Unconscious Bias

Module
1.4

Equality, Diversity
and Inclusion Toolkit

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The EDI Toolkit is updated according to a regular schedule. If you see anything you think needs revising, or have any other feedback, please get in touch by contacting **equality&diversity@methodistchurch.org.uk**

If you would like to request this resource in an alternative format, please contact us to discuss your needs at **publishing@methodistchurch.org.uk**

REMINDER

The Theological Underpinning of Methodist EDI Work

A document called *Theological Underpinning of Methodist EDI Work* is provided separately. All participants should have a copy of this when they attend their first session. It does not need to be considered in detail every time, but participants should be introduced to it at least once, and made aware that this is the starting point for all our work on EDI issues in the Methodist Church.

Module 4

Unconscious Bias

Contents

Introduction

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) toolkit builds on the mandatory EDI training for all those in leadership within the Methodist Church, including Ministers, Stewards, Local Preachers and Worship Leaders, and "employed Lay Workers. The mandatory training introduces EDI work within the Methodist Church, including examining the legal context, the role of unconscious bias, and the Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity adopted by the Methodist Conference of 2021. One of the learning objectives of the mandatory training was to "be able to continue personal EDI development through self-directed learning." The EDI toolkit provides an opportunity to do that through a series of modules which build on the mandatory training. It begins with an Introductory Module, which includes the Theological Underpinning of Methodist EDI Work, and then consists of a series of main modules.

The EDI Toolkit can be used in various ways. It is suitable for any area of church life, including house groups, leadership teams and continuing learning for preachers and worship leaders. This module can be completed as a single session. Alternatively, these materials can be used as a resource to respond to a particular issue. Selected resources or activities from this module could be used or adapted for use in worship or small groups. The materials can also be read by individuals as part of their individual commitment to EDI learning.

How long does it take?

The module can be used in various ways, and you will need to adapt the timings according to your group and context. However, if you are completing this module in one 90-minute session, you may find these suggested timings useful:

Welcome	Worship	EXPLORE	APPLY and REFLECT	EXTEND and preparation for next session	Worship
5 mins	10 mins	20 mins	45 mins	Minimal	10 mins

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Pastoral concerns

This session was designed, as far as possible, to encourage full participation of all those attending. The facilitator needs to be aware that people may be reluctant to contribute, perhaps because of personal experience of discrimination, bullying or prejudice. We would therefore recommend that you encourage participants to respect one another – particularly respecting confidentiality (where it does not infringe on good safeguarding protocol).

There may be a danger of some participants dominating the discussion if they have a lot to say. We therefore encourage you to circulate the discussion groups if you think this will help. You could also introduce different facilitation tools, such as using a 'speaking object' (like a ball, talking stick etc) or allowing people to write feedback as well as verbalising it. This can maximise opportunities for all to participate.

Finally, there is also a risk that some people participating in this session will be upset by the topic under discussion. The sensitivity of the subject needs to be acknowledged at the start of the session and participants need to be aware of the different ways in which they can seek support to help deal with issues – both during the session and afterwards. Whilst it is important, as outlined above, that participants have equal opportunities to speak if they wish, this should always be optional.

You may want to have a separate space for worship, which could also be used as reflective space if anyone needs to take time out. You should also consider Chaplaincy provision, during the event if possible or afterwards if necessary. Your district or local EDI Officer may be able to assist you in sourcing appropriate Chaplaincy provision.

Equality Impact Assessments

The Methodist Church has published an Equality Impact Assessment at: **methodist.org.uk/inclusive-church/EIA**

This is a way of reviewing the things we do now and those we plan to do in the future. This process helps ensure that our practices are fair and inclusive, and that no individual or group

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of people is inadvertently disadvantaged. This enables us to anticipate and remove or reduce any negative impact.

