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SIMPLE AWARENESS OR ACTIONABLE IMPACT? A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IMPLICIT BIAS TRAINING

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ABSTRACT

SIMPLE AWARENESS OR ACTIONABLE IMPACT? A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IMPLICIT BIAS TRAINING

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This phenomenological study explored teachers' perceptions and examined the impact of implicit bias training conducted by the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) Office of Equity and Access on teachers' instructional practices and expectations for student learning. Participants were teachers in the NYCDOE who took part in implicit bias training between 2018 and June 2022. Methods included participant interviews and document analysis. The theoretical/conceptual framework for this study considered educational values and organizational sensemaking as the lens for analyzing the shift in the New York City Department of Education to an Equity and Excellence agenda, with a specific focus on how teachers made sense of this shift and the implicit bias training as it relates to their instructional practice and beliefs about student learning. This study began to investigate the potential impact of this training, both prior to the COVID-19 pandemic when training was in-person, and in its virtual mode due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings indicate that participants had an increased awareness of implicit bias and acknowledge the need for implicit bias training but felt that the training itself was not enough for them to feel confident in how to mitigate the effects of implicit bias. Further analysis of the data around the impact on instructional practice found that there have not yet been significant shifts in teacher pedagogy. A qualitative study with a larger sample size should be considered for future research.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to those who supported me along this journey. First and foremost, to my husband and daughter who made sure I had the time, space, and encouragement to persist and not give up on achieving this milestone in my educational journey and career. Secondly, to the Medgar Evers College Cohort who invited me to join them on this endeavor. Thank you for the texts, check-ins, and Zoom when that was the only way to meet, to help me focus and keep my eyes on the prize!

Finally, last but certainly not least, this dissertation is dedicated to my past, present, and future students and those colleagues who have influenced my work in education and taught me many lessons that provided insight and guidance during this stage of my journey.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

What role does implicit bias and by extension, teacher beliefs and expectations, play in disparities and inequitable outcomes in education? National gaps persist in achievement data, discipline, tracking, enrollment in gifted and talented programs and advanced courses when comparing racial groups despite educational reforms to close the achievement and other gaps (Fergus 2017; Nance, 2015; Smolkowski, Girvan, McIntosh, Nese, & Horner, 2016). African American students are typically underrepresented when compared to their White peers in advanced programs and over-represented in receiving suspensions and other disciplinary interventions and special education classifications. On a national level, White students make up 60.8% of gifted and talented program enrollment, while Black students comprise 8.8% of enrolled students (Fergus, 2017).

Locally, here in New York City, enrollment in gifted and talented programs is drastically disproportionate when compared to the public school system demographics. Recent statistics show that 27% of students in gifted and talented programs are Black and/or Hispanic, while Black and Hispanic students represent 70% of the student body in New York City public schools (Veiga, 2018). Long-term success for students of color is seriously hindered by enrollment, academic, and discipline policies and practices that lead to disproportionate outcomes (Fergus, 2017; Nance, 2015; Smolkowski, Girvan, McIntosh, Nese, & Horner, 2016). There is a growing body of research that contends implicit bias leads to these disparities in educational outcomes (Smolkowski, Girvan, McIntosh, Nese, & Horner, 2016; Nance, 2015; Fergus, 2017). In addition to this growing body of research, the Office of Equity and Access (OEA) in the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) is analyzing and acting on this trend as well.

A current perceived gap in the NYCDOE is a deficiency in cultural competency about the student population coupled with a lack of implicit bias awareness on the part of educators at all levels of the system which has perpetuated achievement gaps and disproportionalities in outcomes for students of color and multi-lingual learners, as well as students with disabilities. An unprecedented number of resources has been directed to not only address lack of resources at the school level through the "for ALL" programming but to implement mandatory anti-bias training across the entire NYCDOE. "The City will invest $23 million in implicit bias training for all teachers, reaching far beyond just schools with disproportionate suspension and discipline trends" (*OneNYC 2050: Equity and Excellence in Education,* 2019, p. 22). These resources are aimed at eradicating not only structural and systemic barriers to success and disproportionate outcomes for historically underserved populations but addressing personal racism and implicit bias of educators in the classroom. *OneNYC 2050: Equity and Excellence in Education* (2019) underscores the importance of this training: "it is imperative that teachers are aware of their own implicit biases and actively resist the impulse to bring socially constructed prejudices and traditions of inequitable treatment into the classroom" (p. 22).

The New York City Strategic Plan, *OneNYC 2050: Equity and Excellence in Education* (2019) opens with the purpose of school: "The school classroom is a cornerstone of our society and an essential component for creating the next generation of compassionate, considerate, and caring adults. School is where students first learn they are powerful, their thoughts have value, and their lives matter" (p. 5). This statement echoes the ideals of democratic equity, social efficiency, and possibly even social

mobility. The strategic plan outlines three initiatives, two of which explicitly address issues of equity and access: "Advance equity in K-12 opportunity and achievement [Initiative 18] and Increase integration, diversity, and inclusion in New York City schools [Initiative 19]" (p. 3). There are four indicators of success that will be tracked by New York City to measure progress. One of the indicators is "Teachers who receive implicit bias training," and the latest data indicates 10,000 teachers received training as of 2018 and the Target is all (p. 5). The gap that NYCDOE is attempting to address is also supported by this plan, "Teachers will be trained in how to create more equitable, culturally responsive curriculums, and confront their own implicit biases" (p. 20), and the inclusion of this training as an indicator of success for the plan. So, why implicit bias training as a key path to equity and excellence in the NYCDOE?

The conclusion that training in implicit bias for teachers is a lynchpin in the New York City Strategic Plan for the goal of equity and excellence in education is supported by the research that underpins the training itself (Godsil, et al, 2017; MacFarlane, et al, 2016). The NYCDOE has contracted the Perception Institute to work with the Office of Equity and Access to develop the training series. The work of the Perception Institute (Godsil, et al, 2017) and (MacFarlane, et al, 2016) is couched in concepts aligned with Labaree's (1997) goals of schooling and examines "inequities in academic outcomes, disciplinary practices, and other issues in education" (Godsil, et al, 2017, p. 2) through the lenses of psychology and mind sciences. Godsil et al (2017) contends that "even though most administrators and teachers hold egalitarian values and want the best for all children" (p. 2), there is a disconnect between "aspirations and educational practices" (p. 2). They suggest that implicit bias is one of the phenomena that is a primary cause of

inequitable outcomes in academics and disciplinary outcomes, and further indicate that "understanding how our brains navigate race makes it easier to openly embrace difference and create environments that are welcoming to all students, faculty, staff, and parents" (MacFarlane, et al., 2016, p. 18). As a result, the NYCDOE has embraced this research and crafted the mandatory trainings for teachers as the means to close the gap and "ensure students in every borough, district, neighborhood, and school have the tools they need to achieve their dreams" (*OneNYC 2050: Equity and Excellence in Education,* 2019, p. 5).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of implicit bias training conducted by the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) Office of Equity and Access on teacher attitudes, their expectations of students, and their instructional practices. Implicit bias is defined as "the brain's automatic, instantaneous association of stereotypes and attitudes with particular groups…These biases exist beyond our conscious awareness and are often contrary to our conscious values and ideals" (MacFarlane, et al, 2016, p. 3) for this research study. As part of the New York City Department of Education's Equity and Excellence agenda (*OneNYC 2050: Equity and Excellence in Education,* 2019), all staff have been mandated to receive training in implicit bias and reducing its effects in the classroom (Godsil, et al, 2017; MacFarlane, et al, 2016). The goal of this training is to ultimately reduce disparities in student outcomes across the NYCDOE by shifting teachers' instructional practices through increased awareness of implicit biases and greater cultural competence.

Statement of the Problem

This approach by the NYCDOE is intended to drive systemic change and reduce disparities in academic and disciplinary indicators. The NYCDOE is prioritizing equity and implicit bias training for teachers. Anti-bias training is necessary for educators, but is it what will change teacher expectations? Implicit bias may surely play a role in how teacher expectations are shaped, but is there more to it, including normalization of failure in our system? This research seeks to understand how these trainings may be helping or hindering teachers in identifying perceptions and whether there is a desire to act on what they discover about themselves after these trainings. Are we simply increasing awareness within the system or are we creating actionable impact that we can measure in student achievement outcomes?

Theoretical Framework

Educational values and organizational sensemaking theories and context informed the theoretical and conceptual framework for this study (Maxwell, 2013). The concept map (See Appendix A) represents the context in which the implicit bias training is grounded in the New York City Department of Education (*OneNYC 2050: Equity and Excellence in Education,* 2019). The intended impact of this training is on teachers' practices and by extension, student learning. This is illustrated by the solid lines in the map. The consideration depicted in the concept map is to what extent the philosophical shift in the NYCDOE may have impact on the teachers' instructional practices based on their experiences with the implicit bias training. The teachers' experiences with this training will have a direct impact on student learning.

The theoretical framework for this study combines concepts of educational values (Labaree, 1997; Kirst and Wirt, 2009) and organizational sensemaking (Weick, 1995; Weick and Sutcliffe, 2005) to explore (a) how teachers are experiencing the implicit bias training initiative in the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) and (b) how the training is affecting their instructional practices. Labaree (1997) asserts three goals of American education: "democratic equality, social efficiency, and social mobility" (p. 41). He contends that these goals impact and at times, undermine each other. He further states that these goals have created "within American education a structure that is contradictory and frequently counterproductive" (p. 70) and cites educational practices that provide very different educational experiences for groups while claiming to provide an equal education for all.

It is this very contradiction that is at the core of the current shift in public education, including in the NYCDOE, towards advancing equity and excellence as core values, moving away from a sole focus on upholding meritocracy. Kirst and Wirt (2009) discuss school reforms towards "excellence" and the policies and programs to support those reforms. They posit that equity is a basic value in educational policy, and suggest equity is "underlain by another and more basic value – fairness in the receipt of benefits needed for a better life" (p. 70). This shift and renewed focus on this basic value is seen in the NYCDOE "Equity and Excellence" agenda, of which the implicit bias training is a key part. A shift of this nature requires not only a change in core beliefs but an understanding of how employees within the organization will make sense of what is happening, which includes the abandonment of prior belief systems and values in order to enact the new ideals and replacement beliefs (Weick 1995; Weick and Sutcliffe, 2005).

For the Equity and Excellence agenda to take root and change the NYCDOE in a meaningful way, the teachers must be able to make sense of the implicit bias training initiative as it relates to their instructional practice.

Significance of the Study

Through qualitative research using a phenomenological design, this study will examine the impact of this training on teacher attitudes towards equity and access, and their expectations for student learning in the communities they serve. This research will serve to inform the educational community, including the NYCDOE, about the perceptions of this training and potential actionable information about its' impact on teachers' instructional practices. This research will consider how the shift in organizational philosophy impacts, directly and indirectly, student learning via the teachers' experiences. There is no current research on this initiative or tool in place to measure the effectiveness of the initiative. This study will fill a gap in current research into implicit bias training initiatives in public school systems.

Research Questions

This study will investigate the following questions:

1. What are teacher perceptions of the implicit bias training?
2. To what extent does implicit bias training impact teachers' instructional practice and/or expectations for student learning?

Design and Methods

This is a qualitative study using a phenomenological research design to explore teachers' experiences with and perceptions of implicit bias training. Phenomenology seeks to understand and make meaning out of experiences: "Phenomenological study

describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 75). A phenomenological approach is ideal for answering the research questions, as indicated by Creswell and Poth (2018); "the type of problem best suited for this form of research is one in which it is important to understand several individuals' common or shared experiences of a phenomenon" (p. 79). Further, as the research questions are aimed at understanding the impact of policy, "It would be important to understand these common experiences in order to develop practices or policies, or to develop a deeper understanding about the features of the phenomenon" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p 79). This study seeks to do exactly that; understand the impact of the policy mandating teachers to attend implicit bias training, as well as examine the impact of that training on student learning.

Qualitative data was collected through individual interviews and content analysis of training documents. Interviews were audio-recorded and analyzed. All data was uploaded and stored in Dedoose software and analyzed using thematic coding methods (Saldaña, 2013). Themes were identified and analyzed to make meaning of teachers' experiences and perceptions. NYCDOE teachers who have participated in the implicit bias training initiative through the Office of Equity and Access were the participants in this study.

Definition of Terms

The following definition is used throughout the study:

Implicit Bias - "the brain's automatic, instantaneous association of stereotypes and attitudes with particular groups…These biases exist beyond our conscious awareness and are often contrary to our conscious values and ideals" (MacFarlane, et al, 2016, p. 3)

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Related Research

This chapter presents findings from existing research on themes related to the research topic. The research reviewed includes articles from peer-reviewed journals, national databases, state and local educational policy, practice briefs, and a book. Findings from the literature are organized into the following themes: 1) disproportionality; 2) cultural competence and culturally relevant pedagogy; 3) implicit bias training and adult learning. The chapter concludes with the gaps in the existing literature and how this study will address those gaps.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study combines concepts of educational values (Labaree, 1997; Kirst and Wirt, 2009) and organizational sensemaking (Weick, 1995; Weick and Sutcliffe, 2005) to explore (a) how teachers are experiencing the implicit bias training initiative in the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) and (b) how the training is affecting their instructional practices. There is a shift in public education, including in the NYCDOE, towards advancing equity and excellence as core values while moving away from a sole focus on upholding meritocracy. This shift is seen in the NYCDOE "Equity and Excellence" agenda, of which the implicit bias training is a key part. For an organization to successfully implement a philosophical shift that redefines the core beliefs of the institution, there must be consideration as to how employees will receive and make sense of this shift. Employees must be able to abandon the prior mission and values by replacing and enacting the new vision and mission. This can only successfully occur if employees not only understand but incorporate the shifts into their beliefs and actions (Weick 1995; Weick and Sutcliffe, 2005). For the Equity

and Excellence agenda to take root and change the NYCDOE in a meaningful way, the teachers must be able to make sense of the implicit bias training initiative as it relates to their instructional practice.

Educational Values

The tensions that arise from defining the purpose and goals of American education throughout history have driven federal, state, and local reform (Labaree, 1997). There are three goals of American education according to Labaree (1997): "democratic equality, social efficiency, and social mobility" (p. 41). He contends that these goals contradict one another and are largely political yet neither completely cancels the other out despite the variety of reforms that are put in place. Currently, especially in our local landscape, we are seeing an attempt at returning to the goal of democratic equality, while also recognizing aspects of the social mobility goal. "The two issues that constitute the area of overlap between the democratic equality and social mobility – educational opportunity and individual achievement – define the core of a consensus that has driven progressive educational politics in this country" (Labaree, 1997, p. 61). Labaree (1997) posits that the problems with education are fundamentally political rather than pedagogical, organizational, social, cultural, and at the core of this problem is "fighting amongst ourselves about what goals schools should pursue" (p. 40). He argues that the solution lies in values.

Similarly, Kirst and Wirt (2009) assert that politics drives policy in education, specifically regarding values. They identify basic values in educational policy that are impacted by politics: quality, efficiency, equity, choice (p. 69-70). Kirst and Wirt (2009) argue that policies are influenced by these values and that each value can be linked to

another policy, creating tension in school reforms when different groups back different values. According to Kirst and Wirt (2009), "due to the maldistribution of educational services, equity values would be stimulated" (p. 72), which is the present value movement we are currently experiencing. Likewise, Ornstein (2015) suggests that education is the "link between excellence and equality" (p. 4), and he argues that there must be efforts to provide excellent education for all citizens of a democratic society and "close the education gaps that exist between the "haves" and "have nots," rich and poor students" (p. 4). He further argues that if a society is committed to social justice, "it must not write off its disadvantaged populations as "uneducable" or slot them into poorly funded schools and second-rate programs" (Ornstein, 2015, p. 4). This is in alignment with the arguments made by both Labaree (1997) and Kirst and Wirt (2009) as it pertains to societal values impacting educational policy.

We see what is being described as a reinvestment in our public schools in New York City, via Mayor Bill de Blasio's focus on an "Equity and Excellence agenda," which is the umbrella for numerous policies and programs, from 3K to grade 12, with the "for ALL" moniker (*OneNYC 2050: Equity and Excellence in Education,* 2019). Kirst and Wirt (2009) contend "two steps in policymaking are required in equity matters – the perception of a gap between human needs and the availability of resources and allocation of resources to close that gap" (p. 70). Kirst and Wirt (2009) describe equity as "the use of political authority to redistribute critical resources required for the satisfaction of human needs" (p. 70). The recent NYCDOE policies and financial allocations have moved in the direction of supporting the educational values of equity and excellence rather than continuing to foster individual achievement and meritocracy as a core value.

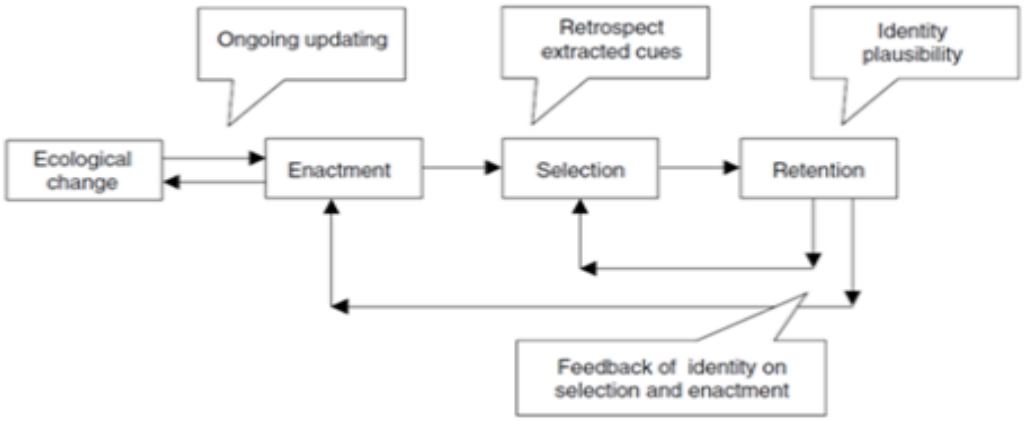
Organizational Sensemaking

Resource allocation and policy are two aspects of organizational culture, but for a philosophy to take hold in the organization and be embodied in how the organization functions, the employees must make sense of the change in culture and their performance must align to the new philosophy for an organizational shift to fully occur (Weick, 1995). Weick (1995) contends that sensemaking is a central part of organizational theory and should be a key consideration for decision-makers in organizations when considering implementing changes of mission or function.

Weick and Sutcliffe (2005) posit "organizational sensemaking is first and foremost about the question: How does something come to be an event for organizational members?" (p. 410). According to Weick and Sutcliffe (2005), the process of organizational sensemaking includes an ongoing sequence of ecological change, enactment, selection, and retention. This process is ongoing and informed by reflection, plausibility, and feedback (**See Figure 1**).

