

Implicit Bias

Overview

This guide provides resources for learning about implicit bias - including readings, videos, and activities - and recommendations for incorporating awareness of implicit bias into your teaching strategies.

Implicit bias describes the way that stereotypes and attitudes we are not aware of shape our behavior. According to research, “Most of our actions occur without our conscious thoughts, allowing us to function in our extraordinarily complex world. This means, however, that our implicit biases often predict how we’ll behave more accurately than our conscious values” (Perception Institute).

In the context of white supremacy, implicit bias frames our perspectives and shapes our behavior, subsequently racializing outcomes that privilege white students while disadvantaging students of color. For example, ‘standard’ English is privileged as linguistic capital in academia. This leads to unearned privilege for native English speakers in educational settings while disadvantaging ESL students (Watson, 2018). Additionally, students of color often experience [stereotype threat](#) perpetuated by socially ingrained beliefs of white superiority. Stereotype threat leads to students of color performing worse on standardized testing than their white counterparts. Implicit biases that underpin these situations put students of color at a disadvantage in education that has lifelong consequences.

Research also shows that implicit bias is pervasive in STEM courses, where instructors and students may carry assumptions or hold stereotypes in mind that are not supportive of an inclusive teaching environment. In the STEM field, implicit bias extends beyond the classroom, as it can show up in the hiring process as well. [Many studies](#) have shown the extent and impact of implicit bias in the STEM field.

[Project Implicit](#) uses the Implicit Association Test (IAT), a tool developed by Anthony Greenwald, Professor of Psychology at the University of Washington and Mahzarin Banaji, Professor of Social Ethics at Harvard, to study prejudice in social contexts. The IAT assesses unconscious or implicit bias in the context of social identity. The test was later implemented in a study, Project Implicit, that is ongoing and is currently housed on servers at Harvard. To hear Dr. Greenwald and Dr. Banaji discuss this research, [view this video](#).

Goals

- 1) To explain how implicit bias functions in the context of white supremacy, reproducing outcomes that privilege white students while putting students of color at a disadvantage.
- 2) To explain implicit bias and its relevance to inclusive teaching practices in all courses.

	<p>3) To provide strategies for addressing possible bias in one’s teaching and interactions with students.</p>
<p>Anti-Racist Pedagogy Principles</p>	<p>The following anti-racist pedagogy principles are incorporated into this resource guide. For a review of the principles, visit our Practicing Anti-Racist Pedagogy homepage.</p> <p>Principle 1: Anti-racist pedagogy acknowledges racism in disciplinary, institutional, departmental contexts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implicit bias is informed by our socialization. The messages we receive from friends, colleagues, institutions, media, etc., influence our socialization. To reframe our thinking, we need to acknowledge and explore how racism and implicit bias show up in different contexts. This resource guide includes reflective journal prompts to examine how implicit bias shows up in your classroom, department, discipline, and institution. <p>Principle 3: Anti-racist pedagogy disrupts racism whenever/wherever it occurs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interrogating one’s implicit bias helps to build self-reflexive muscles needed in practicing anti-racism. When one positions themselves to critically examine implicit bias, they are developing a greater capacity to recognize how it connects to the different levels of racism (internal, interpersonal, institutional/structural). <p>Principle 4: Anti-racist pedagogy seeks change within and beyond the classroom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing one’s personal work is critical in practicing anti-racism. Exploring implicit bias on a personal level allows instructors to examine how it shows up in their interactions with students in and outside the classroom and with colleagues on an interpersonal and institutional level. <p>Principle 6: Anti-racist pedagogy focuses on the importance of process over time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-racist practices are ongoing and intentional. This resource guide is intended to be a primer on the topic of implicit bias as well as encourage instructors to start reflecting on how implicit bias shows up in their lives. This resource guide includes readings and videos to explore implicit bias, encouraging further learning, exposure, and reflection on this topic.
<p>Implementation</p>	<p>Before engaging students in dialogue or activities about implicit bias, instructors must begin the work of their critical self-reflection. Exploring implicit bias should not be taken lightly, and we should not be asking students to engage in this topic if we have not already started exploring and reflecting on it ourselves. If you are unfamiliar with implicit bias, this resource guide offers recommended readings and activities as a starting point for your learning.</p> <p>Examining implicit bias and practicing inclusive and/or anti-racist pedagogy requires us to do our personal work related to topics of privilege, oppression, and systemic inequities. Our resource guide “Doing One’s Own Personal Work on Privilege and Oppression” provides additional insight, readings, and strategies for those looking to become more critically self-reflective. Although it may be unintentional, there can be harm caused to students if we do not properly educate ourselves on implicit bias as well as how we can</p>

effectively discuss implicit bias in a classroom setting.

When you do feel confident to introduce this topic and discuss it with students, facilitating group dialogue is a key skill to possess. Our resource guide "[Useful Questions for Dialogue Facilitation](#)" provides different types of questions to prompt deeper engagement with challenging topics.

It is also recommended that instructors review the following guides for additional insight and context:

- [Applying Dialogic Techniques](#) (Resource Guide)
- [Examining Privilege and Oppression](#) (Activity Guide)
- [Identifying and Addressing Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture](#) (Resource Guide)
- [Invisible Knapsacks](#) (Activity Guide)
- [Racial Bias Test](#) (Activity Guide)

It is our goal that our [activity guides](#) and [resource guides](#) are not used in isolation from one another. Engaging in inclusive and/or practicing anti-racist pedagogy is an ongoing process that requires consistent engagement and reflection. Be sure to review the many resources that are provided on the LSA Inclusive Teaching website.

