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IMPLICIT BIAS AS SEEN THROUGH A PUBLIC SCOPE: A PILOT STUDY

A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RELATIONS

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Abstract

Implicit bias is an unconscious, unintentional bias that escapes societal and individual recognition. Yet, it can be conflated with explicit biases leading to considerable misunderstandings by the greater society of what having an implicit bias means. Implicit bias is not conjured by the individual through conscious prejudice or discrimination. Instead, it manifests in situations where participants make impulsive decisions, whether it is a setting that requires a quick reaction or one that, on the surface, does not seem to warrant in-depth thought. This makes the prejudice or discrimination events that follow unrepresentative of the individual's normal thoughts, beliefs or behaviors. Despite research on strategies to combat implicit biases and public tests designed to help individuals determine potential unconscious biases, the public underutilizes these resources. This may be a result of current stigmas surrounding biases and lack of general knowledge of implicit bias resources, such as empathy strategies or the Implicit Association Tests (IAT). This deficiency in public knowledge and preventative action regarding implicit bias causes experimentation of such biases and strategies to be challenging to study. In this pilot study, the goal was to explore possible reasons and attitudes that lead individuals unfamiliar with implicit bias research to underutilize these resources.

Keywords: implicit bias, unconscious bias, implicit bias research, Implicit Social Cognition Theory

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Implicit Bias As Seen Through A Public Scope: A Pilot Study

Introduction

Individuals can be oblivious to their own implicit biases since this form of bias operates unconsciously. Implicit social cognition theory focuses on how the unconscious nature of implicit bias is based on automatic responses thus does not directly correlate to all manifestations of discrimination or prejudice, which generally are categorized as controlled biases (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). This theory believes individuals can have biases that are hidden and not easily identified. A person's implicit bias may go against their consciously held beliefs resulting in cognitive dissonance. Yet, individuals do not understanding the naturalness and malleability of implicit bias, many people are unwilling to identify their own implicit biases. It is the argument of the primary researcher this stigmatization of implicit bias due to misunderstandings leads the public to not take advantage of current research to fight their own implicit biases or even identify their own potential implicit bias through public tests such as the Implicit Association Test (IAT) through Harvard.

The Implicit Association Test (IAT) measures an individual's automatic associations and how strong they are when reviewing two different groups (Greenwald, Banaju, & Nosek, 2003). Anthony Greenwald, Debbie McGhee, and Jordan Schwartz published the first method and findings of the IAT in 1998 in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. The first introduction of this test started a new wave of tests geared towards exploring implicit bias and observing the strength of these associations. The original test attempted to find strong associations between positive and negative words between different races that were surrounded by social issues such as negative word associations with African Americans. In this test the original races evaluated and eventually became the foundation of the innovative public test

focused on the associations between black and white faces (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). Later, Greenwald, Banaju, and Nosek (2003) addressed issues that had been found with the original IAT and created an improved algorithm. With the improved algorithm these cognitive psychologist were able to improve the likelihood of outside variables affecting scores and lowered a participants prior IAT experiences from impacting their score. Though, the IAT has expanded to encompass more than just a race association test such as body types, Islamophobia, sexism, and so on. However, the race IAT still maintains as one of the first and most well tested out of all the other IAT making it a well-tested and justified stimuli for this pilot study to gauge reactions or attitudes towards implicit bias.

Resources and strategies for identification of implicit biases are at large underutilized. This underutilization manifests in many ways, but are more discernable for study in areas such as the judicial system, healthcare, and the educational system. There also is a lack of understanding of the impact the incorporation of empathetic strategies can have if employed actively into training for any of these spheres. This pilot study used grounded theory an inductive approach to build a frame for how the public may view implicit bias. The objective of using this method was to find a base of attitudes or different realms of exploration in the topic with a more saturated sample achieved through later exploration.

By coding each interview separately, using the constant comparative method, overarching themes of codes were able to organically take form. This allowed for the research to build itself rather than allowing expectations or predestined coding to lead to possible confirmation bias. By allowing for a more open exploration, and permitting the data collection to determine the narrative, it permitted the potential of areas of research to develop that possibly would have been minimized or undetectable using other coding strategies. To further situate the current study,

implicit bias predominance in the educational system, judicial system and healthcare, along with the impact of empathetic strategies, can have on implicit bias are discussed in the following section of this thesis.

Literature Review

The health care system, educational system, and the judicial system are the three areas where attitudes towards bias and the denial of implicit biases have the most considerable amount of documented research. It is in these three areas that the oppressive aspects of this bias are clearly shown by how they affect individuals who are being oppressed. In the case of the health care system, this unconscious bias can manifest in quality care of patients and the damage of patient-provider relationship (Maina, Belton, Ginzberg, Singh, & Johnson, 2018; Cooper et al, 2012; Grif Alspach, 2018). In the judicial system, implicit bias may manifest into longer sentences, higher arrests and even prejudicial council (Selmi, 2018; Young, Levinson, & Sinnett, 2014). Finally within the educational system, implicit bias can maintain educational disparities between districts and students along with creating a hostile environment that is based on a lack of empathy (Nance, 2016; Nance, 2017; Denise & Emerson, 2018). Cultural stigmas of implicit bias are so predominant that even in these three fields where individuals need to be neutral, they are unwilling to deal with their own implicit biases, which in turn has the potential to negatively affect their work.

Implicit Bias' Reach

Healthcare. In the medical field, doctors take an oath to do no harm, yet how each doctor interprets that when it comes to quality care can be directly influenced by implicit bias. Maina, Belton, Ginzberg, Singh, and Johnson (2018) completed an analysis of implicit bias research and the healthcare system. Through their gathering of literature, they found that racial implicit bias has a secure connection to patient-provider relationships. This relationship for patients and providers alike is crucial to ensure not only adherence to treatment plans but also for patients to return for care (Cooper et al, 2012; Grif Alspach, 2018). This lack of interpersonal connection

can damage a patient's trust due to actions and behaviors such as a provider's micro facial expressions, subtle meaning behaviors (e.g., slowed speech, oversimplification, etc.) and other non-verbal cues that could be manifestations of implicit biases.