Figure 1

Weick's Sensemaking Process (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2005)



In the current study, the introduction of the Equity and Excellence agenda via mandatory implicit bias training is the ecological change. The anticipated outcome by the organization is the enactment of instructional practices that are culturally relevant and mitigate potential educator biases. The trainings introduce the science of implicit bias and ask participants to engage in self-reflection, which in Weick and Sutcliffe's (2005) model would be the updating and retrospect that informs selection. The strategies for mitigation and interactive participation in those strategies would act as identity, plausibility and feedback that would lead to enactment. The enactment of the ideals presented through this training series would complete the cycle of ecological change, thereby shifting the organizational mission of the NYCDOE to one of Equity and Excellence. This completed cycle would be visible in the enactment of more equitable instructional practices resulting in a reduction of the disparate outcomes in academics and disciplinary responses, as well as shifts in enrollment policies and practices.

The phenomenon of implicit bias training as experienced by teachers in the same organization is the implicit bias training is the "event" that will potentially lead to enactment of more equitable instructional practices by teachers in the organization – the NYCDOE. Weick and Sutcliffe (2005) suggest that enactment occurs in part through identity construction and reflection. This training initiative in large part is about identity - of the self and of others. One of the areas for inquiry is what teachers were expecting prior to taking part in the training, which touches on the aspects of belief-driven sensemaking and how expectations impact outcomes. According to Weick (1995), self-fulfilling prophecy is a key part of sensemaking for individuals, especially as it pertains to identity. If participants believe they will learn from the training and can connect to the

ideas and see themselves implementing aspects of the training, it is more likely that they will retain and enact those ideals as their new reality.

Disproportionality

Implicit bias leads to disparities in educational outcomes (Smolkowski, Girvan, McIntosh, Nese, & Horner, 2016; Nance, 2015; Fergus, 2017). Disparate outcomes in achievement data, discipline, tracking, enrollment in gifted and talented programs and advanced courses persist despite educational reforms to close the achievement gap (Fergus, 2017). In all indicators, African American and Hispanic students are underrepresented when compared to their White and Asian peers, except for in-discipline statistics where they are grossly over-represented in receiving suspensions and other disciplinary interventions. An additional barrier to long-term success is discipline policies and practices that lead to disproportionate outcomes for students of color (Fergus, 2017; Nance, 2015; Smolkowski, Girvan, McIntosh, Nese, & Horner, 2016). Research to highlight the various disproportionalities across race and gender in school discipline is included to underscore the need for this study.

Nance (2015), and Smolkowski, Girvan, McIntosh, Nese, and Horner (2016) both conducted reviews of the Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection database. In his review, Nance (2015) extrapolated data and provided a statistical analysis of disparities in discipline outcomes by race. The data indicates African American students represented only 16% of total student population in 2011–12 yet represented 32% of in-school suspensions, 33% of out-of-school suspensions. Further analysis shows 42% of African Americans students had more than one out-of-school suspension, and 34% were expelled. During the 2009–10 school year, one of six black students enrolled in

K–12 public school was suspended at least once, but only one of twenty white students was suspended. During that same year, one of four African American students with a disability was suspended. During the 2011–12 school year, African American children represented 18% of preschool enrollment but represented 48% of preschool children with more than one out-of-school suspension.

Smolkowski, Girvan, McIntosh, Nese, and Horner (2016) conducted a study to identify patterns in actual school discipline data that would support or disprove that, within the context of adult decisions about disciplinary actions, certain situations are more vulnerable to the impacts of implicit biases. This study provided a granular look at the Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) data from 2009-2010 and 2011-2012 disaggregated by time of day and found that throughout a school day, African American students were the most vulnerable in terms of receiving an office discipline referral. Data was analyzed from 1,666 elementary schools that were using the School-Wide Information System. The sample included 483,686 office disciplinary referrals (ODRs) issued in the 2011–2012 academic year to 235,542 students by 53,030 educators. A multilevel logistic regression models with different predictors of the odds of a subjective ODR was analyzed. The results demonstrated that, overall, African American students were more likely to receive subjective ODRs than White students. African American students were at greater risk for subjective ODRs than White students in the classroom compared to other settings and when the ODR was perceived as a major offense rather than minor. The researchers found evidence that decisions to make disciplinary referrals were influenced by implicit racial biases.

Smolkowski et al (2016) provide an adequate portrayal of the subjective nature of school discipline, as well as the disproportionate outcomes for students of color. The patterns revealed indicate implicit bias as a likely cause of much of the outcomes; however, the nonrandom sample used was a limitation of this study in its ability to generalize. The sample was also limited in that there was no direct observation of students' behaviors that did or did not receive an ODR, as historical data was used. Although there are sample limitations, this study provides context and data to illustrate the need for implicit bias training for teachers, as well as continued research into school discipline and disproportionate outcomes by race and gender. DOE indicated disparities in discipline outcomes as evidence to support their mandate for implicit bias training.

The findings of both Nance (2015) and Smolkowski et al (2016) are congruent with the discussion of disproportionalities presented by Fergus (2017) in his analysis of how segregation has intensified disparate outcomes in education. Fergus (2017) reviews data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics from the 1980s through 2013 that illustrates the gaps in student outcomes by race, gender, and socioeconomic status, as well as the lack of diversity in school leaders and teaching staff.

Racial disparities in student data, including expulsions, begins as early as preschool. While Black children represent 19% of the preschool population, they are 47% of pre-school students suspended at least one time, which makes Black preschoolers 3.6 times as likely to be suspended compared to White preschool students, as per data collected by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights in 2016. A study conducted at the Yale Child Study Center in 2016 looked at preschool educators' implicit

biases as a potential explanation for the disproportionate expulsion of Black boys in preschool (Gilliam, Maupin, Reyes, Accavitti, & Schic, 2016).

Participants for this study were recruited at a conference for education and early care professionals and included 135 teachers or student teachers in preschool classrooms in the United States. The majority of participants were female (93.9%). 66.7% of participants identified as White, 22% Black, and 77% of those identified as non-Hispanic/non-Latino. Participants took part in two tasks: an eye-tracking study and a vignette study that were meant to analyze the relationship between teacher expectations and race and what role implicit bias may play in that relationship. Findings indicated that when expecting challenging behavior, educators spent more time watching Black students, particularly boys. Boys received more attention from the educators when they were expecting misbehavior, regardless of the educators' race. White educators in this study held Black students to a lower standard for behavior while Black educators held them to higher standards but also recommended harsher discipline responses.

Gilliam et al (2016) indicate that implicit bias plays a role in that there was an expectation that Black children would engage in more challenging behaviors in the classroom. When providing information about the students' family context, Gilliam et al (2016) found that educators showed greater empathy when students were of the same race. Gilliam et al (2016) conclude that these findings are in part due to implicit bias and stereotype; however, when comparing the relationship between educators' race and students' race regarding recommendation to expel or suspend, they found no significance. They did find that Black educators in general recommended harsher disciplinary exclusions across the board than White educators. They recommend more research into

this area, as well as avenues for educators to become more aware of their implicit bias and strategies to reduce those biases.

Cultural Competence and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

There is a body of research citing the effectiveness of culturally relevant pedagogy and its impact on student achievement (Gay, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Khalifa, 2011). Ladson-Billings (1995) asserts that all students benefit when teachers are culturally competent and implement strategies that acknowledge students' cultural identities. She cites a "growing disparity between the racial, ethnic, and cultural characteristics of teachers and students along with the continued academic failure of African-American, Native American and Latino students." (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 483) as the impetus for culturally relevant pedagogy. In proposing a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, Ladson-Billings (1995) reviews prior research that she had begun in 1988 with teachers in a small, low-income school district in Northern California that was predominantly African-American. Her study involved ethnographic interviews of eight teachers who were invited to participate after being identified as excellent teachers by parents in the school community and the principal. In addition to the interviews, Ladson-Billings (1995) conducted unscheduled observations of the participants classrooms, videotaped the participants while they were teaching, and engaged teachers in a collaborative review of one another's videotapes. This research was conducted in phases, with the final phase being the collaborative review where Ladson Billings (1995) was able to confirm notions of culturally relevant teaching that emerged in the initial interviews with actual teaching practice.

Ladson-Billings (1995) discusses prior studies of culture as it relates to student success and contends that these prior studies position student failure and achievement within the social structure of the school. As a result, "the goal of education becomes how to "fit" students constructed as "other" by virtue of their race/ethnicity, language, or social class into a hierarchical structure that is defined as a *meritocracy."* (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 467). She further argues that this conception of schooling perpetuates inequities, and the term "culturally responsive" refers to a relationship of synergy between the school and home, leading to the improvement of the school experience for students, and as a result, greater student achievement. In the discussion of her findings from the 1988 study, Ladson-Billings (1995) posits that culturally relevant pedagogy is an avenue for students to "maintain their cultural integrity while succeeding academically" (p. 476). She asserts that teachers must be able to identify social inequities, their causes, and help students understand these inequities as well. She concludes her argument by stating that culturally relevant pedagogy must meet three criteria: "an ability to develop students academically, a willingness to nurture and support cultural competence, and the development of a sociopolitical or critical consciousness." (p. 483). She acknowledges training is possible and underscores the importance of teacher beliefs about their students' abilities to learn and the school community. She contends that prospective teachers must understand both their own and students' cultures, which can be partly accomplished through educating candidates.

Culturally Responsive School Leadership

Muhammad Khalifa (2011) expands the work of Ladson-Billings (1995) to include culturally responsive school leadership and school environments. He contends

that while implementation of culturally relevant pedagogical strategies is one piece of school reform, the school environment must also be inclusive and accepting of minoritized students. Khalifa (2011) conducted an ethnographic study to investigate teacher expectations and principal behavior. The study was conducted at an alternative school for at-risk Black students over a two-year period. One of the key findings of this study was that school leadership can influence student outcomes via impacting teacher practice and teacher expectations through policy and professional development (Khalifa 2011).

Findings suggest that White teachers are more likely than Black teachers to engage in practices that involve deal-making and lowering expectations of Black students. Khalifa (2011) discusses the concept of deficit thinking and its impact on students' levels of achievement. Teachers who displayed cultural competence and had better relationships with students engaged in less acquiesce. These teachers all held students to higher expectations yet supported the needs of their students without giving in to them. As a result, students had higher rates of academic achievement in those classes than in the classes where teachers allowed students to get out of completing academic work by using excuses or acting up in class (Khalifa 2011). This study indicates that teachers who are culturally competent may have better relationships with students and hold students to high academic expectations. Lack of true cultural competence and awareness of one's lowered expectations contributes to the failure of students:

> Deal-making, however, seems to be a practice not related to teacher experience, but rather to teacher expectations; it is less about number of years of teaching experiences, teacher popularity among students, or even the good intentions of

> teachers, and more about a thorough understanding of culturally-based student disengagement, and an understanding that deal-making is detrimental to students' academic progress. (p. 18)

Khalifa (2011) contends that school leaders can combat lowered expectations of teachers by continuously engaging them in dialogue that increases their understanding of students' cultures, as well as put policies in place that challenge teachers to confront their beliefs and fears of Black students. Being a culturally relevant school leader will enable one to engage teachers through feedback and training that tells them acquiesce and deal-making are forms of lowered expectations that negatively impact student outcomes. Based on the findings, over time and with training, it is possible for school leaders to change teacher practice in these areas: "The findings imply that discussions of race and racism must be part of staff discussions and professional development in cases where racial disparities, or race-linked teacher practice, exist in the student population" (Khalifa, 2011, p. 22). Khalifa (2011) also argues that familiarity with the community and students' cultures will increase teachers' cultural competence and decrease fear and lack of understanding of the roots of student disengagement will inevitably lead to increased student achievement outcomes when teachers are held accountable to confronting their fears and shifting their practices to hold students to high expectations.

In his research on disproportionality and how schools can intervene, Fergus (2017) builds on both the works of Ladson-Billings (1995) and Khalifa (2011). Fergus (2017) contends that "the fundamental issue lies in the dominance of three types of bias-based beliefs – deficit thinking, colorblindness, and poverty disciplining" (p. 27). He characterizes these beliefs as follows and posits that they often function simultaneously

within the context of school practices and policies, thereby leading to disproportionalities.

Deficit Thinking (p. 38):

- "an ideology used within the field of education and in schools to explain academic performance as a result of deficiencies within an individual and group."
- Does not consider "systemic inequalities as the result of race-based processes, practices, and policies."
- Places blame for lack of achievement or conditions on the group
- "Genetic Pathology" that believes group(s) to be genetically inferior to individuals of European descent
- "Culture of Poverty" suggests that historically disenfranchised groups have cultural deficiencies that prevent them from succeeding.

Colorblindness (pp. 31-33):

- "Sustains a White cultural frame as the mode of looking at everything"
- Omits race, gender, and other identifiers that are different from a "White social identity"
- Fails to acknowledge systemic racism and instead focuses on naming individual acts of racism

Poverty-Disciplining (p. 42):

- Similar to deficit thinking but seeks to change behavior and thinking of individuals through discipline
- "Points to low-income people as at fault for persistent adverse conditions"

- Practices that occur in order to discipline "individuals into behaviors perceived as necessary/required for social mobility" I.e. No Excuses and good behavior approaches
- Involves a belief that poverty causes developmental delays in children and families

Fergus (2017) includes resources in his book for school leaders to utilize to work with staff and teachers to better understand and "replace" these beliefs with practices and policies that will lead to less disparate outcomes in all categories. He describes and provides an action plan for school teams to engage in an analysis to better understand the root causes of disproportionate outcomes by examining documents and policies that perpetuate inequities and steps to change such practices through supporting staff and teachers with replacement beliefs and revising school policies to be equitable. Fergus (2017) cites the "hearts and minds" of educators as the potential area in which lasting reform can take hold and lead to equity.

Demographic Divide

Cherng and Halpin (2016) undertook a study to explore the demographic divide between teachers and students from the perspective of students. The study analyzed whether students, particularly minority students, have more favorable perceptions of minority v. non-minority teachers. The growing demographic divide between students and teachers, particularly in urban districts, was cited as the motivation for this study (Berchini, 2015; Strauss, 2015; Rich, 2015). The researchers reviewed several studies citing effects of teachers' perceptions on student achievement, including higher expectations of White and Asian American students and lower expectations of Latino and

Black students (Baron, Tom, & Cooper, 1985; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007) and lower internalized expectations for their own academic success by minority youth (Cherng, 2015). Literature around race matching and student performance outcomes was also reviewed with small positive outcomes discussed. This body of research was cited as the gap to support the need for the current study.

The data used for Cherng and Halpin's (2016) study was the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) longitudinal database that was collected during the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years. The subjects were 2,756 teachers from 317 schools across 6 U.S. school districts. ELA and Math teachers in Grades 4 through 9 were included and grade 9 Biology teachers. Perceptions of 157,081 students were represented in this sample. Student perception surveys were used to collect the data that the authors analyzed, specifically the Tripod student survey. Analysis of the data indicates that students have more favorable perceptions of minority teachers than of white teachers. There is mixed evidence regarding matching race of students and teachers. There was no clear evidence to suggest that all minority students have more favorable perceptions of intraracial teachers.

While it is certainly feasible that students' perceptions can vary by race and that students could have more favorable perceptions of minority teachers, the sample size limits the generalizability of this study. The study only focused on urban school districts so the results cannot be generalized to the entire United States. The data is supposed to be nationally representative, but 6 districts and 2,756 teachers is a small sample size to represent the nation. Despite low statistical power, this study supports an avenue for future research around the impacts of teacher perceptions as they relate to cultural

competence and potential biases. The need for implicit bias training and cultural competence is underscored by this research, especially given the fact that most of the teaching force in the New York City Department of Education is White.

Nadelson, Miller, Hu, Bang, and Walthall (2019) conducted a study of 452 teachers across regions and grade levels (33% urban, 30% suburban, 37% rural, 26% elementary school, 26% middle/junior, 36% high school, 12% other) to attempt to define an 'educational equity mindset.' The researchers investigated educational equity mindsets of teachers with the research questions: To what level do teachers express elements of an educational equity mindset? What is the relationship among the educational equity mindset elements expressed by teachers? What are the profiles of teachers in relationship to the education equity mindset? What elements of the education equity mindset do teachers express in their reflections on their practice? Researchers cite a lack of literature on equity mindset as a motivation for this study. Research on education equity was cited, including Jordan (2010) whose definition was the foundation for the concept of 'educational equity mindset' in this research. Literature on mindset and the nature of mindsets to operate on a spectrum (French, 2016) was used to support measurement of the education equity mindset for this study. Other concepts briefly reviewed in the discussion of how the concept of education equity mindset was developed were culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2002), growth mindset (Haimovitz & Dweck, 2017), high quality teachers (NCLB; Delpit, 2012; Danielson, 2007), and student-centered learning (Brown, 2008).

Data was collected through an online survey of Likert scale (or Likert-like scale) selected response items focused on teacher engagement or perceptions of one of the

facets of an educational equity mindset. ANOVA and Tukey Post-hoc were used for the main analysis. The findings suggest the survey effectively measured the definition of education equity mindset. They found multiple differences in the mindset attributes based on personal and professional variables. Data indicate that teachers may hold competing or fragmented mindsets, and there was a lack of consistency between awareness of equitable teaching practices and implementation of such practices by individuals. There is no ability to generalize this study as it only looked at one region in the southern United States and did not account for any personal or professional variables that could have impacted teachers' mindsets or responses during this study. The lack of control or collection of data around these variables limits the conclusions the researchers were able to make. This research uncovered multiple needed lines of research and implications for teacher preparation and professional development, especially in the areas of equitable mindsets, implicit bias awareness and mitigations, and replacement of bias-based beliefs.

Implicit Bias Training and Adult Learning

Literature on implicit bias was used to ground the study and explain the critical aspects of the model used in this study (Blitz, Anderson, & Saastamoinen, 2016; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Hahn & Gawronski, 2019; Staats, 2016). The work of Staats (2016) was the primary source to explain the concept of implicit bias:

> The attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. Operating outside of our conscious awareness, implicit biases are pervasive, and they can challenge even the most well-intentioned and egalitarian-minded individuals, resulting in actions and outcomes that do not necessarily align with explicit intentions. (p. 29)

Implicit bias affects many aspects of education, including discipline and evaluation of student work. Recent research is indicating more and more school districts implementing equity initiatives, including implicit bias training initiatives for teachers (Chu 2019). A qualitative content analysis of 52 state-approved Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plans was conducted by Chu (2019) to examine how the concept of equity in education is defined and applied in state-level ESSA policies and provisions. The focus was on two questions: How is educational equity defined and interpreted in state ESSA plans? What policy provisions and strategies do SEAs adopt to enhance equity in their ESSA plans? The review indicated that all but four state ESSA plans adopt a stance on equity. Many plans centered on equitable access to educational resources—including funding and effective educators —and less than half state plans attend to equity in outcomes. Most of the state plans do not include a clear definition of what they mean by "equity," despite including implicit bias training as an equity initiative.

