



# Welcome to a taster of Unconscious Bias: Thinking Fast and Slow at UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science, EDI Teaching and Learning Event, 12.05.21



**Dr Fionnuala Darby**



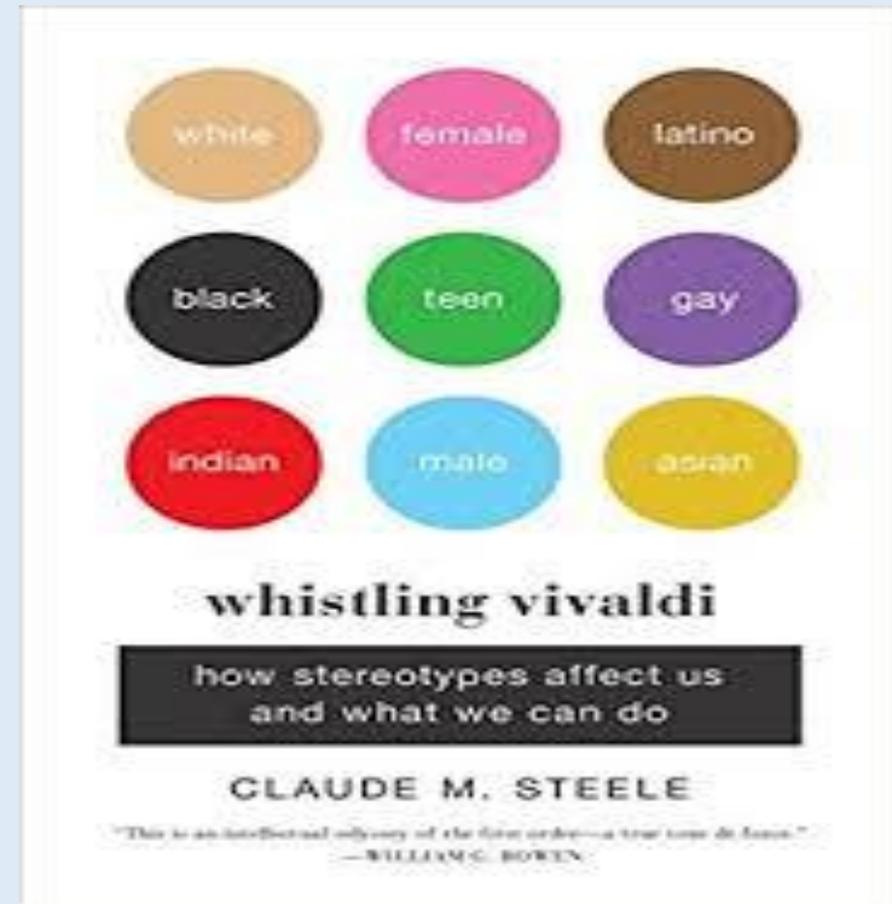
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*What is Unconscious Bias?*

*Why do we need to know about it?*

*What can we do practically in our teaching about it?*

Awareness – key concepts

Impact - influence

Dialogue – critical conversations



# Unconscious Bias – what is it?

- Our unintentional people preferences
- Our unconscious mind automatically categories people
- This allows us to make rapid decisions about people based on limited information
- How powerful is your name in securing a job offer?

Equality in workplace + Add to myFT

## Black and ethnic names have less chance of making shortlist

Bias means that well-qualified candidates struggle to get a foot in the door



Pseudonym: Kayo Anosike had better luck as alter ego Kayla Benjamin when she applied for jobs © Andrew Lunn Photography

