



# Addressing Implicit Bias & Disproportionality in Social-Emotional and Behavior Assessment

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May 27, 2021



# Session Objectives

- **Considerations around implicit bias and how to ensure students receive equitable support**
- **How social-emotional behavior assessment data can be used to consider which students need additional support**
- **Methods for reducing rates of racial/ethnic disproportionality in behavior risk identification**
- **Strategies for engaging in culturally-responsive assessment practices**



# Current State Of Child & Adolescent Mental Health: A “Public Health Crisis”

- Approximately 20% of children are experiencing significant mental, emotional, or behavioral symptoms that would qualify them for a psychiatric diagnosis.

(Costello et al., 2003; Merikangas et al., 2010)

- Among adolescents with mental health needs, 70% do not receive the care they need

(Chandra & Minkovitz, 2006)

- Most people with mental health concerns in the U.S. remain either untreated or poorly treated.



# Significant Disparities in Access to Services



- Especially persistent for Black and Latinx youth
- Increased risk for mental health concerns for diverse youth – due to discrimination, trauma, &/or community violence
- Differential disability identification for diverse youth

(Cummings et al., 2010, Kincaid & Sullivan, 2016; Liu et al., 2018; Pumariega et al., 1998; Shonkoff et al., 2012; Skiba et al., 2006)





# Behavior Assessment Practices: What do we know?



Teacher  
Referral

Problem  
Solving  
Teams

Pediatric  
Setting

# Methods of Early Identification

Universal  
Screening

Office  
Discipline  
Referral  
Data

School-based  
Mental Health  
Support



# Teacher Referral and School Identification Practices

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Refer-test-place models

Perceptions of teachability

Availability of training on referral practices

Delays in referral of SEB concerns



# Subjectivity in Behavior Assessment Practices

- Wide range of variability in assessment of student behavior concerns
- Cultural differences
- Aspects of subjectivity:
  - Behavior rating scales
  - Classroom observations
  - Student/teacher/parent interviews
- Bias, stereotypes, & prejudices
- Culturally-responsive assessment practices for all kids



# Know Our History

- Psychology includes beliefs that encourage us to value superiority, meritocracy, and even heritability
- Many assumptions within psychology are based on refutable explanations of racial differences in intelligence
- Our field has been designed from a deficit perspective.
- Differences and uniqueness are “bad”
- Perspectives that deviate from the common norm are pathological

