

Creating awareness about implicit biases

As the title suggests, this activity is in order to create awareness about our personal implicit biases.

What are implicit biases?

Unconscious or Implicit biases are social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness.

What should you do in this activity?

There are 4 parts to the activity: first there is a test to understand what possible biases you may have. Then you learn about the possible biases that there can be and reflect on your own practices. Thirdly, an example will be analyzed with regards to the biases you have previously read. Fourth and lastly, a reflection on the session is done in order to conclude the learnings of the session. The activity takes around an hour, therefore, please take your time to do it.

Why should I do this activity?

Everyday people are excluded from product we, designers, create. Many of us do this as an unconscious action, as we design products based on our knowledge and experience. Nevertheless, our knowledge and experiences don't portray all the knowledge that is out in the world. For this reason we need to understand how our experiences affect our designs. The first step every designer can do to understand why we are excluding people unconsciously is to dive within our personal biases. This activity will help you identify these so that next time you are designing, you can understand and change how they will shape your design.

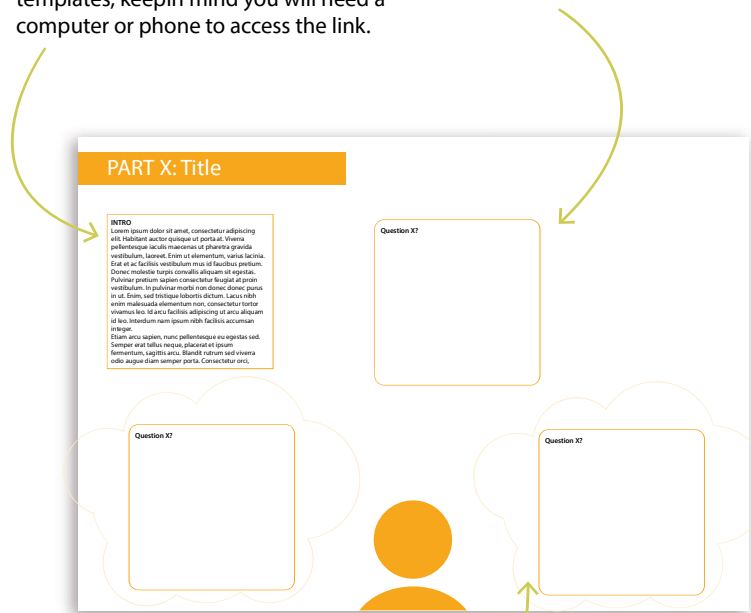
Should I do this activity alone or with others?

This activity has been designed to be done primarily to be done alone, yet could be done in groups. If you do it alone, I encourage you to take your time to reflect on yourself and carry out each step with curiosity. If you do it with others, try to do it in a group no larger than 3-4 people, as it will require more time to speak out about own experiences and opinions.

How to work with the templates?

There is an introduction to each part that explains and gives the information for the corresponding part. Links to external resources are also included in this, therefore, if you print these templates, keep in mind you will need a computer or phone to access the link.

Questions in a rounded box are questions to be answered objectively. These questions don't require you to go into your own experiences.



Questions in a thought bubble (which will be around a person simulating you) are questions that you will need to think about yourself and dive within your own thoughts and experiences. Take your time to think about them and go into your memories.

PART 1: Implicit bias test

INTRO

Let's do an activity to learn about implicit biases. Unconscious or Implicit biases are social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness. Harvard University developed test to understand implicit biases we may have, take one of their tests to see if you have an implicit bias (you can choose any of their tests, if you don't know which to choose, the race IAT is recommended): <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

The IAT test is an exercise to understand and initiate reflection about biases. We all have biases and it influences our daily lives and work. After you have completed the IAT test. Reflect on the following questions one at a time. Spend about 5 min on the thought bubbles around the person icon.

Do I have implicit biases of which I am aware of?

What does it mean to have implicit bias?

How can biases shape my designs?



PART 2: Let's learn about biases in design!

INTRO

Everyone holds unconscious beliefs about various social and identity groups, and these biases stem from one's tendency to organize social worlds by categorizing. Only you can uncover these and improve your designs by doing so.

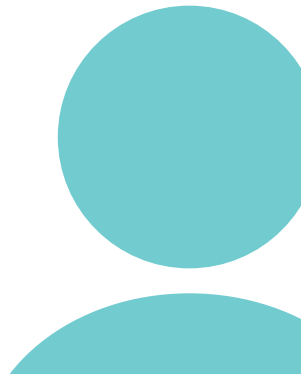
All designers have biases, and biases can take place at any point in the design process. Here is a list of biases grouped in the stages of the design process in which they can take place: <https://uxinlux.github.io/cognitive-biases/52-list-en/>

Take your time to read through them and identify which you have experienced.

What biases do I associate to the most?

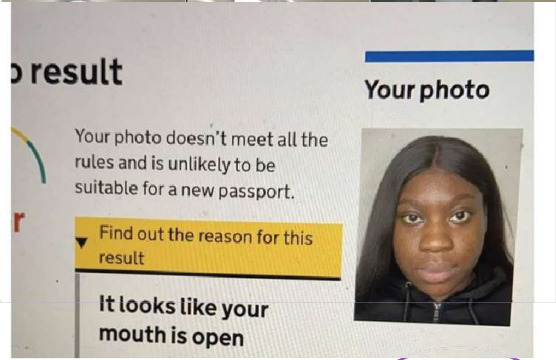
How have these specific biases shaped my designs?

When in the design process these appear?



PART 3: Let's take an example...

INTRO
Did you know that some government websites are discriminatory? Elaine Owusu is unable to upload an image of herself to update her passport because the website AI believes that her mouth looks open in the picture. There are many ways the designer could have prevented this situation like for example by prototyping with a more diverse group of users.



What is the cause of this problem?

What was the intention of the designer? Do you think that they designed it like this on purpose?

Which of the previous biases can have been of influence in this situation?

What effect did these biases have on this scenario?



PART 4: Reflection

INTRO

As you may see, there is an importance in the unconscious biases, privileges, and intentions a designer may have, as it greatly affects every product they design.

Lastly, reflect on what you have learned today:

Can you think of situations where you have designed something and it didn't result in the intention you initially had? Why didn't it? What influenced the process and the outcome? How did your personal biases influence the design?

How has learning about these biases changed your approach to design?

CONCLUSION

Products can be designed with good intentions yet many times the outcome is different than expected and consequently exclude many users. The same goes to designing without knowing of unconscious biases, a designer may be constantly trying to prove a problem that actually does not exist, yet through confirmation bias, they find only resources that may prove its existence. Nevertheless, uncovering our unconscious biases and our privileges isn't just a one time thing. It is a process that needs to happen regularly. It is important to think of these biases while designing your next design (either it is a physical or digital product, or if it is a strategy, etc) and even your daily life. The Institute encourages you to come back after a couple of weeks, in order to:

- understand if anything has changed
- if you have found more biases
- if you have seen other people's biases influence their designs