Beyond the issues of the patient-provider relationship, Hickens, Kravitz-Wirtz, Durkee, and Jackson (2018), argue that there is validity in the concept of implicit bias being connected to microaggressions or other forms of subtle discrimination. These researchers found there is connection between implicit bias and prejudice. Hickens, Kravitz-Wirtz, Durkee, and Jackson (2018) expected that some researchers have not seen this connection reflected in other studies is due to the scientific environment having a substantial effect on participants. The setting is essential because when people know they are being studied for racial biases then it is hard to stage an environment that will induce an unconscious reaction. This makes it hard to check the validity of a test being able to be applied to day-to-day situations since when doctors or healthcare providers are in study environments they understand the need to look racially neutral. These researchers believe that to get accurate results the true focus of the research cannot be known and for implicit bias, as it pertains to patient care, to be observed it needs to be in a real-world setting (Hickens, Kravitz-Wirtz, Durkee, & Jackson, 2018).

To better help with this disconnect, Grif Alspach (2018) discussed the use of the IAT as a tool for physicians to determine their own biases and the different strategies in current research to help combat implicit bias. However, Grif Alspach (2018) points out there is a stigma that having a bias means that an individual is unfit to care for patients, which leads individuals to become defensive by denying the validity of implicit bias tools. To ensure the stigma does not overtake research, it needs to be understood how that implicit bias and stereotyping is normal. Implicit bias exploration is not a threat, but is a device used to understand that the more stress

and automatic a situation is the higher risk implicit bias will materialize (Grif Alspach, 2018; Maina, Belton, Ginzberg, Singh & Johnson, 2018)

Cooper, Roter, Carson, Beach, Sabin, Greenwald, and Inui (2012) explored this idea of implicit bias being a normal and automatic phenomenon by having different providers of different races and disciplines take the IAT. They found that racial forms of implicit bias were common with Caucasian providers, whereas black providers showed low IAT for a single preference (Cooper & et al, 2012). This helps supports the idea that implicit bias is a learned issue that could be derived from cultural racism. This gives research hope because if something is learned that gives way to the possibility of being unlearned. Yet, there are arguments against the idea of implicit bias being a natural occurrence. This study showed however that privilege plays a role in identifying an individual's possible implicit bias because even though not all races may have an innate unfavorable or predominant implicit bias, those in groups of privilege may be more susceptible to having an out-group bias. There are disagreements over the innateness of implicit bias, but all sides agree that implicit bias can be fought through education and self-reflection (Cooper & et al, 2012).

Law. Similar to the health care system, the judicial system also runs into issues of implicit bias being an unexplored stigmatized issue by defenders of the system. Selmi (2018) argues that in current law literature, implicit bias has a different definition than what is stated in social psychology. In law, most define implicit bias as being anything short of a confession. This means that even if an individual knows their biases and act out through prejudice or discrimination, unless they confess their preconceived bias then these actions are considered implicit bias-motivated.

Greenwald and Krieger (2006) emphasizes that implicit bias cannot be broken down into a single mental process, but rather is an encompassing of many implicit mental functions. These researchers list "implicit memory, implicit perception, implicit attitudes, implicit stereotypes, implicit self-esteem, and implicit self-concept" as all branches that make up the implicit bias process (p. 947). This list of processes altogether and an individual can create an implicit bias in a person's unconscious. The concept of implicit bias in research, as explained by Greenwald and Krieger (2006), as it is involved in law challenges legal theory and practices. In looking at research from sixty-one studies they found that when social sensitive situations were measured through implicit measure versus explicit measures then an implicit measure of bias had greater predictive validity. This was attributed to individuals having an aversion to wanting to interpret or express personal biases out of fear of how it will negatively affect them. This makes the definition of implicit bias in law that Selmi (2018) makes problematic at being useful in the courtroom.

Selmi (2018) argues that along with the negatives of using implicit bias as a default for most acts of discrimination, the law is also hurting the effectiveness of the court system at stopping implicit bias by deeming it as uncontrollable. By saying implicit bias is uncontrollable the law is going against the original concept in social psychology that considers it highly malleable. He highlights that because of the way the law conceptualizes implicit bias, it ignores the ever underlining issue that individuals are reluctant to express or truly self-evaluate their own racial implicit biases because they fear that would identify them as racist (Selmi, 2018; Greenwald & Krieger, 2006). Thus this idea of everything short of a confession is implicit bias feeds into the system of thinking that it is better and safer for individuals to hide and not critically reflect of what biases they may hold. Selmi (2018) wants the narrative in law about

implicit bias to change back to a discussion focused on stereotypes as it influences discrimination and leaving implicit bias exploration with the discipline of psychology. This idea of taking implicit bias out of law practices and language is one step in which Selmi, Greenwald, and Krieger attempt to fight back against the stigma. By suggesting the need to redefine the role of implicit bias in a way to hold individuals accountable this may change the narrative and force individual to deal with their unconscious biases instead of hiding behind them.

Selmi (2018) was focusing on implicit as it pertains to persecuting crimes with a racial component in the eyes of the law, whereas Birckhead (2017) looks at how implicit bias shapes the system from the stances of the school administrators, intake probation officers, police officers, and prosecutors. Birckhead (2017) discussed almost the same argument as many of the authors who discussed the health care providers and implicit bias. She examined how even with individuals who are supposed to operate in a system of “innocent until proven guilty” implicit biases can cloud judgment at every level. Birckhead uses the example of how even defense attorneys who operate on behalf of accused children of color may find themselves perpetuating race-based judgments through jury selection or by "advising their young Black clients to speak, dress, and act like ‘good Blacks' during court hearings" (2017, p. 420). This perpetuation continues with judges who will give harsher sentences to children deemed, most likely unconsciously, as confirming negative racial stereotype. This shows how implicit bias is affecting the lives of individuals on a higher level than just everyday person-to-person encounters.

