DISMANTLING BIAS: TOOLS FOR THE CLASSROOM
“We do not see things as they are, we see things as we are.” – Anaïs Nin
Understanding Implicit Bias & How It Impacts Our Community

Chris Bridges and Zabrina Aleguire

Equal Justice Society
Keep the Following Words in Mind...
REST
DOZE
SNORE
BED
TIRED
SLUMBER
WAKE
NAP
AWAKE
DREAM
Do your best to remember the 10 words that you have just seen.

We will come back to them later.
IS SEEING BELIEVING?

100% Black 0% White  
80% Black 20% White  
60% Black 40% White  
40% Black 60% White  
20% Black 80% White  
0% Black 100% White
Implicit biases can affect what we “see”

- Correll study showed evidence of a “shooter bias” where people shoot more unarmed blacks than unarmed whites and fail to shoot more armed whites than blacks in a specialized video game.
Your mind plays tricks on you.

Overt racism has given way to implicit bias and structural racism.

Implicit bias has an undeniable impact on our policies and decisions.

You can recognize your own biases and take steps to counteract them.
Social scientists use the term implicit or unconscious bias to refer to stereotypes or attitudes that operate without an individual’s conscious awareness.

These attitudes or stereotypes can affect a person’s thoughts, actions, and decisions in reference to the subjects of his/her biases, especially when the person is stressed, tired, or forced to make a decision quickly.
The IAT measures the relative strength of association between a target concept (e.g., race) and an attribute concept (e.g., words with good meanings and words with bad meanings).

The more strongly a test taker associates two concepts, the faster and more accurately he/she can pair them together.
Research shows that individuals experience implicit biases toward a broad range of historically disadvantaged groups with respect to characteristics such as:

- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Nationality
- Race
- Weight
- Age
Implicit racial biases can serve as mental links between:

- African Americans
- Latinos
- Criminality, Laziness, Unintelligence, Aggression
- Criminality, Aggression, Immigrant Status

IMPLICIT RACIAL BIAS

EQUAL JUSTICE SOCIETY
Psychological studies show that children develop an adult-like understanding of “race” around age 5.

Associations about the characteristics associated with people of each race develop soon after, and a study found that around 80% of children had already developed pro-White/anti-Black sentiments by age 6.
HOW DID THOSE PICTURES MAKE YOU FEEL?

- Anxious?
- Nervous?
- Did your heart start beating faster?
- Did your blood pressure increase?
When we are afraid, our bodies undergo a series of physiological changes that ready us to flee or attack (fight or flight response).

This response is extremely quick; scientists estimate that it takes less than a tenth of a second for you to react once you are exposed to something that you fear.

To be frightened in this context can be a positive thing (We have all heard stories of mothers who have lifted a car to save their child), but what if you are afraid of something that is actually non-threatening (like a person of color walking down the street or in an elevator)?
People with diagnosed phobias of spiders have higher levels of amygdala activation in their brains when they view pictures of those fear triggers, and a pioneering study found similar brain activity when White participants viewed African American male faces as well.

The level of amygdala activation correlated to subject performance on the Race Implicit Association Test (IAT).

- Nationwide, 70 to 87 percent of people demonstrate bias against African Americans on the Race IAT.
NOW BACK TO OUR MEMORY TASK
Do you remember seeing?

REST
SNACK
DREAM
SLEEP
Racially disparate outcomes are often the product of race neutral policies.

These outcomes can be seen on a wide range of issues:

- Housing
- Employment
- Medical Treatment
- Criminal Justice
- Education
Youth of color are disciplined at significantly higher rates than White and Asian Americans.

Students who have been punished by school officials are at a higher risk of falling behind their classmates academically, dropping out of school, and entering the juvenile justice system.
Over the course of two studies, Jennifer Eberhardt and Jason Okonofua, a Stanford psychology professor and graduate student, respectively, presented a total of 244 K-12 teachers (53 in the first study, 191 in the second) from across the country with a fictional student’s disciplinary records. The records were labeled with either a stereotypically black name (Deshawn or Darnell) or a stereotypically white one (Greg or Jake). In either case, the student had committed two minor offenses, insubordination and classroom disturbance. After reading about each infraction, the teachers were asked about their attitudes toward the student.

Though the two "students" were viewed similarly after only one infraction, teachers who had the black student's file were more likely to feel "troubled" by the student's behavior and to recommend more severe punishments for him after the second instance of misbehavior.

![Bar chart showing mean ratings of how troubled teachers felt by students' misbehavior and how severely they felt students should be disciplined as a function of number of infractions and student race. Error bars represent standard errors.](image-url)
SO WHAT CAN WE DO?
AS AN INDIVIDUAL

- Be aware
  - Take an IAT
  - Learn about your own implicit biases

- Be motivated
  - Learn new information and engage in activities to counter stereotypes (Ex. Having conversations across cultural boundaries or even a screen saver with counter-stereotypic images)

- Be Proactive about not acting on your biases
  - Example- A federal judge realized that he might be making biased judgments based on the photo of the Defendant in the pre-sentence report, so he began having the pictures taken out before he reviewed them.
  - Can you think of any way that this could apply in your own work?
De-biasing Interventions often involve contact with out-group members. Focusing on similarities between yourself and the group that you are biased against can go a long way in reducing the effects of that bias.

