Overcoming Bias to See Family Strengths
Webinar Part 1 of 3

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Objectives of Webinar & Cross – Sites Workshop

Webinar participants will understand:
How a strengths approach is a key strategy for work with families in the child welfare system.

Increase awareness of how implicit bias shapes daily interactions & organizational behaviors.
Objectives (Cont.)

- Three levels of modern day intergenerational legacies of historical trauma: **structural racism** - systems that interferes with recognition of family strengths; **internalized oppression** in the targeted group; and - use of **implicit bias** by bystanders.

- Consider specific areas where bias emerges
Objectives (Cont.)

Identify potential triggers of the spider web of schemas, stereotypes and implicit bias in work with diverse child welfare families.

Identify strategies and actions to mitigate bias at individual and institutional levels.

Learn a 3-step model for identifying diverse family strengths.

Their leadership role as a member of a SBCT in implementing a strengths-based, developmentally informed, approach from diverse perspectives.
A strengths approach is a key strategy for family-centered work.

- Demonstrates value for diverse families.
- Is a core component of the SBCT approach (Hudson, 2016)
- Is the foundation of good casework practice.
- Partners with families in making decisions, setting goals, and achieving desired outcomes.
- It is founded on the principle of communicating openly and honestly with families in a way that supports disclosure of culture, family dynamics, and personal experiences in order to meet the individual needs of every family and every child. (Child Welfare Gateway 2014).
- Promotes the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families in the child welfare system.

What are the barriers to identifying a families strengths?
Family Strengths

A powerful tool for healing the wounds of child abuse & neglect.
Barrier: Our Perception

- We tend to categorize people using limited pieces of information and then act on this information, even though most of our inferences have not been confirmed.

- This process is called **making perceptual inferences** since we are required to diagnose our situation and make rapid inferences about it from scanty clues.
Perception

Two residents wade through chest-deep water after finding bread and soda from a local grocery store after Hurricane Katrina came through the area in New Orleans, Louisiana. (AFP/Getty Images/Chris Graythen)

Associated Press

A young man walks through chest deep flood water after looting a grocery store in New Orleans on Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2005. Flood waters continue to rise in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina did extensive damage when it
What is Unconscious Bias?

- Social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own consciousness
- Patterns based on small bits of information
- Often incompatible with our conscious values
Definitions

- **Unconscious**
  Lacking awareness

- **Bias**
  A preference or inclination that inhibits impartiality
We act with bias

- Also called schemas, cognitive biases, stereotypes, default thinking.
- Examples: women & nurturing, men & competition, African American males & aggression, LGBT parent & weakness.
Biases can be implicit

• We are not aware we hold particular associations – most develop early in life.
• Exposure to a stimulus activates bias; even when we disapprove of the stereotype/are committed to egalitarian views (Uhlmann & Cohen, 2007).
• Implicit associations are measurable, predict a wide range of behavior (Greenwald & Krieger, 2001).
About Hidden Bias

- Scientific research has demonstrated that biases thought to be absent or extinguished remains as “mental residue” in most of us. Studies show people can be consciously committed to egalitarianism, and deliberately work to behave without prejudice, yet still possess hidden negative prejudices or stereotypes.

- So even though we believe we see and treat people as equals, hidden biases may still influence our perceptions and actions.

Source: Tolerance.Org
Bias & Prejudice...

It’s in the air we breathe
Who has implicit biases?
The Public Health Model of Historical Trauma

Historical Trauma experience (Sotero, 2004; Lewis, et al, 2013)

Targeted group

Bystanders

- Internalized Oppression
- Parent-Child Relationships
- Secondary Traumatic Stress
- Unrecognized Privilege

Historical Trauma Response

Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma
Historical Legacy of Trauma

- Implicit Bias
- Internalized Oppression
- Stereotypes
- Institutional and Structural Racism
Unconscious stereotypes of Blacks: Modern Legacies from Slavery
Historical & Modern Images of Native Americans that justify when ‘Otherness’
Societal Images justify Dominance & targeting the ‘other’ for violence
Subtle messages communicated by stereotypes of the ‘Other’

What messages are communicated in this ‘light-hearted’ cartoon of 2002?
The Stereotyped- NAMES game

Unrecognized stereotypes may result in ‘othering’ and experienced as microaggressions. We are socialized as BYSTANDERS to accept ‘Othering’.

• Each PERSON generates a list of stereotypes of Family NAMES based on information presented.

Why don’t they won’t participate in Family conferences? List stereotyped reasons.

• LeQuan, Shaniqua
• Jesus, Bubba, Maria, JoEllen
• Hiriko, Mohammed, Eve (Lesbian).
Stereotypes

Explicit and

Conscious, intentional, subject to logic.
Stereotypes

Explicit and Implicit

Conscious, intentional, subject to logic.

Unconscious, automatic, logic irrelevant.
Stereotypes

Explicit and Implicit

Conscious, intentional, subject to logic.