Young, Levinson, and Sinnett (2014) pushed even further into this idea of implicit racial bias being a cultural issue of courtrooms by testing a mock jury to see at what rate the jury would presume individuals of being innocent or guilty. In their experiment, they tested sixty-one

individuals by having a judge in full garment read a series of jury instructions. Then the jury would be shown headshots of two black and two white faces that were considered equal in attractiveness and with all four not smiling against a neutral background. Then the faces were paired on the screen and using the dot-probe task the researchers were able to determine if the jurors would be more probable to convict a white individual or black individual after being read the jury instructions. A dot-probe task (initially developed by MacLeod, Mathews, & Tata in 1986) is when a researcher measures how strongly a participant's attention is drawn to a stimuli, which in this case was the white individual versus the black individual. In the end, the research yielded that whites are likely to be presumed innocent over blacks especially after presumption of innocence instructions are read. This lead to the conclusion that "the core principle designed to ensure fairness in the legal system primes attention for Black faces, indicating that this supposedly fundamental protection could trigger racial stereotypes" (Young, Levinson, & Sinnett, 2014, p. 1). Even further the research shows how the United States court system can influence individuals to act unconsciously when presuming innocence or guilt.

Education. Implicit racial bias is not limited to the courtroom it also manifests in the educational system, through teachers and school officials. Jason Nance (2017) found that implicit racial bias in schools was predominant and manifested in more severe punishments of African American students, which helped maintain the "school to jail pipeline." Nance (2017) goes on to state that laws should be changed so educators are required to take implicit bias training to help curb their implicit racial bias in the classroom.

Jason Nance (2016) discusses how "criminalization of school discipline" is becoming an emerging focus for research and how schools are creating an environment that prepares students for jail rather than for a future. Nance cites the U.S. Department of Education's Civil Rights Data

Collection (CRD Collection) as showing, in the 2011-2012 school year, a whopping 3.45 million students were suspended, 130,000 students were expelled and 260,000 students were referred to law enforcement. The CRD Collection in 2014 created a snapshot comparing the information that Nance cited and in that article the CRD found that children of color "are suspended and expelled at a rate three times greater than white students" (p.1). This enforces Nance's stance of how these disciplinary actions are contributing to disparities in the quality of education for children of color in the classroom. He also points out that the loss time during these periods can contribute to the likelihood of falling behind, dropout rates and future criminal activity (Nance, 2016). Nance then discusses how this could be traced back to implications of implicit biases held by staff and faculty.

Denise Whiford and Andrea Emerson (2018) tested 34 white female teachers and found that though their sample was small there was a pattern of implicit racial bias against African American students that needs to be explored further with a more saturated sample. In this experiment they noticed that before introducing the empathy training stimuli to the teachers there was a disproportionate amount of disciplinary action, such as school suspensions, dismissals, or referrals, against African American students. Though this study would need more saturation to show a definitive pattern, it does start a strong argument for the implications of implicit bias in the classroom that were also outlined by Nance (2016; 2018) as the "school to jail pipeline." Whiford and Emerson (2018) also were able to provide hope in future research using empathy training to combat implicit bias.

Empathy as a Form of Intervention

Empathetic strategies have been used as a way to lower the presences of implicit bias and help lower the risk of implicit bias manifesting in moments of impulse. Denise Whiford and

Andrea Emerson (2018) discussed how in their research of lowering implicit race bias by using empathetic interventions their experimental group showed significant reduction in implicit bias when compared to the control group. Though they only did this experiment with 34 participants, it does raise enough questions for future studies to begin exploring the impact of empathy as a form of intervention.

Patricia Devine, Patrick Forscher, Anthony Austin and William Cox (2012) in their research, used interventions similar to the ones provided by The Greater Good Science Center at the University of California Berkeley. In their study, they showed that through providing awareness of implicit bias, using the IAT followed by intervention strategies, that over the course of eight weeks the experimental group was able to maintain lower levels of implicit bias compared to the control. This helps show the possibility of using intervention strategies along with implicit bias tests could help create a negative correlation relationship between empathy intervention and implicit bias. Another critical component these researchers believe could contribute to this relationship was the way the researchers framed implicit bias as a bad habit. Through rebranding implicit bias as a kind of bad habit rather than the standard rhetoric of implicit bias being source of character or moral corruption helped to ease participant and helped cultivate a space of safety (Devine, Forscher, Austin & Cox, 2012).

Christy Boscardin (2015) asserted in her article, “Reducing Implicit Bias Through Curricular Interventions," that an intervention is needed, especially in medical school, to lower implicit bias in hospitals. She also continues to describe that such interventions should focus on self-awareness, which is what empathy interventions cover. By allowing individuals to be confronted by their implicit biases in a constructive safe environment it increases their likelihood that such interventions will lead to a reduction in implicit biases (Boscardin, 2015).

Significance of the Research

Based on what has been shown in the provided Literature Review there are possible issues within the United States that can be partly contributed to implicit bias. Implicit bias research accessibility, stigmas, and knowledge are all determinants of whether or not this research is being utilized as intended by everyday individuals. This research becomes more predominant when it is accompanied by how an individual's implicit bias can put other individuals' health at risk (Blair et al., 2013). In professions such as the judicial system, education, and medical fields, they are always faced with upholding the wellbeing of others; in these areas implicit bias can turn into a lack of quality of existence for all people.

