# Understanding Bias through a Volunteerism & Leadership Lens

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Agenda:

1. Meeting Norms and Goals
2. Why is this important?
3. Defining Social Identity Groups
4. 15-minute breakout session
5. Regroup and Report Out
6. Exploring, Understanding and Defining Bias
7. Mitigating Bias

**Meeting Norms:**

- Stay engaged
- Speak your truth
- Listen for understanding
- Experience discomfort
- Take Risks
- Expect and accept non-closure

**Goals**:

- Increase comfort with discussing sensitive topics such as bias and inequity.
- Provide a supportive space and the tools to learn about, discuss and ask questions.
- Engage our Marquette community and enhance our relationships with truth and respect.
- Understand the importance of this work.

# WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

1. Bias can distort our judgment and can lead to stereotyping and bad decision making.
2. A  McKinsey study of more than 1,000 major business investments showed that when organizations worked at reducing the effect of bias in their decision-making processes, they achieved returns up to seven percentage points higher.
3. While not indicative of a person's morality, biases can still be harmful.
4. It is important for all to recognize the biases they don't know they have.
5. Understanding implicit bias can foster diversity and inclusion.
6. A benefit of understanding your biases is that it challenges you to see things from a different perspective.

# DEFINING SOCIAL IDENTITY GROUPS

Social Identity Groups are based on physical, cultural, linguistic, and/or other characteristics and to which individuals are assigned based on socially constructed categories

- Race
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Sexual Orientation
- Socioeconomic status
- Religious affiliation
- Generational cohort
- Age
- Veteran status
- Able-bodiedness
- Personality Type
- Learning and thinking style
- International work experience
- Education
- Learning style
- Geographic region

# BREAKOUT SESSION

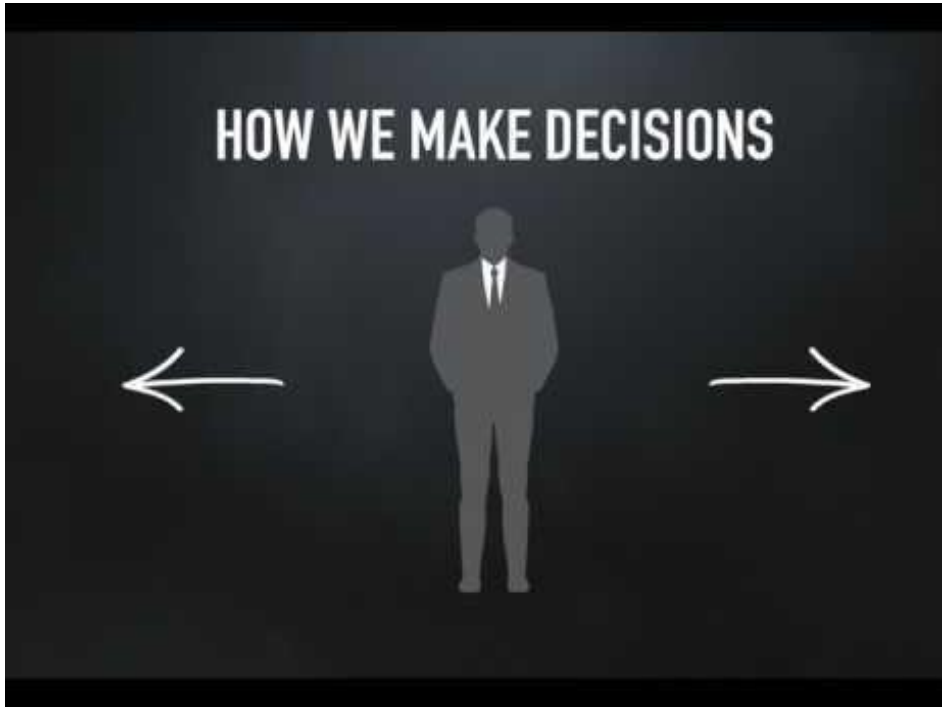
1. Have you ever had a wrong first impression of someone who had a different background or cultural identity from you?

2. Has anyone ever had the wrong first impression of you?

# WHAT DO YOU SEE?

# DEFINING BIAS

bi·as: Prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair.



# IMPLICIT BIAS

**Implicit Bias:** The attitudes or stereotypes – both **favorable and unfavorable**, that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an **unconscious** manner and are activated **involuntarily.**

**Implicit Biases**

- Are unconscious, automatic, and rely on associations we form over time
- Are **pervasive**
- Reflect how we internalize messages about our society rather than our intent
- Operate **outside** of our conscious awareness
- **Do not necessarily align with our declared beliefs** or even reflect stances we would explicitly endorse
- Tend to **favor our own ingroup**
- Are **malleable**

*Adapted from: http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/research/understanding-implicit-bias/*

# FOUR COMMON NON-VISIBLE UNCONSCIOUS BIASES

**Availability Bias**

- When we make decisions by overestimating the importance of information that is readily or immediately available
  - When we hire or ask a volunteer from a particular company or school because we have had previous good hires/experiences from that company or school
  - When the information comes to mind, plays too big of a role in your decision making, forming of an opinion or reasoning

**Bandwagon Bias**

- When you adopt a belief because the group holds that belief. A form of groupthink that makes us believe something because others think it.
  - Making a decision because you see that the group is all voting a certain way or leaning a certain way. Doing something because “that’s the way we’ve always done it.”

# FOUR COMMON NON-VISIBLE UNCONSCIOUS BIASES CONT.

**HALO AND HORNS EFFECT**

- Halo Effect Definition: When we let the ‘halo glow’ of one great thing about a person affect our opinions of everything else about that person.
- Horns Effect Definition: When we see one bad thing about a person, and we let that cloud our opinion of everything else about that person.
    - Someone did well on one project and so we assume they will always do well on subsequent projects.
    - I don’t like the way this person dresses, so I assume they must be lazy or unprofessional.

**AFFINITY BIAS**

- When we make decisions based on how we connect with someone on a personal level. When we show preferences to those who are similar to ourselves.
    - Awarding an alum that reminds you of a ‘younger version of ourselves.’
    - Not asking someone to join the group or receive an award because we don’t have a similar background so there is no way to ‘connect personal.’

# MITIGATING BIAS

**Review**:

- Lesson the impact of unconscious biases on our decision-making with education and awareness. Shift and neutralize our biases before they turn into behaviors.
- Pause and reflect on your own biases
- Ask yourself why you think or act a certain way.
- Engage with people in groups that you feel separate from or different than.

**Strategies for Mitigating Bias:**

- Pause to consider your biases before reacting
- Ask questions
- Structure your feedback
- Focus on impact, not intent
- Slow down your responses
- Work to build trust as part of your team
- Support having open and frank conversations
- Reject stereotyping

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