Implicit Bias in School Discipline Decisions: Strategies to Enhance Equity

Kent McIntosh
University of Oregon

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1. I am aware of my personal biases. 
2. I am concerned about the consequences of bias in education. 
3. I have effective strategies for reducing bias in educational decisions.

(Devine et al., 2012)
Overview of Today’s Session

1. Complete some **activities** to explore disproportionality in school discipline
2. Share an **intervention approach** for enhancing equity in school discipline
3. Guide you through a **data** driven process for:
   1. Identify **causes and solutions**
   2. Change **environments** to prevent challenges
   3. Build **skills** in responding to challenges

Handouts: [http://www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)

Ground Rules

- Ask questions throughout
- Speak your truth
- Get comfortable with discomfort

(Adapted from Singleton, 2015)

Warm Up Activity

- Context matters!
Warm Up Activity: Implicit Association Test

- [https://implicit.harvard.edu/](https://implicit.harvard.edu/)
- Uses beliefs (stereotypes) and evaluations (attitudes) associated with social groups
- Example: Gender-Career IAT
  - Tests automatic association of MEN more with CAREERS (work outside the home) and WOMEN more with FAMILY
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender-Career IAT</th>
<th>Gender-Career IAT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female Family</td>
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<td>Male Career</td>
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<td>Parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
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</table>
Gender-Career IAT

Female Career

Male Family

Salary

DONE

Think Pair Share

- What did you notice about completing the activity?

- How might patterns of responses on this activity relate to real world interactions?

What is implicit bias?

- Unconscious, automatic
- Generally not an indication of our beliefs and values
- We all have it (even those affected by it)
- Based on stereotypes
- More likely to influence:
  - Snap decisions
  - Decisions that are ambiguous
Implicit Attractiveness Bias
(Salter, Mixon, & King, 2012)

Implicit Height Bias
(Judge & Cable, 2004)
One inch of height is worth $789 per year in salary

Implicit Bias in Refereeing
(Lopez, 2016)
Implicit Bias in Refereeing
(Carlson, 2014)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Home game differential</th>
<th>Away game differential</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duke</td>
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<td>-37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Florida State</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Georgia Tech</td>
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<td>-13</td>
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<td>Maryland</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-11</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
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<td>N.C. State</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notre Dame</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pittsburgh</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
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<td>Syracuse</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
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<td>Virginia</td>
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<td>Virginia Tech</td>
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<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wake Forest</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So...are all referees terrible people?

Implicit Gender Bias in Auditions

What about other areas of implicit bias?

https://csphilharmonic.org/2013/10/philharmonic-audition-process/
Implicit Bias and Race

“the challenge is not a small number of twisted white supremacists but something infinitely more subtle and complex: People who believe in equality but who act in ways that perpetuate bias and inequality.”

-Nicholas Kristof, *The New York Times*
“African Americans are 2.07 times more likely to be searched during a vehicular stop but are 26% less likely to have contraband found on them during a search.”

Implicit Bias in Early Learning
(Gilliam et al., 2016)
Implicit Bias in Early Learning (Gilliam et al., 2016)

Track the eyes: Which students are teachers watching?

- Black girls: 10%
- Black boys: 42%
- White girls: 13%
- White boys: 34%

Preschool teachers tend to observe blacks more closely than whites, especially black boys, when challenging behaviors are expected.

Disproportionality in Preschool Discipline (OCR, 2016)

- Black children represent 19% of preschool enrollment, but 47% of preschool suspensions.
- White children represent 41% of preschool enrollment, but 28% of preschool suspensions.

Implicit Bias predicts the extent to which...

- Arbitrators decide labor grievances in favor of women over men (Girvan, Deason, & Borgida, 2015)
Teachers of students with ASD experience anxiety, depression, and professional burnout (Kelly & Barnes-Holmes, 2013)

Police Officers use force when arresting Black children as opposed to White children (Goff et al., 2014)

Pediatricians recommend less pain medication for Black children than White children with identical symptoms (Cooper et al., 2012; Sabin & Greenwald, 2012)

Where do implicit biases come from?
Pop Quiz: What % of the Black population is incarcerated?

(Sakala, 2014)
Disproportionality in School Discipline (Losen et al., 2015)

Poverty plays a role, but racial disproportionality remains, even when controlling for poverty

- Anyon et al., 2014
- Skiba et al., 2002; 2005
- Wallace et al., 2008

Addressing Common Questions

“Isn’t it all really about poverty?”

