

A smiling woman with dark hair, wearing a grey blazer over a light-colored top, is seated at a desk. She is holding a pen in her right hand and has a notebook open in front of her. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a bookshelf or office setting. The overall tone is professional and approachable.

# UNCOVERING IMPLICIT BIAS

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A Guide for Mental Health  
Professionals

STUDY GUIDE

LIVE ZOOM WEBINAR  
APRIL 29, 2022

# PRESENTER



## **DR. JANEÉ STEELE**

Licensed Professional Counselor

Dr. Janeé Steele is a licensed professional counselor, counselor educator, and diplomate of the Academy of Cognitive and Behavioral Therapies. She is also the owner of Kalamazoo Cognitive and Behavioral Therapy, PLLC, where she provides therapy, supervision, and training in CBT.

# PRESENTER



## **DR. CHAR NEWTON**

LICENSED PSYCHOLOGIST

Dr. Char Newton is a fully licensed psychologist and owner of Legacy Mental Health Services, PLLC. Dr. Newton has over 10 years of experience in clinical, academic, and community settings, including teaching experience at both undergraduate and graduate levels of higher education. She is also a member of the Michigan Board of Psychology, appointed by Governor Gretchen Whitmer.



## **UNCOVERING IMPLICIT BIAS: A GUIDE FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS**

Most mental health professionals reject overt forms of bias such as discrimination, harassment, or use of slurs. Yet, research suggests that while most counselors avoid overt oppression, many counselors demonstrate covert, implicit forms of bias even when they rate themselves as culturally competent. This happens for two primary reasons. First, bias is fundamental to the way human beings process the world—it does not necessarily reflect intentional bigotry or prejudice. Second, we are all socialized into cultural ideologies and worldviews that lead to negative ways of thinking about groups of people that are outside of our awareness. These are our implicit biases.

While an individual's bias may be evident to an outsider, the person holding this bias may not be aware due to the nature of how the brain processes and categorizes information. This has the potential to cause clients harm, as counselors who operate out of implicit bias may unconsciously assume, dismiss, or be insensitive to how aspects of a client's identity influence their presenting concerns. In this webinar, you will explore how to mitigate this harm by learning about the nature of implicit bias, its impact, and strategies to minimize and reduce this impact in clinical settings.

# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

During this webinar you will engage in several experiential activities designed to help you uncover your own unconsciously held biases. Specifically, you will learn how to:



**01**

## **DEFINE**

Define implicit bias and explain the science behind it.

**02**

## **ASSESS**

Assess your own implicit bias.

**03**

## **REDUCE**

Reduce implicit bias in the therapeutic relationship.

**04**

## **ENGAGE**

Engage in regular assessment of personally held values, stereotypes, and worldviews leading to implicit bias.

# CONTENTS

## PART 1

### **UNDERSTANDING THE SCIENCE BEHIND IMPLICIT BIAS**

Learn the basics about implicit bias and the brain science behind this phenomenon in our lives.

## PART 2

### **UNDERSTANDING OUR IDENTITIES**

Learn how our identities and cultural worldviews influence our implicit biases and how you can increase awareness of these factors and their impact on your work with clients.

## PART 3

### **UNDERSTANDING OUR BIASES**

Learn more about how implicit bias influences the mental health profession and begin to develop strategies to reduce this bias in your own clinical practice.

## PART 4

### **INCREASING CURIOSITY AND EMPATHY**

Learn evidence based strategies designed to increase empathy and replace the stereotypic images that lead to implicit bias.

## PART 5

### **NAVIGATING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS**

Learn specific verbal and non-verbal strategies to help navigate difficult conversations around culture and bias.

## PART 6

### **REDUCING MICROAGGRESSIONS AND OTHER RUPTURES TO THE THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP**

Learn how to identify microaggressions in the therapeutic context and what you can do when these and other ruptures to the therapeutic relationship occur.

## PART 7

### **CONFRONTING BIAS**

Learn strategies for confronting bias from a variety of approaches including self-care, mindfulness, and CBT.

