



PERCEPTION INSTITUTE

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THE SCIENCE OF EQUALITY

Definitions & Interventions from the Mind Sciences

Perception Institute creates real-world solutions from cutting-edge mind science research to reduce discrimination and other harms linked to race, gender, and other identity differences.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM WE ARE TRYING TO SOLVE?

We are living in a *paradox*.

Despite our stated values of equality,

- There are large differences in academic outcomes and income by race.
- Professional leadership positions are overwhelmingly held by men.
- Black and Latino men are overrepresented in the criminal justice system.

we hold conscious beliefs in equality, but social outcomes don't reflect them

While most of us agree that we should treat all people equally, our individual actions, institutional practices, and public policies continue to say otherwise.

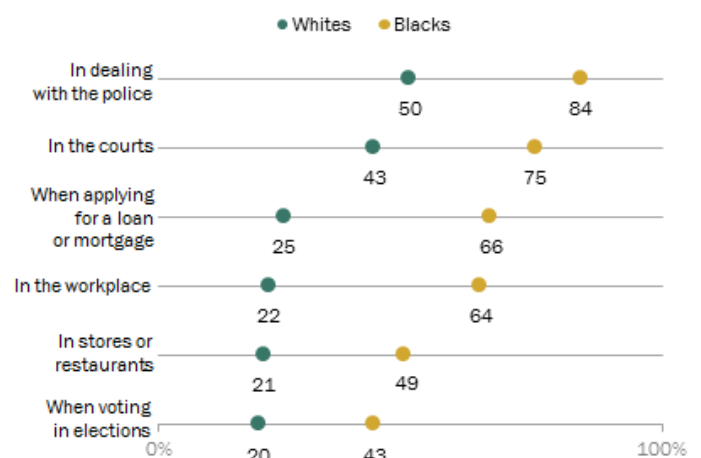
In order to remedy this paradox, we have to tackle *racial polarization*.

Even though we see the same problems, we have such different social experiences and understandings of the world, that we are unable to come together toward a common solution.

Racial polarization is the gap—at the community, institutional, and national level—in our understanding and explanation of racial difference, most often due to the association between our racial identity and our experience of race.

Perceptions of how blacks are treated in the U.S. vary widely by race

% saying blacks are treated less fairly than whites in the country



Pew Research Center (2016) "On Views of Race and Inequality, Blacks and Whites are Worlds Apart"

MIND SCIENCES: KEY CONCEPTS

The mind sciences help us understand why we continue to witness harms linked to identity differences, despite our stated values of equality for all.

EXPLICIT BIAS

Our brains' conscious attitudes about and stereotypes linked to particular groups.

- e.g. the false assumption that Muslims are linked to terrorism, questioning the citizenship of Latino Americans

IMPLICIT BIAS

Our brains' automatic, instant association of stereotypes or attitudes toward particular groups, without our conscious awareness.

- The split-second decisions our brains make (e.g. reactions to or assumptions about someone) without our realizing it.

RACIAL ANXIETY

Our brains' stress response before or during inter-racial interactions.

- For people of color, racial anxiety happens when they fear they will experience bias from someone else, through discrimination, hostile treatment, or invalidation.
- For white people, racial anxiety happens when they fear their actions will be perceived as racist, or that they will be met with distrust or hostility.

STEREOTYPE THREAT

Our brains' impaired cognitive functioning when a negative stereotype about ourselves is activated.

- Stereotype threat is performative—it can affect how we score on a test, perform a task, give a speech, etc.

OTHER CONCEPTS

Confirmation bias When our brains interpret information based on our existing beliefs. We tend to focus on what confirms what we believe, and ignore what goes against it.

Racial threat The fear of one racial group when perceiving social, economic, or political competition from another racial group.

Systems Justification The (often unconscious) motivation to bolster and defend the status quo—that is, the prevailing social, economic, and political systems.

EVIDENCE-BASED

Implicit Bias Interventions

“De-Biasing” – Efforts to Reduce Implicit Bias (i.e. “break the prejudice habit”)

Stereotype Behavior Replacement

Recognize when a response is based on a stereotype, label the response as stereotypical, reflect on why the response occurred, and consider how this biased response could be avoided in future. Replace the biased response with one that is consistent with egalitarian values.

