

# We All Have Bias

*It's What We Do with It That Matters*



**October 20-21, 2022**  
**In-Person & Virtual**

**Colleen Gibley-Reed, MSW, LCSW**  
**(she/her)**  
*Kempe Center for the Prevention and  
Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect*

# Agenda



- Opening remarks
- Setting the stage
- The basics about bias
- From unconscious to conscious

# Setting the Stage

# OUR MEETING IS HELD ON NATIVE LAND

Acknowledgment is a simple, powerful way of showing respect and a step toward correcting the stories and practices that erase Indigenous people's history and culture and toward inviting and honoring the truth.

Acknowledgment is a critical public intervention, a necessary step toward honoring Native communities and enacting the much larger project of decolonization and reconciliation. Join me in adopting, calling for, and spreading this practice.

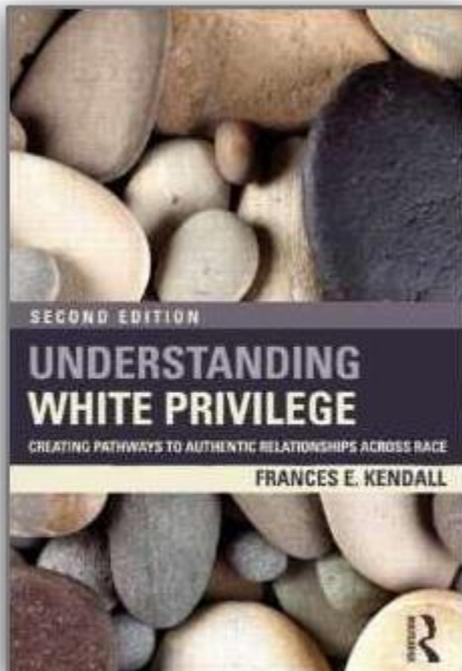
[USDAC.US/NATIVE LAND](https://usdac.us/nativeland)



# My Commitment to This Work

***“We must learn to become comfortable with the uncomfortable and uncomfortable with the too comfortable.”***

- David Tulin



Source: Kendall (2012)

# Community Agreements



Choose authenticity over comfort



Embrace messiness and kindness



Practice personal and group accountability



Be aware of equity of voice



Listen with the same passion with which you want to be heard



Honor subjectivity versus objectivity



Accept non-closure

Source: ABA Center on Children and the Law (2020)

# Trigger Warning

*Today's discussion may be trauma evoking for those who identify as members of historically marginalized groups as we talk about bias. This may call something up in you and I encourage you to take care of yourself.*

# Icebreaker Questions

# Solve the Following Problem

A father and son were involved in a car accident in which the father was killed, and the son was seriously injured. The father was pronounced dead at the scene of the accident and his body was taken to a local morgue. The son was taken by ambulance to a nearby hospital and was immediately wheeled into an emergency operating room. A surgeon was called. Upon arrival and seeing the patient, the attending surgeon exclaimed “Oh my God, it’s my son!” Can you explain this?

Adapted from Pendry, Driscoll, & Field (2007)

Source: Include-Empower.com (2018)

*True or false?*

**“You never get a second chance to make a first impression.”**

# The Basics About Bias

# What is Implicit Bias?

Attitudes towards people or associated stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.

Often refer to **key social identity characteristics**, such as age, disability, gender, race, and religion.

These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are **activated involuntarily** and without our awareness or intentional control.

Source: Kirwan Institute (2018)

# What is Implicit Bias? (con't)

- Implicit bias operates **outside of our conscious** awareness.
- Implicit bias is unconscious, automatic, and relies on associations that we **form over time**.
- We can form bias toward groups of people **based on what we see** in the media, our background, and experiences.
- Our biases reflect **how we internalize messages** about our society rather than our intent. Nevertheless, we can still act on our biases in ways that can harm others.

Source: Kirwan Institute (2018)

# Implications of Unconscious Bias

- We tend to see an individual as a **representation of a particular group**, rather than as an individual.
- We tend to favor, prefer, and associate positive characteristics with **members of the group to which we belong**.
- We tend to associate negative characteristics with or disfavor members of **groups to which we do not belong**.

*These tendencies are the foundation of stereotyping, prejudice and, ultimately, may result in discriminatory decisions or actions, even if those decisions or actions might not be what we consciously intend or acknowledge.*

Source: Minnesota Council of Nonprofits (2019)

# TEDTalk: How to Overcome Our Biases? Walk Boldly Toward Them



*“Biases are the stories we make up about people before we know who they actually are.” - Vernā Myers*

Source: Myers (2014)

# Reflection Questions

- *What are your reactions to the TEDTalk? What resonated with you and why?*
- *Do you see racism and implicit bias in yourself? In others? How does it show up?*
- *How about biases toward other groups (women, LGBTQ+ people, individuals with disabilities, etc.)?*
- *Do you have any personal experiences with encountering bias (positive or negative, conscious or unconscious) based on race? What about other identities?*

Source: The Verna Myers Company (2018)

# From Unconscious to Conscious

# From Unconscious to Conscious: Strategies to Reduce Bias

Unconscious bias is like a habit that can be reduced through a combination of:

- Awareness;
- Concern about the effects of that bias; and
- Application of strategies to reduce bias.

Source: Minnesota Council of Nonprofits (2019)

# Strategy #1 to Reduce Bias: Build Awareness

The first step is to acknowledge that we all have unconscious biases.

Take the **Project Implicit IAT** – a web-based test that measures the strength of associations between concepts and evaluations.

Participate in **trainings** and other **educational programs** aimed at raising awareness about implicit biases and their impact.

