

Participation in Government, Sept 2018

Name:



The book [Blink](#), by Malcolm Gladwell, draws upon 'cutting-edge neuroscience and psychology to reveal that the difference between good decision making and bad has less to do with how much information we process than with our ability to focus on a few particular details.' As we will use the first half of the school year to look at the make-up of 'civic minded individuals, we will use this book to identify what goes into our decision making process. After reading, please answer the following questions.

1. The psychologist, Samuel Gosling, shows how 'thin-slicing' can be used to judge people's personality when he uses the dorm room observers. Visualize your bedroom right now. What does it say about you?
2. Do you think you could hire someone by 'thin-slicing' the candidate during a brief interview? Or do you think this would only work for certain kinds of jobs or perhaps, only certain kinds of people?
3. Do you believe our unconscious reactions come out of a locked room that we can't ever truly see inside? Can we ever know ourselves wholly and understand the motivation and reason behind our every move? If an individual claims to completely know how their mind works, are they incredibly self-aware or just delusional? And if we can't totally get behind that locked door and fully 'know' why we react the way we do, is psychiatry an over-priced and limited exercise?
4. Eckman and Friesens' work of decoding facial expressions reveals that the information on our face is not just a signal of what's going on inside our mind but it is what is going on inside our mind. But what about politicians or celebrities and other figures constantly in the public eye? Do you believe they are always feeling their expressions or are they just camera-savvy posers who defy Eckman and Friesens' expression theory? How about extremely stoic individuals? Do they have diminished emotions in keeping with their limited expressions? Have you ever been 'two-faced' or watched someone else speak badly about another individual only to then turn around and greet them with a warm, gushy hello? Is that 'friendly' expression false or an attempt to make amends?
5. The Diallo shooting is an example of a mind-reading failure. It reveals a grey area of human cognition; the middle ground between deliberate and accidental. Do you think the shooting was more deliberate or accidental?
6. Priming refers to when subtle triggers influence our behavior without our awareness of such changes. An example of this occurs in Spain where authorities introduced classical music on the subway and after doing so, watched vandalism and littering drastically decrease. Can you think of situations when priming occurs?
7. If an individual's behavior is being influenced unbeknownst to them, when can priming become manipulative? How is it different from the controversy a few years back when cinemas used subliminal advertising during previews to 'encourage' people to buy from the confectionary stand?

