

Episode 1 — Roots of (In)Equality: Insights from Child Psychology and Education

Sarah Kaplan: Welcome to another limited-edition series from GATE audio productions. In this four-part podcast, we're bringing to you four conversations with expert panelists from our 2018 Behavioral Approaches for Diversity conference, affectionately known as the (BAD) conference. In them, you'll hear new solutions from the behavioural sciences for making real progress on diversity and inclusion. The BAD conference was co-hosted with the Behavioural Economics in Action at Rotman research center (or BEAR) and we focused on the childhood roots of inequality, going beyond hashtags towards real change, bringing masculinity into the conversation, and how to move the needle on diversity.

GATE audio is produced by the Institute for Gender and the Economy at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management, or GATE as we call it, and I'm Sarah Kaplan, GATE's director. Our goal is to engage current and future leaders in rich conversations about inequalities in our society and how we might address them. And, this conference, and these conversations are part of that effort. Hundreds of people joined us at that conference and now we're super pleased to bring it to the GATE audio listening audience. As usual, if you want more information on GATE, go to gendereconomy.org. And, now on to the show.

Sonia Kang: So, I'm excited to transition us now into our first panel discussion of the day, which is called Roots of inequality insights from child psychology and education. This is a really important panel, we wanted to make sure to include it in the day, because we have experts here on developmental psychology, childhood education, things that we don't usually hear about at the business school to talk to us about how the concept and reality of inequality and equality develop among children. Understanding the developmental underpinnings of these issues is so crucial in helping us work towards change. So the way that this will work is I'll introduce our moderator, Nam Kiwanuka. And now we'll introduce the panel. So Nam is probably familiar face to many of you in the room. She's a journalist, host and producer. She's currently hosting the agenda and this summer on TVO. Nam was also a much music video VJ. So fellow Canadians who are in the room, you might recognize NAMM from pretty much the best show of all time electric circus.

Nam: I still have the glitter from then.

Sonia: So we're very happy to have her here to guide us through this very important conversation on the roots of inequality. Thanks.

Nam: Thanks so much for having me. Hi, good morning. Hi, I'm sorry, I'm kind of out of breath. Because I mismanaged my time this morning, I went to work. And then the TTC decided to slow me down a little bit. So I'm very excited to be here to speak to all of you. So maybe what I'll do is I'll get each of the panelists to introduce themselves, where they're from, and a little bit about what the research that they do. And if we can keep that a little tight, because I have a lot of questions to get to. And hopefully at the end, if we missed anything, we can always add it. So Andrei, maybe we'll start with you at the very end.

Andrei: Just introductions or

Nam: Where you work and a little bit about the research that you do. Less than five though.

Andrei: So I Andrei Cimpian. I'm an associate professor of psychology at New York University. I'm a developmental psychologist, hence my being here on the panel. And some of the work that I've done recently pertains to the reasons why women might be underrepresented in science and technology and engineering fields. And there's a really good empirical case to be made for the relevance of developmental psychology to issues of under representation and science and beyond, just to give you a flavor for the kinds of arguments that can be made empirically, if you look at the percentage of PhDs in science fields who are women, and then you compare that to percentage of bachelors in science for women, and then you compare that to percentage of girls in high school who intend to major in in science, you see that those numbers are actually comparable, and equally low. So the kinds of factors that seem

to turn young women away from science seem to be having most of their effects early on in life. By the time that girls get to high school, their intentions of majoring in science fields, is already about as low as it's gonna get. And that then just gets sort of propagated through the system. So what happens early on that, that makes girls not aspire to careers in? In science as much as boys aspire to careers in science? Here? There are many ways of thinking about This one is the sort of model that Alice proposes stereotyping congruity. There are many ways in which we think about scientists and many ways within which we think about young women and girls that are just incompatible. This is work by Amanda Dickman, for example, this suggests that we think of scientists as loners, spending a lot of time on their own in front of the microscope and you know, in a white lab coat, and working to satisfy their curiosity. So for sort of more selfish purposes, and girls in our society are socialized to think of themselves as more communal, and more altruistic, which creates an incompatibility between how girls think of themselves and how we, as a society, think of scientists. The work that I've done more directly pertains to another dimension of incompatibility, which is that we often think of scientists as being sort of innately brilliant, gifted at what they do. And unfortunately, well into the 21st century, we still don't think of girls and women in the same way. So some of the work that we've done with adults suggests that actually, if you ask people across fields in academia, what they believe is required for success. The more people in a field believe that you need to have some sort of innate ability to succeed in that field. The fewer women are represented at the PhD and bachelors levels in that field, and the fewer African Americans, the commonality there being that both of these groups as well as others, are stereotyped as not being as innately gifted as white men are. And you might think in light of Alice's talk, well, why are we talking about competence differences? The story is actually more complicated license to suggest all that we might think of women as competent. We often think of women as competent by virtue of having worked harder their competence by virtue of having been educated by virtue of having sort of like a nurtured and perhaps compensated for a lack of innate ability that we attribute to men, we still stereotype men as being more and innately intellectually gifted and women.

Nam: Sorry to cut you off. I'm hoping to touch more on what you're talking about. But we're just running out of time, and just keeping an eye on the time. So if we could move over to Christia, please.

