

## Framing Implicit Bias Impact Reduction in Social Justice Leadership

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### Abstract

This article outlines The Social Justice Leadership for Implicit Bias Impact Reduction Framework, a novel conceptualization of understanding implicit bias interventions for school-wide, leadership-driven change through the social justice leadership. The delineation between social justice and injustice paired with current research on how to reduce the impact of implicit bias in schools offers a tool for educational leaders working towards educational equity in their schools. The framework uses four domains of implicit bias reduction: (1) decision-making supports, (2) intergroup contact, (3) information building, and (4) mindfulness situated in three areas of social justice leadership: (1) relationships, (2) flexibility, and (3) morality.

*Keywords:* Implicit Bias; Social Justice; Educational Leadership

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### Introduction

I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality, and freedom for their spirits. – *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

This quote by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. casts the somewhat bold assumption that all people can and should have access to adequate food, a chance to learn, and the opportunity to live a life of freedom and dignity. On its face, this does not seem like a lot to ask. Upon scrutiny, Dr. King's words were actually a bold challenge to all people to work towards this utopian worldview. What hinders this vision is a counter mindset that is rooted in social injustice. This social injustice is rooted in a sub-optimal worldview that spawns "isms" such as racism, sexism, and classism (Bogotch, Beachum, Blount, Brooks, & English, 2008). These isms are countered by the more optimal worldview that encourages social justice. This article seeks to frame social justice in educational leadership as a counter to social injustice. It then explains the tensions within social justice in education broadly and educational leadership specifically. Lastly, the authors propose a framework for understanding social justice through implicit bias.

### Social Injustice and Social Justice

The notion of social injustice outlined above may not be characterized by outright violence, blatant bigotry, and/or unjust laws, but rather a sub-optimal worldview that leads to injustice (Myers, 1988). According to Bogotch, Beachum, Blount, Brooks, and English (2008), "The persistent problem here is that the sub-optimal conception of reality dominates in America. Thus, it affects epistemology, axiology, and consequently reality. Simply put, it impacts not only how we see the world and others, but controls knowledge bases, pedagogies, and behaviors" (p. 42). This worldview promotes external-knowledge over self-knowledge, either/or reasoning over both/and reasoning, primacy of control over primacy of faith, and a dependence on technology over a dependence on spirituality. The values in a sub-optimal worldview include materialism, competition, and individualism as opposed to values of spiritualism, oneness with nature, and communalism (Ginwright, 2004; Myers, 1988). Thus, when a worldview is based on external knowledge (only), either/or reasoning, the dominance of technology (including weapons), control, materialism, competition, and individualism, the result can lead to racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of bias (see Harro, 2000). This thinking is counter to the diversity-based direction of the United States in light of increasing demographic change. "Diversity is our present and our future... One's race, ethnicity, gender, faith, social class, sexual orientation, sexual identity, and the various other intersections make us who we are as individual and as a country" (Lindsey, 2017, p. 7). In an attempt to draw attention to how one's individual and more broad socio-cultural worldview contributes to isms, Myers (1988) stated the following:

Careful examination and analysis of dominant cultural beliefs in this society has led me to the fuller realization that the depth and pervasiveness of the racism/sexism problem went to the very core of the worldview and subsequent conceptual system that characterizes Western thought and European American culture. To the extent we internalize and materialize worldview, racism, sexism, or some other societal "isms" are guaranteed based on the principle of limitation or scarcity. (p. 10)

Consequently, "isms" are undergirded by the threat of limited resources, control, fear, and confusion (Harro, 2000; Johnson, 2006). Thus, social injustice can be understood as

an anti-justice positionality that results in a sub-optimal worldview, which can then create, justify, and promote inequality. This inequality can be most recognized through the various “isms” that tend to plague our existence (Harro, 2000; Johnson, 2006; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; West, 2008). Opposite this conception of social injustice is a notion of social justice.

