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IMPLICIT RACIAL BIAS: IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION AND OTHER CRITICAL OPPORTUNITY DOMAINS

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WHAT IS IMPLICIT RACIAL BIAS?

- Implicit racial bias is a mental process that causes most of us to have negative attitudes about people or groups of people based only on their race or ethnicity.

- Typically, these people are not members of our own racial or ethnic “in group,” although implicit bias can also be directed at people who look and think like we do.

- Many researchers believe that implicit racial bias is fueled by “symbolic” attitudes that we all develop over the course of our lives starting at a very early age.

- These attitudes are formed from distorted messages that we are exposed to every day from a variety of sources—television, newspapers, magazines, conversations with people we trust—that depict African Americans and other people of color in a negative light.
MOST PEOPLE ARE NOT AWARE OF THEIR OWN IMPLICIT RACIAL BIAS

- **Hidden**
  - Implicit racial bias resides in our “unconscious mind,” the part of the brain that many researchers believe is beyond our direct control

- **Less Egalitarian**
  - Unconscious attitudes are less egalitarian than what we explicitly think about race

- **Self-reinforcing**
  - Our refusal to talk about and confront issues of race reinforces implicit racial bias
WHAT ARE “SYMBOLIC/IMPLIED” ATTITUDES?

*Symbolic attitudes* are mental predispositions or “emotional lenses” that determine how we respond to relevant social and cultural phenomena. For example, the symbol of White racial superiority might stimulate opposition to busing as a means of achieving school integration.

What researchers say about symbolic attitudes:

A child will hate communism if that concept is paired with contemptuous or derogatory expression each time he or she hears it. The individual’s needs or interests are irrelevant to attitude formation (Lau, 1978).

Attitude development may take place without regard to whether or not the individual’s needs are satisfied, such as by a process of simple conditioning. That is, attitudes may often be acquired simply by being paired with positive or negative unconditioned stimuli (Staats, 1958).

People acquire stable affective preference through conditioning in their pre-adult years, with little calculation of the future costs and benefits of these attitudes. The most important of these are presumably some rather general predispositions, such as party identification, liberal or conservative ideology, nationalism, or racial prejudice. When confronted with new policy issues later in life, people respond to these new attitudes on the basis of cognitive consistency. The critical variable would be the similarity of symbols posed by the policy issue to those of long-standing predispositions (Sears, 1980).
In his book, *The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation* (2007), Professor Drew Westen tells us that “Irrespective of what we may feel and believe consciously, most White Americans—including many who hold consciously progressive values and attitudes—harbor negative associations toward people of color.”
THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE…

“…because whites and blacks in America still live largely segregated lives, white America's picture of African-American life is acquired disproportionately through the media” (Kirkus Reviews, 2012)
IMPLICIT ASSOCIATION TEST (IAT)
A tool for measuring implicit bias

The Harvard Implicit Association Test for race reveals racial bias by measuring the amount of time it takes an individual to make an association between two concepts displayed as either words or images. So, for example, a person with implicit bias against African Americans might take longer to associate the word “good” with a Black face than with a White face.

IAT: https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/
WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT IMPLICIT RACIAL BIAS?

Research at the Kirwan Institute suggests that implicit racial bias is one of the two principal forces that energize widespread racial and ethnic inequality in our society (the other is structural racialization). Understanding the causes of implicit racial bias and pushing back against its consequences are critical to the movement for social justice and racial equality.
CONSEQUENCES OF IMPLICIT RACIAL BIAS

Housing

- Many municipalities continue to resist building affordable housing in “high opportunity” suburban areas.

- Too often affordable housing is situated in racially segregated low-opportunity communities characterized by low-performing schools, high unemployment and high crime rates.

- Evidence suggests that many African American borrowers were targeted for risky sub-prime loans even when their credit histories would have qualified them for more conventional mortgage loans (New York Times, 2007).

- African American homebuyers are “steered” to neighborhoods where residents are predominately of the same race.

- Homeowners’ insurance claims are denied on the basis of race.

- Credit scores or “insurance scores” are used to price homeowner’s insurance.

- Banks fail to adequately maintain foreclosed properties in African American neighborhoods.
CONSEQUENCES OF IMPLICIT RACIAL BIAS

Employment

- A study conducted in Milwaukee by Northwestern University sociologist Devah Pager found that White job applicants with a criminal record were more likely than Back applicants without a criminal record to be called back for a job interview (Price, 2003).