Christia

So I'm Christia Spears Brown. I'm a professor of also developmental psychology. I'm at the University of Kentucky. And I studied gender stereotypes and kids and their understanding of discrimination. And most recently, we've spent a lot of time talking about sexual harassment and gender based bullying. So one of the things we're really interested in is how early adolescence so we're talking 12 13 14 year old adolescents in forced gender norms among one another. And one of the most important gender norms that they're often really starting to endorse by the time they're about 12. And 13, is this idea of sexualized gender stereotypes is the label that we give it. It's this idea that girls should be sexualized really, at all times, and should be sexually appealing for the attention of boys and should be happy to get that. And the flip side of that is that boys should be aggressively and assertively pursuing girls as sexual objects. And so what's interesting about that is girls are saying that they are often aspiring to be sexualized, but at the same time, they're stereotyping sexualized girls as less competent. So as less smart, less kind, less athletic. So on the one hand, they're saying, she's less smart, but on the other hand, they're saying, but I aspire to look like that, because it comes with its status. And boys, we know are saying that they are wanting to pursue girls as sexual objects. And if they don't do that, there's a lot of gender policing that happens. And if that sounds heteronormative, it's very heteronormative. And so that boys that do anything mildly atypical, beyond this really strict gender stereotype of kind of Uber masculine stereotype, they get then called homophobic slurs by their peers in middle school. So boys are also in this double bind of there's pressure to be hyper masculine. And what that means is sexually harassing and objectifying girls, and if they don't, then they're policed by their male peers. So again, I talked about this for quite some time now and this week, it's you know, more and more relevant you see this play out if you pay attention to American news

Nam: Sorry, not to interrupt you. We're gonna get into that. If you can just move to Jeewan and then we can start our conversation.

Jeewan: Hi, everyone, I'm the superintendent of equity, anti racism and anti oppression for Toronto District School Board. I know you've been hearing a lot about the behavioral approaches and I think maybe what I can add to it is a part of the work that I'm doing is to analyze and understand the impact of systems and structures. So a lot of times when we talk about beliefs and attitudes, we think that that's the one thing that we have to deal with. And we don't analyze that, at the same time with the corresponding systems and structures. And so as we're seated here, and I'm sure you did a land acknowledgement, I want to begin from acknowledging the land that we're on, especially today being orange shirt day, and the legacy that has existed on Turtle Island and as part of Turtle Island. The thing that I think that we have to think about as we're looking at at behaviors, is to remember that through colonization systems and structures were created explicitly to privilege some people. And so when legislation was created, when structures were created, they were created at a time where they believed that, in particular, for example, indigenous people were uncivilized, they needed to be civilized. In order to do that they had to be taken off the land, sent into residential schools, that women were inferior, that people with disabilities were inferior, 2SLGBT identifying people were deviant. All of these things were coded into law. And all of these laws influence the systems and structures that we navigate. And so when we talk about things like the heteronormative views that might exist, and the larger sort of pieces around mindset, those mindsets aren't just mindsets that people have upheld by actual systems and structures. And so when we think about it, the the notion of neutrality or fairness or objectivity, is actually a skewed one. So one of the things that I work with and with educators understand is there is no such thing as neutral that in our work, we have to actually adopt an anti-oppressive stance, which begins by thinking about who we are in relation to who we're serving, and what types of beliefs and attitudes transcend the spaces that we are, just by virtue of the way structures have been created. As a man with male privilege, I don't have to think about, for example, what I wear, when I stand up in front of a group of people, or at the end of the night, if an event ends, which route that I'm going to take home, or how I'm getting to the parking lot, those are things that are realities for women that often men don't have to navigate. That is by virtue of all those pieces in particular, and not don't we look down south all the time, but in this country, as well, that, you know, black people were seen as an economic resource for the people who are in power. And that is where the roots of racism lie. All of these things were built into the legislation and built into the structures. So even though you might see yourself as a nice person, and I'm not doubting that everybody in here are nice people. If we are not actively doing the work to deconstruct the fact that we are products of these structures, then we unwittingly perpetuate those things in spite of. And so, one of the things I try to remind people is even though we share the same world, we do not share the same experiences of the world.

Nam: Thank you very much to all the panelists. So, what I've tried to do is incorporate some of your research throughout the different questions that I'm going to be asking. And if I pose a question to you individually, feel free to jump in, if anyone else has anything to add. So, Christia, you brought up what's been happening in the states with the Brett Kavanaugh testimony hearing yesterday, Dr. Christine Blasi Ford, I'm sure all of us were watching it, streaming it, seeing what's happening down there. And I remember when I was younger, I was maybe around 14 or 15 when Anita Hill testify. But it was only on television. And now this conversation seems to be like this tipping point. But for boys and girls, especially those that are in their teens watching this, what is this moment telling them about who they are? what is expected of them? Christia if I could pose that to you first?