Challenges

Some researchers and media personalities have questioned the validity of implicit bias after one of the originators of the IAT acknowledged problems with the test. Critics claim that because the test is imperfect, implicit bias must not exist. Notably, however, there is a significant body of research on implicit bias that does not use or rely on the IAT. This body of work shows conclusively that implicit bias is a significant problem, particularly in STEM education. See, for example, this review article about women leaving academic research settings because of unconscious bias:

Easterly, D.M., Ricard, C.S. (2011). [Conscious Efforts to End Unconscious Bias: Why Women Leave Academic Research](#). *Journal of Research Administration*. 42, 61-73.

Doing anti-racist work "asks people to consider information and perspectives that challenge their self-concepts and worldviews (Goodman, 2015)." Discussions regarding implicit bias, race, and privilege can become emotional and draw resistance from white students. Resistance "is rooted in fear and anxiety" and white students tend to become defensive when they feel threatened. Facilitators should not prioritize "being nice" or making white students "comfortable"; however, there are strategies that facilitators can use in an anticipatory manner to promote an engaging and productive activity. The following readings offer insight into addressing pushback from students when discussing topics such as implicit bias.

Recommended readings:

Arao, B., & Clemens, K. (2013). From Safe Places to Brave Spaces: A New Way to Frame Dialogue Around Diversity and Social Justice. In *The Art of Effective Facilitation* (1st ed.,

pp. 135–150). Sterling, Virginia: Stylus Publishing. Retrieved from <https://mirlyn.lib.umich.edu/Record/012438120>

Beckwith, B. (2014). In the Face of Resistance – a Lay Facilitator’s Experience. *Understanding and Dismantling Privilege, Special Issue: Resistance to Teaching Antiracism*. Retrieved from <https://www.wpcjournal.com/article/view/12324>

Goodman, D. (2015). Can You Love Them Enough to Help Them Learn?: Reflections of a Social Justice Educator on Addressing Resistance from White Students to Anti-Racism Education. *Understanding and Dismantling Privilege*. Retrieved from <https://www.wpcjournal.com/article/view/12208>

Integration into Instructional Practice and Course Content

Instructor Self-Development:

- 1) Consult the resources below to learn more about implicit bias and how to address your own biases and how they may shape your teaching.
- 2) Consider [taking the IAT](#) and reflecting on your results.
- 3) An [implicit racial bias test](#) can be utilized as a tool to prompt critical reflection around racial bias and white supremacy. See the [Racial Bias Test](#) Activity Guide for more detailed information.
- 4) Self-reflexive journaling is a helpful way to process how implicit bias shows up in your personal life. Consider taking the time to journal on implicit bias using the following prompts:
 - a) Think about a moment where you exhibited implicit bias.
 - i) What do you remember about that moment?
 - ii) What were you feeling at that moment?
 - iii) Were you aware of your implicit bias at that moment?
 - iv) If you were aware, how did you respond in the moment? If you were unaware, how do you feel looking back on that moment?
 - b) How does implicit bias show up in your classroom? In your discipline? In your department? At your institution?
 - c) What additional support do you need in order to acknowledge and address your biases?

Student Self-Development:

- 1) Consider having students read one or more of the “Related Articles” or ask students to view one of the “Related Videos” outside of class and then write a short reflection about how implicit bias may or may not shape their experiences as a student.
- 2) After reviewing one of the videos or articles below in class, ask students to discuss or write about ways that unconscious bias may have influenced projects or research in your field of study.

3) [An Example Activity in EECS](#): This activity developed for use in an EECS 183 demonstrates how ideas in this resource guide can be integrated into course content.

Recommended Articles

Implicit Bias and White Supremacy

Devine, P.G. et al. (2012). [Long-term reduction in implicit race bias: A prejudice habit-breaking intervention](#). *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 48, 1267-1278

Banaji, M.R., Greenwald, G.G. (2013). *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People*. New York: Bantam.

Aronson, J. et al. (2014). [Transforming Perception: Black Men and Boys](#). Perception Institute

Aronson, J. et al. (2013). [Telling Our Own Story: The Role of Narrative in Racial Healing](#). Perception Institute

Maryfield, B. (2018). [Implicit Racial Bias](#). *Justice Research and Statistics Association*.

Implicit Bias and Other Privileges

Watson, M. (2018, May). *Contesting Standardized English – What harms are cause when we insist on a common dialect?* Retrieved from American Association of University Professors: [Contesting Standardized English | AAUP](#)

Coclanis, P. (2018, June 5). *Campus Politics and the English Language*. Retrieved from Inside Higher Ed: [The often unspoken privilege of speaking English in academe \(opinion\) \(insidehighered.com\)](#)

Subtirelu, N. (2016, March 28). *Denying language privilege in academic publishing*. Retrieved from linguistic pulse: [Denying language privilege in academic publishing | linguistic pulse](#)

Dee, T., Gershenson, S. (2017). [Unconscious Bias in the Classroom: evidence and opportunities](#). *Stanford Center for Education Policy Analysis*.

Jackson, S., Hillard, A., Schneider, T. (2014). [Using Implicit Bias Training to Improve Attitudes about Women in STEM](#). *Social Psychology of Education*. 17.3

LaCrosse, J., Sekaquaptewa, D., Bennett, J. (2016). [STEM Stereotypic Attribution Bias Among Women in an Unwelcoming Science Setting](#). *Psychology of Women Quarterly*.

Nordell, J. (2017, May 7). *Is this how discrimination ends?* Retrieved from The Atlantic: [Is This How Discrimination Ends? A New Approach to Implicit Bias - The Atlantic](#)

**Recommended
Videos**

[“Understanding unconscious bias”](#) A 3-minute explanation of how implicit/unconscious bias works. Created by The Royal Society.

[Implicit Bias Video Series](#) from UC Berkeley.

[“How to overcome our biases? Walk boldly toward them”](#) An 18-minute TED Talk by diversity advocate Verna Myers.