Devine’s 5 strategies of De-biasing:
- Stereotype replacement
- Counter-stereotypic imaging
- Individuating
- Perspective taking
- Contact
Recognizing stereotypic responses within oneself and society, labeling them, and replacing them with non-stereotypic responses.

Examples??

STEREOTYPE REPLACEMENT IN OUR INTERACTIONS

EQUAL JUSTICE SOCIETY
Imagining examples of out-group members who counter popularly held stereotypes

Examples??
VIEWING

- Viewing others according to their personal, rather than stereotypic characteristics

- Examples??

EQUAL JUSTICE SOCIETY
- Adopting the perspective in the first person of a member of a stigmatized group.

- Examples??
Increasing exposure to out-group members.

Examples??
- Identify subjective policies and practices that leave room for implicit bias to operate and change them
- Litigate against implicit bias
  - Equal Justice Society
    - Civil rights and legal strategy group based in Oakland
    - Works at the intersection of law and social science to bring mind science into the court room
    - Give declarations and tell your story in a current lawsuit about disparate treatment in KHSD
- Outside legal context, a growing number of businesses are seeking trainings to counteract implicit bias
TARGETED INTERVENTION TO ENCOURAGE EMPATHIC DISCIPLINE HALVES SUSPENSION RATES AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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U.S. SUSPENSION RATES

1974: 3.70%
2011: 11%
OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS

Department of Education, 2012

percent of suspended students | percent of total population

white | black

Department of Education, 2012
Discipline problems are consequential

For teachers
- Can hinder them from maintaining control over class
- Can dishearten them & increase likelihood of attrition

For students
- Can cause disengagement from school, alienation
- Can increase likelihood of drop-out and incarceration

Balfanz, Spiridakis, Neild & Legters, 2003; Fenning & Rose, 2007; Hirschfield, 2009; Johnson, Yarrow, Rochkind, & Ott, 2009; Monahan, VanDerhei, Bechtold, & Cauffman, 2014; Pettit & Western, 2004; Rocque & Paternoster, 2011; Western, 2006; Also see McFadden, Marsh, Price & Hwang, 1992; Office for Civil Rights, 2012; Shaw & Braden, 1990; Skiba et al., 2011; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002; Wu, Pink, Crain, & Moles, 1982
After students repeatedly misbehave, teachers come to think of the students as troublemakers.

- Teachers want to discipline “troublemakers” more severely

After teachers discipline students in a punitive way, students come to feel less respected and have less respect for their teachers.

- Student’s want to cooperate less
Working Model of Recursive Processes

Okonofua, Walton, & Eberhardt, in press
Perspectives on Psychological Science
Working Model of Recursive Processes

- **Student Behavior**
- **Students’ mindset**
- **Teacher Behavior**
- **Teachers’ mindset**

Okonofua, Walton, & Eberhardt, in press
*Perspectives on Psychological Science*
Working Model of Recursive Processes

Student Behavior

Teachers’ mindset

Student’s mindset

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Okonofua, Walton, & Eberhardt, in press
Perspectives on Psychological Science
Theory

- Exclusionary discipline arises, in part, from deteriorating teacher-student relationships
  - Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015

Hypothesis

- Refocusing discipline as an opportunity to nurture relationships with students could reduce suspension rates among students
  - Okonofua, Walton, & Eberhardt, In Press
Laboratory Experimentation

- Student Behavior: Disrespect, negative behaviors toward peers and teachers
- Teachers’ mindset: “Will this student disrespect me by hindering my teaching? Is this misbehaving student a troublemaker?”
- Teacher Behavior: Harsh punishment of racially stigmatized students
- Racially stigmatized students’ mindset: “Do I belong here in school? When teachers discipline me, does it mean they hate me or are biased?”
TEACHER STUDY

41 teachers
- 36 White; 1 Asian; 3 Black; 1 Unknown
- 73% male
- Avg. Experience: 14 years; Age: 41
- 2 removed for missing data

Conditions: punitive-mindset v. empathic-mindset

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, Proceeding of the National Academy of Sciences, invited resubmission
Good teacher-student relationships are critical for students to learn self-control in the classroom at times.

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, Proceeding of the National Academy of Sciences, invited resubmission
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RESULTS

- Punitive Themes
  - Threaten student
  - Assign detention
  - Involve principal
- Empathic Themes
  - Ask why student misbehaved
  - Adjust context

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, Proceeding of the National Academy of Sciences, invited resubmission
STUDENT MINDSET

Laboratory Experimentation

Student Behavior: Disrespect, negative behaviors toward peers and teachers

Racially stigmatized students’ mindset: “Do I belong here in school? When teachers discipline me, does it mean they hate me or are biased?”

