



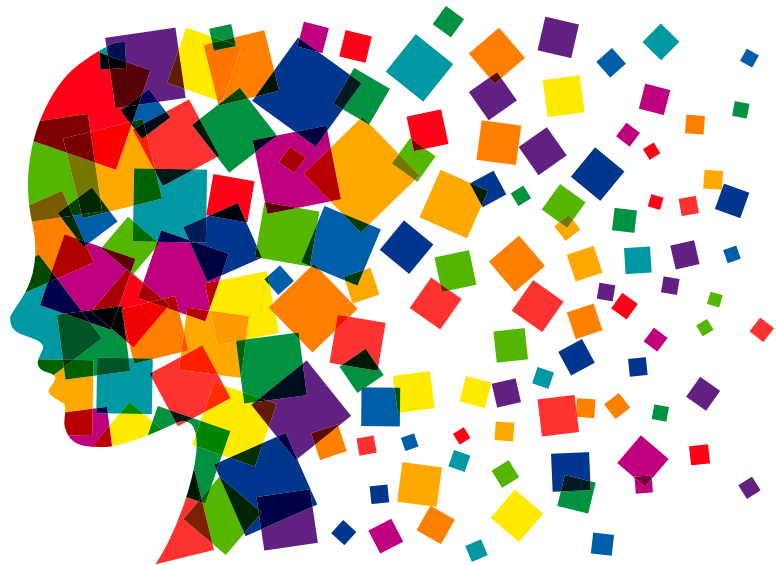
Public Works

# Kaleidoscope

A REFLECTION OF DIVERSITY IN PUBLIC WORKS

SPRING 2018

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## Cognitive Biases vs. Common Sense

### Can you resist the pull of cognitive biases?

By Vanessa Jordan

**B**ias influence everything we do, and as humans we are victims to our own survival mechanism. Dr. Jim Taylor explores the rationale behind our decisions in the article "Cognitive Biases vs. Common Sense." He begins with how even scientists who follow the rigors of the scientific method are subject to "veer off the path of objectivity" and may choose the wrong conclusions. The reason, he says, is because we are all human. Dr. Taylor writes:

*Homo sapiens is a seemingly irrational species that appears to...think and behave in nonsensical rather than commonsensical ways. The reason is that we fall victim to... cognitive biases that cause us to engage in distorted, imprecise, and incomplete thinking which... results in "perceptual distortion, inaccurate judgment, or illogical interpretation" (per Wikipedia), and, by extension, poor and sometimes catastrophic decisions.*



Diversity in Public Works

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In other words, biases tell us that we are rational with our decision making when in reality, we are not. And the results can sometimes be detrimental. The author uses several examples such as the Internet (everything on there is true), housing and financial crises (anyone can afford a house if you get a loan), and the “truly stupid use of social media by politicians, celebrities, and professional athletes.”

So why do we have them? Dr. Taylor explains: “cognitive biases must have had, at some point in our evolution, adaptive value. These distortions helped us to process information more quickly (e.g., stalking prey in the jungle), meet our most basic needs (e.g., help us find mates), and connect with others (e.g., be a part of a “tribe”).” But that does not work in our current, rapidly moving and intricate world. Our brains get overwhelmed with the amount of data presented to them, and rely on outdated means of processing to come to conclusions fast. Bias helped us make decisions quickly, but in a time when “correctness of information, thoroughness of processing, precision of interpretation, and soundness of judgment are, in most situations today, far more important...” when deeper thought is needed on important choices, biases skew our perceptions and look for “the simplest and fastest route to a judgment.”

How do we combat them? Dr. Taylor says “we can reduce their power over us by understanding these distortions, looking for them in our own thinking, and making an effort to counter their influence over us as we draw conclusions, make choices, and come to decisions. In other words, just knowing and considering these universal biases ... will make us less likely to fall victim to them.”