New York State Education Department (NYSED) has indicated that implicit bias is an area that must be addressed in all districts across the state. The Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education (CRSE) Framework, introduced in 2019, specifies teachers are responsible for engaging in learning about implicit bias: "Reflect on your own implicit bias, how that bias might impact your expectations for student achievement or the decisions you make in the classroom, and the steps you can take to address your biases and their impact on students" (p. 27). The CRSE Framework further states that teachers must engage in professional learning: "Continuously learn about implicit bias, with attention to identifying and challenging your own biases, and identifying and addressing implicit bias in the school community" (p. 28). Inclusion of implicit bias

training in this framework solidifies its importance in educational equity initiatives moving forward in not only New York City but the entire state.

The New York City strategic plan *OneNYC 2050: Equity and Excellence in Education* (2019) outlines three initiatives, two of which explicitly address issues of equity and access: "Advance equity in K-12 opportunity and achievement [Initiative 18] and Increase integration, diversity, and inclusion in New York City schools [Initiative 19]" (p. 3). There are four indicators of success that will be tracked by New York City to measure progress. One of the indicators is "Teachers who receive implicit bias training" and data indicates 10,000 teachers received training as of 2018 and the target is all (p. 5). The gap that NYCDOE is attempting to address is also supported by this plan, "Teachers will be trained in how to create more equitable, culturally responsive curriculums, and confront their own implicit biases" (p. 20), and the inclusion of this training as an indicator of success for the plan. So why implicit bias training as a key path to equity and excellence in the NYCDOE?

The conclusion that training in implicit bias for teachers is a lynchpin in the New York City Strategic Plan for the goal of equity and excellence in education is supported by the research that underpins the training itself (Godsil, et al, 2017; MacFarlane, McGill Johnson, & Godsil, 2016). The work of the Perception Institute (Godsil, et al, 2017) and (MacFarlane, et al, 2016) examines "inequities in academic outcomes, disciplinary practices, and other issues in education" (Godsil, et al, 2017, p. 2) through the lenses of psychology and mind sciences. Godsil et al (2017) contends that "even though most administrators and teachers hold egalitarian values and want the best for all children" (p. 2), there is a disconnect between "aspirations and educational practices" (p. 2).

They suggest that implicit bias is one of the phenomena that is a primary cause of inequitable outcomes in academics and disciplinary outcomes, and further indicate that "understanding how our brains navigate race makes it easier to openly embrace difference and create environments that are welcoming to all students, faculty, staff, and parents" (MacFarlane, et al., 2016, p. 18). As a result, the NYCDOE has embraced this research and crafted the mandatory trainings for teachers as the means to close the gap and "ensure students in every borough, district, neighborhood, and school have the tools they need to achieve their dreams" (*OneNYC 2050: Equity and Excellence in Education,* 2019, p. 5).Training initiatives tend to focus on training teachers to understand the science of implicit bias and how implicit bias may impact teacher practice and decisions. Strategies to mitigate the impact of implicit bias are typically provided in trainings, and preliminary research indicates varied success with implementation of these strategies. Effects of implicit bias can be mitigated by implementing strategies: Implicit Association Tests, counter-stereotypes, intergroup contact (Staats, 2016). In her article, Staats (2016) discusses several approaches to mitigating implicit bias, and the underlying research to support these methods. She also emphasizes that educators can and must take steps towards identifying their implicit biases and taking action to ensure they understand how to mitigate these biases to ensure student success is not affected.

Despite a growing body of research and policy initiatives indicating the importance of implicit bias awareness for educators, there is also research that suggests teachers may be resistant or insulted by training that is focused on race, bias, and culturally responsive pedagogy (Blitz, Anderson, & Saastamoinen, 2016; Nadelson, et al, 2019; Staats, 2016). Blitz, Anderson, and Saastamoinen (2016) conducted a study on

trauma-informed practices in an elementary school in the Northeast US. The study was mixed methods and investigated teachers' and classroom aides' perceptions of student behaviors, understanding trauma and toxic stress (TTS) and race, and self-reported stress levels and teaching efficacy. The researchers grounded their study in the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) and Geneva Gay (2014) on culturally responsive pedagogy as it relates to understanding the impact of social oppression on their school communities and students' lives. In addition, literature on the impact of trauma, including secondary trauma experienced vicariously by school personnel working with students and families who have been exposed to trauma was reviewed (Borntrager et al 2012). The culturally responsive trauma-informed approach implemented in this study was based on the work of Bloom (1997, 2010) and the Sanctuary Model. Data was collected through questionnaires, unstructured interviews, and surveys at three points throughout the school year. Mann-Whitney tests to compare means were used to analyze questionnaire and survey results. Coding into themes was used to analyze qualitative data. Four themes emerged from the data: (1) Awareness of TTS in the lives of their students; (2) Perception of a lack of structure, guidance, and support for education in the children's homes; (3) Need for teaching tools and strategies to support student learning; and (4) Emotional burden of secondary trauma and stress.

During their interviews, teachers spoke about recent professional development on culturally relevant pedagogy and awareness of biases. The teachers, who were predominantly white, espoused color-blind ideals and decried the need for training because "we treat everybody the same, regardless of what they look like" (Blitz, Anderson, & Saastamoinen, 2016, p. 533). This common attitude among educators points

to the need for implicit bias training, which attempts to shift the colorblind mindset. Despite some limitations of this study, there is value around the discussion of the need for authentic professional development on trauma-informed practices, culturally responsive pedagogy, and implicit bias, as well as the support of the educators who will participate in the professional development.

A 2019 study conducted by Hahn and Gawronski synthesized six studies across different countries and ethnicities ranging from 150-~400 participants each that tested the effectiveness of different procedures to increase acknowledgement of harboring biases against minorities. The researchers reviewed literature on implicit evaluations of people and acknowledgement of bias, including their own prior research on this topic, to support the need for this study (Gawronski, Hofmann, & Wilbur, 2006; Hahn & Gawronski, 2014; Hahn et al 2014). Greenwald and Banaji's (1995) definition of implicit attitudes was the working definition used. Project Implicit at Harvard University was the reference to support the use of Implicit Association Tests (IATs) as a measure of people's implicit evaluations and beliefs. IATs with various changes to directions were used for each study. An ANOVA was used for the main analysis. The study found implicit evaluations can be consciously experienced as spontaneous affective reactions and directing people's attention to their spontaneous affective reactions can increase acknowledgement of bias.

The researchers discussed concepts of implicit bias and importance of awareness, as well as provided information on interventions to reduce bias and prejudice. The researchers concluded while IATs are a popular tool to increase awareness, there is little to no evidence of their effectiveness towards combating biases. The conclusions drawn in this study are not surprising, but they lack practical application towards reducing biases.

The researchers dedicate too much discussion to the difference between awareness and acknowledgement of biases without the supporting evidence to make a claim. A qualitative survey of the participants would have provided insight into some of the gaps in findings. Future research is needed to determine whether people who participate in IATs act on the results and attempt to mitigate biases that may have surfaced or not. This study highlights the need for not only increased awareness of the concept of implicit bias but also training on strategies to use to mitigate its effects, whether the participants are ready to acknowledge these biases or are only becoming aware of them as a result of IATs.

As indicated in the review of ESSA plans, districts and schools are moving in the direction of professional development for staff to build awareness of implicit bias and its impact on teacher practices. Knowles (1984) contends that adult learners must be included in planning and evaluating their learning, see immediate relevance to practice, and engage in problem-centered learning. Kennedy (1999, 2016) posits that effective professional development must link theory to practice in order to facilitate enactment. For implicit bias training initiatives for teachers and school staff members to be effective in shifting instructional practices and reducing disproportional outcomes, these trainings must be presented in a manner that allows adult learners to fully engage and reflect on their learning.

Training initiatives must also allow teachers to make connections between what they are learning and their instructional practice (Cercone, 2008; Kennedy, 1999, 2016; Knowles 1984). Cercone (2008) conducted a review of four adult learning theories: andragogy, self-directed learning, experiential learning, and transformational learning,

and how these theories could support adult learners in an online learning environment. In her review, she notes elements of each theory and how well these elements would transfer to an online learning environment, as well as how well the theories support the characteristics of adult learners. Cercone (2008) posits, “most adults conceptualize learning as an instructor-designed and instructor-led endeavor that occurs in classrooms where students sit to learn from the sage on the stage” (p. 138). We are asking teachers, adult learners, to shift that paradigm and participate as learners when they take part in professional development; often, professional development that they have had no hand in creating. Adult learning theories “emphasize self-direction, flexibility, and the process of learning, rather than the content. They are learner-centered and recognize the importance of a customized approach to learning” (Cercone, 2008, pp. 150-151).

Kennedy’s (2016) review of 28 studies on the effectiveness of professional development supports the notion of real learning as opposed to simply delivering content to teachers. Central to her review is the problem of enactment (Kennedy, 1999), which suggests that teachers “can learn and espouse one idea, yet continue enacting a different idea, out of habit, without even noticing the contradiction” (p. 947). She reviews the 28 studies through this lens of enactment, to determine which of the professional development programs facilitated enactment, and therefore, impacted teachers’ pedagogical practices. Kennedy (2016) argues that it is not enough for professional development to provide an idea, strategy, or concept to teachers. Instead, effective professional development allows teachers to adopt the new idea while simultaneously abandoning their prior practice, which is necessary for enactment to occur. In her study, she discusses four methods of facilitating enactment and measures to what extent the

professional development programs studied utilized the methods. Findings suggest that teachers must be actively engaged in professional development rather than being passive recipients of prescribed content. Kennedy (2016) also found that teachers' motivation to attend professional development was a factor in its effectiveness.

As the research indicates, adult learning is challenging at best in an optimal school year with little disruption (Cercone, 2008; Kennedy, 1999, 2016; Reeves & Pedulla, 2013). Factor in a global pandemic that shifts learning across the nation and world to a virtual environment, and a whole new challenge has arisen. We are now asking teachers to engage in virtual or "remote" online professional development at a time when they are simultaneously teaching in-person and virtually across the bulk of the United States, as well as locally in New York City as schools shift between hybrid models and fully remote. Research conducted by Reeves and Pedulla (2013) suggests "that more teacher learning takes place when OPD [Online Professional Development] content can be transferred easily to a classroom setting" (p. 62).

Reeves and Pedulla (2013) conducted a correlational study to determine the effectiveness of online professional development (OPD) through regression analysis. This study involved elementary and secondary teachers from nine states who participated in an online professional development initiative, e-Learning for Educators. Pre-, post-, and follow-up course evaluation surveys were collected and analyzed using regression analyses. The data source used for this study was the e-Learning for Educators (EfE) Initiative in which teachers self-reported changes in their knowledge, classroom practice, and student achievement. Consistent with the findings of Cercone (2008) and Kennedy (1999, 2016), teachers in this study were more satisfied with the content and learning that

could be immediately applied in the classroom (Reeves and Pedulla, 2013). They recommend that OPD be endorsed by administrators and aligned to school initiatives, as well as content that is "concrete and readily usable, and relevant to teachers' day-to-day professional needs" (p. 64). This underscores the importance of the content not only being relevant to adult learners but also applicable to their classroom environments, which means actionable strategies, as well as competencies, must be part of any professional development for adult learners.

Research on online professional development conducted by Holmes, Signer, and MacLeod (2010) also finds that OPD can be effective and that there are features that enhance the experience and effectiveness. Holmes, Signer and MacLeod (2010) conducted a mixed methods study involving 103 K-12 urban private school teachers who participated in an asynchronous professional development course over a five-week period in 2005-2006. Approximately half, 52%, of participants had never taken an online class, while the remaining 48% had participated in one to three online courses. Participants completed an online survey at the end of each course, which was analyzed using an exploratory factor analysis, and a Likert scale survey with two open-ended responses. The open-ended responses were analyzed using a qualitative analytical process to identify themes and unique cases (p. 79).

Holmes, Signer and MacLeod (2010) found that there was a positive impact on the participants' instructional practices and "social presence and teacher presence served as the greatest factors related to participants' learning and satisfaction in this experience" (p. 82). In addition, participants specifically identified resources and ability to use the resources as key features of the professional development as it impacted their classroom

practice: “Approximately 88% of the participant responses to this item [impact on teaching] claimed that the online professional development course had direct applications to the classroom instruction” (Holmes, Signer, & MacLeod, 2010, p. 81). These findings are congruent with studies that find effective professional development, regardless of delivery format, must not only include content but practical, actionable strategies that teachers can implement into their pedagogical practices (Cercone, 2008; Kennedy, 1999, 2016; Reeves and Pedulla, 2013). The key ingredient for effective professional development is the ability for teachers to see the immediate practical application of the content or skills to their classroom environment and instructional practice. As the findings of Holmes, Signer, and MacLeod (2010) and Reeves and Pedulla (2013) indicate, effective professional development can be done in an online setting.

Gap in Research

There are strategies that educators can utilize to mitigate the effects of implicit bias. While there are effective strategies, there are no measures in place to determine effectiveness of implementation nor fidelity of implementation of a district or school plan. Implicit bias training is needed for educators, but the focus of this training must be on actionable strategies not just the theory and brain science. Measures to gauge effectiveness of training must also be put in place.

Implicit bias training on its own may not be sufficient to close gaps and reduce disparate outcomes. Policy surrounding implicit bias training and accountability measures must be considered. An area for future research is how the effectiveness of implicit bias training can be measured and if this training does lead to shifts in teacher practices and ultimately, reductions in disparate outcomes. The online learning component of adult

learning as it applies to implicit bias training is of current significance as New York City Department of Education has shifted its mandated implicit bias training to a virtual format. The training is now three asynchronous sessions followed by a virtual conference led by a facilitator from the Office of Equity and Access. This format is expected to continue and the timeline for completion was June 2022. There is no current published research on the NYCDOE Equity and Excellence initiative mandate for all teachers to attend the implicit bias training. Currently, there has been no instrument or measure of effectiveness stated by the NYCDOE to gauge the impact of this training. This study would seek to fill this gap in research and begin to investigate the potential impact of this training mandate and initiative.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This chapter lays out the methods and procedures for data collection and analysis for this study. Phenomenology seeks to understand and make meaning out of experiences: “Phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 75). A phenomenological approach is ideal for answering the research questions, as indicated by Creswell and Poth (2018): “the type of problem best suited for this form of research is one in which it is important to understand several individuals’ common or shared experiences of a phenomenon” (p. 79). Further, as the research questions are aimed at understanding the impact of policy, the common experiences of participants are important to shape policy and practice and better understand phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study seeks to do exactly that; understand the impact of the policy mandating teachers to attend implicit bias training, as well as examine the impact of that training on student learning. The procedures, according to Moustakas (1994), consist of identifying a phenomenon to the study, bracketing out one's experiences, and collecting data from several persons who have experienced the phenomenon.

Creswell and Poth (2018) indicate that finding a group who experiences the same phenomena is often a challenge of this approach, and as a result, teachers are one of the groups who are common participants in studies using this approach. Moustakas (1994) suggests "The research participants remain close to depictions of their experience, telling their individual stories with increasing understanding and insight” (p. 19). For this study, the phenomenon is the implicit bias training. They also state, "An emphasis on a

phenomenon to be explored, phrased in terms of a concept or idea, such as the educational idea of "professional growth" (p. 76). This point strongly supports the use of phenomenology as a research design for this study, as NYCDOE teachers have been mandated to attend this training, and there is a pool of participants with this shared experience available. Another aspect that makes phenomenology an appropriate approach is the concept of "bracketing" which means "the researcher brackets himself or herself out of the study by discussing personal experiences with the phenomenon. This does not take the researcher completely out of the study, but it does serve to identify personal experiences with the phenomenon and to partly set them aside" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 77). Bracketing allows me to confront a potential bias in that I have already experienced the training that I will be studying and have my own opinions about its impact. This methodology allows me to share my experience but not report it in the analysis of the experiences of my participants. Moustakas' (1994) phenomenology is focused less on the interpretations of the researcher and more on a description of the experiences of the participants. With this research design, I will not have to shy away from the fact that I have attended this training, have mixed opinions about the rollout, and believe that teacher expectations make an enormous, if not almost all, of the difference in the classroom and therefore, have a tremendous impact on student learning, both positive and negative.

Methods and Procedures

Research Questions

This phenomenological study investigated the following questions:

- What are teacher perceptions of the implicit bias training?

- To what extent does implicit bias training impact teachers' instructional practice and/or expectations for student learning?

Setting

This study conducted research within the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE). The NYCDOE has chosen to include implicit bias training as part of the NYC Strategic Plan and the Department of Education's Equity and Excellence agenda. This research seeks to understand the potential impact of this training mandate on reducing disproportionalities and improving student achievement outcomes.

Participants were selected from various districts and schools across the NYCDOE. "Purposeful selection" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 97), specifically "criterion sampling" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 157) was used to identify setting and participants, with the criterion being Year One and Year Two Cohort districts where teachers are expected have taken the training during the 2018-2019 or 2019-2020 school years. Maxwell (2013) states, "particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately to provide information that is particularly relevant to your questions and goals, and that can't be gotten as well from other choices" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 97). This sampling approach to the field setting was intended to increase the likelihood of available participants.

Participants

Creswell and Poth (2018) indicate that finding a group who experiences the same phenomena is often a challenge of this approach, and as a result, teachers are one of the groups who are common participants in studies using this approach. For this study, the phenomenon is the implicit bias training offered by the NYCDOE Office of Equity and

Access. They also state, “An emphasis on a phenomenon to be explored, phrased in terms of a concept or idea, such as the educational idea of professional growth” (p. 76). This point strongly supports the use of phenomenology as a research design for this study, as NYCDOE teachers have been mandated to attend this training, and there is a pool of participants with this shared experience available.

The participants “must be individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon being explored and can articulate their lived experiences” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 153), and the phenomenon being studied is the training on implicit bias given by the Office of Equity and Access, NYCDOE between 2018 - 2022. Through additional use of criterion sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 157), teacher attendees of the training were identified (**See Table 1**). The criterion to identify teacher participants was ‘attended the implicit bias training’. A recruitment email survey (See Appendix B) was used to identify teachers who met the criteria and showed interest in participating by responding to the recruitment email.

Table 1

Participants

Pseudonym	***Grade Level/Content Area***	***Years of Experience***	***Race***	***Gender***
Trudy	High School/Foreign Language	20	Black	Female
Adrianna	High School/English	9	White	Female
Aaliyah	High School/English	14	Black	Female
Greta	High School/English	8	White	Female
Venus	High School/Special Education	10	Black	Female
Jessica	Middle School/Math	8	White	Female
Evelyn	High School/Social Studies	4	Hispanic	Female

Sophia	High School/Special Education	3	Hispanic	Female
Thomas	High School/Special Education	17	Black	Male
Steven	High School/Social Studies	27	Black	Male

Recruitment for this study was a significant challenge. Recruitment began in February 2022 after the NYCDOE Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was received and continued until October 2022. The IRB approval specified that the recruitment emails were to be sent to schools and then those emails could be forwarded to teachers by staff within each school. The researcher was not granted permission to email teachers directly until they had expressed interest in the study and provided their contact information through the survey in the email. Emails were sent to principals in early February. Several responses were received by March 2022, and three interviews were scheduled. There were no additional responses to the email received through March, so recruitment emails were sent out again in March, April, and May 2022. A few responses were received, and three additional interviews were scheduled and completed by the end of June 2022. However, once the school year ended, no responses were received, despite sending more recruitment emails to schools across the city. When the school year started in September 2022, recruitment began again. Interviews were completed in November 2022.

