate their effects.

MYTH: It's a waste of time to try to mitigate my implicit biases. They do not impact anyone anyways.

BUSTED

Extensive research has documented the real-world effects of implicit biases in the realms of health care, criminal justice, education, employment, and housing, among others. For example, implicit biases can affect the quality of care a patient receives, the level of encouragement students receive from their teachers, whether or not an individual receives an interview or promotion, and more. **Implicit biases have huge implications**; thus, it is important to identify your own biases and then actively engage in debiasing techniques to address them.



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