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Implicit biases can negatively affect education when teachers, administrators, and other school staff make decisions and interact with students and families in ways that are influenced by their implicit biases. As a result, implicit bias in the context of education creates unfairness on the individual level (e.g., biased speech) and injustice at the institutional or systemic level (e.g., discrimination). Educatorss implicit biases can influence how teachers grade students as well as to whom they give their attention and who they ignore. It can affect which students they praise and reprimand, their body language, and tone of voice. Biases can influence the curriculum choices and which perspectives are highlighted in classrooms. It can affect choices related to guest speakers, books, stories, and more. Implicit biases can also influence how teachers and administrators react to student behaviors and result in inconsistencies across how students are disciplined that fall along racial and ethnic lines. Implicit biases in education may help to explain pervasive inequities in educational institutions such as gaps in achievement scores based on racial and gender groups, differences in participation in advanced level courses, and differences in detention and suspension rates. It can also influence hiring and promotion practices. Examples Biases in Evaluation. A teacher may hold implicit biases about the mathematical abilities of certain groups of students. These beliefs in turn could influence the type of feedback provided, how frequently the teacher calls on students, the types of support and assistance provided, and decisions related to grouping students based on learning needs. In a randomized controlled study of 390 teachers, Copur-Gencturk et al. (2019) used randomly assigned gender- and race-specific names on 18 mathematical solutions. The teachers did not show biases in assessing the correctness of the answers; however, when the teachers were asked to evaluate the students abilities using the same solutions, teacher biases against Black, Hispanic and female students mathematical abilities emerged. The biases were the largest for Black and Hispanic girls. Using a large dataset of ~40,000 teachers across the nation, Chin et al.(2020) found that counties in which teachers had higher pro-White compared to Black implicit bias (i.e., IAT scores averaged among teachers in each county) also had larger test score disparities between White and Black students. Biases in Discipline. For the same behavior, implicit biases may lead a teacher to react to one students behavior differently than anothers. It may lead to inconsistent consequences, such as being sent to time-out, calls to parents, suspension or expulsion. Nationally, African Americans are four times more likely, and Latinos twice as likely, to be suspended or expelled in elementary school for minor infractions than their peers (Skiba et al., 2011). In Hawaii, higher rates of suspensions appear to be correlated with enrollment of low-income, multi-racial and Native Hawaiian students (Terrell, 2015). Disproportionate representation in arrests and ensuing outcomes (e.g. time in juvenile detention) for youth of Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Filipino, mixed-race and other Pacific Islander backgrounds are also evident in the States juvenile justice system (Umemeto et al, 2012). These patterns have been referred to as the school to prison pipeline and disparities in discipline have been connected to implicit biases. Using a large dataset of ~1.6 million Americans, Riddle and Sinclair (2019) found that county-level estimates of implicit White/Black bias (and county-level explicit biases, as well) are associated with racial disciplinary disparities seen in those counties across ~96,000 schools in the U.S. It is important to promote awareness of biases so that educators and institutions can manage their effects (Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2016). Developing equitable institutional protocols for such things as hiring procedures and evaluating teachers, as well as on-going professional development with coaching, may help. Additionally, frameworks for Anti-Bias Education can be used to guide educators (e.g., Learning for Justice Social Justice Standards). Such actions can help to mitigate implicit biases that are unfair and disruptive to learning and encourage practices that are restorative versus punitive. References Chin, M. J., Quinn, D. M., Dhaliwal, T. K., & Lovison, V. S. (2020). 