

Session 32 – Implicit Bias & the Power of Expectations

Materials

- Agenda charted on the board or chart paper, or provided as a handout
- Chart paper containing Community Agreements from Session 7
- Multi-colored index cards
- AV equipment to play video: [Peanut butter, Jelly and Racism](#)
- AV equipment to play video: [The Power of Expectations](#)
- Handout: Excerpt from “Teachers’ Expectations Can Influence How Students Perform”
- Handout: Excerpt from “Harnessing the Power of Expectations”

Opening Ceremony

Invite participants to think about food groups that go together for them. For example, many in American culture associate bacon with eggs or biscuits with gravy. What are food items that are paired in their minds or that they associate together? Invite them to think about foods specific to their cultural backgrounds. Allow participants some think time and then invite them to write down their food pairing on an index card.

Have participants share out their food pairings in small groups or in a pair share. Then have groups/pairs share out their thoughts and observations with the whole group.



Talk Participants Through Today's Agenda

- Opening Ceremony: Food Pairing Activity
- Check Agenda
- What Is Implicit Bias?
- Peanut Butter, Jelly and Racism
- The Power of Expectations
- Closing Ceremony: Jennifer Eberhardt on Implicit Bias

What Is Implicit Bias?

Ask participants if they're familiar with the concept of implicit bias. Elicit and explain that according to the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at Ohio State University:

["Implicit bias"](#) refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control. Residing deep in the subconscious, these biases are different from known biases that individuals may choose to conceal for the purposes of social and/or political correctness. Rather, implicit biases are not accessible through introspection."

Consider sharing this definition with participants via chart paper or whiteboard as a visual reference.

Peanut Butter, Jelly and Racism

Introduce the NY Times Video "Peanut Butter, Jelly and Racism" on the topic of implicit bias.

Before playing the video, explain that the researchers in the video talk about "peanut butter and jelly" as foods that go together. The idea that when (some) people in the U.S. think of peanut butter, they automatically think of jelly. Of course, depending on the country and culture people grew up in, this may or may not be true for them. Think back to the Lee Mun Wah video and the foods he grew up with. Have participants think of the foods they grew up with and the associations connected to them.

Now play the video: [Peanut butter, Jelly and Racism](#) (2.27 min) for people to watch.



Journaling

Invite participants to spend some time journaling, as they consider their IFETs (Impressions, Feelings, Experiences and/or Thoughts) about this video.

As circle keeper, be sure to journal as well for your own personal reflection and healing.

Pair Share

In pairs, invite participants to share their Impressions, Feelings, Experiences and/or Thoughts, taking turns. Each partner will have two minutes to share while the other practices mindful listening (think of the Chinese character, “TING” from earlier sessions). After two minutes, ask partners to switch roles. Speakers become listeners and listeners become speakers.

Large Group Share

Back in the large group, invite a few volunteers to share an Impression, Feeling, Experience or Thought, reminding participants to maintain confidentiality.

Invite participants to go further by making additional connections to people's professional life, using the following questions:

- How does what you watched in the video connect to you as an educator?
- How does what you watched connect to how you see and treat your students?
- How does it connect to the moment we find ourselves in today in this country, in this state, at school?

Summarize what people share and add, as needed, from the Kirwan Institute once more:

[“The implicit associations](#) we harbor in our subconscious cause us to have feelings and attitudes about other people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age, and appearance. These associations develop over the course of a lifetime beginning at a very early age through exposure to direct and indirect messages. In addition to early life experiences, the media and news programming are often-cited origins of implicit associations.”

Think back to Session 20 and the Cycle of Socialization. We all have implicit biases; no one is immune. It is not something we have a say in; it is not something we choose. We absorb these biases from the moment we are born, through osmosis. From the “Peanut Butter, Jelly and Racism” video: “it’s like the air we breathe.”

Video: The Power of Expectations

Explain and/or reinforce that our implicit biased beliefs impact our expectations, which in turn impact our behaviors as Robert Rosenthal’s research proved in the 1960s. Play [The Power of Expectations](#) (3:12 min) video about Rosenthal’s research.

Pair Share

In the same pairs as before, invite participants to take turns sharing their IFETs (Impressions, Feelings, Experiences and Thoughts). Each partner will have two minutes to share, while the other listens. After two minutes, ask partners to switch roles, so speakers become listeners and listeners become speakers.

Rosenthal’s Research Study in the Classroom

Share the NPR transcript about [Rosenthal’s research study](#) in the classroom or the slightly shorter excerpt from *Harnessing the Power of High Expectations: Using Brain Science to Coach for Breakthrough Outcomes*, by Elizabeth D. Babcock. Both can be found at the end of this session. Allow participants 5-10 minutes to read one or the other.

