



Mount
Sinai

*Office for Diversity
and Inclusion*

Unconscious Bias and Hiring Practices

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Learning Objectives

- Understand the science and research of unconscious bias
- Identify how bias can impact decision making in the talent acquisition and retention process
- Become aware of your own background and its impact on your perceptions
- Apply new strategies for practicing more conscious awareness and mitigating bias

What are your associations
bias and **unconscious bias**?

Why is it important to address
bias in the talent acquisition and
retention process?



Diversity & Inclusion = Innovation & Productivity

Identity diversity among teams contributes more to effective problem-solving than a team comprised of the best-performing people without identity diversity.

- NY Times, 2008



Raising Awareness = Reducing Bias

Workshops and learning for healthcare professionals that focus on the science and research of bias can reduce its impact on decision making.

- Moskowitz & Stone, 2008





Now imagine you are meeting these people for the first time – watch your thinking and note the feelings, judgements, and reactions that emerge as you view their photos.

1



2



3



4





What patterns did you notice?



Gender

Skin Tone

Ethnicity

Facial Expression

Body Type

Age

Setting

Clothing

Body Posture

Feranmi Okanlani, MD



- Assistant Professor, Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation at the University of Michigan
- Former track & field star at Stanford; experienced a spinal cord injury, paralyzing him from the chest down
- Director of “Design for the Future,” which encourages high school students to use design thinking to solve problems facing people with disabilities

Rachel Dolezal



- Former NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) Chapter President and Africana Studies instructor at Eastern Washington University
- Received national attention for self-identifying as Black, though she was born to white parents
- Changed her name to Nikechi Amare Diallo following her resignation from the NAACP
- Netflix documentary, *The Rachel Divide*, released in April 2018

Ian Harvie



- Stand-up comedian, actor and transgender man
- For years, toured and served as the opening act for comedian Margaret Cho
- Made his acting debut and is best known for his portrayal as “Dale” on the television show *Transparent*

Pratibha Patil



- Economist, Attorney, Politician and Entrepreneur
- First and only female president of India (2007 – 2012)
- Founded an engineering college for rural students, among other business endeavors



What is bias?

**What influences
our perceptions?**

Bias

A tendency or an inclination that results in judgment without question



What is Unconscious Bias?

Mental associations
without **awareness,**
intent, or control

Often conflict with our
attitudes, behaviors, and
intentions

Our unconscious biases are deeply rooted in and supported by race, class, and power based on structural divisions. If left unchecked, we and do more harm than good, despite our best intentions.



How are our biases formed?

They are formed by our experiences...

Book of Rules

Our individual guidebook of “unwritten rules” which we use to engage with the world. **These rules tell us how to think, feel, and interact with others – like a social contract.**

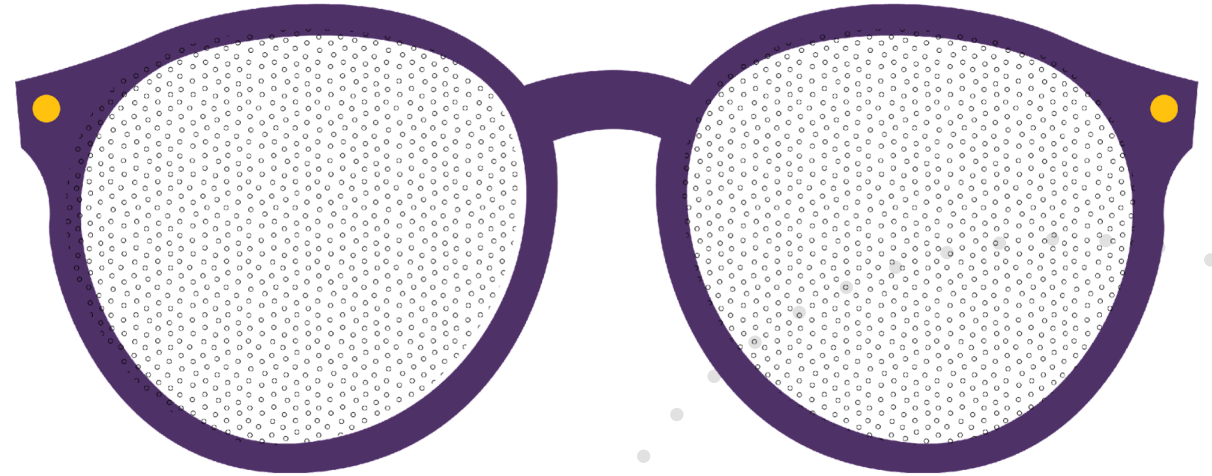
Schema

Our unique perspective based on our book of rules, real world encounters and lived experiences. **It helps us organize our knowledge and assumptions, interpret and process information, and assess what is important to us and ignore what is not.**

