

Understanding Implicit Bias in the Mental Health Professions

Thursday, July 28, 2022

12pm-1pm ET

with

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Fully Licensed
Psychologist



&



Janeé Steele PhD

Licensed Professional
Counselor

Presenters



Dr. Char Newton

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.

Presenters



Dr. Janeé Steele

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*.

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...

- Conversations about culture and bias can be difficult
 - Please take care of yourself!
- If you are a target of oppression
 - Be aware of anything that might be triggering or 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 Are the Things You Bring to 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.
 - How might some of these identities lead to bias?



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

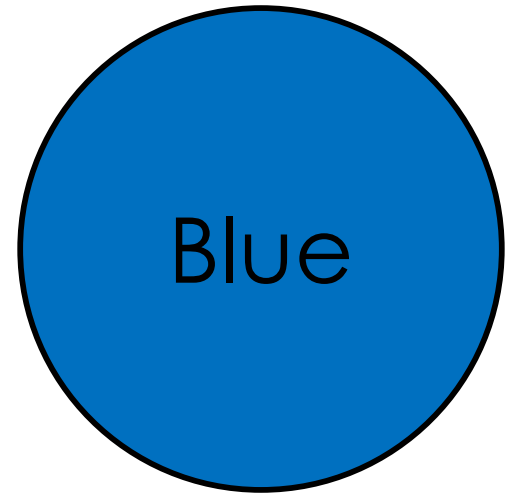
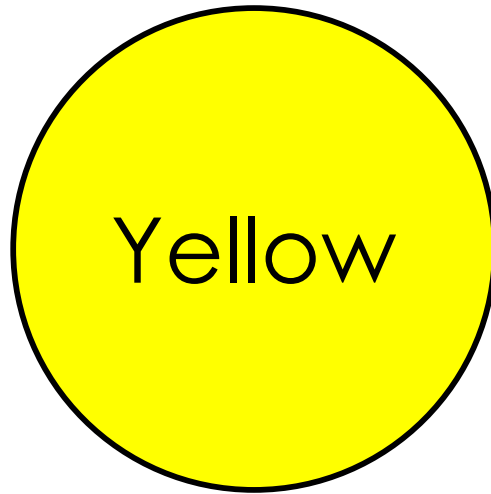
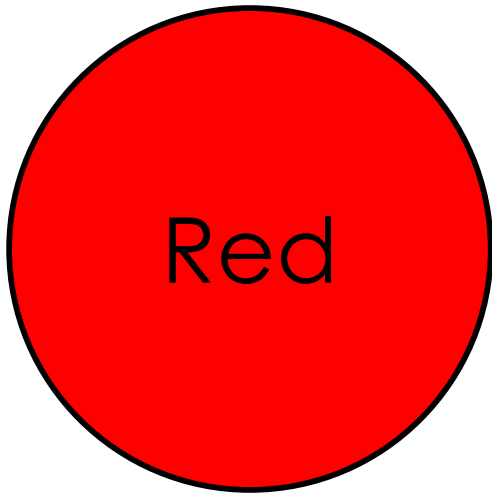
Implicit Bias and the Science Behind It

What is Implicit Bias?

- **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, ability, age, etc.)

How Does Implicit Bias Operate?

- Implicit bias is fundamental to the way human beings process the world—it does not necessarily reflect intentional bigotry or prejudice
- Implicit bias is a “form of rapid social categorization” whereby we routinely and rapidly sort people into groups
- Implicit bias can be positive or negative; bias in and of itself is a neutral term



How Do We Form Implicit Biases?

- When presented with incomplete information, we rely on associative memory to fill in the gaps
- When faced with ambiguous content, our brains make sense of what's presented to us based on the information we already have, even when this information is inaccurate, based on stereotypes, or against our explicitly held values
- This process is automatic, adaptive, and associative

Example: Fill in the blanks

Night and	<u>Day</u>
Black and	<u>White</u>
Young and	<u>Old</u>

Example: Read this sentence

Yuo cna porbalby raed tihs esaliy desptie teh
msispeillgns.

Example: What do you see?

AIBC

Example: What do you see?

12
13
14

Example: What do you see?

12
A13C
14

How Do We Form Implicit Biases?