Christia: Well, I'll say we have a lot of data that that answers that to a degree that I mean, we know that girls are under reporting things like sexual harassment and sexual assault. So 90% of girls our data shows by adolescents have experienced sexual harassment we know by the time they become college age one in four to one and five depending on the study shows they've been the target of sexual assault. And we know that what their most common responses is they smile and try to not let it get to them. So they have higher rates of depression, higher rates of anxiety, somatic symptom so like headaches and stomach aches, they want to miss school they have a hard time sleeping and this is just sexual harassment that happens in like the hallway so we're not even talking about sexual assault like this case that's on television now, and so we know that they are trying to not show that it bothers them, they're not reporting it to people. And yet they're really internalizing a lot of negative symptoms. So, the really challenging part for, for those of us that study this to watch what's going on TV is that we know that girls don't want to report this. And the best-case scenario, they don't want to report it because they're afraid of rocking the boat, because we've been taught to be passive and people pleasing and affiliative, and

communal all along. And so really, what's discouraging is that the message is, don't report it. Because if you do, you're going to be criticized, you're going to have to go into hiding, you're going to receive death threats. It's basically reinforced the idea that if you report it, if you speak up, you're going to be penalized for it. So it's really a not an optimistic moment right now. And particularly if he gets confirmed, it's going to really say, you reporting it not only will hurt you, but it will also not lead to any repercussions for the the attacker either. So I think it's a really pivotal moment to see what's going to be the consequence of

Nam: And again, you mentioned, we're talking about heteronormative. Yes, situations. So that's what's happening with girls. But what about boys who are watching this happen?

Christia: Well, I think that I mean, it is really challenging for boys, because a lot of boys I think are wanting to be good allies and are wanting to stand up and fight this, but there's so much gender policing that then it gets turned on them if they do speak up. So we know that about half of boys get called homophobic slurs in middle school, for example. So if they don't do anything that approaches kind of the Brett Kavanaugh like behavior, they are often getting penalized as well. And so partly, its boys have to figure out how to change their norms and figure out how can we speak up to stop this when we're seeing this happening? So we're not the boys in the corner that are egging it on. I think the fact that this This happened when they were adolescents is really telling and I do think teenagers are paying a lot of attention.

Nam: Who do you think should be talking to teenagers about this right now? Is it educators is it parents? And if so, like what do you say? I think

Christia: Everybody needs to be talking to them. Because we see it in media, we see it in schools, teachers often don't deal with these things that are happening. So most of a lot of this stuff goes on during schools, but teachers are just typically separating boys and girls out and they don't want to actually address it head on. So I think it has to be done with teachers, principals, parents media, we've spent a long time in this culture, reinforcing these gendered norms. So it's going to take it from all fronts to start to change some of these patterns of behavior.

Nam: Jeewan you work for the TDSB, Christia said the teachers don't want to talk about this, is there a reason why they would be reluctant to approach this?

Jeewan: I maybe say in the context of our board that we are trying to have those conversations. And in fact, a big part of what we're doing is even thinking about how we frame conversations about boys and girls in the context of only being binary conversations. Because what our data is telling us is that non binary and trans identifying children are even being harmed more in the conversations, even well intentioned about boys and girls. The other thing that I think is significant for us to think about is how we think about the other. So a part of the conversation that we need to have around this is that often, when we talk about who is the most marginalized, we are unconsciously talking about something or someone who is the norm, and everything else is the other. So often, for example, when we take into when we have conversations, for example, about institutional approaches around well being, they never, for example, take into account things like microaggressions that women are racialized or indigenous people have to deal with on a day to day basis. Things like you know, I show up somewhere, for example, and have someone asked me, Are you here to fix my computer? For some of you, you know that that's actually not a surprising thing. When I had when I went from my job interview, my hair is really long and curly, having to cut it before my interview and all the politics around here. If we did the part of the conversation in terms of when we're doing this as who gets to define the conversation, and how that conversations being had, and often it is, what we're doing is objectifying indigenous racialized people woman.

Nam: We met that I found that very interest.

Jeewan: So, research often tends to happen where we're viewing them as the other. And we're coming with the informed research in a very sort of, quote, unquote, objective way without thinking about. So for example, in our organization, one of the things that we've said, you know, we have approximately 600

schools and 37,000 employees in our organization, we have said that every school site must have three goals. One is an achievement goal. One is a well being goal that must have an equity embedded focus. And the third is an equity goal. But the equity goal must be about the adult learning that is necessary in relation to the children that we are serving. Because if we don't start this conversation with who we are in relation to who we're serving, we will always think that conversations about success are neutral, about best hires are neutral, about the best decisions are neutral, without understanding that we're bringing lived experiences into that. And so if and part of the heart thing of this conversation is that often, because we largely see ourselves as nice people, as good people, as decent people, we believe that we understand equity. And the challenge with that is equity is actually a very meticulous field of study, you can get your PhD in equity. But because I'm a nice person, I think I know equity. And so therefore, because I'm nice, I'm equitable. And what we unwittingly ended up doing is creating workspaces and situations that are actually toxic, and damaging, and it's often left on the people, woman, marginalized people to us LGBT people, right now with the rise of white supremacy, Muslims and Jews to have to do the work of trying to. so I talk about it in the stuff that I write as the burden of the oppressed, we have to bear the pain of the oppression, we have to convince people that the oppression exists, we have to be nice about how we convince them, because we have to take the feelings of the people who are harming us into consideration. And then we have to come up with the solutions to the harm that's happening. Because when we bring it up, they're like, so what's the solution? You do it for us?

