INTRODUCTION TO IMPLICIT BIAS

Trainer: Susan Naimark
www.naimark.org

Session Objectives
1. Understand the prevalence of implicit bias and how it works;
2. Identify specific strategies participants can use to reduce implicit bias;
3. Consider ways to minimize the impact of implicit bias in your work.

AGENDA

1. Why implicit bias?
2. Definitions: A shared language
3. Key attributes of implicit bias
4. Debiasing strategies and application
5. Courageous Conversations: A tool for holding productive conversations about race

“Implicit Social Cognition is the process by which the brain uses mental associations that are so well-established as to operate without awareness, or without intention, or without control”

- Project Implicit, Harvard University

Sources: Most of the information in this presentation is derived from State of the Science: Implicit Bias Review 2013, 2014, and 2015 published by the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, Ohio State University.
MATCH EACH WORD WITH ITS DEFINITION

1. CULTURE
2. ETHNICITY
3. INSTITUTIONAL RACISM
4. INTERPERSONAL RACISM
5. MERITOCRACY
6. MICROAGGRESSION
7. PREJUDICE
8. RACE
9. STEREOTYPE
10. WHITE PRIVILEGE

____ A socially constructed concept that categorizes physical differences to justify social inequalities.

____ Shared history, ancestry, geographic and language origin, and physical characteristics held in common by a group of people.

____ Shared history, traditions, language, values and patterns of everyday behavior held in common by a group of people.

____ A preconceived opinion formed about a person or group that is not based on knowledge or facts.

____ An oversimplified picture of the traits and behaviors of a group of people, which is applied to individuals in that group without regard to their unique characteristics.

____ Institutional policies or practices that are discriminatory or provide inequitable opportunities based on race, and/or result in disparate impacts based on race.

____ Negative treatment in one-on-one interactions between individuals because of a person’s race.

____ A way of conceptualizing racial inequalities that focuses on the advantages that white people have in society rather than only the disadvantages people of color experience.

____ A system in which the talented are chosen and moved ahead on the basis of their achievement.

____ Brief, commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages toward people of color.

The above definitions were derived from the following sources: Courageous Conversations About Race, book by Glenn E. Singleton and Curtis Linton; Cultural Proficiency Course taught by Carroll Blake, Director of Office of the Achievement Gap, Boston Public Schools; Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders, Randall B. Lindsey, Kikanza Nuri Robins, and Raymond D. Terrell; merriam-webster.com; Race: The Power of an Illusion, film and discussion guide; Race Forward.
IMPLICIT BIAS: KEY ATTRIBUTES

Robust and pervasive

- We all have biases – this is a way for us to process and organize information
- Biases strongly predict and inform our actions
- Implicit bias, explicit bias, and institutional forces are often mutually reinforcing of long-standing societal inequities

Involuntarily activated

- We can monitor verbal behavior better than non-verbal, which is where prejudices “leak” out

Categorizing based on beliefs about a group or class of people

- Well established ideas which are programmed through culture, media and experiences
- Judgment skews towards either favorable or unfavorable assessment

Implicit vs. Explicit Bias

The main distinction is level of awareness:

- Explicit biases can be consciously detected
- Implicit biases are unconscious associations that do not necessarily align with conscious beliefs

Our unconscious minds handle more than 99% of our information processing.

“Bias does not make you prejudiced, it makes you human”

This does not mean we can’t learn to combat it.
How it Works

• From an early age, we all organize information into categories as a mental shortcut for making sense of the world.

• Once categories are assigned, any meaning associated with a category is activated by a person or object that falls within that category.

• Stereotypes are beliefs associated with categories of people – often learned from the wider culture.

Why Does it Matter?

• We are all subject to unconscious biases that come from larger societal stereotypes and historical discrimination.

• Extensive research has documented the impact of implicit bias on educators and education.

• Understanding implicit bias enables us to build skills to recognize bias and employ strategies to combat it.

Implicit Bias in the Workplace

• Implicit bias leads to favoring individuals who are “one of us” or most similar to ourselves.

• Can lead to hiring, promoting, and valuing individuals who are a cultural match rather than most qualified.

• Likeness to ourselves also associated with increased trust and respect.

