Exploring Diversity

In academic settings

Geraldine Fitzpatrick

Email: geriafitz@gmail.com  Twitter: @geri_fitz  @ChangeAcadLife
Ideally by the end of this session ...

Agenda:

⇒ Raise awareness, some points of reflection around dimensions of diversity & which ones play out in our contexts
⇒ Share together some practical tips
⇒ Identify areas for future development
Exploring diversity through belonging... not belonging

You & your experiences
In mixed groups of 4-5 ....

Thinking of you... and life inside or outside of academia

Introduce yourselves
Share your story of not belonging

Across the stories ....
What dimensions of difference are evident?
What were the common feelings/experiences?
Understanding what makes people tick & thrive - three basic needs

Self Determination Theory [Deci & Ryan 1984 & numerous other pubs] & intrinsic motivation

**Autonomy**
- Need to have some agency and **control** over their own behaviours, lives

**Competence**
- Need to develop **mastery** over tasks important to them; achievements, knowledge, skills

**Relatedness ***
- Need to have sense of **belonging** and connectedness with others
  - In group – out group
  - Identity, inclusion
Impacts of social exclusion – not belonging to the dominant group

‘OTHER’ - Result of others’ judgements/behaviours towards us, our judgements/behaviours towards others

- Separation fuels intergroup discrimination, conflict [GreaterGood, Berkeley]
- Anticipated exclusion/loneliness -> decline in cognitive performance, logic, reasoning [Baumeister et al 2002]
- Social isolation -> impairs executive functioning, sleep, and mental and physical well-being [Cacioppo & Cacioppo 2014]
- Rejection and social isolation -> overlap of neural pathways with physical pain [Eisenberger 2012]
Diversity – multiple dimensions of identity

Vertical (inherent, social, cultural) ... Horizontal (individual, context)

• Cultural/ethnic origin
• Nationality
• Gender
• Height, weight, age
• Language, accent
• Sexual preference
• Handedness
• Physical (dis)abilities
• Neurodiversity
• Socio-economic class
• Family situation
• Religion, beliefs
• Politics
• Personality
• Communication style
• Drivers
• Values
• Strengths

Any others?

• Disciplinary background
• Research topics
• Research methods
• Technical skills
• Professional priorities
• Dress, haircut, hair colour, skin colour
• Piercings, tattoos
Diversity ... Complex intersections of identities

Context dependent ... relevance, prevalence, salience?

What are some of your personal intersections of identity?

In what ways are they relevant, salient at work?
Why diversity matters

To computer science, to our faculties
Like all technologies, digital technologies do not emerge from nowhere. They are shaped by implicit and explicit choices and thus incorporate a set of values, norms, economic interests, and assumptions about how the world around us is or should be. Many of these choices remain hidden in software programs implementing algorithms that remain invisible. In line with the renowned Vienna Circle and its contributions to modern thinking, we want to espouse critical rational reasoning and the interdisciplinarity needed to shape the future.

We must shape technologies in accordance with human values and needs, instead of allowing technologies to shape humans. Our task is not only to rein in the downsides of information and communication technologies, but to encourage human-centered innovation. We call for a Digital Humanism that describes, analyzes, and, most importantly, influences the complex interplay of technology and humankind, for a better society and life, fully respecting universal human rights.
“Studies show that well-managed diverse groups outperform homogeneous ones and are more committed, have higher collective intelligence, and are better at making decisions and solving problems.”

[Williams & Mihaylo, HBR 2019]
“We understand that scientific excellence depends on creativity, that creativity emerges from diversity, and that the advantages of diversity are realized through inclusion”

[Asai 2019]
The EDM technique, Tannu admits, is counterintuitive. Qubits can be ranked according to their error rate on specific types of problems, and the most logical course of action might be to use the set that's most accurate. But even the best qubits produce errors, and those errors are likely to be the same when the operation is done thousands of times.

Choosing qubits with different error rates – and therefore different types of error – guards against that by ensuring that the one correct answer will rise above the diversity of errors.

Qureshi compares the EDM technique to team-building techniques promoted by human resource consultants.

“If you form a team of experts with identical backgrounds, all of them may have the same blind spot,” he said, adding a human dimension. “If you want to make a team resilient to blind spots, collect a group of people who have different blind spots. As a whole, the team will be guarded against specific blind spots.”
Where are the diversity issues in computer science faculties?

*Thinking of you, your faculty, group, project team... specific examples*

Where is diversity working well?

Where does it need to be better?

In what ways?
Challenges around diversity?

Bias, difference
We are ALL biased

Take the Harvard Implicit Association Test!

