

# Understanding and Mitigating Unconscious Bias In Our Everyday Lives

Binnu Palta Hill

Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer  
Wisconsin School of Business



WISCONSIN  
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

TOGETHER  
FORWARD®

- Night and \_\_\_\_\_

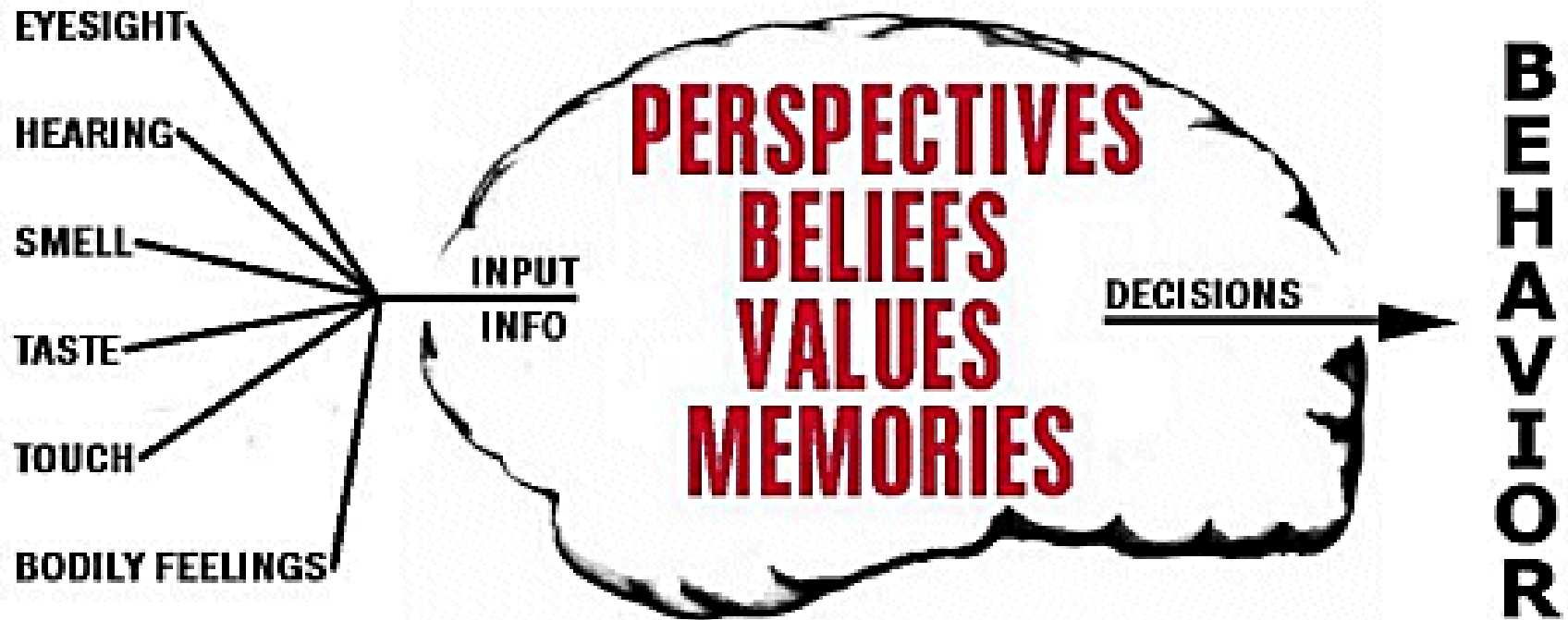
- Black and \_\_\_\_\_

- Young and \_\_\_\_\_

# Neurotransmitters

- Neurons process and transmit information by electro-chemical signaling
- Enable us to perceive our surroundings (see, hear, smell, etc.)
- Responsible for allowing us to draw conclusions and retain information for future reference

# The Human Brain



<http://www.wisdompage.com/FlawsInMentality.html>

# Perceptual Set

- The process by which we select, organize and interpret information around us
- Our readiness to perceive something based on our expectations

Perceptual set = Expectations

- Help us eliminate ambiguity

# Diversity and Team Dynamics

- Attributes classified into “surface-level” and “deep level” (Team Diversity, Triana: Harrison et al., 1998; Jackson et al., 1995)
- The Social Categorization Theory in diversity (Team Diversity, Triana; Harrison, Price, and Bell, 1998)

# Perception

- An automatic interpretation of what we see and hear
- A hypothesis based on prior experience
- New sensory information is perceived in relation to what we already know

# Implicit/Unconscious Bias

- Attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions below the awareness level
- Basis for mental models about groups of people
- Can act as a deterrent to our understanding of other people and situations, limiting our ability to make sound decisions



