

# Unconscious bias



Art credit : Z Lynnie

## **“Sexism in surgery humiliates me every day”**

“As a senior surgeon now, I can definitively state that my gender has not only influenced my career, but in fact has defined it. It was defined when I was denied operating sessions by my unit head because my colleague had "a wife and child to support". It is defined in the quick "my dear" here and the comment about quotas and tokenism there. It is relentless and it is real.

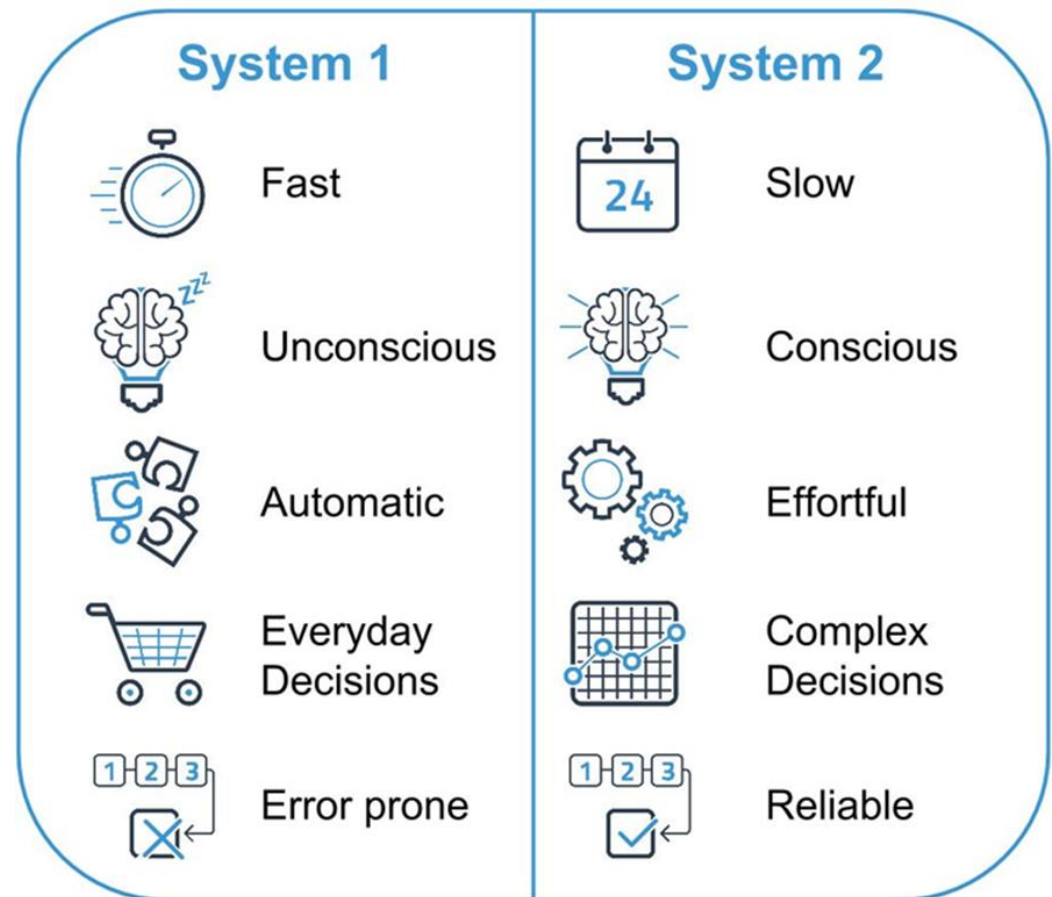
Just because my unit head smiles as he notes that my boots make me look like a dominatrix, does not render it any less humiliating.

Hear me when I tell you that after 20 years of living every day within this hamster wheel – I am utterly exhausted!”