Purpose of the Research

Though there is no formal hypothesis that guides this research, the primary researcher hopes that if this research can shed light on the cultural stigma forming around implicit bias there can be an increase in utilization of research and an increase in an individual's culpability of maintaining implicit bias ignorance. In essence, the purpose of this research was to show the strength of the social stigma surrounding implicit biases that expresses itself as feelings of guilt or defensiveness when discussing bias. By helping to identify this stigma it can lead to understanding the underutilization and lack of personal exploration of extant implicit bias research. Semi-structured interviews were used to analyze individuals' attitudes toward the perceived validity of implicit bias research as it affects everyday individuals.

The choice of students from higher education as the sample was due to their proximity to available research and exposure to educational resources. Also, this access to scholarly research and understanding of how to find this information makes this point in their lives prime for testing such attitudes since such scholarly sources are not available to most everyday people. Thus,

possibly showing the strength of these stigmas by individuals not taking advantage of implicit bias research even when the full spectrum of research is easily accessible. The results provide a snapshot of vital information about how stigmas affect current attitudes towards implicit bias and give a base for future exploration of implicit bias research playing a more significant role in greater society. This pilot study also gives an insight of how future research focused on implicit biases may need to be structured to obtain the best results. Based on the work of Greenwald and colleagues (2013), as well as The Greater Good Science Academy, the following research questions were addressed:

Research Questions

1. How do different demographics expanded out into race, socioeconomic status growing up, hometown's population, age, gender, exposure to different ethnicities before college and political views impact the way participants will react to their IAT results?
2. What are potential emotional reactions individuals have upon discovering their implicit biases?
3. How will the identification of implicit biases shape a participant's willingness to practice the empathy strategies?

Methodology

Research Design

Prior to participating in the study participants were emailed a copy of the verbal consent form and verbal consent was officially obtained before the interviews were conducted. Semi-structured interviews were administered in an enclosed conference room to achieve privacy for the research and a neutral location for participants. All interviews were recorded on a hands-free recording device and were destroyed at the conclusion of the study. The participants and the researcher met twice: for an initial interview and a follow-up interview. At the end of the first interview participants were asked if they were willing to do a follow-up interview and both agreed. Most interview questions were scripted to ensure a uniformed progression of questioning (see Appendix A). However, several spontaneous questions emerged due to questions asked by participants, probing for additional information, or as a way to clarify participants' answers. Field notes were taken to gauge nonverbal reactions that would otherwise not be able to be obtained from the recorded interviews. The notes were completed immediately after each interview. Field notes and interviews were transcribed and analyzed to identify any emerging themes and categories.

The research design explored the predominance of stigmas that might hinder individuals from personal analysis of implicit bias and underutilization of empathetic strategies. This pilot study incorporated qualitative data in the form of semi-structured interviews. It also incorporated quantitative elements through participants providing demographic information (e.g., age, gender, family income, hometown size, etc.). The use of qualitative data in the form of interviews helped create a small snapshot of current opinions surrounding implicit bias research at a university level. The sample of students were purposely chosen based on their proximity to the research

site, their availability for the current research, and the students' accessibility to academic journals and other resources related to implicit bias.

Sample

The sample was comprised of two English-speaking white male college seniors from a Midwestern college. The original goal for the sample was to recruit 10 participants in senior standing that were in human-centered fields seeking to be pre-law or pre-med. However, due to workload, timing of the MCAT, and timing of the LSAT, it was challenging to recruit seniors. Through the sampling process, two participants were recruited within the three months allotted to locate participants. The objective of recruiting participants from a college setting in their final semester, was selected due to their level of education obtained through seven previous semesters, development as scholars, accessibility to research, and availability to the researcher. Though the two participants were not active in areas of power in the fields of law, education, or health care, they both were exposed to the educational system and both sought jobs in which they will be working on teams or leadership positions where implicit bias may play a significant role in their success.

Instruments

Race Implicit Association Test (race IAT). For the current study, the race IAT subscale was used as a form of stimuli to gauge the responses individuals may have when confronted with an implicit bias. The likelihood of having an automatic preference to whites especially if the participants themselves are white was high enough to deem it likely that with the race IAT the participants would have an automatic preference whether strong, moderate, or slight towards European Americans. Furthermore, the interest of using the race IAT was because of its testability and perceived likelihood of evoking a reaction by the participants towards an implicit

bias. As stated in the introduction, the IAT is a well-tested instrument that was considered the best way to produce a reaction while maintaining the lowest risk to participants.

Recording device. An Olympus Digital Voice Recorder DS-40 device was used in all interviews. The instrument was set in the middle of a table approximately equal distance from the participant and the researcher for sound quality. This device was also used to obtain verbal consent before interviews began. Upon completion of the research and submission of this thesis, all transcriptions and recordings were destroyed per guidelines set by the University's Intuitional Review Board (IRB). To ensure recordings were not saved in any other form besides the recording device, all audio was listened to directly from the recording device through headphones connected to the recorder's auxiliary jack. A total of 82 minutes and 28 seconds of audio was recorded between the four interview sessions.

Research handout. The handout shown in Appendix C was given to participants to observe whether knowledge of having an implicit bias was enough self-motivation to pursue strategies to address and/or unlearn implicit bias without active intervention by the researcher. The handout contains the implicit bias definition that was read in the beginning of the first interview, a preview of Berkeley's the Greater Good in Action Project (GGIA) empathy strategies, a brief description provided by GGIA of the four selected strategies, instructions on how to view the website and then the strategies, and contact information for the primary researcher, the research advisor, and the local IRB. It was presumed that once participants were made aware of their implicit bias, the handout would be used to further the understanding of how individuals perceive the urgency of unlearning implicit bias and the participant's self-motivation to do so. These specific strategies were chosen because of their accessibility to the public, their

facilitation by an education institution and their definitive instructions for participants on how to practice empathy in their everyday lives.

