Implicit Bias and its Impact in the Mental Health Service Space

EXPLORING CONCEPTS AND EXPERIENCES (PART I)
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Introductions

NAME, ORGANIZATION

DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION DO ANY WORK OR TRAINING TO ADDRESS IMPLICIT BIAS?
Establish Ground Rules
What is implicit bias?

• In 1995, Anthony Greewald and M.R. Benaji hypothesized that our social behavior was not entirely under our control.

• According to their study, the concept of *unconscious bias* (*hidden bias* or *implicit bias*) suggests that:

  “much of our social behavior is driven by learned stereotypes that operate automatically – and therefore unconsciously– when we interact with other people.”

What is implicit bias?

**implicit bias**: The attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions and decisions in an unconscious manner.

- Activated involuntarily, without awareness or intentional control.
- Can be either positive or negative.
- Everyone is susceptible.

Dual Systems Theory

Implicit bias is a product of System 1 thinking. We act on our implicit biases without awareness; thus they can undermine our true intentions.

To compare System 1 and 2 thinking, think of how we process simple addition like 2+2 vs. a complex algebraic equation that requires conscious thinking and effort to solve.

Implicit Bias Characteristics

- Implicit biases are robust and pervasive.
- Implicit and explicit biases are related but distinct mental constructs.
- Implicit associations do not necessarily align with our declared beliefs.
- We generally hold implicit biases that favor our own in group.
- Implicit biases have real world affects on our behaviors.
- Implicit biases are malleable, therefore can be unlearned.

Discriminatory Hiring Practices

Minorities Who 'Whiten' Job Resumes Get More Interviews

• Companies are more than twice as likely to call minority applicants for interviews if they submit whitened resumes (not revealing race).

• Asians removed their race because employers might be concerned about a possible language barrier. African Americans toned down mentions of race, such as dropping the word “black” from a membership in a professional society for black engineers.

Discriminatory Hiring Practices

• Bias is hardwired into the hiring system and prejudice is clouding the screening of qualified applicants.

• “Organizations can now see very clearly that this is why they are not meeting their diversity goals. They can’t just put a message on recruitment ads and be done. They need to follow through with a clear structure and staff training. They need to make goals and then continually evaluate the outcome in order to meet those goals.

Bias in Mental Health

• Black people living below the poverty line experience a disproportionate amount of serious psychological distress compared to their white counterparts.
• In 2012, despite the fact that black people were 20% more likely to report symptoms associated with psychological distress, white people were twice as likely to treat similar symptoms with prescription anti-depressants.
• Even when black people did seek professional help, psychotherapists were less likely to actually offer assistance.

Exercise – Can you spot your own biases?

| What were messages or stereotypes you would hear about other groups from your family or community? | How did that influence your beliefs and values? | How did that inform your actions and behaviors? |
Share with a partner

- Where do we get messages that influence our beliefs about other people/groups (outside of our family)?
- How does implicit bias on an individual or community level influence discrimination (and structural racism) at an organizational or systems level?
Implicit Association Test

implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html
IAT: Understanding the Tool

• A computerized, timed dual categorization task that measures implicit preferences by bypassing conscious processing
• A collaborative investigation effort between researchers at Harvard University, University of Virginia, and University of Washington
• Examines thoughts and feelings that exist either outside of conscious awareness or conscious control
**Age** ('Young - Old' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to distinguish old from young faces. This test often indicates that Americans have automatic preference for young over old.

**Sexuality** ('Gay - Straight' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to distinguish words and symbols representing gay and straight people. It often reveals an automatic preference for straight relative to gay people.

**Weapons** ('Weapons - Harmless Objects' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to recognize White and Black faces, and images of weapons or harmless objects.

**Gender - Career**. This IAT often reveals a relative link between family and females and between career and males.

**Arab-Muslim** ('Arab Muslim - Other People' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to distinguish names that are likely to belong to Arab-Muslims versus people of other nationalities or religions.

**Asian American** ('Asian - European American' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to recognize White and Asian-American faces, and images of places that are either American or Foreign in origin.

**Weight** ('Fat - Thin' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to distinguish faces of people who are obese and people who are thin. It often reveals an automatic preference for thin people relative to fat people.

**Race** ('Black - White' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to distinguish faces of European and African origin. It indicates that most Americans have an automatic preference for white over black.

**Skin-tone** ('Light Skin - Dark Skin' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to recognize light and dark-skinned faces. It often reveals an automatic preference for light-skin relative to dark-skin.

**Gender - Science**. This IAT often reveals a relative link between liberal arts and females and between science and males.

**Presidents** ('Presidential Popularity' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to recognize photos of Donald Trump and one or more previous presidents.

**Native American** ('Native - White American' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to recognize White and Native American faces in either classic or modern dress, and the names of places that are either American or Foreign in origin.

**Religion** ('Religions' IAT). This IAT requires some familiarity with religious terms from various world religions.

**Disability** ('Disabled - Abled' IAT). This IAT requires the ability to recognize symbols representing able and disabled individuals.
Small Groups

• How does implicit bias show up in your daily life?
• How does it show up at work?
What You Can Do To Fight Bias at Work

Use – or establish – policies.

Interrupt early.

Go up the ladder.

Band together.

Don’t laugh.

Interrupt the laughter.
What to Expect in the Next Workshop