<https://www.smh.com.au/opinion/sexism-in-surgery-humiliates-me-every-day-20150310-13zty9.html>

# Mitigating unconscious bias

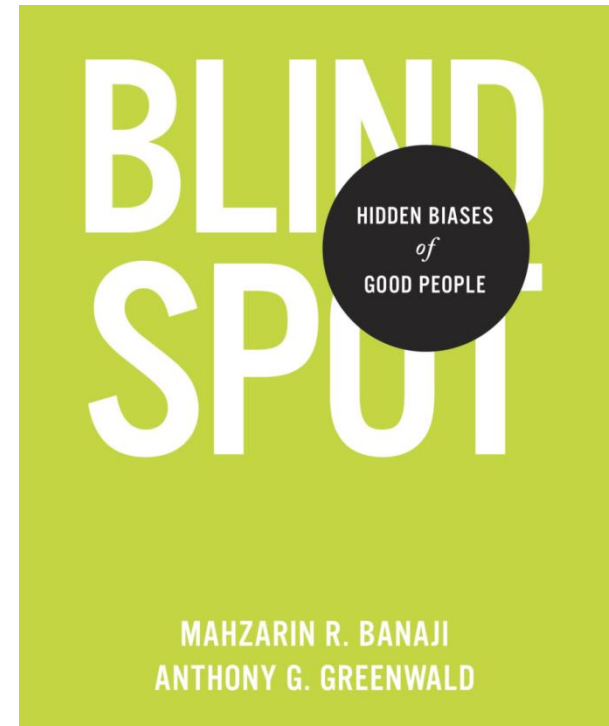
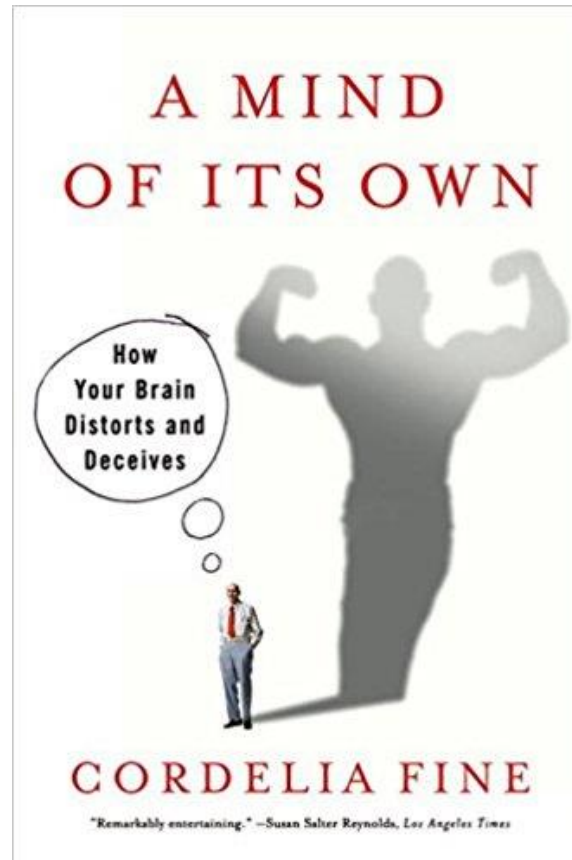
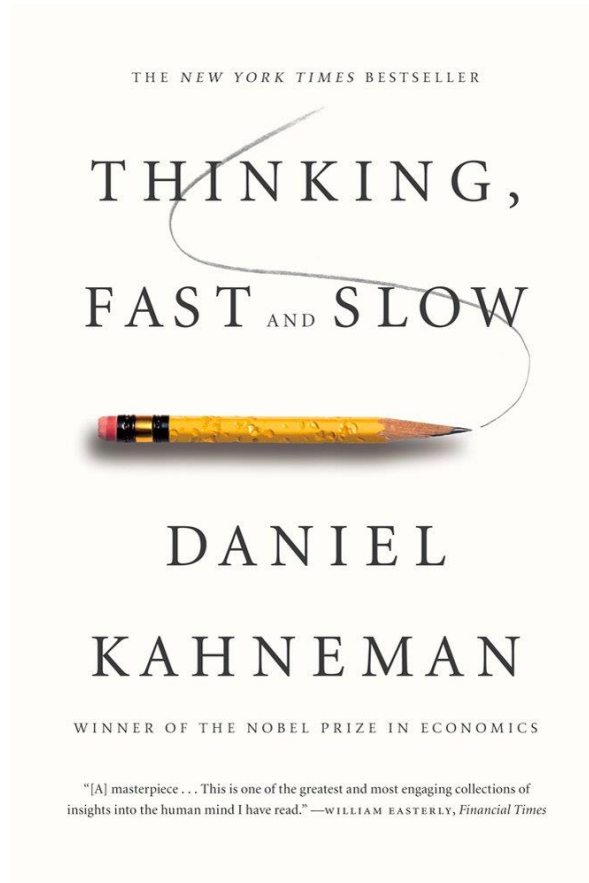
- ▶ ACTION not intention
- ▶ SLOW THINKING not fast thinking