**We are trained to think “biased”**

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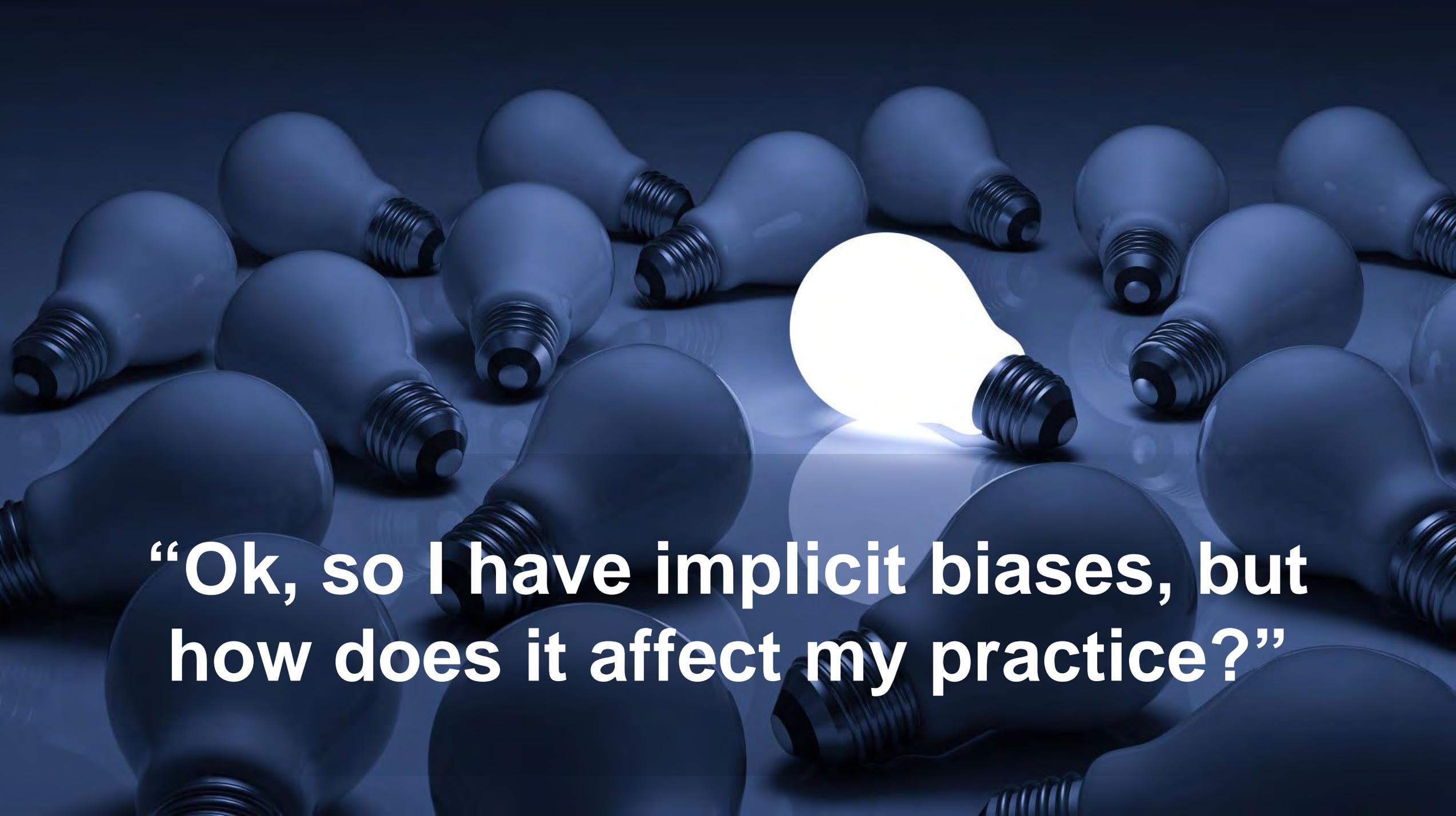
***We must  
unlearn our biased  
perspectives  
and  
replace them  
with  
new approaches***





Our  
behavior is  
powerfully  
guided by  
the things  
that we  
EXPECT to  
be true



A collection of lightbulbs on a dark surface. One lightbulb in the center is illuminated, glowing bright white, while all other lightbulbs around it are unlit and appear dark blue. The scene is dimly lit, with the primary light source being the single glowing bulb.

**“Ok, so I have implicit biases, but  
how does it affect my practice?”**

# Bias in Practice

- We interpret student needs based on our own experiences
- We have cultural blind spots (we miss the silent struggles of BIPOC youth)
- We allow the systems and structures that are designed to be exclusionary to guide our decision making
- We perpetuate the values of superiority, heritability, and meritocracy without recognizing or acknowledging systems of oppression
- We trust our deficit model as the gold standard for determining how to help people





**What do we do?**

**How do we do  
it?**

# Population-Based Approach to SEB Assessment





# Universal SEB Screening

- Population-based service delivery
  - Conducted with all students to identify those who are “at risk” of SEB concerns
- Identify barriers to learning
- Emerging evidence of ability to predict outcomes
  - Screener predicting 6 years later which children were involved in mental health, special education, or juvenile justice (Jones et al., 2002)
  - SAEBRS fall screening scores predict spring reading scores, ODR’s, and student absences (Eklund et al., 2016)
  - Predict one year later students who may have conduct problems, social skills, depression, and academic achievement (Kamphaus, Dowdy, Eklund, & Dunn, 2015)



# Considerations for Selecting an SEB Screener

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**Assessed Key  
Variables  
(+/-)**

**Quick &  
Relatively  
Inexpensive**

**Psychometrically  
Sound**

**Normed &  
Validated with  
Population of  
Interest**

**Good SEB Screener**



# Disproportionate number of students from minoritized backgrounds identified as having Emotional Disability

**Black students  
over-identified**

**Hispanic students  
under-identified**



Teacher  
Referral

Problem  
Solving  
Teams

Pediatric  
Setting

# Methods of Early Identification

**Universal  
Screening**

School-Based  
Mental Health  
Support

**Office  
Discipline  
Referral  
Data**



# Examining Racial & Linguistic Disparities in SEB Screening Data



# Case Example #1

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## Thomas School District

- History of PBIS implementation
- Began universal screener to consider the SEB needs of students
- Student demographics
  - 57% White
  - 25% Black
  - 10% Hispanic/Latinx
  - 7% Multiple
- Examination of Office Disciplinary Referral Data vs. use of SEB screener



