

An Interactive Training Model To Promote Cultural Humility in Early Childhood Professionals

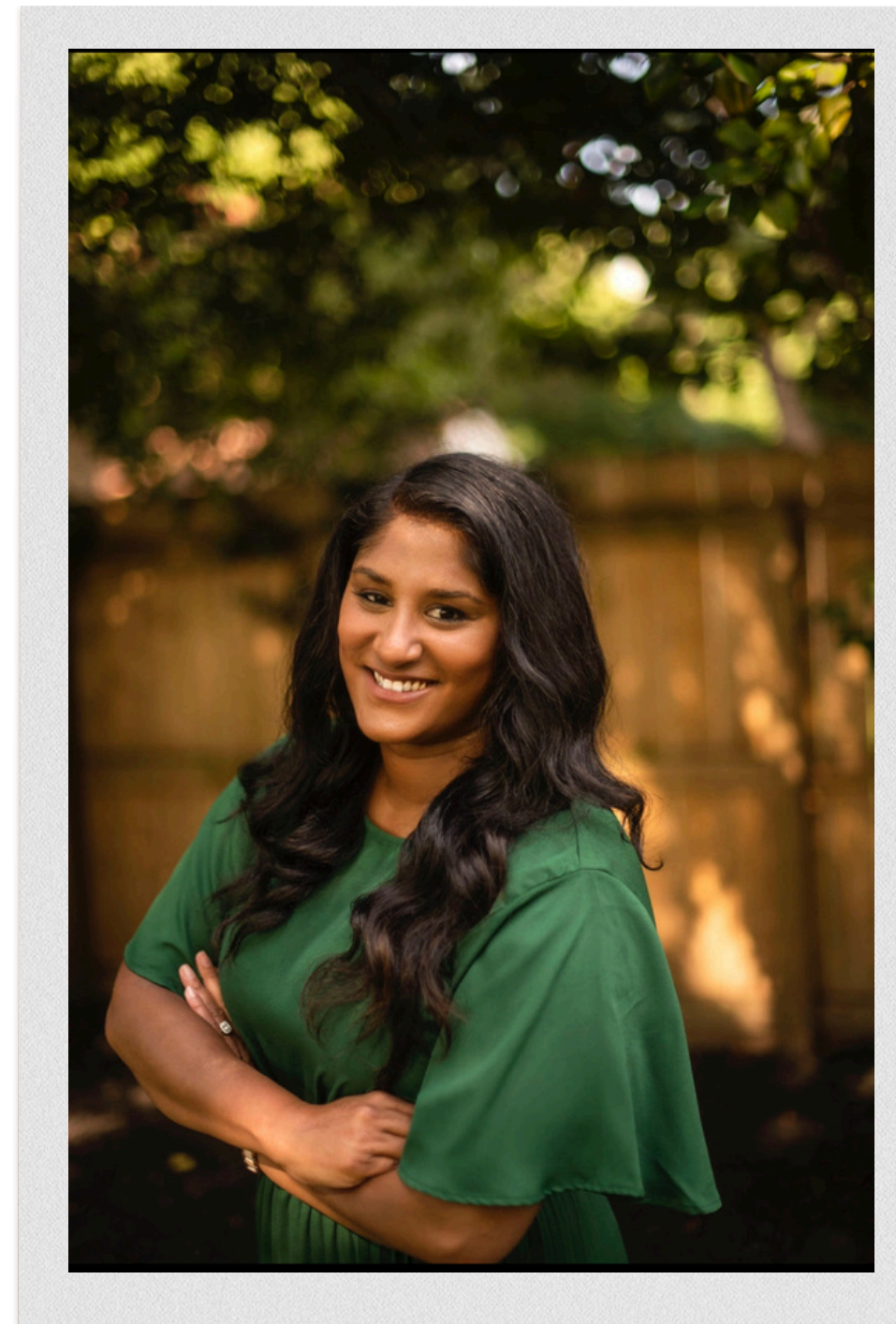
Dr. Anjali Ferguson

@parentingculture

LEP-NEP
November 11, 2025

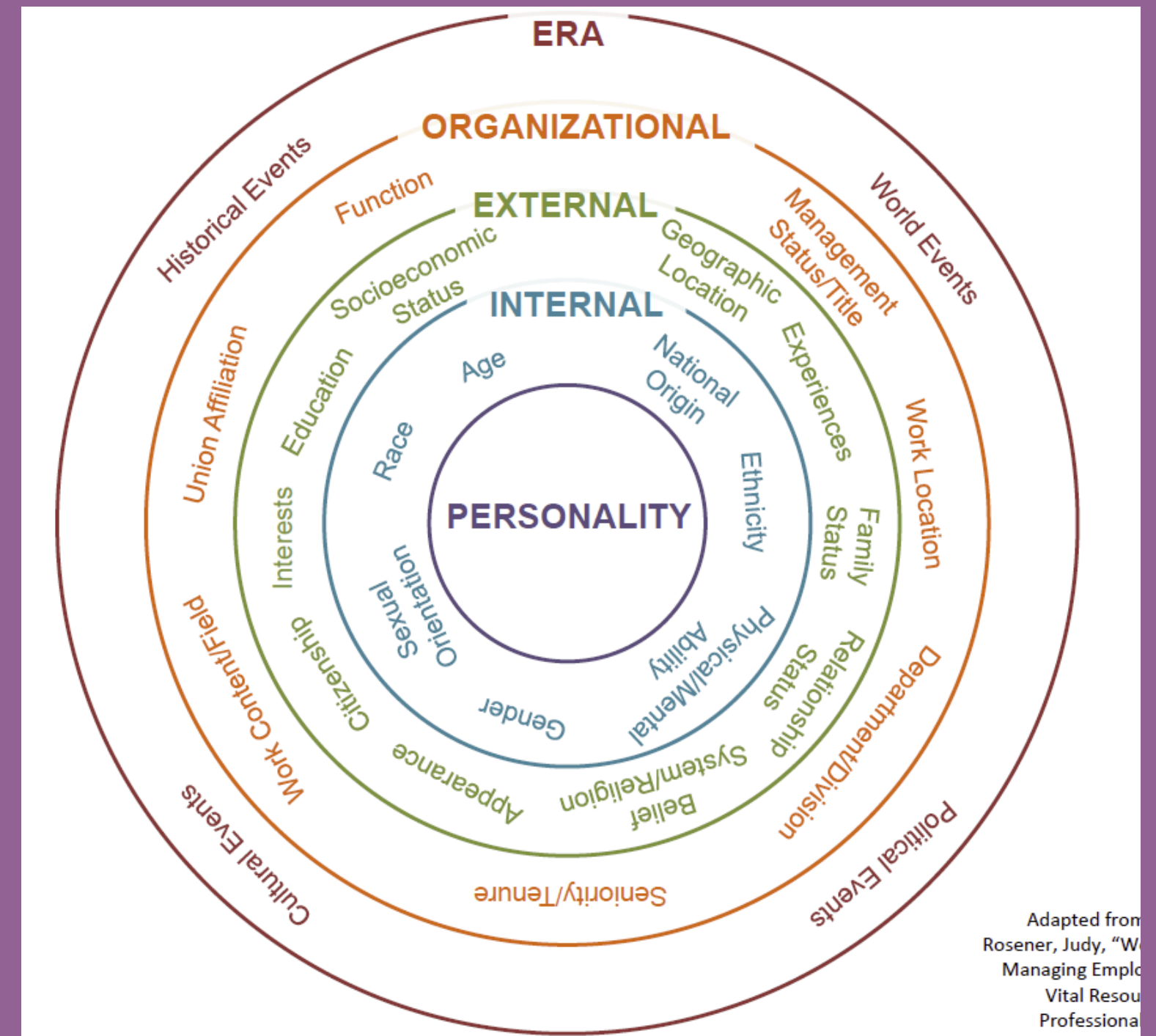
✦✦ Anjali Ferguson, Ph.D. ✦✦

Dr. Ferguson (she/her) is a Clinical Psychologist who specializes in trauma-informed care (to include racial trauma), early childhood mental health, and parenting. Dr. Ferguson's research and clinical interests include culturally competent models of care with efforts to promote community engagement of diverse populations and demystify mental health. Dr. Ferguson earned her Doctorate in Medical Clinical Psychology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She is a global expert on racial trauma and the impacts on children and families. Her commitment to social equity is experienced through her online community Parenting Culture– a research-informed, inclusive space for open conversations around parenting.



Culture and Cultural Identity

cultural identity is a critical piece of personal identity (and worldview) that develops as you absorb, interpret, and adopt (or reject) the beliefs, values, behaviors, and norms of the communities in your life.



