



Equitable Leadership, Microaggressions and Advancing Equity

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Equity-Mindedness

According to Bensimon (2007) Equity-mindedness entails:

- recognizing the ways in which **systemic inequities** disadvantage minoritized people in a range of social institutions or contexts (education, employment, healthcare, the criminal justice system, etc.)
- (re)framing outcome disparities as an indication of **institutional underperformance** rather than students' underperformance;
- not attributing outcome disparities exclusively to students or **perceived deficits** in students' identities, life circumstances, or capabilities;
- **critically reflecting** upon one's role and responsibilities (as a faculty member, student affairs staff, administrator, counselor, institutional researchers etc.).

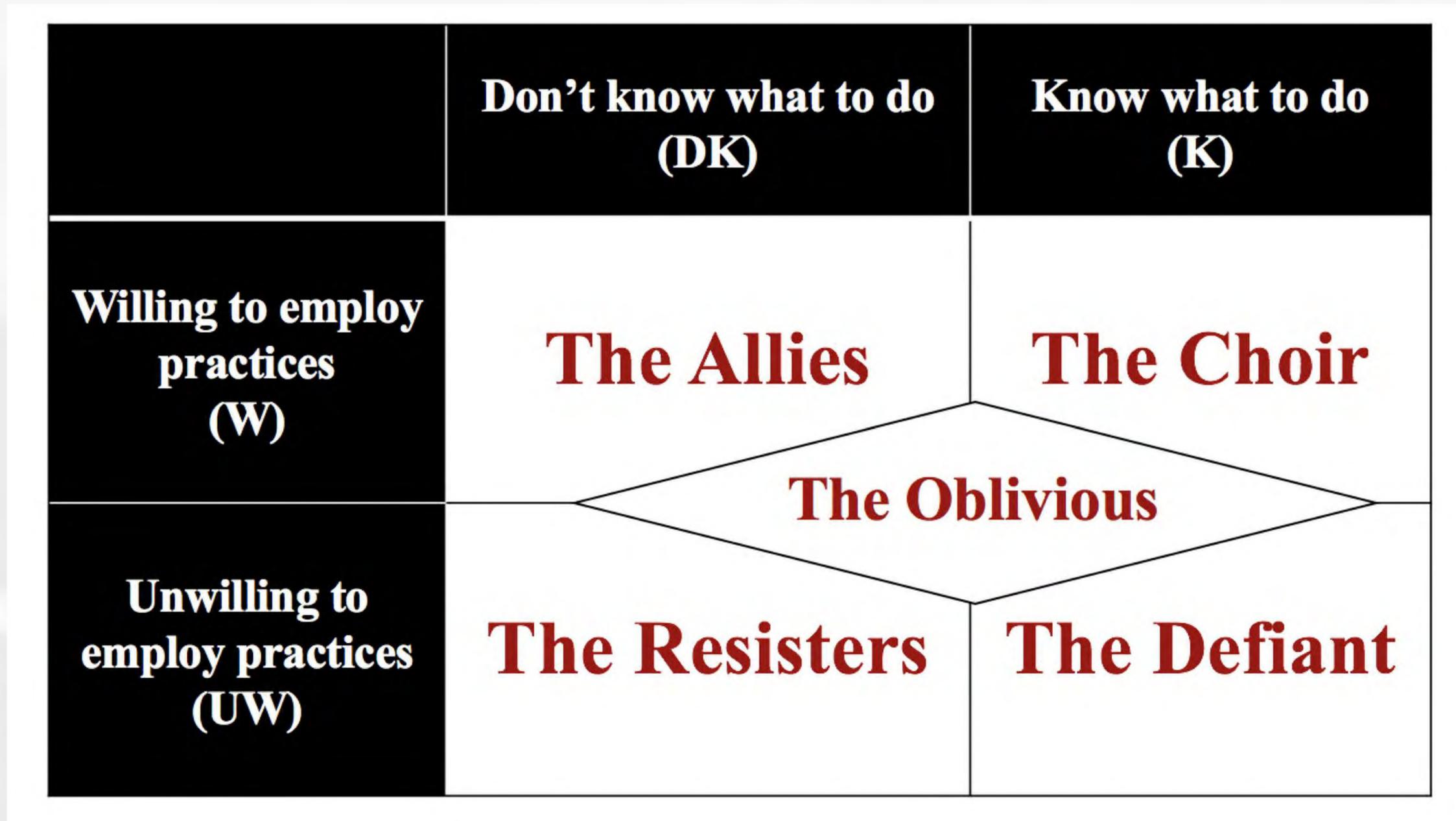
Taxonomy of Educators' Perspectives

	Don't know what to do (DK)	Know what to do (K)
Willing to employ practices (W)	DK W	K W
Unwilling to employ practices (UW)	DK U	K U

Taxonomy of Educators' Perspectives

	Don't know what to do (DK)	Know what to do (K)
Willing to employ practices (W)	The Allies	The Choir
Unwilling to employ practices (UW)	The Resisters	The Defiant

Taxonomy of Educators' Perspectives



Defining Implicit Bias

- **Implicit bias is “the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an implicit manner. Activated involuntarily, without awareness or intentional control. Can be either positive or negative. Everyone is susceptible” (Kirwan Institute, 2016, p. 14).**
- **Implicit bias is characterized by “the introspectively unidentified (or incorrectly identified) traces of past experience that mediate attributions of qualities to members of social categories” (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995, p. 15).**