- Implicit biases are often 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

Common Targets of Implicit Bias

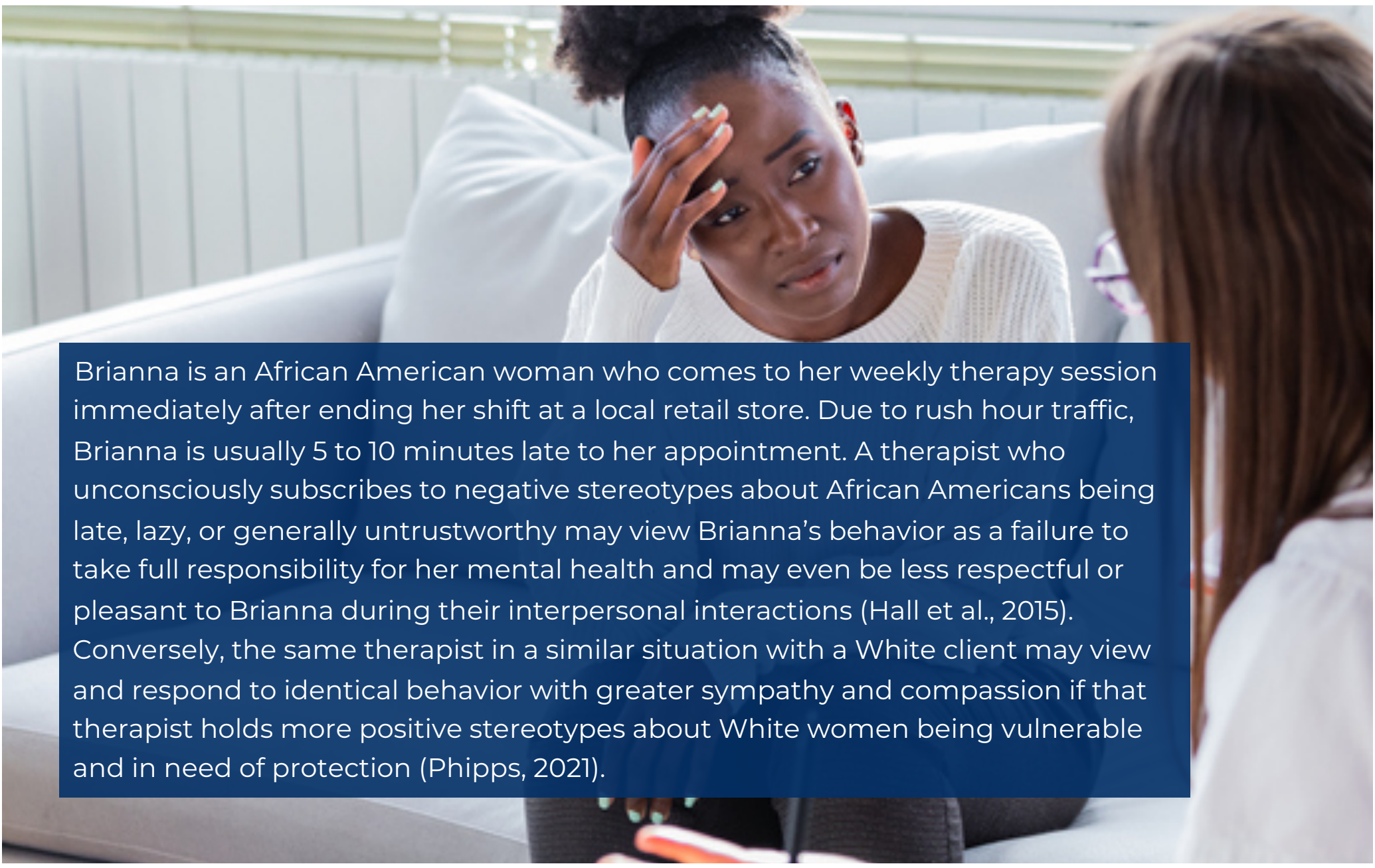
- **Marginalized** refers to groups that are oppressed in society and lack the systemic advantages bestowed on privileged groups (Ratts et al., 2016, p. 31)
 - In the United States, this refers to groups that are oppressed on the basis of race, gender/gender expression, sexuality, class, age, ability, and religion

Examples of Marginalized Groups Within Various Social Identities

- **Race:** African American/Black, Asian American, Pacific Islander, Latino/a/x/e American, Native American/Indian, and Biracial/multiracial
- **Gender:** Women, transgender or gender-nonconforming individuals
- **Sexuality:** Lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals
- **Socioeconomic status:** Individuals in poverty
- **Age:** Youth and elders
- **Ability:** Individuals with mental and physical disability
- **Religion:** Buddhist, Muslim, etc. (Ratts, 2017, p. 94)

Bias in the Therapeutic Setting

- Research suggests counselors and counselors-in-training demonstrate implicit bias even when they rate themselves as multiculturally competent (Abreu, 1999)
- 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



Brianna is an African American woman who comes to her weekly therapy session immediately after ending her shift at a local retail store. Due to rush hour traffic, Brianna is usually 5 to 10 minutes late to her appointment. A therapist who unconsciously subscribes to negative stereotypes about African Americans being late, lazy, or generally untrustworthy may view Brianna's behavior as a failure to take full responsibility for her mental health and may even be less respectful or pleasant to Brianna during their interpersonal interactions (Hall et al., 2015). Conversely, the same therapist in a similar situation with a White client may view and respond to identical behavior with greater sympathy and compassion if that therapist holds more positive stereotypes about White women being vulnerable and in need of protection (Phipps, 2021).