Intersectionality



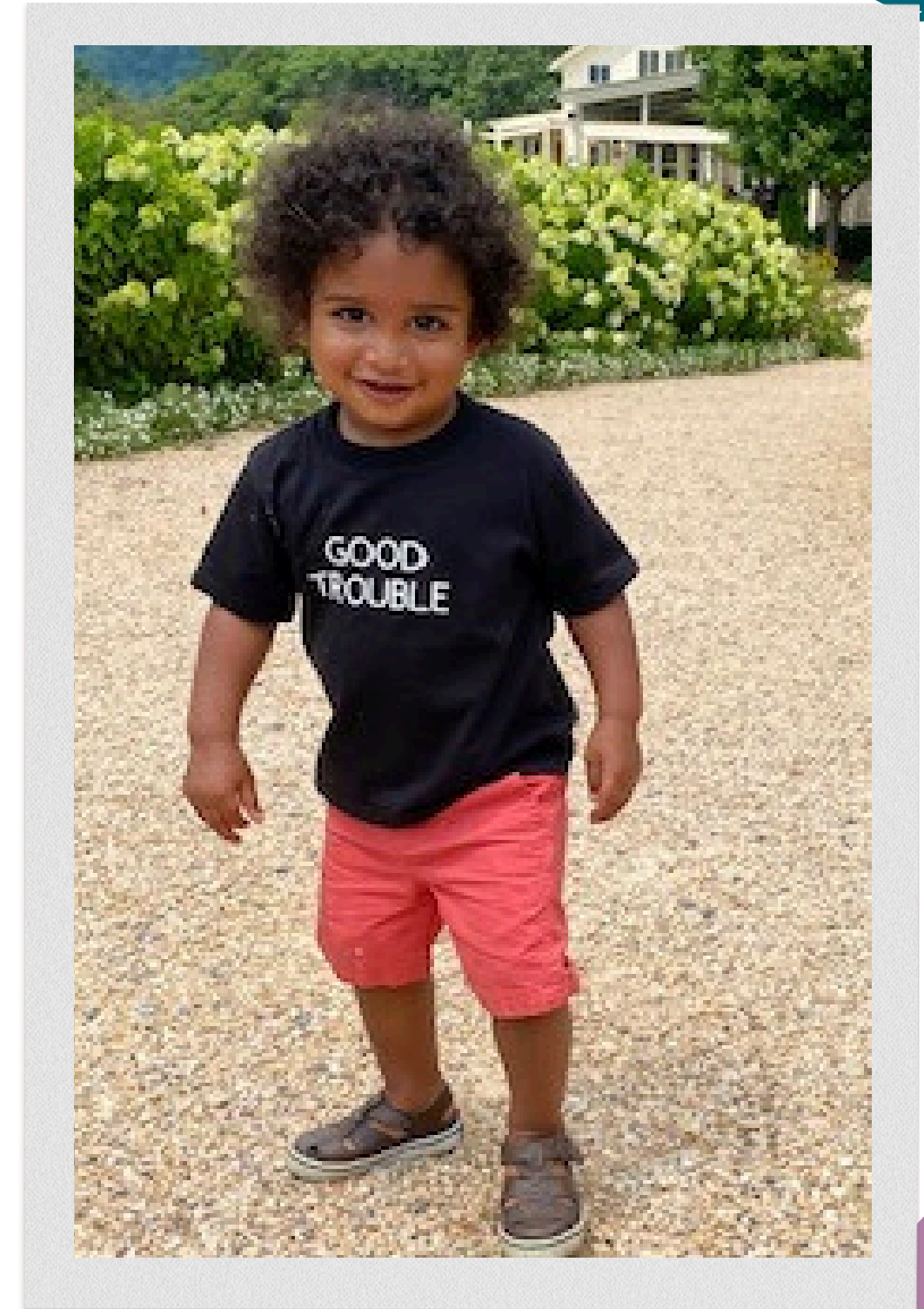
A word cloud containing various identities and roles, including: sister, educator, foodie, female, ally, first-born, professional, risk-taker, cis-gender, consultant, psychologist, partner, mentor, cycle-breaker, adventurer, extrovert, south-asian, parent, daughter, immigrant, author, creative, mother, advocate, woman, friend, wine-enthusiast, therapist, multi-racial, parenting-expert, speaker, and trauma.

The understanding that every individual has an intersection of identities that result from unique overlapping social structures.

No one social structure completely defines us (i.e. race alone does not define us-we must take into consideration an individual's gender, sexual identity, religion, SES, etc.)