Gender and STEM
Feelings

Condry & Condry, 1976
Feelings

Debbie

Danny

Condry & Condry, 1976
Feelings

Debbie

“Afraid”

Danny

“Angry”

Condry & Condry, 1976
How do these biases translate into the real world?
Evidence from research on bias in Day Care Centers

- Findings from new study from Yale University shows evidence of racial bias in day care centers expulsion rates.
- African American male toddlers more likely to be expelled from Day Care.
“Organizational Truths” – CPS

“Truth does not happen, it just is” (Hopi Proverb)
Bias in Child Welfare

Voices of Truth: Protecting Mothers from Bias in the Child Welfare System. (3:46)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d3Aouc3EvRw

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Bias: Child Welfare Court Teams

- Wishful thinking – lack of bias awareness
- Lack of clear standards, open criteria
- Lack of accountability for actions & feedback
- Lack of transparency
- We are rushed, distracted, stressed in deciding
- Low effort processing (Dovidio, 2001; Casey et al., 2012)
How Stereotypes Hurt and Silence

Client
• Stressed
• Challenged

Home Visitor
• Eager
• Educated
• Equipped
How Stereotypes Hurt and Silence

Client

Home Visitor
How Stereotypes Hurt and Silence

STEREOTYPES KICK IN

Client

Home Visitor
How Stereotypes Hurt and Silence

Client  Home Visitor

INVISIBLE SILENCE

Or

Client  Home Visitor

PARTNERSHIP
How stereotypes contribute to Racial Disparities in foster care

A child welfare system ‘truth’:

*Interdisciplinary ‘helpers’ at every point along the child welfare continuum, may operate from a position of privilege and unconscious stereotypes about Blacks and children of color.*
Eliminating Bias

Once we become aware we have biases and “own” them, we have the power to change our mind.
HOW TO RE-TRAIN OUR BRAINS

The good news! Neuroplasticity! Evidence from research on long-term reduction in implicit bias. (Divine, et al 2012)
How do we re-train our brains?

By treating Bias like a Bad Habit!
Research found dramatic results in reducing bias through a 12-week intervention that focused on:

1) **Awareness** of implicit bias - Unrecognized legacies of privilege & stereotypes
2) **Concern** about the effects of that bias –
3) The **application of strategies** to reduce bias.
3- Step Model
Affirmative Introspection

- Awareness of yourself
- Understanding your values, passions, preferences and world views
- Acknowledging the biases and assumptions you have that influence your attitudes

Source: Gardenswartz and Rowe EIDI
Step #1: Individual

- Enhance internal motivation to reduce bias
  - Recognize unconscious bias (IAT)
  - Self-discovery within a non-threatening, private context
- Increase the understanding about the psychological basis of bias
  - Normal aspect of human cognition
- Improve ability to build partnerships with others
  - Finding a common ground
- Enhanced empathy
  - Perspective taking
  - Role play-team discussions

Burgess et al. 2007
Step #2: Undoing Cobwebs of Bias & Stereotypes to see family strengths

- Increase conscious awareness of bias and how bias leads to overlooking talent
- Develop more explicit criteria for interactions (less ambiguity) and accountability up the decision ladder.
- Alter SBCT policies and practices
Step #3: Goal Setting & commitment to break the habit of bias

• Bias in assessment of family strengths?
• Bias in involvement of father?
• Bias in recognition of child needs? (Automatically ADHD diagnosis?)
• Bias based on appearance or # of children
• Bias based on Voice and Accent:
Brainstorm and share

• Consider the type of problem you are trying to address at your site.
• List different strengths-based strategies to address that problem.
Take Home

1. Implicit gender & racial bias affects Disparities in Child Welfare outcomes
2. Humility
3. Implicit biases can change
4. Self-concepts and environments matter

To Do

1. Education, measurement and evaluation.
What can be done?

- http://fullpreviewbias.instapage.com/?submission=70541903
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More Ideas: Use the IAT

• Project Implicit- non-profit org / international collaboration between researchers interested in implicit social cognition - thoughts and feelings outside of conscious awareness and control

• Founded in 1998 by three scientists – Tony Greenwald (University of Washington), Mahzarin Banaji (Harvard University), and Brian Nosek (University of Virginia)

• Goal - educate the public about implicit social cognition & provide a “virtual laboratory” collecting data on the Internet.

• Project Implicit also provides consulting, education, and training services on implicit bias, diversity and inclusion, leadership, applying science to practice, and innovation.

• For more information about the Project Implicit research group, see https://www.projectimplicit.net
Data: What is Your Score on Unconscious Bias?

• Implicit Association Test (IAT)  
  http://implicit.harvard.edu/

• Biases and associations exist in most people (over 75%) – 15 years of research, more than 10 million taken IAT

• Maps to existing social hierarchies and stereotypes (Nosek, 2009)
  – Favor men, Whites, youth, heterosexuals, and physically able
  – Males = Science; Females = Liberal Arts
Example

• associate a list of positive words (pretty, sweet, calm) with flowers
Pretty
Calm
Sweet
Next

• associate a list of negative words (ugly, scary, freaky) with a list of insect names.

Most of us find this initial task easy.
But if we reverse it?
Ugly

Scary

Freaky
• By measuring reaction times in tests like these, Greenwald postulated that scientists are able to measure your association of positive words with flowers and negative words with insects.

• We call this positive association a preference and the negative association a bias.
HOMEWORK – TAKE THE IAT TEST! What’s your score?

• BRING YOUR IMPLICIT BIAS SCORE TO CROSS SITES WORKSHOP.

• WRITE DOWN A GOAL FOR CHANGE OF YOUR SCORE.

• WE WILL WORK ON CASE SCENARIOS USING THE MODEL WE LEARNED TODAY.
Questions, comments, insights?

Take other Implicit Associations Tests Online:
https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/
Finding Family Strengths
The most powerful tool for healing the wounds of child abuse & neglect.

“Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice. Justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love.” Martin Luther King, Jr. (1967)
Resources

Family Engagement: A web-based practice toolkit, developed by the National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections:  
www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/fewpt/index.htm

Implicit Bias – how it effects us and how we push through TED talk (16:12)  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fr8G7MtRNlk

Unpacking and transforming your biases for a better community TED talk (9:17)  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FU4CDFFy77g