



Racial Expectations in the Classroom and the Cruelty of “Caring”

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“If there is no struggle, there is no progress.”
– Frederick Douglass

Food for thought...

Think-Pair-Share

1. Warm-up questions
2. Mini Case-Study

*“Teachers are some of
the most caring people
in the world”*



"Instructors know their students"



“Instructors know their students”



...Or do we?

Anecdote



“In history, good intentions do not always make good consequences.”

“God save us from
people who mean
well.”



Are our expectations for our students important?



- Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968)
 - Provided teachers with false information regarding their students' performance on a nonexistent test
 - Results: over one school year, students who were falsely identified as most likely to progress showed greater gains than their peers
- Jane Elliot's 1968 "Blue eyes–Brown eyes" exercise
 - Students' performance plummeted whenever the expectations were lowered and they were treated as second-class humans, then skyrocketed when their roles switched "A Class Divided."

“soft bigotry of low expectations”

“Not expecting disadvantaged people or minorities to meet the same standard of behaviour or achievement set for most people. It is called "soft bigotry" because it is a more subtle and subconscious form of prejudice.”

–Urban Dictionary



“soft bigotry of low expectations”

- Teachers’ higher expectations led to systematically higher college completion rates for their students (Gershenson & Papageorge, 2018)
- Teachers who identify as “white”—the majority of American educators—have much lower expectations for “black” students than “white” students, all other variables kept constant
- When evaluating the same “black” student, a “white” teacher is about 30 percent less likely than a “black” teacher to predict the student will complete a four-year college degree...and almost 40 percent less likely to expect them to graduate high school (Rosen, 2016)

Low expectations

- Teacher expectations do not only predict student outcomes, but they also influence outcomes by becoming self-fulfilling prophecies
- The literature suggests that students' beliefs affect their education decisions, that their beliefs are frequently incorrect, and that their beliefs can be changed (Gershenson, et al., 2016)
 - Self-fulfilling prophecy:
A student may not go to college simply because they don't believe they can make it.



Positive versus negative expectations

- Desiree Martinez...attended a high school in a low-income part of Los Angeles and longed to enroll at the University of California, Los Angeles. She confided her ambitions to one of her 12th grade teachers. The teacher frowned and said, "I don't know why counselors push students into these schools they're not ready for ... Students only get their hearts broken when they don't get into those schools, and the students that do get in come back as dropouts." Martinez, crushed, told another teacher, who encouraged her and said she should not let people like the first teacher hold her back. The discouraging teacher was "white." The encouraging teacher was "Latino" (Jaschik, 2017).
- Desiree has since graduated from UCLA, returned to teach at her alma mater, and wrote an open letter to her discouraging teacher (Martinez, 2017).

Caveat

- Research also shows that having just one same-“race” teacher between 3-5 grade significantly increases the student’s test scores and likelihood of high school graduation, as well as increases their expectations to attend a 4-year college (Gershenson, Hart, et al. 2018).



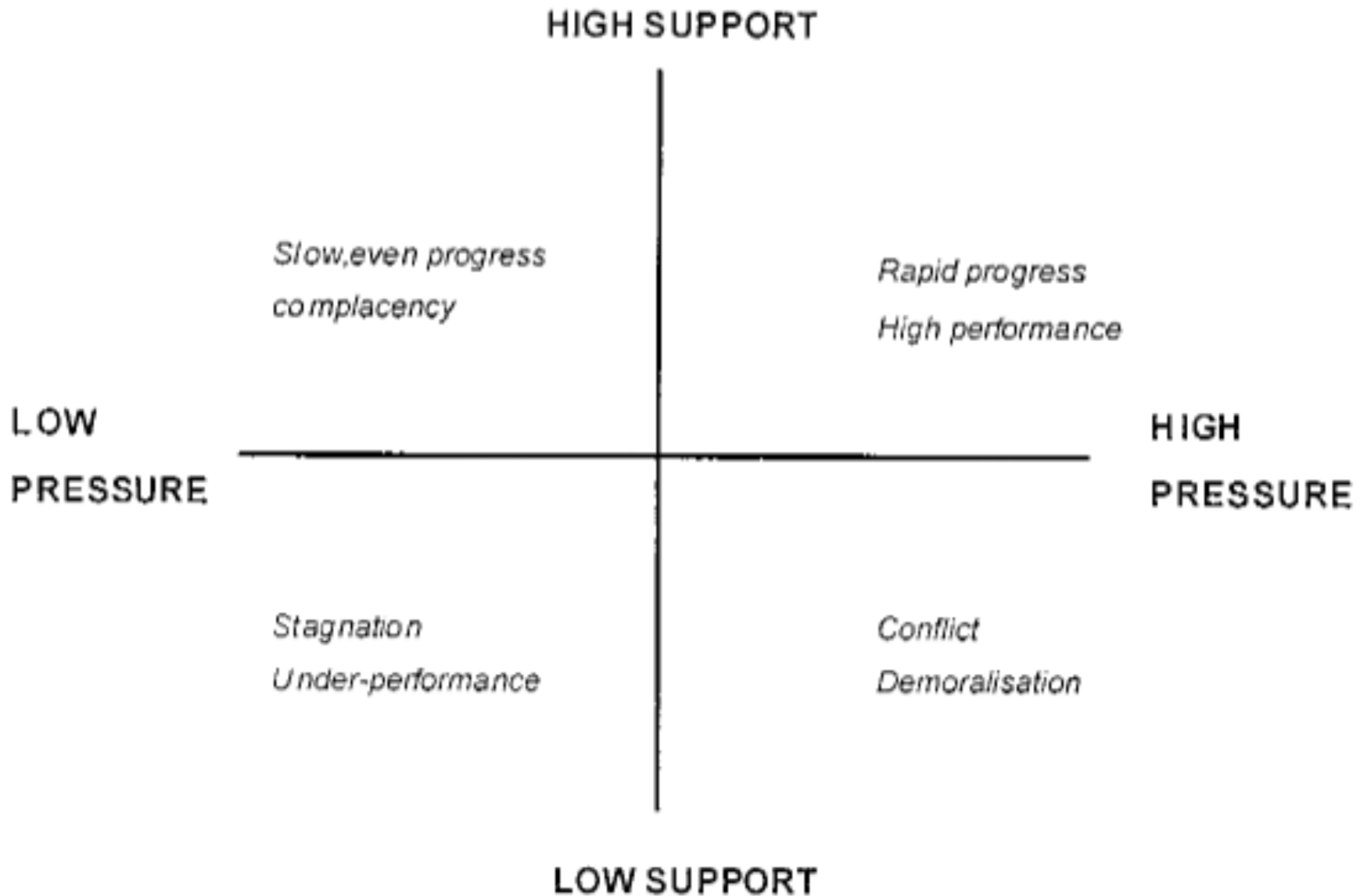
Low expectations → Low input

- *America's Achievement Gap - Made, Not Born? What a Study of 30,000 Students Reveals About Lowered Expectations and Poorer-Quality Instruction for Kids of Color* (Cantor, 2018)
 - “[dark-skinned students] consistently receive less challenging instruction and schoolwork than do their [light-skinned] and more affluent classmates...often leaving them unprepared for college even if they have received top grades.”
 - ‘Students...believe that “showing up, doing the work, and meeting their teachers’ expectations will prepare them for what’s next,” [because] we’ve been telling them so. Unfortunately, it’s a myth.’
- “...teachers often expect the least from students who could benefit the most from higher expectations.” (Segal, 2014)

Low expectations → Low input

Nabur High School, Chicago

- “The inclination in some secondary schools is that [dark-skinned] young men from urban environments need a lot of help, that they’re behind, so we give them all of this support that doesn’t really challenge them to actually be better,” said Warren, MSU assistant professor of teacher education.
- **“If you’re offering the students supports without actually pushing them to meet high standards for college readiness, those supports are likely just weighing them down. To win a race, you must run faster, not slower,”** Warren said. “And at some point they will get to college, but the only way for them to stay in college is to have the skills to struggle through the academic difficulties they will likely encounter.”
- **“We need to keep the standards high and not be swayed by students’ personal circumstances,”** he said. “But we also need to learn the multiple ways that students have learned to bounce back from adversity they encounter outside of school. When delivering supports we must assume these young men have important skills and competencies – the result of their resilience – that they can employ to persevere through rigorous learning experiences and ultimately meet high academic standards.”