- **“The science of implicit cognition suggests that actors do not always have conscious, internal control over the processes of social perception, impression formation, and judgment that motivate their actions” (Greenwald & Kreiger, 2006, p. 946).**

Defining Implicit Bias

Implicit associations are most likely to drive behavior under the following conditions:

- **Situations that involve ambiguous or incomplete information**
- **Circumstances in which time is constrained**
- **Times when cognitive control is compromised (e.g., when experiencing stress or insufficient sleep)**

Defining Microaggressions

- **Racial microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color.” (Sue et al., 2007)**
- Microaggressions are pervasive, normal, daily occurrences
- “put-downs”, “subtle snubs”, “dismissive looks”
- invalidate the experiences and intellectual capabilities of people of color
- Often more psychologically damaging than direct acts of racism
- “a thousand daily cuts.” (Gloria Ladson-Billings)

The Influence of Microaggressions

“Individuals who perceive and experience racial microaggressions in their lives are likely to exhibit negative mental health symptoms, such as depression, anxiety, negative affect (or negative view of the world), and lack of behavioral control... a higher cumulative experience with racial microaggressions may predict more mental health problems. Second, higher cumulative experiences of racial microaggressions predicted depressive symptoms and one’s affect (or how positively or negatively one views the world)”

(Nadal, Griffin, Wong, Hamit, & Rasmus, 2012, p. 62)

Nadal, K. L., Griffin, K. E., Wong, Y., Hamit, S., & Rasmus, M. (2014). The impact of racial microaggressions on mental health: Counseling implications for clients of color. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 92*(1), 57-66.

Racial Battle Fatigue

Racial Battle Fatigue – a framework for making sense of cognitive, emotional and physiological effects of being a person of color in environments that are both implicitly and explicitly racist.

