

CHANGING THE NARRATIVE ABOUT OUR STUDENTS: DISRUPTING IMPLICIT BIAS

John Jay Faculty Development Day August 24, 2017

Ken Hardy's Tasks of participants in Discussions about Race and other Aspects of Social Identity

This dialogue will be governed by the guidelines in Ken Hardy's Tasks of participants in Discussions about Race and other Aspects of Social Identity:

GENERIC TASKS:

1. To be an expert in your own experience, not of others.
2. To create space for telling of one's story.
3. To make space for both thoughts and feelings.

TASKS OF THE PRIVILEGED:

1. To resist false notions of equality. It is not helpful to equate suffering.
2. Intentions vs. consequences: to understand that intentions may be good, but that doesn't change the fact that consequences can be bad. It is not helpful to just clarify intentions when consequences were hurtful. acknowledge the effect of consequences to your actions. Intentions are the province of the privileged; consequences are the provinces of the subjugated.
3. To challenge the ahistorical approach. History does matter. the past does effect the present. The privileged cannot understand the subjugated "out of context."
4. To develop thick skin. Need to be able to thicken one's skin, to not give up on connections with people who have been subjugated even if you are initially rebuffed, to continue to go back, to continue to try.
5. To not become a FOE-framer of other's experiences.

TASKS OF THE SUBJUGATED

1. To overcome learned voicelessness; to advocate for oneself. One needs to challenge the belief that it is not worth speaking up. The subjugated have often been taught that "silence is golden" and "don't speak unless spoken to;" the challenge is to unlearn this behavior.
2. To learn to exhale the negative messages that have become internalized.
3. To overcome the addiction to protect, educate or change the privileged.
4. To deal with one's own rage, to channel it appropriately, not to eradicate it. Shame is a major stumbling block for the privileged; rage is a major stumbling block for the subjugated.

Defining Implicit Bias*

Also known as implicit social cognition, implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control. Residing deep in the subconscious, these biases are different from known biases that individuals may choose to conceal for the purposes of social and/or political correctness. Rather, implicit biases are not accessible through introspection.

The implicit associations we harbor in our subconscious cause us to have feelings and attitudes about other people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age, and appearance. These associations develop over the course of a lifetime beginning at a very early age through exposure to direct and indirect messages. In addition to early life experiences, the media and news programming are often-cited origins of implicit associations.

A Few Key Characteristics of Implicit Biases

- Implicit biases are **pervasive**. Everyone possesses them, even people with avowed commitments to impartiality such as judges.
- Implicit and explicit biases are **related but distinct mental constructs**. They are not mutually exclusive and may even reinforce each other.
- The implicit associations we hold **do not necessarily align with our declared beliefs** or even reflect stances we would explicitly endorse.
- We generally tend to hold implicit biases that **favor our own ingroup**, though research has shown that we can still hold implicit biases against our ingroup.
- Implicit biases are **malleable**. Our brains are incredibly complex, and the implicit associations that we have formed can be gradually unlearned through a variety of debiasing techniques.

Implicit Biases Predict Behavior in the Real World

Extensive research has documented the disturbing effects of implicit racial biases in a variety of realms ranging from classrooms to courtrooms to hospitals. Consider these examples:

- A 2012 study used identical case vignettes to examine how pediatricians' implicit racial attitudes affect treatment recommendations for four common pediatric conditions. Results indicated that as pediatricians' pro-White implicit biases increased, they were more likely to prescribe painkillers for vignette patients who were White as opposed to Black. This is just one example of how understanding implicit racial biases may help explain differential health care treatment, even for youths.
- Other research explored the connection between criminal sentencing and Afrocentric features bias, which refers to the generally negative judgments and beliefs that many people hold regarding individuals who possess Afrocentric features such as dark skin, a wide nose, and full lips. Researchers found that when controlling for numerous factors (e.g., seriousness of the primary offense, number of prior offenses, etc.), individuals with the most prominent Afrocentric features received longer sentences than their less Afrocentrically featured counterparts.

**from the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity*

Excerpt from JOHN JAY COLLEGE MISSION STATEMENT:

We foster an inclusive and diverse community drawn from our city, our country, and the world. We are dedicated to educating traditionally underrepresented groups and committed to increasing diversity in the workforce. The breadth of our community motivates us to question our assumptions, to consider multiple perspectives, to think critically, and to develop the humility that comes with global understanding. We educate fierce advocates for justice.