

.....

Bias

Unintended bias: How do YOU score?

"Every man has reminiscences which he would not tell to everyone but only his friends. He has other matters in his mind which he would not reveal even to his friends, but only to himself, and that in secret. But there are other things which a man is afraid to tell even to himself, and every decent man has a number of such things stored away in his mind."

Fyodor Dostoyevsky

How familiar are you with the workings of your mind? Is there a difference between what you say and what you think? Do your conscious words and actions agree with the thoughts and impressions that exist beneath the surface?

Harvard has prepared a simple new survey that anyone can do over the Internet.

Called Project Implicit, the study looks at the difference, if any, between our inner thoughts and feelings, and our outer words and actions, using a series of simple association exercises.

The project's purpose is to gather results for psychology researchers; using a set of short exercises they've dubbed the Implicit Association Test (IAT). The study follows ethical guidelines.

"It is well known that people don't always 'speak their minds,'" says Project Implicit, "and it is suspected that people don't always 'know their minds'. Understanding such divergences is important to scientific psychology. Psychologists understand that people may not say what's on their minds either because they are unwilling or because they are unable (outside of our conscious awareness) to do so."

This is where the IAT comes in: in a respectful and confidential environment, it is able to measure embedded attitudes and beliefs that we are either unaware of, or may prefer not to share.

While this may sound embarrassing, it's also a chance to ask yourself: do I have biases? If so, what are they? Do I really know myself?

It's a chance, says the project, for participants to "gain greater awareness about their own unconscious preferences and beliefs."

And no one else has to be the wiser.



is an actual holiday, we did find lots of organizations to help you if you do wish to start your own country. What seemed at first like a lark quickly became subversive, but no less fun. Check it out. It's possible. http://www.escapeartist.com/unique_lifestyles/for_a_new_nation.htm

November 24: Buy Nothing Day
(November 24, 2004 - US) (Nov. 27 in UK)

If you do feel the need to buy something this day, buy Ad Busters magazine...

dedicated to freeing us from consumer addiction. A perfect holiday to celebrate so close to the "holiday gift giving season"

Source: About.com: <http://frugalliving.about.com/cs/consumeraddiction/a/112100.htm>

Source: www.buynothingday.co.uk

November 25: Parfait Day (National)

November 25 each year. These guys really know how to market their stuff! There's a day for every kind of ice cream treat imaginable. Hey, we're not complaining.

Source: www.allabouticecream.com/History/nationaldays.html

Sagittarius: November 22 - December 21

Capricorn: December 22 - January 19

December

December Birthstones: Blue Topaz or Turquoise (modern)

Zircon, Turquoise, or Lapis Lazuli (traditional)

Flower: Narcissus

The Narcissus stands for self-love.

Hi Neighbour Month. We weren't able to confirm this as anything more than a greeting card day, but at the same time, what's wrong with sending a card your neighbour's way, just to say hi?

www.greetsomeone.com/december/ neighbour1.shtml



Tests cover our potential biases on topics like pets, age, elections, presidents, skin tones, weight, racial biases and gender.

"The range of studies should provide you with a great variety of experiences and an opportunity to think about topics that are very important to you, or unique issues that you have not had the occasion to think about before. The primary goals of Project Implicit are to provide a safe, secure, and well-designed virtual environment to investigate psychological issues and, at the same time, provide visitors and participants with an experience that is both educational and engaging."

(See: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>).

Tests take just a few minutes to complete (under 10). Basically, you're asked to classify words and/or images by hitting one of two keys. The keys switch back and forth. Results are based on how fast you respond to different words or images. The theory is that we tend to take more time hitting a key when the concept we're thinking about is more negative to us.

The results are immediately shared with the participant and remain otherwise anonymous.

Is it possible that greater awareness about what lurks in our own subconscious is a tool to furthering future world harmony? After all, a deeper understanding of oneself can lead to more understanding and tolerance of others. In these days of terrorism and fear, one wonders, could this be the missing ingredient? ❖

What art offers is space - a certain breathing room for the spirit.

John Updike