Some of the early use of the term “social justice” came from the work of an Italian Catholic priest/philosopher named Luigi Taparelli. Around 1840, he wrote a book titled, the *Theoretical Treatise on Natural Law Based on Fact*. In this book, he sought ways in which the Catholic Church could respond to the dire economic circumstances and increasing political violence Behr (2005) describes that, in Taparelli’s time period, the following occurred:

The revolutionary tide had left traditional religious discourse about poverty and social order, both Protestant and Catholic, in an untenable middle ground between radical laissez-faire liberals and socialists of various sorts. Advocating patience and the virtue of work to the proletariat left such religious critics open to the charge, familiar to Marxists, of being the ‘opiate of the masses,’ while condemning capitalist greed was viewed by the propertied classes as fanning the flames of revolution. (p. 3)

Even today, social justice occupies a contentious middle ground between notions of redistribution and recognition, macro and micro focus, and emphasis on sameness and difference (North, 2008). The future of social justice in education may very well depend on how these crucial areas are addressed.

### **The Terrain of Social Justice in Education**

I would hold the view that a notion of social justice should include the components of distribution, principles of curriculum justice, and should also draw attention to non-material components of equity, such as empowerment. Consistent with all three and guiding all three should be a focus on the least advantaged. (Sturman, 1997, p. 116)

This quote captures the essence of the emphasis on social justice in education. There is an element of fair distribution of educational resources, justice in terms of curriculum and pedagogical matters, and the matter of power in terms of who has power and who should be empowered. At the same time, there should be a focus on those who are the least advantaged and most vulnerable. North (2008) examined the landscape of social justice by examining the aforementioned areas and reviewing related literature. She then developed a model for social justice that asserted that there were competing claims: redistribution and recognition, macro- and micro-level processes and knowledge and action.

The competing claims within social justice frame the discussion as spaces that need to be negotiated. It recognizes that the subject is dynamic and fraught with complexity. *Recognition and redistribution* refers to cultural groups’ struggle for “respect and dignity and socioeconomic classes’ demands for more equitable sharing of wealth and power” (North, 2008, p. 1185). Thus, cultural groups call for a recognition of the differences (e.g., Black History Month, Me Too Movement, etc.) socioeconomic classes usually emphasize the issue of sameness in an effort to equalize or stabilize resources like equal pay or resources like social services, health care, and access to high-quality education. In reality, both are important and should not be viewed as competing notions. North indicated that, “neither recognition or redistribution alone can make

education more socially just. Students require both respect and adequate social goods to develop, pursue, and achieve their academic and life goals” (p. 1187).

Thus, social justice in education has to address two levels: macro and micro. According to Lynch and Baker (2005), the macro level “concerns the institutional procedures for making decisions about school management, educational and curriculum planning and policy development and implementation. At the micro level, it concerns the internal life of schools and colleges, in terms of relations between staff and students and among the staff themselves” (p. 148). The issue here is that the macro-educational emphasis can become so broad that it is disarticulated from, and seemingly irrelevant for, the real lives and issues of the least advantaged. At the same time, micro-level issues can get bogged down in local politics and specific situations.

North (2008) argues social transformation requires a both/and approach by educational scholars. They can do this by “examining and advocating for citizens’ political participation at micro and macro levels within and beyond U.S. borders” (p. 1193). North also asserts that while schools can provide academic preparation or knowledge, social transformation requires students to be able to take action. Britzman (1998) suggested that while “learning about” a subject, topic, or concept is important, “learning from” is equally, if not more important. “Learning from” involves “both a patience with the incommensurability of understanding and an interest in tolerating the ways meaning becomes, for the learner, fractured, broken, and lost” (p. 188). Simply put, “learning from” demands a personal application to one’s own mental models that may cause confusion or challenge preconceived notions. Therefore, students need to have academic literacy and numeracy preparation, and at the same time have the ability to “deliberate and negotiate issues...to challenge the status quo” (North, 2008, p. 1197).

Within education, the area of educational leadership remains impacted by a sub-optimal worldview. The field has a long history of over-emphasis on business models, technical efficiency, rigidity, and order. These ideas are not all bad; rather, it is when these ideas are promoted as the *only* ideas that they become problematic. Bogotch et al. (2008) noted that, “Within educational leadership or educational administration, the sub-optimal conceptual system is masked in the convenient cloak of positivism, scientific management, and/or structuralism” (p. 49). Other scholars have also levied similar critiques (Dantley, 2002; English, 2003; Giroux, 1997). It is with the theoretical frameworks of these scholars that we approach educational leadership as it relates to social justice. Social justice also must address the complex issues of recognition/redistribution, macro-/micro-level emphasis, and knowledge/action. Therefore, we suggest a framework for social justice leadership specifically aimed at the issue of implicit bias, which results from our constant immersion in social messages that reinforce oppression (Harro, 2000).

