

idea newsletter

From the **Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility** committee at Pueblo Community College

Self-Reflection Activity: Implicit Attitudes

Written by **Adam Zaleski**

Social Sciences, Education and Criminal Justice instructor

The word implicit means unconscious. Implicit attitudes were first discovered by scientists Anthony Greenwald, Mahzarin Banaji and Brian Nosek in the mid 1990s. We tend to learn implicit preferences that we observe in our environment. To test your own implicit biases, please go to [Harvard's Project Implicit](#).

After you take the Implicit Association Test (IAT), you will notice that the IAT is a word association test that measures reaction time. The shorter the reaction time, the stronger the association between two words. What has a stronger association, hammer and nail or hammer and nail? If you have a stronger implicit preference for white than black, it means that your reaction time between white and good is quicker than black and good. Implicit attitudes are often difficult to change simply because people are mostly unaware that they exist.

While almost no hiring manager would admit to consciously discriminating against job applicants based on ethnicity, we continue to see hiring discrimination in controlled experiments. Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004) applied to 3,000 real jobs with fake applications. Results showed that job applicants with a historically White name (Emily or Greg) had a call back rate of 10%, while job applicants with a historically Black name (Lakisha or Jamal) had a call back rate of only 6.67%. Similar results have been found among Airbnb hosts (Edelman, Luca, & Svirsky, 2017), Uber/Lyft drivers (Ge, Knitttel, Mackenzie, & Zoepf, 2016) and even police shootings (Hehman, Flake, & Calanchini, 2018).

How do we solve these inequalities if the person is unaware of their implicit attitudes? According to Brian Nosek and Mahzarin Banaji, the solution has two parts. One, people must first become aware of their implicit attitudes. Two, it is possible for people to change their implicit attitudes by thinking of an example inconsistent with their implicit attitudes. For example, if someone has an association between black and bad, this association

can be reduced by thinking of positive black exemplars such as Martin Luther King Jr., Colin Powell and Michael Jordan ([The Hidden Prejudice Video](#)). A few years after this video was produced, these researchers found societal level decreases in implicit prejudice within communities who elected officials that belong to minority groups (Greenwald, Banaji, & Nosek, 2015).

The IDEA committee at PCC is proud to celebrate and advertise positive examples of minority groups through its monthly newsletter. This acknowledgement is a very important process of changing our environment. Over time, this exposure will lead to changes in implicit attitudes and changes in the real world, including but not limited to the election of Barack Obama in 2008 as the 44th President of the United States (Berstein, Young & Claypool, 2010).

References

- Bertrand, M., & Mullainathan, S. (2004). Are Emily and Greg more employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A field experiment on labor market discrimination. *American Economic Review*, 94, 991-1013.
- Berstein, M. J., Young, S. G., & Claypool, H. M. (2010). Is Obama's win a gain for Blacks? Changes in implicit racial prejudice following the 2008 election. *Social Psychology*, 41, 147-151.
- Edelman, B., Luca, M., & Svirsky, D. (2017). Racial discrimination in the sharing economy: Evidence from a field experiment. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 9, 1-22.



Fall 2025 edition highlights

This edition of the newsletter focuses on the power of education to transform communities and honors Indigenous Americans in celebration of Native American Heritage Month.

From the Classroom to the Community: A Newsletter on Education as a Practice of Freedom

Written by **Alysia Bellamy** | *Social Sciences, Education and Criminal Justice instructor*

This issue focuses on the critical works of bell hooks and Henry Giroux, two thinkers who fundamentally reshaped our understanding of the classroom and the role of schools in society.

bell hooks' Engaged Pedagogy: Education as the Practice of Freedom

In her seminal work *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, the late bell hooks offers a powerful alternative to traditional “banking-style” education, where teachers deposit knowledge into passive students. She champions what she calls “engaged pedagogy,” a holistic and liberatory approach that integrates the mind, body, and spirit.

- **Mutual participation:** Engaged pedagogy is not a one-way street. hooks argues for a classroom built on mutual respect and shared responsibility. Both teachers and students are active participants in the learning process, co-creating knowledge and a community of learners.
- **The teacher as a facilitator:** The teacher's role shifts from a sole authority to facilitator of knowledge. They must be willing to learn from their students, acknowledging their lived experiences and emotional intelligence. This requires vulnerability and a commitment to personal growth on the part of the educator.
- **Passion and wholeness:** hooks insists that education should be a joyful and passionate experience. Learning is most profound when it is a “practice of freedom,” a process of self-actualization where students are encouraged to find their unique voice and think independently. Engaged pedagogy welcomes the “whole” person into the classroom, fostering an environment where students feel safe to take risks and be radically open.

