Introduction to Implicit Bias in Mental Health

Thursday, April 6, 2023
12pm - 1pm ET

Live Zoom Webinar

Featuring:
Drs. Janeé Steele and Char Newton

Janeé Steele, PhD

Licensed Professional Counselor

Dr. Janeé Steele is a licensed professional counselor, counselor educator, and diplomate of the Academy of Cognitive and Behavioral Therapies. Dr. Steele is also the owner and clinical director of Kalamazoo Cognitive and Behavioral Therapy, PLLC, where she provides therapy, supervision, and training in CBT. In addition to her clinical work, Dr. Steele is an Associate Editor of the Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development.

Char Newton, PhD

Licensed Psychologist

Dr. Char Newton is a fully licensed psychologist and in practice at Legacy Mental Health Services, PLLC. Dr. Newton also has over 10 years of experience in clinical, academic, and community settings, including teaching experience at both undergraduate and graduate levels of higher education and is a member of the Michigan Board of Psychology, appointed by Governor Gretchen Whitmer. She was recently awarded the 2022 Distinguished Psychologist Award from the Michigan Psychological Association.

Learning Objectives

As a result of this webinar, you will be able to:

- Define implicit bias and explain the science behind it

- Assess your own implicit bias

- Reduce implicit bias in the therapeutic relationship

Something to Think About

If you are a target of oppression

-Be aware of anything that might be overwhelming

-Use mindfulness and breathing skills when you need to

-Take a break if necessary

If you are an ally or a learner

-Work toward maintaining a non-judgmental stance

-Recognize defensiveness

-Seek to understand

What Do You Bring Into the Room?

- Place your name in the center circle to the right. Write an important aspect of your identity in each of the attached circles. These should be identifiers or descriptors you believe are important in defining you. They can include anything, for example, Asian American, Christian, female, mother, athlete, educator, or any descriptor with which you identify.

Things I Bring Into the Room

- I am Black
- I am a woman
- I am from the metro-Detroit area
- My parents and grandparents were from the deep south of Baton Rouge, Louisiana
- I am a member of Generation X and the Millennial generation
- I am heterosexual
- I am Christian
- I am the middle child
- I am a first-generation college student and the first Ph.D. in my family

What is Implicit Bias?

Definition 1

Implicit bias, also known as unconscious bias, can be most simply defined as a hidden preference for one identity over another (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016)

- **Preferences** refer to what we favor or reject

- **Identity** typically refers to shared cultural values and beliefs within specific reference groups (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, age, etc.)
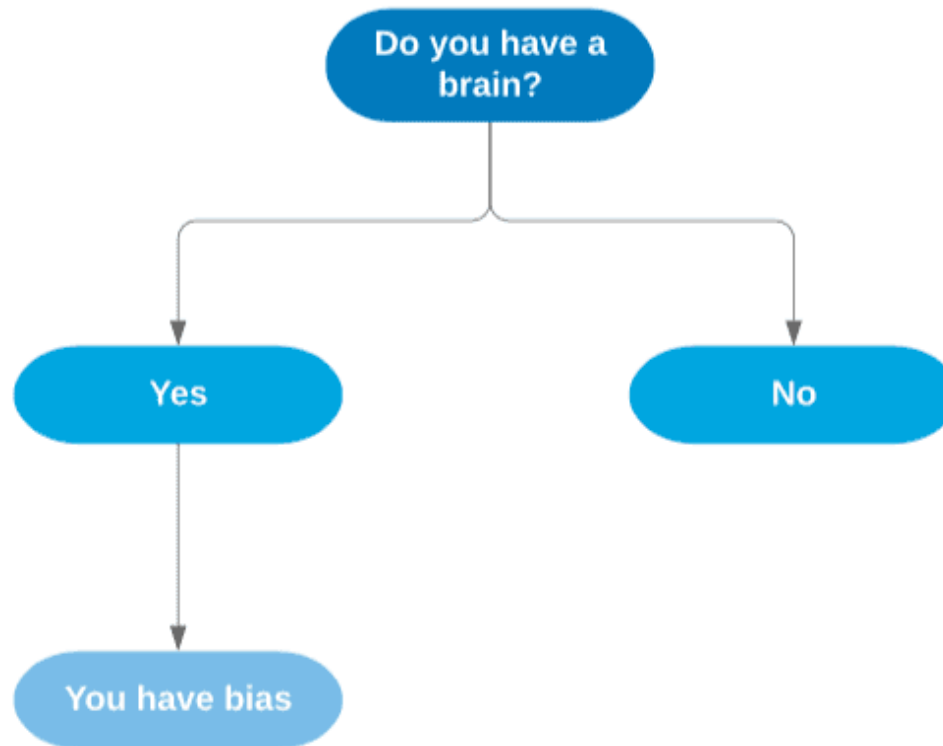
Definition 2

