
Implicit Bias & Cultural Competence

— Overview & Practical Approach —

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What is bias?

- Bias can be defined as a predisposition or preference for a particular person, group, or perspective.
- Because they are not fact-based, biases can often result in unfair treatment toward a person or group of people.
- Gordon Allport, the author of “The Nature of Prejudice”, explains that bias is a result of our very human tendency to classify people into categories in order to quickly process information and make sense of the world around us (Allport, 1954).

So...what is implicit bias?

- Rapid and automatic mental associations made between people, ideas and objects that shape our attitudes and behaviors toward these people, ideas and objects
- Operates at subconscious level
- Often runs contrary to our conscious beliefs

Why is there a need to understand implicit bias?

- To respond to current and projected demographic changes
- To eliminate long-standing disparities in the status and lives of people of diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds
- To improve the quality of life to populations that we serve
- To meet legislative, regulatory, and accreditation mandates
- To gain a competitive edge in the marketplace
- To decrease the likelihood of adverse risk and legal trouble

How do we begin to understand our biases?

- First, let's look at our culture.
 - What is our understanding of our own culture?
 - How about our understanding of the cultures that are not ours?

A large, stylized globe of the Earth is the central focus, showing continents in green and oceans in blue. A large, diverse crowd of people, many wearing traditional or colorful clothing, is gathered around the base of the globe, appearing to be in a celebratory or significant gathering. The scene is set against a bright, white background.

What Is Culture?

Culture

- Culture is a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, and rules.
- Culture provides belonging, and often security within our group.
- It is constantly evolving.
- Culture determines meaning.
 - Examples include: of illness, death, family or gender roles, how to communicate bad news, how we express grief, and what rituals to follow.
- Those who seek entrance in our culture may be leaving their culture behind and coming into a “foreign” culture.

Cultural Competence

A definition

- The ability to understand appreciate and interact with persons from cultures and/or belief systems other than one's own, based on various factors.

Two levels

1. **Individual:** *respecting, understanding and addressing the needs of your patients*
2. **Organizational:** *services that demonstrate respect for diversity and cultural, ethnic, spiritual, emotional and agespecific differences*

Differences Within Cultures



People who differ by culture do not necessarily share the same values, knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and behavior

- Not all African Americans are Christians
- Not all Christians refuse to use contraception
- Not all immigrants speak with an accent
- Not all Americans speak English
- Not all Muslim women wear headscarves
- Not all... The list goes on.

Where to Begin?

Identify your own cultural and family identity, and then identify their values



- What is your ethnic background?
- How has it felt to belong to your ethnic group?
- What do you like about your ethnic identity? What do you dislike?
- What social/cultural factors in your background might contribute to barriers in relationships with persons from other groups?
- What was your first experience with feeling different?
- What are your earliest images of race or color?
- What were you told growing up about how to deal with racial issues?

Introspection, Part 1

- What was it like to learn of a different religion?
- When were you first aware of cultural differences in gender?
- When did your age first become an issue of privilege?
- How did you become aware of different sexual orientations?
- How about gender identities?
- What did you learn growing up about people who were less affluent as you?
- What messages about immigrants and refugees do you remember hearing?

Introspection, Part 2

Try it now!

What lessons did you learn growing up that shaped your own personal cultural and family values?

At any time in your life did you reflect back and question those life teachings? Any surprises?

Why should you be a culturally competent professional?

- The American population is diverse
- Challenges and discrimination exist by race, ethnicity, faith, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, nation of origin, disability status, age, language, SES, and more
- Education should strive to be an environment free from bias



Cultural Competence is
Built by Experience.

Empathy
Curiosity
Respect

Cultural Competence: Next steps

Be aware of your personal
biases & assumptions

Consider your role from an
ethical perspective





Important

1. Check your pulse

2. Empathy, Curiosity, and Respect

3. Be sensitive to nonverbals

Stereotyping

- Stereotyping: the way people use race, gender, age, etc, in acquiring, processing and recalling information about others
- What can lead to stereotyping?
 - Media coverage
 - Societal cues
 - Personal experiences
 - Other routes of messaging
- Stereotyping does not necessarily lead to discrimination
- However, stereotyping may lead to bias
- Stereotyping may be accurate at a group level but inaccurate at the individual level
 - Examples?

Microaggressions

- Everyday, subtle interactions or behaviors that communicate some sort of bias toward historically marginalized groups.
- Sometimes intentional, often unintentional.
- The difference between microaggressions and overt discrimination is people who commit microaggressions might not even be aware of them.

Microaggressions

Examples might include:

- Someone commenting on how well an Asian American speaks English, which presumes the Asian American was not born here
- Presuming that a gay person is only interested in sex with you
- A common experience that black men talk about is being followed around in stores or getting on an elevator and having people move away and grab their purses or their wallets
- Assuming a person with a visible disability must also be developmentally disabled, or vice versa

Practice:

Identifying some potential bias

- Five seconds per slide
- Jot down or remember your first thought
- You do not have to share this with anyone! So, be honest
- We'll discuss at the end some broad questions and answers















What were your thoughts?

- Some may be more socially acceptable, others might embarrass us.
- ALL have an element of bias!
- Sometimes this may be harmless.
- Sometimes this may have a direct effect on our work or relationships.

Implicit Bias in Educational Settings

- Like everyone else, educators and administrators are susceptible to bias
- Our interactions with others can be based on just as much our experiences and culture as it can be with theirs or their performance
- Can lead to false assumptions and negative outcomes

LEARN Model

Listen with sympathy and understanding

Explain your perception of the problem

Acknowledge and discuss differences and similarities

Recommend treatment

Negotiate agreement

Your mission, should you choose to accept it: Project Implicit

Harvard University's Project Implicit ([click here](#)) has over 30 implicit association tests.

Your recommended assignment is to choose a minimum of TWO implicit bias tests and take them for yourself. You will not be turning these in--these are for your own enlightenment. As a recommendation, at least one of these should be on race.

For more info:

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