

Increasing Cultural Competence

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Project Implicit (2013), a non-profit organization committed to public education on bias, offers free online tests to individuals who want to explore their social cognition, attitudes, and stereotypes. The first test I took was Sexuality. The IAT measures relationships between concepts, Straight people and Gay people, and evaluations such as good and bad. The disclaimer states that people are quicker to respond when items that are more closely related in their minds share the same button. For example, an implicit preference for Straight people relative to Gay people means that you are faster to sort words when 'Straight people' and 'Good' share a button relative to when 'Gay people' and 'Good' share a button. Implicit Association Tests can predict hiring, education, healthcare, and law enforcement discrimination. However, the disclaimer states that the test will not likely predict future behavior well (Project Implicit, 2013).

My Implicit Association Test on Sexuality suggests that I have a slight automatic preference for gay people over straight people. This result fell in the eighth percentile of web respondents and may lean positively towards gays because I have a gay brother-in-law and gay friends, and I have always had pleasant experiences with gays. I am very nonjudgmental when it comes to sexual orientation. Although it takes a male and female to reproduce, I do not believe that all men and women are meant to be heterosexual. Other species have proven to humans that love and partnership can be naturally homosexual. Although I am female and married to a male with whom I have four children, I believe both sexes can be attractive, charming, hard-working, funny, and compassionate. I care deeply about all people regardless of their sexual orientation. As a counselor, I want to create a safe space for LGBTQ+ individuals to live an unconstrained, joyous life, free of judgment (Seales, 2022). However, I need to be respectful and mindful of traditional values and beliefs when working with heterosexual clients.

I chose to pursue Grand Canyon University's counseling program because of its Christian foundation. I recognized that if I was going to practice counseling, I needed to break down barriers, become culturally competent, and educate myself on the most prevalent religion in the United States. After taking the Implicit Association Test on Religion, I discovered that I had a slight automatic preference for Christianity over Judaism and a moderate automatic preference for Judaism over Islam. While I do not discriminate against any religion, this test has made me reflect on my subconscious associations towards different faiths. In particular, it made me aware of the emotions I have about Christianity and Judaism, as well as some negative associations I have with Islam. It is essential to acknowledge these associations, to work towards understanding their origins, and to address any prejudice or bias that may be present.

Furthermore, I believe that the homogenization and Islamization of the September 11th terror attack has had a damaging effect on society (Ahmad, 2021). It has resulted in the unfair combination of Islam and Muslims with terrorism, which has led to a great deal of unnecessary fear and discrimination. In addition, Jews in America have been discriminated against in the United States throughout history, but increasingly so with the Israel-Hamas War. Many religions, religious groups, and differences in beliefs have been the basis of wars, death, and brutality in this world, which continues to divide our species. Similar to my morals, values, and spiritual beliefs, the basis of religion is what interconnects the human race, and that is love, respect, and ethical behavior toward others.

Developing cultural competence as a counselor is crucial for providing effective and inclusive mental health services. To enhance my cultural competence, I have set three specific goals. Firstly, I will seek knowledge about different religions, cultures, and the LGBTQ+ community by completing at least one training or workshop every six months, accessing online

resources, and participating in community events. Understanding culture is essential to providing culturally sensitive counseling. Secondly, I will engage in self-care and reflection by examining my biases, assumptions, and values. I will keep a journal, incorporate it into my day, and reflect at least once weekly to avoid unintentional stereotypes. Finally, I commit to identifying at least one communication barrier each month that may obstruct effective communication with my clients. I will track where I addressed these barriers and take the necessary steps to eliminate them by practicing active listening and asking open-ended questions. This will help me provide the best possible care to my clients. It is important to challenge biases and stereotypes to promote greater understanding and empathy toward all sexualities, religions, and cultures. By doing so, we can work towards a more inclusive and peaceful society where everyone feels valued and respected, and I can better serve my clients.

References

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