Implicit bias refers to unconscious, automatically activated attitudes that have the potential to yield discriminatory behaviors (Gran-Ruaz et al., 2022)

Who Has Implicit Bias?

All people have implicit biases

Implicit bias is fundamental to the way human beings process the world—it does not necessarily reflect intentional bigotry or prejudice

How Do We Form Implicit Biases?

Implicit biases are based on inaccurate information or stereotypes

- Stereotypes can be defined as oversimplified generalizations about groups or categories of people (Abreu, 1999)

- The stereotypes we pick up over time from the environment around us (e.g., our family, our school, our community, the media) act as the templates that provide data for our implicit biases

- Even when we have different explicit values, we can still be influenced by stereotypes
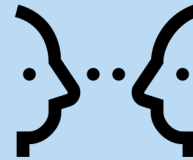
How it works

When presented with incomplete information, we rely on associative memory to fill in the gaps. This process is automatic, adaptive, and associative.
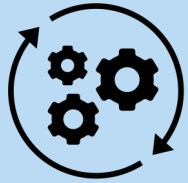
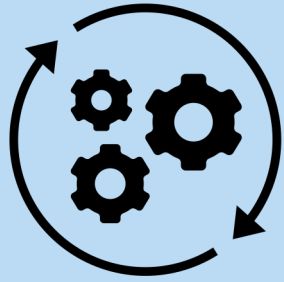## Automatic

Implicit biases are rapid

Adaptive

We see what's supposed to be there

Associative

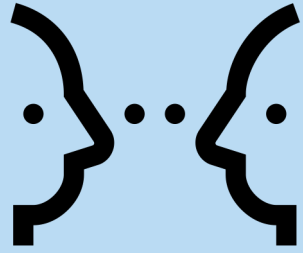What we see is based on information we already have

Automatic

Over time, we're taught to associate certain characteristics with various groups of people. Strong associations tend to have rapid responses.

Fill in the blank:

Night and _____
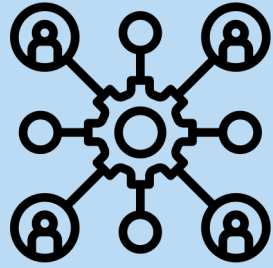
Black and _____

Young and _____

Adaptive

Our brains are capable of seeing what's supposed to be there, even when it's not.

Read this sentence:

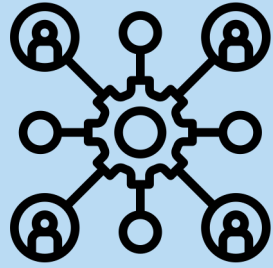Yuo cna porbalby raed tihs esaliy desptie teh msispeillgns.

Associative

We use prior information and experiences to inform how we interpret the present.

What do you see?
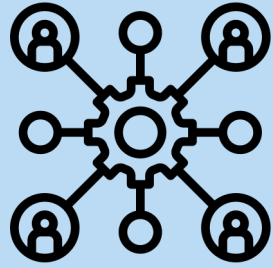
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Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity

How Does Implicit Bias Affect Therapy?

Implicit bias may cause harm in the therapeutic context

- Research suggests counselors and counselors-in-training demonstrate implicit bias even when they rate themselves as multiculturally competent (Gushue, 2004)

- During therapy, implicit biases have the potential to cause clients harm, as therapists who operate out of implicit bias may unconsciously assume, dismiss, or be insensitive to how aspects of a client's identity influence their perceptions of clients and their view of the client's presenting concerns

How Does Implicit Bias Affect Therapy?

