

論 文

Diversity Awareness:

Bringing the unconscious to life for social change

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With global interactions increasing and transnational movements, individuals and organizations have more opportunities to diversify and innovate. Organizations are being forced to face diversification and adapt different ways of doing things to survive. Many people are encountering people outside their comfort zone, and yet fear diversity. Diversity increases fears people have, causing them to not know what to do. Often real and imagined fears surface about those who are different. People fear losing their privilege and power. Confronting fears one has can empower and is necessary for leaders and for personal development. Self-awareness can empower and enable people to be who they want to be and to have self-confidence in their ability to be contributing members working towards goals. Research on unconscious biases, uncertainty avoidance and privilege all have the common element of increasing knowledge and awareness of factors that can help lead to social transformation. This paper is a summary and discussion of lack of awareness of diversity, unconscious avoidance of issues related to diversity and unconscious biases. It also will discuss how making the unconscious conscious can lead to development and social change.

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Grasping diversity

Every day there is news of the necessity of hiring workers who are multilingual, who have various job experiences, and news of the importance of accepting people who are different. However, on those same days, the media tells stories of violence against people

from various backgrounds and shows people using derogatory language against groups of people perceived to be inferior. Both the world and diverse relationships are complex, but many people have difficulty understanding what that means. *If the World were a Village of 100 People* (Smith, 2002) is a children's book that helps people visualize the nature of a

complex world in simpler terms. Instead of imagining what the composition of all the Planet's population of approximately 7.7 billion would look like (Worldometer, 2020), it shows what the world might look like if the population was instead only 100 people. The storybook shows the diversity in a village of 100 by using demographic data of such things as gender, age, ethnicity, language and regions of the world's population.

A video created by PopulationData in 2013 takes a slightly different approach and gives statistics for a village of 100 focusing on world issues. It states that 20 persons would own 80% of the village, with only 1 woman owning her own land. It also explains that 25 of the world inhabitants would be living in a region where there is war, and 5 children would be working in slavery conditions. Regarding religion, the video details how 75 of the village members would be practicing religion but that 35 would be forced to practice. This video and other videos and books highlight the vast diversity and depth and intersections related to diversity. This paper is a summary and discussion of lack of awareness of diversity, unconscious avoidance of issues related to diversity and unconscious biases. It also will discuss how making the unconscious conscious can lead to development and social change.

Literature Review

In his keynote speech at the 34th Annual SIETAR Japan Conference in Tokyo in 2019, Dr. Christopher Kilmartin, a psychologist who studies men, sexism

and masculinity, pointed out that most people are not bad people and do not set out to harm others. However, their ignorance or habits of mimicking what others around them do sometimes cause people to hurt others without thinking. Banaji and Greenwald (2013) and Ross (2014) have examined unconscious biases, and point out that everyone has biases, and to have biases is to be human. However, they also explain that continuing to be oblivious to biases can cause conflict and discrimination in serious cases.

Banaji and Greenwald (2013), authors of *Blindspot* have researched unconscious biases through use of Implicit Association Tests (IAT). IAT is an online instrument that evaluates a test-taker's strength of association between two concepts, stereotypes or judgments (Project Implicit, 2011). It attempts to measure beliefs and attitudes that individuals are often unwilling to report or admit. There are several tests, including ones for age, skin color, and gender. Taking a test allows the participant to show possible biases towards people who fit in a category related to age, skin color, gender, or whatever implicit bias test is being taken. Creators of the IAT hoped that this would lead to self-awareness of possible biases a test participant did not realize they had. There has been much criticism of the IAT and its validity and usefulness (Mitchell & Tetlock, 2017). However, Banaji and Greenwald claim that the IAT is only one step in creating awareness and motivating people to learn about their unconscious biases. They continue to say that biases are so

inherently unconscious and difficult to eradicate that they themselves have been shocked to take one of the IATs after a long period of absence and discover that they still had some biases even though they have taken the tests multiple times over years (Banaji & Greenwald). We base biases on stereotypes and automatic thoughts that have been ingrained through socialization (Banaji & Greenwald, 2013; Ross, 2014). Ross describes how unconscious biases and behavior resulting from them can be damaging and hurtful in every aspect of our lives. They can influence how we interact with people in our work and community every day. An individual unconscious of their own bias may cause others to fear them because of hurtful behavior experienced. A Japanese man may have an unconscious bias towards people who look non-Japanese. When he sees a non-Japanese person sitting on a train, he may avoid sitting next to the person even if it is the only available seat. This phenomenon was common 20-30 years ago. However, it still continues to happen, making non-Japanese living in Japan feel unwanted (McNeil, 2018).