The EDI Toolkit is designed to help us learn about a range of issues that can affect people within our fellowship and society. But learning is not sufficient. We also need action, to change our processes and procedures to ensure church meets everyone's needs including those who do not attend. The Equality Impact Assessment also prompts us to think inclusively. We may have a brilliant idea that will meet the needs of some people in our church or community. Collaboratively completing an Equality Impact Assessment ensures a range of different voices are involved in planning and decision making, so that all people are taken into account in our activities.

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Opening worship

Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love
Singing the Faith 249

Luke 10:25-37
The good Samaritan: who is my neighbour?

Prayer

O God, Creator of all peoples, grant us your strength of love that we may live with a vulnerable openness to each other, which welcomes our diversity and difference as your gifts.

Amen.
(Will Morrey)

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EXPLORE

1 Context
1.1 Introduction

This module builds on the introductory module of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit, to help people develop an understanding and awareness of unconscious biases and affinities. Unconscious bias is a natural part of how people's brains work. From an early age, our minds learn to be comfortable with the familiar and to be sceptical of unfamiliarity. When human beings lived in nomadic tribal groups, this was an important part of keeping the group safe from potential danger, as anything or anyone unfamiliar could be a risk. However, the modern world is significantly more complex, and human societies are much more diverse and varied. Our modern human societies have a better understanding of how human diversity is beneficial, rather than threatening.

Unfortunately, unconscious biases can also lead to unintentional discrimination. The biases of human societies are subtly communicated from one generation to another, and societies continue to have strong biases and prejudices about people who look, sound or act different from the majority. However, if people are aware of their biases, they are better able to avoid unintentional discrimination. It is possible for people to 'unlearn' old habits and old biases, and learn how to be more inclusive and accepting of diversity.

1.2 A context for church life

Being aware of unconscious bias is particularly important when making decisions for the Church, especially when those decisions are about people. Examples of such occasions are: stationing and matching, local preacher assessment, appointing church officers, recruiting employees, or formal processes such as development reviews, sickness/absence management and/or disciplinary processes.

The *Theological Underpinning of Methodist EDI Work* document (set out in Module 1.2 of the EDI Toolkit) states, at paragraph 17:

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A Christian way of living in anticipation of the fullness of the kingdom of God remains difficult to sustain both for individuals and for the Church as an institution. We reflect the divine image in a broken way. This has been true from the beginning. The New Testament does not know of a perfect Christian community, and human sinfulness has not diminished with the passage of time. The life of the Church is eroded by it; its symptoms and results include fractured relationships, (both personal and communal), unwitting exclusivisms, and discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, age, wealth or sexuality. The Church in the past has excluded many believing it was acting fairly and justly by adhering to its well-established boundaries. The Church is challenged to acknowledge the ways in which it fails to live up to its calling, and to continue to prayerfully reflect on the boundaries it establishes. Furthermore, we must always be alert to any inadvertent exclusion and prejudice through our ignorance rather than a conscious desire not to be a place of sanctuary, refuge, safety and love for the marginalised. The Church is reminded of its own need of forgiveness and grace, and turns to God to seek new life in Jesus Christ.

1.3 Introductory activity

See Appendix 2, Introductory Activity Quiz.

2 Where do our unconscious biases come from?

2.1 Research on unconscious bias

Psychologists tell us that our unconscious biases are simply our natural people preferences. In workplace social psychology, the study of how people work together (eg in business or industry), it is becoming more common to talk about affinity bias, rather than unconscious bias. There are two reasons for this.

Firstly, there is a recognition that people's biases are often about affinity, rather than rejection. As human beings we have a better understanding of people who are like us, and situations that are familiar to our own. Consequently people who look like us, sound like us and share our interests are easier to understand, and therefore, easier for us to identify with. Secondly, biases are not always unconscious. Sometimes

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people are conscious of our own biases, but still find it difficult to forget them.

Another theory about unconscious bias, is that from childhood people learn subtle messages from their family and social group about how things 'should be', according to the norms of the family and/or social group. As people socialise beyond what is familiar and comfortable, they become exposed to new experiences and ideas, diverse people, and different ways of expressing human emotions and thoughts. Sometimes our new social interactions help us to become familiar with difference, but sometimes those differences challenge us, and it can be difficult to accept difference.