Assessing Implicit Bias

Identifying Our Biases

- 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)

The Implicit Association Test

- The Implicit Association Test (IAT) is a measure of attitudes and beliefs people may be unwilling or unable to report (<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/education.html>)
- According to the test's website, the IAT does this by measuring the strength of associations between certain groups of people such as Black people and evaluations like good or bad, or stereotypes like athletic or clumsy (<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/iatdetails.html>)

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



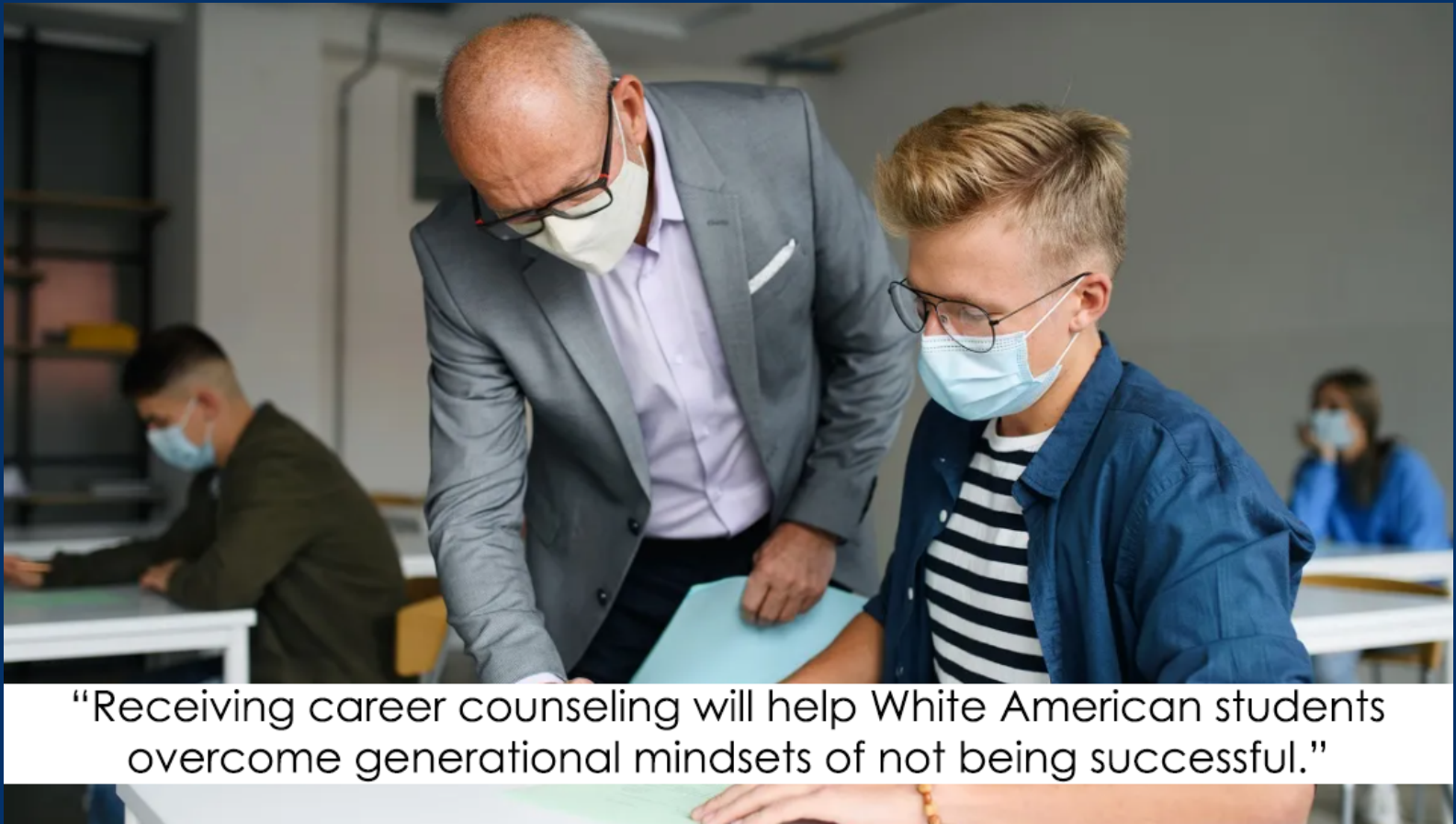
Strong
Independent
Aggressive
Intimidating



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.”