Appearance in particular is a way of differentiating people. Appearance is a creation of cultural symbols people assign meaning to (Falvey 2012). Culture dictates standards and ideas of beauty and standards of attractiveness. Standards of appearance are cultural elements because appearance creation, including rituals such as grooming, styling, and makeup, reflect learned patterns and can change with time. However, globalization, mass media

reach, and transnational mobility have influenced different cultures to have similar concepts of attractiveness. Naqvi and Saul (2012) contend that people make unconscious and mistaken assumptions about individual's and group membership appearances based on visual elements such as skin tone and facial features. Many cultures have historically attributed light skin color with positive social and cultural characteristics. Attitudes towards these visual signs can appear in unconscious biases and behavior (Banaji & Greenwald, 2013). Thompson (2012) points out that most research on dissatisfaction with appearance amongst individuals with obvious physical differences, such as body weight and shape as well as disfigurements, has focused on levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and avoidance on the part of the individual with the visible difference. Research shows that appearance plays a role in how we view others and how we judge ourselves. This impacts social interactions and individual wellbeing (Thompson). Research on perceptions held by others towards those with visible differences also influences quality of interactions. Those who are unaware of their discomfort around those with different body shapes or disfigurements may subconsciously avoid them causing negative feelings. This is strong support for the necessity of making the unconscious conscious so we can make more conscious efforts to have more productive and successful interactions (Ross, 2014).

Fear of Uncertainty

Unconscious biases are related to fear. Someone may fear what they are unfamiliar with. This often leads to avoiding what is feared. It often influences interactions and relationships. The person avoiding interacting with someone they fear may miss important business or personal developmental opportunities. Moreover, the individual being avoided may feel excluded or unwanted and hurt. Social justice and diversity researchers have found that unconscious bias is a major cause of stress and a reason people feel isolated from the communities in which they live. Ross (2014) and Banaji and Greenwald (2013) point out unconscious biases play a significant role in preventing marginalized individuals from being seen favorably. In addition, it is a key reason they face discrimination in the workplace, politics and society. These kinds of human interactions can cause a person's self-esteem to break down and negatively affect their social functioning (Clarke, 1998; Cho, et al., 2018). The most obvious is the tendency for those highly uncomfortable with uncertainty to become eager to avoid communicating and interacting with those they fear (Stephan & Stephan, 1996; Duronto, Nishida, & Nakayama, 2005).

Discomfort comes from not knowing what to expect and feeling insecure when encountering new people and new situations (Clampitt and Dekoch, 2001). Uncertainty management is controlling one's reactions in uncertain and ambiguous situations. Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov (2010) explain that members

of high uncertainty avoidance societies attempt to minimize uncertainty and ambiguity to manage stress by avoiding uncertainty through rituals and formal rules. Those who make extensive efforts to avoid uncertainty and ambiguity create more formal procedures and policies, and follow social norms, rituals and rules strictly to ease the unpredictability of future events (Hofstede, 2001; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2012). Societies comfortable with uncertainty are more informal and flexible, show moderate resistance to change and are more likely to be entrepreneurs and successful leaders (House, et al., 1999).

Rogers and Lee (2017) conducted a study on the attitude Japanese university students had towards uncertainty avoidance and its relation to managing diversity, (a 2014-2016 JSPS Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research project "Diversity Factors in Leadership"). Results showed that, while most student participants had little desire to leave Japan to work, many also wanted to experience living outside Japan. This result was comparable to a Japan Management Association (JMA) report that examined the desire of Japanese university graduates to work overseas. It showed that 78.2% of Japanese university graduates had no desire to live and work outside Japan, and 57.7% said they would not want to work overseas (Baseel, 2014).

Japan is a nation that makes strong efforts to avoid uncertainty compared to many countries (Hofstede, 2001). Some point out that Japanese people as a cultural group place importance on following rules, conducting rituals and

ceremonies and focus on conformity to avoid the unknown and ease stress. It is one reason that change is slow in the country (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Moreover, many people emphasize the importance of licenses and test scores, and there is great social pressure to conform. These elements lessen the possibility that interactions in uncomfortable situations might result in embarrassment and conflict (Stephan & Stephan, 1996). Many Japanese people see non-Japanese as unpredictable and have negative biases towards them (Kobayashi, 2010; Morita, 2015). Experiencing prejudices of Japanese people in turn causes non-Japanese residents to think negatively of Japanese people (Kobayashi; Morita).