2.2 Discussion activity

In pairs or small groups:

- Make a list of things that you think define British society.

- What things about Britain might surprise people from other countries?

- Are there regional differences in what people call things (for example: dinner, tea or supper; a bap, a bun or a roll; a sofa, a settee or a couch)?

- Why do these things matter to you personally?

- How much does it really matter if other people do things differently?

2.3 Learning points so far

- We learn from people around us. Usually, what we learn when we are children, we think of as normal.

- The people we learn from (family, social group, teachers etc) have all been shaped by their experiences and their values, and we subtly learn from them.

- Our own experiences, our environment, how we are treated by others, how much opportunity we have to mix with other people, all have an impact on what we think and feel.

- Having a range of new experiences, and knowing a wider range of people, can make us more comfortable with difference, but it can also cause us to be cautious or nervous.

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2.4 Deep-rooted unconscious bias

Sometimes our biases and affinities are deep-rooted in the subconscious mind: people make decisions that bypass our normal, rational and logical thinking. It happens when people are under stress or anxious, or if they need to make decisions instantly. Social psychologists call this phenomenon 'social categorisation', whereby we routinely and rapidly sort people into groups. People might call it 'intuition' but the categories we use to sort people are not logical, modern or perhaps even legal. Put simply, our neurology takes us to the very brink of bias and poor decision making.

2.5 Illusion exercises: can we really believe what we see?

Illusion exercises are visual illustrations of some of the ways our minds work, sometimes 'filling in the gaps' according to our previous experience, and sometimes taking particular notice of new things. Such optical illusions help us to understand bias.
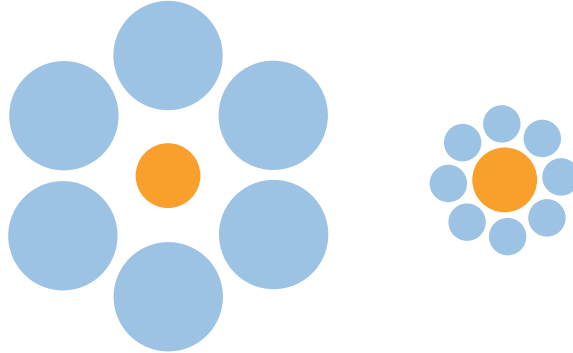
Ponzo

The Ponzo illusion shows us that the human mind judges an object's size based on its background or the context in which it is shown. Even though we are presented with a flat, two-dimensional image our brains perceive the upper line as though it were farther away, so we see it as longer.

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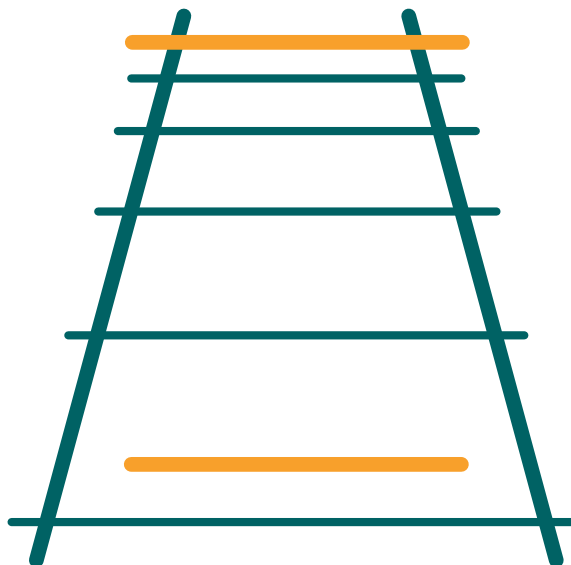
Ebbinghaus

Even though both circles are the same size, we perceive the circle surrounded by smaller circles as bigger. Our brain makes a judgement before we are able to 'think it through'.