Barney Thompson MAY 26, 2016 3

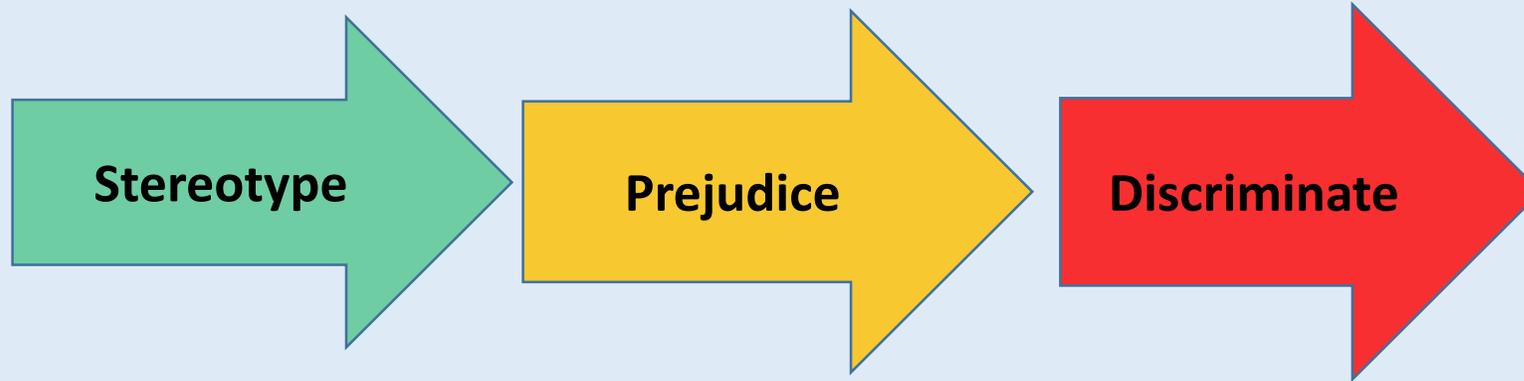
Financial Times, 26.05.16

**When Kayo Anosike embarked on a career change, she then sent out her CV to prospective employers — and heard nothing.**

**She changed her name to Kayla Benjamin. A mere 10 days after sending out her CV, she secured a new job.**

**It was only when Kayo Anosike chose Kayla Benjamin as her alter ego that she managed to get a foot in the door.**

## Unconscious Bias causes us to .....



- Rapidly categorise people into ***In-groups*** and ***Out-Groups*** based on;
  - **physical characteristics** – age, ethnicity, gender, disability
  - **similar background** – culture, nationality, education, religion, sexuality
  - **shared interests** – research, discipline, hobbies, causes
  - **similar lifestyle** – socio-economic, dress

(Bielby, 2000; Landy, 2008; Rudman, Glick, & Phelan, 2008)

# Psychological explanation

***Unconscious bias is a bias - ;***

**We are  
unaware**

**Happens  
outside of  
our control**

**Automatically  
triggered by the  
rapid processing  
of information**

**Influenced by our  
background, cultural  
environment,  
personal  
experiences, media.**

(ECU: 2013; Greenwald, Nosek & Banaji, 2003; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995)

# Affinity Bias

## The opposite of unconscious bias

- A feeling of closeness and understanding that someone has for another person because of their similar qualities, ideas, or interests.
- Commonness & Comfort = Trust
- In an organisation affinity bias can influence who you see as competent, who you hire, who you listen to, the way you provide feedback etc.

*Unconscious bias is why we don't have a diverse workplace, says Google.*



Google points to mobile video uploads - the team that built the [iOS YouTube app](#) didn't consider left-handed users when it added in mobile uploads, causing videos recorded in a left-handed person's view of landscape to appear upside-down.

# Types of Unconscious Bias



- Attribution Bias
- Confirmation Bias
- Comparison Bias
- Source Bias
- Benevolent Bias
- Halo-Horns Bias
- Primacy, Recency and Impact Bias
- Status Quo Bias
- Bias Blind Spot



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# Impacts of Unconscious Bias on Students

**Commonness** leads to **Comfort** which leads to **Trust**  
and some people being seen as more **Competent**



- Listening
- ‘Recruiting’ Students
- Student Voice (Work allocation)
- Feedback
- Informal coaching, mentoring and sponsorship



Consider any 'patterns' within the university, your school, your experience with students or working teams/groups that you are part of, when you may have experienced these 'quick assumptions'?