Data Collection Procedures

Interviews

To collect data, individual phone interviews of teachers were conducted, and interviews were audio-recorded in alignment with IRB guidelines. One of the features of

phenomenology is "data collection procedures that typically involves interviewing individuals who have experienced the phenomenon" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 77). Maxwell (2013) further suggests "interviewing can also be a valuable way of gaining a description of actions and events – often the *only* way, for events that took place in the past or for situations to which you can't gain observational access" (p. 103). The choice to conduct individual interviews rather than a focus group of teachers was to preserve anonymity and create a safe space for teachers to share their experience without judgment from peers. Given the sensitivity of this topic, it was determined that a focus group would not be the appropriate forum to collect data as people may not as be willing to share in a group setting. To gain insight into participants' experiences deeper than surface level, the researcher "will need to *learn* what your participants' perceptions and understanding are of you and your research in order to develop useful and ethically appropriate relationships with them" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 93). For both the research questions of this study and the interview questions (See Appendix C), individual interviews were the best format to build rapport and collect rich data (Maxwell, 2013). All interviews were conducted via phone and were audio-recorded to maintain internal validity, as indicated by Maxwell (2013), "in interview studies, such data generally require verbatim transcripts of the interviews, not just notes on what you felt was significant" (p. 126). A transcript and analysis were sent to each teacher for review before publication.

Observation

In addition to interviews, it was the intent to observe a synchronous virtual training session. According to Maxwell (2013), the "purpose of using multiple methods is

to gain information about different aspects of the phenomena that you are studying" (p. 102). The observations were intended to serve as an additional method to gain insight into the research questions. The data sought here is supported by Maxwell's (2013) discussion of "using different methods as a check on one another, seeing if methods with different strengths and limitations all support a single conclusion" (p. 102). However, given the length of time it took to receive IRB approval from the NYCDOE and the ethical guidelines of conducting research outside of my NYCDOE schedule and work hours, there were no synchronous sessions available to attend to observe. These sessions are no longer offered, and the training is no longer available at this time.

Document Analysis

A document analysis of the training materials was conducted. Training materials included power point presentations, documents, and three asynchronous modules that all participants must complete before the synchronous virtual training. This analysis was used for triangulation of data and to assist with analysis and interpretation of the interviews as a reference to further understand participants' responses. Maxwell (2013) supports this additional method to ensure triangulation of data: "This strategy reduces the risk that your conclusions will reflect only the biases of a specific method and allows you to gain a more secure understanding of the issues you are investigating" (p. 102).

Trustworthiness of the Design

Triangulation of methods and data sources was used. Mathison (1988) defines data triangulation as "using several data sources" (p. 14) and posits that "triangulation as a strategy provides a rich and complex picture of some social phenomenon being studied" (p. 15). Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest that the researcher "makes use of multiple and

different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence" (p. 349). As discussed in the data collection section, triangulation was used to ensure internal validity and credibility (Maxwell, 2013), as well as theories to inform the analysis and conclusions.

To reduce potential researcher bias during analysis of the data collected and further ensure internal validity, member checks were used. It is important to consider these two ideas offered by Maxwell (2013) when analyzing transcripts and recordings: "what the informant says is *always* influenced by the interviewer and the interview situation" (p. 125) and "what is important to understand is *how* you are influencing what the informant says, and how this affects the validity of the inferences you can draw from the interview" (p. 125). Interview transcripts were sent to participants for review to rule out "the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on (Maxwell, 2013, pp. 126-127).

Research Ethics

Once approval was received from the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), this proposal and application was sent to the NYCDOE IRB for approval to conduct research within the NYCDOE. This process began in August 2021, but approval was not received until late January 2022, as there is a backlog of IRB requests to conduct research in the NYCDOE. As discussed in the participants section, this delayed the research. After approval was received, the email survey was sent to schools in accordance with the approved NYCDOE IRB guidelines to inform teachers of this study and the option to participate. Letters of consent (See Appendix D) were emailed to participants to obtain their consent to participate in phone interviews and be audio-recorded during these

interviews. Teachers in my school and community school district were not invited to participate in this study due to ethical concerns.

Given the ethical concerns raised by Creswell and Poth (2018) when considering studying one's own organization, specifically "questions about whether good data can be collected when the act of data collection may introduce a power imbalance between the researcher and the individuals being studied" (pp. 153-154), as a school leader in the NYCDOE, it was best to go outside of the district in which I work to avoid any conflicts of interest. Maxwell (2013) states, "a primary ethical obligation is to try to understand how the participants will perceive your actions and respond to these. A first step in this is to put yourself in their position and ask how you would feel if someone did to you what you are thinking of doing" (p. 92). Being a supervisor of potential participants required deep thought around ethics. As cautioned by Maxwell (2013), "what the informant says is *always* influenced by the interviewer and the interview situation" (p. 125), and this was a serious consideration in choosing the site and participants.

Another ethical concern is protecting the identities of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Maxwell, 2013), especially given the nature of this topic. To ensure anonymity, participants are not referred to by name in any of the documents related to this study nor the final report, nor is there any information about the schools they work in. Names of participants or any identifiable information was not used on transcripts or field notes. Coded initials were used on interview transcripts and notes, and there was no written record of names attached to transcripts. Pseudonyms were created for reporting the study findings.

Data Analysis

The researcher transcribed the audio-recordings from the interviews using Otter software. Transcripts were uploaded into Dedoose and reviewed once again for accuracy. Both original transcripts and any edited transcripts were maintained for accuracy and member-checks. Dedoose software was used to house the data. All documents and data were uploaded to Dedoose, including field notes from each interview and document analysis, as well as memos and jottings, which were also uploaded to Dedoose.

Qualitative data collected through individual interviews and content analysis were coded using Saldaña's (2013) model. According to Saldaña (2013), a code is "most often a word or phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (p. 3). At the core of phenomenological research is the ability to capture the essence of the participants' experiences and perspectives on their experiences. To do this effectively, the First Cycle Coding and Second Cycle Coding process as described by Saldaña (2013) was utilized. This process supported a cyclical process of analysis and reflection to accurately organize and synthesize the data and included creating codes and categories, as well as recoding and recategorizing as the data was reviewed (Saldaña, 2013). "Pre-Coding", in the form of annotations and highlights was used on all printed interview transcripts, field notes from interviews, memos, and documents (Saldaña, 2013).

It is key in phenomenological research to create both individual textual and structural descriptions and composite textual and structural descriptions, to make meaning from participants' experiences and process of understanding those experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Using Saldaña's (2013) transcription and coding processes supported

this endeavor. Moustakas (1994) recommends first identifying statements that identify the phenomena, referred to as "horizons." This will be included in the First Cycle Coding process. The Second Cycle Coding process included what Moustakas (1994) refers to as clustering and thematizing, where both the individual experiences and composite experiences were coded and categorized. Analytic memos were used throughout this process to document preliminary understandings of the data and reflections on how "the inquiry is taking shape; the emergent patterns, categories and subcategories, themes, and concepts in your data" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 41). The analytic memos were also used to identify the composite textural and structural descriptions of participants' experiences as a whole (Moustakas, 1994). Salient quotations representing individual experiences were identified through this analysis for inclusion in the findings to ensure that individual participants' experiences are accurately represented.

Researcher Role

Banks (1998) discusses the importance of being objective in research: "educational researchers should strive for objectivity but acknowledge how the subjective and objective components of knowledge are interconnected and interactive" (p. 11). Banks (1998) cites the work of Merton (1972), who concludes that "both insider and outsider perspectives are needed in the process of truth seeking" (p. 7) and contends that our experiences and insight must be acknowledged as we conduct our research and analyze our findings. Banks (1998) challenges one to consider his or her bias through the role being played as researcher of the topic and asserts that there is fluidity to this role, given the topic and proximity of the researcher to the people being studied.

In considering my role as a researcher, I was an "indigenous -outsider" (Banks, 1998, p. 8) in that I work for NYCDOE, but I am a supervisor, not a teacher. Teachers could have seen me as an outsider because of my supervisory position despite being "indigenous" in terms of working for the same system and having been a teacher within the same system. Banks (1998) refers to this as being "perceived by many members of their indigenous communities as having "sold out" to the mainstream community and thus can no longer speak for the community or have an authentic voice" (p. 15); therefore, an "outsider". Given this status, a phenomenological approach likely encouraged greater participation because teachers were able to share what they experienced without feeling as if they were making judgments as part of a case study or other evaluative study. My role as a supervisor was mitigated by elevating their voices as opposed to speaking for them as in a case study or other type of research. This perspective was important for me to keep in mind when I conducted the interviews.

Maxwell (2013) discusses bias in detail as it pertains to qualitative research. He asserts that "qualitative research is primarily concerned with understanding how a *particular* researcher's values and expectations may have influenced the conduct and conclusions of the study" (p. 124). Maxwell (2013) argues that bias should not be fully removed but rather mitigated, and this research design is ideal given my status as a researcher (Banks 1998) and proximity to this topic (Creswell & Poth 2018).

Using a phenomenological research design allowed me the opportunity to "bracket", which Creswell and Poth (2018) describe as "discussing personal experiences with the phenomenon. This does not take the researcher completely out of the study, but it does serve to identify personal experiences with the phenomenon and to partly set them

aside" (p. 77). This concept allowed me to confront bias by sharing my experience but not reporting it in the analysis of the experiences of my participants. With this research design, I did not have to disregard the fact that I have attended this training as a participant, have mixed opinions about the way the initiative was rolled out, and believe that teacher expectations make an enormous, if not almost all, of the difference in the classroom and therefore, have a tremendous impact on student learning, both positive and negative.

An advantage I have is firsthand knowledge about the activities and topics covered in the training. "What you bring to the research from your own background and identity has been treated as *bias*" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 44). I also have taken the Implicit Association Tests that are recommended, and from discussions I have had with other people as well as the data shared by the tests, my results are not typical for a white woman. I was mindful of this as I interviewed teachers, especially where they had negative feedback about aspects of the trainings, to not interpret that as based solely on their racial identities. To stay objective in my research design and analysis, I had to bracket my own experiences and opinions of the trainings and was careful not to project any of that into my interviews and data analysis. However, according to Maxwell (2013), "separating your research from other aspects of your life cuts you off from a major source of insights, hypotheses, and validity checks" (p. 45), so with that in mind, I performed a delicate dance of allowing my bias to inform but not persuade.

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the impact of the implicit bias training on teachers' instructional practices and expectations for student learning. The study utilized 10 teacher-participant interviews, including participants who participated in the in-person training sessions between September 2018 and February 2020 and participants who took the virtual training that began in May 2020. This chapter provides analysis of the collected data by delving into two overarching themes and concludes with a discussion of these findings as they relate to the research questions of this study. The two overarching themes that emerged from the analysis of the phenomena were: Program Design and Implementation, and Incremental Steps towards Ecological Change.

Findings

Theme 1: Program Design and Implementation

Set against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic and a change of administration in a school system with mayoral control, this phenomenological study investigated the experience of teachers who attended the implicit bias training offered by the Office of Equity and Access and its impact on teacher practice. When the training began in 2018, Mayor Bill de Blasio and Chancellor Richard Carranza's vision and strategic plan was Equity and Excellence, which included a massive effort to provide implicit bias training for all staff in New York City public schools over the course of three school years. This agenda set forth by Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Richard Carranza formed an ecological change in the organization, in this case, the NYCDOE.

The implicit bias training began in July 2018 with superintendents and principals and expanded to include teachers and other staff by the start of the 2018 school year. The 'Implicit Bias, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Training Initiative' handout (See Appendix D) that was shared with NYCDOE staff states the following as the Initiative Overview:

> The current social, economic, and political climate both within New York City and across the country suggests a need for more implicit bias awareness programs that build more inclusive, nurturing, and collaborative communities. While implicit bias cannot be eliminated, its effects can be reduced and mitigated. Within the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE), the importance of this implicit bias work is heightened as district and school staff make decisions on behalf of children or interact with students on a daily basis. The Office of Equity and Access will work to fulfill the goals of increasing awareness about implicit bias and of reducing theses biases by providing a professional learning series that will set a four-year target to reach 110,000 NYCDOE staff members citywide. Inherent in this training will be a focus on culturally responsive practices as an approach to promoting greater systemic equity. (p.1)

The handout also details Initiative Objectives and Timeline of the Project. For this study, the salient objective is "Increase awareness and critical consciousness about implicit bias by training 110,000 employees, including members of superintendent teams, Field Support Center staff, principals, teachers, and other school/Central/district personnel" (p. 1). The document does not indicate that the training was mandatory, yet most staff believed that teachers were mandated to attend this training by the end of June 2022. Whether the training was a mandate became a controversial topic within the

NYCDOE. There was confusion about whether the training was mandated for teachers or if attendance at the training sessions was voluntary. Numerous local and regional media sources, including the *Wall Street Journal,* published articles stating that New York City educators were mandated to attend implicit bias training. Several reasons for the confusion included the deadline of June 2022 for all staff to be trained, school leaders being told to ensure all teachers attended training, and the local media coverage around lawsuits that followed the implementation of the implicit bias training alleging staff were forced to attend trainings that created hostile atmospheres.

The districts were sorted into cohorts, and as a result, superintendents and leadership presented the training as a mandate that would take place in cohorts over the course of the initiative. School leaders were also sent lists of staff members during the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years who had not completed training, which also supported the belief that the training was mandatory. To date, over 72,000 staff members have participated in the training, either in person (57,000) or virtually (15,000), according to the NYCDOE InfoHub and informational one-pager located on the implicit bias training website (See Appendix E).

The teacher training for implicit bias was a one-day workshop facilitated by the Office of Equity and Access staff. Agenda items included 'Practicing Individuation, Implicit Bias, Racial Anxiety, and Stereotype Threat.' The agenda for the training also included time for a question-and-answer period, practicing interventions, and an evaluation of the session. The facilitators used a power-point slide show designed by the Office of Equity and Access as the training session's content. The same power-point slide show was used for all implicit bias training sessions. Strategies introduced during

the training to mitigate the effects of implicit bias included individuation, a "Where I'm From" poem, and perspective taking. The power point presentation included information and research on implicit bias and brain science, as well as images and scenarios that were used to spark discussion during the training. For example, a controversial image of a magazine cover displaying an athlete and a supermodel was included in the presentation as an example of image that played on racial stereotypes. A range of biases were discussed and included in the power point, including racial, gender, age and abilities. The NYCDOE InfoHub website describes the training as "a space to learn and reflect on our perceptions and biases in a way that offers tools to improve our practices for our students and communities."

By 2019, training for teachers was in full swing with training sessions offered on all professional development days, as well as on other days. There were training sessions offered at Borough and District offices for small groups, as well as large-scale training sessions offered at locations including higher education institutions such as Brooklyn Law School. The training sessions that were offered at the District level typically had an audience of around 25 to 30 participants, while the large-scale training sessions offered at other venues had over 100 participants. Training sessions were offered all around the five boroughs of New York City and were very accessible until spring of 2020 when COVID-19 forced New York City public schools to go remote. The training was paused briefly, until the Office of Equity and Access pivoted and created a remote version of the training that was announced in May 2020, approximately six weeks after schools went remote. The one-day training described above shifted to three online self-paced modules and a Zoom session as the training's culmination (See Table 2). On the informational one-pager

found on the NYCDOE implicit bias training website, The 'Foundational Learning Outcomes' are listed as: "Understand the concept of implicit bias; Become familiar with the neuroscience behind implicit bias; Practice strategies for reducing implicit bias" (See Appendix E).

This seemingly overnight shift to ensure the training could go on made it clear that the vision of Equity and Excellence had not wavered despite the challenges of the closure of brick-and-mortar spaces and the entire system functioning remotely. The rapid movement to continue this training while other initiatives were left behind underscored the administration's focus on Equity and Excellence and the importance of all staff receiving it. Schools also received per session funding to support teachers taking the virtual training. "This workshop is necessary now more than ever," DOE spokesman Nathaniel Styer told *The Post* for an article published on May 23, 2020. Given the importance placed on this training initiative, it was necessary for training participants to be able to process and make sense of the content of the training for the initiative to have success. Study participants were asked to share what they had learned, as well as their experiences during the training sessions.

Table 2

Implicit Bias Training Comparison Chart

In-Person Training (2018 – March 2020)	**Virtual Training (May 2020 – 2022)**
Agenda: • Implicit Bias and Brain Science • Interventions (Individuation, Perspective Taking, Where I'm From Poem)	3 Self-Paced Online Modules (approximately 1 hour each): • Module 1: The Stories We Tell • Module 2: Mirrors and Windows • Module 3: Implicit Bias and the Brain

One-day Workshop facilitated by Office of Equity and Access Staff • 5 hours • Range from 25 participants – 100+ in a session	Module 4: Strategies & Next Steps to Mitigate the Impacts of Implicit Bias (A Zoom Session facilitated by Office of Equity and Access Staff) • 90 minutes • Range from 20 to several hundred participants in a session

Content and Facilitation. The first subtheme that emerged, content and facilitation of the implicit bias training sessions, included expectations concerning the content knowledge that participants were supposed to acquire during the training session and how the facilitator(s) impacted the training session. One study participant attended a training session before September 2018. Eight other participants in this study attended the training sessions between September 2018 through March 2020. A total of nine participants attended in-person training sessions prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and one participant attended the virtual training offered after March 2020. Three participants who initially attended the in-person training sessions have also attended the virtual training sessions because the schools they currently work at implemented those sessions for professional development.

Several teachers said that there was too much content for a one-day training session. Some suggested that there could have been pre-work for them to go over the science and concepts related to implicit bias so they could spend more time on learning how to mitigate the effects of implicit bias, as well as the facilitators considering the delicate nature of the content and how participants might feel during the training. All study participants said they felt the facilitator(s) of the training had at least some impact on their experience and how they processed it.