- While the racial microaggressions framework is illuminating and insightful, it does not fully account for the cumulative effects of racism.
- Racial discrimination is a “universal stressor” for Blacks (Smith et al., 2007, p. 554).
- The effects of racial discrimination are chronic and enduring
 - seldom fades
 - becomes a part of one’s life history

Racial Battle Fatigue

- RBF for Blacks is akin to combat stress syndrome for military personnel, which describes the “mental, emotional, and physiological injuries” that manifest from being in environments with persistent stress or risk (Smith et al., 2007, p. 555).
- Physiological symptoms of RBF:
 - tension headaches
 - backaches
 - elevated heartbeat
 - rapid breathing in anticipation of conflict
 - upset stomach
 - extreme fatigue
 - loss of appetite
 - ulcers
 - elevated blood pressure

Racial Battle Fatigue

- Psychological symptoms of RBF:
 - constant anxiety and worrying
 - increased swearing and complaining
 - inability to sleep
 - sleep broken by haunting, conflict-specific dreams
 - intrusive thoughts and images
 - loss of self-confidence
 - difficulty thinking coherently or being able to articulate
 - hypervigilance
 - frustration
 - denial
 - emotional and social withdrawal
 - anger, anger suppression, resentment

Addressing Microaggressions

- Most people view themselves as good, caring, ethical people.
- Reacting to their behavior and naming it racist or discriminatory can be difficult to comprehend.
- Often the initial reaction to addressing microaggressions is:
 - Explain away the microaggression
 - Become defensive in response
 - Accuse others of offending them

The Influence of Microaggressions

- “You’re different than us.”
- “You don’t belong here.”
- “You’re not intelligent or capable.”
- “People of color are lazy and don’t care.”
- “Your experiences and perceptions are wrong.”
- “You’re being too sensitive.”
- “You are a criminal.”
- “You are dangerous.”
- “Racism doesn’t exist.”
- “You are not of worth.”

Types of Microaggressions

MICROINSULT

- Ascription of intelligence
- Assumption of criminality
- Second-class citizens
- Pathologizing culture
- Different norming
- Presumption of Defilement

MICROINVALIDATION

- Alien in own land
- Outsider on own campus
- Color blindness
- Myth of meritocracy
- Transference/Avoidance of racial intervention
- Denial of individual racism

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Ascription of Intelligence

“Assigning a degree of intelligence to a person of color based on race” (Sue & Colleagues, 2007, p. 276).

Examples:

- **Phone call:** The professor called me about a week after I submitted my paper. She said, “I read you’re paper. “Wow! you write this?!” They were shocked that I could write.
- **Private chat:** During the session, another student sent me an email asking if I understood the material being taught... the assumption was that I didn’t know.
- **Zoom breakout:** In my zoom breakout group I answered a question. Then, one of the men in the class said, “you’re smart for a Black girl.”

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Examples:

- **GroupMe:** I’m the only Latina in my class. After the exam, we shared our scores in the GroupMe, I told them I got an ‘A’. Someone wrote, “wow, that’s really high, you should be proud”
- **Google Hangout group project:** When I give out ideas, they ignore me like I don’t exist or that my ideas are bad. I’m the only person of color.
- **Office hours:** I asked a question and he responded by speaking extra slow and exaggerating his pronunciation, like I didn’t know English or something. He obviously doesn’t think I’m smart.

Assumption of Criminality

“Assuming a person of color is dangerous, criminal, or deviant based on race” (Sue & Colleagues, 2007, p. 276).

Examples:

- **Discussion board post:** “I’m sorry, I am not trying to be racist. But people of color come from neighborhoods with lots of crime. It’s a fact. Just watch the news.”
- **Zoom breakout room:** “I have to be honest. When I am alone at night there are times when I worry about being assaulted by a Black or Latino male. It’s not that I’m racist. It’s just a gut feeling I get that tells me I need to protect myself.”
- **Faculty to student assistant phone call:** “Latinx students are more likely to plagiarize on their papers than others. It’s not that they aren’t smart they just don’t understand the language.”

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Examples:

- **Email Response:** I wrote the professor to let him know I wasn't able to attend class because my internet was down. He wrote back very condescendingly, insinuating that I was lying... lot's of people are having internet problems right now.
- **Virtual Office Hours:** I asked my professor for an extension on the assignment during virtual office hours, which I was attending on my phone because my computer isn't working. She was like, “how come you didn't tell me earlier that you were having computer issues, if you had I would have been able to grant the request.” It was clear she didn't believe me.