He concludes with a list of common biases we are all subject to. I added three fun ones at the end:

**The Bandwagon Effect** (aka herd mentality) describes the tendency to think or act in ways because other people do. Example: the popularity of Apple products

**The Confirmation Bias** involves the inclination to seek out information that supports our own preconceived notions. The reality is that most people don't like to be wrong, so they surround themselves with people and information that confirm their beliefs. Example: the tendency to follow news outlets that reinforce our political beliefs.

**Illusion of Control** is the propensity to believe that we have more control over a situation than we actually do. If we don't actually have control, we fool ourselves into thinking we do. Examples include rally caps in sports and “lucky” items.

**The Semmelweis Reflex** (just had to include this one because of its name) is the predisposition to deny new information that challenges our established views. “If the facts don't fit the theory, throw out the facts.” An example is the Seinfeld episode in which George Costanza's girlfriend simply refuses to allow him to break up with her.

**The Causation Bias** suggests the tendency to assume a cause-effect relationship in situations in which none exists (or there is a correlation or association). An example is believing someone is angry with you because they haven't responded to your email when, more likely, they are busy and just haven't gotten to it yet.

**The Overconfidence Effect** involves unwarranted confidence in one's own knowledge. Research has shown that people who say they are “99 percent certain are wrong 40 percent of the time.” Examples include political and sports prognosticators.

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home to eat and rest, or they eat in restaurants. Everything is closed on Sundays, except for a few grocery stores which can be open in the mornings. My wife and I do remember when stores were not open on Sundays in the U.S., though those days are long gone. However, we were surprised to encounter the closures once again, now that we have the current American mindset which is that just about everything is available at any time.

Also, restaurants are closed from 2-5 p.m., between lunch and dinner. On the second jet-lagged day of our trip we decided to eat out at 1:45 p.m.,

only to be greeted by empty streets and closed or nearly-closed restaurants in the town of Mirano, Italy. We couldn't squeeze in. Nope. They would not be able to completely serve us a meal before 2 p.m., and that was closing time. We were out of luck!

## European Vacation

By Tom Klusman

**M**y name is Tom Klusman, I have worked in Fleet for 24 years. In the fall of 2017, my wife, son, daughter, and son-in-law joined me for a month-long family holiday of sightseeing and visiting family and friends throughout Italy and France. As a new member of the Diversity Committee I was asked if I would write about my family's European vacation, where cultural differences presented themselves in surprising ways. I am more than happy to share some of our observations.

Our first fine dining experience in Italy, amidst white table cloths and black-tie wearing wait staff, offered the first evidence that we were no longer in the United States. The menu contained a horse meat entrée. My French son-in-law explained that horse meat is readily available in grocery stores and restaurants in France. Though he himself has eaten it very rarely, he says it was available in school.

Another indication of cultural differences is the fact that businesses and stores, except for grocery stores, are closed from noon until 2 p.m. every day because this is lunch time in Italy and France. People either go



We learned right away to mark time, to make sure we knew what supplies we might need for the next day in order to procure them in the allotted time. Time management was crucial and could be the difference between eating or not, having needed supplies or not. By the end of our month overseas we had be-

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# Diversity Snapshot Coming in April

## Exploring Fellowship and Recycling in Indonesia

Tuesday, April 17 • 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. • Roosevelt Yard Building 2 Conference Room



Planning for the next Diversity Snapshot is underway! Stephanie Scafa will talk about her recent trip to Indonesia. She was there as part of an exchange program and learned about some of Indonesia's practices, and shared some of ours surrounding waste management.

Along with technical details, she'll share personal experiences of being immersed in another culture, along with some eye-opening experiences about how Indonesia is tackling some pretty important waste management questions and improvements.



### Did You Know?

You can still watch the last Diversity Snapshot, *Brand Leadership* with Juan Carlos Valle.

Find it here:

<http://ceshare/pw/pwshared/PWVideos/SitePages/Bullying%20Handouts.aspx>

# Equity and Contracting Program

Eugene Public Works is committed to stewardship, it's one of the department's values. Staff can help showcase financial stewardship by utilizing several tools in the City's financial toolbox.