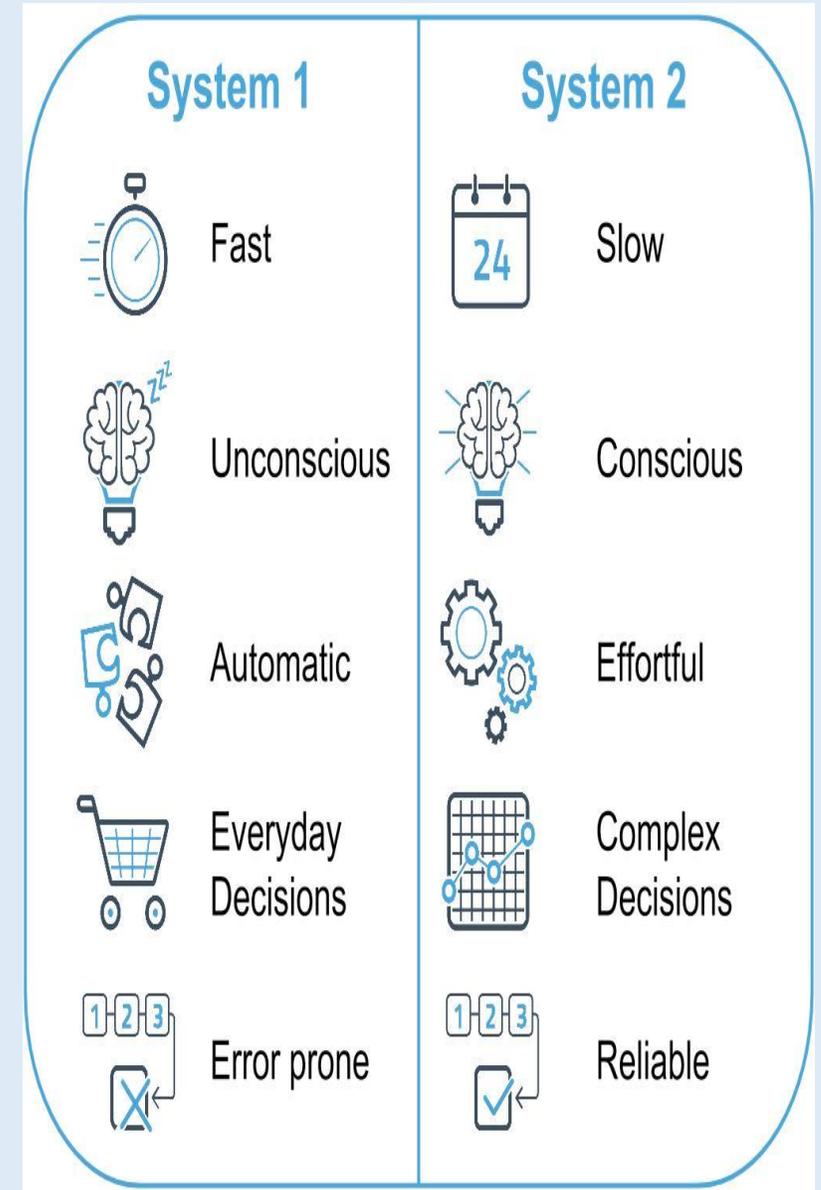
# The Dual Processing of the Brain

## Conscious Brain: System 2

- ✓ Thinks slow
- ✓ Relies on rules
- ✓ Limited processing power
- ✓  $42 \times 17 = ?$

