

Unconscious Bias Some Reflections

Päivi Salmesvuori
Paivi.salmesvuori@helsinki.fi

Definition of bias (Poppenhaeger 2019):

- Bias is a positive or negative unconscious belief about a particular category of people.
- A bias allows quick, but sometimes inaccurate, processing of information. It often conflicts with consciously held attitudes.
- For example, on average, both men and women underestimate the scientific contributions of women.
- Similarly, on average both whites and people of colour underestimate the contributions of people of colour."
- Only when unconscious biases are allowed to influence our actions do they actually lead to discrimination.

Critical comment to applying implicit/unconscious bias:

- Risk masking broader social, structural, political barriers to women's advancement (Pritlove, Juando-Prats, Ala-Leppilampi, Parsons 2019)
- → Eija's talk: work-family balance, obs researchers without so-called traditional family, lack of mentoring, lack of role models, "the only woman in the room" phenomenon)

Women should take care of
having more women at boards
etc (Asta's talk)



- NOT !!!!
- Should be everybody's policy, support from the leadership crucial

Role models – why so important?

- The last 20 000 years (40 000 according to Meryl Streep) male leadership the norm
- Human person = a male one has been the norm
- Women's history in academia, in leadership positions short
- Role model – represents what can be done, how it can be done, who can do it
- Connects with identity, identity constructed during your whole life

Literature

- Cheryl Pritlove, Clara Juando-Prats, Kari Ala-Leppilampi, Janet Parsons: "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of Implicit Bias", *The Lancet* Vol. 393, pp. 502–504, 2019.
-
- Katja Poppenhaeger: "Unconscious Gender Bias in Academia: From PhD Students to Professors", *AIP Conference Proceedings* 2109, 1300001, 2019.