Baader-Meinhof

When we become aware of something we have not previously considered, we start to notice it everywhere. This can be negative or positive. For example, you choose to buy a yellow car as you don't believe you have seen many, so suddenly spot yellow cars everywhere you go.

2.6 Learning points

The human brain has evolved to make rational sense of random or limited information (Ponzo/Ebbinghaus).

The brain processes information according to what we have previously experienced; unconsciously, the brain takes note of things that confirm our existing views (Ponzo/Ebbinghaus).

However, the brain also takes note of new information – and notices it everywhere (the Baader-Meinhof effect).

We can consciously challenge and question assumptions by being **intentional** and **attentive** in our learning. Our environment, the diversity of our social group and our experiences in life all influence how we feel, think and make decisions in the future.

3 Types of unconscious bias

Consider a selection of the case studies in the 'Apply and reflect' section, and consider the questions and learning

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points. Notice that there are different ways in which unconscious bias affects people. The following types of unconscious bias are important to be aware of and to look out for in our own behaviour and that of others. Noticing and acknowledging that these biases can be present can help us to minimise the negative effect of them on the choices we make.

Stereotyping bias
A fixed thought or belief that many people share about a certain type of person or thing.

Gender bias
A preference for one gender over the other. This can change depending on the choice we're making.

Conformity bias
This relates to bias caused by group peer pressure – when we behave similarly to others in a group, even if it goes against what we actually believe. In order to feel 'we belong', people can overlook their own rational views and observations, and comply with the 'strongest voices'.

Beauty bias
This is the view that comes from preconceived ideas of 'what good looks like'. In recruitment, it's common that recruiters will look to fill a role with someone who shares similar physical attributes to the person who held that role before, or who they believe looks like the kind of person who should have the role based on their preconceived bias.

Affinity bias
Affinity bias is where we feel we have an affinity to people because of shared interests, and/or because they have similarities to other people in our social, professional or church circles. We warm up to someone we feel a connection to; maybe because they attended the same school or college, or grew up in the same town. In appointments and recruitment, this can lead to individuals and organisations making decisions that preserve the status quo, rather than being dynamic.

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Halo effect

When we let one good quality about someone influence our judgement of them as a whole.

Horns effect

When we let one negative trait about someone blind us to their positive qualities.

Similarity bias

The natural tendency to surround ourselves with people who are similar to us.

Contrast effect

When we compare someone to the person they're replacing, rather than how capable they are at the job they are doing. This can happen a lot in the recruitment and selection process.

Attribution bias

When we look for reasons behind our own and other people's behaviour. We tend to think others are lucky when they do well; and when they do badly we think it's due to their personality or bad behaviour. When we do badly, we tend to blame other people or outside influences.

Confirmation bias

When we look for evidence to back up what we already believe. We have trouble believing evidence that goes against our beliefs.

Microaggression

Microaggressions are a set of unconscious (sometimes conscious) behaviours often seen in the workplace, committee room or other formal or informal settings which say to an individual that they do not quite belong and are not welcome. These very often take the form of insensitive comments, questions or actions which undermine confidence, questioning the right to belong, subtle insults or criticism, slights or insults often disguised as a joke or banter. The recipient of this type of behaviour will usually feel uncomfortable or hurt.

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Microaggression can include:

- Not being invited to speak or contribute in a meeting.

- Not being given eye contact.

- Being ignored.

- Having your contribution to a meeting or task unnoticed.

- Being talked over.

- Having your authority undermined.

- Having negative assumptions made about your competence to do a job role or particular task.

- Having assumptions made about your honesty.

- Having assumptions made about your citizenship or nationality.

- Having stereotypical judgements made about your ability.

- Persistently having your name said incorrectly – or having new 'acceptable' names created.

Microaggression, when left unchallenged, can impact on an individual's psychological wellbeing, confidence and performance over a prolonged period, and can lead to exclusion and alienation.