Role of Privilege

Privilege plays a significant role in group dynamics and in the degree of awareness one has of experiences of others. Goodman (2011) defines privilege as a special right, advantage, or power available only to a particular person or group while denying others those same rights and advantages. Members of privileged groups are unaware of the privilege they have and deny and avoid seeing themselves as privileged (Goodman). As members of the dominant group in Japan, Japanese people are unconscious of their privilege and resist thinking of themselves as privileged (Deguchi, 2016).

Morita (2015) states that in Japanese society, Japanese people are privileged, while ethnically different people and those who do not have Japanese

nationality lack privilege. Morita describes an experience of one research participant who was indirectly told to leave by employees of clothing shops in Japan because they thought she was large-sized by Japanese standards. Kobayashi's study (2010) concluded that Japanese people felt uncomfortable and discriminated against and avoided foreign nationals who had dark skin and strong accents when speaking English or Japanese. These incidents show prejudices many Japanese people have towards non-Japanese who appear to be from countries considered to be inferior. Those who lack privilege in Japan are severely disadvantaged and lack human rights in Japan (Morita, 2015). Many Japanese people are unaware of their own privilege when compared to non-Japanese living in Japan. Not only does the clothing shop example show an unwillingness to do business with non-Japanese who might have different appearances and different customs, but Willis (2006) explains that there is little awareness among Japanese people that non-Japanese nationals do not enjoy the same privileges and rights as Japanese. However, Kobayashi (2010) and House, et al., (1999) point out that diversity is a positive influence on innovation and organization success. Kobayashi points out that Japanese companies need foreign workers to survive, so it is imperative that Japan accepts them and becomes a more inclusive country for everyone to live in.

Discussion

Individual and Societal Development

In his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire (2000) describes what was necessary for society and communities to change. He insists that the path to societal development is reliant on individual development. Individuals can develop through knowledge and self-awareness. Individual human development influences community cooperation and growth, which then causes organizations and societies to develop (Freire, 2000). Developing human elements at the basic level can lead to social transformation.

Banaji and Greenwald (2013) explain that awareness of what biases are and how they work unconsciously to damage relationships can motivate individuals to change their way of thinking. It can help them stop and think before acting on biases. Banaji and Greenwald's IAT have been criticized as popular games that may make some not take biases seriously; however, they are a tool to aid individuals who want to change become more self-aware of their own biases and how they can influence behavior (Mitchell & Tetlock, 2017). Not bringing unconscious biases to consciousness creates situations in which the needs and interests of privileged members are prioritized while marginalizing those already disadvantaged (Laperrière & Lépinard, 2016).

Self-awareness of biases lead to awareness of privilege one has in a society. Noticing privilege one has makes us examine the situation and experiences of others. This process can lead to

consciously making efforts to accept and include those who are disadvantaged. It can also influence creation of ways to change parts of social systems so that disadvantages are lessened in more situations and everyone has human rights.

With global interactions and transnational movements increasing, individuals and organizations have more opportunities to diversify and innovate. Organizations are being forced to face diversification and adapt different ways of doing things to survive. One of the greatest challenges is for companies to learn to reconcile and use differences for more effective problem-solving, creativity and innovation (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2010). According to Scharmer, (2009), a major obstacle to successful leadership is fear of the unknown and not knowing how to manage uncertain situations. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner insist that the ability to negotiate uncertain situations and their inherent ambiguity is a key element of managing diversity. Many people fear diversity. Diversity increases fears people have, causing them to not know what to do. Often real and imagined fears surface about those who are different. People fear losing their privileges and power. They may fear people who are different will gain favoritism with others or become more popular and gain rewards within a social system. They may fear negative consequences, fear misunderstandings, or just fear the unknown (Simons, Vázquez & Harris, 1993; Stephan & Stephan, 1996). Nonetheless, Simons, Vázquez and Harris

insist that confronting fears one has can empower and is necessary for leadership and for personal development. Self-awareness can empower and enable people to be who they want to be and to have self-confidence in their ability to be contributing members working towards goals. This is the concept that Freire (2000) advocates for leading to social change. Research on unconscious biases, uncertainty avoidance and privilege all have the common element of increasing knowledge and awareness of factors that can help lead to social transformation.

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