For hooks, teaching is a deeply political act. It is a tool for challenging dominant power structures—like racism, sexism, and classism—and for empowering marginalized voices. Education, when practiced as freedom, becomes a vehicle for social justice and liberation.

Henry Giroux: Schools as Sites of Cultural Politics

Henry Giroux, a leading figure in critical pedagogy, expands on this idea by arguing that schools are not neutral institutions; they are “cultural sites” deeply embedded in the politics of society. His work challenges the notion that education is merely about acquiring skills or information. Instead, he sees schools as contested spaces where dominant ideologies are both reproduced and resisted.

- **Beyond the classroom walls:** Giroux posits that education extends far beyond the school building. Media, popular culture, and the wider social environment all act as powerful pedagogical forces. Students are constantly “border-crossers,” navigating and interpreting a complex world of cultural messages.
- **Ideology and power:** According to Giroux, the curriculum, school policies, and even the way teachers interact with students are all shaped by ideological forces. Schools often reinforce a “dominant culture” that perpetuates existing power relations. However, they also hold the potential to be a source of resistance and change.
- **The teacher as a public intellectual:** Giroux argues that teachers must see themselves as “public intellectuals”—critical thinkers who can connect what is happening in the classroom to larger social issues. By helping students critically analyze the world around them, educators can foster a sense of civic responsibility and equip students with the tools to challenge injustice.

Giroux's work calls for a pedagogy that not only teaches students how to read the “word” but also how to read the “world.” It is a call to action for educators to embrace their role in creating a more democratic and just society.

The Synergy: Why hooks and Giroux Matter

Together, the ideas of hooks and Giroux provide a powerful framework for rethinking education in the 21st century.

From the micro to the macro: hooks' engaged pedagogy provides a practical and deeply human approach to creating liberatory classroom environments, focusing on the intimate relationship between teacher and student. Giroux's cultural politics expands this vision, positioning the classroom within a broader social and political context.

Critique and possibility: Both thinkers offer a language of critique to dismantle oppressive educational practices while simultaneously providing a language of possibility for imagining and building a better way forward.

Their combined message is clear: Education is not just about what we learn, but about who we become. It is a powerful force for individual and collective transformation, and it is a practice of freedom that we must all commit to.

References

- Giroux, H. A. (2001). *Theory and resistance in education: Towards a pedagogy for the opposition* (2nd ed.). Bergin & Garvey.
- hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. Routledge.

PCC's Land Acknowledgement Revision

Written by **Ann Oreskovich**

Fine Arts, Humanities and Media Communications Assistant Department Chair

To formally recognize and honor Indigenous peoples' historical connections to the lands, some institutions, including PCC, elected to create a Land Acknowledgement statement. The IDEA Committee serves as the steward of the college's Land Acknowledgement.

Last year, IDEA members from the Southwest campus, which has particularly rich Indigenous ties, asked the committee to consider broadening the language of the statement to account for the complexities of the history of the land in the Southwest region.

Over the past year, a group of people from the Pueblo campus and the Southwest campus, including members of the Indigenous community, met to reflect on and re-write the Land Acknowledgement. The author of the new statement is [Dantzelle Yazzie](#), a graduate of the Bachelor of Science program in nursing at PCC Southwest and member of the Diné Nation.



In conjunction with the statement, the task force developed content for a web page where the statement can be found, along with information about what Land Acknowledgement is, a timeline of the painful history of land occupation in Colorado, and resources for Indigenous students, including a wealth of scholarship opportunities.

The [Land Acknowledgement web page](#) is in the quick links at the bottom of PCC's home page. It was beautifully brought to fruition by PCC's Online Media Coordinator, Crystal Tucker.

Crystal is a proud graduate of PCC and has served in her role for 11 years. She specializes in managing the college's website, enhancing brand visibility, and supporting marketing campaigns across various digital platforms. As an enrolled citizen of the Cherokee Nation, Crystal is dedicated to fostering equity in digital environments and ensuring that underrepresented voices are both seen and heard online.

In the words of Dantzelle reflecting on her Indigenous identity, "Our story is resilience, rediscovery, and healing. We recognize that the descendants from the ancestral people are the original inhabitants of this land, and we honor their presence physically, their presence in spirit, and the memory of those who have passed on. This land is our identity, and we are still here!"

The task force will continue to meet to address ways to best serve our Indigenous communities, and a new student club is being created for Indigenous students. For more information or to get involved in either of these opportunities, contact idea@pueblocc.edu.