4   So what can we do?

4.1 When is unconscious bias most active?

We have the capacity in our brains to control bias, but we do not have infinite energy or resilience. When we use up these resources, bias is more likely to break through into our behaviour. When we are stressed, frustrated, angry, or threatened these emotions overwhelm our resources and bias can be left unfettered.

4.2 How does unconscious bias affect our behaviour?

Unconscious bias operates at a very subtle level, usually below our awareness. It results in almost unnoticeable behaviours (micro behaviours) such as paying a little less attention to what the other person says, addressing them less

warmly or talking less to them. Without care and attention to how our own behaviours affect others, we tend to become less empathetic towards people who are not like us. These behaviours are small and not likely to lead to censure, but long-term exposure is corrosive.

4.3 What can I do about my unconscious biases?

People are not automatons who cannot control their behaviour; we all have the ability to control our biases. The brain has a 'bias control mechanism' that prevents our biases becoming behaviour. To trigger this mechanism, our brain needs to see a mismatch between our instinctive people preferences and our wider goals (eg our values or our desire to be fair – or at least, to be seen as fair). Having personal goals that are fair, moral and value-driven helps trigger our natural bias defences.

Being aware of what biases we have and how strong they are equips us to better manage our unconscious biases. This is because we know which groups may trigger our unconscious categories and when we may need to be more vigilant.

Managing unconscious bias is not just of benefit to others. If we can control and manage our unconscious biases, it releases cognitive and emotional resources. These resources lead to fairer decision making and enhanced problem solving; increased ability to think in novel situations; better logical reasoning and more persistence.

A test
You can explore your own unconscious bias at **implicit. harvard.edu/implicit/**. These tests are confidential and purely for your personal use and benefit.

4.4 Reflection
Consider what, as Christians, we understand as humankind being made in the image of God. How can our values as Christians help us challenge unconscious biases?

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APPLY and REFLECT

1 Case studies

In small groups, consider the following case studies. Think about at least two of the stories, as many as time will allow.

Each of these is a true story, although names and some details have been changed to maintain anonymity. They were provided by the individuals concerned and so reflect their choice of language to describe their story.

There are questions to consider for each case study. Reflect also, as you read, on what the key words, emotions and issues are – for the person in the story and for you.

It may be helpful to refer back to the SCIP classification in the Introductory Module. Here is a headline reminder of the SCIP classification:

- Structural – eg legal and political structures, policies, committees etc

- Cultural – the cultural norms of a group or society, commonly held views

- Institutional – practices, how things are done

- Personal – personal behaviours and practices.

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Steven's story

Soon after being stationed to a new church, Steven noticed that some church members were openly racist to others who were from ethnic minorities, refusing to listen to anything he had to say and belittling his contribution to church life. Unfortunately, this group is over-represented in the leadership of the church, despite being a minority within the congregation itself.

Steven is appalled by this behaviour, but unsure as to what to do to change people's attitudes. When he spoke to others within the circuit about it, all he got in response were platitudes like "There's a lot of that around, isn't there?" Without any support from his colleagues (and for the sake of those affected by the racism) Steven has resorted to suggesting that the affected church members join a different church. The whole situation has led Steven to question his calling.

Questions

Experience

- Who has failed Steven in this story, and how?

Learning

- What could have been done differently?

Action

- How does your church seek out a diverse range of people and talent in leadership roles?

- When new people take over roles, what support systems are in place in your church? Do the systems work? What could you do to make them work?

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Karen's story

Karen had been asked several times over a number of appointments to think about becoming a superintendent. She had thought long and hard about it, but each time she came back to the same old thoughts: that not only was the role male-dominated, but superintendents were expected to be domineering – which was just not her style. It was not until she was stationed with a woman superintendent that Karen felt she had finally found a role model who could help her rethink how she too could do the role. Her superintendent was supportive and persuasive, encouraging her to realise her potential. Karen is now an active and engaging superintendent, committed to her work and to ensuring that women have equal access to role models.