When asked about the content of the training, study participants struggled to recall specific examples of content discussed at the training. Some mentioned recalling examples of racial stereotypes and bias being shared, but they did not provide specific examples or details about the content of the training. One participant, Adrianna, a white high school English teacher with nine years of experience, was able to share an example of specific content and the conversation that ensued because of that item:

> As I recall, they had put up magazine covers, I mean, at first, everyone was comfortable. But then when they tapped into the whole unconscious bias, and they had put up, I believe a Vogue magazine cover, if not GQ, it was LeBron James and Giselle, like sitting on his knee or something. I was like 'Oh, this looks great. They're two great people on a cover of really known magazine, and they look great.' And then as soon as we started having those conversations, people were trying to unpack why that cover was just not appropriate. That's when people started getting offended, and it just made the room very uncomfortable. I specifically recall an older gentleman who was white said, 'He looks great. He's on the cover of a magazine. He's an all-star. This is wonderful for his career. Why are people upset about this?' And then I remember a woman, an African American lady saying, 'You know, why does he have to look animalistic, next to this, like beautiful damsel in distress where he could be wearing a wonderful suit, showing that he's a man of status and stature.' So that kind of set the tone of uncomfortableness because I recall, everyone just went silent in the room. To the point we found ourselves in the position of that older gentleman apologizing, standing up and apologizing to a roomful of teachers, which I think also made it

worse. I feel like people digressed as far as the training was going. But in the same respect, the upside of that I think it made people who are unaware of their unconscious biases come to terms with that. I think that opened the doors for other conversations that were difficult but needed to be had.

Thomas, a tenured Black teacher with 17 years of experience in high school Special Education, recalled the initial rollout of the training and was the only other study participant who could give a specific example of content shared at the training. Due to his interest in the topic, Thomas attended a session during Summer 2018 that was actually designed for superintendents and school leaders:

> I remember when it was the thing, right. I remember there was a rollout of it in the summer, and it was optional, right? So, I signed up for it not knowing, you know what it was, I was excited, because everyone's like, well, equity, blah, blah, you know, and we had this progressive administration, air quotes. And so, it was me and a colleague. We said, let's go to this, it sounds interesting, and that realizing this was something else, man, and we knew was going to be mandated, right. But I didn't realize it was going to be rolled out the way it was rolled out. And the initial rollout was for superintendents and people in leadership positions. So that's the one we went to. And Fergus spoke there, he talked about the math behind it, and so on. So, it was very interesting. And there were a couple sessions. So that was the first session. A company came from DC with a consultant and did this wonderful presentation that was very engaging, very informative. And then it rolled out to the whole city, and it was not the same.

Thomas elaborated on his comments about the training not being the same after the rollout to teachers. Thomas noted, "The teacher training session did not have guest speakers bringing their research and expertise, which was the most interesting part." The teacher training sessions had less content than the leadership training sessions. For example, the teacher training discussed disparities caused by implicit bias while the leadership training dug deeper into policies and practices and how to calculate risk ratios of disparate outcomes that may be caused by implicit bias. The training session that he attended had experts in the field as guest speakers and consultants that were hired by the NYCDOE to facilitate the training for NYCDOE leadership, including superintendents and principals. The training sessions that were designed for teachers were facilitated by NYCDOE employees in the Office of Equity and Access who had varying levels of expertise in the content.

When asked about the facilitation of the training sessions, all participants shared examples of how the facilitator(s) directly impacted their experiences. The facilitators controlled the pace of the training sessions, the amount of content covered, the level of audience participation and engagement, and as a result, were a key factor in how participants felt about their experience with the implicit bias training sessions. Adrianna shared an experience and how the facilitator may have impacted her experience:

> I think the facilitator of the training could have been a little bit more informative, as far as explaining to people, especially to the older group, the older faculty members of what exactly implicit bias stands for and represents and the importance of it, I think, just throwing information in front of people without really unpacking all that, as far as biases and equity and how that impacts our

> schools and our students. I think that was the biggest thing, I think we're just kind of thrown into it. And I think that left people really shaken up and they really then shut down. People around me shut down.

Two other high school teachers, Greta and Jessica shared similar reflections on their experiences. Greta, a white high school English teacher, discussed a lack of "time for reflection, or small group conversations." Additionally, Greta thought there was a lot of content that session participants needed more time to understand or process. "They were also talking about a lot of different implicit biases. It seemed like they were trying to push a lot of things into a very small session, rushing through and kind of just glossing over a lot of big ideas that maybe people weren't ready to accept or understand." Similarly, Jessica, a white middle school math teacher, stated:

> I don't think the facilitators considered where people were in their own understanding of what it was going into the training and what mindset they were coming into the training because it was a diverse group, and it was on a professional development day. I think a lot of people were just kind of forced into this and not prepared or not in the right mindset to kind of say, Hey, let me reflect on this. It's kind of another thing that I'm being forced to go to. And now they're just going to kind of talk at me. I think that the setting wasn't the one of the best ways to get people to open up.

High School Social Studies Teacher Evelyn, a Hispanic woman, also commented on the facilitator as having an impact on the experience of the training. She also indicated that "the presenters need themselves to be aware of how difficult the topic is." However, Evelyn, who has four years of teaching experience, also considered whether the

facilitators were comfortable with the content of the training and how well they were prepared: “It's a difficult topic, to stand before an audience of diverse people and to do an effective job. They have to make sure that they are ready to have that discussion.” Other study participants felt that the facilitators were not prepared, and a few teachers who were interviewed indicated that the facilitators did not respond well when topics arose during the training sessions that they did not want to discuss. For example, Greta, a high school English teacher of nine years, recalled from the training session:

> The facilitator seemed rushed at points and frustrated at times with the responses or lack of responses from the people participating. They seemed to be interested in getting through the content more than gauging the impact on the audience. I don't remember being asked for feedback or an evaluation or if I had specific questions. It just seemed to come to an end.

Many examples shared by study participants included either a perceived lack of willingness to engage with training participants or contentious exchanges between training participants and facilitators or indicators of what was interpreted as bias on the part of the facilitators. Evelyn shared an example of pushback during the session:

> Maybe some of the examples that the attendees shared, the presenters did not want to go in that direction. And there was some pushback, which led one person to literally protest because each time she raised her hand, she was ignored, and it became obvious to the audience that she was being ignored. At one point she stood, and they were forced to allow her to speak.

Trudy, a Black Foreign Language teacher with 20 years of combined middle and high school experience, felt that the facilitators showed bias in how they facilitated the

training. “It was a little disappointing because I thought the conversation would be an honest one. Starting a conversation became very stressful for the presenters. They tried to move away from the topics.” Trudy elaborated on what she perceived as bias on the part of the facilitators:

> I remember distinctly this lady who raised her hand to contribute to the conversation but was deliberately overlooked by the moderators. She knew that she was being ignored but was persistent and did not lower her hand and even then, they continued to ignore her. I thought it was ironic that we were there to talk and learn about implicit bias and yet the moderators were themselves demonstrating what it looked like to us. It comes to the point that we all have biases.

In addition, a few study participants felt that the size of the training session impacted the effectiveness of the facilitators, which directly impacted their experience at the training session. For example, Trudy attended a large training session offered on a professional development day. She indicated that this session had over 100 participants and possibly closer to 150 participants. As a result, she perceived that part of the facilitators’ unwillingness to fully discuss concepts was related to the number of training participants because of the wide range of opinions and viewpoints shared by training participants:

> The delivery of this training revealed how complicated it can be to address this type of topic to a large audience. Although you may be comfortable with the content, you may not be equipped to deal with how the audience is going to react or interact with the content. For example, the facilitator was uncomfortable with

the issues raised by a member of the audience and so the solution was just to ignore that person.

One study participant, Evelyn, mentioned the facilitator having a problem with technology as an issue that impeded the training session:

> The facilitator seemed more concerned with showing that she was relatable to her audience instead of really discussing the strategies. Also, the facilitator was unprepared. She had technology issues, but instead of continuing the training, she talked about her background for most of the training, and it seemed very focused on her. She was flustered by the technology issue. She seemed unprepared, almost somewhat unprofessional and had a lack of boundaries with some of the personal things that she was saying and really making herself the central focus of the training due to the technology.

Venus, a Black Special Education teacher with 10 years of teaching experience in a high school, also shared disappointment at not getting to spend time learning about the strategies to mitigate implicit bias: “Perhaps I would have gotten more out of it if the facilitator were better prepared and had gotten through the entire training. I've heard things from other people, and I heard they did more on the strategies, and I was really interested in that part of the training and disappointed that we didn't get to it in my session.”

One outlier felt that the facilitator had a positive impact on the training experience. Sophia, a Hispanic Special Education teacher of three years at the high school level, shared, “she led the group pretty well. And she just went from topic to topic, and she made everyone feel comfortable with whatever they were sharing.” This teacher

also shared that the training session overall was worthwhile, and the facilitator played a role in that: “I did notice that it brought up tough conversations that otherwise wouldn’t happen. I think the trainer was good at keeping the conversations going and stopping them if any when they were getting off topic or hurtful towards others.”

Aaliyah, a Black woman who has been an English teacher at the high school level for fourteen years, spoke about her experience at a training session that was not directly facilitated by the Office of Equity and Access facilitators. She stated that she recalled:

> Some external groups doing their best to try and contextualize the history of race/racism and groups while bringing to the forefront contemporary issues around bias that impact us all. I remember feeling like everyone was trying their best. I remember asking myself, what could be a better way to go about this? I remember wondering if this was helping or harming.

As they processed and reflected on the phenomena, the implicit bias training, teachers were clear that facilitators, regardless of size of training, had an impact on how teachers experienced the training. Based on study participants’ responses, the size of the training may have played a role in how well the training sessions were facilitated. For example, several participants attended training sessions where the audience was over 100 participants, and they felt that the large size of the audience directly impacted the effectiveness of the facilitators and as a result, the training overall. However, even in the smaller trainings of approximately 30 people, the study participants indicated that the facilitators still affected their experience.

Even in cases where it may have been minimal, the facilitators still played a role in how teachers were impacted by this training. Teachers recalled more specific incidents

involving dialogue and experiences with the facilitators than the actual content of the training sessions. The specific critiques offered by study participants included the possible lack of comfort level and knowledge about implicit bias, both the willingness and ability to fully engage with the audience during the training sessions, especially when the audience expressed frustration and/or pushback, and the facilitators' ability to appropriately pace the session so participants could understand and apply their learning.

Training Session Participants. During the discussions on the facilitation of the training sessions, several study participants commented on the impact of their fellow training session participants on their experiences and how they reflected on the training. Several study participants shared examples of pushback and comments by training session participants that created tension and frustration during the training sessions. Greta provided an example of how training participants behaved and the lack of response on the part of the facilitators:

> During the training, a lot of people seemed uncomfortable, including the facilitator. People said training shouldn't be happening. I recall someone saying something like 'these types of conversations stir up things that are better left unsaid'. People were also rude, and the facilitator seemed reluctant to address. People participating seemed to have really varying levels of interest and willingness to even consider that implicit bias might be something to think about as it relates to the classroom and school experience.

Jessica commented further on the lack of preparedness on the part of training participants and how that affected the experience: "There were a few people who were very outspoken. And kind of expressing opposite views of the presenters and kind of

showing that implicit bias was a thing. But also, they weren't as open-minded and ready to reflect on their own. So they just weren't ready there, but their voices were overpowering." Jessica shared that it was "Just very frustrating to hear more negative talk." Sophia shared a similar sentiment, "Some people were afraid to truly express how they were feeling, while others voiced their opinions loudly."

Aaliyah also felt that her experience was impacted by other training session participants: "A group of people, white folks, protested and some words were shared that spoke to their disdain or discomfort. Many people, mainly white, asked what does this have to do with teaching? and said that they were "sick of" this equity stuff." Evelyn also experienced training session participants pushing back: "There was some pushback, which led one person to literally protest. At one point she stood, and we were forced to listen to her speak." Several other participants mentioned their colleagues' behavior during the training sessions as being key to the types of discussions that took place during the training sessions, as well as the level of comfort or discomfort of training participants overall.

In-person vs. Virtual. As indicated in a previous section, nine of the ten study participants attended in-person training sessions prior to March 2020. One study participant attended the implicit bias training after May 2020 when it had shifted to virtual training. Three of the ten study participants have experienced both the in-person and virtual training sessions. These three participants attended in-person training sessions in 2020 but also attended virtual training sessions in the schools they worked in after 2020. As a result, these three study participants were able to provide insight into both in-person and virtual experiences.

All study participants, except one, said that this training needed to occur in person to be successful due to the importance of the topic and the need for conversations during the training. However, most participants also indicated that they would have liked more time to engage with the content prior to the training so they could feel better prepared to discuss and process what they were expected to learn at the training. A common perspective was that "pre-work", such as some of the content or articles referenced, should have been shared prior to the in-person training so more time during the training sessions could be spent on understanding and even practicing the strategies to mitigate the effects of implicit bias. The study participants who experienced the virtual training liked the three asynchronous modules but felt that Module 4, the Zoom session, was lacking.

Most participants preferred an in-person format because of the nature of the topic and the potential for discussion and better understanding. Trudy shared, "I prefer in-person because it creates a more dynamic setting and engagement is different. You are able to make that eye contact and read not just what is said but also what is communicated via body language." Venus' thoughts were similar: "I like professional development training in-person because it allows me to have a better connection with everyone in the meeting. Virtual meetings can feel less connected." Adrianna also agreed that in-person was a more effective model:

> I actually preferred the in-person because it allowed for people to interact with each other and even go to the side and have conversations that they may not have wanted to have as a whole group collectively. And then the modeling is different in person, the resources provided are different in person, I think.

Steven, a black Social Studies teacher with 27 years of experience in high schools, was one of the study participants who experienced both the in-person training session and the virtual training. He shared his thoughts not only on the importance of the topic, but also why a Zoom session was insufficient from his perspective:

> For something of this magnitude? Definitely, definitely in person. Why? Because this is something that is that important that you need to have real conversations, and you need to be able to grow. With the screen, you could turn your screen off, you don't have to face the people, you know, you don't even have to be present. But if you're physically in a room together, you're forced to be present. During the zoom, there was a lady named Karen and someone said something about 'caring', but Karen didn't realize that they said 'caring', so she took offense, and it just went left, which is more of a reason why we need to be in person. And this is so important to have these kinds of discussions. I mean, imagine, the Civil Rights Movement was, I don't know how many years ago, but it's 2022. We still haven't moved the needle. Like, it's important for us to be involved.

Jessica and Thomas were the other two study participants who attended both the virtual training and in-person training sessions. Jessica said that she enjoys both in-person and virtual training, and the key is for training sessions to be structured properly and provide opportunities for engagement and reflection, whether in-person or virtual. They also felt that while virtual training could be effective, this particular training session needs to take place in-person. Jessica shared that even though the in-person training was frustrating at points, it was more effective than the virtual model:

> I prefer in-person. I've now done two implicit bias trainings. One was virtual and one was in-person. And out of both of those, the in-person one was better, even though it was the more frustrating one. During the in-person one, we were just talked at. We were told 'talk with your partner for a second.' But then you come back, and it wasn't like any structured reflection time or any time where you could actually like, deeply digest this. They're just kind of talking about different situations. And it just wasn't engaging. It was just a presentation. It was more effective than the virtual one because of technology issues and different things. Being in person, being able to sit with someone and talk to them like this is more meaningful to me than being in the breakout room.

Similarly, Thomas indicated that while he generally prefers in-person training, he has attended effective virtual trainings. However, he still believes that while it is possible to have successful virtual trainings, in-person training is necessary for a topic such as implicit bias:

> I think depending on who the person is would depend on how they receive the format, I guess. I like in-person because I feel like it's a different experience to engage with a human being in front of you versus the virtual, but I have had great professional development virtually as well. For these types of discussions on bias, I'm an 'in-person' person.

Greta and Sophia both explicitly suggested a hybrid format for implicit bias training sessions. Sophia stated. "I prefer virtual because you can take the training from anywhere. For this specific training, I think in-person is a better option so people can capture how others really feel about things. But a hybrid training could be really good so

people can prepare before they get there." Greta appreciated the time for discussion and strategies but felt that having access to the content and resources prior to the in-person training session would have enhanced the experience and made it more effective for all training participants:

> The training session was in-person so there were opportunities for discussion, but there wasn't enough time to really discuss how to mitigate the effects. It was mentioned that there were strategies to mitigate but nothing explicitly stated about what teachers could do in the classroom. We did activities together, but I don't think people connected the dots that the activities are the strategies. From what I've heard from colleagues who did the training virtually, they just zipped through and didn't really participate in the zoom session, so I do think my session being in-person was better. But the modules that were available online might be useful to see to get a better understanding of the content.

Despite participants preferring in-person training, those who experienced the virtual training did acknowledge that Modules 1, 2, and 3 were useful in terms of the content and resources. Study participants indicated that pre-work and having resources shared prior to the training session would have been helpful. Modules 1, 2, and 3 contained content that also could have been shared prior to in-person training sessions, according to the study participants who attended both in-person and virtual sessions. They indicated that the content shared in the modules would have allowed in-person participants the opportunity to better prepare for the training sessions, as well as provide a resource if they attended sessions where the facilitators did not cover all the content.

Most study participants also suggested that a toolkit of resources provided after the training would be useful. These modules could be that toolkit.

Effective program design and implementation is necessary to shift the culture of an organization, as well as in the practices of the staff within the organization. However, for the changes to be sustainable, the staff must make be able to sense of the new learnings and integrate those learning into their practices.

Theme 2: Incremental Steps towards Ecological Change

Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Richard Carranza introduced a change to the vision of the NYCDOE when they rolled out their equity and excellence agenda. To enact this vision, an ecological change, and create a shift in the mindset of the organization, implicit bias training for all staff was implemented. The implicit bias training was to be the first step in moving the system towards more equitable outcomes through mitigating implicit bias and increasing critical consciousness and culturally relevant practices. In this case, the implicit bias training was one example of ongoing updating that would begin the cycle of ecological change, and hence, the needed shift to reach Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Carranza's vision of equity and excellence. This cycle must include enactment of the new understandings and practices to be complete.

Initial Reactions and Anticipation of Implicit Bias Training. The implicit bias training initiative was announced in 2018 and was met with mixed reactions. One of the subthemes that emerged from the study participants' interviews was the reactions and sense of anticipation about the training sessions and what would occur at these sessions. Publicly, there were opposing viewpoints about the need for this training and much skepticism about the content. The responses from the study participants indicated they

understood why the NYCDOE would create this initiative, but they also felt skepticism and even some frustration at the idea of what they believed to be mandated implicit bias training.

Both Greta and Aaliyah were not surprised by the opposing viewpoints and pushback from people within the NYCDOE. Greta shared that she had heard "a lot of pushback from all over the system." As a result, she was also "skeptical about whether the training would connect to instructional practice, and I wondered what it would be like." Aaliyah shared her initial thoughts about the training:

> My initial thoughts were more of wonderings, what was the impetus? What were the goals and what did the implicit bias trainings hope to achieve? What impact did it seek to make, and what would be the long-term plan or strategy? I was aware of the concept of implicit bias through bearing witness to a world of bias, prejudice, hate and hostility. I anticipated significant pushback from individuals and groups. I anticipated frustration and hostility. I anticipated lawsuits. I anticipated these things in part because many people experience great discomforts and anxieties with change in general. People often experience significant discomfort, anxiety, and even hostility if that change includes or centers race and gender issues, and especially if those issues present a perceived threat to one's foundational understandings, perceived entitlements, and historical or contemporary privilege.