## Unconscious Brain: System 1

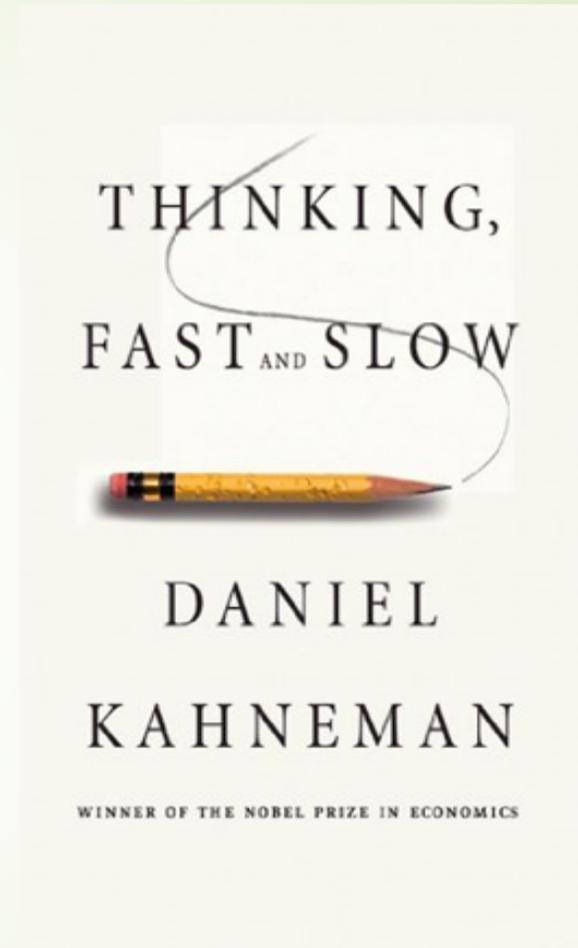
- ✓ Thinks quickly
- ✓ Massive resources
- ✓ Fight or flight response
- ✓ Rapid processing based on pigeon-holing



# Dual Processing



A bat and a ball costs €1.10  
The bat costs €1 more than the ball  
How much does the ball cost?





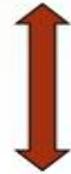
Bat

€1

Ball

Total €1.10p

€1.10



10c

€1.20

€1.05



5c

€1.10

# Micro-behaviours

**Unconscious bias operates at a very subtle level, below our awareness.**

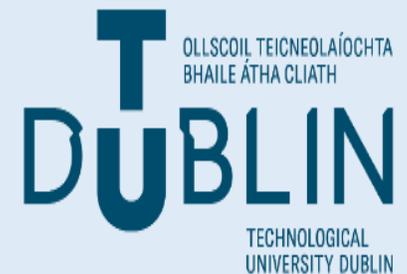
Unnoticeable micro-behaviours such as paying a little less attention to what the other person says, addressing them less warmly or talking less to them.

**We tend to be less empathetic towards people who are not like us.**

These behaviours are small and may not be picked up as discriminatory or even consciously by the person on the receiving end.

But their long-term effect can be corrosive in terms of equal access and equal opportunity.

(Rowe, 2008)



**Broadening out Unconscious Bias to height, bodyweight, beards, age, physical attractiveness, marital status etc.**



**6.3cm = €3279 Male**  
**6.3cm = €1260 Female**



**- €234 Male**  
**- €2108 Female**



*Bearded faces are seen as less competent*



Sources: Shire Professional -  
<http://www.shirepro.co.uk/>

Fortune 500 -  
<http://fortune.com/fortune500/>

## Key facts about unconscious bias

Implicit biases develop and are maintained from our **Experiences (patterns)**, the **Media** we absorb, and the **Culture** we live in and have lived in.

Being biased is part of who we are; **we are ALL biased** and have a **bias blind spot**.

Biases are easily triggered under **cognitive** or **emotional load**.



## Imagery is powerful...

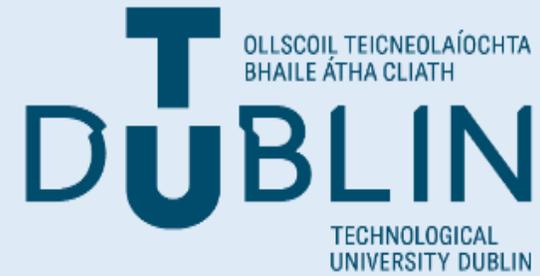
Chief Medical Officer **Tony Holohan**, the deputy officer **Ronan Glynn** and NPHE's Professor **Philip Nolan** met with Taoiseach **Micheál Martin**, Tánaiste **Leo Varadkar**, Green Party leader **Eamon Ryan** as well as the D-G of the HSE **Paul Reid**, Health Minister **Stephen Donnelly**, Finance Minister **Paschal Donohoe** and Public Expenditure Minister **Michael McGrath**.



# Cognitive, Emotional & Other Triggers

- Complex, often contradictory information
- Heavy workload
- Rushing
- Stress
- Anxiety
- Frustration
- Threat (for resources)
- Lack of glucose
- Tiredness





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