Questions

Experience

- What were Karen's reasons, initially, for not wanting to be a superintendent?

Learning

- What were the traditional images of leadership in Karen's mind?

- What, if anything, do you think is different about Karen's leadership?

Action

- How would you and your church ensure that women are actively supported in their ministry?

- How would you support women or men to explore different styles of leadership?

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Harry's story

Harry is six years old and has Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). As a result, he lacks understanding and awareness of other people's emotions and feelings, and he finds it difficult to start conversations or take part in them properly. He also has a habit of tapping repetitively. Julie, his mother, has tried to explain Harry's ASD to the members of her local church, as he is regarded as strange because he "doesn't look disabled" (as one person put it).

Though most of the parents within the church are supportive of Julie and Harry, they feel uncomfortable with Harry playing with their children. Harry tends to give the children nicknames which are "not always kind", and to shout these out at them. Harry also finds it very difficult to sit still in church, and though Julie brings a box of small toys to keep him occupied, he sometimes gets very angry or noisy. Julie regularly has to explain that he is not being naughty. She is finding coming to church very stressful.

Questions

Experience

- How do people's attitudes towards Harry affect Julie? How might they affect Harry?

Learning

- What could have been done differently in this story?

Action

- What could you and your church do to make it a more inclusive place, where people like Harry and Julie can be heard and all feel welcomed?
- What could you do?

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Francesca's story

Francesca has recently moved to a new area, having started her first job after leaving university. The church she has joined does not have many young members, although the leadership is keen to change this. As soon as Francesca was accepted into the church community, members and stewards started coming up to her and asking if she was interested in working with the children and young people. Francesca has been politely refusing, as she doesn't believe that is where her talents lie. Despite mentioning to the minister and members of the church that she has a passion for outreach and that she would be very happy to be involved in this area of the church's ministry, people continue only to consider her for children and youth work.

Recently, Francesca has started to hear comments about how young people are selfish and won't give their time to the church. This has left her frustrated and hurt, and she is considering moving to another church.

Questions

Experience

- What assumptions have been made about Francesca?
- Why do you think people have those assumptions?
- Have you noticed or experienced people making similar assumptions?

Learning

- What could be the consequences of Francesca's experience – both for her and for the local church?
- What structural, cultural, institutional or personal assumptions have people in this story made?

Action

- What could the people in this story have done differently?
- Now thinking about the situations you experienced or noticed personally, what would you do differently?
- Who is responsible for making those kinds of changes in your church, or others that you know, and who can help them? Consider what you will do.

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Peter's story

Peter was born into a very large family, as the oldest boy with five sisters; he had throughout his life been not just a brother, but a mother, father and friend. With such a large family, it went without question that he helped out his mother and sisters. From an early age Peter would set up Sunday school in the kitchen and read from the children's Bible, then get his sisters to draw pictures which they all loved. This pattern continued until all the children became adults.

At church, Peter decided to put himself forward to teach Sunday school, as this is where he saw his calling. He approached the minister to discuss this, but was told that for safeguarding reasons, the church had decided that only women could be Sunday school teachers, as parents were uncomfortable with men in this role. The minister suggested that Peter should work in the youth club with the football team instead. Peter was quite upset by this response. He felt saddened that the minister's decision was wrong, but decided not to challenge it as he had already been made to feel bad for suggesting working at the Sunday school in the first place.

Questions

Experience

- What assumptions were made about Peter because he is a man?
- If you were told that you couldn't do something "for safeguarding reasons", how would you feel?
- Have similar assumptions been made in your church?

Learning

- What could have been done differently in this story?

Action

- How would you and your church ensure that it could use the skills and expertise of someone, regardless of their gender?
- How would you inform people about gender equality?

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Jim's story

Jim works full time and has two children. Having recently gone through a divorce, Jim is greatly thankful to his church and its members, and feels that he wants to give something back and help the church. The church recently established a 'mission committee' to try to help the church be more of a presence in the community and attract a broader demographic of people. Jim saw this as the perfect opportunity and was gratefully accepted into the group. However, when Jim received the notice of the first meeting, he saw that he would be unable to attend as it was scheduled for during the working day.

