Implicit Bias

Conversation Guide

www.ProjectABC-LA.org
Implicit Bias is...

Conversations around bias, racism, discrimination, and prejudice are growing. And often, all of these very nuanced terms are used interchangeably. For the purpose of this conversation, and for the benefit of the young children we serve, this guide will focus on Implicit Bias and how young children experience, learn and are impacted by Implicit Bias.

As human beings, our brains are constantly processing an enormous amount of information, second by second. It is natural for the human brain to automatically sort or categorize things, places, ideas, and even people and to form opinions as to how to interact with these items based on previous experience. This automatic “short-cut” method of making sense of the world is extremely fast, but can also lead to errors in judgment, most significantly when it comes to sorting people. *Without being aware of it, this erroneous categorization can lead to the formation of implicit biases, often influencing our decisions and impacting lives; which differs from explicit or overt beliefs and actions.*

Though we anticipate that group participants will bring in other terms, our goal is to explore the internal thoughts, the unconscious associations that unknowingly guide our actions. If your group wants to delve deeper into Implicit Bias check out [Peanut Butter, Jelly and Racism](#) from the New York Times and other materials in the Resources and Research section of this guide.

Through the Eyes of a Child

Adult biases can have lifelong implications for young children. CONVERSATION is a powerful tool to address Implicit Bias. However, this can be perceived as a challenging topic to address. Project ABC, an Early Childhood System of Care Community, developed this video as an instrument to spark dialogue among child-serving professionals in order to improve the long-term outcomes for young children of color who are suspended/expelled from preschool more frequently, have more referrals to child welfare, and are in “out of home” placements with open child welfare cases longer than other populations. You can find links to current data in the Resources and Research section of this guide.

Though the video is geared toward Early Childhood practitioners, it is applicable to a wide range of service providers. Our goal is for all service providers serving children 0-5 to join the conversation and come to the realization that—even on our best days—if we are not mindful of our internal thought process and our biases, we make decisions that negatively impact our work. Keeping these biases in mind will help us better support young children and their families and interrupt the “preschool to prison pipeline”. 
Before the Conversation

We found greatest success when this video is viewed in its entirety. Remember, this video is a conversation starter; it is intended to spark further discussion. **We recommend a minimum of 30 minutes for any conversation:** 5 minutes for introduction and group agreements, 5 minutes of viewing, at least 15 minutes of discussion and 5 minutes for closure.

**Facilitator Preparation**
- View the video and explore support materials in advance. You are not expected to be the subject-matter expert, but you should have a general familiarity with the topic and related issues.
- Recognize that everyone, including you, will have a personal (and sometimes emotional) response to the story. Anticipate how you will care for yourself and others.
- Arrange a physical setting and context that encourages collaborative conversation and curiosity. Use “we” language to establish a sense of “us” throughout your introduction.
- Have resources on hand, including manipulatives, doodling supplies and journals to support different listening styles and personal reflection.
- Consider starting with an “ice-breaker” activity that will establish some commonality among participants.

**When working with a Co-Facilitator**
- If possible, watch the video together
- Review format and structure of the conversation
- Identify common goals and purpose for conversation
- Determine roles, order and time frames (e.g., lead, scribe, timekeeper)

**The Conversation**

The facilitator will play a key role in making the conversation relevant to your audience and purposeful. Observe participant reactions as they view the film in order to gauge where/how to start the discussion when the video ends. Notice what you notice and regulate yourself. Then ask the group:

- What did you notice in the video?
- What is the experience of the child?
- In which moments could implicit bias have influenced behaviors or decisions about this child?
- Were there any moments in the video that you need clarity on or would like to discuss?
It’s not just black and white! Implicit bias exists in and impacts ALL of us in different ways.

- **Do you see yourself in this story?**
  - How is the experience of bias similar or different for people of various races or ethnic backgrounds? How is the experience of bias different for other perceived differences?
  - How have your experiences of bias been different based on your background, environment or context?

- **How do your biases impact others?**
  - How does this child’s experience of bias impact his world view?
  - How does the child’s meaning-making change if the bias he experiences is implicit vs. explicit?
  - What biases were you taught about other ethnicities or cultures?
  - When did you become aware of your biases?

**What you do next matters**

- **What is your response to the service provider’s apology?**
  - Why is s/he apologizing? Is there anything else s/he could have said?

- **What can we do to reduce Implicit Bias?**
  - How do we encourage interaction with people of different cultures?
  - How do we encourage a culture of curiosity and commonality with people of different backgrounds?

- **How can we keep the conversation going?**
  - How do we talk about bias and equity with kids?
  - What do our conversations with adults teach our children?

- **How will this conversation impact your interactions with those you serve going forward?**

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*You can’t go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending.*

– C.S. Lewis

#RelationshipsMatter
Strategies for Addressing Implicit Bias:

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation
A problem-solving and capacity-building intervention implemented within a collaborative relationship between a professional consultant with mental health expertise and one or more caregivers, typically an early care and education provider and/or family member. Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation aims to build the capacity (improve the ability) of staff, families, programs, and systems to prevent, identify, treat and reduce the impact of mental health problems among children from birth to age 6 and their families. (Adapted from Cohen & Kaufmann, 2000) [www.ecmhc.org](http://www.ecmhc.org) ECMHC is recommended by SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) as a tool for addressing implicit bias and reducing suspension and expulsion rates in early childhood settings.