# Case Example #1

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## Thomas School District

### Results

- Examination of Office Disciplinary Referral (ODR) Data vs. use of SEB screener to identify risk
- Students of color
  - Use of ODR: 3x more likely
  - Screening measure: 1.5x more likely



# Case Example #1

## Thomas School District

	White	Black	Multiple	Hispanic	Asian	EBR Odds Ratio	ODR Odds Ratio
School 1 (n = 300)	36%	40%	11%	6%	7%	NS	NS
School 2 (n = 203)	37%	44%	11%	5%	2%	NS	NS
School 3 (n = 505)	72%	9%	8%	9%	1%	1.49	2.04
School 4 (n = 282)	69%	12%	10%	2%	0%	1.52	2.92



## Examining Racial/Ethnic & Linguistic Disparities in SEB Screening Data

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### **Universal Screening to Detect BER Among English Language Learners**

(Murietta & Eklund, 2021)

- No difference between ELL students and English-speaking students
- Age & gender significant predictors of risk status among both groups

### **Moderating Influence of Student Race/Ethnicity on the Diagnostic**

**Accuracy of a Behavior Screener** (Eklund et al., under review)

- Examine the diagnostic accuracy of the SAEBRS as moderated by student race/ethnicity
- SAEBRS demonstrated borderline to optimal sensitivity and specificity across racial/ethnic groups in predicting SEB risk status
- Diagnostic accuracy did not vary across racial/ethnic subgroups





# Culturally Responsive Assessment Practices



# Changing Our Approach to Assessment Practice

Not Culturally Responsive	Culturally Responsive
Collect data from past records and replicate	Cultural data collection (includes heritage and identity)
Interview with “standard” interview questions	Design based interviewing
Task oriented/ transactional interactions with caregivers, and youth	Relationship focused, deeply interpersonal style
Strict standardized processes, inflexible	Collaborative, flexible, creative
Take the perspective of the referring person	Honors and values multiple voices and perspectives from the child and family
Data interpretation without critical analysis	Data interpreted in context of heritage and identity
One standard approach for everyone	Personalized approach to assessment and intervention



