IMPLICIT BIAS

WHAT IS IT AND HOW DOES IT AFFECT UNIVERSITIES?

Melissa J. Marks, Ed.D.
University of Pittsburgh – Greensburg
mjm37@pitt.edu
OVERVIEW

- Activities to get us thinking
- Some definitions and examples
- Discussion
- Wrap up: How does this affect us?

“They always say time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself.”
— Andy Warhol, The Philosophy of Andy Warhol

“Change will not come if we wait for some other person, or if we wait for some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.”
— Barack Obama
DO THESE DESCRIBE MALES OR FEMALES?

Tomboy
Caring
Science Teacher
Logical
Doctor
Emotional
Hero
Tough
Elementary Teacher
Sweet
Bossy
Leader
Artistic
Tough
Athlete
Smart
Nurse
Mechanical
Strong
Jock
Foolish
Please read this scenario (that I did not write)

“The words of my doctor from earlier that morning were still ringing in my ears when I found myself slamming the brakes of my car to avoid a nasty collision. An incompetent driver was cutting across two lanes at a roundabout just in front of me. Still perspiring somewhat I carried on to drop off my screaming child with the nanny. It was a hectic morning”
CLOTHING, ETHNICITY, AND GENDER INFLUENCE OUR IDEAS OF IDENTITY, PERSONALITY, AND CHARACTER
WHAT DOES THIS SAY?

7H15 M3554G3 53RV35 7O PR0V3 H0W 0UR M1ND5 C4N D0 4M4Z1NG 7H1NG5! 1MPR3551V3 7H1NG5! IN 7H3 B3G1NN1NG 17 WA5 H4RD BU7 N0W, 0N 7H15 LIN3 Y0UR M1ND IS R34D1NG 17 4U70M471C4LLY W17H 0U7 3V3N 7H1NK1NG 4B0U7 17, B3 PROUD! 0NLY C3R741N P30PL3 C4N R3AD 7H15.
IMPLICIT BIAS

- Unconscious, outside of our control
- Automatic
- “Mindbugs”
  - Erroneous thought that stick in our minds even when we consciously “know better”
- Lead to perceptual bias
- Influences how we see, feel, remember, “know”, judge
- Learned associations
TYPES OF IMPLICIT BIAS

- Gender
- Race
- Religion/Lack thereof
- Sexual Orientation
- Age
- Weight/Physical Attributes

https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html
BEFORE WE DISCUSS GENDER....

The Genderbread Person
by www.ItsPronouncedMetrosexual.com

Gender Identity
- Woman
- Genderqueer
- Man

Gender identity is how you, in your head, think about yourself. It’s the chemistry that composes you (e.g., hormonal levels) and how you interpret what that means.

Gender Expression
- Feminine
- Androgynous
- Masculine

Gender expression is how you demonstrate your gender (based on traditional gender roles) through the ways you act, dress, behave, and interact.

Biological Sex
- Female
- Intersex
- Male

Biological sex refers to the objectively measurable organs, hormones, and chromosomes. Female = vagina, ovaries, XX chromosomes; male = penis, testes, XY chromosomes; Intersex = a combination of the two.

Sexual Orientation
- Heterosexual
- Bisexual
- Homosexual

Sexual orientation is who you are physically, spiritually, and emotionally attracted to, based on their sex/gender in relation to your own.
IMPLICIT BIASES: AFFECTS ON MEN AND WOMEN

- “Women are Wonderful” vs. “Man’s Role”
- “Natural” Women
- The role of a dad: parent or babysitter?
- The value of men vs. the value of women
IMPACT OF GENDER BIAS AT UNIVERSITIES

- In Sciences, men are favored as candidates
- In academia, implicit gender bias contributes to “the fact that women do not reach the most senior and leading positions at universities in the same proportions that men do” (LERU, 2018, 3)
- Double-blind reviews led to significant increase of females as lead authors (Budden, Tregenza, Aarssen, et al. 2008)
- Men earn more than women at every rank and in every institution type except two-year private institutions and held a higher percentage of tenure position at every type of institution even if they did not hold the highest number of faculty positions (Johnson, 2017)
- 26% of full professors are female, 40% of associate professors are female, 48.6% of assistant professors are female, and 56% of instructors/lecturers are female within the Pitt system (Brodish, 2017).
AND IF YOU THOUGHT IT WAS BECAUSE OF MARRIAGE & KIDS....