# Conscious vs. Unconscious

We process ~7  
stimuli at a time  
consciously



**The What**

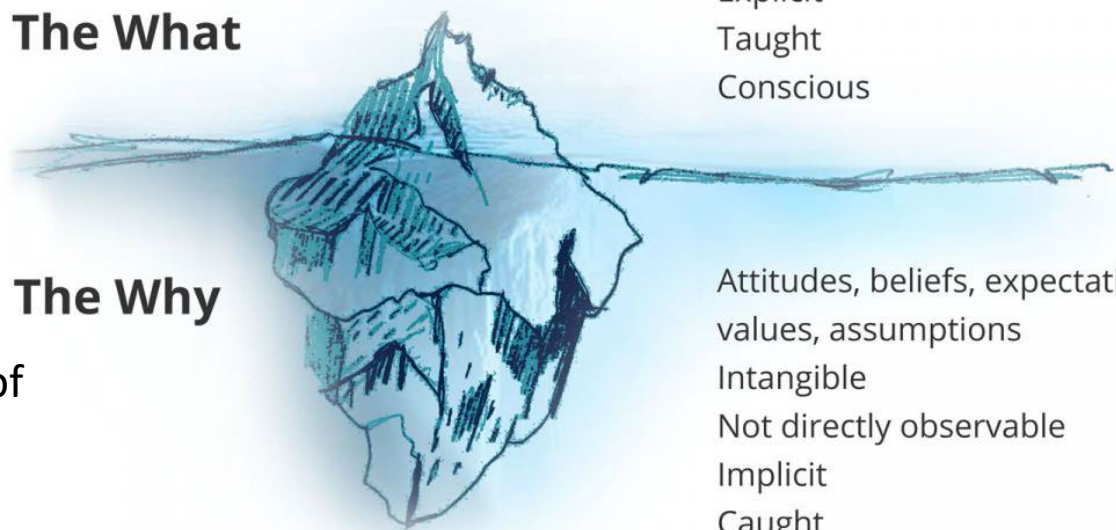
Behaviours and artifacts  
Accessible to the senses  
Observable  
Explicit  
Taught  
Conscious



We process millions of  
stimuli at a time  
unconsciously

**The Why**

Attitudes, beliefs, expectations,  
values, assumptions  
Intangible  
Not directly observable  
Implicit  
Caught  
Subconscious



# Implicit Bias

- Implicit processes are automatic
- Our auto-responses or impulses can be contradictory to our explicit intentions
- Implicit processing occurs under
  - Distraction or compromised cognition
  - Ambiguous or incomplete information
  - Time constraints
  - Overconfidence in objectivity

# Perceptions of Leadership

- 14.5% of American men are over 6' tall; CEOs of Fortune 500 companies: 58%
- 3.9% of American men are over 6'2"; 30% among the Fortune 500 CEOs
- Only 6% of S&P 500 CEOs are women; 1% are African-American; 3% are Hispanic

# What makes a good manager?



This content is from [rework.withgoogle.com](http://rework.withgoogle.com) (the "Website") and may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with the terms of use set forth on the Website. re:Work

Business Insider Strategy <http://www.businessinsider.com/google-unconscious-bias-training-presentation-2015-12/#in-another-study-268-male-managers-across-a-variety-of-industries-and-departments-were-asked-to-use-a-list-of-92-attributes-to-describe-one-of-7-categories-men-and-women-in-general-men-and-women-as-managers-and-men-and-women-as-successful-managers-the-result-was-that-71-of-the-traits-associated-with-successful-managers-were-associated-with-men-in-general-21>

# Origin of Bias

- Preference influenced by experiences, demonstrated in behavior
- An object, animal, or person assessed to be dangerous is encountered, a “fight or flight” fear response occurs
- Based on in-groups/out-groups

# Bias: Behavior

- Subtle messages below our awareness level
- Body language
- Level of attention and engagement
- Tone
- Level of empathy
- Hiring, promotions, team development

# Cultural Competence

- A set of attitudes and behaviors that help individuals effectively interact and work across cultural and diversity dimensions
- A dynamic, ongoing development process achieved over time

