



AP PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Diversity & Inclusion and Equity & Access

Types of Bias

Implicit Bias

Also known as unconscious or hidden bias, are negative associations that people unknowingly hold. They are expressed automatically, without conscious awareness.¹

Forms of bias-based beliefs²

COLORBLINDNESS

Treating individuals as individuals not considering their social and racial identities

- Traits of Colorblindness
 - Insists on utilization of commonalities versus differences in language
- Examples
 - ◆ Sometimes I wonder why we can't see each other as individuals instead of race always being an issue.
 - ◆ I try not to notice a child's race or skin color in the classroom setting.
 - ◆ Latino students who speak English should refrain from speaking Spanish in school so they don't alienate other students or teachers.

DEFICIT THINKING

Believing low-income students and students of color are unable to achieve at high levels given their circumstance

- Traits of Deficit Thinking
 - ◆ Blames cultural groups for ability or behavior
 - ◆ Does not acknowledge systemic problems
 - ◆ Creates and/or supports a stereotype of a cultural group

¹ Staats, C. (2013). State of the Science: Implicit Bias Review 2013, Kirwan Institute, The Ohio State University.

² Fergus, E. (2017). Solving Disproportionality and Achieving Equity. Corwin.

- Examples
 - ♦ There is not much schools can do to close the achievement gap.
 - ♦ It's important that students of color assimilate so that they can succeed in mainstream American culture.
 - ♦ Students of color from disadvantaged homes just seem to show a lack of initiative.

POVERTY DISCIPLINING

Criticizing and wanting to change behavior of low-income students and students of color to assume middle-class standards and beliefs around behavior

- Traits of Poverty Disciplining:
 - ♦ Insists on changing behavior and psychological dispositions
 - ♦ Disciplining promotes "good citizenship" behaviors
- Examples:
 - ♦ Behaviors like respect and self-regulation are traits that low-income students require learning more often than not.
 - ♦ Discipline is an important tool when working with low-income students.
 - ♦ Low-income students are not exposed to the type of grit necessary to be successful in school.

Seven Types of Curriculum Bias³

TYPE 1: INVISIBILITY: WHAT YOU DON'T SEE MAKES A LASTING IMPRESSION.

The most fundamental and oldest form of bias in instructional materials is the complete or relative exclusion of a group.

- Some typical invisibility include:
 - ♦ Textbooks published prior to the 1960s largely omitted African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans from both the narrative and illustrations.
 - ♦ Women, those with disabilities, and those representing the LGBTQIA+ community continue to be missing from many of today's texts.

TYPE 2: STEREOTYPING: SHORTCUTS TO BIGOTRY.

Perhaps the most familiar form of bias is the stereotype, which assigns a rigid set of characteristics to all members of a group, at the cost of individual attributes and differences. While stereotypes can be positive, they are more often negative.

- Some typical stereotypes include:
 - ♦ Men portrayed as assertive and successful in their jobs, but rarely discussed as husbands or fathers
 - ♦ Women as caregivers

³ Seven Forms of Bias in Instructional Materials <https://www.sadker.org/curricularbias.html>

TYPE 3: IMBALANCE AND SELECTIVITY: A TALE HALF TOLD.

Curriculum may perpetuate bias by presenting only one interpretation of an issue, situation, or group of people. Such accounts simplify and distort complex issues by omitting different perspectives.

- Some examples include:
 - ♦ A text reports that women were “given” the vote, but does not discuss the work, sacrifices, and even physical abuse suffered by the leaders of the suffrage movement that “won” the vote.
 - ♦ Math and science courses typically reference European discoveries and formulas.

TYPE 4: UNREALITY: ROSE-COLORED GLASSES.

Many researchers have noted the tendency of instructional materials to gloss over unpleasant facts and events in our history. By ignoring prejudice, racism, discrimination, exploitation, oppression, sexism, and intergroup conflict, we deny students the information they need to recognize, understand, and perhaps someday conquer societal problems.

- Examples include:
 - ♦ Because of affirmative action programs, people of color and women now enjoy economic and political equality with (or superiority over) white males.
 - ♦ The notion that technology will resolve persistent social problems.

TYPE 5: FRAGMENTATION AND ISOLATION: THE PARTS ARE LESS THAN THE WHOLE.

Fragmentation emerges when a group is physically or visually isolated in the text. Often, racial and ethnic group members are depicted as interacting only with persons like themselves, isolated from other cultural communities. While this form of bias may be less damaging than omission or stereotypes, fragmentation and isolation present non-dominant groups as peripheral members of society.

