

Implicit Bias Definitions

Implicit bias refers to the unconscious attitudes and stereotypes that shape our responses to certain groups especially around race, class, and language.

Implicit bias operates involuntarily, often without one's awareness or intentional control, which is different from explicit racism. It is important to understand that implicit bias is not just overt racism that's hidden on purpose. Implicit bias is not implicit racism. Why we engage in implicit bias is rooted in neuroscience and related to our brain's efforts to process large amounts of incoming data by using its shortcut we know as stereotyping. Even educators who have taken an explicit social justice or progressive stance have implicit bias based on their exposure to the dominant culture's messages and memes over a lifetime. -Zaretta Hammond (2015)

Implicit bias, also known as implicit prejudice or implicit attitude, is a negative attitude, of which one is not consciously aware, against a specific social group. Implicit bias is thought to be shaped by experience and based on learned associations between particular qualities and social categories, including race and/or gender. Individuals' perceptions and behaviors can be influenced by the implicit biases they hold, even if they are unaware they hold such biases. Implicit bias is an aspect of implicit social cognition: the phenomenon that perceptions, attitudes, and stereotypes can operate prior to conscious intention or endorsement.

-American Psychological Association

Implicit Bias refers to the attitudes, beliefs, or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases often manifest themselves in the forms of microaggressions and stereotypes. Everyone has Implicit Bias, but few of us are aware of it and how it impacts our daily experiences. For educators, Implicit Bias may have a negative effect on our students' behavior and academic outcomes. -National Education Association

Microaggressions Definitions

Microaggressions are the subtle, everyday verbal and nonverbal slights, snubs, or insults which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to people of color based solely on their marginalized group membership. In many cases, these covert messages serve to invalidate positive group identity or trivialize their experiences. They are designed to demean them on a personal or group level, communicate they are lesser human beings, suggest they do not belong with the majority group, threaten and intimidate, or relegate them to inferior status and treatment (Sue et al., 2007 as reported in Hammond 2015)

Microaggressions are defined as the everyday, subtle, intentional — and oftentimes unintentional — interactions or behaviors that communicate some sort of bias toward historically marginalized groups. The difference between microaggressions and overt discrimination or macroaggressions, is that people who commit microaggressions might not even be aware of them. Someone commenting on how well an Asian American speaks English, which presumes the Asian American was not born here, is one example of a microaggression. Presuming that a black person is dangerous or violent is another example. A common experience that black men talk about is being followed around in stores or getting on an elevator and having people move away and grab their purses or their wallets.

Oftentimes, people don't even realize that they're doing those sorts of things. And in fact, if you were to stop them and say, 'Why did you just move?' They would deny it because they don't recognize that their behaviors communicate their racial biases. But it is important to understand that a lot of times people who engage in microaggressions will not believe that what they said was racist or sexist or homophobic. We're all human beings who are prone to mistakes, and we're all human beings who might commit microaggressions. And it's not necessarily that you're a bad person if you commit a microaggression, but rather that you need to be more aware of your biases and impact on people. We all need to commit to working on these things in order to create a more harmonious society (adapted from Limbaugh's interview with Kevin Nadal, 2020).