Relationship-based Practice Week

BASW England 80-20 Campaign in partnership with University of Sussex

Examining anti-racist direct practice in children and families social work

Wednesday 2nd December 2020
12:00pm – 13.00pm

#8020campaign

links to all resources will be shared in the chat box
Relationship-based Practice Week
BASW England 80-20 Campaign in partnership with University of Sussex

Welcome

We will start soon

Please mute yourselves if you are not speaking

You are invited to keep your cameras on

This event is being recorded

Our hashtag is #8020campaign
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Chair
Gavin Moorghen

Panelists
Shantel Thomas
Rebecca Olayinka
Omar Mohamed

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Anti-Racist Social Work: A Critical Conversation and Call for Change – December 2020
Learning Outcomes:

• Consider the extent to which racism affects outcomes for children and families
• Reflect on the need to take an anti-racist approach to practice
• Learn ways to improve your practice and outcomes for children and families
Shantel Thomas MA, AFHEA, PgCert, BA (Hons)

Senior Lecturer in Social Work and BASW Children and Families Group Member

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Risk and safety: a strengths-based perspective in working with black families when there are safeguarding concerns

Claudia Bernard and Shantel Thomas

Introduction

Engaging black families in child protection can pose a number of challenges for social workers when there are concerns about child abuse and neglect. It is widely recognised that the effective engagement of parents is central to ensuring the safety and needs of at-risk children (Murphy, 2008; Ferguson, 2011). Available evidence suggests that effectively engaging families in child protection work is challenging, not least because these families are often “invisible,” ambivalent, hostile and highly resistant to social work intervention (Luning, 2003; Forrester et al., 2012; Platt, 2012; Turner, 2012; Tuck, 2013). A number of authors have highlighted the need for the deficit-focused approach to reach positive social work with black families and emphasise the importance of intervention strategies that can identify and build on capacities and strengths for engaging black parents in child protection work (Gerrero, 1998; Chand and Theobal, 2006; Chand, 2008). Importantly, some scholars have drawn attention to the underlying factors that are potential barriers to black families’ engagement with child protection services, and suggest that factors such as fear, mistrust and stigma play a decisive role (Chand, 2000; Bernard and Gupta, 2008). Furthermore, it has been increasingly recognised that children living in families affected by factors caused by social inequalities, such as poverty, unemployment and living in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods, are the greatest risk of child welfare interventions (Drake et al., 2000; Hewstone et al., 2014; Bynum, 2013). There is also a growing evidence base which shows that some minority racial groups are disproportionately affected by poverty, and are thus over-represented in the child welfare system as a consequence (Swain, 2009; Schmid, 2011). Thus, it is thought that a strengths-based approach, based on assets rather than deficits, is better able to capture a more nuanced understanding of the coping strategies of black parents in complex practice situations (Butler, 2007; Bernard and Gupta, 2008). Increasingly, it is being recognised that a deficit-focused approach with black families can undermine the attributes, resources
As social workers, we have to strike a balance between sensitively navigating how to respectfully challenge parental attitudes and behaviours framed around culture whilst at the same time keeping a focus on the rights of the child.
How do we Promote Anti-Racism in Social Work?

1) A Critical Conversation

2) Factors that frame the lived experiences of children

3) Understanding how diversity, social inequality and poverty impact the lived experiences of children