**Similarity/affinity bias:** homophily, people like me

**Confirmation bias:** selective evidence that fits previous opinion/experience/stereotype

**Salience bias:** most easily available information

**Stereotype threat:** self-behaviour in line with expectations of our own perceived stereotype

**Performance bias:** holding some groups to higher standards

**Performance attribution:** attributing success to either skills or luck/hard work
Diversity as difference

Differences make it harder for people to connect and empathise with each other

[Berkeley, GreaterGood]
Examples of bias in hiring

‘Bias in hiring has been extensively documented. In one study, “Jamal” needed eight more years of experience than “Greg” to be seen as equally qualified.

Another found that **men from elite backgrounds** were called back for interviews more than 12 times as often as identical candidates from non-elite backgrounds.

Other studies have found that **women, LGBT+ candidates, people with disabilities, women in headscarves, and older people**

are less likely to be hired than their peers.’

[Williams & Mihaylo, 2019]
Evidence for the reproduction of social class in brief speech

Michael W. Kraus, Brittany Torrez, Jun Won Park, and Fariba Ghayebi

PNAS first published October 21, 2019 https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1900500116

“We find that Americans can perceive the social class of targets based on exposure to brief speech patterns, that word pronunciation facilitates this perceptual process, and that these cues bias hiring decisions in favor of those higher versus lower in social class.”
"The very small behavioral cues that signal whether our contributions are valued, whether I want to talk to you, whether you’re being included or not, etc – unconsciously driven yet influence our behavior”

Negative cues, subtle disrespectful actions:
- Interruptions
- Sniggers, slights
- Silent judgements, eye rolling
- Ignoring someone
- Mispronouncing someone’s name...repeatedly
- Excluding someone from a gathering/meeting
- Failing to give credit where due
- Not introducing someone

[re:Work Google’s Unconscious Bias @ Work]

[Consciously overcoming unconscious bias, Media Partners]
Constructively engaging with difference

Ways forward–diversity & inclusion
Not enough just to have diversity

... 

Have to enable, empower, embrace value of diversity through inclusive practices

Creating safety & belonging

Beware of orientation to inclusion –

To what extent is the ‘other’ expected to change to fit with the dominant

vs mutual respect & change?
[Note: Mixed evidence about value of Implicit bias training]

**Awareness**
- Cognitive inclusion
  - Self awareness
  - Empathy, perspective
taking

**Behaviour**
- Habits of inclusion
  - Recognising, valuing difference
  - Forming new habits
  - Micro-affirmations

**Culture**
- Culture of inclusion
  - Supportive structures, policies, processes, reward systems

© Copyright 2019 | GeriFitz
Cognitive re-frame...

Diversity/differences as places of encounter and possibilities rather than exclusion
Engaging with difference

A prosocial skill that can be developed with intentionality & practice

- Identify, foreground what is also common ... eg shared dimensions of identity, goals etc

- Recognise & communicate the importance of divergent <dimensions of difference> as strengths

- Develop skills to develop differences as positive advantages

- Hold ourselves & others accountable
  - Make it the norm to talk about bias, for anyone/everyone to call out perceived bias
Example strategies for inclusion - people

To mitigate against /minimize bias, to increase feelings of belonging, to value diversity

- **Get to know people** in your teams/project/groups as people
  - Respectful enquiry, listen to understand
  - What are their strengths, what can they contribute
  - Identify, negotiate, how to best use individual’s uniqueness – teams, roles, tasks, creative solutions

- **Recognise** who/how the team might **trigger** some of your unconscious biases
  - Try to put yourself in their shoes
  - Challenge stereotypes with counter stereotype information
  - Assume good intentions
  - Look for alternative explanations eg contextual/situational explanations rather than dispositional/stereotype ones - “what might be three different reasons for this...”
Example strategies for inclusion - micro-affirmations

**LIVE** - ‘everyday gestures of respect that make people feel included & valued’

**LISTENING**
- Listening
- Making eye contact
- Paying attention to what others have to say
- Not interrupting

**INCLUDING**
- Inviting to participate
- Inviting to socialize
- Keeping in the loop

**VALUING**
- Giving credit where it’s due
- Encouraging strengths
- Acknowledging contributions, accomplishments

**ENGAGING**
- Saying hello and goodbye
- Giving equal time to all
- Asking for input

© Copyright 2019 | GeriFitz

Consciously overcoming unconscious bias: https://www.media-partners.com/respectful_workplace/consciously_overcoming_unconscious_bias.htm
Example: Strategies for inclusion - processes

To mitigate against /minimize bias, to increase feelings of belonging, to value diversity

**Recruitment:**
- Objective & prioritized criteria and common rubric
- Diversity of applicant pool & committee members (What dimensions? How many)
- Structured interviews with skill-based questions

**Meetings:**
- Schedule meetings inclusively
- Who talks first matters
- Call out interruptions
- Ensure credit is appropriately given
- Rotate ‘housework’
Example resources

- Facebook: Managing Unconscious Bias: https://managingbias.fb.com
- Consciously overcoming unconscious bias: https://www.media-partners.com/respectful_workplace/consciously_overcoming_unconscious_bias.htm
- Example research re why unconscious bias training programs don’t work: