

Mentoring and Mentoring Up:

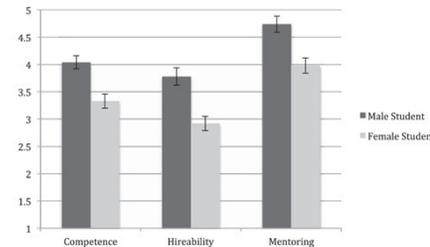
Workshop #3: Diversity and Unconscious Bias



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Do we really have an unconscious bias?

- Handelsman, et al, *PNAS*, 2012.
- Science faculty rated a student (male or female) for a lab manager.
- The male student was rated higher in 3 categories.



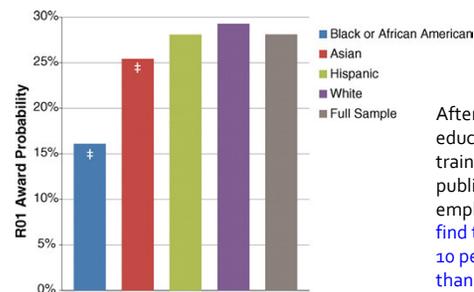
What is your reaction to this data?

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Do NIH reviewers have an unconscious bias?

Ginther, *Science*, 2011.

Probability of NIH R01 award by race and ethnicity, 2000 - 2006.



After controlling for applicant's education, country of origin, training, past research awards, publication record, and employer characteristics, we find that black applicants remain 10 percentage points less likely than whites to be awarded NIH funding.

A possible cause for the bias is the focus on the deficit model

- This focuses on deficits of 1st-generation college students:
 - "Across all demographic categories, first-generation students arrive at college campuses at risk academically. As a result of their high school experiences, they are less academically prepared than their traditional counterparts. Overall, when compared to non-first-generation students, first-generation students tend to have lower reading, math, and critical thinking skills and pursue a less rigorous high school curriculum, especially in the sciences and math..."
- In contrast, Nicole Stephens' research is more balanced:
 - She proposes that 1st-gen students attend college seeking interdependence, while non-1st-gen students seek independence
- What happens if we focus only on their deficits?

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An alternative model is to focus on Diversity 3.0

Marc Nivet from *Assoc of American Medical Colleges* (2011):

- Diversity 1.0** – diversity **opposes** excellence
 - Civil Rights era to current
- Diversity 2.0** – diversity is **equal, but separate** from excellence
 - separate offices for diversity and academic rigor
- Diversity 3.0** – diversity **enhances** excellence
 - companies e.g. IBM are adopting this model



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Diversity 3.0 – diversity actually promotes productive work

- Scott Page's *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies*, 2007
- Page claims that:
 - Diverse perspectives and tools enable people to find more and better solutions and contribute to overall productivity
 - Diversity is particularly important when the problem is complex
- Examples:
 - Watson and Crick: $1 + 1 = 12$
 - game show *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*
- Analogy of the toolbox



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Suggested further reading

- Benefits and Challenges of Diversity
 - Fine and Handelsman; pdf in Blackboard
- Leveraging Diversity – Scott Page
 - www.youtube.com/watch?v=ltgUeknKwZw
- stereotype threat
 - Claude Steele
- white privilege
 - McIntosh "Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack"; pdf
- microaggressions
 - Derald Wing Sue
- third culture kids

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**Let's read and discuss
the case studies**

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Mentoring and Mentoring Up – Case Studies

Workshop #3: Diversity and Unconscious Assumptions

Case 1 (from *Entering Mentoring*, p 69)

Last summer I worked with a fantastic undergraduate mentee. She was very intelligent and generated a fair amount of data directly relevant to my thesis project. I think that she had a positive summer research experience, but there are a few questions that still linger in my mind. This particular mentee was an African-American woman from a small town. I always wondered how she felt on a big urban campus. I also wondered how she felt about being the only African-American woman in our lab. In fact, she was the only African-American woman in our entire department that summer. I wanted to ask her how she felt, but I worried that it might be insensitive or politically incorrect to do so. I never asked. I still wonder how she felt and how those feelings may have affected her experience.

- Would you have asked her about her experience as the only African-American woman in the lab and the department? If so, how would you have approached her?

Case 2 (from Steve Lee)

Kathy was a fellow graduate student in my lab, who was married and whose husband was also a grad student in the same department. One day, another grad student from a neighboring lab told her “Your husband must be very proud of you.”