- Other Examples:
  - Being perceived as gay in LGB-hostile states significantly decreased the rate of returned calls, with the reverse being true in an LGB affirming state (Shin et al., 2021)
  - Aversive prejudice was evident in services for Muslim women, whereby counselors and psychologists are unknowingly acting in a biased manner toward a request for an appointment from a Muslim woman; that is, practitioners (a) respond more frequently to the Muslim woman and (b) respond faster to the Muslim woman but (c) offer services to the Muslim woman at a lesser or similar frequency (Moscovitz et al., 2023)
  - Participants primed with African American stereotypes rated Mr. X significantly less favorably on hostility-related attributes and significantly more favorably on hostility-unrelated attributes than did participants primed with neutral words (Abreu, 1999)
  - A fictitious counseling center intake report was given to a sample of 158 White graduate students in counseling and clinical psychology to examine the impact of reported client race (Black or White) on perceptions of clients' symptom severity, with participants judging the Black target to be significantly less symptomatic than the White target (Gushue, 2004)

How Do We Assess Implicit Bias?

Assessing implicit bias is an ongoing process

- Identifying implicit biases requires individuals to: (a) understand the relationship between their biases and their identities and (b) know when they are susceptible to bias (Fuller et al., 2020)

- Traditional 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 (Boysen, 2010)

- Instead, researchers have discovered that implicit biases are best uncovered through tools that use response latency, or timed groupings of words and images into certain categories

  - Harvard Implicit Association Test (IAT)

Flip It To Test It

- This exercise was developed by Kristen Presser, a CEO of a large company, who shared it through a very interesting TED Talk that we recommend you all view

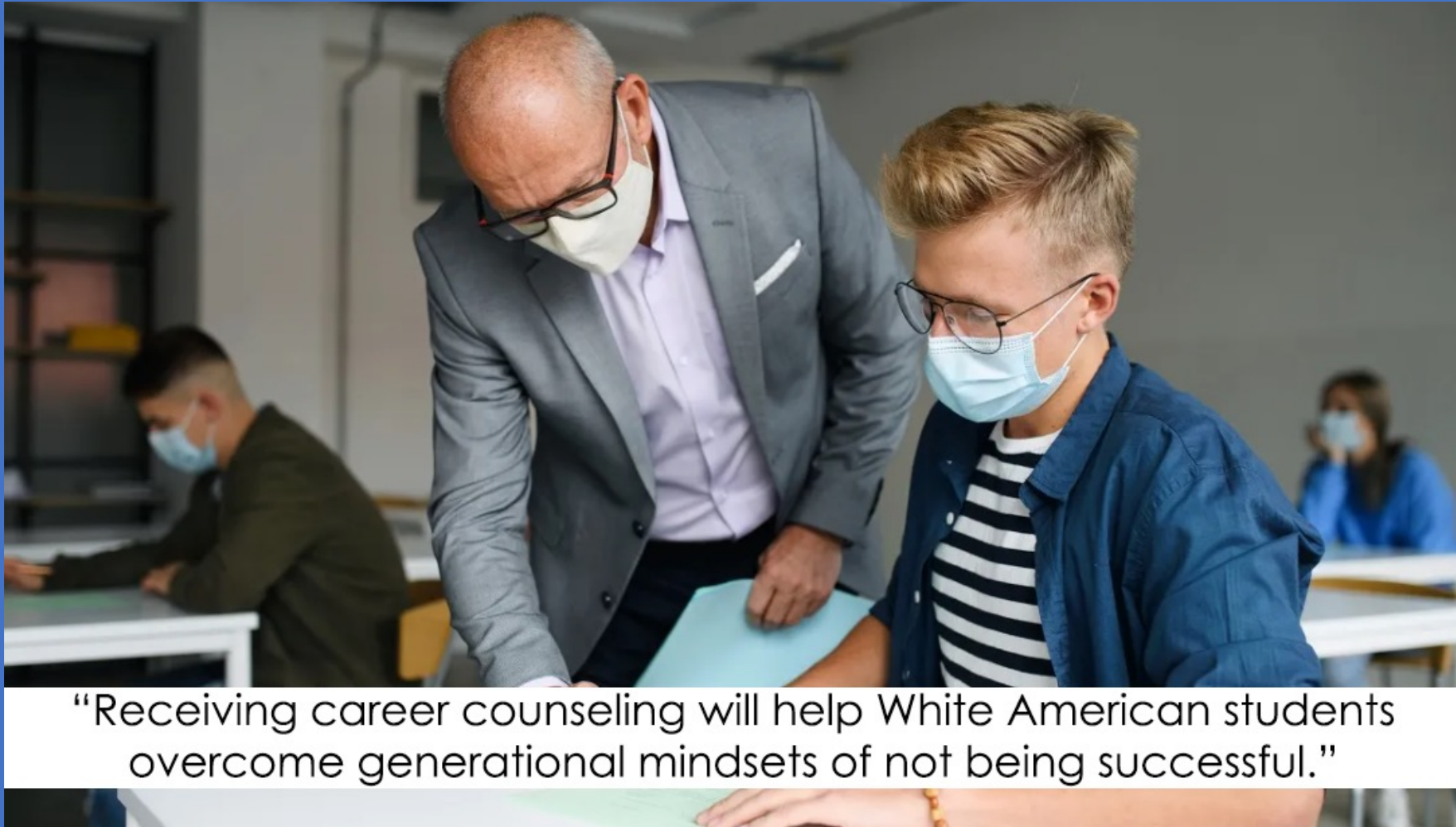- Helps uncover some of our implicit biases by eliciting emotional responses through the use of images