- Some typical fragmentations include:
 - ♦ A “special” chapter or insert on “Bootleggers, Suffragettes, and Other Diversions” or a box describing “Ten Black Achievers in Science.”

TYPE 6: LINGUISTIC BIAS: WORDS COUNT.

Language can be a powerful conveyor of bias, in both blatant and subtle forms. Linguistic bias can impact race/ethnicity, gender, accents, age, (dis)ability, and sexual orientation.

- Examples of linguistic bias:
 - ♦ Native Americans described as “roaming,” “wandering,” or “roving” across the land. Such language implicitly justifies the seizure of Native lands by “more goal-directed” white Americans who “traveled” or “settled” their way westward.
 - ♦ Such words as forefathers, mankind, and businessman serve to deny the contributions (even the existence) of females.
 - ♦ The bias against non-English speakers.

TYPE 7: COSMETIC BIAS: “SHINY” COVERS.

The relatively new cosmetic bias suggests that a text is bias free, but beyond the attractive covers, photos, or posters, bias persists. This “illusion of equity” is really a marketing strategy to give a favorable impression to potential purchasers who only flip the pages of books.

- Examples of cosmetic bias:
 - ♦ A science textbook that features a glossy pullout of female scientists but includes precious little narrative of the scientific contributions of women.

Strategies for Mitigating Bias in the Classroom⁴

Use Self-Reflection Questions When Designing Lessons⁵

- Who am I designing the lesson for—the students or me?
- What is my knowledge about the subject that I am teaching?
- What are my implicit biases?
- Have I considered what knowledge my students bring to the classroom based on their own cultures and identities and how do I allow them to benefit from that?
- Does my lesson center the humanity of all my students?
- Have I included specific, inclusive examples?
- What are the liberatory qualities of my lesson: Does it encourage students to engage in inquiry? Does it promote creativity, experimentation, and dreams? Does it encourage them to fail without harm?
- How do systems of oppression show up in the classroom and my school community, and how do I work to dismantle that on a daily basis?

Stereotype Replacement

This strategy involves replacing stereotypical responses with non-stereotypical ones. The process includes recognizing that a response is based on stereotypes, labeling the response as stereotypical, and reflecting on why the biased response occurred. Next, one considers how the biased response could be avoided in the future and replaced with an unbiased response (Monteith, 1993).

Counter-Stereotypic Imaging

This strategy involves imagining in detail counter-stereotypic others (Blair, Ma, & Lenton, 2001). These can be abstract (e.g., smart black people), famous (e.g., Barack Obama), or non-famous (e.g., a personal friend). The strategy makes positive exemplars salient and accessible when challenging a stereotype’s validity.

4 Strategies From: Devine, P. G., Forscher, P. S., Austin, A. J., & Cox, W. T. (2012). Long-term reduction in implicit race bias: A prejudice habit-breaking intervention. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 48(6), 1267–1278.

5 <https://teach.com/resources/addressing-student-trauma-curriculum-violence/>

Individuation

This strategy relies on preventing stereotypic inferences by obtaining specific information about group members (Brewer, 1988; Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). Using this strategy helps people evaluate members of the target group based on personal, rather than group-based, attributes.

Perspective-Taking

This strategy involves viewing environments and experiences from the perspective of a member of a stereotyped group. Perspective-taking increases psychological closeness to the stereotyped group, which ameliorates automatic group-based evaluations (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000).

Increasing Opportunities for Contact

This strategy involves seeking opportunities to encounter and engage in positive interactions with group members. Increased contact is believed to ameliorate implicit bias through a variety of mechanisms, including altering the cognitive representations of the group and directly improving evaluations of the group (Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Devine et al., 2012).

Question Your Objectivity

Somewhat ironically, evidence suggests that when people assume they are objective, they are at a greater risk of inadvertently allowing bias to influence their decision making (Pronin, 2007). By contrast, teaching people about how the unconscious mind operates and the challenges of behaving objectively may lead them to be more skeptical of their own objectivity and better able to guard against biased evaluations.

Increase Motivation to Be Fair

A large body of research shows that those who are internally motivated by the desire to be unprejudiced rather than “externally” motivated by a concern about social disapproval are better able to control prejudiced behavior (Devine et al., 2002; Klonis, Plant, & Devine, 2005; Peruche & Plant, 2006). In other words, holding equal treatment as an important personal value is linked with less discriminatory behavior.