Interview questions. The semi-structured interview questions came from a combination of common points by the existing literature and the IAT website. The limitations section within most of the reviewed literature discussed that current societal understanding of implicit bias, and the implications of how participants understand what having an implicit bias means, could have skewed their research and results. This exploration to gather a beginning understanding of how individuals not within social sciences understand social science concepts was the driving force in the way the interview questions were developed. All questions were focused on inquiring what knowledge participants had, how they felt once made aware of their implicit bias, and what value they attribute to such concepts.

Transcription of Interviews

All transcriptions were done by the primary researcher immediately following all interviews and were kept on an encrypted zip drive. All audio was subjected to conversation analysis which included a detailed transcription including conversations, interruptions, pauses, grunts, coughs, laughter, and all other discernable noises or forms of speech (Babbie, 2010). For every thirty minutes of audio, it took the researcher approximately two hours of transcription and audio repetition to ensure all discernable noise was transcribed on the typed document. Field notes that were included within the transcription and noted of when they were observed by the researcher. All field note observations were written during the interviews and notes were taken of what time during the interview they were observed to ensure fluidity between the audio transcription and the timing of observed behaviors.

Coding of Transcripts

Coding of themes was conducted as a Grounded Theory Method (GTM) where all codes were a result of an inductive approach (Babbie, 2010). This coding scheme allowed the information collected to shape the direction the research was developed and coded rather than the codes being predetermined and filed accordingly. Since the researcher was uncertain of the possibility of obtaining more than one participant interview (do to time constraints), the P01 interview was assigned its own subset of codes before the P02 interview information was obtained. The first interview coding matched closely with the questions that were asked and the code names assigned initially were longer such as "understanding implicit bias," "importance of empathetic strategies," "moral culpability of bias," and many others. Once the second interview was acquired, that interview was coded in a similar manner and consistent patterns between the two interviews began to form. Using the constant comparative method similarities were found and were coded together resulting in the four core themes elaborated on within the remaining sections of this thesis: (1) Understanding, (2) Morally Corrupt, (3) Validity, and (4) Emotions. The researcher chose to provide analysis of the commonalities in themes, rather than the differences; it was assumed future work using a larger sample (additional observations) will allow for saturation and confidence in the remaining non-analyzed themes.

Data Collection

Demographic information of participants was collected during the first interview portion. All interviews were conducted in an enclosed setting in a one-on-one format. Interviews were recorded on an audio recording device to allow the primary researcher to give full presence and attention to the participants. The recorder was only used for interviews and transcribing purposes, which was done by the primary researcher within her office. Both participants were assigned numbers to replace names, which represent them through the interview and

documenting process. Names were not requested, and all participants were informed that all information regarding their identities would be strictly confidential. The layout of the initial interview (Appendix A), follow up interview (Appendix B) and the research handout (Appendix C) are provided within the Appendices.

Results

Analyses

The objective of the analysis was to examine similarities within the two cases and conceptualize emerging themes. Implicit social cognition theory focuses on how the unconscious nature of implicit bias is based on automatic responses thus does not directly correlate to all manifestations of discrimination or prejudice, which generally are categorized as controlled biases (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). This theory is the base of this analysis by seeing how the participants react to implicit bias and if this school of thought was reflected in their understanding. Through the examination of the two transcripts and field notes taken between the two cases, four major themes emerged that were analyzed. The themes that were identified were coded under four names: (1) Understanding, (2) Morally Corrupt, (3) Validity, and (4) Emotions. The following section will provide a brief background of each individual in order to provide a better understanding of what could have influenced these observations. The researcher believed these themes create a better understanding of the recurring patterns that could be extracted from the information provided by the participants. Then the latter section will discuss the four themes with a brief description of the theme, quotes, field notes and a detailed analysis each of the theme as they relate to theory.

An important point that must be made about the analysis is that it is more of a phenomenography analysis approach based on responses and observed behaviors of the participants. This analysis is possibly influenced, and different aspects could be seen as necessary, because of the researcher's well-adapted background in the field of Human Relations and the lens the individual researcher understands her world. Others in a differing field of study may observe the same phenomenon, which may take on different meaning or other aspects may

be seen as more significant. Though this is important to point out for understanding the following analysis at its core this examination is still based in theory.

Brief Biographies

P01: P01 is a 29-year-old, Caucasian, heterosexual male. He grew up in a middle-class family in a town with a population of 50,000. He has one child and based on interactions seems to be an attentive father. He is a college student with a senior standing majoring in engineering and is considering becoming a captain in the military. Before coming to college he would describe his interaction with those of other races being limited and mainly interacting with other Caucasians. As an individual who is in the military, he recalls being going through briefings focused on understanding human based concepts and intergroup dynamics. When it comes his belief systems and seeing what political party best represents him, he identifies more with republican views.

P02: P02 is a 22-year-old, Caucasian, homosexual male. He is a college student with a senior standing that believes in the importance of qualitative research and is Linguistics major. He grew up in a middle-class family from Tulsa, Oklahoma that has a large population, however he would describe his interactions with individuals of color being limited. He went to a Catholic school, which he believes may have contributed to this lack of contact. He considers himself a Democrat and aligning with the general beliefs of the Democratic Party.