Strong
Independent
Aggressive
Intimidating

Attractive
Fragile
Vulnerable
Approachable

"White American students often lack the parental support needed to thrive."

"Receiving career counseling will help White American students overcome generational mindsets of not being successful."

Breakout Groups

- What were your reactions to the images shown?

- What messages and/or stereotypes are represented by these images?

- How might these messages and/or stereotypes affect aspects of the counseling process?

- How might have implicit bias been at play in some of your own past clinical and/or supervisory experiences? What messages were conveyed?

Strategies To Address Our Bias

Addressing implicit bias requires intentionality

- Per Fitzgerald et al. (2019), intentional strategies to overcome biases may include:
  - Exposure
  - Identifying the self with the outgroup
  - Exposure to counterstereotypical messages
  - Stereotype replacement

Exposure

Increase contact with different cultural groups

- Increasing opportunities for contact with individuals from different groups can help decrease implicit bias
  - Expanding one's network of friends and colleagues or attending events where people of other racial and ethnic groups, gender identities, sexual orientation, and other groups may be present can help with developing empathy and understanding for people who are different than us

Identifying Self With The Out Group

Get curious!

- Get curious about how you might actually identify with or be similar to groups for which you hold bias

- As the counselor, you might perform tasks that lessen barriers between yourself and the outgroup so that you can see similarities
  - **Example:** Having a client look at their values as it relates to their treatment goals might help you see ways you have similar values to those of your client

- Furthermore, counselors can engage in perspective taking by "putting yourself in the other person's shoes"
  - Ask questions like "What might it feel like being a Black male and knowing that the police maybe profiling or mistreated you because of your race?" "What emotions might this elicit?"

Counterstereotypic Messages

Imagine the alternative

- Counterstereotypic messages entail imagining the individual as the opposite of the stereotype (Devine et al., 2012)