PCC's Land Acknowledgement statement

Pueblo Community College gathers on lands belonging to Indigenous peoples of the past, present, and future. This land is the home of the ancestral and contemporary members of many Tribal Nations. All Indigenous peoples continue deep connections with the land, Mother Earth, and seek always to treat the land with reverence and gratitude. These lands are marked by the beauty of the rivers, forests, mountains, and deserts which form the foundation of Indigenous peoples' creation stories.

Pueblo Community College continues this legacy by advocating for the ancestral place on these lands and by acknowledging the oppression and pain of their stories. We honor the Indigenous ancestors' wisdom and resilience by preserving this connection with the Creator, the land, and the people.

Pueblo Community College continues to collaborate with Tribal Nations by learning, listening, advocating, and supporting all Indigenous communities in creating meaningful futures.

Breaking Stereotypes of Indigenous Youth in Educational Settings

Compiled and summarized by **George Hristovich**
Social Sciences, Education and Criminal Justice faculty



These videos address pervasive misconceptions that Indigenous youth face in education and ways that students are working to overcome those barriers.

- In [Cultural Safety Education as the Blueprint for Reconciliation](#), the speaker provides a variety of examples of cultural barriers faced by Indigenous students. In particular, he stresses the need for communication and an awareness of normativity, which compromises cultural safety by excluding individuals and groups who do not identify with mainstream norms and cultural narratives. The presenter encourages discussion of racist enculturation, awareness of history and examination of power imbalances to create more culturally inclusive institutions.
- In [Unpacking the Indigenous Student Experience](#), the speaker shares his experience with the constant need for Indigenous students to correct a variety of misconceptions and biased historical narratives, which they encounter in educational spaces – as well as simply of exclusion of Native issues from conversations. He stresses lack of retention and the need to generalize awareness beyond specific educational experiences, and to incorporate it into daily life.
- In [6 Misconceptions About Native American People](#), students address common misconceptions and contradictions regarding Indigenous people, focusing on misinformation regarding government programs and cultural practices.
- In [Language: the Key to Everything](#), the speaker explores the important role that learning his ancestral language has played in his personal growth and success. He provides a variety of examples from what he has learned, which illustrate the cultural value of language. Throughout his journey into his heritage, he has gained many insights into the social dynamics of his ancestry, many of which relate to modern social problems – adding much-needed context to his experiences. The speaker concludes by sharing how his studies have informed his identity, and his personal and social philosophy.
- [An Indigenous Student's Perspective: History, Culture, and Language](#) shares Native perspectives on motivation philosophy, with a focus on the role of failure in educational efforts. The speaker critiques the concept of “failure” as a cultural construct that does not align with the more communal perspective of many Native groups. The speaker challenges the audience to step outside of dualistic conceptions of success and see achievement as a process embodied in repeating cycles of trial and error.

Resources

Books, Movies, Podcasts, Websites

Click to check out our
November list

Questions or comments about the newsletter? Contact us at idea@pueblocc.edu



Panther Spotlight **Mikayla Owens**

Written by Lisa Molina
*Director of Student Services,
PCC Southwest*

This November, for Native American Heritage Month, PCC is honored to share the story of Mikayla Owens, a nursing student whose journey reflects both determination and deep cultural pride.

“I grew up in Cortez, but we traveled back and forth to Zuni, near Gallup, for ceremonies,” she explained. “Being from a military household, with family in the Marines, taught me discipline. And in my culture, our clan is matriarchal. Everyone comes together to set up ceremonies and transitions. That’s where I learned to step up, take charge, and lead.”

Her interest in healthcare began in high school when her school encouraged her to explore college course options. She enrolled in EMT-B alongside other exploratory courses, which gave her both experience and confidence.

“That encouragement, combined with my passion for helping others, made me feel secure in pursuing nursing

school later,” she shared. “I earned my practical nursing license in summer 2025, and now I’ve started the dual RN/BSN program. Balancing everything — school, work, and life — isn’t easy, but it’s not impossible.”

Leadership has become a big part of her college experience.

“I’m not afraid to speak up when others in class might be stuck. I try to bring everyone’s voice to the table, and I like connecting with classmates, reviewing tests together, talking through what we could have done better. It’s about lifting each other up.”

Her Native heritage also shapes her vision for the future.

“Coming from a smaller tribe, I feel like I have a lot to prove. I want to represent those who can’t and help the elders who face language barriers, or people in rural areas with limited access. My goal is to become a family nurse practitioner, working with Indian Health Services or as a traveling nurse.”

For her, Native American Heritage Month is powerful.

“It shows we are still here. For us, it’s not just a month, it’s a way of life. Celebrating reminds everyone that America is a melting pot, and our traditions and cultures are part of that.”