## Unconscious bias definition

- ▶ What: cognitive bias and heuristics are automatic patterns of thought, or short cuts
- ▶ Why are they useful: efficiently allocate attentional resources
- ▶ How do they form: repeated exposure to pervasive cultural stereotypes
- ▶ Who: both men and women share these biases
- ▶ Why are they problematic: undermine equity goals

# Bias





# Be wary of your subjective perspective



## Barbara and Ben Barres (MIT)



# Don't just ask your colleagues

**'Essential'** Marlon James, Winner of the Man Booker Prize 2015

**Reni Eddo-Lodge**

# WHY I'M NO LONGER TALKING TO WHITE PEOPLE ABOUT RACE

THE  
BAILLIE  
GIFFORD  
PRIZE FOR  
NON-FICTION  
2017  
LONGLISTED

BLOOMSBURY CIRCUS





# Evidence

- ▶ Call backs on **résumés** (Bertrand & Mullainathan 2003)
- ▶ **Hiring** men over women (Rudman & Glick 2001)
- ▶ Treatment of **pain** for African Americans (Sabin 2012)
- ▶ Treatment of **heart attacks** (Green et al 2007)
- ▶ Speed of shooting black player in **video games** (Glaser & Knowles 2008)
- ▶ Gender **pay gap** NZ (Motu 2017)
- ▶ **Interruptions** of Justices on the US Supreme Court (Jacobi and Dylan 2017)