Counter-stereotypic imaging

Imagine, in detail, counter-stereotypic others. These individuals can be real, fictional, or imagined. The strategy makes these images more readily available and useful for countering stereotypes.

Individuation

Gather specific information about individuals, in order to prevent making stereotypic inferences. This strategy helps people evaluate others based on personal, rather than group-based, attributes.

Perspective Taking

Imagine oneself to be a member of a stereotyped group. This increases empathy toward the group and reduces automatic group-based evaluations.

Increase Opportunities for Contact

Seek opportunities to encounter and engage in positive interactions with others. Contact decreases bias by changing mental representations of the group and improving evaluations of the group.

Break the Link Between Bias and Behavior

Doubt Objectivity

Assuming we are objective actually increases the role of implicit bias. Acknowledge the presence of bias.

Increase Motivation to be Fair

Being internally motivated to be fair, rather than being afraid of others' judgment, can decrease bias.

Improve Conditions of Decision-making

Think slow. Engage in mindful, deliberate processing to prevent implicit biases from kicking in and determining behaviors.

Count

Use data to detect biased behavior. Data can reveal racially disparate outcomes and help to identify patterns of behavior that may contribute to those disparities.

SOLUTIONS

Racial Anxiety Interventions

Scripts

Generate consistent language, especially for initial interactions. This helps ease anxiety and allows individuals to focus on making genuine connections.

Increase Intergroup Contact

Direct interaction between members of different racial groups can reduce anxiety and promote more positive inter-group attitudes and expectations for future contact.

Stereotype Threat Interventions

Social Belonging

Increase the sense of belonging for individuals in stereotyped groups. This makes social identity less prominent as a marker of difference.

Wise Criticism

Give feedback that communicates both high expectations and confidence that the individual can meet those expectations. If feedback is purely critical, it may be interpreted as the product of bias; if feedback is purely positive, it may be interpreted as racial condescension. Wise criticism reduces uncertainty about the reason for feedback.

Growth Mindset

Abilities can be treated as either fixed (“you have it or you don’t”) or able to be developed (“you can learn it”). When thought of as fixed, poor performance signals inadequacy, but with the growth mindset, there is just more work to do.

FROM RESEARCH TO REMEDIES

These interventions have been shown to effectively counter the effects of implicit bias, racial anxiety, and stereotype threat.