This semester, we celebrated... PRIDE

Four Corners Alliance for Diversity Event

Written by Sabina Modeste, PCCSW executive assistant



The Four Corners Alliance for Diversity hosted its annual Pride Celebration in Durango Sept. 13, beginning with a parade on Main Street and culminating with a community festival at Buckley Park. I was honored to attend the festival, and it was an unforgettable experience.

Due to limited space and high demand from local organizations, PCC Southwest wasn’t able to secure a table this year. However, the alliance generously displayed our flyers at their booth and helped distribute many of our branded items to attendees.

Approaching the park, I was immediately moved by the colorful array of flags — each representing a unique aspect of the LGBTQ+ community. Some were unfamiliar to me, yet together they created a beautiful and powerful message: “You are seen. You are valued. You are welcome.”

Throughout the day, I had the chance to talk with several attendees about the many programs we offer at PCC Southwest. One conversation in particular stood out — a parent of a recent nursing program graduate who studied in Durango. Her daughter, a trans student, shared how supported and welcomed she felt during her time at PCC.

Hearing that reaffirmed what I already know: We are part of an institution that honors individuality, supports diversity, and helps every student feel like they belong.

Representatives from PCC gathered for Pueblo Pride in Mineral Palace Park on Aug. 18 to celebrate Pueblo's LGBTQIA+ community. The festivities included a parade, food and craft vendors, entertainment and a plethora of community organizations.



Hispanic-Serving Institution Week and Hispanic Heritage Month



In honor of Hispanic-Serving Institution Week and Hispanic Heritage Month, PCC offered a robust calendar of events in September and October on the Pueblo campus, including a read-in and tours of *El Movimiento* in the library, piñata-making with Art Club, an ASG movie night, heritage stories, Toltec yoga, history speaker Ernesto Sagás, games, and a panel of Lantinx leaders.

The Pueblo campus also hosted its first block party, *La Fiesta del Pantera*, on Oct. 4 that offered information about programs and resources along with food, entertainment, a lowrider car show, and drawings for scholarships. The Fremont campus celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month with a day of food and fellowship.



Upcoming Events in November

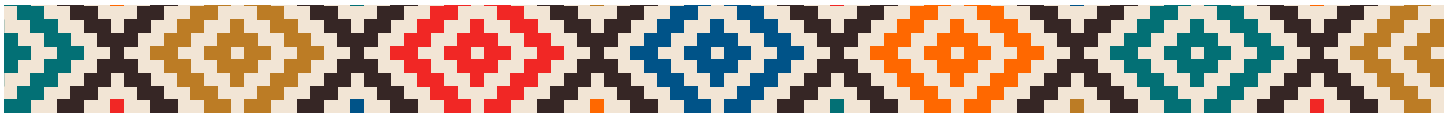
- **Enrollment Night** will take place on Nov. 11 from 5-6:30 p.m. to provide prospective students guidance on applying for admissions and financial aid.
- **Safe Zone Training** will be offered on Nov. 12 from 1-3 p.m. Look for registration information from PCC Communications or contact idea@pueblocc.edu.
- PCC is again partnering with the Federal Bureau of Prisons to bring the bureau's interactive and informative **Parole Reentry Simulation** to PCC. The reentry simulation is an innovative event designed to provide participants with a firsthand understanding of the challenges faced by individuals reentering society after incarceration. This immersive experience will take place on Tuesday, Nov. 18, with two sessions scheduled: one at 10 a.m. and a second at 12:30 p.m.

The event offers participants a unique chance to engage in realistic scenarios which reflect the daily challenges parolees face, such as finding housing and employment, managing finances, accessing social services, and meeting parole requirements.

Through interactions with volunteers role-playing key figures like landlords, employers, and parole officers, participants gain firsthand experience that enhances understanding of the importance of effective reentry programs, highlights the critical role of supportive networks in overcoming the obstacles new parolees face, and gives them a greater appreciation for the true extent of the everyday challenges these individuals face.

Light refreshments will be provided, and comfortable attire is recommended for those wishing to participate. Stay tuned for more information about companion events to the simulation happening throughout the week of Nov. 17. For more information or to register as a volunteer, please contact Rich Keilholtz at 719.549.3426 or Richard.Keilholtz@pueblocc.edu.

- The Southwest campus has events planned in celebration of Native American Heritage month. On Nov. 20, a hoop dancing performance will take place, along with elder's storytelling on generational trauma, lunch, the presentation of a mural, and a quiz for prizes from 11:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m.



Our Mission

To foster and promote a sense of belonging among intersectional identities that values and respects the talents, beliefs, backgrounds, and ways of living in our world.

Our Members

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