### **Implicit Bias**

Implicit bias is, “the stereotypes and attitudes that occur unconsciously and may or may not reflect our actual attitudes” (Gullo, Capatosto, & Staats, 2019, p. 19). While this might be as simple as a tendency to choose high-calorie/high-sugar foods over healthy snacks, implicit biases become problematic when applied to people; for example, when men are assumed to be more violent than women without consideration of the individual. Such a perception is a social injustice that occurs because it follows from a sub-optimal worldview. Implicit biases often result in the application of stereotypes based on those held by the dominant culture, but may reflect any beliefs held about individuals of different groups. This too, reflects sub-optimal thinking. Implicit bias towards student races is linked to both academic and disciplinary detriments that often results in lower teacher expectations (Woolley, Strutchens, Gilbert, & Martin, 2010),

higher rates of exclusionary discipline (CRDC, 2018), and reduced access for Students of Color (Gullo, Capatosto, & Staats, 2019; Yull, 2015). Together, these impacts of implicit bias in schools present a challenge to social justice and school equity that can begin to change with high-quality social justice leadership.

### The Four Domains of Implicit Bias Impact Reduction

Almost as soon as researchers found evidence of implicit racial biases in schools, other researchers began exploring strategies to reduce the impact of such unconscious biases. While the number of empirically validated strategies continues to grow, these strategies tend to fall into four domains as follows and is shown in rows of Figure 1: 1) decision-making supports, 2) intergroup contact, 3) information building, and 4) mindfulness.

	Morality	Flexibility	Relationships
Decision-Making Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive decision guidelines.</li> <li>• Structured decision-making.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School-created support systems</li> <li>• Scheduling: Time-taking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared decision-making</li> <li>• Restorative practices</li> </ul>
Intergroup Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empathy</li> <li>• Compassion and caring</li> <li>• Cultural relativism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible thinking</li> <li>• Perspective taking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatability with "out" groups</li> <li>• Empathetic capacity</li> <li>• Relationship building</li> </ul>
Information Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data: Personal bias</li> <li>• Data: Student access</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional development on other options</li> <li>• Scheduling: PLCs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Background knowledge</li> <li>• Community supports</li> </ul>
Mindfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moral awareness</li> <li>• Consciousness</li> <li>• Insights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write it out discipline</li> <li>• Considering multiple options/perspectives</li> <li>• Checking in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural relevance</li> <li>• Relating to others</li> <li>• Courageous Conversations</li> </ul>

**Figure 1.** The Social Justice Leadership for Implicit Bias Impact Reduction Framework is depicted above with examples of the intersectionalities between the four domains of implicit bias reduction and three practices for Transformative Social Justice Leadership.

Many of these strategies work by supporting educators through, or decreasing the likelihood of, what McIntosh, Girvan, Horner, and Smolkowski (2014) termed “vulnerable decision points” They note that “In general, implicit biases tend to affect decisions that involve more uncertainty, ambiguity, or discretion” and extrapolate this to subjective decisions, time of day (mental fatigue, hunger), high stress situations (end of week/year, testing), unfamiliarity (hallways, early school year), and perceived threat by students (more physically mature) (p. 8). Thus, decision-making supports tend to focus on reducing uncertainty and guiding discretion, intergroup contact and information building help to reduce ambiguity and uncertainty, and mindfulness works in all three areas. While McIntosh et al. argue vulnerable decision points are linked only to issues in discipline decision-making, supports based on these tend to also work well for academic and more social-emotional related impacts as well.

Fewer studies have applied implicit bias impact reduction strategies to social-emotional well-being and academics. Kahn, Goff, and Glaser (2016) focused on the impacts of implicit bias in interactions between authority figures and adolescents and developed a system of professional development and interaction practice that targeted stereotype threat as a mechanism for differential treatment. While using strategies for academic impacts is substantially understudied, studies of the impact of implicit bias on academics repeatedly show that lower levels of teacher implicit bias towards students is linked with better academic performance (Dee, 2004; Kumar, Karabenick, & Burgoon, 2015; Jacoby-Senghor, Sinclair, & Shelton, 2016; Peterson, Rubie-Davies, Osborne, & Sibley, 2016). Again, these point to the same four domains such that decision-making supports and mindfulness help to guide educators despite biases, intergroup contact helps to reduce bias and stereotype threat, and information building helps to build bias awareness.

Taken together, the four domains create a practitioner-friendly mental organization of the multitude of implicit bias impact reduction strategies available. While a complete detailing of all currently evidenced strategies is outside the realm of this article, Table 1 provides a semi-comprehensive summary of strategies for implicit bias impact reduction as related to schools outlined in the literature since 2000. Of note, here are those strategies that are most applicable to educational leaders embodying a transformative social justice leadership style; strategies we highlight in the Implicit Bias Impact Reduction in Social Justice Leadership Framework. It is important to reflect on the implementation and use of these strategies with regard to social justice so that they reflect a multicultural perspective rather than only that of the dominant culture. While these strategies reflect those evidenced in the research literature, non-dominant perspectives likely remain under-represented and deserve critical consideration and reflection.

Table 1  
*Summary of Research on the Implicit Bias Impact Reduction Since 2000*

Authors (Year)	Domain	Findings
Blair, Ma, & Lenton (2001)	IC	Mental imagery of counter-stereotypes reduced implicit bias.
Burgess, Beach, & Saha (2017)	M	Mindfulness practices were effective in reducing clinician implicit bias towards patients.
Capers, Clinchot, McDougle, & Greenwald (2017)	IB, M	After taking the IAT and being debriefed on findings, med school admissions officer admitted a much more diverse cohort.
Cate, Krolak-Schwerdt, & Glock (2015)	IB, M	Teachers made more accurate (less associated with bias) tracking decisions when they were primed that they would be held accountable for their decisions.
Dasgupta & Asgari (2004)	IC, IB	Viewing counterstereotypic women as leaders led to a decrease in anti-women implicit bias.
Dasgupta & Greenwald (2001)	IC	Viewing images of liked Black individuals and disliked White individuals reduced implicit anti-Black bias 24 hours later.
Devine, Forscher, Austin, & Cox (2012)	IB	Participants in a 12-week instructional intervention showed a long-term reduction in implicit racial biases.

Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner (2000)	IC	Intergroup contact with focus on boundary recategorization reduced intergroup bias.
Dunbar, et al. (2014)	IB	Cognitive biases were influenced by video game instruction when paired with explicit instruction.
Gaertner & Dovidio (2014)	IC, IB	Using a “we” mindset as opposed to an “us” and “them” mindset helps to lower intergroup bias.
Gonzalez, Steele, & Baron (2017)	IC	Providing children with positive intergroup contact reduced their implicit biases.
Gutierrez, Kaatz, Ramierez, Samson-Samuel, & Carnes (2014)	IC, IB	Playing videogame designed for active intergroup perspective-taking appeared to reduce implicit bias.
Kahn, Goff, & Glaser (2016)	IB	A training with practical elements was effective as reducing the impact of implicit bias.
Lai, et al. (2014)		
<i>Cerruti &amp; Shin</i>	IB	Repeated positive pairing for Black individuals in the Go/No-Go Association Task was effective in reducing implicit pro-White bias.
<i>Frazier</i>	IC	Playing a competitive game where all outgroup teammates and all ingroup opponents reduced implicit bias.
<i>Heiphetz</i>	IB, M	Priming multiculturalist rather than color-blind values was linked to a reduction in implicit bias.
<i>Lai</i>	DM, M	Setting an implementation intention to associate Black faces with “good” words demonstrated a lower level of implicit pro-White bias.
<i>Lehr</i>	IB	Exposing an individual to a series of outgroup asset-type individuals and ingroup enemies resulted in less pro-ingroup implicit bias.
<i>Marini, Rubichi, Sartori</i>	IC, IB	Placing individuals in a vivid Counterstereotypic scenario (i.e. White woman assaults the individual) reduced implicit pro-White preferences.
<i>Teachman</i>	IB	Practicing the IAT combined test with the Black-Good pairing reduced pro-White implicit biases.
<i>Wojcik &amp; Koleva</i>	IB	Evaluative conditioning was effective in reducing implicit bias.
Lowery, Hardin, & Sinclair (2001)	IC	Lower anti-Black bias with experimenter who is Black than experimenter who is White.
Lueke & Gibson (2015)	M	Participants showed a decrease in implicit age and race bias after listening to mindfulness meditation
Mann & Ferguson (2015)	IB	Adding information about a person can change implicit evaluations of that person.
Peck, Seinfeld, Aglioti, & Slater (2013)	IC	After playing a virtual reality game with a darker skinned versus a lighter skinned avatar, players had a decrease in pro-White implicit biases.
Qian, Quinn, Heyman, Pascalis, Fu, & Lee (2017)	IB	Perceptual individuation training was effective at reducing implicit racial biases in children.
Rudman, Ashmore, & Gary (2001)	IB	Students enrolled prejudice and conflict seminar had reduced implicit and explicit anti-Black biases as compared to control students.

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Stell & Farsides (2016)	M	After hearing a meditation to increase positive affect, participants showed reduced implicit racial bias.
Yusuf, Irvine, & Bell (2016)	DM	Shared development of a structured decision-making process helped to lessen the influence of implicit bias on decisions about discipline.

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*Note:* Authors in italics are the authors of studies reported on in the Lai, et al. (2014) paper.

### **Decision-Making Supports**

Decision-making supports are strategies intended to support decision-making—especially for decisions made at vulnerable decision points. General decision-making supports include structured and shared decision-making. Structured decision-making, first popularized by Gregory and Failing (2012) concerning environmental management, offers a systematic guide for decision-making that can be used by either individuals or organizations. Organized by an iterative six-step process, structured decision-making involves: 1) defining the problem, 2) defining objectives and issues, 3) developing alternatives, 4) estimating consequences of decision choices, 5) making trade-offs and selecting and, finally, 6) implementing and monitoring the decision. While the process itself helps to guide the decision-maker through a well-considered choice sequence, the steps also embody principals of mindfulness and information-building that further support the decision-maker during potentially vulnerable decision points.

**Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTII).** Some school leaders choose to implement structured decision-making through decision-tree diagrams. While these can serve as invaluable tools for many decisions that must remain split-second, flexibility is needed to address decisions that do not fit the modeled flow. One popular approach involving a less defined structured decision-making process is seen in Response-to-Instruction-and-Interventions (RTII, see Bradley et al., 2005). Through this approach, learning supports are offered first using Universal Design for Instruction (see Burgstahler, 2009), then to small groups needing further support and, finally, on an individual basis before a potential learning disability referral is considered. Whether using the formal definition, or simply offering guidelines for decision-making, such supports reduce uncertainty and ambiguity to some extent and offer guidance during times of educator discretion.

**Culturally-responsive positive behavior interventions and supports.** Leaders must be aware that shared decision-making can backfire when more biased individuals overpower group dynamics. Conversely, well-balanced shared decision-making groups can offer a wider variety of opinions and understandings that may not be available to a singular decision-maker. Shared decision-making can even be combined with structured decision-making to create a collective decision regarding guidelines for decisions that meet the unique needs of the school or district. Culturally-Responsive Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports is a discipline and school culture system where schools are encouraged to use shared decision-making bodies referred to as “Learning Labs.” These groups work to better understand the issues faced by the school and creatively construct and evaluate interventions to address those needs (Bal, 2018). These Learning Labs offer the 10-15 educational stakeholder member team time to make shared decisions using a structured decision-making process similar to the Gregory and Failing (2012) model. Community learning opportunities are also supported.

**Restorative practices.** Restorative Practices is another approach that has many elements of shared and structured decision-making (see Fronius et al., 2016 for review).

For example, Restorative Conferences place the affected (victims) and exerting (perpetrators) students in a mediated and facilitated conference when deciding how best to restore relationships. Restorative Circles offer facilitated meetings between students and other key stakeholders to help make decisions regarding problems such as discipline issues, instructional access, and community tensions. Peer Mediation is a third restorative practice that involves a facilitated dialogue; however, is enacted more proactively when implemented when attention to social justice is used to decide upon interventions to avoid conflict. Restorative Practices have already seen much success at lessening discipline discrepancies by race and lowering levels of conflict overall in schools (Fronius et al., 2016; Gregory, Clawson, Davis, & Gerewitz, 2016).

### **Intergroup Contact**

Intergroup contact refers to interaction (face-to-face, virtual, or imagined) between individuals of different stereotypic groups. Studies confirm that positive experiences between individuals from different stereotypic groups can lower both implicit and explicit prejudice levels during in-person contact (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2003; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2014;), virtual contact (Dunbar et al., 2014; Gutierrez, Kaatz, Ramirez, Samson-Samuel, & Carnes, 2014), and even imagined contact (Blair, Ma, & Lenton, 2001; Stathi, Crisp, & Hogg, 2011). It is by this same mechanism that exposure to counter-stereotypical exemplars, or instances of individuals that do not reflect stereotypical norms, can work to lessen bias (Dasgupta & Asgari, 2004). While intergroup contact can occur in a myriad of manners, educational leaders must ensure that efforts for such contact respect all individuals involved and those experiences are positive and supportive.

### **Information Building**

Albeit a broad domain, strategies that build information are popular in many areas of educational leadership and include practices such as data collection and analysis and professional development communication. Data collected about student program enrollment, academics, discipline, teacher quality, and school climate can be disaggregated and analyzed to reveal gaps between different subgroups, inequitable practices that need further attention, and even whether planned interventions are successful (Carter, Skiba, Arredondo, & Pollock, 2014). The equity audit provides a clear structure for analyzing more overall quantitative data (Skrla, McKenzie, & Scheurich, 2009; Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004) while equity traps offer a mixed methods approach to information building through data use (see McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004). Nearly every employed teacher in the US receives some form of professional development (Rotermund & Randolph, 2017) and many states require continued education for teachers to maintain certification (e.g., Pennsylvania's Act 48). Professional development opportunities focused on individual strategies to reduce the impact of implicit bias and raise awareness of one's own levels of implicit biases have been shown to reduce overall implicit bias and racial gaps in discipline (Devine, Forscher, Austin, & Cox, 2012; Kahn, et al., 2016). While in some situations, simple implicit bias awareness is enough to see positive changes (Capers, Clinchot, McDougale, & Greenwald, 2017), most situations will require both bias measurement to build awareness paired with training on the meaning of the results of the test and implicit bias in schools (Kahn, 2018). As with most situations involving learning, partial information can do more damage than no learning at all. Thus, creating an environment where implicit bias can be well understood and relevant learning is supported is key to the success of using professional development and data to reduce the impacts of implicit bias in schools.

**Mindfulness**

Mindfulness involves being aware of the present moment. It is conceptualized here as both the formal practice of mindfulness as well as simply being mindful (i.e., not having a mind full of distractions) while making decisions subject to bias. Various mindfulness practices have been shown to reduce the impact of implicit bias on others (Burgess, Beach, & Saha, 2017; Lueke & Gibson, 2015) and to reduce stress and thereby the frequency of vulnerable decisions points (Meiklejohn, et al., 2012; Jennings, Lantierir, & Roeser, 2011; Poulin, Mackenzie, Soloway, & Karayolas, 2008). Other versions of mindfulness involve taking time to think through a situation, being aware of implicit reactions, and even writing out thought processes in an effort to consider all elements involved in the decision process. While these strategies might seem simple, they are often the most difficult to engage in due to the stresses and time limitations inherent in day-to-day teaching. Furthermore, mindfulness in highly racist individuals might be an inner reflection on whether an action is likely to produce any negative outcomes for oneself. As such, mindfulness strategies are effective only when supported with other methods of implicit bias impact reduction.

**Implicit Bias Impact Reduction through Transformative Social Justice Leadership**

Taken together, the four domains of implicit bias impact reduction are framed through three practices of transformative social justice leadership as displayed in the columns of Figure 1 and as follows: 1) morality, 2) flexibility, and 3) relationships. Each strategy can be approached through each of these three leadership practices and reflects both the framework as well as good overall leadership practice. Certainly, remembering the many elements involved in transformative social justice leadership and dozens of strategies for reducing the impact of implicit bias on students can be overwhelming. Thus, a framing such as this offers school leaders only seven major ideas to remember when looking for effective and evidenced leadership tools. Some very powerful tools are embedded throughout the framework such as empathy. Empathy can be practiced through morality, flexibility, and relationships and is a way to support decision-making. It can also be developed through intergroup contact, can help to build information, and is useful when practicing mindfulness. Other elements are presented best through specific intersectionalities as detailed below.

**Practicing Morality in the Four Domains**

The school leader who emphasizes morality can provide decision-making guidelines that reflect positive and equitable values for those who might not embody a similar moral compass. Furthermore, decisions can be structured through flow charts to avoid rash decisions during times of high stress or time constraints. Leaders can provide mentoring to decision-makers that need to develop morality skills in order to facilitate such judgement, or seek mentorship from others if their own morality is in question. It is important here not to suggest that one moral structure is correct; rather, it is important to support the development of, and fluency of understanding, one's own moral structure such that it reflects a socially just school community. Leaders can meet with individuals from typically stereotyped groups to develop understanding and empathy towards members of that group. Intergroup contact with the local community can help to develop a sense of the cultural understanding and allow consideration and compassion for situations where value systems may not align. Data should be examined to better understand personal biases (explicit and implicit) and biases regarding student access to different programs and activities. Morality involves considerations of fairness that may arise when bussing or parental obligations might prevent students from participating in certain offerings more available to other students. More present in morality than the other practices, mindfulness should reflect a heightened sense of ethical well-being for students and school professionals alike. Together, these strategies can combat situations

where implicit biases might be the default reaction or where cultural collisions (see Beachum & McCray, 2011) contribute to stereotype perpetuation.

### **Practicing Flexibility in the Four Domains**

The flexibility of the school leader is reflected in both thoughts and in actions. She can lead schools in the development of decision-making support systems that fit the individual needs of the school or district. Such a leader will work through scheduling as a system that changes shape to meet the unique needs of students, families, teachers, and other members of the school community. When possible, the flexible leader supports decision-makers' increased time to make decisions more clearly so as to create equitable systems for inclusion of all students. The flexible leader meets with individuals from all groups to better understand diverse perspectives and conditions as well as ensures access to information through professional learning opportunities and creative use of school data. She may hold office hours or focus groups to gather and build more information about the needs of the school community and offers training to a wide range of participants. The flexible school leader makes time and adjusts to listen to and support professional learning communities (PLC) and the community at large. This leader practices flexibility by thinking through decisions and watching for patterns, considering alternative explanations and perspectives, and checking-in with students during disciplinary and academic hardships to see how the school might adapt to their unmet needs. The leader using data creatively understands the focus on equity, giving students what they need to succeed, rather than equality, giving all students the same, when pursuing social justice. This leader is also flexible in knowing that some needs may not be met in order to meet other needs, but listens with a creative and understanding ear. Finally, the flexible leader makes sure that others have the opportunity and knowledge to think critically and act reflexively as well.

### **Practicing Relationships in the Four Domains**

The leader who practices high-quality relationship-building allows for real and meaningful inclusion and potential equity. The leader does this through self-modeled practices, which may require specific leadership training. Leaders that foster relationships allow for practices that are restorative and based in shared decision-making because they understand the importance of collaboration. This leader goes beyond intergroup contact by developing intergroup relationships that help to enhance empathy capacity, relatability, and school and community climate. This leader also demonstrates a strong sense of the school as a learning community and uses relationships and communication to build information about situations, school needs/wants, available community supports, and school culture. The relationship-focused leader does not wait for conflict, but rather proactively fosters and actively engages in relationship maintenance. She knows her community, is mindful of cultural relevance, and can relate to various individuals. The leader focused on relationships can use communication strategies such as Courageous Conversations (see Singleton & Linton, 2005) and Fierce Conversations (Scott, 2004) to reach others without limiting the extent of the communication. While all three practices or morality, flexibility, and relationship are important, the leader who can lead through positive relationships is often already adept in flexibility and morality due to the relationships' interdependence on these practices.

### **Summary**

Today's school leader is faced with innumerable challenges and school equity is only one of them. The Framework for Implicit Bias Impact Reduction Through Transformative Social Justice Leadership offers a simplified conceptualization for school leaders as they face the challenge of social injustice in their schools. The framework also offers a structure by which researchers of educational leadership can

better conceptualize and contextualize the practices of school leaders as they work towards school equity, since many of these practices for implicit bias impact reduction generalize to a broader goal of racial achievement gap and discipline gap reduction. Now, more than ever, we cannot simply look at what should have or would have been done to achieve equitable excellence. We must create a user-friendly bridge to practice in every scholarly endeavor and follow these with research to understand how leaders use such evidenced strategies and what prevents success. We offer this framework to facilitate this next step in implicit bias research for educational leaders as we go forth on the same journey.

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