REDUCING UNCONSCIOUS BIAS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING: STRATEGIES FOR INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY

CTRL Noontime Conversation
October 10, 2018
12-1:30pm
✓ Understand why unconscious bias matters in teaching and learning
✓ Recognize how unconscious bias may shape our perceptions and pedagogy
✓ Explore tools for inclusive pedagogy to apply in our teaching
OUR BRAINS ON BIAS

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JiTz2i4VHFw
DRIVERS OF UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS, ON SOME LEVEL, IS NECESSARY AND ADAPTIVE

FLUENCY HEURISTIC—WE PREFER INFORMATION THAT IS PROCESSED MORE EASILY, OR FLUENTLY, JUDGING IT TO BE MORE TRUE.

CONFIRMATION BIAS—WE TEND TO SEARCH FOR, FAVOR, RECALL, AND USE NEW EVIDENCE THAT CONFIRMS EXISTING THEORIES
“Recent studies within cognitive science point us to the conclusion that most biased decisions are not made by bad people with bad attitudes, but rather by well-intentioned people who are unaware of the internal unconscious processes that may be affecting their decision-making every day” (Cook Ross, 2018)
WHY UNCONSCIOUS BIAS MATTERS AT AU

"I feel included on campus"

- 33% African American
- 56% International*
- 59% Asian
- 59% Hispanic
- 71% White

AU Plan for Inclusive Excellence, 2018
INCLUSION, BELONGING AND LEARNING

If students feel as if they don’t belong in a school setting, the cognitive energy that should be used on social engagement and learning is being used to scan for group barriers, discrimination and stereotypes. Stereotype threat uses cognitive resources, diminishing performance.

Students who have a greater sense of belonging have a higher level of engagement in class and higher levels of academic performance.

Teachers and administrators have the power to enforce policies and practices that promote social inclusion to build students’ engagement and overall academic performance.
UNCONSCIOUS BIAS IN THE CLASSROOM

Fig. 1
Instructional triangle

Cohen, Raudenbush & Ball, 2003
UNCONSCIOUS BIASES IN THE CLASSROOM

- Assumptions about students’ academic preparation, motivation, or intelligence
- Assumptions about who needs more or less attention and why
- Expectations about participation styles, affinities, experiences
- Marginalization of content domains, scholarship, and knowledge forms
- Perceptions of and responses to student behaviors
- Student learning outcomes
- Student self and other-perceptions
BREAKING THE HABIT OF UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

➢ Substitute your habits with new practices.
➢ Observe your stereotypes and replace them.
➢ Get information to see people as individuals.
➢ Look for situational reasons for people’s behavior.
➢ Get to know people that belong to groups unlike your own.

(Drawn from the work of Patricia Devine at U-Wisconsin, Madison)
STRATEGIES FOR INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY
1. On the **outside** create labels to describe the behavior, appearance and aspects of your identity that others can observe or easily determine (age, gender, language)

2. On the **inside** list aspects of your identity that may not be evident to others around you

**CULTURAL X-RAY**
CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY
(LADSON-BILLINGS, 1994)

- Recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning
- Focuses on 3 areas
  1. Academic achievement (holding high expectations/standards for all students)
  2. Cultural competence (helping students to recognize and honor their own cultural beliefs and practices while acquiring access to the wider culture)
  3. Sociopolitical consciousness (finding ways for “students to recognize, understand, and critique current and social inequalities”)
CULTURALLY AFFIRMING INSTRUCTION

Connected to students’ cultural and intellectual legacy
Connected to students’ lived experiences
Of value outside the classroom
Connected to the students’ community
DIVERSE

• Diverse Instructional Materials (windows and mirrors)
• Inclusive
• Variety
• Exploration
• Reaction
• Safety
• Evaluation
RESOURCE PEDAGOGIES
FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE

• Creating culturally affirming identities of excellence
• Counter narratives - challenge dominant ideologies
• Study a topic of interest to them
• Tapping the funds of knowledge should be situated in reality (historical, social, political context)

Incorporating students knowledge and skills in classrooms
WAYS TO INTERRUPT BIAS

• Seek to identify and consciously acknowledge real group and individual differences
• Cultural X-ray activity
• Student questionnaire/survey
• Build relationships with students outside of the classroom
• Learn to question and suspend assumptions and judgments (implicit biases become explicit action)
How do we move from awareness to action?