4) Listening to the voice of Children

5) Power and Discrimination

6) A Call for Change
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>White Supremacy</th>
<th>White Indifference</th>
<th>White Awareness</th>
<th>White Allyship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Accepts, and in some cases promotes, theories designed to justify white</td>
<td>• Passionate defender of western universalism, academic freedom and the right to</td>
<td>• Belief that racism is real and that it is a product of ‘prejudice plus power’</td>
<td>• Racism is a complex interaction between structural, ideological, institutional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dominance and racial hierarchy typically associated with ‘scientific racism’.</td>
<td>offended.</td>
<td>Characterised by a desire to critically reflect.</td>
<td>and behavioural processes, but it can be overcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fear/loathing/exoticisation of the non-white other which may be overt or</td>
<td>• Belief in meritocracy but also recognises that some (deserving) disadvantaged</td>
<td>Functions like a mental illness that only white people have (Katz) hence focus</td>
<td>Characterised by the desire to take responsibility for change, which is not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>covert.</td>
<td>people need help.</td>
<td>on ‘discovering’ unconscious bias and cognitive distortions.</td>
<td>restricted to behaviour alone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Characterised by the ‘white gaze’.</td>
<td>• Characterised by a refusal to take a serious look at racism and views anti-</td>
<td>• Desire to engage with ‘black issues and people, but only in limited spaces</td>
<td>Focus on paradigm shifts and concrete interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Belief that we live in a meritocracy.</td>
<td>racist initiatives as ideological endeavours linked to culture wars and political</td>
<td>(committees, training events)</td>
<td>Dynamic and creative solutions through co-creation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Uncritical/favourable view of empire and colonialism - the white man’s burden.</td>
<td>correctness.</td>
<td>• This may be as a result of feeling guilty of historic racism and/or a desire</td>
<td>Rejection of deficit models and acceptance of the link between white privilege</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Subscribes to scientific racism.</td>
<td>• Self-concept is based on being rational and moral, which results in avoidance</td>
<td>to make some amends.</td>
<td>and educational outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ‘Black underachievement is seen to be due to their dysfunctionality/pathology.</td>
<td>of responsibility for discriminatory behaviour!</td>
<td>• White privilege is recognised and becomes a source of shame and embarrassment.</td>
<td>Share power, privilege, risk and vulnerability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Whiteness and its proxies’ function as badges of honour.</td>
<td>• Willing to ‘tolerate’/‘fetishise’/‘pity the ‘non-white’ other.</td>
<td>• Most activity however restricted to self-development and deployment of</td>
<td>Actively digesting from histories, systems and structures that reproduce racism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• White privilege is rationalised as the natural order.</td>
<td>• Happy to make tokenistic gestures, but total refusal to accept one’s own</td>
<td>politically correct language.</td>
<td>Onus on white to build sustained partnerships with black people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Onus on black People to accept their place.</td>
<td>complicity in the (re)production of racism.</td>
<td>• Onus on white people to overcome unconscious bias.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *The term ‘black’ here is used to denote all those people who are positioned outside of whiteness and as a result experience racial disadvantage. The degree of racial disadvantage will vary as a result of other factors primarily associated with gender, class, ethnicity.*

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A Call for Change:

> As social workers, we must be able to identify and examine our own racial biases to increase overall awareness of how beliefs might impact our work with different racial and ethnic groups.

> A deficit-focused approach with black and ethnic minority families can undervalue the attributes, resources, and assets of the family, and thus be an obstacle in parental engagement.
Summary of Key Points:

> as black and ethnic minority children have become more diverse as a group in the UK, the issues arising for them in child protection practice take more complex forms.

> emerging forms of abuse based on religious beliefs, underpinned by cultural traditions, are bringing new challenges concerning thresholds for interventions for child protection.

> there is evidence to show that black and ethnic minority families are disproportionately affected by poverty and therefore overrepresented in the child welfare system.

> black and ethnic minority children in families affected by factors caused by social inequalities like poverty, unemployment, and living in economically-disadvantaged neighbourhoods, are at the greatest risk of child welfare interventions.

> to capture the lived experiences of black and ethnic minority children, social workers must be critically reflexive, understand the intersectionality of different forms of oppression, and be willing and able to engage in conversations that are emotionally-loaded and discomforting.
Rebecca Olayinka

Privately Fostered care experienced child.
Info

• I am a qualified social worker of 9 years, working within adult social care.
• My specialisms are;
  • Safeguarding
  • Learning Disabilities
  • Older adults
My Journey

- I was privately fostered from the ages of 0-9.5 years.
- There was a surge in private fostering particularly in the Nigerian community from the 1940’s in the UK and is, I believe still ongoing, remember the tragic short life of Victoria Climbe?
What is Private Fostering?