- In a 2003 study, researchers found that job applicants with White sounding names received 50 percent more callbacks for interviews than applicants with Black sounding names (Bertrand, 2003).
CONSEQUENCES OF IMPLICIT RACIAL BIAS

Criminal Justice

- Racial profiling: The practice of targeting individuals for differential treatment or suspecting individuals of unlawful or unethical behavior based solely on the individual’s perceived race or ethnicity (Rudd, Introduction to racial profiling survey, 2012).

- Research suggests that all-White juries are more likely to convict non-White defendants than White defendants for the same crime (Cole, 1999).

- Research shows that defendants who kill White victims are much more likely to receive the death penalty than those who kill Black victims (Baldis, 1990).

- Research suggests that defendants with more Afro-centric facial features (regardless of race) receive longer sentences for the same crimes than defendants with fewer Afro-centric facial features (Blair, et al., 2004).

- Research on “shooter bias” (also called the “shooter effect”) suggests that, in simulation tests, a White person requires less decision time to shoot an unarmed Black man than to shoot an armed White man and that Whites will shoot African Americans more frequently (Correll, Park, Judd, and Wittenbrink, 2002; Greenwald, Oakes, and Hoffman, 2002, Payne, 2006).
New York City Police Stops
2010

Matthew Bloch, Ford Fessenden and Janet Roberts
New York Police Department; Center for Constitutional Rights; New York Civil Liberties Union; New York Housing Authority; Andrew A. Beveridge, socialexplorer.com; Census

Be Careful of Stereotypes!
Only One of Them is a Convicted Felon.
A teacher may say—and explicitly believe—that he or she has equal expectations for all students, while in fact, implicit racial bias lowers expectations for students of color and stimulates subtle differences in the way the teacher behaves toward these students—less praise and recognition and more discipline, for example.

A 2001 study conducted at seven integrated schools in southeastern Louisiana shows that White students were treated more favorably than Black students by their White female teachers (Casteel, 1998).

These subtle differences, often driven by implicit racial bias, can affect a student’s self-esteem, motivation and academic performance.
CONSEQUENCES OF IMPLICIT RACIAL BIAS

Education

Segregation

- Since the passage of *Brown V. Board of Education*, White families have participated in a mass exodus from metropolitan school districts to avoid school and neighborhood integration.

- Physical distance between racial groups is an indication of their perceived social distance.

- In a phenomenon called “tipping”, White residents of a formerly all-White neighborhood tend to move out when the percentage of Black residents reaches 15% (Chideya, 1995).

- By 1991, the proportion of African American students attending intensely segregated schools (90 to 100 percent students of color) returned to the same level as in 1971, when the Supreme Court issued its first school desegregation busing decision.

- One-third of all Black and Latino students attend schools where more than 75 percent of students receive free or reduced lunch. In contrast, only 4% of White children do (Nittle, 2010).

- Today, one-third of Black students attend school in places where the Black population is more than 90 percent (Lockette, 2010).
CONSEQUENCES OF IMPLICIT RACIAL BIAS

Education

Disproportionate Discipline

- African American students, and especially African American boys, are disciplined more often and receive more out-of-school suspensions and expulsions than White students who commit the same offenses.

  - A 2009-2010 survey of 72,000 schools (kindergarten through high school) shows that while Black students made up only 18 percent of those enrolled in the schools sampled, they accounted for 35 percent of those suspended once, 46 percent of those suspended more than once and 39 percent of all expulsions (Lewin, 2012)

  - Over all, Black students were three and a half times as likely to be suspended or expelled than their White peers (Lewin, 2012)

  - Over 70 percent of the students involved in school-related arrests or referred to law enforcement were Hispanic or Black (Lewin, 2010)

...African American students appear to be referred to the
office for less serious and more subjective reasons.
Coupled with extensive and highly consistent prior data,
these results argue that disproportionate representation
of African Americans in office referrals, suspension and
expulsion is evidence of a pervasive and systematic bias
that may well be inherent in the use of exclusionary
discipline.

Indiana Education Policy Center
2000
CONSEQUENCES OF IMPLICIT RACIAL BIAS

Education

Disproportionate Tacking to Special Education

- African American children represent only 17 percent of the school population but constitute more than 30 percent of the children in special education (Kunjufu, 2009).