# Cultural Data Collection: General Domains of knowledge

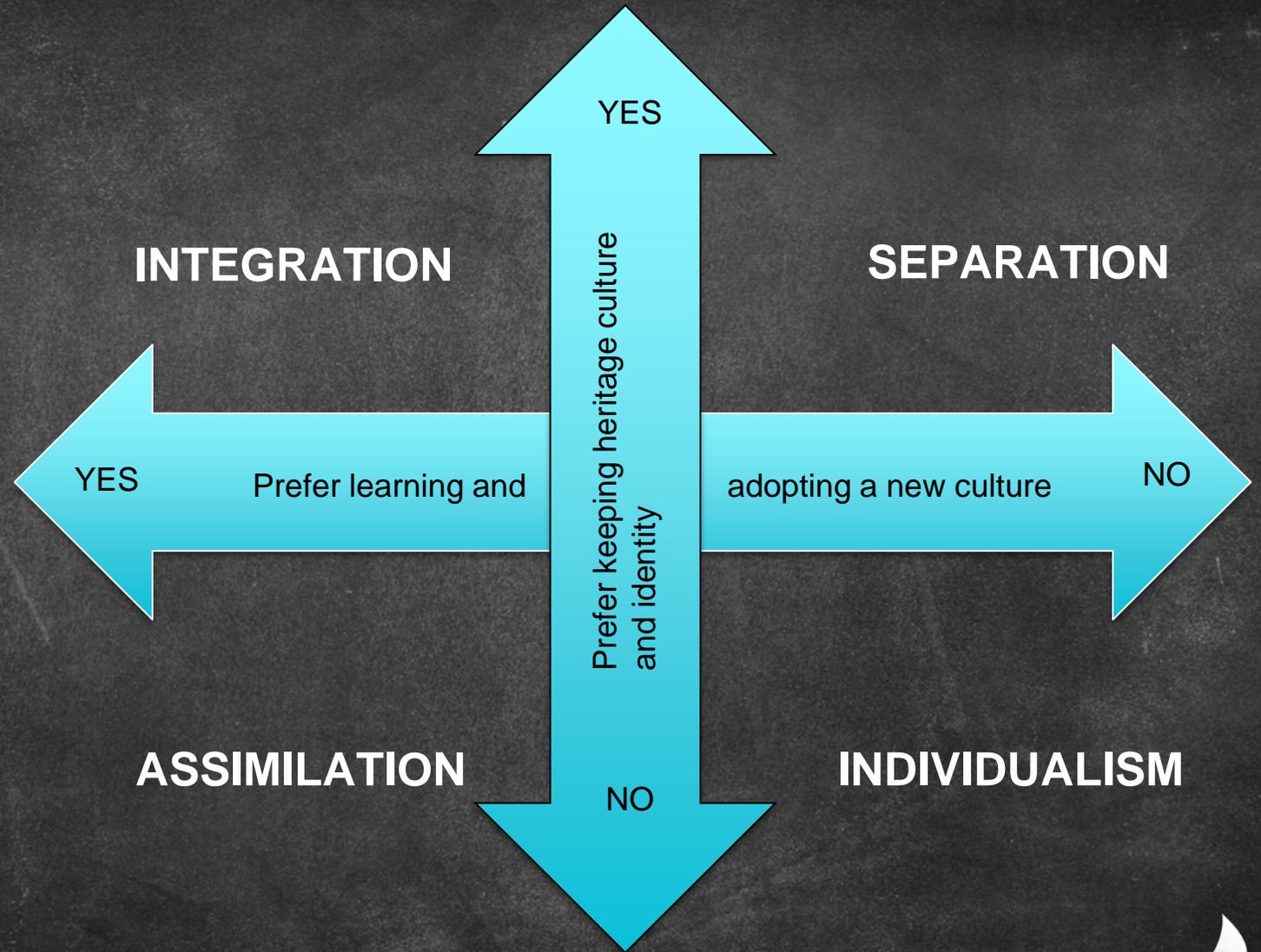


# Notice Communication Styles

	Culture A	Culture B	Culture C	Culture D	Culture E
Speaking style	Softly/slower	Softly	Softly	Loud/fast to control more	Animated with affect/emotion
Eye Contact	Indirect gaze with listening or speaking	Avoidance of eye contact while listening or speaking to high status persons	Avoidance of eye contact while listening or speaking to high status persons	Greater eye contact when listening	Direct eye contact (prolonged) when speaking, but less when listening
Pattern	Interject less: limited encouraging communication	Interject less; limited encouraging communication	Interject less	Head nods; nonverbal markers	Interrupt (turn taking) when can
Response speed	Delayed auditory (silence)	Mild delay	Mild delay	Quick responding	Quicker responding
Intensity	Low-keyed, indirect	Low-keyed, indirect	Low-keyed, indirect	Objective, task oriented	Affective, emotional, and interpersonal



# Acculturation



Note: Adaptation of Berry's acculturation model (Berry, 2005)



**Table 1. ADDRESSING Framework and the Jones Intentional Multicultural Interview Schedule (JIMIS)**

<b>ADDRESSING framework Cultural Influences</b>	<b>Application to Minority Groups</b>	<b>Sample questions from Jones Intentional Multicultural Interview Schedule (JIMIS)</b>
<u>A</u> ge/ generational	Children, adolescents, elders	How do you define family? Who is in your family? Who lives in your home? What do your family members call you? Where were you born? Where does most of your family live now? Who makes the decisions about your daily care (e.g. transportation, food, discipline)?
<u>D</u> evelopmental disabilities <u>D</u> isabilities acquired	Developmental disabilities or acquired disabilities	What are some challenges that you or your family members have to deal with? Tell me what you think about school. What emotions come to mind when you think about your schoolwork?
<u>R</u> eligion & Spirituality	Religious minority cultures	How does your family deal with feelings? What are some coping strategies that they use? How do religion and spirituality impact your family? Who do you turn to when you are sad, scared, or worried about something?
<u>E</u> thnic and Racial Identity	Ethnic and racial minority cultures	What does your family think about counseling? What do you think about it? What are some things about your family that few people know? How do you describe yourself in terms of your race? How does your race affect your relationships with other people? What issues to you have with hair and/or skin color? What experiences do you have with racial conflict? Who supports you the most at school? At home?