Nam: It sounds exhausting.

Jeewan: It is exhausting.

Nam: I noticed a lot of corporations even at TVO. They have diversity training, inclusion, whatever you want to call inclusive training. Do you think that's a positive thing? Or I guess more importantly, what do leaders need to think about when they're addressing inclusion?

Jeewan: So diversity is what is. And I think if we start from that point, we can begin to trouble things. Sometimes when I talk to people who say, well, at my site, there's no diversity. Often that's code for there's no racialized people in that space. But the thing that I always try to blow up and I'm, I'm mindful, being Muslim and saying blowing up stuff. But the thing that I tried to blow up is that there is no such thing as a homogenous space, because there are elements of identity that we cannot see. And so when we think about diversity as broad, moving beyond what we call the saris and samosas thing, Oh, everybody dress up and bring your food and yay diversity. I know what you know, I know what samosas are now, yay, that's great. Or chai tea, or Chai? You know, I know about Kim Chi, you look at me, right? The challenge with that approach is that it minimizes the actual structural pieces and our own complicit ways that we uphold those norms. And so what we're trying to do in our organization, this is the work that I lead is to take on an anti oppressive approach. So an anti oppressive approach. What that means is that we understand that systems and structures drive practice, and they are artifacts of values and attitudes. So when we say things like this is how it's always been done, or these are the rules or this is the way we must do it. We are actually upholding structures that have upheld some people and not others. And so we have to begin now by figuring out who are we serving and centering who has been most traditionally marginalized in those spaces, with the understanding that what is necessary for some is actually good for all. We're not trying to take away things from people. We're actually recognizing that when we support more girls to go into STEM and STEAM, for example, ample, that actually, we'll all do better. And so one of the ways that we've shifted as an organization is that we've begun to talk about equity as a leadership competency, and to shift all of our hiring processes to reflect equity as a leadership competency, where we begin to look at the identities, the abilities and the lived experiences of people as assets. Here's a quick example. If somebody comes to us, and they might be a refugee, they may not have all of the quote unquote, Canadian experience in the world. But what else do they have that they're bringing to the organization to the space that is different in terms of who they are, that will actually help move the organization further. So when we talk about, we're hiring the best? My question back is best for whom?

Nam: Thank you very much do you Jeewan. Andrei, I'd like to bring you into the conversation. In the US, less than 25% of the politicians in Congress are women. In Canada, our prime minister famously said that "because it's 2015," when he was asked why he had assembled a cabinet that had an equal number of

male and female ministers, there was some criticism about that cabinet lack of diversity, and also the files that some of the ministers were assigned to. But what role does political will play when it comes to creating a more inclusive society?

Andrei: I think children see who is leading the country, right? So to the extent that we can create a leadership structure that reflects the diversity of the country, I think that's going to be an enormously influential factor in children growing up to aspire to be to be part of the leadership structure. So we can think about children and what they aspire to be when they grow up. As in ways, you know, like, we can take STEM as a model, but apply it to leadership, for example, where children grow up absorbing some of the stereotypes that our culture holds about them. And they also absorb the stereotypes that our culture holds about whatever career it is that they're we're considering. So for example, when they think of politicians, they think of them as mostly male, they think of them as ambitious, they think of them as power seeking, to the extent that girls in the US and in Canada grow up absorbing different sorts of values from the stereotypes that people hold about their groups, thinking of them as, as altruistic and communal, then it's going to be hard for them to see themselves as being suited for careers in in politics. So to the extent that we can actually, for example, quotas have been enormous and enormously influential in terms of not just immediately changing the composition of the government, but also, in the long term, creating role models for girls to use as sort of a psychological vaccine against doubts that others might have about their abilities. And also, in the even longer term, shifting the stereotype such that we no longer think of politicians as sort of on the template of the male politician whose power seeking and will do anything to, to stay to grab power and stay in power, but rather, on the template of, you know, like the leader, that's also keeping in mind the welfare of their people.

Nam: But also for boys, too. I read somewhere last year, an article in The New York Times of how there was a lot of jobs in the health field in the US, but men weren't applying for those jobs, because they consider those traditional female roles. So how do you change the mind, the minds of men, that those roles are also for them?

Andrei: Yeah, so the problem of gender equity is, I mean, involves everyone, right? So just working on boosting girls aspirations to, you know, to go into STEM or politics is only going to solve part of the problem to the extent that we have jobs that are not being occupied, because men feel that they're not suited because they don't have the nurturing skills, then that's obviously not going to get us anywhere. So I think similar, men and women don't have different psychologies, it's the same psychology. So to the extent that we encourage men and maybe even with a system of quotas or something like that, to take up some of the more communal roles than that can via processes of this sort that I was describing, shift the stereotypes and create a more welcoming environment for men in those fields. The problem however, is that a lot of communal roles also have lower status associated with them, right. So it's not just that we associate women with sort of communal roles, but also communal roles are seen as less than their what you do if you don't have any other options. So I think part of the ultimate solution to encouraging men to pursue more communal careers is gonna have to have a status component as well. It's unclear to me at this point how exactly we do that, you know, like how we shift the conversation around these topics, but it's going to be enormously crucial because otherwise, men who are also socialized to be more status seeking are not going to want to pursue jobs that aren't seen lower than stem,