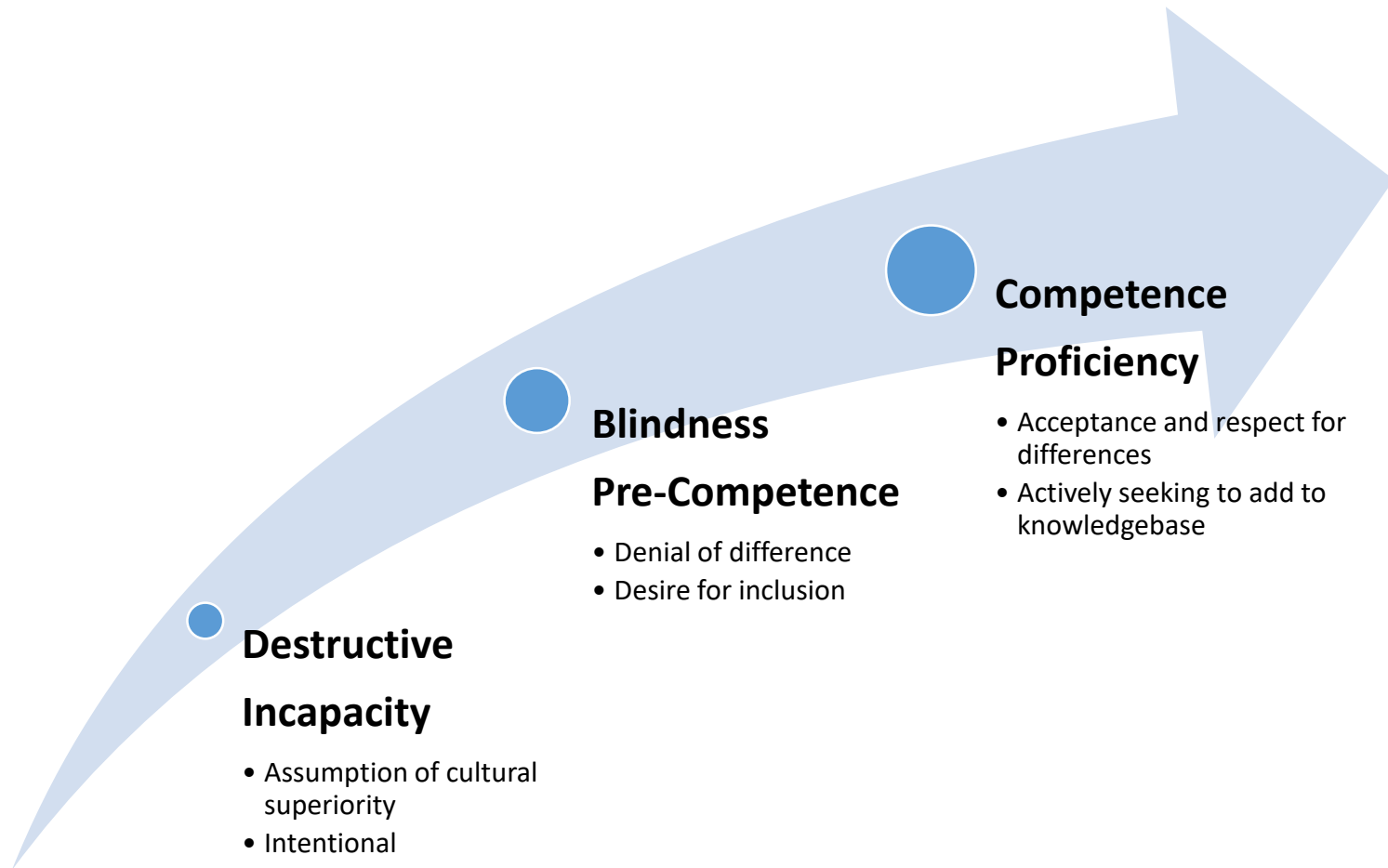
# Cultural Competence as a Critical Professional Skill

- Linked to high performance
- Cultural dexterity critical to a manager's ability to shape the culture of their unit, and influence the organization as a whole.
- Research shows that a group with individual and cultural diversity
  - will yield higher performance and have more creative output than a homogeneous group
  - have a higher probability of conflict if their differences and talents are not respected and utilized

\*Richard Florida and Scott E. Page



# Levels of Cultural Competence



# Common Acts of Exclusion

- Checking your phone during a conversation
- Introducing one person with accolades and another with only a name
- Omitting someone from important communication
- Using acronyms others do not know
- Exhibiting impatience due to other person's accent
- Interrupting
- Repeatedly canceling meetings on someone

# Conscious Acts of Inclusion

- Acknowledgment
- Curiosity
- Ally-ship
- Perspective-taking
- Communicating clearly, directly and honestly
- Demonstrating respect
- Be a partner in learning
- Demonstrate courage

\*Some ideas offered by Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group

A man with short brown hair and a light beard, wearing a dark blue suit jacket over a white shirt, is looking off to the side with a thoughtful expression. The background is a blurred office or workshop setting.

**BEFORE YOU  
JUDGE SOMEONE**

*watch this*