Qualitative Themes

Understanding. The understanding theme reflects the fundamental understanding the participants already had of implicit bias and the critical role they believe it plays as being an unconscious belief. They both had good definitions of what implicit bias was even if it did not cover all that this bias entails. Having this working knowledge put the perspective that implicit

bias is more mainstream in society, however, everything that it covers is not fully understood by these two participants. When asked to define implicit bias P01 stated:

> "*Probably just…. biased based on your environmental norms but like growing up an um like you don't even realize that you have sort of been indoctrinated into these beliefs that you exhibit*"

When asked the same question P02 took this similar definition, but included its influence in different relationships. P02 stated:

> "*um biases that may not be aware of um but still affect how they operate in their daily lives umm and how they interact with other people um yeah yeah kind of space like online, in person, professionally, socially, friendships. Yeah its pervasive but a lot of people aren't aware of their implicit biases."*

Both participants in their understanding discuss that implicit bias is an unconscious idea, but still in both of their definitions much is still to be desired. Some aspects of implicit bias that P02 did not consider was the idea that P01 discussed, which is implicit bias being a learned behavior. He states, *"you have been indoctrinate into these beliefs."* However, in the same way P02 discussed the idea of how it can affect how an individual chooses relationships, which is an aspect that P01's definition did not encompass. This idea that both participants left out parts of implicit bias could be seen as representing the different interpretations implicit bias is understood as a term outside of research. By not having the holistic definition of implicit bias how the participants may interpret or understand their own implicit biases could skew. This skew would be caused by how they believe this implicit bias manifests or developed in their lives.

In this understanding theme there is the possibility to separate it further based on both of the participant's responses and how they chose to answer their "why" for if they believe

someone is morally bad for having an implicit bias. Kimberle Crenshaw's (1989) Intersectionality theory may explain the differences in their answers. For participant P02 being liberal, a Linguist, and homosexual may cause him to be exposed to different experiences that have lead him to come in contact with implicit bias issues either towards him or discussed in social settings. This would contribute to his more complete definition when discussing implicit bias.

However, with P01 being in STEM, heterosexual, Conservative and in the military may account for his lack of maintaining his understanding of the implicit bias definition. He may have never encountered the topic, other than what he discussed as what was involved in his military training sessions. When it comes to an individual's exposure to a topic it is essential to understand a person's intersectionality since there is a high chance this will affect their answers. Even more so this is based on what details about their lives they were willing to share. It is possible that more intersectionality aspects are at play in other areas of their answers that could not be explored.

Morally corrupt. The Morally Corrupt theme looks at how the participants interpreted implicit bias as it related to an individual's morals. Both participants agreed that a person who has an implicit bias should not be seen as morally corrupt. However, their reasoning for that conclusion differs. Their answers stemmed from when they were asked, "Do you believe a person who has an implicit bias when it comes to socially sensitive issues is a morally bad person? Why or why not?" P01 said:

"No…because it is out of your control."

When P02 was asked the same questions he stated:

> *"No… ummm I think implicit biases are often umm obviously I haven't studied this but it seems intuitive that umm being that there is an understanding that implicit biases aren't something your always aware of if you haven't any chance to work through them ummm you haven't been able to reject growth in a way so…you know I think growing up in a small town predominantly very one race that is normally like white you get a certain mindset about other people and if you haven't had the chance taa talk about implicit bias as just in general you haven't had any chance ta um combat your own implicit bias. So I don't think, I think assigning that person as morally less than someone else who doesn't have the same implicit biases means that they are not able to over come them. So I don't I don't think that having an implicit bias trying to work through back to what the question was cause I kind forgot but… there ya go."*

Though both participants agreed that a person should not be considered morally bad person they differ in their reasoning for why. When it comes to P01's answer it is important to point out the statement he used of *"out of your control"* by using this wording he is going against his definition of implicit bias as being something learned. If something is learned it gives it the ability to be malleable and able to change, however with this addition means that potentially there is a lack of current understanding in this malleable aspect of implicit bias. However, P02's reasoning was closer to the definition he gave for implicit bias, as being something an individual cannot be held in moral contempt for because of their lack of awareness of the implicit bias.

In the morally corrupt theme, whether the participants believed someone was morally questionable because of their implicit biases was an important question to ask them. This was key because it forced participants to verbalize to themselves that if they did have an implicit bias

they are not a morally corrupt person. It was also important that the definition and this question were asked before they were ever given the information by the researcher because it allowed their answers to be spontaneous. However, as what will be discussed in the Emotion theme, despite this verbalization and the researcher confirming both of the participants that this is true they both still had an adverse reaction to their results.

In the morally corrupt theme this cognitive dissonance could be a conflict in understanding of if someone is a bad person for having an implicit bias. Though they know and have verbalized that the answer is no after gaining their results, guilt and confusion could have set in of whether that was actually true. Another, possibility is that it is not an issue of cognitive dissonance, but the result of the Elton Mayo's Hawthorne effect or more widely understood the observer effect of participants modifying their behaviors based on being observed. So in the case of this pilot study, the participants may have provided answers based on what they believed the research was looking for as an answer. One small part that could indicate this is in the demographic section when P02 was asked, "What was your exposure to other races before college?" he answered but then followed up with *"Is that the kind of response you were looking for? What were you wanting from exposure to other races prior to…"* Though, this is the only time this occurred it could be seen as the participant wanting to ensure he provided the answers the researcher was seeking.

Validity. For the validity theme participants both questioned the validity and methods used by the IAT. They both questioned the tests validity after viewing their results and again in the follow-up interview. Both were briefed before the test of the possible cognitive dissonance the test can provoke along with how the test is generally laid out. However, it was not until after the test was completed and they saw their results that they began to question the test. As noted in

the field notes both participants also changed the way they spoke, which was also evident in the recordings. They both go from varying speech patterns and nonchalant to lower steady tones and began to be more direct. There also is a note that both crossed their arms and P02 physically distanced himself from the table. P01 began questioning the validity as a justification for why he was not having an emotional reaction to the results. P01 said:

> *"Not really and the reason is because I aaa can say I just question a little bit the testing method. I think it should be more extensive to really make conclusive results because it sets you up to click Good associated with Caucasian at the beginning, so you know the way your mind works I have already associated with that so by the time they say switch it to see what the reaction is to associating good with black people I'm having to rewire what I had just programmed my brain to do, right? So aa I don't know if it's accurate or not."*

However, P02 did not wait for me to ask a question after discussing his results he immediately asked:

> "*Okay, do you think there is anything flawed with the ordering they did for the test? And automatically starting with whites with good and blacks with bad then treating it like a game that you have to get use to? And then switching it to where it is kinda confusing?"*

Both participants were concerned with the order in which they had to associate positive words with one race and negative words with the other. However, Project Implicit addresses this question directly in their "Commonly Asked Questions" section. After reading to them that there is not any research to indicate that the difference is significant enough to change a person's results they had mixed response.