When Jim pointed this out to the chair of the group, he was told that almost everyone who volunteers to be on committees is retired, and that they do not like to be out in the evenings. When Jim raised the problem with the minister, she was sympathetic but said that church meetings had always been held during the day, and she couldn't afford to lose the support of the older members. Jim was forced to withdraw from the committee and now gives his time volunteering with a local charity.

Questions

Experience

- What assumptions have been made in this story, and about whom?
- Has anything similar happened in your experience?

Learning

- What structural, cultural, institutional or personal assumptions were made by people in this story?
- How could a situation like this, or others that you can think of, impact people like Jim?
- How would this impact on the mission of the church (eg what has the church lost by not having Jim involved)?

Action

- What could have been done differently?
- Who is responsible for making those kinds of changes in your church, or others that you know, and who can help them? Consider what you will do.

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2   Summary and learning points

- Unconscious bias is a natural part of how the human brain works.

- It comes from a mixture of learnt behaviours, experiences and assumptions.

- It is not intentional, but can have discriminatory effects on people.

- By being intentional and attentive in our thinking and learning, we can challenge our own assumptions and biases.

Thinking about your answers to the questions and issues raised in the case studies, reflect on:

- what you have learnt

- what the stories might mean in your church

- what you will do.

Closing worship

Matthew 16:13-20
Who do you say that I am?

Prayer
Loving God, give us richness of imagination to see you in the faces of everyone we meet,
so that we may adore and worship you unceasingly and enjoy you as we enjoy other people;
through Jesus, lover of all.

Amen.

(Donald Frith)

Thanks for friends who keep on loving
Singing the Faith 619

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Appendix 1 – The science bit: unconscious bias and the human brain

Illusion exercises

This section explores where our unconscious biases come from. It is important to remember that these:

- are natural (part of how our brains work)

- are unintended (not deliberate)

- are impactful (ie they affect the decisions we make)

- can be mitigated (we can do something about them).

Psychologists tell us that our unconscious biases are simply our natural people preferences. Our life experiences, socialisation and cultural values subtly shape how we think and feel. Some things and some people are, therefore, more familiar to us – which leads us to prefer people who look like us, sound like us and share our interests. Social psychologists call this phenomenon 'social categorisation', whereby we routinely and rapidly sort people into groups. This preference bypasses our normal, rational and logical thinking. We use these processes very effectively (we call it intuition) but the categories we use to sort people are not logical, modern or perhaps even legal. Put simply, our neurology takes us to the very brink of bias and poor decision making.

Just how hard-wired is unconscious bias?

On one hand, neuropsychologists tell us it is built into the very structure of the brain's neurons. Our unconscious brain processes and sifts vast amounts of information looking for patterns (200,000 times more information than the conscious mind). When the unconscious brain sees two things occurring together (eg many male senior managers) it begins to expect them to be seen together and begins to wire them together. Brain imaging scans have demonstrated that when people are shown images of faces that differ from themselves, it activates an irrational prejudgment in the brain's alert system for danger: the amygdala. This happens in less than a tenth of a second. Our associations and biases are likely to be activated every time we encounter a group member, even if we consciously think that we reject a group stereotype.

However, on the other hand, social scientists and educators point out that our brains are constantly learning new experiences, and we are capable of challenging our assumptions, biases and

prejudices. Even in terms of the neuroscience, the brain has a 'safety gateway' where unconscious instincts can be passed to the brain's social processing areas, which enables our actions to become empathetic. People can make active choices about whether to act on instinct or empathy; the more often we act empathetically, the more we naturally behave empathetically.