Andrei: When sort of communal roles, but also communal roles are seen as less than they're what you do if you don't have any other options. So I think part of the ultimate solution to encouraging men to pursue more communal careers is gonna have to have a status component as well. It's unclear to me at this point how exactly we do that, you know, like how we shift the conversation around these topics, but it's going to be enormously crucial because otherwise, men who are also socialized to be more status seeking are not going to want to pursue jobs that aren't seen as long stem,

Nam: And Christia. As we've seen, the me too, and times up movement, gain momentum. we've seen this desire to talk about toxic masculinity. We're building up girls, and we're telling them to be fearless and the future is female. What impact does that have, if any, on young boys?

Christia: Well, I mean, I think that, partly, boys have just really been left out of the conversation. So I think that boys have been left out of emphasizing really kind of what Andrei is saying, too, is that how can we emphasize for boys, that being kind and compassionate and empathetic and helpful, are just as valuable and important as being assertive and agentic. And so I think that the part is that girls have a hard time achieving equality on their own boys have to also meet them at that point. And so it's, it's kind of an impossible thing to claim equity on your own unless other people are so are also contributing, because you know, then you're going to grow up and to be in these families, where women are still doing twice the amount of family work that men are. And so it's hard to have equity in the workplace if you're then having to go home and do double duty there. And so for women, it's great to lean in and all of that. And we you know, we do push those messages on girls. But I think what we really need to emphasize to boys is how do you lean into being helpful? How do you lean into supporting others and being empathetic and being a good ally, and contributing to more communal goals, because I think that for girls, you can be as fearless as you want. But then if you have to work really hard, and then go home and raise children, and then always be the one to volunteer for the, for the work group, in addition to all of the other things, that's an unfair burden for half the population.

Nam: And you mentioned that children police themselves, I have a seven year old, and in the hallway before he goes into his class, I'm always like, giving him a hug, covering him with kisses. And the minute he like pushes me away, and he walks towards his class, the composition of his body changes. He stands up straighter, he like pushes his shoulders back. He has a slow swagger. It's like he's bracing himself to start the day. And we know, data shows us that in schools, Indigenous kids, black kids, black boys, are in or suspended more are in detention more. And I guess this is where the conversation comes in with bias. Do you want is this something? How is this something that, like you said, everybody wants to be seen as being nice and being friendly? How do you address bias in the setting in education? Especially for teachers?

Jeewan: Yeah. And I think, you know, a couple of things really quickly. We have to have conversations about privilege. And often when people say that word, a lot of people put their backs up, because they're like, Well, what do you mean, I didn't have privilege? I worked hard for everything that I have. And often it shuts down the conversation. Sometimes I don't really like that word privilege, because it doesn't actually mean that you know, you didn't have to work hard.

Nam: Which word do you like better?

Jeewan: So I actually haven't figured that out yet. But what I will say when I have the conversations about privilege, is that it does not mean that you didn't have to work hard. But it does mean that the system was set up to support you to move easier. And the way I explain it is I've heard this example used before, it's like you're walking and you have a tail when that's working with you, versus you're walking into winds coming right at you. I as a man have male privilege, as somebody who's cisgendered I have privilege, as somebody who's an English speaker I have privilege, as somebody who was born here who's not indigenous with a Canadian passport I have privilege. naming those privileges does not make me a bad person. And I think part of the way that we have to have the conversations is ways that supports it so that people under Stand up. When we talk about privilege, it is not about shame or blame or guilt. It is about acknowledging that when I'm making decisions as a cisgendered person on behalf of trans children, that there are things about the realities of trans identifying children that I will never know or presume, to be able to understand, and I need to change who else is there. What it also means is that, so for example, me too, because you brought up me too, part of the challenge with me too, as it started growing was we started hearing from a lot of racialized women who were saying that their voices weren't actually being upheld in the me too movement. And so when we don't understand how our identities intersect, and how sometimes we can unwittingly go the way while my voice is there, then we stop thinking about who else's voices are missing, to make sure that the story is complete. So in our system, for example, and I would argue that this is reflective, not just provincially, but nationally, indigenous children are in the gaps. Black children are in the gaps, in particular black boys achievement gaps while being gaps, two spirited, LGBT identifying children, children with disabilities, children coming out of low SES, with the rise of white supremacy, we're seeing the impact on more Muslim and Jewish children.

Nam: Also, too, I'm thinking social class might play a role.