- Would you have considered this to be a back-handed compliment?
- How would you have responded to this situation?

Case 3 (from *Entering Mentoring*, p 62)

I am a graduate student in a very crowded lab. One summer, we hosted two students from Spain. The students were great—they worked hard, got interesting results, were fun to be around, and fit into the group really well. The problem was that they spoke Spanish to each other all day long. And I mean ALL DAY. For eight or nine hours every day, I listened to this loud, rapid talking that I couldn’t understand. Finally, one day I blew. I said in a not very friendly tone of voice that I’d really appreciate it if they would stop talking because I couldn’t get any work done. Afterwards, I felt really bad and apologized to them. I brought the issue to my mentoring class and was surprised by the length of the discussion that resulted. People were really torn about whether it is OK to require everyone to speak in English and whether asking people not to talk in the lab is a violation of their rights.

- What might be the intent of an English-only policy?
- What might the impact be on lab members and the ‘lab community’ as a whole?
- What might have been a better way to respond to this situation?

Case 4 (based upon a real situation from a previous CLIMB student; from Steve Lee)

Harry has just joined a lab. All of the other members of the lab are international students, and usually speak their native language. They are friendly to Harry, but he's been feeling left out of informal conversations and at their social activities because they often speak their native language. The PI is also from the same country and often speaks their native language. Harry is a third culture kid (See definition below.) himself, and so understands the importance of being culturally sensitive, but wants to connect more with his PI and labmates.

- The term of "third culture kid" is used by sociologists and anthropologists, referring to children who accompany their parents into a new culture and grow up in a culture that's different from their parents. They are sometimes also referred to as trans-culture kids.
- What would you do if you were in Harry's shoes?

Case 5 (from *Entering Mentoring*, p 60)

Some issues are stickier than others. I once had a student who would come into the lab every Monday and loudly discuss his sexual exploits of the weekend. People in the lab—men and women—dreaded coming in on Mondays and were intensely uncomfortable during his discourse. No one in the group wanted to deal with it, and most of them were too embarrassed to even mention it to me. Finally, my trusted technician shared with me her intention to quit if this student didn't graduate very soon. I was faced with the challenge of telling the student that we all need to be sensitive to others in the lab and there might be people who didn't want to hear about his sex life.

I was uncomfortable with the conversation for a lot of reasons. First, I'm not used to talking to my students about their sex lives. Second, I was concerned that the student would be hurt and embarrassed that others in the lab had talked to me about his behavior and I didn't want to create a new problem in the process of solving the original one. Third, the student was gay and I didn't want him to think that his behavior was offensive because of this. I wanted him to appreciate that any discussion of sexual experience—straight or gay—was simply inappropriate for the open lab environment. But the student had never told me that he was gay, so I felt it was a further violation of his relationship with other lab members to indicate that I knew he was gay. The discussion did not go well because we were both so uncomfortable with the subject and I had trouble being as blunt as I should have been.

The behavior didn't change. The student finished his thesis and defended it. At the defense, one of the committee members suggested that the student do more experiments, and I detected the beginnings of a groundswell of support for his point of view. I blurted out that if this student stayed one more day in my lab, my wonderful technician would quit, so if he had to do more experiments, could he do them in one of their labs? In the end, everyone signed off on the thesis, the student graduated, and I never published the last chapter of the student's thesis because more experiments were needed to finish the story. I felt that I had weighed lab harmony against academic and scientific standards and have never been happy with how I handled the whole situation.

- Would you have handled the situation any differently?
- What might be a better way of handling this situation?

Case 6 (from Steve Lee)

Janet is looking forward to attending the next professional conference, because she finally has some results to present, and her abstract was accepted for a poster. This will be the first time that she'll be able to attend this conference, which is an annual national conference in her field. Her PI is covering the costs of the conference, for which Janet is grateful. He reminded her to get the most out of the conference by attending as much of it as possible. He tells her that the budget for the trip will need to be less than \$1000, because funding for the group has been tight. Mike, who is a fellow grad student in the same lab, said that he had attended the conference at the same location last year, and was able to attend the conference and keep his expenses below the \$1000 cap by staying at a cheaper hotel farther from the convention center.

Janet starts to make plans for the conference, which is in an urban area of a large city and which she has never visited. She begins to wonder if she will be able to safely return to her hotel in the evenings. This worries her especially, because her poster session is in the evening. She searches for closer hotels to the convention center, but they are all more expensive. She could take a cab between the convention center and her hotel each evening, but that would also increase her travel expenses.

