Unpacking, Understanding, and Countering Implicit Bias in the Classroom

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#WesInclusion

Explicit vs. Implicit

Explicit bias are attitudes that are at the conscious level, are deliberately formed and are easy to self-report.

**Implicit** bias are attitudes that are at the unconscious level, are involuntarily formed and are typically unknown to us.

So…why care?

Because implicit bias impacts student performance, which puts the mission in jeopardy.

Wesleyan Mission

Wesleyan University is dedicated to providing an education in the liberal arts that is characterized by boldness, rigor, and practical idealism. At Wesleyan, distinguished scholar-teachers work closely with students, taking advantage of fluidity among disciplines to explore the world with a variety of tools. The university seeks to build a diverse, energetic community of students, faculty, and staff who think critically and creatively and who value independence of mind and generosity of spirit.

Implicit Bias = Blindspots

BLIND SPOT

Forward Vision

Rearview Mirror Vision

Side Mirror Vision

BLIND SPOT
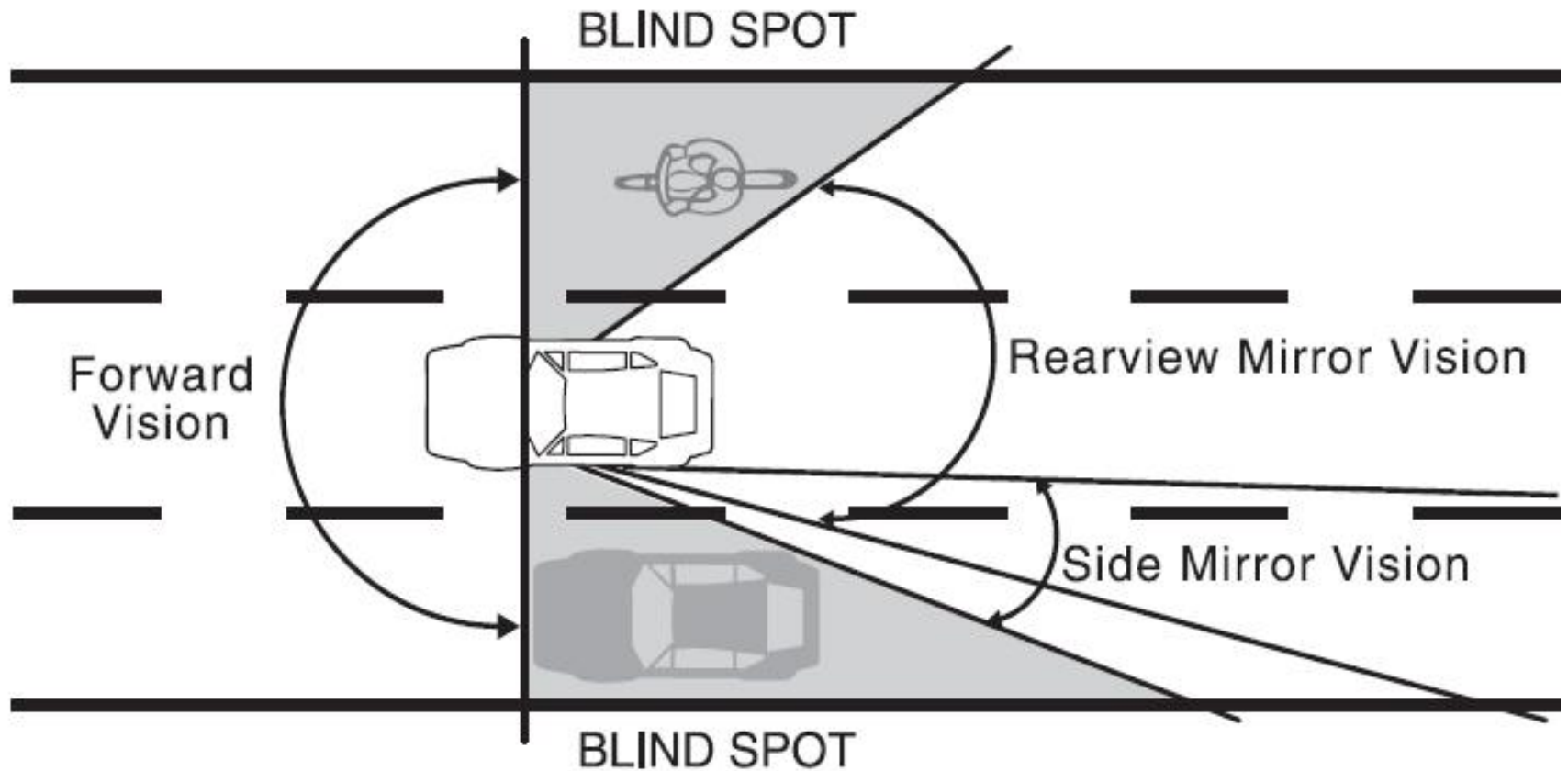
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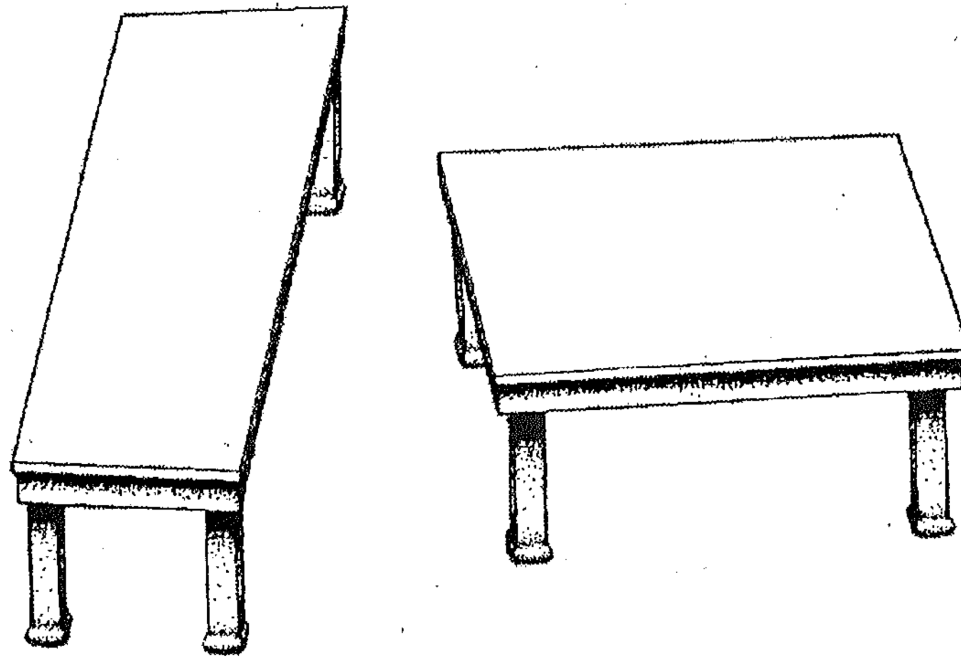
Origins