Jeewan: Yeah, so low, low socio economic status, households working class, or impoverished. Absolutely. When we looked at our, for example, suspensions and expulsions that are data, black children make up 12% of our board, but they were represented by almost 50%, of suspensions and expulsions. You can't tell me that, you know, that many children are who are black, who figure into discipline issues, if we're not addressing on one side beliefs and attitudes and two systems and structures that uphold it. And that's why we have to address both simultaneously, we have to figure out what are the beliefs and attitudes that are happening. And so, as I said, in our organization, we've now begun to use something called an inclusive design approach that puts identity right at the center of the conversation, and it begins with who is it that we're serving? Who is it that's in the room with us? How is it that our lived experiences actually influence the decisions that we make? And who else do we need to have at the table, and when we can name who's in the gaps, we've changed now, with equity as a leadership competency, our focus instead of you hiding the gaps, good leadership is being able to name that the gap exists, being able to name who is in the gaps, even if we don't know what to do, because when we name it, we can do something about it, because the expertise exists. And you know, there's a saying nothing about us. Without us, we cannot presume to make and a lot of financial institutions have begun to understand the financial promise of honoring that difference in experiences and identities, and how they approach things. And really, if you think about it in a workplace situation, if you can create an environment where the people who are there feel good about who they are, and they're not constantly navigating. "Are you here to fix the computer? Or did you see what they blew up today? Or all those kinds of conversations? Yep. You know, those people, they're always getting arrested," when they're not having to navigate those realities. Guess what, their productivity is going to go up.

Nam: And I don't want to go back to the school setting. Oh, we only have a couple of minutes. And then we will be taking questions from you. See, I told you it's gonna fly by. This is for Christia or Andrei, whoever wants to take it. What role does bias play in how children are treated in a school setting?

Christia: I think it plays a huge role. I think, again, the idea that it happens in every marginalized identity. So we see it with kids that are immigrant first and second generation immigrants, kids of color. We see that bias is coming from teachers, we see biases coming from peers, we see structural levels of bias so that, you know, in the US kids of color, are attending schools that are getting substantially less funding from government agencies than kids that are predominantly white. So I think at every single level, whether it be structural, whether it be the types of teachers that are wanting to teach in the schools that predominantly have kids of color, we see bias at that level, but we also see it from teachers so even kids are perceiving it from teachers. So we have data for third and fourth grade, Latino immigrant kids, probably Mexican immigrant kids in the Midwest, where I live, we see even kids are recognizing that their teachers are biased and perceiving them to be less academically competent. And then we also see it from peers. So it's not even at the level of microaggressions, we see pretty blatant forms of racial bias and ethnic bias and immigrant focus bias. And then that's not even talking about all of the gender implications that are here. And then the role of intersectionality, I think, is important. And so we see it by, you know, elementary school, kids are even recognizing it themselves.

Nam: And I'm thinking they probably start to police themselves and what they can and cannot do.

Christia: Yeah, and so I think that's where, you know, an argument I make a lot when I talk to parent groups is that kids are often their own worst enemy. So the problem is, I think, parents, you know, the idea of what can parents and teachers do is often they don't realize that kids are holding the levels of stereotypes and biases that they're holding. And they don't realize that kids are enforcing these norms the same way. And so they're not talking to kids. So parents don't talk to their kids about gender stereotypes. Often, they don't talk about race stereotypes with their kids, because they think that if we talk about it, then kids will notice it for the first time. When really we know by the time kids are beginning elementary school or primary school, they're already aware of stereotypes enforcing those restrictions among each other. And so we really have to explicitly talk about it and call it out and point it out when we see it so that kids have a schema or a language for what's a stereotype, or what is bias, as opposed to this is just the way things are meant to be.

Nam: Thank you. Andrei, do you wanna add something? Yeah.

Andrei: The other problem is that bias is really invisible. So parents don't see it in their kids, and they don't also see it in themselves. And the same with teachers. So we know that, for example, if you, if you ask teachers, they, they say things like, oh, yeah, girls can do as well as boys at math, if they try hard enough. And they think that that's a totally fine thing to say, you know, and you actually see that representative, you know, like nationally representative studies of teachers, where if you look at their ratings of boys and girls, their ratings are similar. But because girls actually do better in school, they get better grades. And when you actually control for some of these confounding variables, and you look at boys and girls that are as similar as you can make them. Teachers actually way overestimate boys abilities, they think that boys are innately smart. And if they only apply themselves, they will do much better than the girls. And this is the kind of thing that is still sort of not considered as a bias, right. So when it's hard to know even where to start, if some of the things that are clearly bias aren't even perceived as such, the other the other obstacle here is that when parents become aware of some of these biases, we also have all sorts of intuitions about what we can do to address them that are also off the mark. Right? So you might say, oh, when you hear that people think that let's say, boys are smarter than girls, you might think that going home to your girl and saying, you know, girls are just as smart as boys, is a good thing to say to contradict that stereotype. But it turns out that language works in kind of complicated ways. And if you say boys or girls are just as smart as boys, you're still sending the message that boys are the reference point which girls are, are compared.

Nam: Oh, my gosh, I've done that with my daughter.

Andrei: So I can send you studies to make you feel worse about yourself. That basically, when you tell kids that they not only assume even though on the surface, you're saying that they're equal, they they assume that boys are better, but also the boys are naturally good. And girls have to try hard to be at the same level. So for example, you tell them about like, girls are as good as boys at preaching, and they have no idea what preaching is. And you ask them who's better boys and who's naturally good, boys, right? So. So that's another sort of layer of difficulty here that we have these intuitions about the kinds of things we can do once we become aware of bias, which in and of itself is sort of a process.

Nam: Maybe just acknowledging that we've all lived different lives. So we have different framing, and there's and that's where the bias is. Exactly right. Thank you so much. It's time for questions. Okay, I can actually see that my eyes are so bad. We have a question for anonymous. How do we change patterns or behaviors for boys to support and encourage male allies?