Take a look at the explanations of the Ponzo illusion, the Ebbinghaus illusion and the Baader-Meinhof effect on page 11 and 12. Now consider the following questions and learning points:

Ponzo – can we really believe what we see?
The Ponzo Illusion shows us that the human mind judges an object's size based on its background or the context in which it is shown. Even though we are presented with a flat, two-dimensional image, our brains perceive the upper line as though it were farther away, so we see it as longer.

Ebbinghaus
Even though both circles are the same size, we perceive the circle surrounded by smaller circles as bigger. Our brain makes a judgement before we are able to 'think it through'.

Baader-Meinhof
When we become aware of something we have not previously considered, we start to notice it everywhere. This can be negative or positive.

Learning points
The human brain has evolved to make rational sense of random or limited information (Ponzo/Ebbinghaus).

The brain processes information according to what we have previously experienced; unconsciously, the brain takes note of things that confirm our existing views (Ponzo/Ebbinghaus).

However, the brain also takes note of new information – and notices it everywhere (the Baader-Meinhof effect).

We can consciously challenge and question assumptions by being **intentional** and **attentive** in our learning. Our environment, the diversity of our social group and our life's experiences all influence how we feel, think and make decisions in the future.

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Appendix 2 – Introductory activity quiz

In groups, answer the following questions. The answers are at the end.

Beauty bias

1. What percentage of workers have experienced some sort of appearance-based discrimination?
    a) 6% - 8%
    b) 9% - 11%
    c) 12% - 14%

(USA, 2015)

Battle of the sexes

2. Researchers sent out 127 fake job applications: 63 professors received applications from the 'ghost' applicant John and 64 received applications from the 'ghost' Jennifer. All applications were identical.

    On average, what was the difference in offers for John and Jennifer?
    a) £1500
    b) £2000
    c) £2500

(Princeton researchers, 2015)

Higher or lower

3. Fewer than 15% of American men are over 6ft (1.82m) tall. What percentage of corporate chief executives are over 6ft (1.82m) tall?
    a) 20%
    b) 40%
    c) 60%

4. Fewer than 4% of American men are over 6ft 2in (1.88m) tall. What percentage of corporate chief executives are over 6ft 2in (1.88m) tall?
    a) 16%
    b) 26%
    c) 36%

(Princeton researchers, 2015)

The **Methodist** Church

Race to the top

Women make up 51% of the UK population. Ethnic minority groups make up 14%.

5. What is the overall proportion of women who are directors in the FTSE 100?
   a) 23.5%
   b) 30.5%
   c) 48.9%

6. What is the overall proportion of people from ethnic minority groups who are directors in the FTSE 100?
   a) 5.3%
   b) 8.2%
   c) 14.9%

(ONS, 2017)

7. What percentage of members of Parliament are women?
   a) 23%
   b) 33%
   c) 43%

8. What percentage of members of Parliament are from ethnic minority groups?
   a) 5%
   b) 8%
   c) 14%

9. What percentage of members of Parliament have self-identified as disabled?
   a) 0.07%
   b) 0.77%
   c) 7.07%

(The Guardian, 2017)

The age gap

10. What percentage of workers thought that having a 70-year-old boss would be unacceptable?
    a) 5%
    b) 10%
    c) 15%

(UK, 2016)

The **Methodist** Church

Introductory activity: answers

Beauty bias
1. What percentage of workers have experienced some sort of appearance-based discrimination?
    a) 6% - 8%
    b) 9% - 11%
    c) 12% - 14%

(USA, 2015)

Battle of the sexes
2. Researchers sent out 127 fake job applications: 63 professors received applications from the 'ghost' applicant John and 64 received applications from the 'ghost' Jennifer. All applications were identical.

    On average, what was the difference in offers for John and Jennifer?
    a) £1500
    b) £2000
    c) £2500

(Princeton researchers, 2015)

Higher or lower
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    b) 8%
    c) 14%

9. What percentage of members of Parliament have self-identified as disabled?
    a) 0.07%
    b) 0.77% (just 5 MPs)
    c) 7.07%

(The Guardian, 2017)

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(UK, 2016)

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