- **Test it out:** List three people who are different than you with regards to one of the marginalized identities we discussed earlier. What are three characteristics/qualities about the person that counter a stereotype about their group?
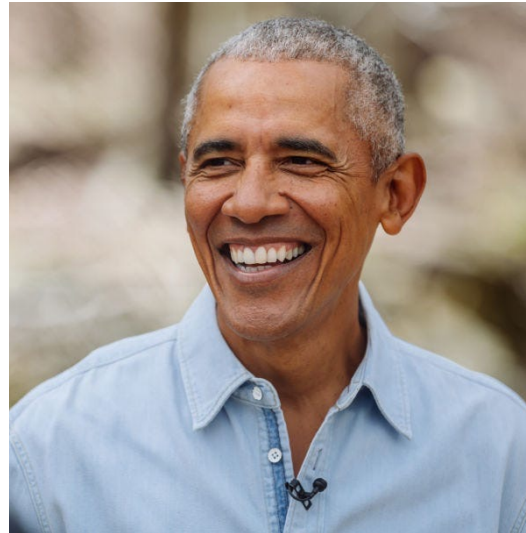
Stereotype Replacement

Stereotype replacement entails:

• Recognizing when you're having a stereotypic thought

• Identifying the factors behind the thought/portrayal

• Replacing the stereotype with a non-stereotypic response
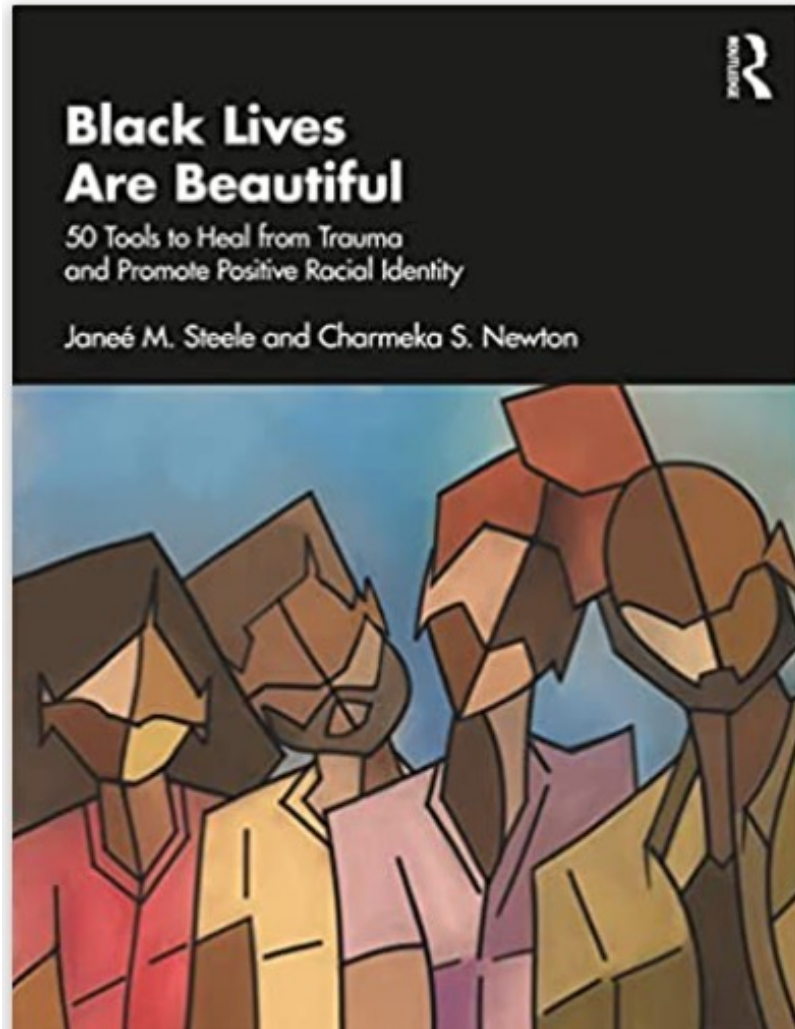
How to recognize when stereotypes are activated:

• **Know your physiological signs:** What are the physical sensations you have when you spend time with and/or around people with who are different from you?

• **Know your emotions:** What feelings do you have when you're with and/or around people who are different from you?

Join Us For Future Events!

Black Lives Are Beautiful: Strategies for Promoting Positive Racial Identity in Black American Clients

Thursday, May 11, 2023
12pm - 1pm ET

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Janeé M. Steele and Charmeka S. Newton

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HOSTED BY:
CHAR NEWTON AND JANEÉ STEELE

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