Who Are You?

What Identities Make You - You?
Our Brains at Work

The problem?
Too much information to process.

Scientists estimate that we are exposed to as many as 11 million pieces of information at any one time.

Our brains can only functionally deal with about 40.

98% of mental processes are unconscious. Only 2% are conscious.

The solution?
Mental short-cuts.

The brain seeks to conserve energy.

The brain acts as a prediction-machine.

We’ve evolved to have mental short cuts that save time and usually yield reliable results.
How Our Brains Respond to Differences

• Our brain is scanning our environment for who belongs (and is safe) and who is “other” (and a potential threat or dangerous).

• **Who** we come to categorize as belonging or threatening is **learned** as a result of structural inequities and messaging we have received about categories of people.

• These harmful **associations** we carry can lead us to make **assumptions** resulting in **inequitable outcomes** for historically marginalized groups.
Mental categories and personal experiences become “hard-wired” into cognitive functioning.

Unconscious biases are mostly triggered by primary factors such as race, gender and age.

Our biases are most likely to be activated by the following four key conditions:

- Stress,
- Time constraints,
- Multi-tasking, and
- Need for closure

“[Biases] are learned, so they can be unlearned,” says Dr. Mahzarin Banaji.
How Can it Show Up?

1. **Personal (Internalized)**
   - The subtle and overt messages that reinforce negative beliefs and self-hatred in individuals.

2. **Interpersonal**
   - Negative acts and microinequities carried out from one person to another.

3. **Institutional**
   - Policies and practices that reinforce negative standards within a workspace or organization.

4. **Systemic (Structural)**
   - Multiple institutions collectively upholding negative policies and practices.

- Industry practices (i.e. redlining)
- Public policies (i.e. disproportionate sentencing laws)
- Lack of representation at the different levels, departments and roles
- Biased processes for recruitment, hiring, development, advancement, retention, and support
- Microinequities
- Disrespect
- Harassment
- Bullying
- Discrimination
- Attitudes toward others
- Attitudes toward self

Inspired by Race Forward.
Moment of Reflection
How do these go together?
OPPRESSION

- RACISM
- SEXISM
- HOMOPHOBIA
- TRANSPHOBIA
- XENOPHOBIA
- CLASSISM
- ABLEISM
- ANTI-SEMISTISM
- ISLAMOPHOBIA

Any form of unjust or cruel exercise of authority or power over those without power.
OPPRESSION WORKS IN THREE WAYS:

- Pressure to conform or comply
- Backlash to get you to comply
- Get rid of you through villainization

Book Recommendation: White Rage
TACTICS USED TO MAINTAIN SYSTEMIC OPPRESSION IN MENTAL HEALTH AGENCIES

- DENIAL
- SILENCING
- PERFORMATIVE ACTS
- VILLIANIZATION/SCAPEGOATING
- RETALIATION/THREATENING
- FORCING PERSON OUT OF AGENCY
DENIAL

• “What do you mean there are inequities here?”
• “We value Diversity, Equity and Inclusion”
• “We have Diverse staff”
• “We see Diverse clients”
• “There is NO PROBLEM HERE”
• “There is no racism anymore”
• “I don’t see color”

Book Recommendation: Cultural Humility
SILENCING

• “This is not a topic for workplace or professional setting”
• “This is too emotionally difficult for work”
• “This is not the way we do it”
• “DEI is just not a priority for me”
• “We are overbooked with clients – there is no time for this type of discussion”
• Ignoring client complaints/feedback

Book Recommendation: Race Talk: Conspiracy of Silence
VILLIANIZATION & SCAPEGOATING

• “Your tone is too aggressive”
• “You do not fit the culture here”
• “If only you said it in a better way, I could listen”
• “You are creating problems here” (aka you are the problem)
• “No others are complaining”
• Can be directed towards clients, family members or therapists who are trying to advocate

PURPOSE

• DISCREPITS the person and the concerns they are advocating for
• SILENCES all others from speaking up because they are scared of retaliation
• MAINTAINS THE STATUS QUO of Systemic Oppression

Book Recommendation: White Fragility
TACTICS USED TO MAINTAIN SYSTEMIC OPPRESSION IN MENTAL HEALTH AGENCIES

- Denial
- Silencing
- Performative Acts
- Villainization/Scapegoating
- Retaliation/Threatening
- Forcing Person Out of Agency
ACCOUNTABILITY ON ALL LEVELS

AGENCY

COMMUNITY

INDIVIDUAL
Accountability for Mental Health Agency

- Policies
- Leadership
- Enforcement of Policies and Consequences
- Holding Leadership Accountable
- Systemic Changes
- Hearing from clients, family members, and therapists of the agency

*Book Recommendation: How to Be An AntiRacist*
Joining together is a way to build our power collectively to advocate for true equity and inclusion in our systems.
Personal & Interpersonal Levels

