

**Using Implicit Bias Education in an Undergraduate Course to Enhance Student
Development and Achieve Course Objectives**

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Introduction

While explicit biases or overt prejudices toward others lead to negative behaviors and discrimination, implicit biases can lead to equally negative discriminatory practices such as inequitable teaching behaviors, biased job hires, racial differences in school discipline, and stereotyping (Banaji & Greenwald, 2013; Devine, et al., 2014). Implicit bias occurs based on preferences about race, gender, sexuality, age, and many other human characteristics. Implicit biases are cognitive processes that affect our attitudes toward others resulting in positive or negative viewpoints impacting our decisions, perceptions, and behaviors (Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, 2018; Project Implicit, n.d.).

Internalized associations often start at a young age that may foster biases toward groups of people based on what we see in the media, our background, and experiences (Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, 2018). Unfortunately, implicit bias can turn even our best intentions into unwanted outcomes. Therefore, is it important for educators, communicators, and leaders to be aware of our own biases (hidden and obvious). The good news is that this awareness can help prevent inequitable interactions and practices (Banaji & Greenwald, 2013; Devine, et al., 2012).

The purpose of this innovative poster is to share how implicit bias education, as part of an undergraduate course (i.e., program development and evaluation), promotes student development and achieving course outcomes. Similar strategies can be used in other agricultural education, extension, communication, and leadership courses.

How It Works

Students in the course complete a graded assignment, Implicit Bias Module Series, through the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity (2018). The assignment consists of four online learning modules, 1) Understanding Implicit Bias, 2) Real-World Implications, 3) Understanding Your Own Biases, and 4) Mitigating Unwanted Biases. The third module directs students to take the Implicit Association Test (IAT) through Project Implicit (n.d.). There are 14 IATs offered through Project Implicit, in areas such as race (Black – White IAT), sexuality (gay – straight IAT), and age (young – old IAT). Students are required to take the race IAT and select another one of their choice. The IAT has been studied extensively to establish instrument reliability and validity with over 150 peer-reviewed publications utilizing the IAT (Project Implicit, n.d.).

For the course assignment, students complete four online quizzes (multiple choice) with each of the learning modules and save their results in a PDF file to then submit into Canvas (i.e., web-based learning management system). Full credit is given for quiz completion (i.e., not percent correct) to enhance the learning experience rather than earning a score or grade. Explanations are provided for incorrect answers to help student growth and learning. Students must also submit to Canvas their responses to three self-reflection questions. The self-reflection questions are related to taking the race IAT and the other IAT selected. Students do not submit their IAT results since

it is for their own reflection and not for me (instructor) to point out or cast judgement about their biases.

Self-reflection questions support both student professional development and course objectives:

1. Which two implicit association tests did you complete and what were your feelings or reactions? [professional development]
2. Reflect on your life experiences that may influence your implicit biases; family, growing up, neighborhood, media, etc. How might these experiences shape your thoughts and biases, with or without conscious awareness? [professional development]
3. How might knowing your implicit biases help outreach educators (professionals, volunteers, etc.) deliver effective programs. [course objectives].

Results to Date - Implications

The results from student input and completion of course assignments indicate student professional growth and achieving course objectives to develop and implement effective outreach education programs. While these results were positive, it is important to note that several students were surprised about their IAT results. To help students process, data was shared about the race IAT in which over 70% of respondents (based on millions of people who have completed the race IAT) prefer White (European people) as compared to Black (African American people). Students also process common reactions of disbelief, disregard, acceptance, discomfort, and distress (Clark & Zygmont, 2014) to help them make sense of their IAT results along with strategies for moving forward (Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, n.d.).

For my course on program development and evaluation, a key objective is to develop effective outreach education programs. A common error for students and outreach educators is to view characteristics of program participants as all the same, while also assuming program participant characteristics and learning function like them or those who implement programs. Implicit bias education (IBE) can address these misperceptions and create awareness for strategies to reduce bias. Unwanted biases can change through education and training, interaction-work with others who are different than ourselves, and self-reflection (Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, 2018).

Future Plans

I will use IBE again in this undergraduate course and consider how to incorporate into my other courses. Changes for using IBE include targeted feedback from students about completing IATs and the Implicit Bias Module Series. In addition, I plan to incorporate more IBE content into course exams and their final written assignment to develop an outreach education program and evaluation plan.

Resources – Costs

Resources to incorporate IBE into your courses are available without charge through the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity (2018) and Project Implicit (n.d.) which administers and provides results for numerous implicit association tests.

References

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