Christia: I felt like this captures a little bit what I was talking about. So I think part of it is that we have to be explicit that boys are the ones that really need to change. I think part of it is educate. I mean, part of the problem is boys are not aware. And again, this is a really heteronormative cisgendered, straight boy, schema, and script, but really everyone is forced to follow along with this script. So, but part of it is helping boys recognize what is harmful behavior. So instead of saying, Well, this is just boys being boys, which is what boys have really been taught almost all of their lives, many of them all of their lives, it is really helping them understand the damage that some of these behaviors cause on others. So what happens when you call another boy, a homophobic slur? So what happens when we're using homophobic language constantly in elementary or an elementary and middle schools? What damage does that do on the people that are listening? What do

Nam: Do they even know what they're saying?

Christia: They don't. So what's frustrating is they're using homophobic language. They're using it as often general insults, it doesn't really seem to be related to sexual prejudice. So it's not as though they have biases against LGBT individuals, although they do with some new data that shows that. But they're still using it as a really just kind of regular part of their language. And you don't see teachers really correcting it. And so but yet, if you are the kid who is a kid who's identifying as LGBTQ, and you're hearing that even if it's not directed at you, it really does enforce this norm, that you're being othered. And that your identity

is used as an insult for other people. And so part of it is having that that conversation and questioning these behaviors that we've just long accepted as normative,

Nam: Even with my kids, sorry, to keep bringing them up. It's just my reference point. My son won't wear pink. And it's not because I've ever said, anything's wrong with pink, he's like, it's a girl color. I'm like, What do you mean, it's a girl color. And then I told him the history of the color pink that it was originally a boy color. And he just looking at me, like, What are you talking about? But if this stuff is starting in school, like early, like, you're talking about, what five, six?

Christia: That stuff starts around preschool

Nam: And if the teachers aren't addressing it, and some parents, maybe that's how they think, or, you know, they have their prejudices? How do we, how do we address it? Like, how do we dismantle that?

Andrei: I don't have a good answer. But I think the strategy that you are adopting, I think, is on the right track, I think some of the most successful intervention programs to combat racism in schools have not just tried to convince kids that racism is a bad thing on sort of theoretical grounds, but have actually tried to give kids an understanding of the history of racism and where it comes from, I think it's often oftentimes when you try to intervene and change behavior, people think that it's efficient to just provide kids with a series of facts, you know, like you're trying to get them to not get colds or the flu, and you're like, wash your hands, but they don't really understand at least a young age why that is, right. In the same way, if you tell them racism is bad, and other kids suffer when you call them racial slurs, you know, some will understand and some won't, but if you actually provide them with a conceptual framework to think about why some kids look different, and behave differently than they might, where these differences come from, that they're not sort of baked into our biology, but they're the product of a long history of discrimination and, you know, like laws that codify some of these status differences. I think those sorts of interventions have proved to be most successful in producing long lasting change in kids behaviors, because they have a conceptual understanding of why it is that they're observing the kinds of things that they hear.

Christia: To tag on to that really quickly is, I think, also another thing is to help foster the actual friendships between boys and girls, the parallel with race, also, the one thing that works with race bias is to encourage friendships across races, because that helps you see other people as individuals and not as these stereotypes instead. And so I think, partly what we allow in kids really early and we allow really throughout is for boys and girls to be really separate. So we you know, we allow boys and girls say, I don't want to play with them, because, you know, boys have the cooties or that kind of idea. And so we allow segregation to occur. And so that then what happens is when we want to come together again, later, when puberty kicks in, we don't have a way in which we can relate to one another as humans and as individuals. Instead, we're just operating off the stereotypes. And I think that's also a way in which we're fostering this difference. It's a really easy way to encourage us coming together, and it's what we can learn really from the race intervention literature.

Nam: Great. Thank you. Let's see another question, please. Can you speak anonymous again, can you speak to the growing evidence that is showing that diversity and inclusion training is actually causing increasing intolerance and tribalism?

Andrei: Well, so I, I will start with a caveat that I'm not an expert in this particular literature. But one of the things that I've noticed is that sort of the way multicultural multiculturalism is the currently sort of dominant and sort of state of the art philosophy for thinking about diversity. That we should value difference, right. But oftentimes, the way this philosophy is implemented in organizational settings just stops at that level, right. So it says we should, we should celebrate difference. And in fact, studies have shown very recent studies, that when you just keep it at that level, that actually reinforces the idea that these differences come from a deep place that we are deeply different by virtue of, you know, the racial groups that we we are part of, or the gender groups that we are part of. And therefore, you take this message that is inherently a positive one, we should value a difference. And unintentionally what you do is you reify boundaries between categories. And I think you know, and I haven't done any research, but I'm sort of on this point, but I'm excited to go in that direction. I think the reason why some of these messages backfire

in this way, as again, that we don't quite provide people with a conceptual understanding of why we are different in the first place, right? Because if you say, you know, like, we all bring differences to the table, and so on. And let's celebrate that your leave people to interpret those differences as they will. And we know from a lot of research that people tend to interpret any group level differences in terms of the inherent attributes of people in that group. So then when you say, We're all different, let's celebrate that. For a significant portion of the people in your organization, what they'll hear is, you know, your genes are different from my genes. But that makes us behave in ways that are different. And therefore, I don't really need to interact with you sure, I can value your difference, but you don't need to be friends. And you're also Stapley the way you are, you're not going to change because it's in your genes, and so on, so forth. So I think supplementing one of the things that might help is to supplement current messages and multiculturalism of valuing difference with a more sort of explanatory way that sort of might combat the naive tendencies of people to interpret difference in inherent terms.