# UNDERSTANDING THE SCIENCE BEHIND IMPLICIT BIAS

## WHAT ARE IMPLICIT BIASES?

Most people think of implicit biases as negative beliefs about certain cultural groups. In reality, these biases may be negative or positive and are based mostly on the stereotypes we have been socialized into believing about these groups. As mental health professionals, it is important that we are aware of the stereotypes and implicit biases we hold, as research shows that implicit biases may cause clients harm. To this end, during this part of the webinar we will define implicit bias and other key terms associated with this construct, and discuss the brain processes that make implicit bias a relevant factor for all clinicians regardless of age, experience, or cultural background. As you learn, use the space below and the next few pages to help you remember key takeaways.

## NOTES:



# UNDERSTANDING THE SCIENCE BEHIND IMPLICIT BIAS

## Understanding Implicit Bias

1

What is one definition of implicit bias?

2

What are two parts of the brain involved in the development of implicit bias?

3

How do stereotypes influence the development of implicit bias?

4

What else do you believe you need to know about the science behind implicit bias? How can you go about learning this information?



# UNDERSTANDING OUR IDENTITIES

## HOW DO WE DEVELOP IMPLICIT BIASES?

Addressing implicit biases can be difficult because of their automatic and unconscious nature. Research shows, however, that while difficult, there are strategies that can help to reduce implicit biases. Most of these strategies begin with an understanding of our own identities and cultural worldviews. Accordingly, this segment of the webinar dives deeper into the connection between implicit biases, our identities, and our cultural worldviews, both as individual clinicians and from the standpoint of the mental health profession as a whole. Because racial worldviews play a particularly impactful part in the role of bias in the mental health profession, we highlight ways dominant racial worldviews influence bias in counseling theory, research, and practice. We know that discussing issues related to race can be difficult. Therefore, as you participate in the part of the webinar keep in mind that implicit bias does not equate to intentional prejudice. Everyone has implicit bias and it is up to all of us to address this bias in our work with clients.

## NOTES:



# UNDERSTANDING OUR IDENTITIES

## Understanding Our Identities and Cultural Worldviews: A Reflection



How do our identities and cultural worldviews influence implicit biases in our own clinical work and the mental health profession at large?



**Reflection** Take some time to reflect on the following questions:

1. Have you had negative experiences with members of different races, genders, sexual orientations, etc.? How have these experiences impacted you personally and professionally?
2. What messages do you remember your family giving you about members of different races, genders, sexual orientations, etc.?
3. Do you find yourself “holding back” or biting your tongue with members of certain races, genders, sexual orientations, etc.? If so, why?
4. To what extent do you find yourself feeling uncomfortable when working with members of different races, genders, sexual orientations, etc.? What do you believe that is about?
5. What assumptions do you make about members of different races, genders, sexual orientations, etc.?
6. How do you feel your values differ from members of different races, genders, sexual orientations, etc.?

# UNDERSTANDING OUR BIASES

## HOW DO WE DISCOVER OUR IMPLICIT BIASES?

During therapy, implicit biases have the potential to cause clients harm, as clinicians who operate out of implicit bias may unconsciously assume, dismiss, or be insensitive to how aspects of a client's identity influence the clinician's perceptions of clients and their view of the client's presenting concerns. Understanding implicit biases requires individuals to (a) understand the relationship between their biases and their identities and (b) know when they are susceptible to bias. Traditionally, professional development around culture and diversity involves self-reflection; however, implicit biases cannot be adequately measured through conventional reflection tools such as self-report scales, journaling, or group discussion alone, as these tools rely heavily on explicit knowledge of oneself. Instead, researchers have discovered that implicit biases are best uncovered through tools that trick our minds into revealing the negative schemas that influence our thoughts. In this part of the webinar, we will discuss these tools and provide an opportunity for you to try them out for yourself.

## NOTES:



# UNDERSTANDING OUR BIASES

## The Harvard Implicit Association Test (IAT)

The Implicit Association Test (IAT) is a measure of attitudes and beliefs people may be unwilling or unable to report. According to the test's website, the IAT does this by measuring the strength of associations between certain groups of people and evaluations like good or bad, or stereotypes like athletic or clumsy. Visit <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html> and identify two groups to explore your own implicit biases. Identify the groups below and answer the following questions: What feelings or reactions did you have upon learning your IAT results? How can you overcome any defensiveness that may arise when reviewing your results?