Build **positive new relationships** with individual members of groups outside your own.

Consider the **attributes of the individual** apart from their group and focus on what you have in common.

Source: Minnesota Council of Nonprofits (2019)

# Implicit Association Test

- To understand how biases operate within the child welfare system, it is important for individuals operating within the system to understand the nature of their own biases.
- Implicit association tests measure attitudes and beliefs that people may be unaware of.
- You can explore your own biases by taking a free test on the Project Implicit website:  
<https://implicit.harvard.edu/>



Source: Minnesota Council of Nonprofits (2019)

# Common Reactions to the IAT

## DISBELIEF

- It is common for people whose results conflict with their worldview to experience a level of disbelief and defensiveness about their results.

## DISREGARD

- Perhaps you're questioning whether or not your score would be different if you're right or left-handed? Or maybe you're thinking that it may be possible to somehow outsmart the test? If so, rest assured that you are not the first person to have these thoughts.

## ACCEPTANCE

- For some, it is relatively easy to come to a place of acceptance of their results.

## DISCOMFORT

- Some individuals feeling discomfort may accept the accuracy of their IAT results but are upset or uncomfortable with their results. Uneasiness with one's results can lead to reflection, questioning, and/or uncertainty.

## DISTRESS

- Feelings of distress come with elevated concern with one's results, sparking reflection on personal responsibility. This can sometimes manifest through embarrassment, guilt, shame, and/or a desire for action.

Source: Kirwan Institute (n.d.)

# Strategy #2 to Reduce Bias: Understand Effects

- Take in a different perspective of the person. Try to **understand from their perspective** what they encounter and what adaptive techniques they might use to function successfully.
- **Hold yourself responsible.** Do not dismiss your accountability simply because implicit biases are triggered automatically without our conscious awareness.
- Remind yourself that an **inclusive culture** leads to better buy-in, stimulates creativity, and helps find solutions that benefits all.

Source: Minnesota Council of Nonprofits (2019)

# Strategy #3 to Reduce Bias: Apply Strategies to Reduce and Interrupt

- **Practice Individuation** – take the time to learn about people who you perceive to be different than you.
- **Practice counter-stereotypic imaging** – do a media audit, counter negative stereotypes of under-represented and marginalized groups
- **Improve decision making process**
  - “Blind” yourself so you make decisions based on relevant information
  - Use checklists to slow down decision making and encourage deliberate thinking
- **Build new mental associations** and these interventions must be consistently and continuously applied.

Source: Minnesota Council of Nonprofits (2019)

# For Further Learning

# For Further Learning

- [Article](#): Beating bias: Debiasing strategies for everyday decisions
- [NCWII Article](#): Biases
- [Article](#): How to identify and overcome your implicit biases
- [Article](#): Prejudiced thoughts run through all our minds – the key word is what we do with them
- [Article](#): Unconscious bias activities
- [Article](#): Unconscious/implicit bias exercise
- [Radio program](#): Implicit biases: Understanding our own beliefs
- [TEDTalk](#): We all have implicit biases. So, what can we do about it?

# For Further Learning

- [Video](#): An introduction to unconscious bias
- [UCLA Resource hub](#): Implicit bias
- [MANP Resource hub](#): Implicit bias
- [Website](#): Test yourself for hidden bias
- [Website](#): Equity Literacy Institute
- [Website](#): The SPACE2 model of mindful inclusion: Strategies for managing unconscious bias
- [AFCARS data](#): Disproportionality rates for children of color in foster care dashboard
- [Federal data](#): Child Maltreatment Report 2020

# For Further Learning

- [Online training](#): Family assessment: Understanding bias
- [Online workshop](#): inSIGHT: A workshop on implicit bias for child protection caseworkers
- [Unconscious Bias Training](#) with Vernā Myers
- [Resources from the Child Welfare Information Gateway](#): Strategies for reducing inequity: Addressing bias
- [Article](#): Child welfare practice to address racial disproportionality and disparity.

# References

## References

- ABA Center on Children and the Law. (2020). *A conversation about the manifestation of white supremacy in the institution of child welfare, level 1* [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EUBuOCVhUZI>.
- Include-Empower.com. (2018). “A-ha” activities for unconscious bias training. Retrieved from <https://cultureplusconsulting.com/2018/08/16/a-ha-activities-for-unconscious-bias-training/>.
- Kendall, F. (2012). *Understanding white privilege: Cultivating pathways to authentic relationships across race*. Routledge.
- Kirwan Institute. (n.d.). Making sense of your IAT results. Retrieved from <https://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/sites/default/files/pdf/iat-results.pdf>.
- Minnesota Council of Nonprofits. (2019). Consciously addressing unconscious bias. Retrieved from [https://www.minnesotanonprofits.org/docs/default-source/download-centers/19-essentials/unconscious-bias.pdf?sfvrsn=eade81ea\\_2](https://www.minnesotanonprofits.org/docs/default-source/download-centers/19-essentials/unconscious-bias.pdf?sfvrsn=eade81ea_2).
- Myers, V. (2014, November). *How to overcome our biases? Walk boldly toward them*. [Video]. TEDxBeaconStreet. Retrieved from [https://www.ted.com/talks/verna\\_myers\\_how\\_to\\_overcome\\_our\\_biases\\_walk\\_boldly\\_toward\\_them](https://www.ted.com/talks/verna_myers_how_to_overcome_our_biases_walk_boldly_toward_them).
- The Verna Myers Company. (2018). Verna Myers TEDTalk back discussion questions. Retrieved from <http://www.ywboston.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/18.03.11-Vern%C4%81-Myers-TED-Talk-Back-Discussion-Questions.pdf>.