No evidence of different base rates of behavior for any subgroups

- Bradshaw et al., 2010
- Losen & Skiba, 2010
- Skiba et al., 2014

“Aren’t Black boys just more violent?”
Addressing Common Questions

“Are you saying that all teachers are racist?”

Our research indicates that disproportionality comes from unconscious bias – that we’re not even aware of.

- Girvan et al., in press
- Greenwald & Pettigrew, 2014
- van den Bergh et al., 2010

If you’re aware…

…you’re halfway there.

A Unidimensional View of Bias

A Multidimensional View of Bias
Two Systems for Decision Making (Kahneman, 2011)

- **System 1: Fast Decisions**
  - Automatic, snap judgments
  - Intuitive, unconscious

- **System 2: Slow Decisions**
  - Deliberate decisions
  - Allows for conscious attention

Discussion

- Which decisions in schools are more likely to be snap judgments?
  - Correcting a student’s behavior
  - Sending a student to the office
  - Picking which student to call on
  - Deciding whether to call a student’s parent
  - Suspending a student from school
  - Grading students’ work

Assumptions

- We all believe that a student’s color should not **fate** him or her to negative outcomes
- Discussing equity and race is **uncomfortable**
- Creating discomfort without providing **effective strategies** for equity is not productive
- In discussing equity and taking steps, we will make **mistakes**
A 5-point Intervention Approach to Enhance Equity in School Discipline

1. Use engaging **academic instruction** to reduce the opportunity (achievement) gap
2. Implement a **behavior framework** that is preventive, multi-tiered, and culturally responsive
3. Collect, use, and report **disaggregated discipline data**
4. Develop **policies** with accountability for disciplinary equity
5. Teach strategies for neutralizing **implicit bias**

**5-point Intervention Approach**

- http://www.pbis.org/school/equity-pbis

**2. Why start with a foundation of SWPBIS?**

1. Proactive, instructional approach may prevent problem behavior and exposure to biased responses to problem behavior
2. Increasing positive student-teacher interactions may enhance relationships to prevent challenges
3. More objective referral and discipline procedures may reduce subjectivity and influence of cultural bias
4. Professional development may provide teachers with more instructional responses

(Greffund et al., 2014)

**Effects of PBIS on Discipline Disproportionality**

- **Vincent et al., 2011**
  - Statistically significantly lower Black-White ODR disproportionality in 72 schools implementing SWPBIS than in 81 schools not implementing SWPBIS
- **Vincent et al., 2009**
  - Decreases in ODRs seen across racial/ethnic groups in 69 schools implementing SWPBIS
- **Scott, 2001**
  - Larger decreases in suspensions for Black students when SWPBIS implemented
- **McIntosh et al., 2014**
  - Sustained decrease in suspensions over eight years of SWPBIS implementation in an Indigenous school
Which SWPBIS Features are Most Related to Equity?
(Tobin & Vincent, 2011)

- Examined change in Black-White Relative Risk Index for suspensions in 46 schools
- Two key predictors of decreased disproportionality:
  - Regular use of data for decision making
  - Implementation of classroom SWPBIS systems

Which features predicted decreased disproportionality?
- Expected behaviors defined clearly
- Problem behaviors defined clearly
- Expected behaviors taught
- Expected behaviors acknowledged regularly
- Consistent consequences
- CW procedures consistent with SW systems
- Options exist for instruction
- Instruction/materials match student ability
- High rates of academic success
- Access to assistance and coaching
- Transitions are efficient and orderly

Culturally Responsive PBIS Implementation
- Ensure equitable access to praise and acknowledgment systems

When we look for the behavior we want to see, we will see it more often.
Culturally Responsive PBIS Implementation

- Ensure equitable access to praise and acknowledgment systems
- Develop and revise school-wide systems with active involvement of families, students, and the community

Common PBIS Activity: School-wide Expectations Matrix

- Clarify what is expected for students
- Create consistency among staff
- Reduce miscommunication
- Make hidden curriculum visible
- Focus on prosocial behavior
Culturally Responsive Adaptation: Personal Matrix

- Aka “behavior dictionary”
- Tool to assist in “code-switching”
- The tweak:
  - Take school expectations and...
    - Add differences at home
    - Add differences in community

### Expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectation</th>
<th>At SCHOOL it looks like...</th>
<th>At HOME it looks like...</th>
<th>In my NEIGHBORHOOD it looks like...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Be Safe     | - Keep hands and feet to self  
              - Tell an adult if there is a problem |  
              - Protect your friends and family  
              - Don’t talk back |  
              - Stick up for your friends  
              - Don’t back down  
              - Look the other way |
| Be Respectful | - Treat others how you want to be treated  
                - Include others  
                - Listen to adults |  
                - Do exactly what adults tell you to do  
                - Don’t stand out  
                - Don’t bring shame |  
                - Text back within 30 seconds  
                - Be nice to friends’ parents  
                - Share food |
| Be Responsible | - Do my own work  
                  - Personal best  
                  - Follow directions  
                  - Clean up messes |  
                  - Help your family out first  
                  - Own your mistakes  
                  - Share credit for successes |  
                  - Have each other’s backs  
                  - Own your mistakes  
                  - Check in about what to do |

Interpreting the Personal Matrix

- Assess differences between school and other settings and ask:
  1. Are the “different” school rules necessary for positive student development?
     - **NO:** Change the rules to align more with home and neighborhood
     - **YES:** Acknowledge explicitly and provide additional teaching, practice, and acknowledgment
Culturally Responsive PBIS Implementation

- Ensure equitable access to praise and acknowledgment systems
- Develop and revise school-wide systems with active involvement of families, students, and the community
- Use regular student and family surveys to assess acceptability and fit

Stakeholder Input & Satisfaction Surveys

**Situational Setting**

1. **Situational Setting**
   - **Context:**
     - **Goal:** To foster a welcoming and inclusive environment.
     - **Challenge:** Ensuring equitable access to praise and acknowledgment systems.
   - **Strategy:** Develop and revise school-wide systems with active involvement of families, students, and the community.
   - **Evaluation:** Use regular student and family surveys to assess acceptability and fit.

**Stakeholder Input & Satisfaction Surveys**

**Student Stakeholder Input & Satisfaction Survey – Student MIDDLE/High | SIDE MIDDLE/High**

**Objective:** To assess student and family satisfaction and input on the implementation of culturally responsive PBIS strategies.

**Survey Questions: (Example)**

- **What grade are you in?**
- **What is your gender or gender identity?**
- **What is your ethnicity?**
- **How inviting are we for all?**

**Acknowledgment & Reward Systems:**

- **Cultural Competence:** Ensure that acknowledgment and reward systems are culturally sensitive and inclusive.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Regularly solicit feedback from students and families through surveys and discussions.

**Implementation Challenges:**

- **Equity:** Addressing disparities in equitable access to praise and acknowledgment.
- **Community Engagement:** Maximizing active involvement of families and students.

**Evaluation Measures:**

- **Acceptability & Fit:** Survey responses indicating improvements in system perception and fit.
- **Behavioral Outcomes:** Reduced incidents of uninviting or alienating behavior.

**Conclusion:** Culturally responsive PBIS implementation enhances inclusivity and engagement, fostering a more equitable learning environment.
Resources for Promoting Equity in Classrooms: www.tolerance.org

3. Using disaggregated data to assess and address equity

- Disproportionality Data Guide

http://www.pbis.org/school/equity-pbis
4. Implement policies with accountability for equity

- Equity Policy Guide

http://www.pbis.org/school/equity-pbis

5. How can we reduce implicit bias in our decision making?

- Racial Bias
  - Situation
  - Disproportionate Discipline

What is a Vulnerable Decision Point (VDP)?

- A specific decision that is more vulnerable to effects of implicit bias
- Two parts:
  - Elements of the situation
  - The person’s decision state (internal state)

**Situations:**

Options for Identifying VDPs

1. All ODR/suspension decisions (general self-instruction routine)
2. Identify specific VDPs
   a) Through national data
   b) Your own school or district data
   c) Your own personal VDPs
Using Discipline Data within SWPBIS to Identify and Address Disproportionality: A Guide for School Teams

Introduction
The purpose of this guide is to provide a framework for schools to analyze data on the use of discipline. The guide includes recommendations for using data to identify and address disproportionate discipline practices. The information provided is intended to help schools ensure fair and equitable discipline practices.