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Can they be reduced? Honolulu Civil Beat. Umemeto, K., Spencer, J., Miao, T., & Momen, S. (2012, June). Disproportionate Minority Contact in the Hawaii Juvenile Justice System: 2000-2010. School leaders across the country are reflecting on the conversation about race and racism in America that came to a head this summer, proposing policy changes and professional development. A timely new study from Harvard Ph.D. student Mark Chin and his coauthors, University of Southern California professor David Quinn and Ph.D. student Tasminda Dhaliwal, and Harvard Ph.D. student Virginia Lovison, provides some of the first suggestive quantitative evidence to suggest teachers implicit biases may effect student outcomes, underscoring the necessity of these conversations. Identifying teachers implicit bias is difficult because measuring it is often not part of the review that school districts and school leaders do its not part of the process of looking at teachers in the classroom, says Chin. He notes that theres been a lot of theoretical research on teachers biases, but quantitative evidence of the relationship between biases and outcomes hasnt been available until recently. Data on biases from Project Implicits white-Black Implicit Associations Test, combined with county-level test score data from the Stanford Education Data Archive and disciplinary outcome data from the Office of Civil Rights provided the team of researchers with an opportunity to probe those connections between bias and outcomes. Findings Chin and his co-authors present two major findings. However, as this is one of the first studies to quantitatively examine the relationship between bias and student outcomes, stronger causal evidence is needed before drawing firm conclusions and drafting policy. We cant say biases are leading directly to disparities. There are potential factors were not capturing in our models that could explain the relationship, he says. The implicit biases of teachers vary significantly by the race of the individual. Teachers of color were found to have lower levels of pro-white/anti-Black bias than white teachers, with Black teachers having the lowest levels of anti-Black bias. Teachers with lower anti-Black bias tend to work in counties with more Black students. This is a positive finding, given that you wouldnt want teachers with strong anti-Black bias serving more Black students. Our results are also potentially showing an explanation for why Black students who have Black teachers have higher outcomes, says Chin. Areas with stronger pro-white/anti-Black bias among teachers show larger gaps between test scores and in suspension rates for Black and white students. The mechanism by which bias ends up influencing both sets of outcomes may be different, so I wasnt convinced beforehand that wed find a similar result, said Chin. This finding comes after controlling for factors like differences in socioeconomic status that might influence test scores or discipline. Implications Some analyses suggest that smaller interventions to address implicit bias dont actually result in long-term behavioral change, Chin says. For an intervention to be useful, we would want to know that it actually leads to lasting changes in behaviors. Otherwise, the intervention may not be a useful investment for schools to spend money on. But this study may underscore the efforts many districts have made to adopt hiring practices that increase the diversity of teachers and school leaders. Hiring seems like a beneficial lever to pull, given that teachers of color have lower biases, and having more leaders of color in a school might challenge the structures that perpetuate these biases in schools and districts, says Chin. With a teaching force that is 75% white, however, its also important to focus on supporting white teachers in learning to recognize and monitor their own implicit biases. In the last few months, many policy recommendations have pointed towards implicit bias trainings to effect this change. And yet, as Chin notes, individuals biases are formed and perpetuated by systems. I would argue whats more important is to ensure the systems in a school, in a district, are set up so they dont replicate symbols of systemic inequality, he says. In the long term, bias training only does so much if society doesnt change too. Last week at Colgate University in central New York, reports of a black male carrying a gun which in reality was a Colgate student carrying a glue gun for a school project prompted school officials to put the campus on lockdown. In a message to the university, President Brian W. Casey wrote: It is important that we understand the role that implicit racial bias had in the initial reporting of and responses to the events of last night.African Americans have learned to expect bias in their lives from an early age, and very little has been done to counteract the effects associated with implicit biases. If black students experience the effects of implicit bias from the first day they step into a school, how can we expect them to develop healthy or positive attitudes toward authority figures later in life? While we may think of ourselves as unbiased, it is important for educators to recognize and purposefully counteract any effects of implicit bias by beginning with staff and then spreading understanding beyond schools and into the public mindset.Implicit bias unconscious attitudes and stereotypes used by the brain to make decision-making more efficient often alters our actions and decisions in high-stress and split-second situations. When bias relates to preferred foods or colors, very few if any negative consequences occur. However, implicit bias often enters our judgments related to other people based on skin color, ethnicity, language, and other traits. In schools, the effects of implicit bias on students of color have been linked directly to excessive discipline, lower teacher expectations, and over-critical grading procedures; and linked indirectly to higher dropout rates, future incarceration, and lower higher education outcomes.Experiences of implicit bias