"The greatest barrier to dismantling systems of injustice, as we and many of our

contributors see it, is our rhetoric; and the silencing/blinding rhetoric of our discourses *is* the new

racism" (Greenfield, Rowan, 13).

An Overview of Implicit Bias

Abstract - Implicit biases are attributes we assign to individuals based on stereotypes. Everyone

has implicit biases; it's determining what they are that's the complicated part. In any setting

where interaction with the public is expected, it's important to understand what our biases are

and how they may affect our interactions. This is particularly the case with a position like

teaching or tutoring, as there's a power dynamic already present. Little research has been done

on stereotypes and tutoring, which is why it's imperative to assess what information does exist

on the topic. Implicit bias can be overcome through understanding the root of these conclusions,

identifying personal ideologies, and further educating ourselves and others.

What is an implicit bias?

Implicit biases are internalized preconceptions based on stereotypes. Using Villanueva's (16)

writings on bias as a focal point, examples may include:

- **abstract liberalism** - every man for himself, claiming to be 'color-blind'

- **naturalization** - it's just the way things are, of course *they* would hang out with *their*

  own kind

- **biolization of racism** - Asians are just smarter, black people are just more athletic

- **minimization** - there's still racism, but it used to be much worse

Where does implicit bias come from?

Implicit bias is a perpetuating cycle of ideologies and media. Stereotypes are established in society and then reinforced by the media. Oftentimes these stereotypes are so ingrained they seem more like a universal truth rather than what they are--harmful misconceptions. In *The Whites of Their Eyes,* Stuart Hall describes this internalization, saying "Ideologies tend to disappear from view into the taken-for-granted 'naturalized' world of common sense. Since (like gender) race appears to be 'given' by Nature, racism is one of the most profoundly 'naturalized' of existing ideologies." (19). These cliches have become so popular because they "offer a blunt, effective tool for communicating--and, as with most blunt tools, their impact is most often overbroad and harmful" (Ross, 2). The more stereotypes are depicted, the more ingrained they become.

Are all stereotypes harmful?

The exact nature of a stereotype is irrelevant, as all cause damage even if they seem like positive attributes. Research published in *The Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* conducted four studies that all concluded positive prejudices were just as harmful as negative ones. The study found that positive stereotypes continued to reinforce the idea there were biological differences between people of color and their Caucasian peers, and increased the likelihood that negative stereotypes would subsequently be applied. "Previous research has noted the prevalence and antecedents of positive stereotypes and their potential to negatively impact members of the positively stereotyped group and to justify inequality. The present research adds to this by demonstrating the extent to which these types of stereotypes may be uniquely capable at

reinforcing cultural stereotypes and beliefs that people explicitly eschew as as racist and harmful--even more so than exposure to explicitly negative stereotypes" (Kay, et. al., 291). Positive stereotypes still play into the idea of a biological hierarchy, and if some stereotypes are accepted then why aren't others? Who's to say what's positive and which isn't?

Why is this relevant to peer tutoring?

Implicit bias damages the client/consultant dynamic. Acknowledging the history of the writing center, and the university in general, is imperative. Segregation was only outlawed in 1964, and institutions were built with exclusionary practices in mind. It's naive to believe these issues have all been resolved, and that they wouldn't have bled into the writing center. "Writing centers, like the institution in which they are situated, are not racially neutral sites of discourse and practice" (Greenfield, Rowan, 1). Simply because prejudice isn't discussed doesn't mean it ceases existing. Even within an academic circle dedicated to writing centers, participants were reluctant to address the inherent power imbalance. Villanueva gave a speech at a writing center conference about racism within the Writing Center. When asked to discuss after, participants were resistant. Their reluctance to engage in the discourse was "because the term *racism* was problematic, that it evoked a negative connotation (as if there were a positive kind of racism available for discussion) and that different terminology might have been more appropriate so as to alleviate discomfort" (Greenfield, Rowan, 2). The conference participants failed to comprehend it wasn't a statement about their individual character, but rather a pervasive systemic issue that requires all of us to dismantle. However, the subsequent speeches were met with an enthusiastic discussion. It was only Villanueva's topic that was avoided. Beginning an open discourse about racism, then, is important to ending it.

What can be done to minimize implicit bias?

Research - Establishing what implicit biases are is the first step toward eliminating them. Understanding the types of implicit biases like the examples mentioned earlier through studies like IATs are arguably the most popular method to assess implicit bias.

Identification - Identifying personal biases is imperative to opposing them. The issue is that implicit bias is just that--implicit. For example a bias I have is towards students involved in fraternities. My first assumption is that their focus is on partying over studying, and they're unlikely to be academically driven. This is of course completely false, as being a good student and a fraternity member aren't mutually exclusive, but it's a stereotype perpetuated by the media. Some researchers argue "if our awareness of the content of our implicit biases derives from inferences we make based on (for example) our behavior, then the question is whether these inferences are justified, assuming knowledge entails justified true belief." In other words, it's impossible to identify our own implicit biases because they're so deeply rooted. However, other research "argued that people are typically very good interpreters of their own minds (e.g., Carruthers 2009; Levy 2012), in which case it may be more likely that our inferences about the content of our implicit biases are well-justified" (Brownstein). Most researchers tend to lean towards this second conclusion, that we are able to discern our own biases.

Education - Conducting further research into implicit biases and educating those around us is the biggest step towards eliminating bias. It's important to be mindful of these biases and how they might influence different interactions. Sharing this awareness broadens the discourse to include even more people and communities. The majority of people get their news from social

media, particularly Facebook, which has in turn been filtered through the poster's own interpretation.

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