Reflective Practice
Reflection is a tool that enhances a professional’s capacity to recognize the mental states — feelings, thoughts, and intentions — in themselves and others, and link mental states to behavior. [www.wiaimh.org](http://www.wiaimh.org)

Self-Awareness
Observe yourself when you are interacting with people from different groups. Notice when your reactions, choices, behaviors and decisions are based on stereotypes and generalizations or biases. Ask people from different groups for feedback on their experience of interacting with you.

Specific Training
Initiating this conversation may allow you to identify specific areas of training that would support your service delivery or community building goals. You can identify trainers in your area who can teach anti-bias, culturally responsive trainings that can be tailored to your group or community.

Project ABC:
Project ABC is designed to create change at the beginning of children’s lives. Even as infants and toddlers, children need support to optimize their healthy social and emotional development. Our goal at Project ABC is to ensure that families, professionals and community organizations work together to support every child’s development through awareness of the central role that relationships play in shaping healthy lives.

A system of care is a coordinated network of community-based resources that integrates health, education, social and legal services that are organized to meet the mental health needs of very young children. Families work in partnership with organizations to design mental health services and supports that are effective, that build on the strengths of individuals, and that address each person’s cultural and linguistic needs.

Project ABC is working to develop a coordinated community network of trained service providers, representing multiple sectors, involved with very young children and their families. [www.ProjectABC-LA.org](http://www.ProjectABC-LA.org)

For additional options to support young children visit:
- Center for the Developing Child: developingchild.harvard.edu
- Child Trauma Academy: childtrauma.org
- First 5 Los Angeles: First5la.org
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network: NCTSN.org
- Project ABC: ProjectABC-LA.org
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: SAMHSA.gov/children
Resources & Research
This is not an exhaustive list; it is a place to start the conversation.

**Child Welfare Statistics**
California Child Welfare Indicators Project (CCWIP):
http://cssr.berkeley.edu/cwscmsreports/cssrFavorites/Default?preSetId=4&cntyId=0

Department of Children and Family Services Fact Sheets: http://dcfs.co.la.ca.us/aboutus/factsheets.html

**Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation**
The National Center for Effective Mental Health Consultation (CEMHC) addresses the needs of Early Head Start/Head Start (E/HS) staff and families for practical guidance on effective ways to promote young children’s social and emotional development and reduce challenging behaviors. Their Core Competencies for effective ECMHC consultation they include addressing implicit bias to promote equity in Early Childhood settings.
https://www.ecmhc.org

**Walter Gilliam, PhD**
Dr. Gilliam has conducted extensive research involving early childhood education and the impact of implicit bias, ways to improve the quality and mental health of prekindergarten and childcare services, early childhood mental health consultation, early childhood expulsions and suspensions and early childhood education on school readiness.


**Indigo Cultural Center:**
Promote strong, nurturing families and healthy child development through research, training, facilitating and convening. http://indigoculturalcenter.org

**New York times:**
“Who, Me? Biased?” 25 Mini-Films for Exploring Race, Bias and Identity With Students which includes a two-minute video that highlights how we make associations within our social context called **Peanut Butter, Jelly and Racism**.

**Perception Institute:**
Perception Institute is a consortium of researchers, advocates, and strategists who translate cutting edge mind science research on race, gender, ethnic, and other identities into solutions that reduce bias and discrimination and promote belonging. https://perception.org/research/implicit-bias

**Project Implicit:**
Project Implicit is where you can take your own Implicit Bias test online. Project Bias is a non-profit organization and international collaboration between researchers who are interested in implicit social cognition - thoughts and feelings outside of conscious awareness and control. The goal of the organization is to educate the public about hidden biases and to provide a “virtual laboratory” for collecting data on the Internet. https://Projectimplicit.com

**Dr. Bryant Marks:**
“The Hidden Biases of Good People: Implications for Social Workers and the Populations They Serve”
Glossary
from RacialEquityTools.org

This is not an exhaustive list; it is a place to start the conversation.

**Discrimination**
The unequal treatment of members of various groups based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion and other categories. *Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative. A Community Builder's Tool Kit.*

**Institutional Racism**
Institutional racism refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. The institutional policies may never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for whites and oppression and disadvantage for people from groups classified as people of color. *Flipping the Script: White Privilege and Community Building. Maggie Potapchuk, Sally Leiderman, Donna Bivens and Barbara Major. 2005.*

**Internalized Racism**
Internalized racism is the situation that occurs in a racist system when a racial group oppressed by racism supports the supremacy and dominance of the dominating group by maintaining or participating in the set of attitudes, behaviors, social structures and ideologies that undergird the dominating group’s power. *Racialequitytools.org Glossary - MP Associates and Center for Assessment and Policy Development, 2013*

**Prejudice**
A prejudgment or unjustifiable, and usually negative, attitude of one type of individual or groups toward another group and its members.

Such negative attitudes are typically based on unsupported generalizations (or stereotypes) that deny the right of individual members of certain groups to be recognized and treated as individuals with individual characteristics. *Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative. A Community Builder’s Tool Kit.*

**Privilege**
Unearned social power accorded by the formal and informal institutions of society to ALL members of a dominant group (e.g. white privilege, male privilege, etc.). Privilege is usually invisible to those who have it because we’re taught not to see it, but nevertheless it puts them at an advantage over those who do not have it. *Colors of Resistance Archive Accessed June 28, 2013.*

**Racism**
For purposes of this site, we want users to know we are using the term “racism” specifically to refer to individual, cultural, institutional and systemic ways by which differential consequences are created for groups historically or currently defined as white being advantaged, and groups historically or currently defined as non-white (African, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, etc.) as disadvantaged. *www.racialequitytools.org*