and related differences in treatment of individuals by race starts at an early age. A study by Yale University faculty found that preschool teachers looking to prevent behavioral problems focused on black male students significantly more than their peers.National data sets show K-12 black students received suspensions and expulsions at rates higher than students of all other races, and they experienced out-of-school-suspensions 3.8 times more often than white students. Resulting differences in discipline exposure by race lead to juvenile incarceration, lower graduation rates, diminishing academic achievement, higher incidences of future poverty, and high costs to taxpayers through assistance programs and extended time in the K-12 school system. To begin lessening the effects of implicit bias, schools must provide professional development opportunities to make teachers aware of implicit bias and the different ways it might impact students. Data collection and analyses in the form of equity audits provide clear information as to where implicit bias most severely impacts students. Schools need to implement policies that allow for adequate time for teachers to react to and respond to the academic, disciplinary, and social needs of students. Recognition of culture must become an integral part of school climate and be allowed to grow and change based on the population of students served by the school.Personal bias mitigation can begin with systemic self-examination. The Implicit Associations Test, developed by social psychologists, is a tool that assesses levels of implicit bias in several categories. Although it is difficult, individuals may begin to change their levels of implicit bias by reading stories that go against popular beliefs about people or cultures and experiencing examples of strong and/or successful people of color. Individuals must share awareness of bias with local communities or workplaces and practice making informed decisions and thoughtful reactions when working through situations subject to bias. Every situation will be different, but beginning to identify and address ones own implicit biases is an important first step toward the realization of a more just and equitable society.Dr. Beachum is the Bennett Professor of Urban School Leadership at Lehigh University. He is also the program director and an associate professor in the Educational Leadership program in the College of Education. Gina Gullo recently completely her doctorate in Educational Leadership at Lehigh University. Culturally Responsive TeachingA primer on the impact of implicit biases in schools and how they can be expressed by students and faculty.Collage Edutopia, photos Kellette ElliottLike everybody else, I possess unconscious biases about people that are contingent on how they talk and look. Such instant judgments, called implicit bias, involve automatically categorizing people according to cultural stereotypes, Sandra Graham and Brian Lowery writein Priming Unconscious Racial Stereotypes About Adolescent Offenders.The consequences of implicit bias in schools are both powerful and measurable. A 2017 study by Hua-Yu Sebastian Cherng, for example, found that math teachers perceive their classes to be too difficult for Latino and black students, and English teachers perceive their classes to be too difficult for all non-white students. In English, these biases lower the affected studentsexpected years of schooling by almost a third of a year.... The effect of being underestimated by math teachers is 0.20 GPA points.Implicit bias also leads to inequitable punishments for students of color. A 2012 investigation found that 17 percent, or one out of every six black schoolchildren enrolled in K12, were suspended at least once, compared with one in 20 (5 percent) for whites. Black girls ages 5 to 14have been viewed by adults as less innocent than white girls of the same age, which may be a factor in the disparity in suspension rates, according to a 2017 report by Georgetown Laws Center on Poverty and Inequality.Microaggressions are one outgrowth of implicit bias. Columbia Universitys Derald Wing Sue defines this term as prejudices that leak out in many interpersonal situations and decision points; they are experienced as slights, insults, indignities, and denigrating messages.A microassault is a verbal or nonverbal attack meant to hurt the intended victim through name-calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions. Example: Students wear Confederate flag clothing.A microinsult is insensitive communication that demeans someones racial identity, signaling to people of color that their contributions are unimportant. Example: A teacher corrects the grammar only of Hispanic children.A microinvalidation involves negating or ignoring the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color. Example: An Asian American student from the U.S. is asked where she was born, which conveys the message that she is not really an American.Over the years, the concept has been extended beyond race to include similar events and experiences of other marginalized groups, including women, LGBTQ people, people with disabilities, etc.In schools,students report that experiences like these are fairly common:In high school, boys in my math classes would look over my shoulder and unsolicited point out my errors with their pencils.Sometimes