

PREFERENCE CHECK

Traits associated with whiteness and masculinity in America have been **assigned higher value and importance** when it comes to all things leadership and hard work. This skewed sense of what different bodies are capable of in the workplace includes (but is not limited to): **perception, assumptions, and experiences related to intellect, physical ability, leadership presence, team leadership style, motivation, drive, and more.** *Yuck.*

Preferences toward or away from certain types of behaviors and people are pervasive and, thus, predictable. These preferences are baked in to our psyches¹ in all areas of life: news, school, our interactions with institutions, and more.

We have all been programmed, and we all have preferences. These impact how we feel about who would and wouldn't be a good fit on our teams at work. We might even go so far as to convince ourselves we were doing a job candidate a favor by not hiring them because they probably wouldn't like working with us all that much. *Uh-oh!*

- Programming just is. None of us is immune. It's about what we, as adults, do with the programming that matters.
- We have all been race and gender programmed, whether it's in our everyday awareness or not.
- We have each been rewarded and punished for our behaviors based on the expectations put upon us by family, community, and work.

This programming influences and determines what has been coded as “professional,” “ideal,” and “impressive” in the context of hiring.

Problems and prejudice arise whenever we are *not* paying attention to our own race and gender programming at work. Your job is to start noticing how similar behavior is discussed in very different ways **depending on the bodies** engaging in the behavior. Building this capacity will help you catch the same problematic narratives while you hire.

¹ Douglas Starr, “Meet the Psychologist Exploring Unconscious Bias—And Its Tragic Consequences for Society,” *Science*, March 26, 2020, <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/03/meet-psychologist-exploring-unconscious-bias-and-its-tragic-consequences-society>.

Hiring Revolution / RESOURCE

A Guide to Disrupt Racism + Sexism



Pause + Reflect

Be honest! There are no bonus points for the most polite answers.

What characteristics or qualities do you find <i>likeable</i> in other people?	What are the characteristics of a person you feel most <i>comfortable</i> around?
Imagine that optimally <i>likeable</i> person. What is their age, race, gender, physical appearance, smell, smile, and handshake style?	Imagine that person you feel <i>comfortable</i> around. What is their age, race, gender, physical appearance, smell, smile, and handshake style?

Let's do a quick preference check.

Set a timer for one minute and answer the twenty questions on the next page. Yep, we need you to do it that fast! Don't worry: there is no way to fail this quiz. In fact, there won't even be scoring. The question is,

Who would you most like to work with or near?

You don't need a reason why.

You cannot circle both. Pick one.

Set the timer for 1 minute. Did you do it? Now... Ready—Steady—Go!

Hiring Revolution / RESOURCE

A Guide to Disrupt Racism + Sexism



I prefer my co-workers/colleagues/boss to be (circle ONLY ONE from each pair):

Fat/Heavy	or	Thin
Bald	or	Have Hair
Able Bodied	or	In a Wheelchair
English Speaking	or	English with an Accent (Southern, British, Spanish)
Young	or	Old
Gay	or	Straight
Have Kids	or	Don't Have Kids
Deaf	or	Hearing
A US Citizen	or	Not a US Citizen
Transgender	or	Cisgender
Jewish	or	Christian
Wealthy	or	Working Class
Have a Car	or	Don't Have a Car
Pregnant	or	Not Pregnant
Muslim	or	Atheist
Tall	or	Short
Fast Talker	or	Slow Talker
Introvert	or	Extrovert
Loud	or	Soft
Hugger	or	Handshaker

Okay, stop.

Take three deep breaths, each one deeper than the last.

Hiring Revolution / RESOURCE

A Guide to Disrupt Racism + Sexism



Take your time. Really breathe. Resist the urge to leave your body. Stay in it. Keep breathing as you now take some time to review your list of selected preferences.

*Now let's do some **freewriting** to figure out what you notice and what you can learn from your reactions. Read back over your circled responses:*

- ◆ *How did that feel? What are your initial reflections on your own reactions?*

- ◆ *Where did you get stuck choosing one answer? And where did you fly through answering?*

- ◆ *What do you notice about your preferences being similar and different to the ways that you yourself behave, are, or act?*

- ◆ *How have these preferences shown up in how you behave at work in your past?*

- ◆ *How do you imagine your preferences showing up when you hire?*

- ◆ *How might these preferences be limiting your desire and/or ability to build a kickass team full of people good at all sorts of different and complementary things?*

- ◆ *Last question on likability: What has been the impact of your criteria for likeable and comfortable?*

- ◆ *Anything else arising???*

You get the point. Our preferences run deep. We might still be just as judgmental as we were about who did and didn't belong at our table in the cafeteria at school. Let's grow up. Let's wake up. Self-awareness work can clarify preferences for whiteness and masculinity that will without a doubt creep into our hiring decisions unless we get both conscious and clear.