Our Experiences

Book of Rules: Our guidebook

Schema: Our perspective



Book of Rules + Schema = Background

The lens through which we view the world

Our unique backgrounds cause us to look at the same things, people, decision points, etc. and perceive and interpret them differently.

Our Experiences

Book of Rules

Schema

Background = The lens through which we view the world

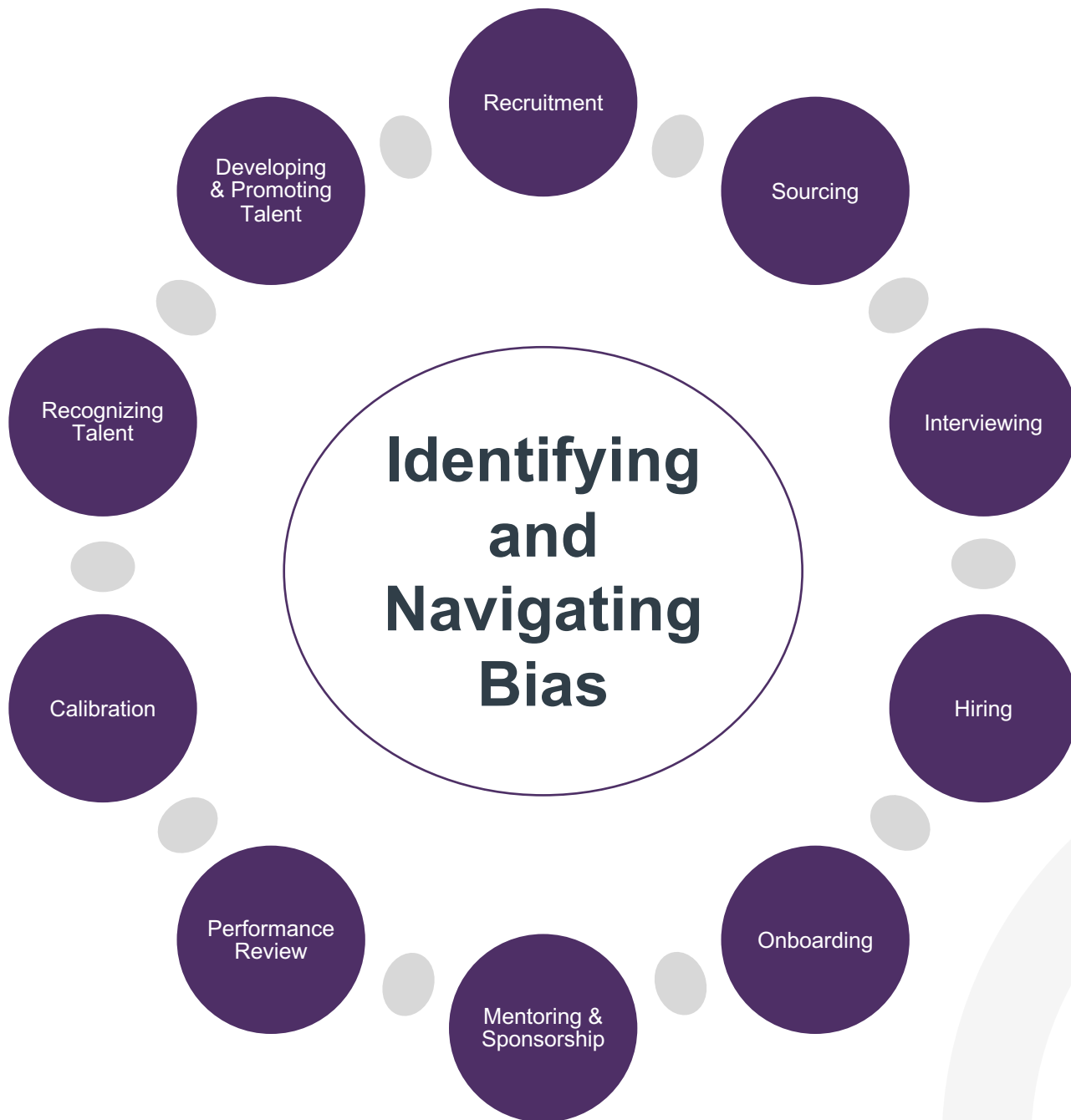
Our biases are also formed by our identities:

- Cultural Identity: Caribbean, Irish, LGBTQ+, Jewish, East vs. West Coast, etc.
- Group Identity: Gender/Gender Identity, Physicians, Nurses, circle of friends, etc.
- Individual Identity: Personal values, Personality type – Introvert/Extrovert, etc.
- Institutional Identity: Mount Sinai Health System, University, Religion, etc.

We see the world, not as it is, but as we are -- or, as we are conditioned to see it. When we open our mouths to describe what we see, we in effect describe ourselves, our perceptions, our paradigms.

— *Stephen Covey* —

**What role does bias
play in the talent
acquisition and
retention process?**

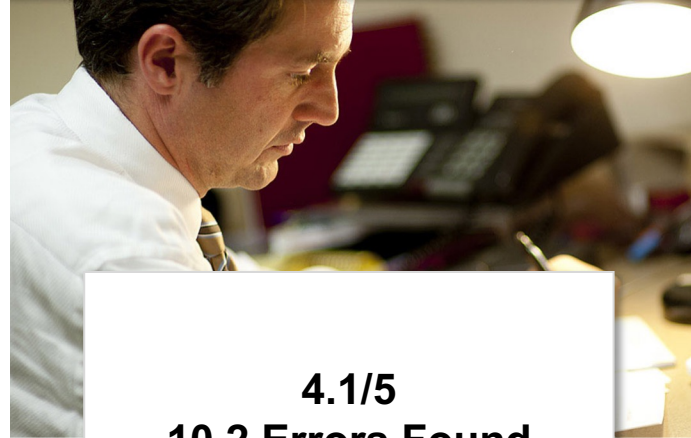


Bias may present itself at every step – consciously and unconsciously.

Examples of Unconscious Bias: Candidate Reviews

Law firm partners were sent a brief from “Thomas Meyer” with 22 spelling, grammar, technical, and analytic errors...

Half were told the candidate was white...



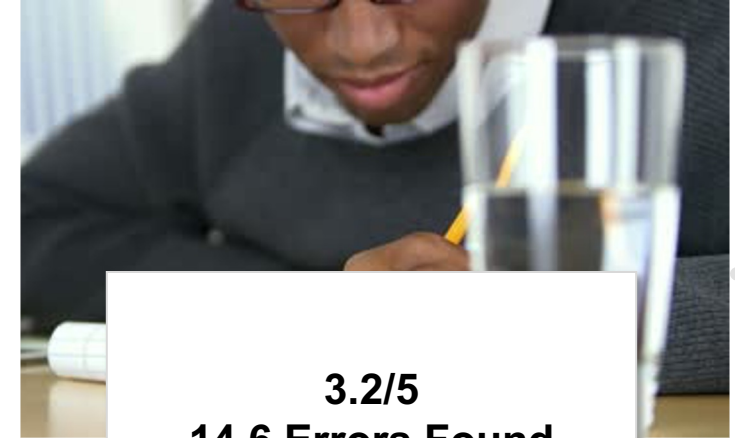
4.1/5
10.2 Errors Found

“HAS POTENTIAL”

“GOOD ANALYTICAL SKILLS”

“GENERALLY GOOD WRITER BUT NEEDS TO WORK ON...”

Half were told the candidate was Black...



3.2/5
14.6 Errors Found

“NEEDS A LOT OF WORK”

“AVERAGE AT BEST”

“CAN’T BELIEVE HE WENT TO NYU...”

Examples of Unconscious Bias: Gender and Science

Professors at Yale were given the resume of a prospective lab assistant – all information was the same, except the name...

- “John” was rated higher (4/7 versus 3.3/7)
- The average starting salary offered to “John” was \$4,000 higher
- John was also seen more favorably to hire or would be willing to mentor
- Female professors were just as biased as male professors



Examples of Unconscious Bias: Language and Accents

Researchers found that we tend to believe people more when they have accents that are similar to our own and vice versa.



Other Examples of Bias/ Unconscious Bias in the Talent Acquisition Process

- **Height:** A study of 1.3 million Swedish men found that taller men were more likely to become CEOs and to be paid more as CEOs. (Judge and Cable, 2004)
- **Weight:** A study looked at 97 applicants to Psychology PhD program; higher BMI was significantly associated with less post-interview offers. (Obesity, 2013)
- **Attractiveness:** A study detected a significant interaction between the rater's and applicant's gender; male committee members gave higher ratings to "more attractive" female applicants. (AAMC, 2016)
- **Race:** Medical School Admissions Committee Members at Ohio State University took the Implicit Association Test. All groups displayed implicit white preference. (Academic Medicine, 2017)

Why does this occur
and how can we
mitigate our biases?

Attraction to the Familiar

We support it

- We tend to like applicants who remind us of ourselves, i.e. worked in similar roles, attended the same school(s), etc.; also known as In-group Bias

We defend it

- If we share an identity attribute with the candidate, i.e. race, we believe that only he/she can say something about that identity
- We buy into stereotypes of individuals who would be “best fit” for certain roles, i.e. Security Guards, Assistants, Managers, etc.

We expect more

- At times, we are harder on applicants who share similar attributes to us

Mitigation Strategy:

Recognize and accept that you have bias. Say, “I recognize my bias with this candidate and want to acknowledge how it may impact my decision.”

Assumptions and Stereotypes

We make assumptions about the ability of candidates who:

Have disclosed something personal about their identity, i.e. LGBT, disability, mental illness, religious/spiritual faith

Are applying or are being screened/interviewed for a union versus a non-union position

Have a professional/career background with which we are not familiar or do not understand, i.e. military

Are referred to us by a certain institution and/or individual, i.e. FedCap, internal referrals, legacy candidates, etc.

Have large gaps of perceived unemployment on a resume and/or attended certain schools (i.e. Ivy League vs. city/state schools)

Mitigation Strategy:

Ask standardized questions during interviews so that you evaluate all candidates by the same standards – regardless of what they, or others, disclose.

Use of Coded Language

We do not always recognize the social meaning and impact of our word choice when considering a candidate. We may use:

“He is articulate”

“He speaks well”

**“She is (or is not)
a good fit”**

“She is sweet”

**“They have not
checked all the
boxes”**

**“They do not have
enough experience”**

“She is too quiet”

**“She is too
polished”**

**“He is a diverse
candidate”**

Mitigation Strategy:

Are you using these phrases only for certain individuals? Explain what you mean (and ask your colleagues to explain what they mean) when you use these phrases.

Groupthink

In group interviews, how our **colleagues** view the candidate may influence our own decisions.

In hiring decisions – if we are not the final decision maker – how our **supervisors/leadership** view the candidate may affect our assessment, whether we prefer the candidate or not.

Mitigation Strategy:

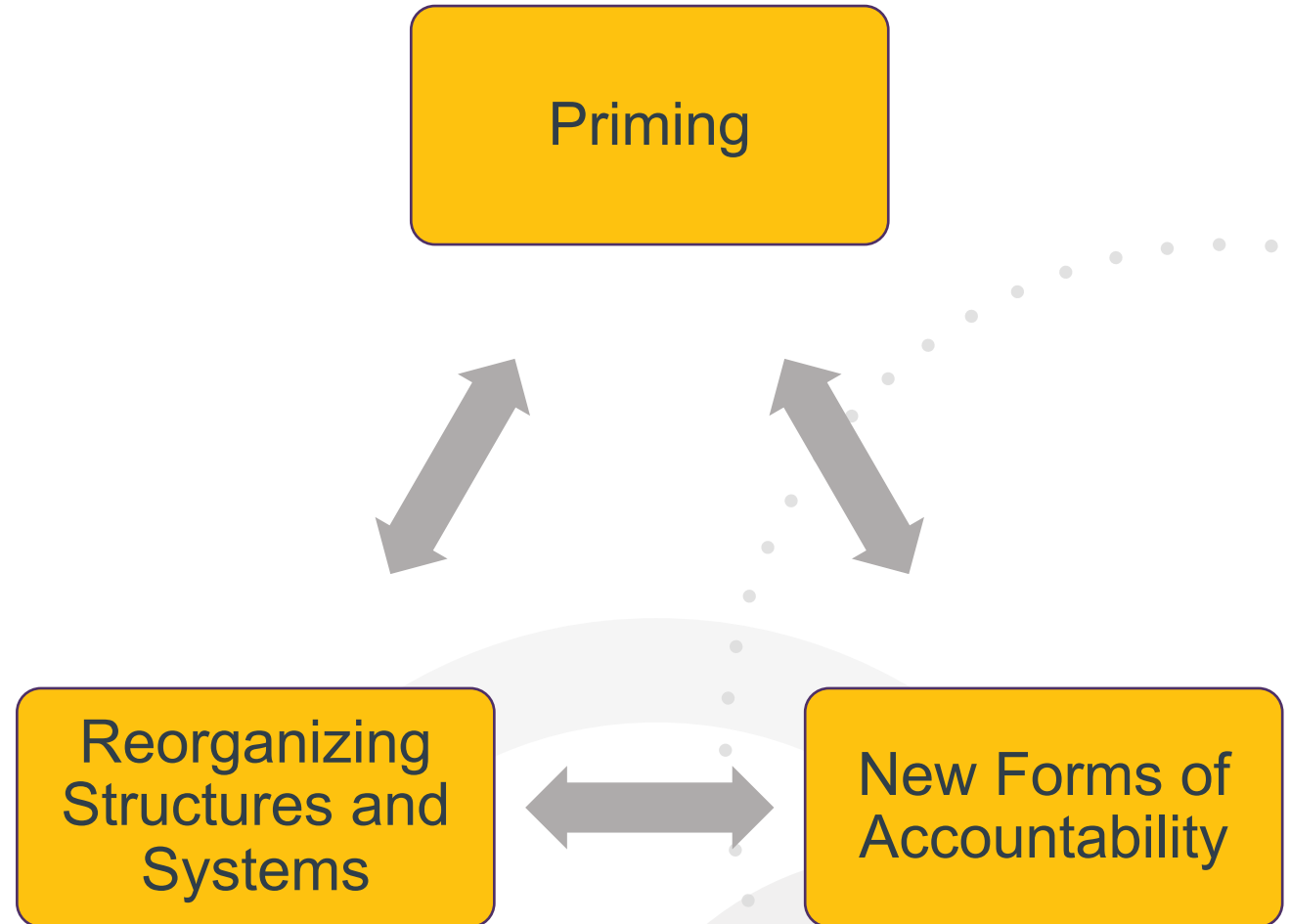
Use an anonymous voting mechanism and/or have candid discussions with leadership about your decision (supported by and based on facts) to reduce bias when making the final decision about a candidate.

Other Common Biases in Selection Committee Practices

- **Stereotype Bias:** When a reviewer places personal biases around certain issues, such as politics, religion, or certain narratives
- **Confirmation Bias:** When a reviewer creates a hypothesis in his/her/their mind and looks for ways to prove it.
- **Recall Bias/Recency Bias:** When a reviewer cannot accurately recall his/her/their opinion of a candidate based on time passed since the interview.
- **Bizarreness Effect:** When a reviewer weighs an unusual aspect of an individual's candidacy to heavily.
- **Halo Effect:** When a reviewer ignores other aspects of an individual's application because one aspect is impressive.
- **Personal Mission Bias:** When a reviewer wishes to help an applicant because he/she/they feel personally invested in said applicant's success.
- **Mood Bias:** When a reviewer's personal mood influences their assessment of a candidate.

**How may we
practice
conscious
awareness?**

Tactics that help us make more conscious decisions



Priming:

Ask yourself the following questions to bring awareness to your biases before interviewing a candidate.

1. Does this candidate's resume remind me in any way of myself?
2. Are there aspects of this resume that can potentially influence my decision in a positive or negative way? Are these aspects relevant to the position for which I am hiring?
3. Does the candidate remind me of anyone I know? Is that positive or negative?
4. What assessments have I already made about the candidate? Are these assessments grounded in solid information or are they simply my interpretations?

Reorganizing Structures and Systems:

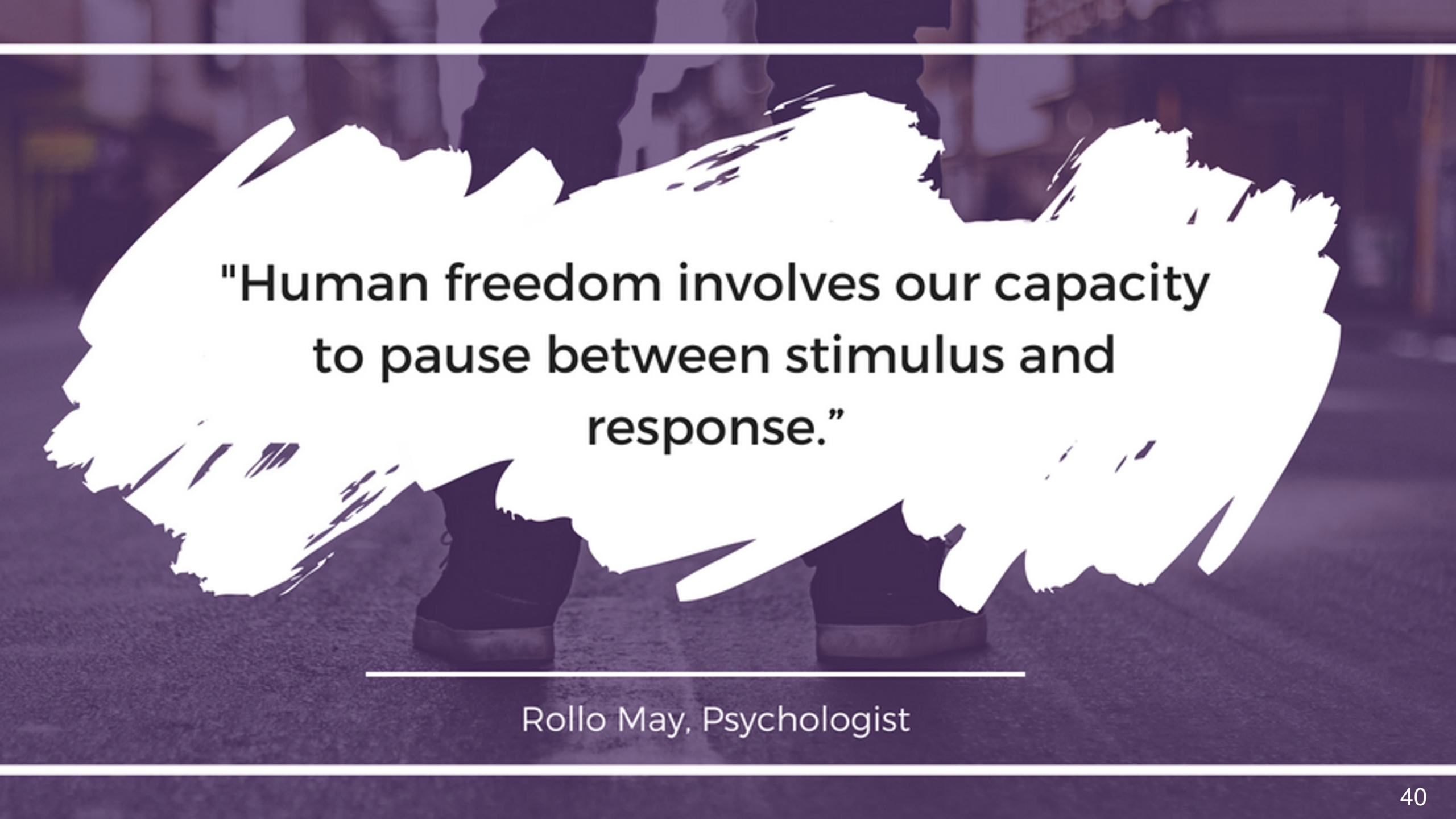
Develop and institute specific interview practices to mitigate bias when making hiring decisions.

- Be clear on the process and criteria before interviewing candidates and ensure your prioritized list of attributes matches the evaluation criteria for the job
- Create standardized questions and evaluation forms so that all persons interviewing are assessing the candidate on the same criteria
- List your top candidates before hearing the recommendations of others to reduce undue influence and increase the viable candidate pool for the position

New Forms of Accountability:

Develop metrics that will be used to identify when bias is occurring and hold colleagues accountable in the process.

- Review and evaluate hiring metrics to identify areas of improvement
- Individual metrics to consider (among various dimensions of diversity) include:
 - % of individuals who apply for a particular position
 - % of individuals who are offered an interview
 - % of individuals who accept positions
 - % of individuals who are successful in their position after six months
 - % of individuals who are promoted within five years of hire



**"Human freedom involves our capacity
to pause between stimulus and
response."**

Rollo May, Psychologist

Take a P.A.U.S.E



*A quick way to
check your reaction*

P

Pay attention

A

Acknowledge your assumptions

U

Understand your perspective

S

Seek different perspectives

E

Examine your options and
make a decision



When to P.A.U.S.E.