Normativity
Ignorance
Homophobia
Injustice
Transphobia
Misogyny
Heterosexism
Systemic Inequality
Religion
Biphobia
Police Brutality
Fear
Anger
Shame
Guilt
Institutionalized Oppression
Enemies
Media
Slurs
Violence
Disgust
Denial
Criticisms
Repression
Bullying
Rejection
Gender
Binary
Invisibility
Judgment
Stress
Heartbreak
Pain
Shaming
Suicide
The Closet
Loss
Abuse
Acute
Negativity
Horizontal Oppression
Judgment
Political Games
Trauma
Substance
Violence
Suicide
Heartbreak
Pain
Shaming
Loss
Abuse
Acute
Negativity
SHIFTING & REFRAMING

“What has happened to you?”

vs

“What is wrong with you?”
Use Your Power, Privilege and Position
to be a critically conscious ally, advocate, activist, co-conspirator

- Do your own work. You do this work for yourself as much as for others.
- Work through feelings of guilt, shame and defensiveness.
- The narrative belongs to the client not to you.
- Suspend Judgement. Deeply listen to the lived experiences of your client.

- Trust your client’s story even if it doesn’t make sense to your world.
- Avoid stereotyping, trivializing or infantilizing racialized experiences.
- Recognize that all conversations and disclosures don’t need your voice or response.
- Advocate for the dismantling, and deconstruction of White supremacy in all spaces.

- Unapologetically call out racist and discriminatory remarks, behaviors and institution structures.
- Acknowledge when you are wrong and learn from it.
- Don’t expect a thank you.
HISTORICAL CONTEXT RESOURCES
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- The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America’s Great Migration by Isabel Wilkerson
- A People’s History of the United States: 1492–Present by Howard Zinn
- They Were Her Property: White Women as Slave Owners in the American South by Stephanie E. Jones-Rogers
- American Lynching
- Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II by Douglas A. Blackmon
MENTAL HEALTH PRACTICE RESOURCES

- Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome
  - Dr. Joy DeGruy
  - Newly Revised and Updated Edition

- Eliminating Race-Based Mental Health Disparities
  - Promoting Equity and Culturally Responsive Care across Settings
  - Edited by Monique T. Williams, PhD, Daniel C. Rosen, PhD, Jonathan W. Karter, PhD
  - Foreword by Patria Alexander, MD, NCC

- My Grandmother’s Hands
  - Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies
  - Resmaa Menakem

- The Body Keeps the Score
  - Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma
  - Bessel Van der Kolk, M.D.

- Anti-Racist Psychotherapy
  - Confronting Systemic Racism and Healing Racial Trauma
  - David Archer

- You Are Your Best Thing
  - Vulnerability, Shame Resilience, and the Black Experience
  - Edited by Tarana Burke and Brené Brown

- Managing Microaggressions
  - Addressing Everyday Racism in Therapeutic Spaces
  - Monica T. Williams

- Cultural Humility
  - Engaging Diverse Identities in Therapy
  - Joshua N. Hook, Don David, Jesse Owen, and Cillieen Deblaker
UNDERSTANDING WHITE BODY PRIVILEGE
ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES
ECONOMICS OF WHITE SUPREMACY
UNDERSTANDING AND DISMANTLING RACISM

*Disrupting White Supremacy From Within* by Jennifer Harvey

*Killing Rage* by bell hooks

*Witnessing Whiteness* by Shelly Tochuk

*Uprooting Racism* by Tim Wise

*A Promise and A Way of Life* by Paul Kivel

*Biased* by Jennifer L. Eberhardt, PhD
PERSPECTIVES ON RACE
ADDITIONAL TITLES
Resources for Next Steps

Racial Equity Tools Glossary
https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary

Building a Multi-Ethnic, Inclusive & Antiracist Organization
https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/olcese.pdf

Continuum of becoming and anti-racist organization
https://www.aesa.us/conferences/2013_ac_presentations/Continuum_AntiRacist.pdf

Principles for Racially Equitable Policy Platforms
https://www.raceforward.org/practice/tools/principles-racially-equitable-policy-platforms

One Way to be an Ally Right Now: Support Black Mental Health
https://www.huffpost.com/entry/ally-support-black-mental-health_1_5ed7a1f0c5b6f8b2ac14a47e?utm_campaign=share_email&ncid=other_email_o63gt2jcad4

8 Ethical Considerations for Responding to Social Injustice
https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Ethics-Education-and-Resources/Ethics-8/8-Ethical-Considerations-for-Responding-to-Social-Injustice?MvBriefArticleId=47256

White People Confronting Racism:
https://whitesconfrontingracism.org

The Hidden Cost of DEI Work - And What To Do About It
Q&A
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