- Private fostering is recognised in The Children Act 1989 as an arrangement whereby a child under the age of 16 (or 18 if the child has a disability) (S. 66 Children Act 1989) is placed for 28 days or more in the care of someone who is not the child's parent(s) or a 'connected person.
What Private Fostering meant for me?

• My foster mother was white and was the only constant care giver that I had when I was little.
• I called my foster mother “Mummy Marceline”
• I lived in Essex in a small seaside village
• I went to school in Essex and had friends there.
• While my mother lived in London. I only saw her only on birthdays and some holidays.
What Private Fostering meant for me?
Identity vs Belonging

• Identity
  • I am a Black British Child.
  • My parents were Nigerian
  • So I identify as Black British & Nigerian

• Belonging
  • Living in a white town where I was not welcomed.
  • I did not belong in Nigeria either and could not speak the language
What Private Fostering meant for me?

Identity vs Belonging

• Identity

  • I lived with my foster mother who was not my biological parent - I had 2x mothers

• Belonging

  • My own relationship with my mother was never fully cultivated, even though I went to live with her when I was 9.5 I did not feel I belonged with her either.
What Private Fostering meant for me?
Identity vs Belonging

- Identity
- My foster mother told me I was Brown and not Black, as she believed Black was a dirty word.

- Belonging
- When I returned to London I was ostracised by other kids as I was telling them I was Brown and not Black as no one really told me who I was.
Why Belonging is important

• Brene’ Brown definition of belonging;

Belonging is the innate human desire to be part of something larger than us. Because this yearning is so primal, we often try to acquire it by fitting in and by seeking approval, which are not only hollow substitutes for belonging, but often barriers to it. Because true belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world, our sense of belonging can never be greater than our self acceptance.
Racism

I experienced a lot of racism when I was being fostered.
I was only one of two Black children in my school in Essex.
I experienced Racism & institutionalised racism almost on a daily basis and it wasn’t taken very seriously by the school.
I got into fights and arguments with other children because I was Black.
How My Private Fostering Journey Ended
• My mother decided she wanted me back to live with her.
• My foster mother contested this so the local authority became involved.
• I was visited by two different social workers
• One said I should live with my mother
• The other said I should live with my foster mother.
After Private Fostering

• My mother took me back to live with her in London when I was 9.5 years old.
• For years after I was fostered, I did not speak about it as no one wanted to know.
• Not my family and not social services.
• There was no support and no help available
• It was like being fostered never happened.
The duties of the Local Authority

- Section 67 of the Children Act also states;
- “It is the duty of the local authority to satisfy themselves that the welfare of children privately fostered in their area are safeguarded and that an officer of the local authority should visit in prescribed circumstances and on specific occasions within specified periods.”
• I was taken back to live with my mother, back in London- by force in the end and the LA did not want to be involved after that.
• I also had a bit of Kingship fostering care when I got back to London I stayed for most of the week, (when I was not in school) at a family friend’s home and did not see my mother much for the first 2 years that I was in London.
Kingship Care

- Kingship care is when a child lives full time or most of the time with a relative or friend who is not their parents, this is usually a grandparent, however it can include older siblings, aunts, uncles, neighbours and family friends.

- This type of fostering happens frequently in the Black community and in the Black Community it is not thought of as a foster care.
What could be done to support Black Foster Children in the future

• More recruitment of Black foster carers
• 24% of children in care are BAME vs 13% from a BAME background.
• More support to help Black children and carers in foster care- understanding how to look after our hair & skin as well as multiple identities- i.e. African/Caribbean/British/Faith/diets/routines
• Ongoing support for when Black Children leave care due to the added disadvantages that they will face.
Facebook- Rebecca Olayinka
Instagram- An_author_called_Rebecca
Twitter- @RebeOlayinka

END
Thank you

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Campaign

Promoting relationship based practice