Experiences as an administrator, teacher, and yes, learner

(Picture: Six seconds: The emotional Intelligence Network)
EXPERIENCE AS AN ADMINISTRATOR: LEARNING HOW TO IDENTIFY AND INTERRUPT BIAS

Language placement, student identity and bias.

Identifying students that speak Spanish as a heritage language.

Challenge, because we encounter unconscious bias at multiple levels: Instructor, system, and student’s perceptions of their situation.

Conversations with peer instructors: What to do (and not do!), what to say, how to help.

Recognize how our own perceptions can shape a decision, path for a student.
WHAT IS A HERITAGE SPEAKER OF A LANGUAGE?

“A student who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or merely understands the heritage language and who is to some degree bilingual in English and the heritage language”

(Valdés, 2000)
INTERRUPTING BIAS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Student self-identification vs external classification

In a conversation, not a score, not a form.
SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS TO SELF-IDENTIFY AS HERITAGE SPEAKERS:

- Do you understand Spanish, but you would like to communicate in Spanish the same way you communicate in English?

- Do you speak some Spanish at home with your parents, abuelit@s or other immediate family?

- Have you studied in the United States since and early age, with most of your formal education conducted in English?

- Do you seek to learn Spanish not as a foreign language --since you already understand it and speak it-- but because you feel you may benefit from being in a space where you can use the advantage you have to move from one language/culture to another?
CREATING A SAFE, NON-JUDGMENTAL CLASSROOM: A LANGUAGE COURSE FOR HERITAGE SPEAKERS

✓ Bilingual and transcultural identities: Advantage instead of a drawback.
✓ Cultural enrichment and empowerment
✓ Solidarity of experience afforded by the other members of the cohort. (Students are co-creators, you learn from them too!)
✓ Academic/intellectual space
✓ Solidarity of experience, place that is tangible
✓ Horizontal rather that vertical approach.
ON THE FIELD: CO-MANAGING A HERITAGE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

THE NEW 3 Rs
1. CREATING A SAFE, NON-JUDGMENTAL CLASSROOM: PHYSICAL SURROUNDINGS

RELATIONSHIPS

✓ Physical surroundings matter.
✓ Encouraging in-class exchanges.
✓ Creating opportunities for interaction outside the classroom. Buddy system.
✓ Raising positive awareness of differences and similarities to build trust.

  View diversity as an asset
  Teamwork across differences.
2. CREATING A SAFE, NON-JUDGMENTAL CLASSROOM: BUILDING A SAFE-PLACE, CREATING A CLASSROOM CULTURE

RESILIENCE

✓ Classroom policies
✓ Awareness of vulnerabilities.
Importance of social-emotional skills.
✓ Honor student experience
✓ Development of intergroup awareness and understanding.
✓ Structuring Academic/intellectual space to support individual growth.
3. CREATING A SAFE, NON-JUDGMENTAL CLASSROOM: INTRODUCING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

REFLECTION

✓ Text-to-text, Text-to-self, Text-to-World

✓ Connections to
  - Identity
  - Justice
  - Action
LEVERAGE THE FULL POTENTIAL OF DIVERSE STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM

Students are invited to:

Think before you speak: Avoid making quick decisions

Use metacognition: Analysis of what you are thinking and why you are thinking about something this way? (Parallel discussion)

Listen with empathy and compassion: Focus your energy on understanding other opinions and emotions.

Try to understand yourself and recognize your own cultural beliefs, and be open to see other points of view without negative conclusions.
CRITICAL PRACTICES

- Honoring student experience
- Thoughtful classroom set up and structure
- Shared inquiry and dialogue
- Social and emotional safety

From Critical Practices for Anti-Bias Education perspectives.tolerance.org
DISCUSSION

• Have you ever tried these ideas in your courses?
  • If so, what did you do? What were the outcomes?
  • If not, what barriers or challenges prevented you from doing so?
• What ideas do you have about how to interrupt unconscious bias in teaching and learning or using inclusive pedagogy?