- Human survival is predicated on quickly categorizing. eg: Is there a saber tooth tiger around the next bend?

- We are constantly being exposed to cultural norms based on identity.

- Stereotypes are constantly being activated, which leads to stereotype threat.

- Norms turn into stereotypes, stereotypes turn into implicit and explicit bias.

Where to begin?

Conversations around the topic of inclusion and equity are *often emotionally charged*; therefore, it is recommended that a common baseline understanding from which to further customize definitions and perceptions be utilized.

Before We Begin: Initiating Conversations Around Equity & Inclusion

- **Diversity**: Individual differences (e.g., personality, learning styles, and life experiences) and group/social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, and ability as well as cultural, political, religious, or other affiliations) that can be engaged in the service of the mission.
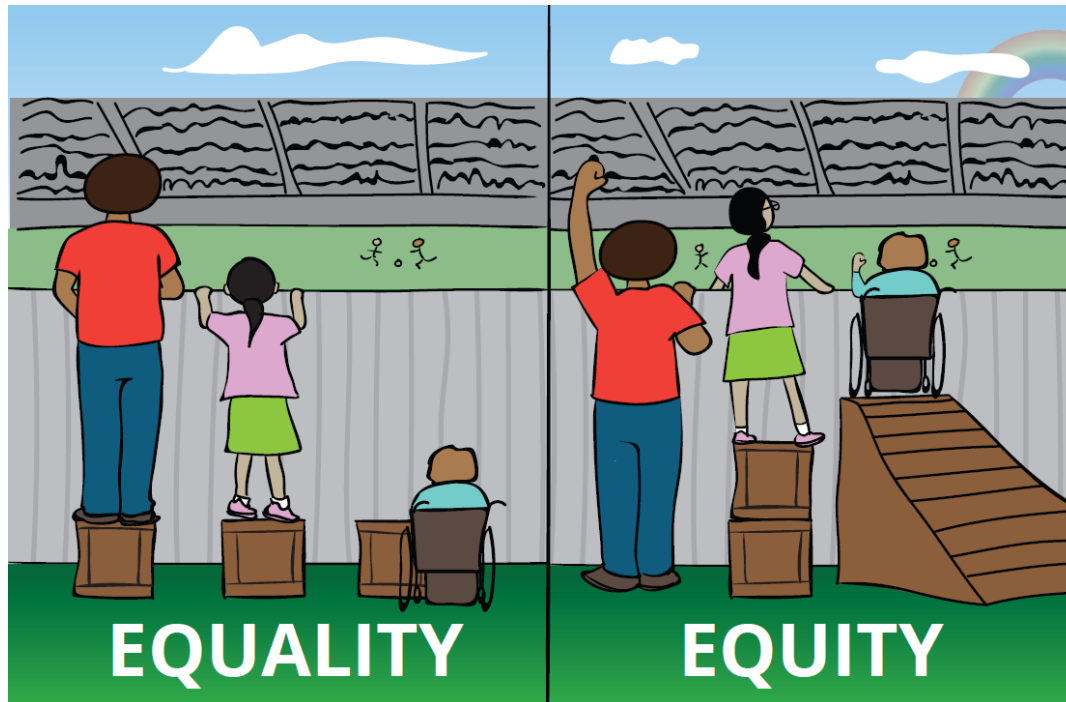
Baseline Definitions: adapted from Association of American Colleges & Universities (aacu.org)

Before We Begin: Initiating Conversations Around Equity & Inclusion

Equity: The creation of opportunities for historically underrepresented populations to have equal access to and participate in programs that are capable of closing the achievement gaps in employee recruitment, retention, and promotion.

Baseline Definitions: adapted from Association of American Colleges & Universities (aacu.org)

Before We Begin: Initiating Conversations Around Equity & Inclusion

Inclusion: The active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diverse people and with communities (intellectual, social, cultural, geographical) with which individuals might connect - in ways that increase one's awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within [and change] systems and institutions.

Baseline Definitions: adapted from Association of American Colleges & Universities (aacu.org)

Before We Begin: Initiating Conversations Around Equity & Inclusion

Privilege: Describes the advantages people benefit from based solely on their social status. Privilege, like disadvantage, exists through systems that individuals are born into and is not something that they request. Because social status is conferred by society on certain groups, members of "privileged" groups can see those advantages as normal. Since social status is conferred in many different ways, all people are both privileged and non-privileged in certain aspects of their lives. Furthermore, since dynamics of social status are highly dependent on situation, a person can benefit from privilege in one situation while not benefiting from it in another. It is also possible to have a situation in which a person simultaneously is the beneficiary of privilege and the recipient of discrimination. Access to privilege does not determine life outcomes, but it is an asset that makes it more likely that talent, ability, and aspirations will have positive results.

Harvard Implicit Association Test

Background on IAT:

Mahzarin Banaji, Harvard University

Brian Nosek, University of Virginia

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2RSVz6VEybk

Take the test:

https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/

Recommended Reading:

Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do, by Claude Steele

Does having implicit bias make me a _____?

Challenges & Opportunities With Constructing an Inclusive Classroom

You

Gender Dynamics

First Generation

Race & Ethnicity

Religion

Socioeconomic Background

Worldview

Learning Styles

Home Drama

Physical Ability

Cultural Norms

Learning Disabilities

Language Skills

Motivation

K-16 Preparation

Sexual Identity

Through Meaningful Interactions

Micromessaging

Micromessages are those subtle – and sometimes not-so-subtle – nonverbal messages that people send through body language, tone of voice and the way they inflect words.

Micromessages signal at an immediate gut level how people feel about each other. You can use nice words when speaking to other people, but if at the same time you inadvertently send out negative micromessages, those nonverbal signals will have a more enduring impact than anything you say.

Managers, supervisors and other leaders should become avid students of their own facial expressions, styles of personal engagement, body language and other nonverbal communicative attributes. Then they should try to send positive micromessages, not harmful ones that breed resentment and undermine performance.