Second-Class Citizen

“Occurs when a White person is given preferential treatment over a person of color”
(Sue & Colleagues, 2007, p. 276).

Examples:

- **Discussion board:** Responding to discussion posts from White male students and ignoring posts from students of color (see Baker, Dee, Evans, & John, 2018).
- **Zoom engagement:** You have to raise your virtual hand in Zoom to get called on...but if feels like she never calls on me, it's like I don't exist.
- **Instructor emails:** So apparently the professor has been reaching out to students to check in on them...but he's only doing it with his favorite students...all of us Black students know that means he's not reaching out to us anytime soon.

Pathologizing Culture

“The notion that the values and communication styles of the dominant/White culture are ideal” (Sue & Colleagues, 2007, p. 276).

Examples:

- **Online office hours:** So, I logged on to the online office hours with the professor. I asked a question and his response was “did you do the readings?”
- **Phone call:** I was on the phone with the basic needs coordinator because I heard there was emergency money ... they came off like I was just there for the money.
- **Phone call:** I got a call from my academic advisor to see how I was doing. It was nice at first. I said to them, “can I ax you how to get my class grade turned to credit.” They then corrected me saying, “yes you can ask me a question.”

Pathologizing Culture

“The notion that the values and communication styles of the dominant/White culture are ideal” (Sue & Colleagues, 2007, p. 276).

Examples:

- **Zoom breakout room:** Someone wrote: “If Blacks made healthier choices about what they eat and stop drinking and smoking, then so many of them wouldn’t be dying from COVID-19.”
- **Private zoom message:** Another student sent me a message that was clearly intended for someone else. It said: “If they would stop spending their stipend checks on rims and sneakers, then they wouldn’t be so hungry and homeless.”

Different Norming

“Assuming/having the authority to negatively categorize or uncategorize people of color” (Harris III & Wood, 2016).

Examples:

- **GroupMe:** We have a Groupme...one of the other students sent a meme about Chinese people... I’m Asian, so I was pissed...They call me directly to apologize and said, “I don’t think of you as Asian...I wasn’t really talking about you.”
- **Instructor feedback:** Two comments stood out to me. One said, “you write well for a second-language learner.” ... The second.. “Well done! Why can’t the others be like you?!”
- **Classroom interaction:** I work with the other Black students. But this time a group of White students reached out to me. They sent me a text message saying they wanted me in their group because “you work hard.”

Presumption of Defilement

“Communication rendered to people of color that suggests they are generally debased, physically dirty, infected or diseased” (Wood & Harris III, n.d.).