For source information, see

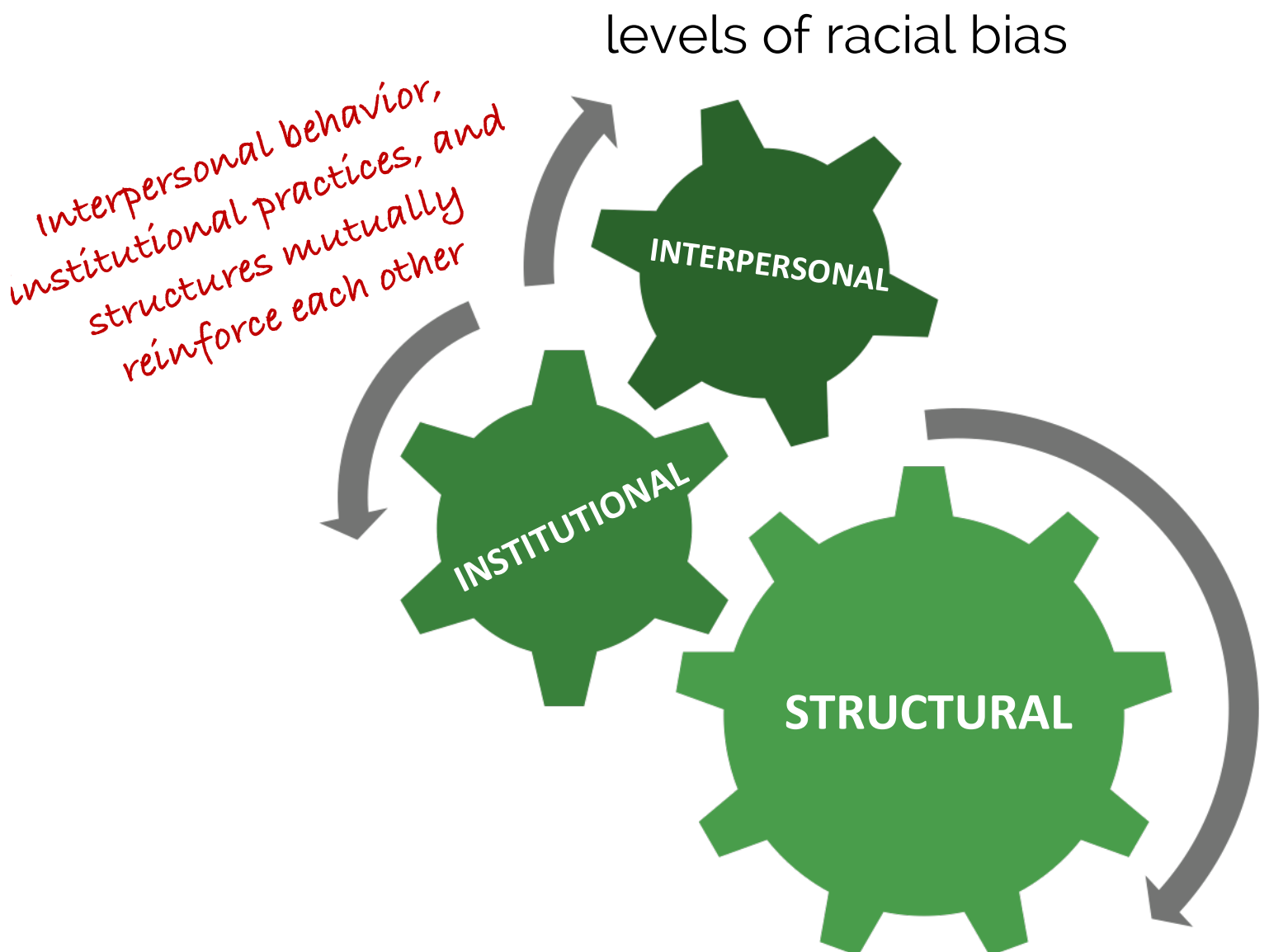
Science of Equality, Volume 1: Addressing Implicit Bias, Racial Anxiety, and Stereotype Threat in Education and Health Care

<http://perception.org/publications/science-of-equality-vol-1>

MIND SCIENCES AND RACE EQUITY

The mind sciences do more than show us how our brains work.

Mind science research demonstrates how we can effectively shift attitudes and behaviors at the interpersonal level. But we can also use mind science research to shift practices and policies within institutions (e.g. school or workplace) in order to promote equity. In doing so, we are better positioned to counter bias at the structural level (e.g. change policy).



PERCEPTION INSTITUTE PUBLICATIONS



The Science of Equality, Volume 1: Addressing Implicit Bias, Racial Anxiety, and Stereotype Threat in Education and Health Care

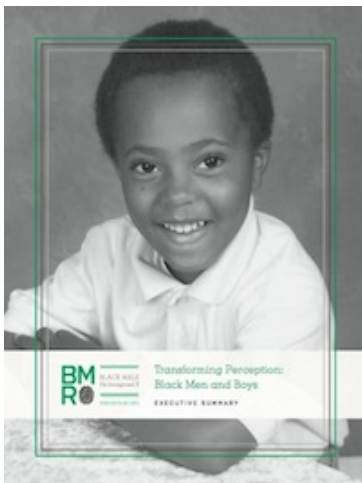
An in-depth look at mind science phenomena in education and health care, with evidence-based strategies.

→ *Look out for Science of Equality, Volume 2: Gender, coming in 2016!*



Telling Our Own Story: The Role of Narrative in Racial Healing

Using mind science to explain the power of narratives, to inform the use of narrative in racial healing.



Transforming Perception: Black Men and Boys

A synthesis of research demonstrating how distorted perceptions of black men and boys are created—and the impact of these biases on life opportunities.

*These— and others —available for
FREE download on our website!*



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Perception Institute is a consortium of researchers, advocates, and strategists that uses cutting-edge mind science to help organizations reduce discrimination linked to race, gender, and other identity differences. Working in sectors where bias has the most power to create harm—our schools, workplaces, hospitals, justice system, and media—we translate findings into interventions and workshops, customize research, and develop strategies to communicate across difference and disrupt the cycle of bias and harm.

For information on

- Mind Science Workshops
- Original Research Design
- Communications Strategies

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