

## **Increasing Your Cultural Competence**

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## **Introduction**

This paper will reflect on the author's cultural competence and their completion of two Implicit Association Tests available from Harvard University and Project Implicit (Project Implicit, 2022). The paper will cover which test was completed, a summary of the results, an exploration of the author's impressions of the test and a discussion of the author's plan for growing in cultural competence as a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC). Lastly, the author will examine why it is important for LPCs to understand their cultural biases.

## **Test Completed**

The Implicit Association Tests (IAT) by Project Implicit measure the response time to words and pictures presented to the test-taker to measure how a person has preference (bias) for one race/sexuality/body type/etc. over another (Project Implicit, 2011). For the purpose of this paper, the author completed the Race IAT that measures automatic preference of either African American or European-American.

## **Summary of Results**

The results of the IAT suggest that the author has a slight bias for African American over European-Americans. In comparison, according to the IAT results page, only 7% of respondents share this bias while 68% of respondents are either slight, moderate, or strongly biased in their preference for European-American over African American (Project Implicit, 2011).

## **Overview of Impressions**

The author's overall impressions of the IAT are mixed. The test has received criticism as being unreliable and susceptible to several errors (Nagai, 2017). Additionally, while some social psychologists believe the IAT has some value, in the end taking an IAT doesn't quite compare or gauge a true-to-life, contextualized event of bias (Jost, 2019). In response to Nagai's (2017)

criticisms, the author must say that as a European-American with an absolute 0% of any ancestry other than Caucasian, he was convinced that the IAT would peg him as an out-and-out racist because that's what these kinds of tests do, right? However, the author was surprised that he tested as having a slight preference for African Americans over European-Americans.

This preference is slightly confusing to the author when addressing plans for growth and increasing his cultural competence. As a European-American, isn't the author *supposed* to have implicit and unconscious bias opposite the results? Perhaps, the author is being facetious. Areas of growth would perhaps need to include a continued cultivation of a welcoming atmosphere to all races regardless of culture or lifestyles.

### **Plan for Growth in Cultural Competence**

The author's plans for growth are to continue to grow in cultural competence through education of various cultures, personal contact with persons of various cultures, and to continue to cultivate his strength of being able to create a welcoming environment to all cultures and lifestyles. He plans to 1) become more educated on the history and culture of African American cultures while in graduate school, 2) journal out any moment whenever he feels bias against an African American, and 3) become more aware of unconscious bias using resources which discuss the psychological underpinnings of unconscious bias.

### **The Importance of Understanding Biases**

It is important for LPCs to become aware of their biases whenever preparing for a career in counseling because they should be able to know the difference in how they see the world compared to their clients and be able to set aside their own perspective so that they can empathically understand the perspective of their client (Tadisco & Salomone, 1991). If an LPC does not do this before becoming licensed there is a strong possibility that their biases will

become more entrenched the further removed, they are from graduate school and training (Tadisco & Salomone, 1991).

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this paper has explored the author's taking of an IAT that tested for bias toward or against African Americans verses European Americans. The author did not test for racial bias against African Americans but will continue to strive to grow in this area to fully understand his cultural biases. This will enable him to create a more welcoming atmosphere and to be a more culturally competent and aware counselor.

## References

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