WE ALL COUNT

HIDDEN BIAS IN DATA PRODUCTS

Bias, often in the form of accidental racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and more, accidentally leaks into evaluation and research products at each of the 7 stages of the Data Lifecycle.

Thinking carefully at each stage can help prevent social bias and equity issues you might have overlooked.

FUNDING:

Who pays for the research often sets hidden agendas. Many important topics don't get researched since no one with money wants to pay for it.

The demographic profile of the funders compared with the humans that will contribute data to this project matters.

MOTIVATION:

Compare the implicit purpose vs stated purpose of this data project

Think about who stands to benefit most from this data project and who stands to lose.

5 REASONS TO FIND & FIX SOCIAL BIAS IN YOUR DATA PRODUCT

Your results will be more accurate.

Your work will be more efficient and effective.

Your research will be more ethical and trustworthy.

Your organization will stay on the cutting edge of research and evaluation practice.

Your funders and stakeholders are more likely to increase support for your projects.

PROJECT DESIGN:

Research methods are not neutral. They each have assumptions and world views embedded. Consider the implications of the methods we're using for this data project.

DATA COLLECTION:

Consider who owns the data and the equity implications of this. Think carefully about measurement. Get a diversity of input.

Consider actual informed consent if collecting data from beneficiaries who believe they can only receive the benefits by consenting to data collection.

ANALYSIS:

The definition of success is extremely important and often causes accidental bias and inequity.

Statistical methods each have their own implicit biases and assumptions. Check yours carefully. Get external advice.

INTERPRETATION:

Consider all the alternative explanations for your results.

Check if the questions you think you're answering are the real questions.

COMMUNICATION AND DISTRIBUTION:

Produce communication materials in all the languages that the data was collected in.

Ensure that the graphic design of your results reflects the cultural and cognitive preferences of the people who contributed data.