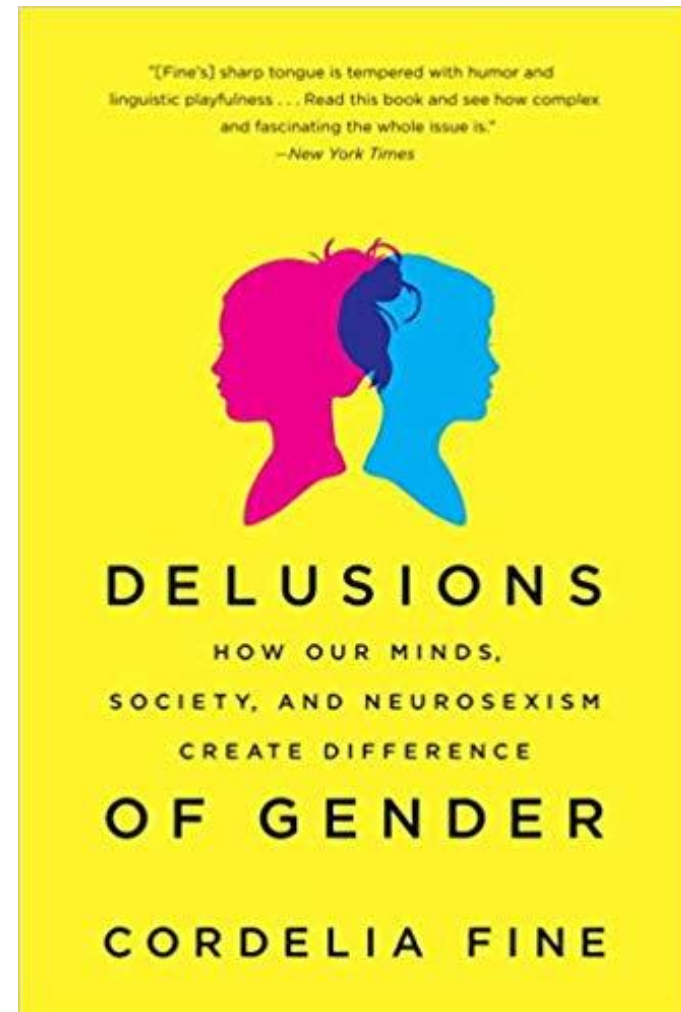
# Consequences: gender in the workplace

- ▶ (Law) **Mistaken** for custodial staff, administrative staff, or court personnel: 57% (women of colour), 50% (white women); 7% (white male lawyers) (ABA 2019)
- ▶ (Law) 80% of white men reported that they had equal **opportunities** for high-quality assignments, but only 63% of white women, 59% of men of color, and 53% of women of color (ABA 2019)
- ▶ (Law QCs) Only 26 /110 **Queens Counsel** appointed since 2002 = Female
- ▶ (Medicine) Patients in general do not **interrupt** Dr, unless she the Dr is female in which case both female and male patients interrupt her more (Rhoades et al 2002)
- ▶ (Medicine) Female patients are more likely than men to have their reports of **pain** be perceived as emotional (Hoffman & Tarzian 2001)
- ▶ Physician gender affects how displays of **dominance** are perceived by patients (Schmid Mast 2004)
- ▶ (Orthopaedics) 61% of women are asked **illegal interview** questions e.g. family planning, versus 8% of men (O'Connor 2016)
- ▶ (Transplant surgery) **Letters** for male applicant = significantly more likely to contain agentic terms such as superb, intelligent, and exceptional, and the term "**future leader**". Letter for female applicants were more likely to use communal terms like compassionate, calm, and delightful. (Hoffman et al 2019)

## Men also constrained by rigid gender norms

- ▶ Stereotypes: strength, invulnerability, stoicism, assertiveness, risk-taking
- ▶ Barrier to health seeking behaviour
- ▶ Social isolation

# Nature versus nurture





# Meritocracy

## Michael

- ▶ street-wise
- ▶ risk taker
- ▶ lives alone
- ▶ good relationships with fellow officers



## Michelle

- ▶ well-educated
- ▶ politically connected
- ▶ media savvy
- ▶ has a spouse and child



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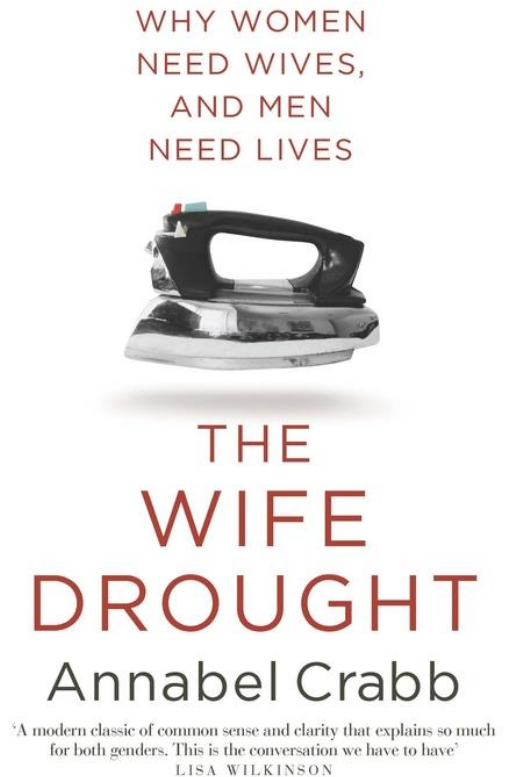
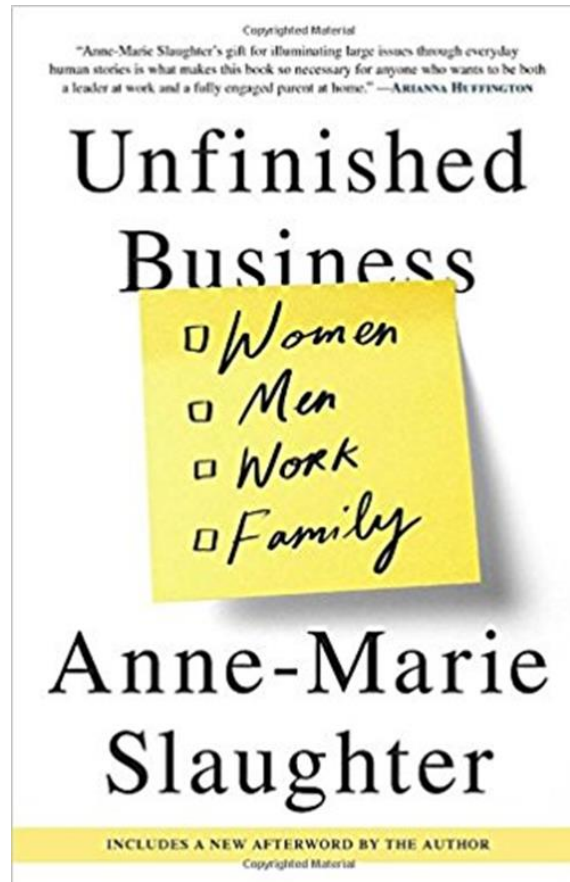
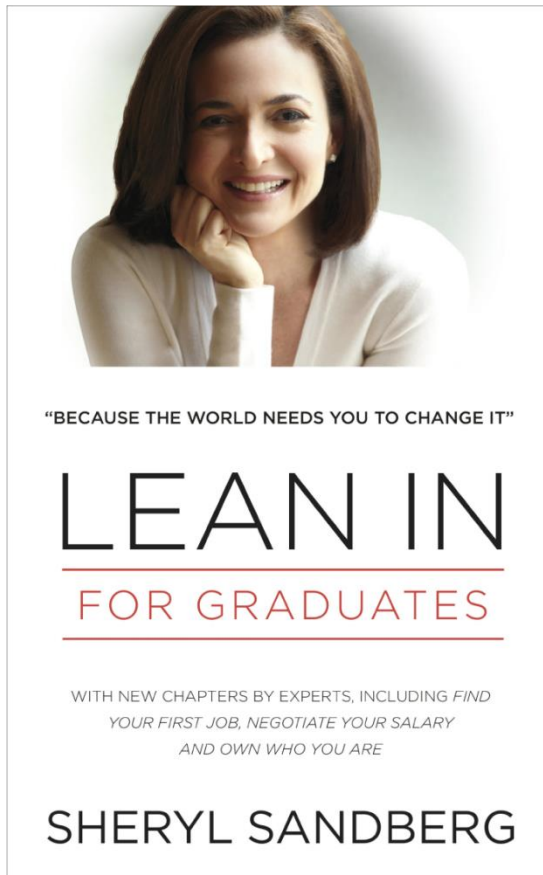
## Self-perceived objectivity

“My judgments in this study were based on a logical analysis of the facts”

“My decision-making in this study was rational and objective”