Think Slow: Improve Conditions for Decision Making

Engaging in mindful, deliberate processing, reduces the likelihood that our implicit schema will kick in and determine our behaviors. Ideally, decisions should be made in a context in which one is accountable for the outcome, rather than in the throes of any emotion (either positive or negative) that may exacerbate bias.

Count: Identify Disparities

Implicitly biased behavior is best detected by using data to determine whether patterns of behavior are leading to disparate outcomes across genders. Research has shown that people are more likely to detect discrimination when it is presented in the aggregate rather than on a case-by-case basis (Crosby et al., 1986). Therefore, tracking outcomes—such as academic achievement and disciplinary actions—is critical to unveiling the role of bias across circumstances.

Tips for Managing Scenarios⁶

5 Things Not to Do

1. **Do Nothing:** When there are heated conversations happening in your presence, don't become passive.
2. **Sidetrack the Conversation:** If the focus of the conversation is on bias, keep it on bias—don't allow yourself or participants to discuss other issues.
3. **Appease the Participants:** To avoid conflict and maintain the goodwill of the audience, don't: stress commonalities and avoid differences, discuss superficial issues without exploring deeper personal meanings, avoid confrontation.
4. **Terminate the Discussion:** To avoid the conversation getting out of control, don't table the discussion and ask that the conversation take place outside of the room/meeting.
5. **Become Defensive:** If participants are deflecting their discomfort onto or challenging you, don't go into self-protective mode, become angry, or shut down communication.

11 Potentially Positive Actions/Strategies

1. **Understand one's own racial/cultural identity:** Be aware of your own worldview-values, biases, prejudices, and assumptions about human behavior.
2. **Acknowledge and be open to admitting one's biases:** Must be able and willing to acknowledge and accept the fact that you have inherited the biases, fears, and stereotypes of society.
3. **Be comfortable and open to discussing topics of bias, race, and racism:** Attaining comfort means practice outside of the classroom or training situation.
4. **Understand the meaning of emotions:** Help others make sense of their feelings and what the emotions mean to them.
5. **Validate and facilitate discussion of feelings:** Allow space for the strong expression of feelings and create the conditions that allow for openness and receptivity to strong emotions.
6. **Control the process and not the content of the conversation:** Give space to process statements to uncover what is driving the statement.
7. **Unmask the difficult dialogue through process observations and interventions:** Help participants see the difference between intention and impact and refocus the dialogue on feelings.
8. **Do not allow a difficult dialogue to be brewed in silence:** Ignoring and not addressing the impasse only creates the elephant in the room that will continue to hold power.
9. **Understand the differences in communication styles:** Recognize the role culture and gender play in communication styles.
10. **Forewarn, plan, and purposefully instigate bias talk:** Preplanning a difficult dialogue allows you to control the process.
11. **Validate, encourage, and express admiration and appreciation to participants who speak when it is unsafe to do so:** Appreciate those members of the group who take a risk and show courage, openness, and willingness to participate in a difficult dialogue.

⁶ Sue, D. Wing (2016). Race Talk and the Conspiracy of Silence: Understanding and Facilitating Difficult Dialogues on Race

Resources for Deeper Learning

Ending Curriculum Violence (<https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/spring-2020/ending-curriculum-violence>)

National Association of School Psychologists, Social Justice: Central page directs visitors to tips for educators on understanding implicit bias, supporting refugee youth, and more.

National Council of Teachers of English Committee Against Racism and Bias in the Teaching of English: Helpful tips on anti-racist language teachers can use and qualities of anti-racist curricula.

Organization of American Historians (OAH), Trauma and Trigger Warnings in the History Classroom: A Roundtable Discussion: Transcript from panel on teaching violent and traumatic subjects.

Project Implicit, a nonprofit organization of international social cognition researchers, has developed a series of Implicit Association Tests (IATs) that are designed to measure “attitudes and beliefs that people may be unwilling or unable to report.” IATs are designed to measure associations that either reinforce or contradict your conscious beliefs. An IAT may suggest that you have implicit associations based on race, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability, or other criteria. IATs can be a useful tool in identifying potential biases, attitudes, and associations, but these tests alone should not be expected to overcome the impact of biases of the test taker.

Rethinking Schools Nonprofit publisher and advocacy organization is dedicated to sustaining and strengthening public education through social justice teaching and education activism.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network’s guide, “**Addressing Race and Trauma in the Classroom: A Resource for Educators**,” summarized some of the effects of trauma that teachers may see among students.