



Megan Fuciarelli

When Implicit Bias Becomes Explicit

According to the **Perception Institute**, “we use the term *implicit bias* to describe when we have attitudes towards people or associate stereotypes with them or without our conscious knowledge.” This term gained traction during the first debate when Hillary Clinton shared the impact of implicit bias saying it is a, “problem for everyone—not just the police.”

We cannot eliminate all bias – it is human nature. However, what we can do is begin having conversations to resolve the issues that are a result of bias. What I hope to accomplish within this analysis is share the impact of bias, the impact of open conversations regarding bias and privilege, and how our society has shifted from implicit to explicit bias and what we can do to resolve this issue.

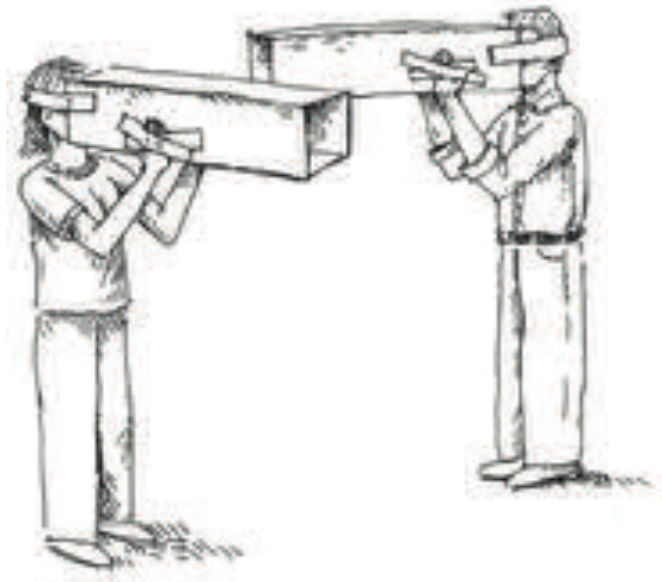


Image from perception.org

Being in education, I focus mostly on the effects of implicit bias in the classroom. Cindy Long, in conjunction with The National Education Association (NEA), wrote in January, 2016 specifically targeting the impact of implicit bias in education say, “even though educators aren’t aware of their biases, the results are insidious and far-reaching.” This is something I have seen in my own experience as a teacher, building administrator, and district administrator. Now, working at the state and national levels in the areas of social justice and educational equity, I see this on a much

larger scale. The NEA encourages all educators to seek out self-reflection training and to go even further and analyze how bias impacts the students, colleagues, and parents they work with. We cannot eliminate bias, but we MUST have conversations in order to eliminate some of the negative impacts of bias. Maureen Costello, Director of Teaching Tolerance, was quoted saying, "...what's important to know about implicit biases is that, once people are made aware of them, those biases can be successfully

In addition to the implicit bias discussion, we must start talking about privilege. The idea of white privilege was first discussed by Peggy McIntosh in her work *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*. One of the points that stuck with me most was that we need to determine "...whether we will get truly distressed, even outraged, about unearned race advantage and conferred dominance, and, if so, what we will do to lessen them." This point is the impetus for my work to this day. Not

“...the first thing you have to do is become aware of the habit” - Maureen Costello, Director of Teaching Tolerance

addressed. We can mitigate them. We can interrupt them. You can train your mind to catch yourself. It's like breaking a habit, but the first thing you have to do is become aware of the habit.”

Take a look around and you will recognize that bias impacts much more than education. Bias training is becoming much more of a necessity in all fields; whereas it was seen as a 'warm fuzzy nicety' just five-seven years ago. We must have these conversations and we must be open to listening to others – whether they correspond with our own beliefs or not.

only do I choose to address the ideas of all forms of privilege, but I choose to have conversations and grow from these discussions rather than reject the idea. My question when working with groups is often two fold: what bias do you hold and what are you going to do about it in order to not allow it to negatively impact those around you? These same two questions can be discussed through the privilege lens: What privileges do you hold? How can you minimize your privilege to maximize those around you?

Let us now move onto the idea of 'implicit' bias and 'invisible knapsack'

Bias (cont.)

becoming explicit and no longer hidden. So many events in recent times based on hate and bias. For example, the incidents involving the Pulse nightclub shooting, Philandro Castile, Terence Crutcher, and Alton Sterling have put this country on high alert. These events aren't new, but they are being brought to people's consciousness at a faster pace. These events, in addition, to the tone and tenor of our current Presidential administration, have given our country

incite these actions, but I beg to differ. Trump, during his campaign, mocked a disabled reporter, called all Mexicans rapists, his company has been sued for discriminatory renting practices, he has made overwhelmingly general comments about the "inner-city" and assuming this term is synonymous "black people", he has said he has the right to sexually assault women because he is rich, and named people to his Cabinet that are openly alt-right in their stances. He

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permission to be explicit about their bias. According to The New York Times and reports from Teaching Tolerance, in "Bullying in the Age of Trump", over 400 reports of bullying were reported in just one week following the election. This number of reports had not been seen since after 9/11. The day after the election, less than five miles from my home, an incident happened in a middle school with children chanting "Build the Wall." Less than a week later, in the same school, nooses were found hanging in an African-American student's locker. Many supporters of President Trump have said that he has not doing anything to

has even advocated violence towards protestors, offering to pay the legal fees of those who partake in the violence (Reisman). Regardless of your political beliefs, we have seen a dramatic surge in explicit bias over the past several months and the explicit bias that exists in our society is penetrating our children's psyches as well and we must overcome. As Emily Bazelon said, "We have to show heart and conviction. We have to ensure that our kids learn the values some leaders have forgotten."

This is where the work of organizations such as US2, Inc. becomes paramount.

The premise of US2, Inc. is to Understand Self in order to Unite Society.

We must recognize our own internal/implicit bias and work through the necessary components in order to unite society and reduce the hatred that is growing at an exponential rate. It is imperative to the relationships and interactions we have everyday. Not just with our students and co-workers, but with the person at the coffee shop, our significant other, our families and neighbors. We must share our stories and speak from the heart to help others recognize the impact of our thoughts and perceptions of the world.

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US2, Inc. <http://us2us.weebly.com>

Megan Fuciarelli serves as the Executive Director and Principal Consultant of US2, Inc., a consulting agency focused on social justice and educational equity. Before becoming a consultant, Megan served as a classroom teacher, Spanish teacher, bilingual reading specialist, assistant principal, principal, director of curriculum/ELL, and assistant superintendent. She obtained a BS in

Bias (cont.)

Elementary Education from Central Michigan University, MATL in Reading from Nova Southeastern University, MEd in Educational Administration from Roosevelt University, ESL Certificate from National Louis University, and a certificate in Urban Education from Harvard.

Passionate about her work in improving our educational system, Megan has presented at local, regional, and national levels. She founded the South Suburban Curriculum

Consortium in the Chicago area, and served as the Whole Child Advocate and Diversity Chair on the Board of Directors for the Illinois chapter of ASCD. She has also worked with Teaching Tolerance, writing the professional development modules on Critical Practices in an Anti-Bias Environment. Megan also serves as an External Evaluator for AdvancED, a national accreditation agency, and as a provider for Restorative Justice Administrator Academies.

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