Im asked, Why are you so white? meaning that people with Arab names and heritage are supposed to be all dark-skinned, and Im asked to justify my skin color and explain why I dont match their racial stereotypes.Ive been told, Go back to Mexico! many times.Other microaggressions include teachers being surprised by certain students achievements or holding tests on religious holidays, and peers imitating foreign accents or saying, Thats so gay, or Shes so bipolar.Once during a faculty meeting, I witnessed an educator tell a white male colleague that hed committed a microaggression. At the time, I didnt know precisely what that meant. Nobody talked for a few uncomfortable seconds until someone changed the topic. Calling the man out in the moment was justified. After all, its everybodys job to make diversity-sensitive norms explicit. But that moment was also a dialogue killer. Had there been previous conversations among the entire faculty about microaggressions, perhaps the entire incident could have been avoided.Thoughtful conversations are also halted by whataboutism (Why do they get to use racist words and we dont?), name-calling (snowflakes, thought police), and the unfortunate formula strategic denial plus conjunction plus racist comment (Im not racist, but...).How do you have a meaningful classroom dialogue about microaggressions? The trick is to plan a conversation on this topic before microaggressions ignite tensions.Set discussion ground rules, like commit to learning, not debating, and then show examples of microaggressions as a prelude to discussing why theyre hurtful.If these types of conversations feel too challenging to you, contact a nearby universitys office of diversity and inclusion and invite someone with expertise in sensitive topics to address the class. Theyll model how to handle this discussion, so you can take the leadnext time.There are a number of resources that can help K12 faculty and adolescent learners counteract implicit bias and avoid the perpetuation of microaggressions.Activities: Sign up for a seven-day bias cleanse that emails daily tasks to reorient your thoughts on race, gender, and anti-LGBTQIA bias. And try Harvards Implicit Bias Test.Students and teachers are made of powerful feelings, but these feelings are not fixed and set in stone. Emotions can be identified, excavated, understood, and managed. And when we work through that process together, implicit bias can be unlearned.Culturally Responsive Teaching By Diego Santa Maria This question is central to efforts aimed at reducing discrimination in education, workplaces, and other settings. A recent paper entitled Revealing Stereotypes: Evidence from Immigrants in Schools by CID faculty affiliates Michela Carlana and Eliana La Ferrara, along with co-authors Alberto Alesina and Paolo Pinotti, investigates how revealing implicit stereotypes to teachers impacts their grading of immigrant and native students in Italian middle schools.The study combines data from over 1,300 teachers in Northern Italy and two experiments. The first, a field experiment, randomly revealed to teachers their own Implicit Association Test (IAT) scoresmeasuring bias against immigrantseither before or after they graded their students. The second, an online experiment, compared two types of interventions: a generic debiasing message about stereotypes in society and personalized feedback on each teachers own IAT score. Teachers were then asked to grade hypothetical tests with names randomly assigned to sound either native or immigrant.Bias in Grading: Immigrant students receive lower teacher-assigned grades compared to native students with similar standardized test scores. This grading gap is especially pronounced for high-performing immigrant students and is correlated with teachers implicit biases.Impact of IAT Feedback: Providing teachers with personalized IAT feedback before grading reduced the immigrant-native grade gap by 27%, primarily by increasing grades for immigrant students. The effect is particularly strong around the threshold that determines whether a student passes or fails a subject.Mechanisms: On average, providing personalized IAT feedback does not change grading relative to generic debiasing messaging. However, teachers with stronger implicit biases only adjust their behavior when given personalized feedback, particularly if their results are unexpected.This study is motivated by the profound impact that teacher bias can have on immigrant students educational attainment, with implications for their long-term human capital development and economic opportunities. Both generic messaging and personalized feedback on implicit stereotypes are effective in reducing grading disparities on average, but the latter works best among teachers with stronger biases. The most cost-effective alternative depends on the policymakers specific goals and the strength and prevalence of biases among the teacher population.The results show that IATs, which are relatively simple to implement, may be a powerful tool to collect metrics that may be used to counteract negative stereotypes about certain groups. These findings extend beyond education, offering lessons for reducing bias in domains such as hiring, performance evaluations, and law enforcement. Curious to dive deeper into the findings? For a comprehensive analysis and detailed insights, read