Initial skepticism was also shared by Evelyn, "my initial thoughts were why I am doing this. While I understand the importance of implicit bias training, does it really change anything?" Jessica understood the need for a mandate for such training, but she

also would have appreciated if the NYCDOE considered where teachers were in their varying levels of understanding about implicit bias:

> My initial thoughts were that the training was necessary. Based on conversations with other DOE employees, I can see that there was a very different understanding of what implicit bias was. I was interested to go and was eager to sign up to figure it out. However, just as we meet our students where they're at, teachers also have to admit where they're at with this training. So, I think there's a lot of flexibility for students and teachers are told to be flexible with students, but teachers are also humans. And we're learning about these things at different levels as well. I think the DOE doesn't always think that through 100% when they're making these mandates. They should be meeting us where we are and making changes because not everybody is always ready at the same place at the same time. But there are certain things you need to mandate to kind of push, especially if it's affecting students, but they should understand it could cause more divide.

Sophia also commented on the mandate and wanted to have more information about the initiative: "It seemed like another thing we were mandated to do without really being told much about what the initiative would be and what the anticipated outcomes were. Just another thing on a long list of mandates that we get in trainings we're told we must go to." Despite her feelings about being told to go to the training, Sophia did acknowledge the need for such training:

> Our unconscious stereotypes, biases and attitudes can impact our actions and decisions. This training is supposed to make us aware of and foster a better

understanding of our bias with the ultimate goal of improving relations with the school and community, faculty, staff, parents, and students.

Other study participants also acknowledged the need for the study and indicated that bias and stereotypes are notable in schools, whether intended or unintended. For example, Venus stated that she has heard comments made by educators: "You would hear comments about how some students can't achieve and setting different standards, not necessarily intentionally and maybe not out of malice but just kind of shifting it and not realizing that that there was bias there." Based on these experiences, Venus indicated that she was not sure what to anticipate and was "just trying to go in with an open mind to see what I can get from the training. I was trying not to anticipate anything." Evelyn, despite her skepticism, did also express the importance of the training: "sometimes we stereotype the kids without even acknowledging that we're doing it. So that's why everybody needs to be on the same page. That's why they must bring this training. And no one can say tomorrow that they didn't know about it."

Adrianna's reactions to the need for training are in line with Venus and Evelyn: "I could see it with other teachers. Some schools or some teachers are not aware of how to treat the kids and how that would impact their lives." Adrianna commented further when asked to elaborate: "I thought it would be good for people to take the training because sometimes we do and say things without noticing how it could hurt others. People are sometimes unaware that their own beliefs and attitudes are hurtful to others." Trudy also agreed:

> We all have biases in one form or another, and sometimes, we are not even aware of these biases. As a result of this ignorance, we sometimes offend co-workers

without intentionally meaning to do so. Sometimes, these biases impact how and what we teach and by extension, how we interact with our students. To be honest, before the training, I was not familiar with the term 'implicit bias' per se, but I was very familiar with the concept of biases and stereotypes.

Despite the aforementioned comments about pushback and skepticism, Greta also acknowledged the need for the training and expressed interest:

I thought it was interesting that they [NYCDOE] were finally willing to discuss the topic of bias and curious about what the training would be like and mean long term. I've thought for a long time that student achievement and teacher expectations are tightly tied together. I think teachers' expectations are largely formed by bias, whether they realize it or not. There are large gaps in the performance of subgroups that seem to never close. A lot of teachers come from backgrounds where they have never encountered people of different backgrounds or cultures, and they make assumptions about them.

Not only did Steven and Thomas join the others in acknowledging the need for implicit bias training in the NYCDOE, they welcomed the training and the opportunity for educators to learn and reflect on the impact of implicit bias. Both shared a sense of hopefulness about the potential impact of the training. Steven stated that this training felt very personal to him as he has been impacted by the effects of implicit bias:

Yes, I was optimistic about the implicit bias training initiative. Growing up in New York City in the United States of America, it's very hard for a person of color or a young black man to not understand what implicit bias is and how it directly affects you, not only emotionally but psychologically, affects confidence

and affects just about everything when it comes to trying to gain employment or education. So yes, I was well aware of the need and unfortunately, I like to say that I suffer from PTSD because of things like this, you know, but, we move forward. I wasn't shocked by the training because it was about time. What shocked me was that it took until 2019, 2020 that we are like, Oh, my God, we are servicing young students of color in certain environments that are desperately in need of equity, both in the schools and in the environment. So I was, I was in shock, but I was also impressed at the same time, because that means that we're finally paying attention, and we're finally going to be able to move forward together, instead of in this divisive manner that has been created in our society.

Thomas expressed feeling similar to Steven, but he additionally commented on the need because of biases based on disability. He also shared that biases are a part of why he chose to become an educator:

> Absolutely. Absolutely [understood the need for training]. I mean, I work with disabilities, right? When we talk about inclusivity, they're probably one of the most excluded groups, so absolutely. Let's look at my population, we have mostly black and brown students, right, as well as many of the schools around us, right. So what lens are we using to look at disparity when all our students are minorities? And there are things that we could look at. So just understanding what it was that they expected us to add to what they wanted us to look at. And I also want to see how other people understood it. I came into this position because I knew that biases existed. And I wanted to level the playing field for kids, right? Naturally, we all have biases. I think we wouldn't be human if we didn't, but it's

looking at how do we not impose those beliefs or whatever I think onto children. I think that that's a thing, right? Because we've heard stories about people getting very personal with their beliefs and impacting children.

All study participants indicated a level of understanding about why the NYCDOE would initiate this type of training. Most study participants also shared that they had witnessed negative impacts of bias, and agreed that the training was necessary, if not welcome, but none of the participants had sought out this type of training for themselves, and most indicated they only attended because they believed they were mandated to do so, or their schools included the training session in the professional development plans.

Limited Sensemaking. All study participants indicated some understanding of the concept of implicit bias, but most were more familiar with the idea of stereotypes prior to attending the implicit bias training. For the ecological change to take place, there must be a level of enactment on the part of the teachers in the NYCDOE; but first, they must understand the content of the implicit bias training, including gaining an understanding of the concept of implicit bias, its effects, and ways to mitigate those effects. The reflections shared by the study participants show an increased awareness of the concept of implicit bias.

Evelyn was familiar with stereotypes, but the training clarified the concept of implicit bias. She reflected on a point that stood out to her: “Implicit bias can hurt the relationships or the communities by pre-judging others before really getting to know them without even being aware that you are pre-judging.” Jessica agreed with Evelyn about the concept being clearer to her after the NYCDOE training, “Prior to the training, I had heard about it through training done at my school, not explicitly about implicit bias, but just kind

of talking about it a little bit. My grad school programs that I was taking at the time were starting to introduce the idea. But the training was bringing more to the surface. The concept became more clear to me." Evelyn continued to flesh out her reflection on the training:

> If the teachers are not aware of an implicit bias they may have, it may impact the way they approach that student, or if there are cultural differences, and maybe the teacher is unfamiliar about that culture and doesn't realize he has a preconceived notion. They may approach the student differently based on that. That's why this training was good.

Sophia shared that while the training didn't necessarily change her understanding of the concept of implicit bias, it did still have an impact in that it has made her think about how she interacts with her school community:

> It prompted me to do research and read on my own. Therefore, it had a positive impact on how I deal with all members of the school community. It made me more curious. I can't say the training was fully effective, but it did make me interested in the topic and want to learn more about it. Learning about implicit bias makes you more sensitive to certain things that you didn't consider when you weren't aware that you should be sensitive.

Several study participants discussed that the training made them more aware and able to identify and reflect on implicit bias. Like Sophia, Venus said the training made her more thoughtful: "It has made me think about what biases I may hold and how can I mitigate those to be sure I am really being equitable and inclusive. I also did notice that it brought up tough conversations that otherwise wouldn't happen." Trudy shared a similar

opinion to Venus about the impact, “I think about how we refer to different populations within our community and how to make sure I’m more sensitive when describing the Arabic kids or kids from the Middle East. I'm making much more of an effort now to refer to them by name not as a group. It was effective in that sense.”

Adrianna agreed that the training was impactful. She felt that the training was somewhat effective in helping people reflect on their own implicit bias. She also acknowledged the difficulty in doing so and feels that it is easier to identify implicit biases in other people:

> I feel like it's a lot easier to kind of look at someone else and be like, oh, you have an implicit bias. It's easier to call someone else out for the lack of a better term or statement than to look at yourself and be like, Okay, what do I really need to work on as far as my own biases? So that was where I was at. It's being conscious of your unconscious biases. That was the biggest thing. There's a lot of things that we are fully unaware of sometimes that we do or say to students, or the way we even, you know, go about grading certain group of students or the way we go about teaching certain material without even consciously being aware that we're being biased.

Adrianna also reflected on her own implicit biases and the importance of being willing to acknowledge and be aware of one’s own biases:

> So that was a big thing for me that I wanted to like, really unpack. It unpacked a lot of things like that, that people had a hard time having conversation about. You aren't aware most of the time that you have these biases, until there's a situation that arises and someone's like, well, that right there is implicit bias. Like when

someone says that an 85 for a kid from Bed-Stuy is great. But it's not that great for a white kid from Manhattan. And then the person thinks, Okay, I didn't even realize I had that bias. I felt it was necessary to build awareness because some people may genuinely not know they're showing biases in their class. I thought it was relevant.

While Adrianna spoke in depth about identifying biases, she did not mention any strategies she has used to mitigate them other than now being more aware and "conscious." She also refers "working on her own bias" without being specific about how other than the conversations with others at the training.

Steven felt the training had an impact because of the conversations that have ensued between groups of people who are different from one another as a result of attending this training. He also indicated that the conversations need to continue at the school level for the training to have real lasting impact:

> It's refreshing that we are having conversation, you know, because oftentimes, we go back to our own corners, wherever that is. And then we have those discussions in our homes. But when we're dealing with urban students, we need to be able to bring some of those real conversations about biases or we're not going to move forward until we bring things to the table. I wasn't sure because most teachers, whether white or black come into this craft wanting to change lives and wanting to help students progress and want to see the best in all students. I was a little apprehensive because now you're asking people who are not of color to kind of look at their biases, the way they've lived, and where their biases were, and most people, I'd like to think that going into education, they don't really feel like they

have biases. Because if you're going to work in the urban environment, you're like, Yo, I'm gonna go teach, I'm gonna make a difference. That's your goal. But now you're kind of forced to look at 'Wait a minute, you know, Did I have privileges that allowed me to get education, get an education, opportunity and jobs?' You know, you're forced to kind of look at yourself if you're really true to the game. And some people probably would push back like, this is not fair. Like, why are we discussing this? Because now, you're making me seem like I'm looking down on you, so to speak, or I'm better than you, but I'm not. I'm here to really just, you know, help you, you know, or help students get an education. This reflection is positive for all of us.

Steven also specifically pointed to implicit biases that may in part be created because of the media as an important part of this training. He refers to what we are exposed to by the media as "part of our programming":

> You don't you don't realize how much the media programs you, you know, for example, the Lebron James thing that we discussed. That's also programming, right? It was just an example of where we're at, and where we're not, you know, where we need to be at the same time, right? People's realization of implicit bias. It's hard to describe, you know, being a man of color, because it's like I've been programmed too. Like if I get in my car, I have to think about the cops. Right. And when I talked to my white counterparts it is like, 'I never have to think about that.' That's one example. That's why it is important for us to keep talking about biases – to get a better understanding of one another.

Thomas was also able to reflect on meaningful conversations at the training he attended that allowed him to think further about bias. He did, however, express concern that he did not believe this was the experience that most people had at their training sessions. He felt that his experience was effective because of the sharing of stories and discussion of scenarios that helped him process the concepts and retain some mitigation strategies:

> I also remember talking to people about bias in different ways. It was meaningful. Unfortunately, I don't think that's the experience that people had. My student got murdered on the 2 train right before the training, so I remember that. But it also spoke to his circumstance, right? The place where he grew up. Right. Right. And the fact that this is his fate, and this is the conversation where we talked about opportunities. Right? Right. So, I made a connection between the importance of having this conversation about survivor bias, and the possible outcomes that they have for students who are in certain situations. So, I think for me, just the fact that you're sitting in the space, and you're thinking about it, and the presenters were all engaging, they're from different, you know, walks of life, different places, they had different stories. They told their stories, we talked about their stories, we had different scenarios that we had to unpack. It was good for making us reflect on our biases.

The study participants were clear that the conversations and discussions about implicit bias gave them a greater awareness of the concept. Some participants acknowledged being more thoughtful and reflective. The reflectiveness of participants on whether this training was necessary and effective seems to be connected to their prior

experiences with bias. Study participants who acknowledged either past personal experiences with implicit bias, whether witnessing or personally experiencing the negative impacts, were more expressive in detailing their experiences and the urgent need for this type of training to continue. These participants also spoke with greater thoughtfulness on the need for individuals to share stories, connect, and empathize with one another for this work to be truly impactful. All study participants expressed a general willingness to learn and engage with the topic but most struggled to give concrete examples of shifts in mindset other than being more thoughtful.

Impact on Instructional Practices. Enactment completes a cycle of ecological change and is needed for an organization to fully adopt the change. Enactment occurs when teachers implement new ways of thinking and new strategies into their instructional practice. All study participants' responses indicate an increased awareness of implicit bias, but not all study participants shared examples of shifts in instructional practice or a clear understanding of how to shift their instructional practice to mitigate the potential effects of their implicit bias. For example, Venus stated, "I'm more reflective, but I don't know if that means I've really changed my practice or that I am mitigating bias. I'm not sure how to tell." Most study participants indicated either a shift towards trying to plan more culturally relevant lessons or being more strategic in planning overall.

Jessica did not speak to any specific practices, but she indicated that she felt more confident in her ability to plan because of her increased awareness: "For me it's not really about strategies. I think have a greater awareness of implicit bias, and so I am more strategic in my instructional practice." Greta, on the other hand, was interested in learning more about specific examples of mitigation strategies in practice in classroom settings.

She felt that the training needed to be more explicit about modeling strategies to mitigate implicit bias if there was an expectation of a change in instructional practice as a result of attending the training:

> What does it look like in real time? I think there is potential in this training, but it needed to be more than one session to inform teachers. We need more application to practice. It also seems that there is a missing piece with administrators and what support they received to support us with using the training to impact practice.

Study participants struggled to provide specific examples of mitigation strategies that they use in their instructional practices. However, when asked about specific strategies, such as use of the 'Where I'm From' poem, several participants indicated that they have used the poem with their students after attending the training sessions. Some study participants also indicated that the training session changed their use of visual images and caused them to be more strategic in selecting visual images to share with students.

Evelyn mentioned the use of the 'Where I'm From' poem in her classes when asked about changes in her instructional practice. "If we give the kids a chance to do the poem, they could express themselves in a poetic way." Evelyn was the only study participant to refer specifically to the poem without being prompted. However, when specifically asked about the 'Where I'm From' poem as a follow-up example, five other participants mentioned using the poem with at least one of their classes.

Several participants shared that they have changed how they select images to use in their lessons. For example, Sophia stated that she is more "mindful of images I show in

class, and I have a greater awareness of my instructional practices." When asked to elaborate on her instructional practices, Sophia did not name any strategies but said that she tries to be more culturally relevant in her planning and delivery of instruction. Trudy spoke in more detail about the impact of the training on her practice, including selecting images:

> The content that was shared was effective, and I am more aware of implicit biases even as I interact with my students. For example, I am mindful of what I say to my students, and even when creating tasks for them, I think about biases. If I am choosing images online to use in a task, I think about those images and what they convey. If those images are promoting certain stereotypes, I will not use them.

Adrianna agreed about the changes in selecting visual images. She spoke not only about the impact of the training on her use of images, but also about how the training session made her reflect on her expectations and ensuring that she was not using content that was not grade level appropriate for her students rather than differentiation strategies and multiple entry points to better support all students:

> It gave me the ability to reflect on myself a little bit more and kind of be more understanding with my students and to make sure I do not change the content; To be more flexible with the way students express themselves and just give them more opportunities in different ways. But that was another thing that I wanted to tap into, because again, I wanted to make sure that I was servicing my students, that I wasn't lowering my expectations, and that I was appropriately providing multiple entry points for my students to be the most successful with the most resources possible. I also use images a lot in my classroom. So now I think about

> the power behind images, I'm more critical in terms of choosing the images that I share with my students. There was a big discussion around the images at the training, and it became very controversial. People saw it through different lenses. I think whenever I'm using images, that's something I actually think about now.

When asked to elaborate, Adrianna shared that she tries to consider how her students might view images before she incorporates them into her lesson. She also shared that she thinks more about differentiated instruction, especially with students who might be struggling. She acknowledged that prior to training, she made have given students "easier" work if they struggled, but now she thinks about how to better help them understand more challenging work.

Three participants, Aaliyah, Thomas, and Steven discussed the impact of the training in terms of shifts towards culturally responsive pedagogy that they have seen or are making in their own practice. Aaliyah now works directly with teachers as a coach, and she has been able to use some of what she experienced at the training: "It supported me in speaking with some teachers, but many only wanted to do "CRSE" [Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education] their own way, which in many ways was grounded in bias, privilege and entitlement. I did facilitate some CRSE leadership trainings thereafter." She acknowledges seeing minor shifts in instructional practices but worries that these shifts are not sustainable and do not fully mitigate the impacts of bias. Steven also shared shifts in instructional practice that are more culturally responsive. Like Aaliyah, Steven feared sustainability and believes more training should take place:

> Instruction has shifted to more cultural relevancy, and we've been able to tie everything, every subject matter ranging from health to physical education, to

> cultural relevancy. For health, it's like what are you what are you putting in your body and look at the stores that are in your neighborhood, and how that affects you, as well as how that's different than the suburbs where there's Whole Foods and Trader Joe's. Unfortunately, there are still schools and teachers who haven't accepted that there is anything wrong, it will never change. I mean, I've seen schools in my building where there still are no people of color as teachers. If you're not making an effort to kind of represent the students that you're serving, then what are we doing?

Despite seeing these shifts, as indicated, Steven expresses a desire for more change in practices and greater movement towards cultural responsiveness. He states that more still needs to be done:

> Even though we are doing things in my school, I'd like to see more culturally relevant instruction in the classrooms. I like to see more discussion amongst the staff, whatever your race is, and I'd like to see people reading more books that are relevant to the craft that we're in. Let's have that conversation now, and let's talk about our biases, right. And let's really build our community. Because if it really takes a village, right, let's have some real talk.

Thomas had similar thoughts to both Aaliyah and Steven regarding greater discussion about cultural responsiveness but indicated that he has seen few consistent shifts in instructional practices in his school. Thomas also expressed concerns regarding sustainability and believes the training must continue in order to really impact instruction:

> When I think about its impact on teaching, I was hoping that it would help people understand what is your opinion? And what is a fact? And how do we get children

to determine facts for themselves without our biased opinions? And I think we've seen that it was timely. What the pandemic did, it exposed a lot of bias, right. And there was a lot of conversation about how race played into the pandemic. I want kids to understand learning is about forming your own opinion based on facts. When I walk around school and sit with colleagues, there's more conversation around diversity. Right. And the schools are doing more culturally relevant things, like, for example, we had a multicultural fair, where we wanted to highlight the fact that people are different. And, you know, and that's okay, and so on. And so you see more of that.