Reflecting on Our Biases

- 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?

Additional Strategies for Understanding Our Implicit Biases

Intellectual

Johnson and Melton (2021) recommend addressing the intellectual aspects of bias, for example, overgeneralizing and confirmation bias

Research, thinking, reflection, and journaling are strategies that allow for the break down of intellectualization of bias standpoints

Emotional

Johnson and Melton (2021) encourage individuals to look at how emotional responses such as fear, anger, and suspicion play into one's bias

Strategies for doing so may include supervision or personal therapy

Relational

Bias often continues as a result of "othering" people of color and by avoidance of these groups

Relational strategies for addressing bias may include forming positive relationships with members of various groups or joining community partnerships that bridge cultural gaps

Reducing Implicit Bias in the Therapeutic Relationship

Overcoming Bias

- Per Fitzgerald et al. (2019), intentional strategies to overcome biases may include:
 - Exposure,
 - Identifying the self with the outgroup, and
 - Exposure to counterstereotypical messages as holding merit to address implicit bias
- In addition, stereotype replacement can also help build empathy and address implicit bias

Exposure

- 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 Outgroup

- Get curious about how you might actually identify with or be similar to the group 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 “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?”

Counterstereotypical Messages

- **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?

Navigating Cultural Ruptures

- Cultural ruptures can occur as a result of verbal and nonverbal communications
- They consist of intentional and unintentional statements that portray insensitivity, disrespect, and/or negligent attention to some salient aspect of the client's cultural heritage (Pierce et al., 1978; Sue et al., 2007)
- The impact of cultural ruptures include:
 - Limitations to client disclosure level
 - Early termination of therapy session
 - Increased self-doubt, decreased self-esteem, and feelings of embarrassment, worthlessness, shame, and anger in the client
 - Reinforcement of the client's presenting problem(s) (Miles et al., 2021)

Reducing Microaggressions and Other Ruptures to the Therapeutic Relationship

- Pay careful attention to the appearance of your office space
- Pay careful attention to your front desk staff in that they are well trained to treat all clients with respects
- Validate your client's pain and frustration when microaggressions are pointed out by the client
- Acknowledge your bias and blind spots...don't take the defensive stance
- Invest in learning through professional development opportunities (e.g., webinars/conferences)... you must be a lifelong learner (Williams, 2020)

Additional Strategies

- Conduct a cultural interview. You can use APA's Cultural Formulation Interview to help the client tell their narrative and cultural perception of the difficulties that may bring them into counselor
- Use good test/assessment measurements that allow you to understand the client better as it relates to race-based or other cultural issues (e.g., Trauma Symptoms of Discrimination Scale, Multigroup Ethnic identity Measure, General Ethnic Discrimination Scale, Schedule of Racist Event, The Everyday Discrimination Scale)

Confronting Bias

- Recognize, accept, and reduce interracial anxieties through use of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (work with your own thoughts)
- Use mindfulness: research shows that meditative audios can help individuals focus on their sensation and thoughts in a nonjudgmental way and lessen implicit bias (Lueke & Gibson, 2015)
- Move from your comfort zone: emerge yourself in different environments
- Start “bias journaling” where you can write about shame, guilt, embarrassment, or anxiety you may have and processing tangible steps you can take to conquer this bias
- Think about people you may usually avoid and be intentional about engaging these individuals
- Educate yourself about your client’s culture, reading is important

Strategies for Self-Care as you do the Work of Confronting Bias

Collective coping

- Seek connection and support from family, friends, and one's racial community
- Establish personal and professional networks (e.g., mentoring)
- Racial microaffirmations: verbal and nonverbal strategies that affirm one's values, integrity, and humanity
- Humor and laughter to reduce the power of racial microaggressions and bond with others

Resistance coping

- Challenge/resist White, Eurocentric normative behaviors (i.e., individual and systemic)
- Defy stereotypes with authenticity (e.g., wearing one's natural hair)
- Confront perpetrators directly when it feels safe to do so (e.g., calling in, naming microaggressions, education, humor)

Self-protective coping

- Seek supervision (i.e., process and validation)
- Utilize basic self-care activities
- Engage in culturally relevant practices that reestablish pride in one's racial group and reminds one of their strength
- Organized religion (e.g., church) and spirituality
- Desensitize, avoid, and disengage to minimize stress associated with racial microaggressions

(Spanierman et al., 2021)

Finding Your Way Forward

- See our clients as individuals not stereotypes
- Take time to pause, reflect, and engage in perspective taking
- Increase exposure and shift perspective

Join Us For Future Events!



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