You have a strong emotional or physical reaction

Someone else has a strong emotional or physical reaction

You come to a complex decision very quickly based on limited data

Your group comes to a complex decision very quickly based on limited data

Action Planning: What are you committed to doing?

What are your key takeaways from today's session?



How will you use this information to address patterns of bias?

What will you do differently the next time you have to make a hiring decision?

- Identify an upcoming decision regarding a position or specific candidate
- Strategize how you may mitigate the impact of bias in that decision

Session Evaluation

Scan the
QR Code (or click
the link in the
“Chat”) to complete
the evaluation for
today’s session!



Suggested Resources

The Implicit Association Test (IAT):

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>

Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC):

<https://www.aamc.org/initiatives/diversity/322996/lablearningonunconsciousbias.html>

Office for Diversity and Inclusion (ODI)

www.mountsinai.org/about/odi

Questions & Comments

Email: diversity@mountsinai.org

Phone: 646-605-8280

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Ann-Gel Palermo, DrPH, MPH, MSHS ODI

Pamela Abner, MPA, CPXP, MSHS ODI

Shana Dacon-Pereira, MPH, MBA, MSHS ODI

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Michelle Sainte Willis, Department of Medical Education

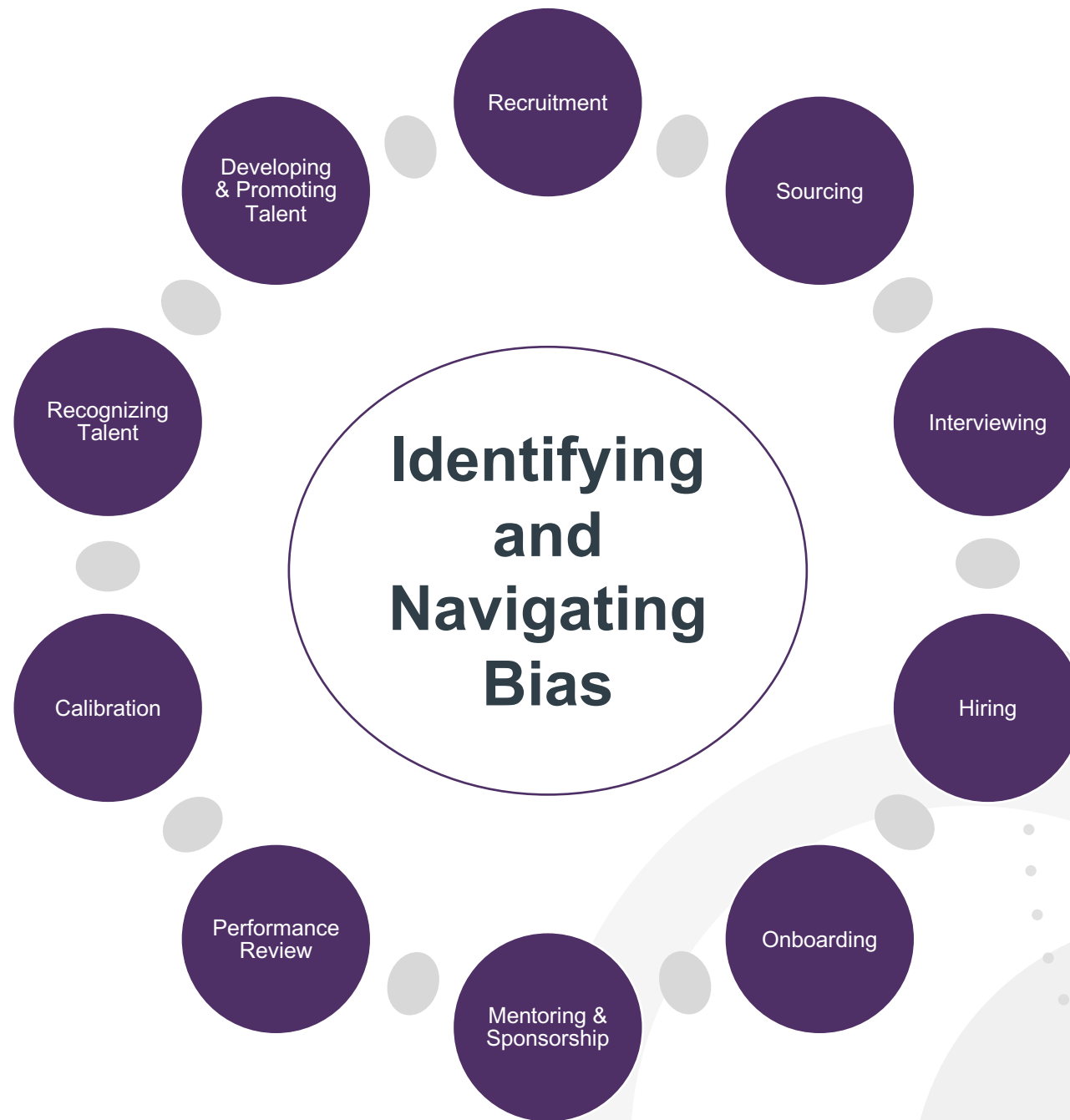
Jessica Reid-Adam, MD, MS, Department of Pediatrics