Audience
This guide is designed for school administrators, teachers, and other school staff who are responsible for implementing behavior policies.

http://www.pbis.org/school/equity-pbis

National SWIS Data (2011-12)

3,026,367 ODRs
6,269 schools
47 states, plus DC

VDPs from national ODR data

- Subjective problem behavior
  - Defiance, Disrespect, Disruption
  - Major vs. minor
- Non-classroom areas
  - Hallways
- Classrooms
- Afternoons

SWIS Drill Down (www.swis.org)

Add demographic group of interest as a filter (click to “Include in Dataset”).

Click each graph and compare to overall patterns.
Multidimensional View of Bias

Situations:
Activity - Identify VDPs worksheet

1. Identify a demographic group of interest
2. Fill the top set of blanks with national ODR data
   - Behavior:
   - Location:
   - Time:
   - Day:
   - Grade lvl:

3. Fill the middle left set with your school or district’s ODR/susp. data for White students
   - Behavior:
   - Location:
   - Time:
   - Day:
   - Grade lvl:

4. Fill the middle right set with data for your demographic group
   - Behavior:
   - Location:
   - Time:
   - Day:
   - Grade lvl:
Welcome to Macleod K-8 (pseudonym)
- Inner city school
- 50% White and 40% Black students

Discipline data
- Black-White ODR Risk Ratio = 2.96

What do you think the team should do?

Situations:
Activity – Examine Data for VDPs

- Using the data in the handout, identify:
  1. The most common patterns of ODRs for White students
  2. The most common patterns of ODRs for Black students
  3. Differences (aka VDPs for disproportionality)

- Ex: ODRs are most commonly issued for White students for [Behavior] in [Location] during [Time] for students in [Grade].

SWIS Drill Down (www.swis.org)

Add White as a filter (click to “Include in Dataset”).

Click each graph and identify the patterns.

ODRs by Behavior:
White Students

Referrals by Problem Behavior
Drill Down

Problem Behavior

- M-Desperation
- M-Hope, Lur
- M-Contact
- M-Reliance
- M-Other
ODRs by **Time:**
Black Students

**Referrals by Time of Day**

Drill Down

- Referrals vs. Time of Day

ODRs by **Grade:**
White Students

**Referrals by Grade**

Drill Down

- Referrals vs. Grade

ODRs by **Grade:**
Black Students

**Referrals by Grade**

Drill Down

- Referrals vs. Grade

**Situations:**

Activity – Brainstorm solutions

- Using the following VDP:
  - ODRs are most commonly issued for Black students for defiance in classrooms during the first 30 minutes of the day for students in 8th grade.

  ...generate possible strategies for the team.
Situations:
Activity - Identify VDPs worksheet

5. For this group, what are some common student behaviors that push your buttons?

6. How might these specific behaviors be related to cultural differences?

7. How might these behaviors meet a functional need for these students?

Situations:
Responses to culturally-based behaviors

- May be desirable/adaptive outside of school
  - May work/be reinforced in other settings
  - Not necessarily “wrong” – just not for school
- Solutions
  1. Reframe to student as a strength (acknowledge the positive intent)
  2. Be explicit in teaching situational specificity (“code-switching”)
  3. Provide extensive practice (ex. + / - signs)

Decision States:
Setting Events

- An event occurring before or with an antecedent that increases likelihood of a behavior
- Sets it up (slow trigger)
- Sometimes is present and sometimes is not
- Does not require one’s awareness
- Examples from students:
As we become fatigued, our filters for appropriate behavior can be affected.
Effects of hunger (Gailliot et al., 2009)
Decreases in willpower later in day

- "The Morning Morality Effect" (Kouchaki & Smith, 2014)
- Examples…

Outcomes of parole hearings (Danziger et al., 2011)

- Resource Depletion in Action

1. What are some common VDP decision states for many adults in schools?
2. What do you think might be possible VDP decision states for you?

- When you see unwanted behavior, stop and ask yourself:
  1. Is this a VDP?
     - Situation
     - Decision state
  2. If so, use an agreed-upon alternative response

Two-step Neutralizing Routine for Staff:
Neutralizing Routines for Reducing Effects of Implicit Bias

What makes for a good neutralizing routine?