PRESIDENTS

70% - 30%

While the number of women presidents has increased since 1986, as of 2016, women only hold 30 percent of presidencies across all institutions of higher education.*

Currently married
90% vs. 75%

Have children
89% vs. 74%

Altered career for dependent, spouse/partner, or parent
16% vs. 32%

Women presidents are less likely to be married, less likely to have children, and more likely to have altered their career to care for dependent, spouse/partner, or parent.**
IMPLICIT BIASES: RACE

- Influence in Classrooms
- Who do we mentor?
- To Whom do we Respond?
  - Graduate Students
  - On-line courses
- Expectations
  - Shifting standards
- Academic suspensions
- Discriminatory Health care
STEREOTYPE THREAT
ETHNICITY/INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS & FACULTY

- Implicit bias against students with non-standard accent (Na, 2016)
- Accented English can be seen as “exotic” (e.g., “Ooh, I love your accent) and/or
- Feeling from international minority ethnic faculty that “individuals from non-dominant backgrounds should conform to White norms and leave institutionalized racist acts unquestioned” (Bhopal & Chapman, 2018, 108)
- Devaluing of Research:
  - Can be viewed as “lesser” or “more personal”, less “serious” and “rigorous” (Bhopal & Chapman, 2018)
Intersectionality is how being more than one of these groups affects a person.

Example in academia: “At the turn of the 21st century, there were 176,485 tenured full professors at the nation’s public and private research universities—72 percent White men, 17 percent White women, 8 percent men of color (Black, Hispanic, and Native American combined), and 2 percent women of color—combined” (Evans, 2007, 131).
SPECIFIC OUTCOMES OF BIASES ACROSS THE BOARD

- Hiring Practices (Faculty, Grad Students, Etc.)
  - Experiment of equal resumes

- Letters of Recommendation
  - Undergraduate letters of recommendation (male/female; white/minority) -- discrepancy and tentative statements
  - Letters overall tend to be shorter, lack specificity, include fewer superlative adjectives
BECHDEL TEST

Alison Bechdel (1985)
Created for movies; now used for books
(1) it has to have at least two women in it
(2) who talk to each other
(3) about something besides a man.
“Faculty share the values and prejudices of the broader society and those of their own group—one which in the US is predominately white, male and from well-educated middle class families” (MacLachlan, 2017,1).

- Think we’re objective, but we come with our own values, expectations, values, and experiences
- It’s our “water”. It is what academia “is” or “is not” to us.
WHAT CAN WE DO TO IMPROVE INCLUSIVITY & LESSEN BIAS?
ADVICE TO MITIGATING IMPLICIT BIAS*

Bias is influential when...

- Information is ambiguous, complex, and/or incomplete
- Decision-making criteria are unclear

To mitigate the effects of bias we could...

- Develop and prioritize evaluation criteria in advance
- Judge all candidates in comparison to criteria
- Know which factors are related to performance

*From Kate A. Ratliff, Ph.D. Executive Director, Project Implicit. Assistant Professor, University of Florida
“Studies on the psychology of racial dialogues indicate social and academic norms that dictate against race talk between White Americans and persons of color: (a) the politeness protocol, (b) the academic protocol, and (c) the color-blind protocol. These protocols discourage race talk and allow society to enter into a conspiracy of silence regarding the detrimental impact oppression plays on persons of color. **Facilitating difficult dialogues on race requires educators to recognize what makes such discussions difficult.** For people of color, engaging in race talk exposes them to microaggressions that invalidate and assail their racial/ethnic identities. For Whites, honest discussions are impeded by fears of appearing racist, of realizing their racism, of acknowledging White privilege, and of taking responsibility to combat racism.” (Sue, 2013)

“Unexamined biases in institutional culture can prevent diverse students from thriving and persisting in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. Given the daily personal interactions that faculty have with students, we suggest that individual educators have the opportunity, and responsibility, to improve the retention and persistence of diverse students. However, in our experience, **faculty professional development programs often limit discussions of diversity to “comfortable” topics (such as learning styles) and miss opportunities to explore deeper issues related to faculty privilege, implicit bias, and cues for stereotype threat that we all bring to the classroom**” (Killpack & Melon, 2016).
ADDITIONAL ACTIONS WE CAN TAKE

- Be mindful: Reflect on your emotions
- Be kind and practice empathy
- Being diverse does not equal being inclusive
  - We “hire for diversity and manage for similarity” (Turnball, 2019)
- Maintain an openness to learning
PLAN OF ACTION

- What will you do?
- Who will it effect?
- How will it change what we do here at the university?
- How will it improve the lives of our faculty, staff, and students?


Zawisza, M. (2016) Think you’re all for gender equality? Your unconscious may have other ideas. The Conversation http://theconversation.com/think-youre-all-for-gender-equality-your-unconscious-may-have-other-ideas-69520