• Shows up most when we are under stress.

Implicit Bias in Health Care

• Physicians who perceived less cooperative relationships with their Black patients were more likely to show high levels of implicit anti-Black bias (on the Implicit Attitudes Test). At the same time, patients with whom relationships are perceived to be more cooperative are more likely to adhere to treatment recommendations.

• Black patients reported feeling less respected and having less confidence in primary care clinicians who, when tested independently, showed higher implicit racial biases.

• In one study, trauma surgeons were more likely to believe there was a hidden history of alcohol abuse in Black patients compared to White patients, and that the Black patients posed a threat to themselves or others.

• Asian Americans are more likely than any other population to die from cancer, yet they are least likely to be recommended for cancer screening.
“Indirect evidence indicates that bias, stereotyping, prejudice, and clinical uncertainty on the part of healthcare providers may be contributory factors to racial and ethnic disparities in healthcare.”

This is what it looks like

Two men arrived at the same hospital with chronic knee pain and swelling. Both had comparable health insurance and nearly identical symptoms. Both were diagnosed with osteoarthritis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>White male experience</th>
<th>African-American male experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offered pain med’s immediately</td>
<td>Was told he could not receive pain med’s until the doctor arrived</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seen quickly by a doctor</td>
<td>Waited more than 2 hours, receptionist responded with annoyance when he asked about wait time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended for total knee replacement</td>
<td>Told to work out and lose weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received total knee replacement</td>
<td>Did not follow doctor recommendations due to pain and distrust of experience with doctor, who had done most of the talking, never asked how patient felt. Osteoarthritis never improved, knee further deteriorated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Time to Reflect: Think – Pair – Share

1. Take a minute for initial reactions and reflections:
   • Is this information new to you?
   • What about it makes sense, or doesn’t, in the context of your work?

2. Identify some ways your implicit biases might show up in your work or everyday life.
DEBIASING

- Attempting to repress biases does not work
- Starts with openly acknowledging one’s biases and directly challenging them
- Involves constructing new mental associations – like breaking a bad habit
- Takes intention, attention, and time
- Results vary depending on individual’s motivation and context

Debiasing Interventions

1. **Education** about implicit bias

2. **Intergroup contact**

3. **Deliberative processing** – take the time to reflect on the ways we think about and treat others

4. **Perspective taking** - Think of a stereotype that might be used about you
   
   *This helps to assess the emotional damage caused by stereotyping*

5. **Counter-stereotype training** – retrain associations through:
   
   - **Counter-stereotype imaging** – Promote, think about, display examples of people who contradict widely held stereotypes
   
   *This shifts the mental imagery away from negative stereotyping*

   - **Stereotype replacement** - When you detect a stereotypical response within yourself:
     
     *Label it as such, evaluate how it occurred, and replace it with an image that is non-stereotypical*

6. **Accountability** – expectation that one may be called on to justify one’s beliefs, feelings, and actions to others
   
   *Seek out a colleague or group to hold yourself and each other accountable to your ideals and values.*

7. **Individuation** - Gather specific information about individuals and do not rely on categories;
   
   *Recognize that race, gender, culture, socioeconomic status, etc. are just single facets of a person.*

Debiasing in the Workplace: Some Proven Strategies

- Use of multiple perspectives and sources of information

- Avoid reliance on first impressions or gut feelings

- Persons who are shown that their actions are biased and then allowed to “practice” neutral judgments are more likely to make gains, especially if they are committed to equity.
Debiasing Interventions: How might you utilize these in your work?

INDIVIDUALLY: To reflect upon and reduce your own biases?

INTERPERSONALLY: To reduce the impact of implicit bias with others you work with regularly?

ORGANIZATIONALLY: To reduce the impact of implicit bias in your organization’s interactions with the people it serves?

SYSTEMICALLY: To support the network of institutions with which you interact to recognize and address implicit biases?

TO EXPLORE THIS TOPIC FURTHER, CONSIDER TAKING THE ONLINE IMPLICIT ATTITUDES TEST: https://implicit.harvard.edu/
Which quadrant do you tend to default to?

How might you explore the other quadrants in order to bring a broader tool kit to your work?

Source: From Courageous Conversations, Pacific Educational Group