The City is now advertising contracting bids on ORPIN (Oregon Procurement Information Network). ORPIN provides access to procurement and contracting information issued by the state of Oregon, local governments, and political subdivisions.

Utilizing this free system may save the department thousands of dollars annually in advertising expenses. In addition to these savings, Public Works will reach far more suppliers and increase the [Equity in Contracting program's](#) ability to gather important data.

Staff can also ensure they're good stewards of finances by following a few simple tips from [Purchasing](#). According to Becky Wheeler, Purchasing Analyst, one of the best resources available to City staff is the [Certification Office for Business Inclusion and Diversity \(COBID\)](#). The COBID directory is a certified listing of all minority and women-owned businesses in Oregon, as well as other certification types.

"By using the COBID directory, project managers can locate and connect with new suppliers who may have innovative ideas and pricing or meet their needs better," Wheeler said.

National and regional studies show that significant systemic barriers to participation in the marketplace has led to historic underutilization of minority and women-owned businesses in public contracting.

Wheeler said instead of going to the same three suppliers over and over for quotes, often it's better to reach out to more suppliers, and the COBID directory makes that easy.

"Increasing market competition can get the City best value. It's good for the City, the supplier community and project managers. It's just the right thing to do," Wheeler said.

Wheeler says the most important thing to remember is that Purchasing is always there to help. Purchasing can also assist suppliers to register with COBID.

**EQUITY IN CONTRACTING PROGRAM**  
**COBID: How to Access New Vendors**

**What is COBID and Why Should I Use the Directory of Certified Firms?**

The City of Eugene is committed to applying the principles of equity to our public contracting efforts. The Certification Office for Business Inclusion and Diversity (COBID) is the State of Oregon Office that certifies all minority and women-owned businesses in Oregon, as well as other certification types. One way to diversify our vendor pool is to search through COBID's [directory](#) of Certified firms.

**How do I use the Directory of Certified Firms?**

By clicking on the green box, you can use the [directory](#) to search for vendors. (Note: if you lose the link, you can simply do an internet search for "COBID directory" and it should be the top result.)

Once you are on the directory webpage, you can search by a variety of attributes: business name, description, commodity codes (CSI, NAICS, NAEP, SIC, UNS/ISC), contact person, location, area code, certification type, and more.

[Click here on back page.](#)

Contact Claudia Denton, Contracting Equity Analyst, if you would like help or tips on how to use the COBID directory.  
Claudia.M.Denton@ci.eugene.or.us or 541-682-5058.

If you know of a vendor that is minority or women-owned, but not certified, please contact Claudia so she can assist the business in obtaining this important, free certification.

*Follow these instructions to diversify your vendors*

**"By using the COBID directory, project managers can locate and connect with new suppliers who may have innovative ideas and pricing or meet their needs better"**

# Co-Worker's Corner — It's About Us!

## An Introduction to the Public Works Diversity Committee

### Ray Joseph

Erosion Prevention Specialist  
Engineering Division

**Hometown:** Gary, Indiana

**College:** Ball State University, College of Architecture and Planning

**Major:** Urban and Regional Planning and Development

**My biggest adventures:** It's difficult to narrow it down to just one. Every year my partner and I take a couple of weeks and travel throughout the U.S. on our motorcycle. Every adventure is different and always fun.