Thomas, like Steven, says despite noticing some slight shifts, there is still not significant impact. He voices concerns about whether the shifts he has seen will last:

> But in terms of teaching practices, I don't see great impact. I always talk about letting the kids see themselves in the teaching, right? Or asset-based teaching, right? How to take the strengths that students have and use that to design lessons. That's something I definitely want to continue to work on. Obviously, the pandemic, you know, disrupted a lot of the equity work we're doing, but one of the challenges with the equity work is the sustainability of it. And the format of that training does not allow for sustainability. One, it is super expensive to pay people per session. Over time, it's a very hard thing to track and monitor. And you deal with large groups of people in a room. How is this going to be sustained? I think it's going to die with this chancellor. The whole conversation about equity and implicit bias, it's so big, and people sometimes focus on the race piece of it. And it's bigger than that. Right. And I think that's where the training must

continue. The conversation must be continued. We're not going to see the impact from the kids in the way that we should if it's not continued.

These were the only three study participants that connected the implicit bias training to shifts towards culturally responsive sustaining education. Each of these participants also felt that the shifts they are seeing will not be sustained without continued training around mitigating the effects of bias and a clear understanding of culturally responsive education and what it looks like in practice. All three indicated that there must also be clarity around expectations for culturally responsive sustaining education that includes affirmation of collective differences and the value of diverse voices.

All study participants point towards some shifts in instructional practice that they have made or have seen as a result of the implicit bias training. All participants agreed that a one-day training session just scratched the surface. The study participants felt that this type of training should be continued, with a greater emphasis on what teachers can do in the classroom to make a greater impact. The study participants would have liked a "toolkit" or more resources that they could implement immediately in their lessons and instructional practices.

Conclusion

This study investigated two research questions about the teacher perceptions of implicit bias training and its impact of the training on teachers' instructional practice and/or expectations for student learning. The findings of this phenomenological study point to increased awareness of implicit bias and its impact on student learning and some minor shifts in instructional practices as a result of their increased awareness and understanding of implicit bias.

Perceptions

The first research question in the study investigated teacher perceptions of the implicit bias training. The analysis of the data found that participants acknowledge the need for implicit bias training but felt that the training itself was not enough for them to feel confident in how to mitigate the effects of implicit bias. When reflecting on the phenomena of the training itself, the data indicates that participants identify the training as necessary but not successful in its rollout. Findings include that the training itself was too short in length, did not provide enough time to "dig into" the information, and that a professional learning series may be more appropriate. Participants all indicated they understood the need for the training but also acknowledged that they had not sought out training on their own on this topic prior to attending the NYCDOE training, nor would they likely have attended the training if they were not mandated to do so. Several participants also shared an interest in attending additional training on implicit bias, but none had yet sought out trainings.

Participants shared that in-person training for this topic would be necessary because of the need for conversation to learn by applying the concepts and that the virtual modules were more useful for content knowledge and preparation for the training than as the training itself in remote format. Participants who attended the zoom training felt that it was not effective for this topic. The data suggests that participants would have been more interested in a hybrid training model where they received some content prior to an in-person session to take a deep dive into the topic. Participants acknowledge an increased awareness of implicit bias, but findings indicate while it is much easier for participants to notice or identify implicit biases in others after training, it is still

challenging to reflect and act upon their own implicit biases. The study participants acknowledge the harmful effects of implicit bias and believe that teachers are for the most part willing to work towards greater equity in the New York City Department of Education.

Instructional Practice and Expectations

The second research question in this study investigated to what extent implicit bias training impacts teachers' instructional practices and/or expectations for student learning. Analysis of the data around the impact on instructional practice found that there have not yet been significant shifts in teacher pedagogy. There has been a shift towards a greater awareness of cultural relevance and inclusivity in planning for instruction, but most participants struggle to point towards substantive changes in instructional practices when delivering instruction. Most participants indicate thoughtfulness and reflection as their biggest takeaways from the training. Participants did not articulate that they learned specific strategies at the training but when explicitly asked about strategies modeled during the training, participants acknowledged either using the strategy or planning to use the strategy. When reflecting on the training and its impact, only one participant specifically referenced thinking about expectations for student learning. Others spoke generally about their planning process being more targeted towards their students, specifically regarding materials, resources, and content of their lessons. Most of the participants believe that the training has made them more culturally competent and better able to select materials, resources, and plan lesson content that is more culturally responsive.

CHAPTER 5

Introduction

This dissertation presented a phenomenological study of the implicit bias training offered by the New York City Department of Education's Office of Equity and Access during 2018-2022. This study explored teachers' perceptions of the implicit bias training and to what extent the implicit bias training impacts their instructional practice and/or expectations for student learning. Analysis of the data collected from one-on-one interviews revealed four key findings. First, participants have an increased awareness of implicit bias and its impact on student learning. Second, all participants acknowledged the need for implicit bias training but felt that one training session was not enough for them to feel confident in how to mitigate the effects of implicit bias. Third, the training has resulted in a greater awareness of cultural relevancy and inclusivity when planning instruction and selecting materials and resources to use. Fourth, there have not been significant shifts in teacher pedagogy because of the implicit bias training. This chapter discusses the findings of the data analysis as they relate to each research question and literature reviewed in chapter 2. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future practice and research.

Implications of Findings: Research Question 1

When investigating teachers' perceptions of the training, two discoveries were made. The first major discovery from this study was that teachers expressed an increased awareness and understanding of the concepts of implicit bias. Admittedly, participants find it easier to identify implicit biases in others; however, all participants were able to reflect on their own biases and how those might impact their classroom environments.

This finding affirmed existing literature that suggests an increased understanding of implicit bias can impact the creation of welcoming environments (MacFarlane, et al, 2016; Staats, 2016). Both New York State and New York City have included implicit bias training in recent policy as part of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan (Chu 2019) and Strategic Plan *One NYC 2050: Equity and Excellence in Education* as a strategy for more welcoming school and classroom environments.

A second major discovery of this study was that all participants shared that they believe this type of training is necessary, and while it had a positive impact on their level of understanding and awareness, they do not feel competent in how to mitigate the effects of implicit bias. Participants indicated that the training did not provide enough opportunity to learn about strategies to mitigate implicit bias and how to apply the strategies in a classroom environment. The existing research on implicit bias training concurs with this finding in that increased awareness by itself does not necessarily combat bias and that interventions are needed (Godsil, et al, 2017; Hahn and Gawronski, 2019; Staats, 2016).

All participants, regardless of race, indicated that this training is not only important but necessary to create more equitable outcomes for students. The study participants gave examples and shared reflections on why they felt the NYCDOE would mandate this training. Participants shared a willingness to engage in additional training. This challenges research that suggests teachers may be resistant or insulted by training that is focused on race, bias, and culturally responsive pedagogy (Blitz, Anderson, & Saastamoinen, 2016; Nadelson, et al, 2019; Staats, 2016).

All participants stressed the need for this training to take place in-person so participants can engage in storytelling and conversation. Despite the virtual training taking less time and making it easier for teachers to simply comply with completing the training, teachers felt strongly that there had to be an in-person component to be able to learn about the strategies and practice using the strategies to mitigate implicit bias. The participants who had experienced the online modules did indicate that the modules were effective in building their understanding and awareness, and that the self-paced modules could be included as part of future training sessions. This finding upholds research that indicates there can be effective online professional development if teachers feel that they can use the resources (Holmes, Signer, & MacLeod, 2010; Reeves and Pedulla, 2013).

This finding also underscores the need for continued training and discussions to increase awareness of implicit bias, as well as model mitigation strategies during the training. The discussions around implicit bias, its effects, and mitigation strategies are necessary to not only creating more welcoming affirming classroom and school environments but to also reduce the disparate outcomes in education.

Implications of Findings: Research Question 2

When investigating to what extent implicit bias training impacts teachers' instructional practices and/or expectations for student learning, two additional discoveries were made. The first discovery was that the implicit bias training has increased awareness of cultural relevancy and inclusivity when teachers are planning instruction and selecting resources and materials to share with students and in their classrooms. Teachers spoke to examples of being more reflective on how students would react to visuals and ensuring that the visuals and materials used in their lessons represent the students and are

appropriate in terms of how students would perceive the materials and visuals. They also spoke of their planning processes being more targeted towards their students' needs. This finding affirms the literature that suggests effective professional development allows teachers to make connections between what they are learning and their practices (Cercone, 2008; Kennedy, 1999, 2016; Knowles, 1984).

However, despite teachers sharing that they felt more culturally competent, most of the teachers struggled to point towards substantive changes in instructional practices when delivering instruction. This was the second discovery for this research question; implicit bias training has only resulted in minor shifts in instructional practice. The teachers did not articulate strategies that they learned at the training unless asked directly about a specific strategy that was used in the training. When directly asked, some indicated use of strategies such as the 'Where I'm From' poem, used to create connections and get to know students better. This affirms some aspects of culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), but it does not go far enough unless teachers' expectations are impacted as a result of their new understandings and increased cultural competence. Only one participant specifically referenced teacher expectations of students as something to reflect on after the training, which is needed for culturally responsive sustaining education (Khalifa, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Teachers express a willingness and desire to shift their thinking based on their experiences with implicit bias training. As the teachers indicated, the training needed to move from theory to practice and support them with time to apply what they were learning to their pedagogy. For them to incorporate what they have learned about implicit bias and how to mitigate its effects into their pedagogical practices, they needed

replacement beliefs and enactment to move from awareness to action (Fergus, 2017; Kennedy, 1999, 2016). It is not enough for professional development to provide an idea or concept; instead, effective professional development must allow teachers to adopt the new idea while simultaneously abandoning their prior practice.

Theoretical Framework

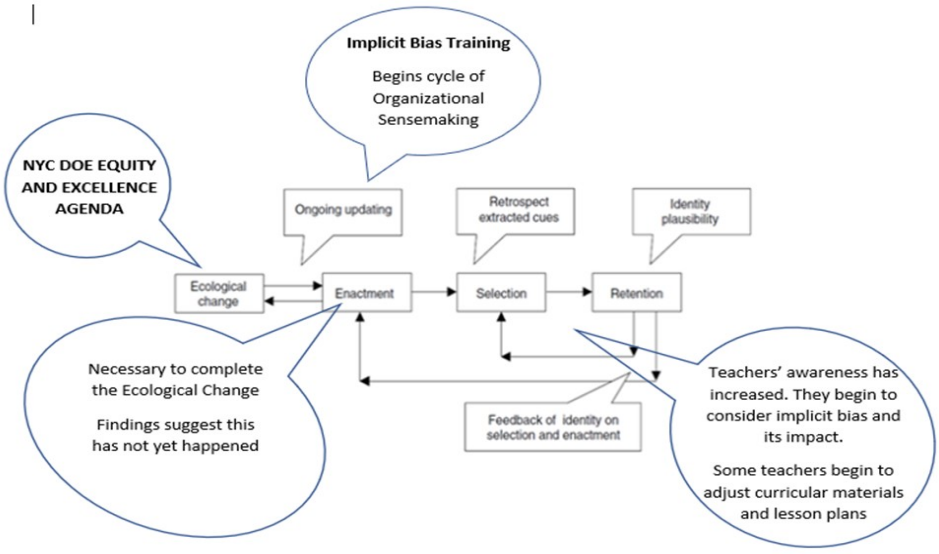
For an educational system to successfully shift the mission and vision, a process of organizational sensemaking must occur through an ecological change (Weick, 1995). The shift to the Equity and Excellence Agenda by New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio and New York City Department of Education Chancellor Richard Carranza was an ecological change. By introducing the Equity and Excellence Agenda, Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Carranza were attempting to move the system away from a mission and vision upholding meritocracy to a system that promotes democratic equality and as a result, produces more equitable outcomes (Labaree, 1997; Kirst and Wirt, 2009). The implicit bias training was an example of ongoing updating that must take place after there has been an ecological change. However, for the cycle of change to be complete, enactment must occur. The findings of this study indicate that while there is an increased level of awareness, there are not major shifts in instructional practice, which would occur if enactment was taking place. The findings show that a cycle of selection and retention, or limited sensemaking, is taking place but not yet enactment, which is needed to complete the cycle of organizational sensemaking to solidify an ecological change in the organization (Weick, 1995; Weick and Sutcliffe, 2005). **See Figure 2**.

Within the current political landscape of New York City, meritocracy is at the forefront once again in NYC Public Schools, and there seems to be a shift away from the

equity and excellence agenda and possibly away from the "For ALL" programming that had become symbolic of the mindset shift the organization had been seeking. The NYCDOE is now moving in the direction of public schools as a driver of economic social mobility rather than democratic equality and equity (Labaree 1997; Kirst and Wirt, 2009). The creation of pathways is a key initiative that this current administration is pursuing. While building generational wealth and social mobility can be seen as goals worth pursuing, without changing the organizational philosophy, and by extension the mindsets of the educators (Weick, 1995; Weick and Sutcliffe, 2005), will the same disparities persist? If educators do not confront their biases and the outcomes that are a result of the lower expectations that these biases may create, will students actually be guided into pathways that will result in greater social mobility? Or will some students continue to be guided based on what can be considered lower expectations because of educator biases? As a result of these shifts, the organization seems stuck in the cycle of selection and retention, which has caused limited sensemaking and a lack of enactment of practices to mitigate the impacts of implicit bias.

Figure 2

Limited Sensemaking



Limitations of the Study

The timing and small sample size of this study may limit the external validity of its findings. This study took place as New York City Public Schools were attempting to return to pre-COVID 19 pandemic norms and during a change in Mayor and Chancellor. The shifting focus of the New York City Department of Education and political climate potentially played a role in recruitment of study participants and willingness of teachers to speak about their experiences with this training. During the time that this training was implemented, there were many voices expressing a wide array of opinions on the topic and the training itself. It was the hope that this study would capture a wide variety of voices in an attempt to understand the experiences not only of those teachers who were willing to attend the training, but also of those who felt forced to attend and did not agree with the initiative.

Within the small sample of participants, high school teachers were overly represented, and there was limited representation of teachers who had middle school experience. No elementary school teachers participated, which limits external validity as being representative of all NYCDOE teachers. The voices of elementary school teachers would be important to capture to measure the impact of this training on educators who work with children in early developmental stages.

Recommendations for Future Practice

New York State Education Department continues to move forward in its implementation of the CRSE Framework, which includes implicit bias as an area that must be addressed. With this policy in place, the CRSE Framework calls for teachers to continuously learn about implicit bias" (p. 28). Based on the findings of the study, both NYSED and the NYCDOE should consider policy or a practice brief that specifically addresses the expected outcomes of implicit bias training and provides guidelines for format and duration of training. A continued series of professional learning on implicit bias and its impact, 'equity in practice', and culturally responsive sustaining education would be recommended based on the reflections and experiences of the participants in this study. The expected outcomes of this professional learning should be provided to all educators, as well as how impact will be measured.

Districts across the state and NYCDOE should consider providing a hybrid model for implicit bias training. Teachers should be given access to modules that include the science and other content they are expected to learn before attending in-person training sessions. The modules could serve as the content while the training session serves as application and bridge to practice with a brief review of the content in the modules.

Access to modules prior to training would provide the opportunity for teachers to process and reflect without an audience. During the in-person sessions, participants can then practice mitigation strategies and create plans for how to implement mitigation strategies into their everyday instructional practices.

Specifically, within the NYCDOE, professional learning for superintendents, school administrators, and teachers can be built directly into the monthly professional development time to avoid any contractual issues and staff not attending sessions because it is offered outside their contractual work obligations. Professional development time is contractual for school administrators and teachers, so professional learning on implicit bias and culturally relevant sustaining education can be embedded into existing structures rather than offered for per session, during school days where teachers would have to be released, or during the summer. Additional offerings can be provided during the summer; however, by embedding this professional learning into existing contractual structures, as is done with other initiatives, the NYCDOE can ensure all staff at the district and school levels participate. This policy shift would also reinforce the importance of not only understanding implicit bias and how to mitigate its effects, but also clarifying CRSE and the expectations of its implementation across the NYCDOE.

In addition to the professional development and mindset shifts, The NYCDOE should consider systemwide policy shifts around programming for gifted and talented, enrichment, and "AP for ALL"-style programs. At this point in time, these decisions are largely district and school based, which is a driver of disparate outcomes. Policies could be created to ensure that all districts and all schools provide more accessible programming for all students. For example, not all NYCDOE high schools offer

Advanced Placement, which leads to disproportionate outcomes before course enrollment policies even come into effect. A policy about course offerings at all high schools could be put in place, and then policies for course enrollment could also be put in place that allow for greater access. These policies would mitigate the potential impacts of implicit bias of school administrators and teachers of these courses. Policy shifts would also support mindset shifts in current NYCDOE staff and teachers, as well as set a clear expectation for future employees of the NYCDOE.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies could replicate the methodology with a larger sample size of teachers to gain a better understanding of the impacts of this initiative throughout the entire New York City Department of Education. A larger scale qualitative study could potentially capture those voices to gain insight into understanding why some were opposed to the initiative and the training sessions. Given the small sample size and limit to external validity as a result, a larger sample size that includes more teachers and possibly represents all districts could also look at the nuances by grade level, content area, district, and borough to gauge impact.

Another recommendation for future research would be a qualitative study involving school administrators. Participation in training for school administrators does not seem to have been tracked in the same way that teacher participation was tracked. Also, teachers' experiences with this initiative were also potentially impacted by their administrators' experience with their training, or lack thereof, as well as the level of support they receive in implementing what they have learned at the training. A qualitative study could consider the impact of the training for school administrators, as well as a comparison to the impact of the training on teachers.

