

MYTHBUSTERS

IMPLICIT BIAS EDITION

CLEARING UP THE CONFUSION SURROUNDING IMPLICIT BIAS

What is Implicit Bias?

MYTH: Implicit bias is nothing more than beliefs people choose not to tell others. They know how they feel; they just know they cannot or should not say those beliefs aloud, so they hide them.

BUSTED Implicit bias differs from suppressed thoughts that individuals may conceal for social desirability purposes. **Implicit biases are activated involuntarily and beyond our awareness or intentional control.** Implicit bias is concerned with unconscious cognition that influences understanding, actions, and decisions, whereas individuals who may choose not to share their beliefs due to social desirability inclinations are consciously making this determination.

MYTH: Implicit bias is nothing more than stereotyping.

BUSTED Implicit biases and stereotyping are closely related concepts that can be easily confused. Both implicit biases and stereotypes are types of asso-

ciations that can be positive and negative. While it is true that implicit associations may form as a result of exposure to persistent stereotypes, **implicit bias goes beyond stereotyping to include favorable or unfavorable evaluations toward groups of people.** Additionally, implicit biases are activated involuntarily, whereas stereotyping may be a deliberate process of which you are consciously aware.

MYTH: Having implicit biases makes me a bad person.

BUSTED Bias is a natural phenomenon in that our brains are constantly forming automatic associations as a way to better and more efficiently understand the world around us. **No one is a "bad" person for harboring implicit biases; these are normal human processes that occur on an unconscious level.** Some implicit biases are even positive in nature. In terms of the existence of unwanted, negative implicit biases, fortunately our brains are malleable, thus giving us the capacity to mitigate their effect through research-based debiasing strategies.