Nam: Could this go back to what you were saying about privilege because we've had a default for so long? And maybe now there's a disruption happening that is making people uncomfortable?

Jeewan: This is a longer conversation than two minute answers. So what I probably would say is that often when you think about how these strategies have been constructed, they haven't been constructed with people at the table at the beginning. It's been constructed by people who have the best solutions. And then after the afterthought, and that's the whole piece about the when I talk about how we end up objectifying groups of people. And the conversations aren't necessarily as straightforward. So yeah, we can talk about differences between, for example, boys and girls. And I would beg to differ that black and indigenous boys have a different experience when it comes to how their gender actually works for or against them, not saying that within spaces that they enjoy male privilege, but race ends up playing a very different because it's always operational. And so what ends up happening is when we talk about, for example, solutions, much like yes, having boys and girls interacting more with each other. And again, I'm being mindful of the binary of the construction. If it's not done in ways that are culturally nuanced, then it becomes colonization all over again. So here I am, the successful person who knows everything and I'm imposing on you what I know you need to do in order and so we've seen it for example, you know the difference, a piece of cloth can make, talk to a Muslim woman who wears hijab or a Sikh man who wears a turban and notions of what will make them successful. In the case of Muslim woman how very well intentioned women in the liberation movement, women's lib movement, we're trying to liberate Muslim woman from their hijabs instead of accepting that as women they could define themselves and their bodies and what they choose to show or not show from their place and their worldview. And so I often worry about these types of approaches. Because they often silence and erase people from the conversation, which is why we have to remember always no community is a monolith. So you can use any, any title, you know, gender, race, sexual orientation, any of those things, you're not going to get an ambassador who can speak for everyone, we speak from our place of experience. So no community is a monolith. And if when we are coming up with the solutions, those people are not at the table, then I'm telling you to begin with, the conversations flawed. And I'm saying this as the superintendent of anti oppression, it doesn't matter what structures you have in place, they will be oppressive. Because though this has been my area of expertise and it's an area that I've devoted, 20 years of my life, I started when I was five, in case you're wondering, but for those of for any structure will end up oppressing some people, because we don't have everyone's lived experiences. And that's why the stance is important, because it brings us back to the work that we have to do on ourselves, and critical questions we need to ask in order to interrupt things that become normative, and then often situates people as the other.

Nam: I think we have one more question. Thank you very much. What are your thoughts about hiring quotas to offset systemic bias? Does it help or hurt underrepresented groups?

Jeewan: I think it's in how it's done. We, we are an Indigenous land. We a lot of times we talk about all the things that are happening. In quote, unquote, third world countries, we don't talk about the fact that the colonizing countries basically plundered the wealth and are now living off of it, leaving those countries in squalor. But right here, drive just an hour north of here to where there's indigenous people, and the situations are horrific. We have duties according to truth and reconciliation calls to action. Apart from that, if we want our organizations to be dynamic, and to be vibrant, and to actually attend to the needs of the

changing demographics of this country and the world, and to be globally competitive. I don't see how we have any choice other than to really do targeted hiring. That doesn't mean, right, because often the minute that you have these conversations, people are like, well, that leaves me I'm not saying and this is not we're hiring people because of the bodies that they live in. But it is about troubling and problematizing the way we think and talk about expertise. For the very reason we're still talking about gender today, because many times expertise that women bring, have been looked at as less than by virtue of the bodies that they're in and the way that society has taught us to view who they are. So if we're looking at improving what our organizations can do, and how we can actually meet the needs of the people that we serve, we have to think about how we interrupt the dynamics that already exists. And that doesn't mean the people who are there bad people, it doesn't mean that they don't bring expertise and our wealth of experience. It means that we're trying just like if you identify a key skill in your organization that you need to be able to do better at That's what I'm talking about is how do we think about it in those ways, and be able to bring in those varied experiences and identities to help us get to the next place.

Nam: That's great. Thank you so much, Andrei, Christia and Juwan. Thank you very much. I think we've run out of time.

Sarah Kaplan: Thanks for listening to another GATE audio production podcast. To continue these conversations, GATE will collaborate with Rotman's TD Management and Data Analytics Lab to host a new conference called Gender Analytics: Possibilities or the (GA:P) conference on April 27, 2023. At the GA:P conference, you'll join more than 25 speakers and hundreds of participants to explore how to use inclusive analytics to generate innovative products, services, and policies. We'll be talking about topics such as decolonizing data and design, inclusive product and service design, new trends in financial services, creating inclusive contracts in legal practice, and revolutionizing sports analytics. Check out thegapconference.com for more information. That's the gap conference dot com. Stay tuned for more GATE audio episodes!