Conclusion

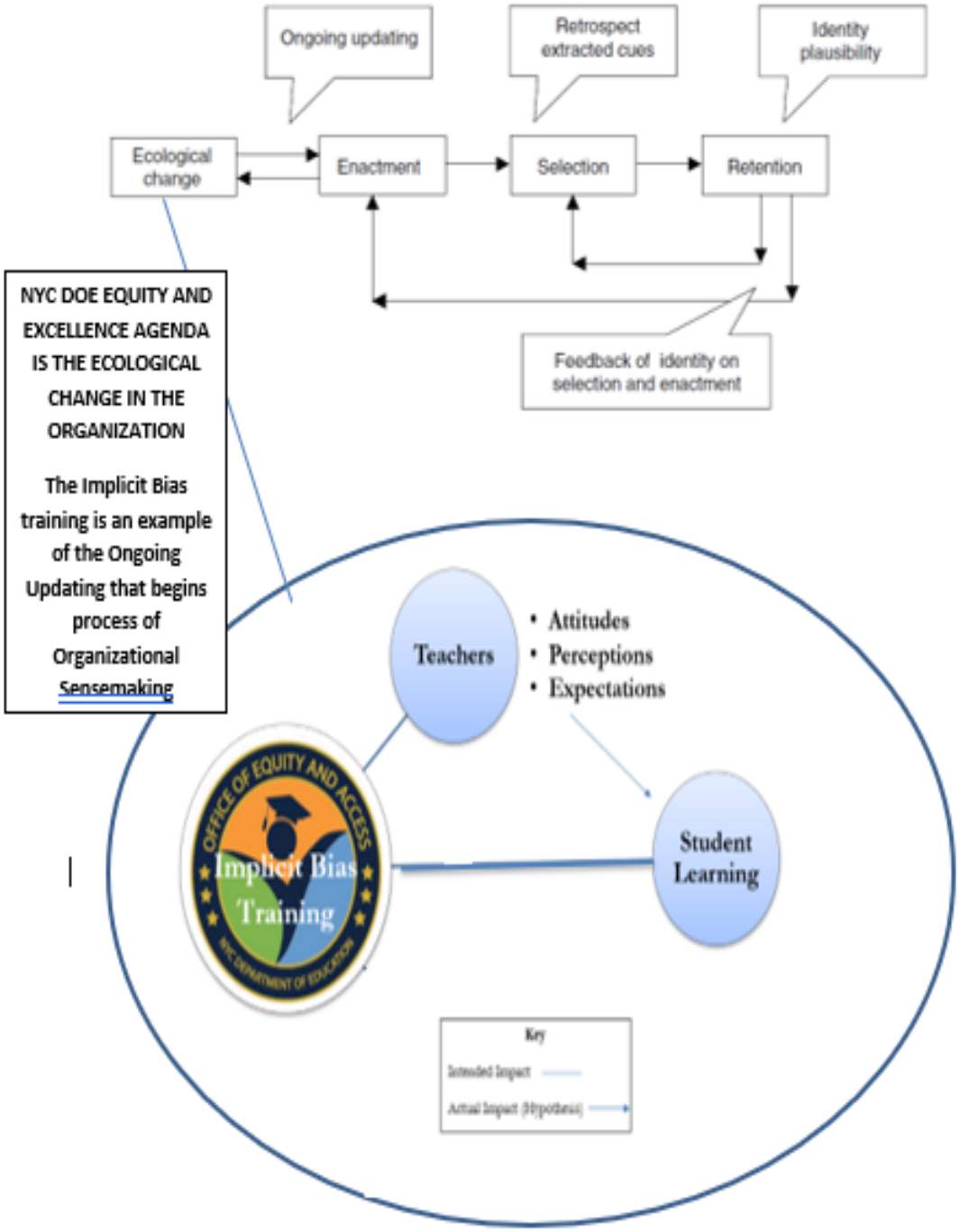
The findings of this study reveal teachers' perceptions of the implicit bias training and the impact of that training on their instructional practice. As the findings indicate, the training was effective in building teachers' awareness of implicit bias. However, the training did not go far enough to create sustainable and lasting shifts in teachers' instructional practices, which has led to a state of limited sensemaking in the organization.

Additional training is needed to shift the system towards producing more equitable outcomes. It is the hope that this study can be used to begin a conversation around the potential positive outcomes of continued professional learning on implicit bias and support for educators to not only begin to understand and reflect on the potential impacts of their implicit biases, but also to learn how to implement strategies that can mitigate these effects. If teachers are supported with learning more equitable practices and abandoning prior practices that contribute to disproportionate outcomes, enactment on a larger scale will occur, and a mindset shift will inevitably take place.

With the shift towards the pathways initiatives, there is still great potential for disparate outcomes, and implicit bias training may be even more necessary to ensure students are not steered towards career pathways based on educator bias. One of Chancellor Banks' Four Pillars is Scale and Sustain What Works. This study indicates that implicit bias training was effective in building awareness of implicit bias, shifts towards greater cultural relevancy, and some minor shifts in instructional practice. The training can be sustained and built upon to be more effective. If we begin to design with equity in mind, we may come to understand that more access for more people means more benefit for more people. Implicit bias training is a step in that direction.

Appendix A

Conceptual Framework



Appendix B

RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear Principals and School Staff,

I am conducting a research study for my dissertation which will look at the experiences of teachers who have attended the implicit bias training that has been implemented by the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) Office of Equity and Access. This study will not evaluate the experiences of teachers or facilitators but will look at what teachers have experienced and how they have experienced this training. The concluding report will share common themes and descriptions of the experiences of participants in this study.

This research provides an opportunity for NYCDOE teachers to share their experiences with this training, both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. I am looking to recruit teachers to participate in one-on-one interviews. If possible, please have a staff member within the school office forward the recruitment email below to teachers in your school.

Teachers who respond to the email via the linked form will be sent the Letter of Consent. Upon agreeing to participate in the study, an interview via phone will be scheduled. The Letter of Consent will be reviewed and signatures obtained digitally before the interview is conducted.

Please note no identifying information related to individual educators, schools, or district will be collected. This research is voluntary, and there is no expectation for principals to actively recruit participants.
I sincerely thank you for your time and consideration of this request.

Be well,
Dannielle Darbee Muelthaler
dannielle.darbee02@my.stjohns.edu

Note: This research study and the associated interviews and focus group has received IRB approval from both St. John's University and the NYC DOE. (St. John's IRB Protocol #:IRB-FY2021-452 ; NYCDOE IRB Protocol #: 3932)

PLEASE FORWARD:

Greetings Teachers,

I am writing to request your participation in a study that will look at the experiences of teachers who have attended the implicit bias training that has been implemented by the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) Office of Equity and Access. This study will not evaluate the experiences of teachers or facilitators but will look at what teachers have experienced and how they have experienced this training. The concluding report will share common themes and descriptions of the experiences of participants in this study.

You have been selected as a potential participant because you are a teacher and you may have attended the implicit bias training provided by the Office of Equity and Access. As a participant, you will commit to a one hour interview and possibly a follow-up interview that will take approximately 30 minutes.

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to participate. If you would like to participate in this study, please click on the link here to indicate your interest and best contact method.

Thank you in advance for being willing to share your experiences and participate in this study.

Be well,

Dannielle Darbee Muelthaler

dannielle.darbee02@my.stjohns.edu

Note: This research study and the associated interviews and focus group has received IRB approval from both St. John's University and the NYC DOE. (St. John's IRB Protocol #: IRB-FY2021-452 ; NYCDOE IRB Protocol #: 3932)

Appendix C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

INTRODUCTION:

Hello! My name is Dannielle Darbee Muelthaler, and I'm a doctoral student in the School of Education at St. John's University. First and foremost, I would like to thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. Before we begin, I would like to tell you a little bit about the research I am doing. I am researching how the New York City Department of Education implicit bias training impacts teachers' instructional practices and expectations for student learning. The purpose of this interview is to learn about your experience with the implicit bias training that you attended. I am interested in learning about what you experienced at the training and how you have processed that experience. I am not evaluating you or other teachers. My report will share common themes and descriptions shared by you and other participants. I would like you to feel comfortable sharing your experience and how you really feel about that experience. With your consent, I would like to- record our conversation, so I do not miss any part of it by trying to take notes on everything you share. I would like to remind you that this interview will remain confidential and be used only for the purposes of this study. This interview will take no more than 60 minutes. Before we begin, I would like to discuss the Informed Consent Form with you. Do you have any questions?

INFORMED CONSENT FORM:

Share the letter of consent and secure the required signature via email

QUESTIONS:

Background information

1. Please tell me about yourself.
2. Tell me about your previous experience.
3. What is your current position?
4. What is your Educational Background and Training?
5. How often, if ever, do you participate in Centrally-led trainings with the Department of Education?

Pre-Training Impressions

1. What were your initial thoughts upon finding out about the implicit bias training mandate? Why?
2. Do you understand why the NYCDOE believes all staff should attend this training? Why?
3. What were you anticipating before you attended the training? Why?

4. Before you attended the training, were you familiar with the concept of implicit bias? What did you know about it?
5. What was your opinion about implicit bias and how it may impact teaching?

Training Experiences

6. What did you experience during the training? Can you give an example?
7. What factors do you think caused that experience? Why do you think that?
8. Which model of delivery (in-person or virtual) do you prefer for professional development/training? Why?
9. In what ways, if any, do you think the delivery of this training affected your experience? Give examples.
10. Which model of delivery (in-person or virtual) do you prefer for professional development/training? Why?
11. In what ways, if any, did the facilitator of the training affect your experience?

Post Training Integration

12. Do you see this training impacting your teaching practice? Your approach to your students? In what ways?
13. Are there specific strategies from the training that you would like to incorporate into your instructional practices?
14. Has this training made you interested in pursuing other related professional development opportunities?
15. Is there anything else you would like to share about this experience?

CONCLUSION:

Thank you so very much for taking the time to share your experiences and thoughts with me today. I appreciate you sharing your perspectives on this topic, and your answers will be very helpful with my research project. Do you have any final thoughts or questions before we end? Thank you again.

Appendix D

LETTER OF CONSENT

ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY
THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

New York City Department of Education

Institutional Review Board

Adult Consent Form to Participate in a Research Study

1. Title of research study and general information.

Study title: *Simple Awareness or Actionable Impact?* A Phenomenological Study of the New York City Department of Education Implicit Bias Training Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Study number: 3932

IRB of Record: *St. John's University, IRB-FY2021-452*

Participation duration: *Participants will partake in 1-2 interviews over the course of 2 months, averaging 1 hour per session*

Anticipated total number of research participants: *10*

Sponsor/Supporter: *N/A*

2. Researchers' contact information.

Principal Investigator: *[Dannielle Darbee Muelthaler, Doctoral Student, St. John's University; B.A, Manhattan College M.S. Ed., St. John's University, Professional Diploma, Manhattan College*
Phone Number: *917-885-1461*
Email Address: *Dannielle.darbee02@my.stjohns.edu*

Co-Investigator/Study Coordinator: *[name(s), institutional affiliation (e.g. Study Coordinator, Columbia University Medical Center), and degree(s), as applicable]*
Phone Number:
Email Address:

Faculty Advisor For Student Research: *Catherine DiMartino, Professor, St. John's University*
Phone Number:
Email Address: *dimartic@stjohns.edu*

3. What information is on this form?

We are asking you to take part in a research study.

This form explains why we are doing this study and what you will be asked to do if you choose to be in this study. It also describes the way we (Researchers) would like to use and share information about you.

Please take the time to read this form. We will talk to you about taking part in this research study. You should ask us any questions you have about this form and about this research study.

You do not have to participate if you don't want to.

4. Why is this study being done?

We are doing this research study to learn more about *teachers' experiences with the New York City Department of Education Implicit Bias Training*

We also want to find out if *this training has had an impact on teachers' instructional practices and expectations for student learning.*

5. Who is being included?

You are being asked to participate in this study because we have determined that people who *have participated in the NYCDOE Implicit Bias Training* will help us answer our research question(s). The following people will not be included because *they teach in the District and/or School in which the Principal Investigator works as an employee of the NYC Department of Education.*

6. What will I be asked to do if I choose to be in this study?

We will ask you to participate in *1 or 2 (if a follow-up is necessary)* interviews *via telephone or Zoom.*

This study will last two months.

Recordings:
Audio/video recording or photography

We are asking for you to allow us to *audiotape (voice recording) if the interview takes place via a telephone call, or videotape if the interview takes place via Zoom,* you as part of the research study.

The recording(s) will be used for *analysis by the researcher.*

The recording(s) will include no identifying markers. If the interview takes place via Zoom, the camera will be turned off to fully block the participant's face.

The recording(s) will be stored *in a password protected database; and a printed transcript will be stored in a locked file cabinet with no link to subject's identity and will be destroyed upon publication of study results, retained indefinitely.*

Please write your initials next to the choice you make below:

_____ (initial) yes, I agree to recording as described above

_____ (initial) no, I do not want to be recorded

7. Are there any risks?

There are no known risks to participating in this study.

We do not think that the risks associated with taking part in this study are greater in and of themselves, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examination or tests.
You can choose to skip questions if they make you uncomfortable.

Loss of confidentiality
A risk of taking part in this study is the possibility of a loss of confidentiality or privacy. Loss of privacy means having your personal information shared with someone who is not on the study team and was not supposed to see or know about your information. The study team plans to protect your privacy. Their plans for keeping your information private are described in section 9 of this consent form.

8. Are there any benefits?

You may or may not receive personal [direct] benefit from taking part in this study. The possible benefits of taking part in this study include: sharing your experiences with the NYCDOE Implicit Bias training initiative with others and potentially informing future research into this topic.

9. What about my privacy?

Every effort will be made to keep your personal information confidential. However, we cannot guarantee total privacy.

All collected research data will be immediately stripped or all identifiers and maintained in a de-identified format in a password protected database Only the Principal Investigator and the study staff will be able to see this file.

If information from this study is published or presented at scientific or professional meetings, your name and other personal information about you *will not* be used.

The following people and/or agencies will be able to look at, copy, use and share your research information:
- The investigator, *St. John's University and the NYC DOE]* staff and other professionals who may be evaluating the study;
- Authorities from *St. John's University and NYC DOE],* including the Institutional Review Board ('IRB'). An IRB is a committee organized to protect the rights and welfare of people involved in research.
- The Federal Office of Human Research Protections ('OHRP')

On the checklist below, please indicate if you would permit the researchers to store and/or share your interview transcript(s) for future research.

_____ I agree to allow my *interview transcript(s)* to be stored for future research by the researchers of this study.

_____ I agree to allow my *interview transcript(s)* to be shared with other researcher for future research.

_____ I do not agree to allow *interview transcript(s)* to be stored or shared for future research.

You may change your mind and revoke (take back) this consent at any time and for any reason. To revoke this consent, you must contact the Principal Investigator, Dannielle.darbee02@my.stjohns.edu .

However, if you revoke your consent, you will not be allowed to continue taking part in the Research. Also, even if you revoke this consent, the Researchers and the Sponsor (if applicable) may continue to use and disclose the information they have already collected.

10. Will I get paid or be given anything to take part in this study?

You will not receive any payment or other reward for taking part in this study.

11. Will I incur costs if I take part in this study?

There will be no costs to you for being in this study.

12. What are my rights if I take part in this study?

Taking part in this study is your choice. You can decide not to take part in or stop being in the study at any time. If you decide not to participate, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Please tell one of the Researchers listed in Section 2 of this consent form if you decide to leave the study before it is finished.

Your participation will also end if the Researchers or the study Sponsor stops the study earlier than expected or if you do not follow the study procedures.

13. Who can I call if I have questions?

You may call Dannielle Darbee Muelthaler at telephone # 917-885-1461 or email *Dannielle.darbee02@my.stjohns.edu* if you have any questions or concerns about this research study.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, or if you have a concern about this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board listed below.

Institutional Review Board
New York City Department of Education
52 Chambers Street, Room 310
New York, NY 10007
Telephone: (212) 374-3913
MAzar@schools.nyc.gov

St. John's University
Newman Hall, Room 106
8000 Utopia Parkway
Jamaica, NY 11439
Telephone: (718) 990-1440
irbstjohns@stjohns.edu

14. Statement of consent and signatures

Statement of consent

I have read this consent form. The research study has been explained to me. I agree to be in the research study described above.

A copy of this consent form will be provided to me after I sign it.

By signing this consent form, I have not given up any of the legal rights that I would have if I were not a participant in the study.

Signatures

_____

Research Participant Date

_____

Print Name of Research Participant

_____

Person Obtaining Consent Date

_____

Print Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Appendix E

IMPLICIT BIAS TRAINING INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

NYC Department of Education | Bill de Blasio, Mayor | Richard A. Carranza, Chancellor

Office of EQUITY and ACCESS

Implicit Bias, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Training Initiative

INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

The current social, economic, and political climate both within New York City and across the country suggests a need for more implicit bias awareness programs that build more inclusive, nurturing, and collaborative communities. While implicit bias cannot be eliminated, its effects can be reduced and mitigated. Within the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE), the importance of this implicit bias work is heightened as district and school staff make decisions on behalf of children or interact with students on a daily basis. The Office of Equity and Access will work to fulfill the goals of increasing awareness about implicit bias and of reducing these biases by providing a professional learning series that will set a four-year target to reach 110,000 NYCDOE staff members citywide. Inherent in this training will be a focus on culturally responsive practices as an approach to promoting greater systemic equity.

INITIATIVE OBJECTIVES

- Evaluate and amend current policies and practices to align with research-based best practices;
- Increase awareness and critical consciousness about implicit bias by training 110,000 employees, including members of superintendent teams, Field Support Center staff, principals, teachers, and other school/Central/district personnel;
- Deepen this work by providing extended learning opportunities to key stakeholder groups; and
- Build capacity and sustainability by training staff to become leaders of this work at different touchpoints within the NYCDOE.

TIMELINE OF THE PROJECT

- Spring 2018 - District Engagement
- Summer 2018 - Leading for Equity and Coaching for Equity
- Fall 2018 - Year 1 Cohort Implementation

Appendix F

Implicit Bias Awareness One-Pager

Office of EQUITY and ACCESS

Implicit Bias Awareness Workshops FAQs

Foundational Learning Outcomes

- Understand the concept of implicit bias
- Become familiar with the neuroscience behind implicit bias
- Practice strategies for reducing implicit bias

3 Asynchronous Modules (1–3 hours)

Module 1: The Stories We Tell
Module 2: Mirrors and Windows
Module 3: Implicit Bias and the Brain

1 Live Virtual Module 4 Session (90 min)

Module 4: Strategies & Next Steps to Mitigate the Impacts of Implicit Bias

How can I access the course?

- All participants who have not completed their IBA workshop are automatically pre-registered in the course via WeLearnNYC.
- If staff have already completed workshop, they may re-engage in them as a refresher, but are not required to attend again.
- Upon completing live Module 4 session, participants will receive a code to enter on WeLearnNYC needed to receive certificate of completion, resources, and feedback survey.
- 5 hours of CTLE credit available upon completion on a bi-weekly basis.

Office of EQUITY and ACCESS

Implicit Bias Awareness Workshops

By the Numbers

72,000+

Educators

have participated in the foundational workshop

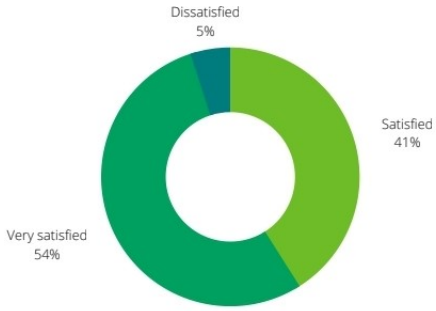
57,000+ in-person

(1/19-3/20)

15,000+ online

(5/20-3/22)

1000+ total sessions



95%

of participants were satisfied or very satisfied with the overall workshop

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Vita

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Other Degrees and Certificates	*Professional Diploma,* *Manhattan College* *Bronx, NY, Administration*
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