1

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2

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# INCREASING CURIOSITY AND EMPATHY

## HOW CAN WE SEE PAST OUR IMPLICIT BIASES?

Some clinicians believe that once we become aware of our implicit biases, we can fix them on our own through self-reflection and good will. Yet, engaging with others to learn more about their experiences and points of view is the only proven way we have to challenge the stereotypes that lead to implicit bias. During this part of the webinar, you will learn specific strategies to help you develop counterstereotypic images and replace the negative schemas that lead to implicit biases. As you participate, try to make it personal! Use the ideas and exercises presented so far in the webinar to identify some of your own implicit biases and begin to apply the tools discussed in this section of the webinar to challenge these biases.

## NOTES:



# INCREASING CURIOSITY AND EMPATHY

## Strategies for Increasing Curiosity and Empathy

List four strategies you can implement to increase empathy and reduce the negative schemas that lead to implicit bias. Be sure to describe how you might use each strategy.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

# NAVIGATING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

## HOW CAN WE CREATE THE SPACE NECESSARY TO DISCUSS IMPLICIT BIASES?

Sometimes our biases or general discomfort addressing issues related to culture with clients prevents us from discussing these important topics during therapy. Yet, as clinicians, it is crucial that we have the strength and courage to persevere in the face of difficult conversations, as our clients are relying on us to address these topics and their impact on their lives and the therapeutic relationship. During this part of the webinar, you will learn verbal and non-verbal strategies to help navigate difficult conversations around bias and culture. As you listen, think back to a past conversation where you might not have acknowledged bias or culture in a way that you would hope to, and imagine yourself having this conversation again, this time applying the strategies you've learned today. You can write about this and other notes below.

### NOTES:



# NAVIGATING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

## Strategies That Create Space

List four strategies you can use to navigate difficult conversations around bias and culture. Be sure to describe how you might use each strategy.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_



# REDUCING MICROAGGRESSIONS AND OTHER RUPTURES TO THE THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP

## HOW CAN WE BE PROACTIVE IN MITIGATING THE IMPACT OF IMPLICIT BIASES?

One way we can be proactive in mitigating the impact of implicit biases in our work with clients is by reducing microaggressions and other ruptures to the therapeutic relationship. *Microaggressions* refer to small, everyday slights that demean an aspect of a person's social identity. Similarly, *cultural ruptures* consist of intentional and unintentional statements that portray insensitivity, disrespect, and/or negligent attention to some salient aspect of the client's cultural heritage. Implicit biases may be a source for both microaggressions and cultural ruptures to the therapeutic relationship. In this segment of the webinar, specific examples highlighting microaggressions and cultural ruptures will be shared, along with strategies to reduce their impact on the therapeutic relationship.

## NOTES:



# REDUCING MICROAGGRESSIONS AND OTHER RUPTURES TO THE THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP

## Being Proactive

1

How do you define microaggression?

2

What are the three types of microaggressions?

3

What is a cultural rupture?

4

How can you reduce microaggressions and potential cultural ruptures in your own clinical work with clients?

# CONFRONTING BIAS

## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

As you reach the conclusion of this webinar, we hope that you've internalized the idea that implicit biases represent automatic processes that occur in our brains as a result of the stereotypes we have been socialized into believing about various social groups, and that the stereotypes we pick up come from all around us---our families, our schools, our communities, and the media. Because this socialization is a lifelong process, confronting implicit bias in our work with clients will also be a lifelong process. We recognize that this process can be arduous and overwhelming. Therefore, we end the webinar identifying specific approaches you can implement as you continue to confront implicit bias, including self-care, mindfulness, and CBT.

## NOTES:



# CONFRONTING BIAS

## Having a Plan



Confronting bias can be overwhelming. In the space below list specific ways you will confront bias in your work with clients and identify strategies for self-care during the process.

A large, empty white rectangular box intended for writing a plan.

# THANK YOU!

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