In this theme of validity, cognitive dissonance and confirmation bias both could be considered as playing a role. Since both participants likely did not consider themselves racist or morally corrupt prior to this research, it is likely once their results challenged their conscious held beliefs and the implications they judged those associations to mean, they rejected the information causing this discomfort. As a result questioning the validity of the test is one way to maintain or confirm how they consciously viewed themselves was still accurate. Though, they were reassured their implicit bias does not make them racist, sexist, or seen as aligning with any other form of overt prejudice.

Another theory that could be in play is the stereotype threat discussed by Claude Steele in the book *Whistling Vivaldi and Other Clues to How Stereotypes Affect Us.* Steele (2011) discusses how knowing a stereotype about an individual's race can lead to individuals to internalizing any negative associations and they may attempt to try to separate themselves from this perceived threat. In this case, the threat of the stereotype of Caucasian individuals being racists could have invoked this need to deny implicit bias. This "threat" could also be enforced further because of the 2019 political climate and constant social media presence of racist act being portrayed by Caucasian individuals. Though these portrayals are explicit bias and not implicit bias, it may give more to the argument of individuals possibly conflating the implications of implicit bias and explicit bias.

Emotions. The emotions theme was raised based on particpants responses to the question of "What is your emotional reaction to your results and why do you think those emotions were manifested?" and the micro expressions that were observed. The way the both answered this question was different, but the mood in both rooms changed once they received their results and the validity questions they had about the IAT was answered. Both were noted to have a change in

their voices went from casual to direct. Even the tones of their voices became deeper and did not fluctuate as much. For P02 when asked if he was having an emotional reaction to his results he replied:

"Maybe later when I think about it I will."

When asked if he would like to elaborate on the comment he quickly replied:

"No."

When it came to P01 the same nonverbal reactions were seen, however, as seen in his quote from the validity theme, he believe he was not having an emotional reaction because he *"just question a little bit the testing method."* It was actively chosen by the researcher to not bring these changes to the attention of either participant or push for an answer for why these emotions were being felt. The reason for this was because due to the quick onset of the change and the observed emotions it was believed the participants might not even directly be aware of their own emotions fully and not be able to process them. As discussed earlier the IAT can cause cognitive dissonance, which can invoke negative emotions of attempting to understand the underlining implications of their implicit biases. These strong emotional reactions observed are believed to be the reason why, in the follow up interview, neither participant looked or even practiced the empathy strategies they were provided. When asked why both answered they were too busy and did not wish to give further information leaving an originally timed 30 minute interview to conclude in 4 minutes in both cases.

The emotion theme embodies all of the theories previously discussed of these strong emotional reactions being caused by a mixture of intersectionality, cognitive dissonance, Hawthorne effect, confirmation bias, and the stereotype threat. It is hard to say definitively the source of such reactions, but with future research and a more significant sample saturation this

aspect could be explored on a grander scale. Another, way in which this could be analyzed is through social learning theory and discovering if the way an individual develops, such behaviors and imitation, can shape the way all of the previous theories relate to evolving into this emotional outcome exhibited (Newman & Newman, 2015).

Discussion

Conclusion

Implicit bias has a far reach through society. However, majority of the research is focused within three spheres: healthcare, education, and judicial. Though empathy strategies have been able to show a pattern through the literature to aid implicit bias both implicit bias research and empathy strategies continue to be not employed in the greater society. In this pilot study of P01 and P02, gave a possible pattern as to why this underutilization is happening and what the greater society's interpretation of what having an implicit bias may mean for the individual. Despite the term implicit bias being considered "mainstream," within these two cases it can be seen that much was left to be desired in the holistic understanding of implicit bias. With a more saturated sample and with the patterns exhibited by P01 and P02 as the foundation, future changes can begin to take form in how implicit bias research is approached with every-day application in mind. The four different themes, though connected, give a snapshot understanding and experience of what implicit bias research could be with each theme as individual players in how implicit bias research could be looked at moving forward.

Recommendations

Though the term implicit bias is gaining momentum in the broader society, there is still an abundance of work needed to explore the limits of implicit bias research. In this pilot study, an insight into the possible emotional implications of identifying an individual's implicit bias was observed. However, due to this study's small scale a larger saturation sample must be conducted before the full emotional implications surrounding implicit bias can be revealed. In this study, some issues that arose dealt primarily with matters with recruitment of students of senior standings. Another potential challenge was the possible variable of having individuals discuss a sensitive topic in a one-on-one interview, which could have created a perceived

atmosphere of judgment or Hawthorne effect. Then leading to neither participant following through with the application of empathy strategies when left to do them on their own. In future study, especially if one-on-one interviews are involved, a direct intervention with empathy strategies with the research may be necessary in order to be able to test the impact they have on IAT.

