

# **Call for papers:**

## **Unconscious Bias in Organizations**

*Special Issue*

*Women, Gender & Research*

It is no longer controversial to claim that organizations are gendered and that at least part of the reason is to be found in the way human beings are biased in their evaluation of each other (Acker 1990; Brewis, Hampton and Linstead 1997; Britton 2000; Martin and Collinson 2002; Smith and Parrotta 2018; Williams 2015). Our minds can simply not process all the information that it receives and therefore makes short cuts that rely on categorizations (Bargh and Chartrand 1999; Fine 2013; 2018; Hassin et al. 2005; Rippon 2019; Saini 2018) – or as it is called in management lingo, experience and intuition. The problem is therefore not the short cut or the bias in and of itself, as our brains would have a hard time functioning without these. The problem is rather the fact that the biases are based on culturally and historically defined categorizations of for example gender, race, religion and sexuality as well as management, leadership and organizations. When our history and culture, then, is influenced by gendered, religious and colonial discourses it dictates what in a given context is perceived to be ‘normal’, ‘natural’ and ‘neutral’.

In matters of work and organizations, this means that we automatically relate certain bodies to certain professions and positions, without even thinking about it (e.g. Heilman and Caleo 2018). We are historically programmed, so to speak, to see certain bodies fit certain jobs and other bodies stick out in work contexts (e.g. Ashcraft 2013; Ashcraft et al. 2012; Einarsdóttir, Hoel and Lewis 2016; Monaghan 2002). This means that our evaluations of for example candidates for new jobs or promotions are always already gendered, classed, sexualized, raced etc. – also when we are not aware of it – for example when people fall within the norm. As a result of unconscious biases that lead to stereotypical thinking, certain people benefit and others are penalized (Carlsson and Rooth 2007; Gaustad and Raknes 2015; Muhr 2011; Moss-Racusin et al. 2012; Trix and Psenka 2003). These biases don't always result in deliberate discrimination, but an unconscious and sometimes invisible form of discrimination, which nonetheless leads to not only inequality and discrimination, but also bad business decisions.

In organizations, unconscious biases constitute a significant hurdle for achieving equal opportunity as employees are simply not evaluated and treated on equal terms. This has detrimental effects for both recruitment, development and promotion of employees as well as for their well-being and thus productivity. Understanding and limiting unconscious bias therefore has a multitude of benefits for organizations such as increased group innovations, productivity, and creativity; enhanced relationship- and community-building; employee loyalty, retention and commitment; as well as greater appreciation for equity, diversity, and inclusivity (Danowitz et al. 2012). To battle unconscious bias, many organizations today offer unconscious bias training of various sort. However, a lot of this training has proven to be inefficient at best and with negative results at worst (Bendl et al. 2015; Deane 2013; Sabharwal 2014).

With this special issue, we want to take stock of the academic debate on unconscious bias. Is it still a thing, we as researchers should take seriously? And if so, how can we do so in a way that does not

result in (feminist) backlash? What aspects of unconscious bias in organizations are still to be uncovered? And in what new ways can we address it?

Accordingly, we encourage contributions to the following topics and are furthermore grateful for additional perspectives:

- What is organizational bias?
- What is the impact of unconscious bias in organizations?
- How do biases influence different groups of employees differently?
- How is bias linked to power and privilege?
- Feminist analyses / critiques of organizational stereotypes and bias
- Intersectional analyses of unconscious bias
- How can unconscious bias in organizations be reduced?
- How can we outsmart the human mind in organizations?
- Is technology part of the solution or the problem?
- How can organizations avoid stereotypes and over-generalizations?
- How does bias influence the hierarchical division of organizations?
- How does bias influence and shape professions?
- How can we address cultural stereotypes critically?

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**Deadline for articles**: September 15, 2020

All contributions must be in English. Abstracts should be submitted to [redsek@soc.ku.dk](mailto:redsek@soc.ku.dk). Subsequently, authors should register and submit full papers online at:

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Questions about the call for papers, guidelines or submission process, should be sent to the editorial secretary: [redsek@soc.ku.dk](mailto:redsek@soc.ku.dk).

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