MSHS ODI Unconscious Bias Education Facilitator Team



REFERENCE GUIDE:

**Identifying and
Navigating Bias in
the Recruitment
and Hiring process**



RECRUITMENT

- Evaluate your job descriptions for bias
 - Are the job criteria clearly listed and is it clear what is required to do the job effectively versus what is merely preferred?
 - Do you include clear criteria for cultural competence and inclusion in your hiring statement?
- Ensure all your recruiters, interviewers, hiring managers and supervisors are aware of unconscious bias concepts
- Be careful of arbitrary standards that represent preferences rather than work-related competencies
- Track recruitment data to identify patterns that may reveal hidden biases

SOURCING

- Sponsor discussion sessions on sourcing topics
- Create relationships with organizations that support special needs groups (i.e. people with disabilities) that may be able to help you accommodate these individuals should you decided to hire them as employees
- Consider whether your “go to” institutions for recruitment provide you with a diverse slate of candidates
- If you use executive search firms, monitor their practices

INTERVIEWING

- Consider if there are certain triggers you use to eliminate candidates
 - Studies have shown people are strongly influenced by various identifiers
- Ask yourself (and your colleagues) the following questions:
 - Do your triggers have anything to do with the competence of the candidate?
 - Does anything about the candidate remind you of anyone (positive or negative)?
 - Are there items on the candidate's resume that you react strongly to, in particular (similarities or differences relative to you)?
 - Is there a "type" you are drawn to?

HIRING

- Observe patterns of biases before a candidate's resume even reaches your desk
- Form and utilize diverse panels for hiring; be aware of groupthink and domination by a particular individual(s)

ONBOARDING

- Develop a structured onboarding process for your department
 - Provide a cultural and logistical orientation, including “unwritten” cultural rules
 - Most people decide within the first 3-4 months whether they see a position as short- or long-term for themselves
- Avoid making premature assumptions about the person’s performance
 - Saying that an individual is “not a good fit” can often be a persona, superficial judgment and can diminish or eliminate someone whose perspective may be valuable for the organization
- Team a new employee with an existing employee to help transition into their position

MENTORSHIP AND SPONSORSHIP

- Create mentorship and sponsorship opportunities to ensure that new employees have a good chance and fair shot of being successful within the organization
 - Specialized mentoring programs, though well intended, may inadvertently reinforce negative stereotypes and biases

PERFORMANCE REVIEW

- Identify and navigate biases related to work styles, interpersonal traits, personal relationships, life styles or personal goals
 - Is my own agenda influencing my behavior in evaluating this employee?
 - Bias can occur in rated assessments because people relate to the ratings differently

CALIBRATION

- Question expectations that seem to favor dominant over nondominant behaviors, i.e. masculine over feminine leadership styles
- Challenge organizational cultural patterns that weigh one area over another

RECOGNIZING TALENT

- Explore talent beyond the “usual suspects”
 - How are the different work styles of individuals evaluated relative to the dominant work style of the organization?
 - Note that culture or personality may affect how people interact in various settings

DEVELOPING AND PROMOTING TALENT

- Develop structured career development and succession planning processes to build equity
- Encourage employees to share their professional aspirations
- Track how employees experience inclusion