**This always brings a smile to my face:** My daughters always bring a smile to my face.

**Game love to play:** I really enjoy backgammon.

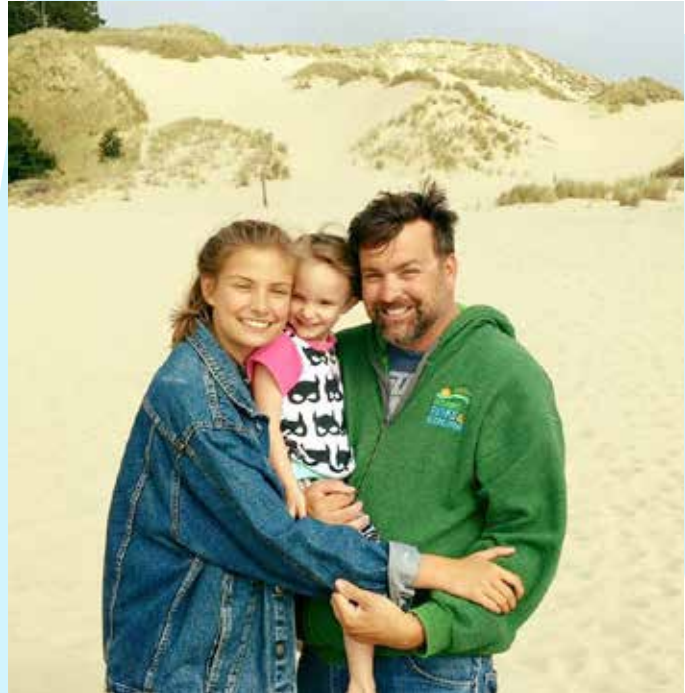
**"Getaway" place:** My "getaway" place is solo time spent on two wheels.

**People I would like to have dinner with:** Challenging question. I guess it would be a person or persons who has changed our lives for the better. I would have dinner with Barrack Obama, Miles Davis, Mohammad Ali and Mark Sandman.

**Athlete or Team I enjoy watching:** Growing up in the Chicago Region, I'm a diehard Cubs and Bears fan... Da Bears.

**My dream job is:** Something with a high level of interaction with the citizens of Eugene that allows me to improve the quality of life in our community. I'd also love to continue to grow my skills in planning and design.

**My most prized possession:** I'd have to say my motorbikes are my most valued possession.



*Ray with his daughters Hazel and Violet*

**Activity like to do in or around Oregon:** I love to go backpacking with my family.

**Hobbies:** I have way too many hobbies. Currently, I'm into photography, graphic design, restoring old motorcycles and brewing tasty beer.

**Musical Artist or group:** I dig all types of music, currently I'm into Fela Kuti and Afrobeat.

**My teammates describe me as:** I believe my teammates would describe me as optimistic, I see setbacks as an opportunity to grow. I also believe that I'm organized and reliable.

# Co-Worker's Corner — It's About Us!

## An Introduction to the Public Works Diversity Committee



*Paul dressed for success*

### **Paul Bellis**

Maintenance Worker  
Maintenance Division

**Hometown:** Albany, Oregon

**My biggest adventures:** Being a father

**This always brings a smile to my face:** A child's laugh

**Game I love to play:** Basketball/football

**Person I would like to have dinner with:** Muhammed Ali

**Athlete or team I enjoy watching:** Oakland Raiders/  
Brian Ortega (MMA)

**My most prized possession:** My three daughters

**Activity I like to do in or around Oregon:** Play in the water

**Hobbies:** Weightlifting, Jiu-Jitsu, Jeet Kun Do

**My teammates describe me as:** Who?

**The False Consensus Effect** is the penchant to believe that others agree with you more than they actually do. Examples include guys who assume that all guys like sexist humor.

**The Fundamental Attribution Error**, which involves the tendency to attribute other people's behavior to their personalities and to attribute our own behavior to the situation. An example is when someone treats you poorly, you probably assume they are a jerk, but when you're not nice to someone, it's because you are having a bad day.

**The Cheerleader Effect**, also known as the group attractiveness effect, is the cognitive bias which causes people to think individuals are more attractive when they are in a group.

**Cue-dependent Forgetting**, or retrieval failure, is the failure to recall information without memory

cues. The term either pertains to semantic cues, state-dependent cues or context-dependent cues. ... Instead, information stored in the memory is retrieved by way of association with other memories.