For future research each theme could be broken up and focused on as individual studies. The recommended first step would be focusing research on this possible conflation of explicit bias societal attitudes and how they may be impacting or framing implicit bias research narrative in the greater society. There may even need to be a new narrative created focused on rebranding implicit bias as a "bad habit" just as Devine, Forscher, Austin and Cox (2012) did in their study. Though this is a well-explored topic more strides need to be made to bring this topic holistically into the public scope of understanding. If implicit bias research is to ever function as an individual driven force a lot of work needs to be done in making the topic important enough for people to believe it is worth investing in to unlearn (i.e., utilize offered strategies). Without future research attempting to make this topic more acceptable so themes, such as the ones observed in these case studies, do not happen then the underutilization of these resources will persist. However, as stated earlier more research needs to be focused on showing the patterns of this pilot study on a more saturated scale before all these news steps in implicit bias research can be done. Suggestions for future research questions include:

1. How will a person's intersectionality possibly affect the way they interpret implicit bias and react to having an implicit bias?

2. Does rebranding implicit bias as a “bad habit” rather than a “bias” make the research better received by participants leading to a more active participation in strategies to combat implicit bias?
3. Would implicit bias discussion about race change if facilitated online and generate more genuine discussions or understandings of implicit bias?
4. Does social media and political climate force an internal conflated understanding between explicit and implicit bias, which leads to an increased resilience by participants of wanting to explore their implicit biases?

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Appendix A

Interview

Demographic information.

1. Gender:_____
2. Age:_____
3. Race: _____
4. Sexuality:_____
5. Average family income growing up: _____
6. Approximate size of hometown:_____
7. Political Party:_____
8. Exposure to other Races prior to college: _____

First Interview Script. Hello and thank you for your participation to the study of implicit bias. This interview will last 30mins or longer depending on your responses. Please note, that you have the choice to not answer a question and no explanation will be requested. This interview will comprise of basic knowledge of implicit bias questions followed by the action of taking the Race Implicit Association test and then another set of questions to address your experience of taking the IAT and your reaction to your results.

1. Have you ever heard of implicit or unconscious bias before today?
2. What is your definition of implicit or unconscious bias?
3. Do you believe a person who has an implicit bias when it comes to socially sensitive issues is a morally bad person? Why or Why not?

- Give definition of implicit bias and give a short summary of the literature

- Now give a short disclaimer that the IAT can show results that may not align with the persons publically held beliefs and the importance of understanding that the IAT must only be used for educational purposes of self-evaluation only. Then I will offer them the chance to opt out of this section of the interview.
- If they proceed then section A questioning will take place and it the opt out section B questions will take place.

A. Administer IAT

    1. Did you find the IAT to be difficult or easy? What was easy or difficult about the test?
    2. Would you be willing to show me the results of your test?
    3. What is your emotional reaction to your results and why do you think those emotions were manifested?
    4. Do you believe that the IAT is a good predictor of implicit bias? Why or why not?
    5. Would you like to hear of current strategies to help combat possible implicit biases you may have?
        a. https://ggia.berkeley.edu/#filters=empathy
    6. Do you believe any of these strategies could help you in your day-to-day life?

    - At this point I will ask critical questions dependent on their answers to these six questions

B. The IAT will not be administered

    1. What is the first reason that comes to mind for why you may not want to take the Race IAT?

2. What was the first emotion you felt when I requested you to take the Race IAT? Then why do you believe that emotion was triggered?
3. Would you like to hear of current strategies to help combat possible implicit biases you may have?
    a. https://ggia.berkeley.edu/#filters=empathy
4. Do you believe any of these strategies could help you in your day-to-day life?

- At this point I will ask critical questions dependent on their answers to these four questions

Thank you for participating in this research. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant or any concerns or complaints regarding your participation, you can contact me at Alexandra_dinges@ou.edu or (405)325-0377. You may also contact Dr. Shannon Bert at bert@ou.edu or (405) 325-1766 or OU's IRB at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

. Now would you be willing to set up a non-formal meeting in one week for a short check up interview?

Thank you again.

Appendix B

Follow up Interview

Hello and thank you for coming back for a follow up interview. This interview will last 30mins or longer depending on your responses. Please note, that you have the choice to not answer a question and no explanation will be requested.

1. Reflecting on our last meeting what were some of the things you took away?
2. Did you notice any changes in your behavior or did you find yourself being more aware of those around you?
3. Did you reflect on anything that you might have experienced in your past that could have been caused by an implicit bias?
4. Did you look over the empathy practices on the website I provided? If so were they helpful?
5. If you did not look over the strategies, why not?
6. Do you believe the knowledge you now have about implicit bias will change the way you cultivate new relationships?
7. Overall do you believe that this was a good experience and the information provided is useful?
8. Going forward will you attempt to keep fighting against any implicit biases you may hold? Why or why not?

- At this point I will ask critical questions dependent on their answers to these eight questions

Thank you for participating in this research. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant or any concerns or complaints regarding your participation, you can contact me at Alexandra_dinges@ou.edu or (405)325-0377. You may also contact Dr. Shannon Bert at bert@ou.edu or (405) 325-1766 or OU's IRB at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

Appendix C

Research Handout

Defining Implicit Bias: implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control. Residing deep in the subconscious, these biases are different from known biases that individuals may choose to conceal for the purposes of social and/or political correctness. Rather, implicit biases are not accessible through introspection.

Greater Good in Action:

- Active listening: Express active interest in what the other person has to say and make him or her feel heard.
- Shared identity: Think of a person who seems to be very different from you, and then list what you have in common.
- Put a human face on suffering: When reading the news, look for profiles of specific individuals and try to imagine what their lives have been like.
- Eliciting altruism: Create reminders of connectedness.

These were strategies from Berkeley's Greater Good in Action project and to find ways actively practice these actions please go to:

ggia.berkeley.edu and then select empathy

If you have questions, concerns or complaints about the research or have experienced a research-related injury, contact me at Alexandra_dinges@ou.edu or (405)325-0377. You may also contact Dr. Shannon Bert at bert@ou.edu or (405) 325-1766 or OU's IRB at 405-325-8110 or the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, concerns, or complaints about the research and wish to talk to someone other than the researcher or if you cannot reach the researcher.