

Åsa Burman, Stockholm University & Institute for Futures Studies:
Collective responsibility for implicit bias

ABSTRACT

The current debate about implicit bias and moral responsibility focuses primarily on individuals and their behavior – is a person morally responsible for having implicit bias; for manifesting it; or for not acting on the knowledge that she most likely is biased? This individualistic bent also shows up in suggested solutions: Personal intervention is by far the most common type of solution. The question of collective moral responsibility for implicit bias, however, has hitherto been overlooked: Can we as a collective – a nation, club, or as board of directors of an organization – be held morally responsible for implicit bias in individuals? I answer in the positive. More specifically, I show that two arguments – the argument from lack of awareness and the argument from causal etiology – directed against the view that individuals are morally responsible for having and manifesting their implicit bias rather speaks in favor of the view that we as a collective can be held morally responsible for implicit bias in individuals.