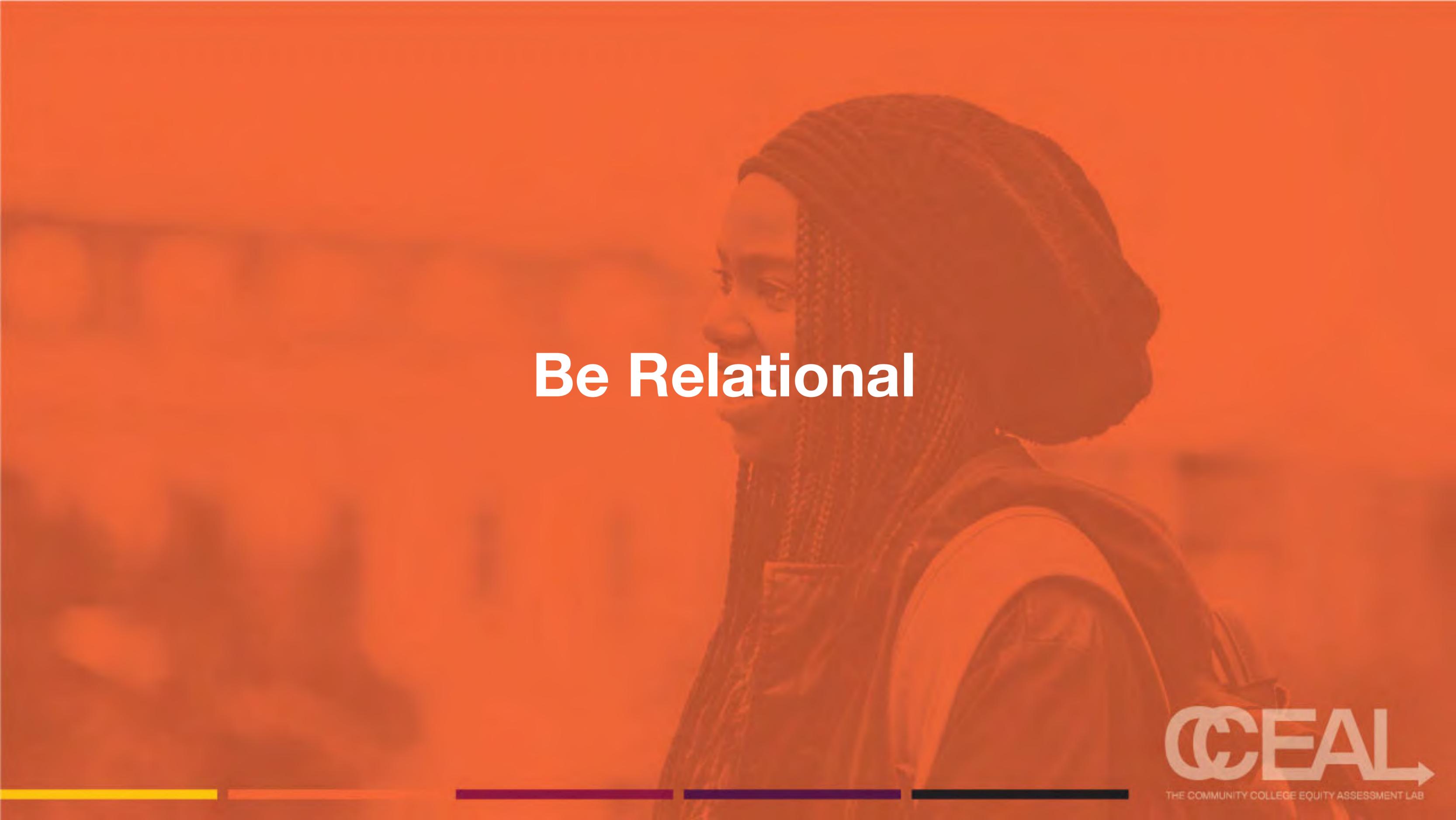
Examples:

- **Class Social Site:** Our class has a closed Facebook page where we share information with one another. There is a student on the page who is always posting memes ... but sometimes they are just racist – like jokes about the “Chinese virus” and stuff.
- **Profile icon:** Some people have uploaded profile icon pictures in our groupchat that are not pictures of themselves but of Asian men with gasmasks.

Be Intrusive

Be Intrusive

- Conduct an informal assessment of students' experiences in online learning.
- Proactively reach out to students (e.g., calls, emails, texts).
- Performance monitoring and intervening
- Connect students to people, not services

