

## Mitigating Implicit Bias in an Online Environment

In an online environment, there are fewer physical cues about students' backgrounds and identities than in a face-to-face setting. However, research suggests that implicit or unconscious biases can still be triggered simply by seeing a name and can impact how students are evaluated and judged (Baker, Dee, Evans, & John, 2018; Moss-Racusin, Dovidio, Brescoll, Graham, & Handelsman, 2012; Reeves, 2015). Implicit biases are often based on stereotypes and assumptions about groups of people. These stereotypes and assumptions are also at the root of microaggressions.

Microaggressions are verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, invalidations, or insults, often based on stereotypes and assumptions, directed at people from marginalized identity groups. Like unconscious bias, microaggressions are often subtle and unintentional (Sue, 2010). In an online environment, *verbal* microaggressions can take the form of something the instructor or a student verbalizes or writes. *Environmental* microaggressions can include course materials or digital media that portray negative stereotypes or erase or minimize certain identities.

### Recommendations for Counteracting Implicit Bias

1. **Explore the impact of implicit bias in our work and social lives.** Watch the videos found in this website to understand implicit bias and learn how to counter its effects. [Who, Me? Biased?](#)
2. **Acknowledge (then avoid) assumptions.** We may unintentionally make inaccurate assumptions about a student based on their name and/or profile picture. These assumptions can lead to positive or negative biases when interacting with and evaluating a student's participation or coursework. The first step is to pay attention to and acknowledge (to yourself) any assumptions or ideas that you might have about your online students based on their names and/or profile pictures. By bringing these thoughts to your conscious awareness, you can more consciously avoid applying the assumptions when interacting with or evaluating these students.
3. **Increase awareness of your own implicit biases.** In order to mitigate implicit bias, we need to first become aware of our own implicit biases. You may take [Harvard's Implicit Association Test](#) to learn more about yourself and any implicit biases you may have.

### References

- Baker, R., Dee, T., Evans, B., & John, J. (2018, March). *Bias in online classes: Evidence from a field experiment* (CEPA Working Paper No. 18-03). Stanford Center for Education Policy Analysis. <https://cepa.stanford.edu/wp18-03>
- Moss-Racusin, C. A., Dovidio, J. F., Brescoll, V. L., Graham, M. J., Handelsman, J. (2012). Science faculty's subtle gender biases favor male students. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 109(41), 16474–16479. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1211286109>
- Sue, D. W. (2010). *Microaggressions in everyday life: Race, gender, and sexual orientation*. Wiley.