Janet timidly asks her PI, if there's any chance that the budget for her trip could be increased, because she's concerned that she might not be able to safely attend the conference. The PI rolls his eyes at her request, as he mutters out loud that she might have to cover the increased expenses herself, or he might send someone else in the lab to present the research.

- What would you do if you were Janet?

Case 7 (from Steve Lee)

Henry is excited because he was invited for a campus interview for a faculty position. He is close to completing his PhD, and has been applying for lots of faculty positions, and this is his first campus interview.

During the visit, he is interviewed by a group of established faculty in the department. He's asked the usual round of questions about his research and professional background, and the discussion becomes more informal. One of the professors asks him if he's married. Henry is a little surprised by this question, but no one else in the room seems to blink an eye at the question. Henry politely answers the question. The group continues to talk about international students in their department, and then the same professor asks, "Where are you from?" Henry, who was born in Asia and grew up in the US, is more agitated by this question, and uncertain how to respond.

- How would you respond, if you were Henry?

Case 8 (from Steve Lee)

Mary is an international postdoc and single. She starts to notice that another person in the lab has been behaving unusually, and is starting to make her feel uncomfortable. He seems to follow her around and giving her a lot of attention, which she doesn't appreciate, especially because he is married. She tries to distance herself from him, but he gets upset, claiming that she is not respecting him. In one instance, he slams some books on his desk, complaining that she's not respecting him.

Mary tells her PI of the situation, and says that she is becoming very uncomfortable in the lab, and that it has been affecting her productivity in the lab. The PI tells her to simply go to the office dealing with sexual harassment on campus, but doesn't seem to want to be bothered with the situation. He says that he hasn't witnessed any of this unusual behavior himself, and can't control the personal behavior of students in his lab.

- How would you respond in this situation?

Key Terms

(definitions from Wikipedia; accessed 2/13/2013)

Microaggression is the idea that specific interactions between those of different races, cultures, or genders can be interpreted as mostly non-physical aggression coined by Chester M. Pierce in 1970. Micro-inequities and micro-affirmations were additionally named by Mary Rowe, PhD of MIT in 1973, in her work she also describes micro-aggressions inclusive of sex and gender. Sue et al. (2007) describe microaggressions as, "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color."

Microaggression usually involves demeaning implications and other subtle insults against minorities, and may be perpetrated against those due to gender, sexual orientation, and ability status. According to Pierce, "the chief vehicle for pro-racist behaviors are microaggressions. These are subtle, stunning, often automatic, and nonverbal exchanges which are 'put-downs' of blacks by offenders".

Microaggressions may also play a role in unfairness in the legal system as they can influence the decisions of juries.

Stereotype threat is the experience of anxiety or concern in a situation where a person has the potential to confirm a negative stereotype about their social group. Since its introduction into the academic literature in 1995, stereotype threat has become one of the most widely studied topics in the field of social psychology. First described by social psychologist Claude Steele and his colleagues, stereotype threat has been shown to reduce the performance of individuals who belong to negatively stereotyped groups. If negative stereotypes are present regarding a specific group, they are likely to become anxious about their performance which may hinder their ability to perform at their maximum level. For example, stereotype threat can lower the intellectual performance of African-Americans taking the SAT reasoning test used for college entrance in the United States, due to the stereotype that African-Americans are less intelligent than other groups.

Third culture kid (TCK, 3CK) is a term coined in the early 1950s by American sociologist and anthropologist Ruth Hill Useem "to refer to the children who accompany their parents into another society". Other terms, such as trans-culture kid or Global Nomad are also used by some. More recently, American sociologist David C. Pollock developed the following description for third culture kids: "A Third Culture Kid (TCK) is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture may be assimilated into the TCK's life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background."

White privilege (or white skin privilege) refers to what some individuals perceive as advantages that white people enjoy in certain societies beyond those commonly experienced by people of color in the same social, political, or economic spaces (nation, community, workplace, income, etc). The controversial term connotes both obvious and less obvious unspoken advantages that white individuals may not recognize they have. These include cultural affirmations of one's own worth; greater presumed social status; and freedom to move, buy, work, play, and speak freely. The concept of white privilege also implies the right to assume the universality of one's own experiences, marking others as different or exceptional while perceiving oneself as normal. It can be compared and/or combined with the concept of male privilege.