Pair Share

Back in the same pairs, invite participants to take turns sharing their IFETs (Impressions, Feelings, Experiences and Thoughts). Each partner will have two minutes to share while the other listens. After two minutes, ask partners to switch roles, so speakers become listeners and listeners become speakers.

Large Group Share

Reconvene the group and invite a few volunteers to share an impression, feeling, experience or thought, reminding participants to maintain confidentiality.

Facilitator Note: If time is tight, consider playing “The Power of Expectations” video and having participants read the handout before having them reflect in pairs and sharing out in the large group. Alternatively, consider skipping reading about the research of expectations in the classroom altogether.

Closing Ceremony:

As you close the session, have participants consider what Jennifer Eberhardt, author of *Bias: Uncovering the Hidden Prejudice That Shapes What We See, Think and Do*, says about implicit bias and read the following quote aloud:

“Without our permission or even awareness, stereotypes come to guide what we see, and in so doing seem to validate themselves. That makes them stronger, more pervasive, and resistant to change.” So “moving forward requires continued vigilance. It requires us to constantly attend to who we are, how we got that way, and all the selves we have the capacity to be.”

Invite a few volunteers to share out their closing thoughts.

New York Times Video Series on Implicit Bias:

- Video 1: [Peanut Butter, Jelly and Racism](#) (2:27 min)
- Video 2: [Check Our Bias to Wreck Our Bias](#) (3:00 min)
- Video 3: [The Life-Changing Magic of Hanging Out](#) (2:09 min)
- Video 4: [Why We're Awkward](#) (2:41 min)
- Video 5: [Snacks and Punishment](#) (2:05 min)
- Video 6: [High Heels, Violins and a Warning](#) (1:22 min)

Additional Resources: Session 32

Written Resources:

Bias" by the Kirwan Institute

["MYTHBUSTERS: Implicit Bias Edition; Clearing Up the Confusion Surrounding Implicit Bias"](#) by the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity

["Implicit Bias in Education"](#) by the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity

Book Suggestion:

Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents by Isabel Wilkerson

Handout: Teachers' Expectations Can Influence How Students Perform

Alix Spiegel

[In my Morning Edition story today](#), I look at expectations — specifically, how teacher expectations can affect the performance of the children they teach. The first psychologist to systematically study this was a Harvard professor named Robert Rosenthal, who in 1964 did a wonderful experiment at an elementary school south of San Francisco.

The idea was to figure out what would happen if teachers were told that certain kids in their class were destined to succeed, so Rosenthal took a normal IQ test and dressed it up as a different test. "It was a standardized IQ test, Flanagan's Test of General Ability," he says. "But the cover we put on it, we had printed on every test booklet, said 'Harvard Test of Inflected Acquisition.' "

Rosenthal told the teachers that this very special test from Harvard had the very special ability to predict which kids were about to be very special — that is, which kids were about to experience a dramatic growth in their IQ.

After the kids took the test, he then chose from every class several children totally at random. There was nothing at all to distinguish these kids from the other kids, but he told their teachers that the test predicted the kids were on the verge of an intense intellectual bloom. As he followed the children over the next two years, Rosenthal discovered that the teachers' expectations of these kids really did affect the students. "If teachers had been led to expect greater gains in IQ, then increasingly, those kids gained more IQ," he says.

But just how do expectations influence IQ? As Rosenthal did more research, he found that expectations affect teachers' moment-to-moment interactions with the children they teach in a thousand almost invisible ways. Teachers give the students that they expect to succeed more time to answer questions, more specific feedback, and more approval: They consistently touch, nod and smile at those kids more. "It's not magic, it's not mental telepathy," Rosenthal says. "It's very likely these thousands of different ways of treating people in small ways every day." Instead, it's: "'Johnny, tell me more about what you think is going on ... But also, I want you to sit down quietly now as you tell that to me,'" Pianta says. "Those two responses," he says, "are dictated almost entirely by two different interpretations of the same behavior that are driven by two different sets of beliefs." To see if teachers' beliefs would be changed by giving them a new set of teaching behaviors, Pianta and his colleagues recently did a study.

They took a group of teachers, assessed their beliefs about children, then gave a portion of them a standard pedagogy course, which included information about appropriate beliefs and expectations. Another portion got intense behavioral training, which taught them a whole new set of skills based on those appropriate beliefs and expectations. For this training, the teachers videotaped their classes over a period of months and worked with personal coaches who watched those videos, then gave them recommendations about different behaviors to try. After that intensive training, Pianta and his colleagues analyzed the beliefs of the teachers again. What he found was that the beliefs of the trained teachers had shifted way more than the beliefs of teachers given a standard informational course. This is why Pianta thinks that to change beliefs, the best thing to do is change behaviors. "It's far more powerful to work from the outside in than the inside out if you want to change expectations," he says. In other words, if you want to change a mind, simply talking to it might not be enough.