the full research paper. View All Blog Posts Our biases and assumptions about others can be so automatic that they result in unintended thoughts that contradict our own beliefs. Even given our best intentions, we all hold some form of bias due to socialization and cultural stereotypes. Our implicit biases are essentially bad habits that stem from cultural learningsthey are a byproduct of our socialization and not a moral failing. If we are not aware of our biases, those habits can become activated and applied by default even when they may be undesirable and counteract our intentions. The good news is that, like all bad habits, it is possible to break this bad habit of implicit bias, though it will take time and conscious attention. What differentiates those with lower prejudice is their unwillingness to apply stereotypes to a whole group. During the change process, an individual must not only inhibit automatically activated information but also intentionally replace such activation with nonprejudiced ideas and responses (Devine, 1998). It can be difficult to correct our implicit biases because our assumptions often go unnoticed in everyday life. We dont often receive feedback that confirms or dispels the assumptions we make about others. Our biases continue to live in our minds unless we unearth and intentionally confront them, asking how we know our assumptions are true. Regardless of how well-intentioned we are as instructors, implicit biases result from automatic thoughts. These can end up negatively impacting students and depriving them of opportunities and learning experiences. In a study conducted by Moss-Racusin et al. in 2012, faculty members received the same resume and application materials in consideration for a laboratory manager position, with a random assignment of a male or female student name. The faculty members more frequently judged the female student to be less competent and less hireable and offered her a smaller starting salary and less career mentoring than the male student. This bias was independent of the faculty members gender, scientific discipline, age, and tenure status, which suggested that the implicit bias towards the female student was likely unintentional, generated from widespread cultural stereotypes rather than a conscious intention to harm women. Interestingly, the faculty members actually reported liking the female student more than the male student. However, this did not translate into similarly positive perceptions of her competence. Faculty members of both genders seemed to be affected by cultural stereotypes about womens lack of competence in science, despite not intending to dislike the female candidate. This shows the potential negative impacts of implicit bias. Despite good intentions, the continuation of such biases towards any group can have detrimental effects. In a similar 2019 study by Eaton et al., they experimentally manipulated the gender and racial identities of CVs for postdoctoral researcher applications that STEM professors in biology and physics would then review. In line with the Moss-Racusin 2012 study, they found a gender bias, in which the physics professors favored the male students, and a racial bias, in which the physics professors perceived Asian and White students as more competent than Black and Latinx candidates. The biology faculty did not exhibit a gender bias, which Eaton et al. theorized might be because biology is a more gender-balanced field than physics. Biology faculty exhibited a racial bias of Asian students being seen as more competent than Black students. This study also found compounded racial and gender biases, where Black and Latina female candidates, as well as Latino male candidates, were rated as less hireable than other candidates. Eaton et al. noted less bias in evaluating applicants with exceptionally strong records or clear differences in quality. Implicit bias is more likely to play a role in deciding between moderately and equally qualified candidates. The results of these studies exemplify the impact that implicit biases can have if left unchecked, as the faculty members in both studies did not consciously intend to be biased against these groups. We can hypothesize how issues similar to those above can arise in the classroom when evaluating student performance on more subjective tasks (e.g., awarding points for class discussion, open-ended writing assignments or projects) or when assigning student grades at the end of the term when a student is close to a letter grade threshold (A/B, B/C, etc.). Additional areas where implicit bias can show up in the classroom include group work and resource allocation, such as opportunities (e.g., undergraduate research) and your time. To help mitigate the impact of implicit bias in the classroom: Pay attention to who you mentor and who participates in class. This can show up in class discussions, where our biases can lead us to (unintentionally) respond differently to student comments or call on certain students more than others. Another place our biases can impact the classroom is with participation. Our memory and biases may provide us with false accounts about which students participated the most or least unless there is an objective way to measure who is participating.Set criteria in advance. Create rubrics to help reduce bias during grading and share the