# Jones Intentional Multicultural Interview Schedule (JIMIS)

# Jones Intentional Multicultural Interview Schedule

(cont.)

<u>S</u> exual orientation	Gay, lesbian, bisexual people	What are some characteristics about you that make you similar or different from people in your peer group? Is there a label that your peers use to describe groups of kids at your school? Which label best identifies your group?
<u>I</u> ndigenous heritage	Indigenous/Aboriginal/Native people	What are some rituals /routines that your family does daily? Which are used to cope with stress? What situations are most stressful for you?
<u>N</u> ational origin	Refugees, immigrants, international	How and when did your family arrive in the United States? What were the circumstances of their arrival?
<u>G</u> ender	Women, transgender people	When there is conflict with peers at school, what is the usual cause? What are some characteristics about you that make you different from people in your peer group? What do you believe are the responsibilities of women or men?

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive review of the ADDRESSING framework, see Hays, P. A. (2016). *Addressing cultural complexities in practice: A framework for clinicians and counselors* (3rd ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association

<sup>2</sup> For the original JIMIS, see Jones, J.M. (2009). Counseling with multicultural intentionality: The process of counseling and integrating client cultural variables. In J.M. Jones (Ed.), *The psychology of multiculturalism in schools: A primer for practice, training, and research* (pp 191-213). Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

<sup>3</sup> For a study of the application of the questions in this table, see Zigarelli, J., Jones, J.M., Palomino, C. and Kawamura, R (2016). Culturally-Responsive Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: Making the case for integrating cultural factors in evidence-based treatment. *Clinical Case Studies*, 15(6), 427-442. doi: 10.1177/1534650116664984.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands typing on a laptop keyboard. The focus is on the keys and the fingers, with a soft, blurred background. The lighting is warm and natural, highlighting the texture of the skin and the keys.

**Telling a child's authentic story through  
culturally responsive assessment reports**



# CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE REPORTS (PLANNING WORKSHEET)

BACKGROUND	TEST SELECTION	TEST INTERPRETATION	STRENGTHS AND ASSETS	RECOMMENDATIONS
Cultural values of the family and child	Describe the most relevant cultural factors prior to selecting measures for this evaluation.	For each assessment measure, identify cultural and linguistic factors impacted results.	Integrate a consistent focus on the cultural (including family and community) strengths for this child throughout the report.	School and home interventions: Start with a strength for every recommendation.
Cultural and/or linguistic factors that impact learning and behavior	How representative is this child's background in the psychometric properties of the tests available to you?	Identify any manifestations of behavior and emotion that may be due to cultural differences.	Describe family coping skills and perspectives on improvement.	Determine connections between the potential skill deficit and use the strength to select the appropriate intervention
Family system variables	Alternative measures to consider if invalid (or inconsistent data) found.			Consider all resources that the family does (or does not have access to) before selecting and intervention.
Acculturation patterns and styles among family members	Tools for evaluating strengths			

BACKGROUND	TEST SELECTION	TEST INTERPRETATION	STRENGTHS AND ASSETS	RECOMMENDATIONS
In what ways, were the cultural values of the family described?	What steps were taken to select the measures for this child?	How was an awareness of linguistic or cultural factors that affect this child demonstrated in the interpretation?	In what ways was there a focus on the cultural (including family and community) strengths for this child?	In what ways were the child's strengths used to support (or link to) the recommendations?
In what ways, were the cultural or linguistic factors that impact learning and behavior described?	How representative is this child's background in the tests that were selected?		What efforts went into involving the family in the assessment and decision-making process? How was it indicated in the report?	
In what ways were family system variables (constellation of members caregiving patterns, who is involved) described?	What other measures might have been chosen given the cultural background of the child? (if given the opportunity to do it again)		How were the family values integrated into or reflected in the report?	

## CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE REPORTS (ANALYSIS WORKSHEET)



A photograph of a woman from behind, wearing a blue denim jacket and a dark messenger bag. She is standing in a public space, possibly a transit station, with other people blurred in the background. The word "Questions?" is overlaid in yellow text on a semi-transparent dark band across the middle of the image.

**Questions?**