Selectively high expectations

- Stereotype of Asian students as exceptional in math but poor in English
- According to Cherng, 2017, the parents of second-generation Asian students often do not acknowledge good performance
- Because of the pressure, if these students do not perform perfectly, they believe themselves to be second-rate and their own expectations for themselves plummet (Cherng, 2017)
- As a result, only 74% of second-generation Asian students expected they would finish a degree, versus 83% of non-Asian students who had less pressure (Cherng, 2017)

What then?

- Recruit more same-“race” teachers?
- High support, high pressure?



High expectations for all: “The Silver Bullet”

- Elite schools hold high expectations for all their students and produce top-level graduates. However, expectations are lower in low-income school districts.
- “According to the American Psychological Association, teachers in economically-embattled neighborhoods tend to **encourage less, demand less, and accept less** from their students than teachers elsewhere because **they assume that's the best the students can do.**” (Thomas, 2018)
- Nevertheless, many examples show that any school can implement the same standards and expectations as elite schools, with the same results:
 - Jaime Escalante, Garfield High School, East LA (*Stand and Deliver*)
 - Thaddeus Lott, Wesley Elementary, Houston
 - Knowledge is Power Program, Houston
 - Success Academy, NY
 - Etc.

“Expect every child can learn” – President G.W. Bush

- “Above all, we believe that two fundamental premises have been firmly established: every student can achieve high standards; and radical improvement can be rapidly accomplished. The key to both is an unrelenting focus on classrooms, teaching, learning, and pupil performance.” (Barber, et al., 2000)


Reflect on:

- implicit biases and how these may have poorly informed our teaching
- how to adjust in order to encourage all students to learn



Is it pedagogically useful to be “race conscious”?





Although we may feel like our classroom is just one small space amid a great big world, the small actions we take there create waves in the lives of our students which can ripple out for decades, for their good or to their detriment.



Thank you!

~

Questions?

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THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 2020

Faculty Room (University Club, IMU) **3:30-5:00 PM**

DOING DIVERSITY OR DOING DAMAGE: EXPLORING LIBERAL PRIVILEGE IN THE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION SPACE

John Gates, PhD Pronouns: *he/him/his*

The work of diversity and inclusion is complicated by often competing ideas of what diversity is, to whom it belongs, who can be included, and where the lines between right and wrong, good and bad exist—leaving us at odds with our stated values as we seek to advance equity. Has liberalism caused us to frame diversity and inclusion around stereotypes that deepen divides or damage the principles on which the very proposition stands? This talk will explore how liberal privilege fosters stereotypes, such as “the downtrodden black student,” “the deficient minority scholar,” “the straight white man as enemy,” and “conservative views don’t matter” that undermine the essential mission of diversity and inclusion.

This event is in collaboration with the SEISMIC project. Earlier in the day, Dr. Gates will facilitate a workshop with SEISMIC participants entitled, “Doing Justice: A Roadmap to Closing Achievement Gaps.”



John Gates joined Purdue University in early 2019 as the Vice Provost for Diversity and Inclusion and clinical professor in the Krannert School of Management. Prior to his appointment at Purdue, Gates served as the inaugural associate dean in the University of Virginia’s School of Engineering and Applied Science. Other prior academic posts include serving as associate dean for administration and finance at Harvard College, Harvard University and special assistant to the president and provost at the University of Vermont, where he focused on strategic initiatives, change management and diversity. Gates also launched and led his own consulting firm, Criticality Management Consulting, where he advised corporate clients on a range of workforce issues. A native of Gary, Indiana, Gates received a Bachelor’s degree from Morehouse College, a Master’s degree from New York University and a PhD from the University of London.

Radical Inclusivity Series

2019-2020

Spring 2020



THE OFFICE OF
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION
College of Arts + Sciences

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