Micromessaging

- Micromessages can be positive or negative

- Our background informs how we send & interpret micromessages

- Self-monitoring is an everyday thing

- Difference triggers microinequities

- Similarity triggers microaffirmations

- You have choice in sending microaffirmations or microinequities
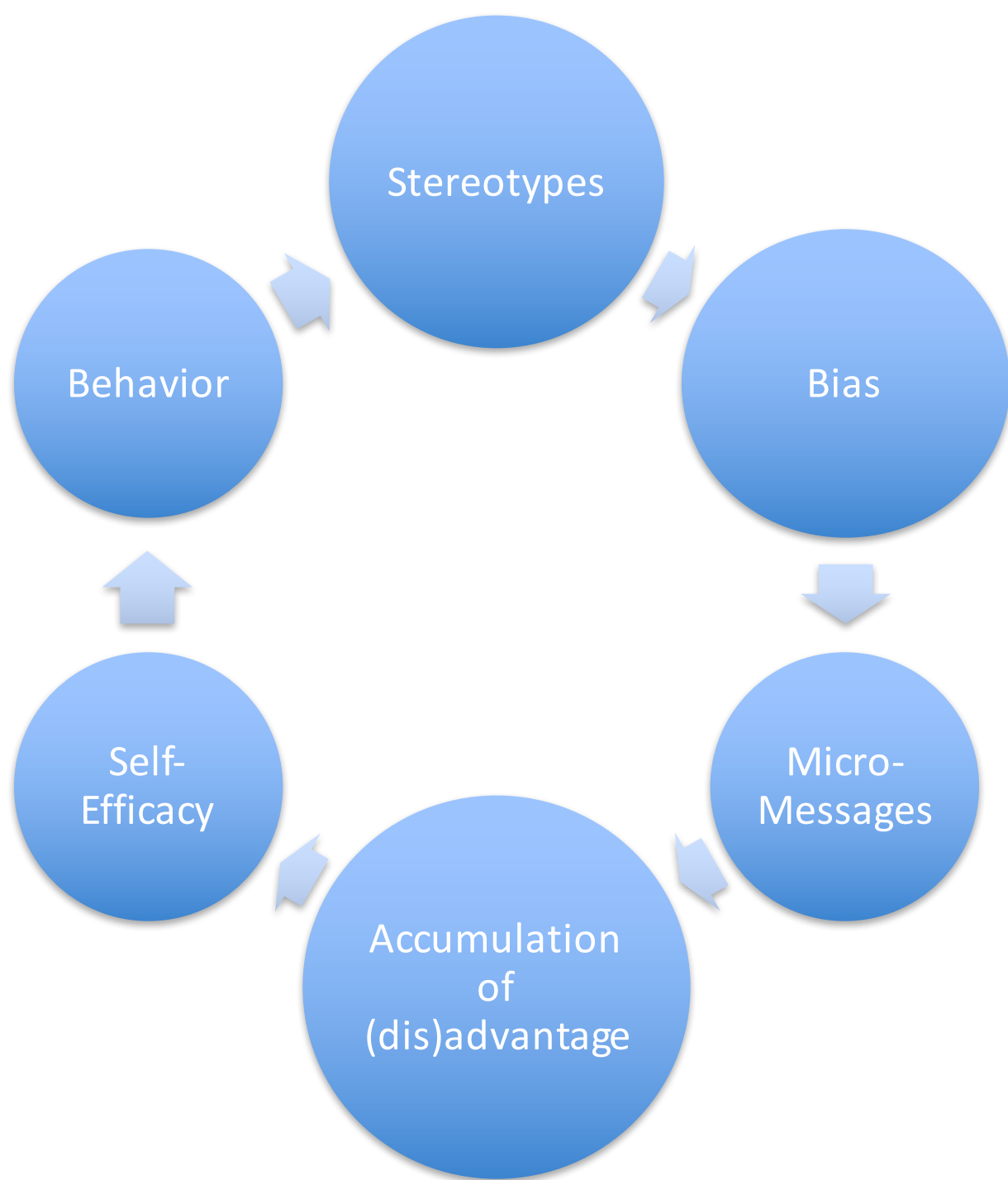
Build Concrete Steps To An Inclusive Work Environment In Time & Space

- Develop long range dept planning with aspirational goals in recruitment, retention, promotion.

- Develop a suite of professional development tools designed to keep the conversation fresh and ongoing. One & Done is a recipe for failure.

- Crucial Conversation models work – sign up!

- Assess Climate and Culture:

    – Are you fully listening to your students?

    – Where are there opportunities for meaningful engagement?

    – Are you accounting for multi-generational workforce needs and expectations?

- Join affinity groups based on experience as well as personhood.

- Be intentional – disrupt your norms – what you read & watch, how you socialize.

- You are your best Case Study!