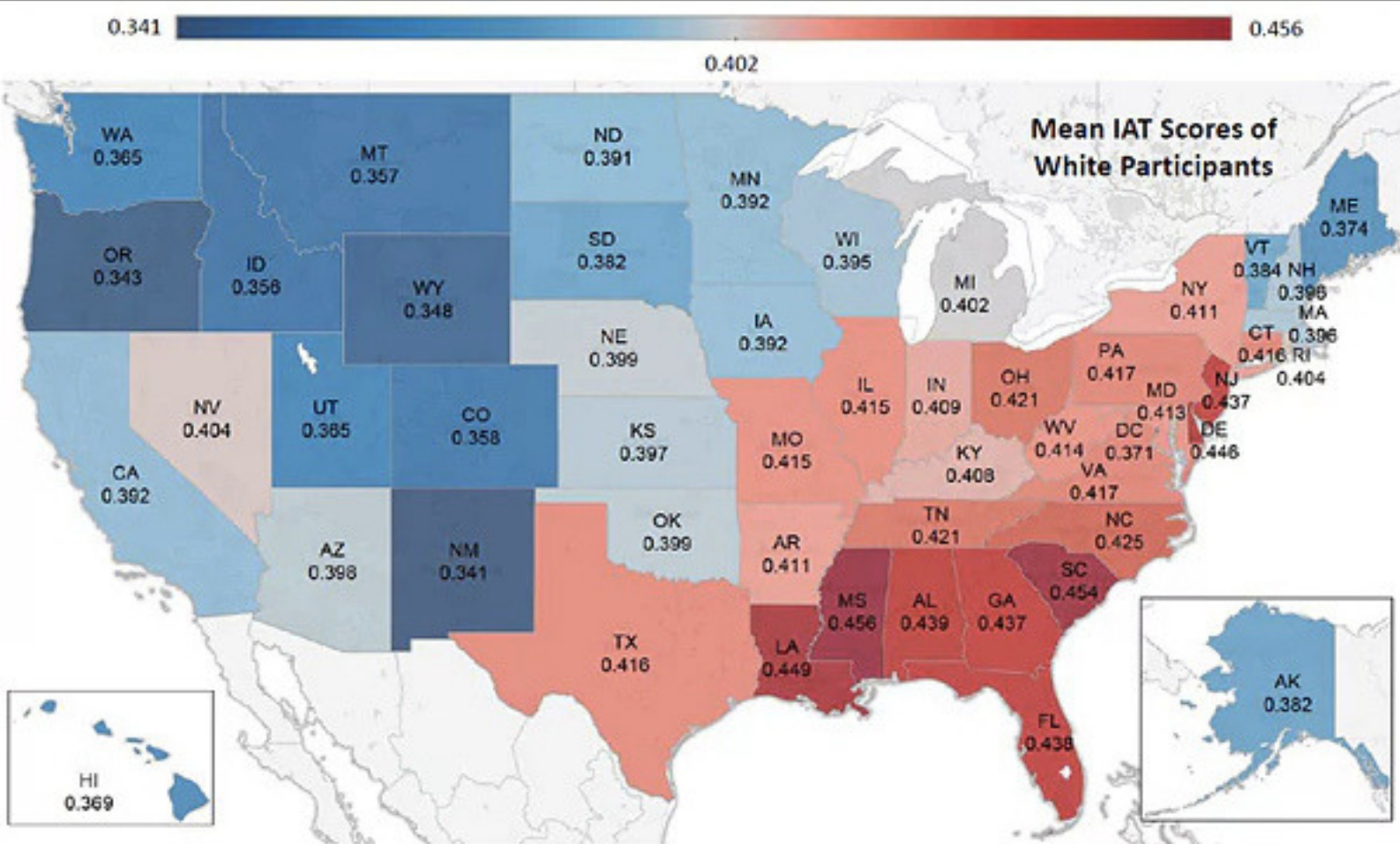


Implicit Bias

THE PRESENCE AND EFFECTS OF BIAS IN THE UNITED STATES

The United States is often referred to as a melting pot of cultures and diversity; however, as shown through many recent events, tension between minority and majority groups are still prevalent. Racism is still plaguing the United States, leaving the victim population confused, disgusted, and hurt. There is a type of racism that is highly evident among all states and includes a wide variety of individuals, including liberals and conservatives: unintentional, implicit bias. The subconscious of many Americans hold prejudice against races, genders, and sexuality that is different from their own. Back in 1998, three scientists founded Project Implicit, a organization studying implicit social cognition. Tony Greenwald (University of Washington), Mahzarin Banaji (Harvard University), and Brian Nosek (University of Virginia) created the Implicit Association Test to measure the bias people hold against others that they may not be fully aware of. Since the launch of the test, over 2 million people have taken the test, and as a result a lot of data was recorded for research. The Project Implicit website contains a database of its data and allows the public access. Among their many data graphics is one that measures the bias of White Americans against African American people:



Data courtesy of Project Implicit

The graphic illustrates the average IAT score of White Americans per state. The numbers range from a minimum of 0.341, a median of 0.402, and a maximum of 0.456. These scores are based on the time taken to associate positive or negative words with either White or African Americans. The longer it takes to associate a positive word with an African American face than with a White face, the higher the bias score becomes. Any score over zero suggest a preference towards white people.

When looking at the data graphic, it can be concluded that Southeastern and Eastern America hold more Implicit bias, and the Northwest has less bias. One important thing to note is that all states have bias and there is no state that is completely free of prejudice. The Implicit Association Tests are also completely voluntary and do not represent a sample population; this presents a chance that Americans as a whole can be more or less biased than the graphic implies. The test is mostly taken by younger, more liberal individuals and people who actively acknowledge the presence of implicit bias. With this in mind, it is plausible to believe that if more Americans that have more conservative and close-minded opinions took the test, the data would reflect a more biased United States. Either way, the country still exhibits implicit bias and we should focus and determining the causes of this bias as well why certain areas are more inclined to have more prejudice.

Why This Matters:

Now that we know Implicit Bias is widespread across America, we should look at the potential side effects of this attitude. Explicit and intentional acts of racism are obvious and cause immediate pain and anguish to those being victimized and those against racist acts, but these implicit and sometimes subtle remarks and actions of racism can accumulate negative effects over time for a person and result in long term anxiety towards the people who have or could be racist. Once someone has felt the harsh effects of racism, they often feel uneasy around people of similar resemblance to the racist group or individual; for example, there can be fear and anxiety of the possibility of a person being a white supremacist. Another notion is that people may become more cynical and untrusting. All these outcomes and more are a result of people not realizing that they are causing harm to others through their words and actions. We need to better educate the population on the importance of cultural diversity and acceptance with the hope of fostering a more inclusive society in America that has a reduced amount of bias.

Citations:

- Axt, Jordan. "Mapping Geographical Variation in Implicit Racial Attitudes." Blog, Project Implicit, 11 Sept. 2017, implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/user/jaxt/blogposts/piblogpost05.html.
- Mooney, Chris. "Across America, Whites Are Biased and They Don't Even Know It." The Washington Post, WP Company LLC, 8 Dec. 2014, www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2014/12/08/across-america-whites-are-biased-and-they-dont-even-know-it/?utm_term=.5728abc3503c.