**The Backfire Effect.** The Misconception: When your beliefs are challenged with facts, you alter your opinions and incorporate the new information into your thinking. The Truth: When your deepest convictions are challenged by contradictory evidence, your beliefs get stronger.

Jim Taylor Ph.D., The Power of Prime

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-power-prime/201107/cognitive-biases-vs-common-sense>



## PWDC MISSION STATEMENT

*The City of Eugene Public Works Department is committed to fostering understanding, communication and respect among all members in the department.*

*We believe in a department that is accepting of everyone so that we capitalize on the strengths emanating from our differences.*

*By drawing on our individual strengths, we believe we can create an optimum and respectful workplace, one that can attract and retain a diverse workforce, allowing us to serve the community from which we come more effectively.*

*We believe that an inclusive diversity program is pivotal to reaching our professional potential, both individually and collectively.*

### GOAL

*The goal of the PW Diversity Committee is to promote a workplace free of harassment and discrimination. We recognize and respect diverse viewpoints, cultures, and life experiences.*



come accustomed to this difference. It took a bit of time once we returned home, to relax again and not succumb to the mental pressure of time restraints due to store closures. It did not take long, however, to remember the gentleness of life we enjoyed which came about because of the prioritizing of family and the enjoyment of everyday life due to closed businesses.

Travel in Italy and France was interesting as well. Not only is fuel expensive, which provokes thoughtful efficiency in travel, hitting as many stops in one errand run as possible so as to keep fuel costs low, but the general use of tiny, fuel-efficient cars is necessary. The amount of tolls taken on freeways astonished us. While we have encountered toll roads here in the U.S., the tolls in France were, to us, over the top. To drive 170 miles from Paris to the American Cemetery at Omaha Beach in Normandie cost about \$35 in tolls, which was the cost of the fuel used for the same trip. The tolls pay for the roads. This expense is a consideration in travel plans, causing people to think about whether they can afford the trip, or are there short cuts, or perhaps public transportation might be the way to go.

**...the French and Italian people seem to take their ancient buildings and structures — many of which are still in use — for granted the way we take our beautiful forests, deserts, and wild places for granted.**

The toll stations were very interesting, and my wife and I adapted to them quickly, priding ourselves on our newfound ability to get through correctly and quickly, appearing as local as possible. Why not? Where the toll stations appear, the freeway slows and spreads out to 10 or 15 booth lanes. The first time you encounter a booth it is to grab a little, machine-offered card, which you mustn't lose. The next station, many miles down the road, is where

you swipe that card to determine how much you owe. These stations receive your payment. Some booths take cash, some credit cards, some prepaid passes. You mustn't line up in the wrong booth lane, either, because they are automated. There's no going back. After stopping and conducting business at the booth, it is a race back to the freeway as the toll gate area narrows and funnels the traffic back into two or three lanes.

The economy of travel here in the U.S. is something we all enjoy, without thinking about it. Experiencing firsthand the impact of toll roads and high fuel costs helped me realize I have taken for granted the ease of jumping into my car for a trip anywhere, near or far, without having to consider extra costs beyond how much fuel is in my tank.

One more cultural difference my family and I noticed is that the French and Italian people seem to take their ancient buildings and structures — many of which are still in use — for granted the way we take our beautiful forests, deserts, and wild places for granted. It was not uncommon to talk of the places we'd visited to French or Italian nationals only to have them register confusion. They didn't even know the places existed, the way we might not know a beautiful hiking trail exists just miles from our own home.

Encountering and adapting to cultural diversity made our trip interesting, informative, fun, and sometimes challenging. We enjoyed conforming to the customs and traditions and can't wait to go back!

#### THIS IS YOUR NEWSLETTER!

If you have an experience, event or perspective that you feel would provide insight into our diverse world that you'd like to share with others, please send it to

[pwdiversity@ci.eugene.or.us](mailto:pwdiversity@ci.eugene.or.us).

Article ideas are also encouraged.

Thanks!