So, since expectations can change the performance of kids, how do we get teachers to have the right expectations? Is it possible to change bad expectations? That was the question that brought me to the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia, where I met Robert Pianta. Pianta, dean of the Curry School, has studied teachers for years, and one of the first things he told me when we sat down together was that it is truly hard for teachers to control their expectations. "It's really tough for anybody to police their own beliefs," he said. "But think about being in a classroom with 25 kids. The demands on their thinking are so great."

Still, people have tried. The traditional way, Pianta says, has been to sit teachers down and try to change their expectations through talking to them. "For the most part, we've tried to convince them that the beliefs they have are wrong," he says. "And we've done most of that convincing using information." But Pianta has a different idea of how to go about changing teachers' expectations. He says it's not effective to try to change their thoughts; the key is to train teachers in an entirely new set of behaviors.

For years, Pianta and his colleagues at the Curry School have been collecting videotapes of teachers teaching. By analyzing these videos in minute ways, they've developed a good idea of which teaching behaviors are most effective. They can also see, Pianta tells me, how teacher expectations affect both their behaviors and classroom dynamics.

Pianta gives one very specific example: the belief that boys are disruptive and need to be managed. "Say I'm a teacher and I ask a question in class, and a boy jumps up, sort of vociferously ... 'I know the answer! I know the answer! I know the answer!' " Pianta says. "If I believe boys are disruptive and my job is control the classroom, then I'm going to

respond with, 'Johnny! You're out of line here! We need you to sit down right now.' "This, Pianta says, will likely make the boy frustrated and emotionally disengaged. He will then be likely to escalate his behavior, which will simply confirm the teacher's beliefs about him, and the teacher and kid are stuck in an unproductive loop. But if the teacher doesn't carry those beliefs into the classroom, then the teacher is unlikely to see that behavior as threatening. Instead it's: " 'Johnny, tell me more about what you think is going on ... But also, I want you to sit down quietly now as you tell that to me,' " Pianta says.

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For this training, the teachers videotaped their classes over a period of months and worked with personal coaches who watched those videos, then gave them recommendations about different behaviors to try. After that intensive training, Pianta and his colleagues analyzed the beliefs of the teachers again. What he found was that the beliefs of the trained teachers had shifted way more than the beliefs of teachers given a standard informational course.

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Handout: Excerpt from *Harnessing the Power of High Expectations: Using Brain Science to Coach for Breakthrough Outcomes*, by Elizabeth D. Babcock, MCRP, PhD

In the mid-1960s, Professor Robert Rosenthal of Harvard University conducted an experiment that laid the foundation for all subsequent research on the power of mentor expectations—a phenomenon now referred to as “**The Rosenthal Effect**” or “The Pygmalion Effect.” In the study, Rosenthal partnered with the South San Francisco School District to look at the impact of teacher expectations on student performance. He told teachers that children sometimes experience a process of “bloom,” in which they undergo a leap of intellectual growth within a short period of time. He told the teachers he planned to study blooming by administering intelligence tests to their students at the beginning and end of the school year. The test at the beginning of the year would predict which students were most likely to “bloom” and at the end of the year, the tests would measure the intellectual growth of all their students and validate the degree to which the “bloomers” had shown stronger than average gains.

In the fall, all students took the TOGA (Test of General Ability) standardized intelligence test and afterwards the teachers were given the names of their students who were likely to bloom during the year. At the end of the school year, the TOGA was again administered and the students who were predicted to bloom showed significantly higher gains on the TOGA than the other students.

But there was a catch: Rosenthal had rigged the study. The TOGA could not predict blooming, and the 20 percent of students labeled as bloomers at the beginning of the year had been selected entirely at random. By telling the teachers the names of the students, researchers had raised teachers’ expectations about the randomly selected students’ performance, and because the teachers expected the bloomers to be particularly successful, they were.

This study spurred widespread investigation into the impact of teacher expectations on student outcomes, which Rosenthal later synthesized in a meta-analysis of 464 of the most rigorous studies. What he found was that on average across all the studies, when all other factors were controlled for, **teacher expectations accounted for 30 percent of the changes (positive or negative) in student performance.** In other words, teachers held

personal beliefs about the ability of their students, and these beliefs helped or hindered student performance by an average of 30 percent.

The meta-analysis also showed that teachers' expectations influenced their own behavior in four key ways (ranked by order of impact on student performance):

1. Climate: Teachers created warmer socio-emotional climate for their "special" students (students for whom they had high expectations), through both verbal and non-verbal cues.
2. Input: Teachers taught more material and more difficult material to their "special" students.
3. Output: Teachers encouraged "special" students to respond more and gave more time for responses.
4. Feedback: Teachers gave "special" students more feedback, both verbally and non-verbally, on their performance.