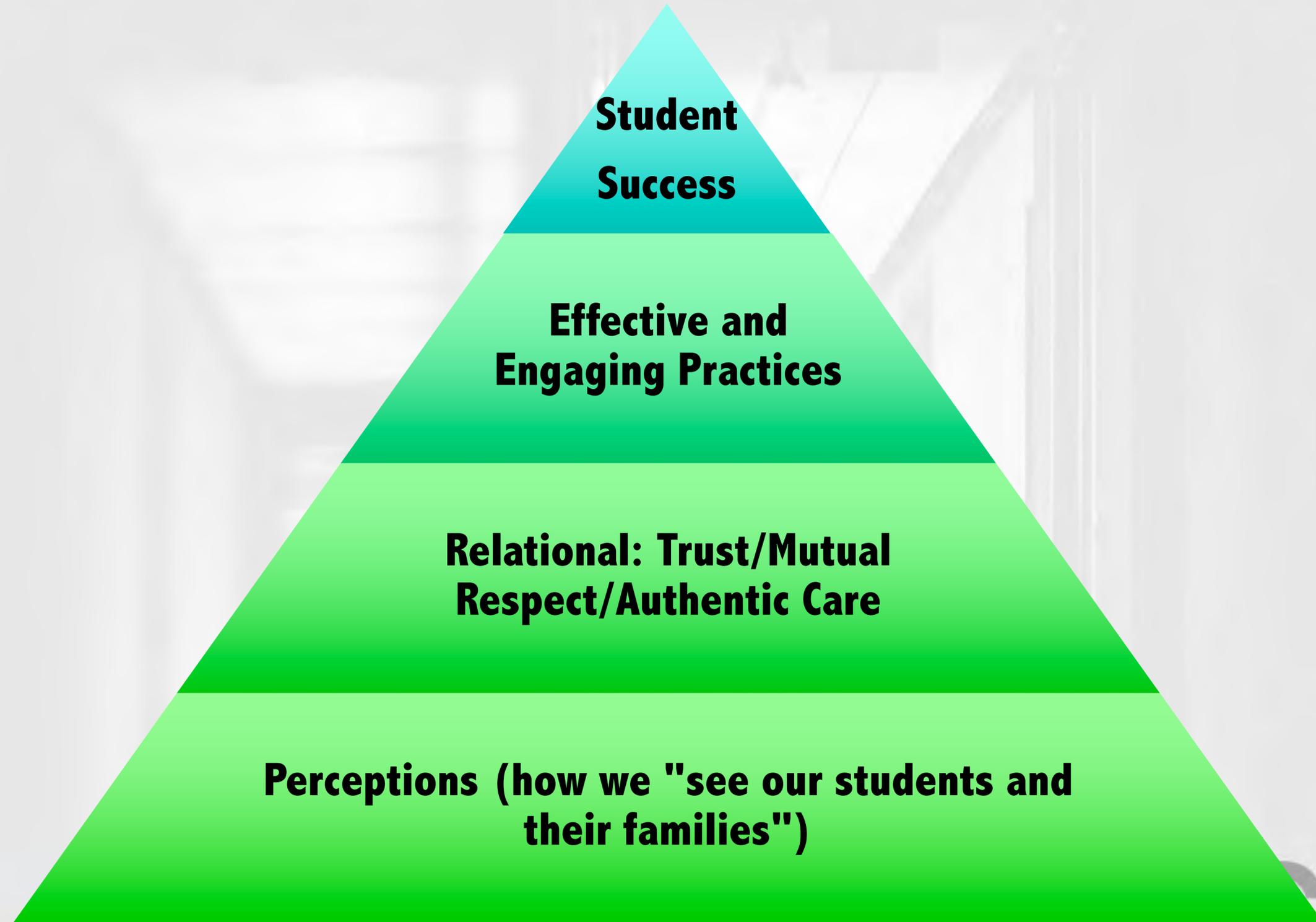


Be Relational

Be Relational

- Learn about each student
- Appropriate disclosing
- Validation and positive messaging are critical! Students must hear: “you belong”, “you can do the work”, “you can succeed”, “you have the ability”, “you are very intelligent”
- Hold high expectations for performance.

Pyramid of Student Success



Be Race Conscious

Be Race Conscious

- Be intentional about providing opportunities to engage racial and equity issues within the context of the course.
- Give students the tools they will need to productively engage in racial dialogue in the course.
- Make sure you have the tools you will need to facilitate the dialogues.
- Stay present in the dialogue, monitor it regularly, and intervene when necessary.



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