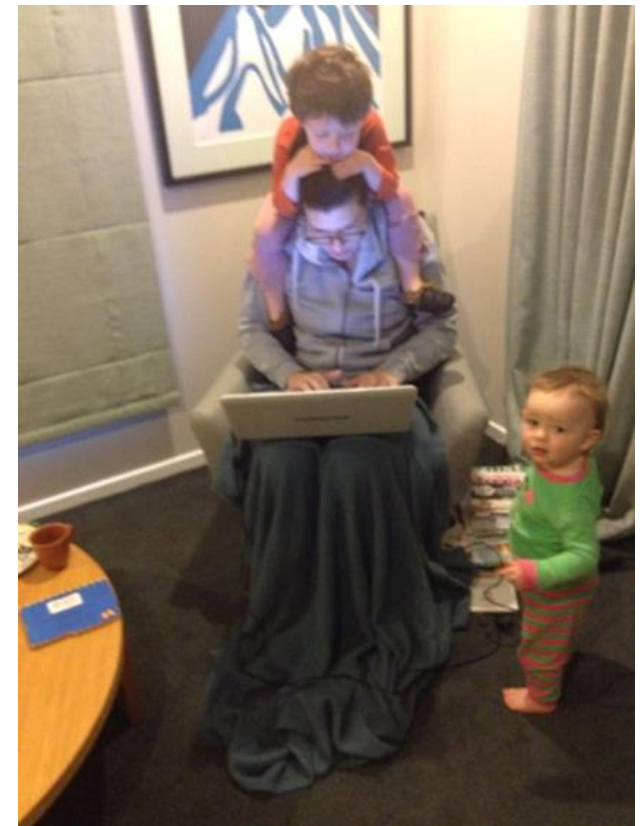
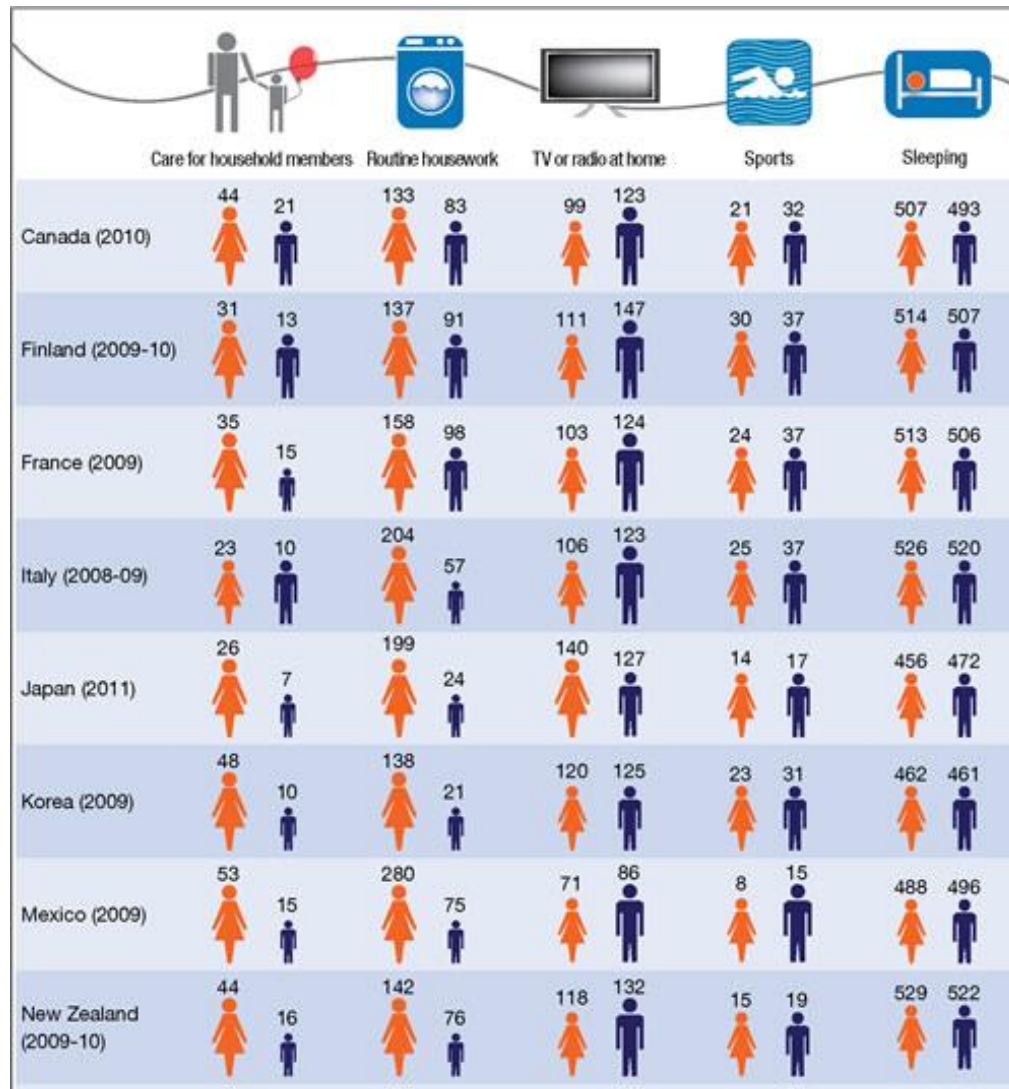


# Professional advice for women





# Unpaid work



# Solutions

- ▶ Failed bias interventions = education on bias, teaching cross-cultural awareness, promoting egalitarian worldview (Lia et al 2014)
  
- ▶ **ACTION** not intention
- ▶ **SLOW THINKING** not fast thinking
  - ✓ Action orientated, accountable, visible, transparent
  - ✓ Collect data
  - ✓ Key performance indicators
  - ✓ Define evaluation criteria
  - ✓ Blind review
  - ✓ Peer-review