Teachers’ mindset: “Will this student disrespect me by hindering my teaching? Is this misbehaving student a troublemaker?”

Teacher Behavior: Harsh punishment of racially stigmatized students
302 participants (credit pool)
- 153 females & 147 males
- 144 White; 41 Asian; 57 Black; 38 Mixed or Native; 18 Other

Conditions:
- punitive-discipline v. empathic-discipline

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, Proceeding of the National Academy of Sciences, invited resubmission
Control

- You leave your seat to get tissues from the tissue box multiple times during a 50 minute class. Mrs. Smith assigned two days of detention to you and threatens to tell the principal about your misbehavior. Later, you get up and throw items away in the wastebasket on the other side of the room. Mrs. Smith asks has the principal talk to you about your misbehavior.

Treatment

- You leave your seat to get tissues from the tissue box multiple times during a 50 minute class. Mrs. Smith asks you why you are moving around the class so much. Later, you get up and throw items away in the wastebasket on the other side of the room. Mrs. Smith rearranges the room so that the wastebasket and tissue box are closer to your desk.
Indicate the extent to which you agree... I think Mrs. Smith deserves my respect

(1 = Strongly Disagree – 7 = Strongly Agree)

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, Proceeding of the National Academy of Sciences, invited resubmission
Indicate the extent to which you agree... I want to behave in this class

(1 = Strongly Disagree – 7 = Strongly Agree)

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, Proceeding of the National Academy of Sciences, invited resubmission
MOTIVATION TO FOLLOW RULES

Indicate the extent to which you agree... It is important to me that I follow rules in this class

(1 = Strongly Disagree – 7 = Strongly Agree)

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, Proceeding of the National Academy of Sciences, invited resubmission
PERCEIVED PATTERN OF MISBEHAVIOR

- Discipline Mindset
- Respect
- Behave Well

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, Proceeding of the National Academy of Sciences, invited resubmission
TEACHER-STUDENT MINDSETS

In The Real World

- Student Behavior: Disrespect, negative behaviors toward peers and teachers

- Racially stigmatized students’ mindset: “Do I belong here in school? When teachers discipline me, does it mean they hate me or are biased?”

- Teachers’ mindset: “Will this student disrespect me by hindering my teaching? Is this misbehaving student a troublemaker?”

- Teacher Behavior: Harsh punishment of racially stigmatized students
PARTICIPANTS

- 5 schools across 3 school districts
- 36 Teachers
  - 32 completed all materials
  - 7 Male; 24 Female; 1 NA
  - 19 White; 5 Asian; 2 Latino; 2 Black; 2 Other; 2 NA
- 1,580 Students
  - Mostly Latino

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, Proceeding of the National Academy of Sciences, invited resubmission
INTERVENTION SCHEDULE

Late-Fall

Session 1
- 45-minutes
- Empathic-Mindset v. Technology-Control
- Teacher Survey

Early-Winter

Session 2
- 25-minutes
- Booster Materials by condition
- Follow-up Student Survey

End of School Year

Data Collection
- Collect Suspension Records
- Relationships with students are important
  - They shape students attitudes about school and behavior
- Empathize with students
  - Students worry about being treated fairly and with respect
- What teachers can do about misbehavior
  - Misbehavior is an opportunity to nurture relationships with students

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, Proceeding of the National Academy of Sciences, invited resubmission
“In middle school, I didn’t feel like I belonged. It seemed like the teachers always called on the other students. So I didn’t pay attention in class and sometimes I got in trouble. One day I got detention and instead of just sitting there, my teacher talked with me about what happened. He really listened to me. And then he told me that he had trouble sometimes in middle school but that it gets better. It felt good to know I had someone I could trust in school.”

-- 7th grade student

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“When I was a child, I remember worrying about how I would be treated by teachers at my school. But I will always remember Ms. McBride, who treated me with respect and trust. She showed me that teachers could make all the difference in how students feel about school. Now, I make a point of treating my students with respect and I find that they respect me more in return.”

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OVERALL EFFECT (SUSPENDED V. NOT)

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, Proceeding of the National Academy of Sciences, invited resubmission
EFFECT BY PRE-POST

Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, Proceeding of the National Academy of Sciences, invited resubmission
**EFFECT BY RACE & GENDER**

*Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, Proceeding of the National Academy of Sciences, invited resubmission*
To build positive relationships I...

- Greet every student at the door with a smile every day no matter what has occurred the day before.
- I NEVER hold grudges. I try to remember that they are all the son or daughter of someone who loves them more than anything in the world. They are the light of someone’s life!
Indicate the extent to which you agree...
Teachers and other adults at my school treat me with respect?

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- Growth mindset
  - Carol Dweck
- Values-affirmation
  - Geoffrey Cohen
- Sense of Purpose
  - David Yeager
- Belonging Uncertainty
  - Gregory Walton
OTHER RESOURCES

- ProjectImplicit.org
- PERTS.net
- Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack by Peggy McIntosh
- Check your Privilege (Buzzfeed quiz mentioned during webinar)
THANK YOU!

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