1. If-then statement
2. Brief
3. Clear steps
4. Doable
5. Interrupts the chain of events

Neutralizing Routine Examples

- If this is a VDP,…
  - **Delay decision until I can think clearly**
    - “See me after class/at the next break”
    - ask the student to reflect on their feelings/behavior
    - am I acting in line with my values?
  - **Reframe the situation**
    - “I love you, but that behavior is not ok”
    - “How do we do that at school?”
    - picture this student as a future doctor/lawyer
    - assume student’s best effort at getting needs met
    - respond as if the student was physically injured
  - **Take care of yourself**
    - take two deep breaths
    - recognize my upset feelings and let them go
    - model classwide cool-down strategy

Sample Neutralizing Routine

- **TRY**
  - **Take a deep breath**
  - **Reflect on your emotions**
  - **Youth’s best interest**
    - “Let’s **TRY** that again.”
    - “Let’s **TRY** it a different way.”
    - “Let’s **TRY** it how we do it at school.”
Classwide “Reset” Routine

- **TRY** for students
  - Take three deep breaths
  - Reflect on your emotions
  - You got this!
- Social-emotional Theme
  - Mistakes are part of the learning process
  - We won’t always do it right the first time
  - We can’t succeed unless we **TRY**

Two-step Neutralizing Routine for **Staff**:

- Can also be used as precorrection
  1. Am I about to enter a VDP?
  2. What are my values?
  3. When I see problem behavior, I’ll use my alternative response

"If you inadvertently assist the student to escalate, do not be concerned; you will get another chance to do it right the next time around."

- Geoff Colvin

We just discussed one kind of discipline decision…

- Staff decision to send a student to the office (i.e., issue an ODR)
- What about the administrator’s decision?

You wouldn't send a student to the office because they can't read. Why send them there because they can't behave?
What is the strongest predictor of disproportionality in school discipline?

- The school principal’s endorsement of exclusionary discipline and zero tolerance policies.

(Skiba et al., 2014)

Two-step Neutralizing Routine for Administrators:
(Susan Barrett)

- When you have to handle problem behavior, stop and tell yourself:
  1. Don’t just do something, stand there!
     - Be sure you are ready to act in line with values
     - Get information from student and staff
     - Assess student-teacher relationship
  2. Whenever possible, use an agreed-upon instructional response
     - Teaches missing skills
     - Connects student to school and staff

The Restorative Chat
(Alton School District, IL)

1. Tell me what happened.
2. What you were thinking at the time?
3. What do you think about it now?
4. Who did this affect?
5. What do you need to do about it?
6. How can we make sure this doesn't happen again?
7. What can I do to help you?

Professional Development

1. Use data to identify:
   - The extent of the problem
   - Vulnerable Decision Points (VDPs)
2. Teach and practice:
   - Implicit bias
   - VDPs
   - Neutralizing routines
3. Follow up:
   - Ongoing coaching
   - Monitor progress with data
School Example

Urban K-8 School

School Example

Urban K-8 School

Risk Indices

Referral Risk Index
Major, 2013-14

- Black/White ODR Risk Ratio = 2.67

Drill Down: Phys. Aggression on Playground

Referral Risk Index (Ethnicity)

- Black/White ODR Risk Ratio = 4.5

The School PBIS Team’s Intervention

- ODRs and observations indicated differences in perceived basketball rules
- Team clarified rules for staff and students
  - Aka “code-switching”
- Additional teaching, practice, and acknowledgement
- Monitor with ODRs and Black-White RR
The School PBIS Team’s Intervention Outcomes

Black-White Risk Ratios

- Overall
  - 2013-14: 2.67
  - 2014-15 (Sept to Dec): 2.0
- Physical Aggression on Playground
  - 2013-14: 4.5
  - 2014-15 (Sept to Dec): can’t calculate (1 ODR)

Progress over Time

Office Discipline Referrals Per Day
Per 100 Students

Big Ideas

- Thinking about and discussing solutions is the first step
- Pick a neutralizing routine and try it out
- Use your data to assess and monitor
  - If you don’t have the data you need at hand, advocate for it
- This is hard work – but you know how to do it!
Please complete this anonymous evaluation to help improve it!


Think Pair Share and Steps Forward

- Turn to partner and share:
  - One aha
  - One ah...huh?
  - One next step

Contact Information

- Kent McIntosh
  Special Education Program
  University of Oregon
  kentm@uoregon.edu
  @kentmc

- Handouts: http://kentmcintosh.wordpress.com

References