- Only 27 percent of African American male special education students graduate from high school (Lewin, 2012)

- African American children are more likely than their peers with the same disability to be overrepresented in more restrictive settings, or underrepresented in the general education setting (Skiba, et al., 2000)

- Often, assignment to special education is the result of “cultural deficit thinking,” i.e., bias against the different language styles, appearance, and behavior of students of color.

- “Deficit thinking” pathologizes behavior that differs from White middle class norms and uses these differences to categorize a child as disabled (Abraham, et al., 2011)

- Black students with disabilities constituted 21 percent of the total, but 44 percent of those with disabilities who are subject to mechanical restraints, like being strapped down (Lewin, 2012)
The state of crisis for black boys is based on a need to look at the overall issues impacting their lives and to consider new approaches to dealing with the problem. Special education has been used as an automatic answer to behavior and emotional problems that can and should be addressed in a variety of ways. In many cases, Ritalin and special education are seen as quick fixes. Ritalin is the fifth leading drug in America after nicotine, alcohol, cocaine and marijuana.

The problem is systemic. Little boys in need of positive role models, needing more academic support, boys who come to school hungry, some who have been abused, boys with a slow start in early school preparation, precocious or hyperactive boys – all may find themselves with the same future in special education.

Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu
2009
CONSEQUENCES OF IMPLICIT RACIAL BIAS

Education

Absence of Advanced Placement Courses

- The National Association for College Admission Counseling found that grades in college preparatory courses were the top factor that colleges considered in the admission decision (Abdul-Alim, 2012)

- Four out of five African American graduates were either left out of an AP subject for which they had potential or attended a school that did not offer the subject (The College Board, 2012)

- California’s best high schools offer so many A.P. and honors classes — which confer bonus points on a student’s G.P.A. — that the average G.P.A. of White and Asian freshmen at U.C.L.A. is now 4.2. At many of the largely black high schools around Los Angeles, it is sometimes impossible to do much better than a 4.0, because of the relative lack of A.P. classes (Leonhardt, 2007)
Figure 5: Demographics of the class of 2011 versus AP Exam-takers

- Overall Student Population
- AP Exam-Taker Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/American/Islander</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>59.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP Exam-Taker Population</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Because some AP Exam-takers identify themselves as “Other” for race/ethnicity or do not provide race/ethnicity, the “AP Exam-Taker Population” in this figure only represents a total of 94.0% of all AP Exam-takers.

What do the data show?

Black/African American graduates were the most underrepresented group in AP classrooms.

Figure 6: Participation in recommended AP subjects by race/ethnicity of graduates with AP potential

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Took a recommended AP subject</th>
<th>Did not take a recommended AP subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>73.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/American/Islander</td>
<td>57.9%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>79.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>70.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
<td>61.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four out of five Black/African American graduates were either left out of an AP subject for which they had potential or attended a school that did not offer the subject.
CONSEQUENCES OF IMPLICIT RACIAL BIAS

Education

Stereotype Threat

“Stereotype threat” is an unconscious response to a prevailing negative stereotype about an identifiable group by a member of that group (Rudd, 2012). For example:

- Implicit racial bias fuels the stereotype of Black intellectual inferiority.
- This stereotype is perceived to be harmful to all African Americans.
- Black students are fearful that if they do not perform well on high stakes standardized tests, this stereotype will be reinforced and all African Americans will be harmed.
- This fear creates such a high level of stress and anxiety that a student’s cognitive function may be impaired while taking the test and the student may perform below his or her actual ability.
WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Talk about race in a transformative way.

- Connect with people from racial and ethnic groups that are different from your own.

- Expose racial disparities in critical opportunity domains, including education, but also lift up examples of people who have overcome barriers to opportunity.

- Educate multiple audiences, including teachers, employers, judges, politicians, and high school students, about the causes and consequences of implicit racial bias (in language that is accessible to these audiences).

- Evaluate media messages more critically for evidence of racial and ethnic bias.

- Carefully, critically, and honestly examine our own racial attitudes for evidence of implicit bias.

- Educate all students to become agents of change to improve opportunity for all people in the society...
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APPENDIX
WORKS CITED


Critical pedagogy is not concerned with simply offering students new ways to think critically and act with authority as agents in the classroom; it is also concerned with providing students with the skills and knowledge necessary for them to expand their capacities both to question deep-seated assumptions and myths that legitimate the most archaic and disempowering social practices that structure every aspect of society and to then take responsibility for intervening in the world they inhabit.

Henry A. Giroux
2010