**Cultural Competence
vs.
Cultural Humility/Responsiveness**



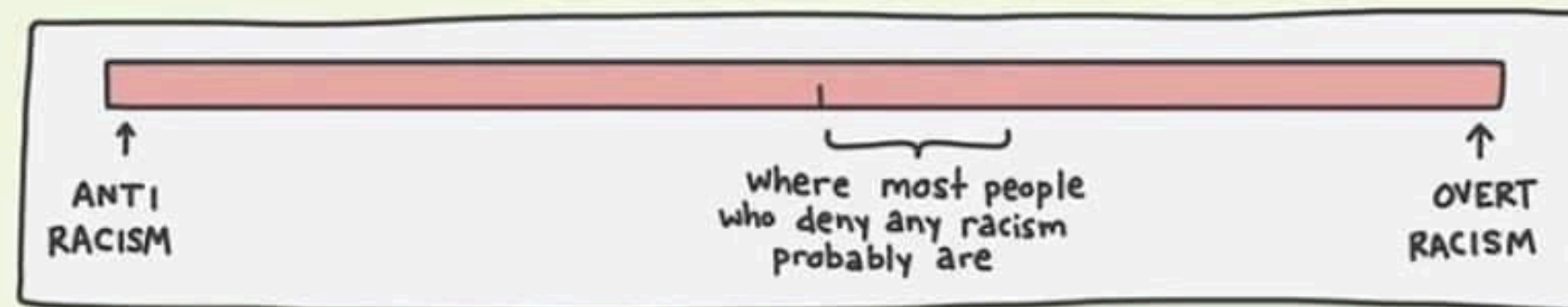
HOW I THOUGHT RACISM WORKED
BEFORE ANTI-RACISM EDUCATION:

ARE YOU RACIST?

☐ YES

☐ NO

HOW I THINK RACISM WORKS NOW:



@LINDSAYBRAMAN



Developmental Science



- **6 months : babies recognize race-based differences**
- **2 - 4 years old: children internalize racial bias**
- **Age 10 -12 children become set in their racial beliefs.**

- **In order to address equity, you have to start early and continue the conversation often**
- **In order for systems to alter all families have to engage in socialization practices**



Racial Trauma impacts on Mental Health



Historical and intergenerational impacts of trauma can exacerbate a stress response in BIPOC communities

Black youth have reported greater rates of depression, anxiety, and PTSD following the events of 2020



•Witnessing and living through racial violence can illicit:

Anxiety

Aggression

Sadness

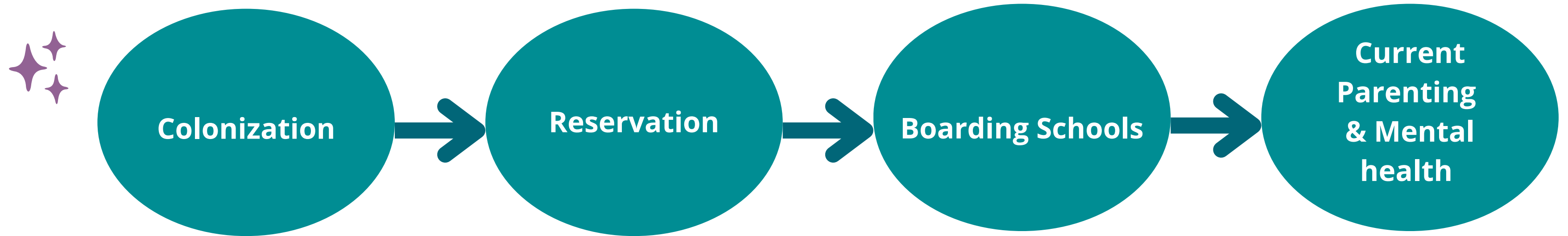
Difficulties concentrating

Sleep and appetite changes

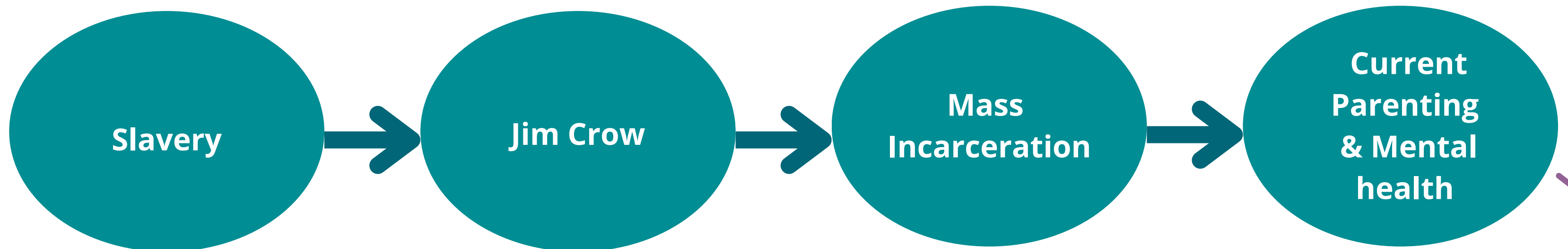


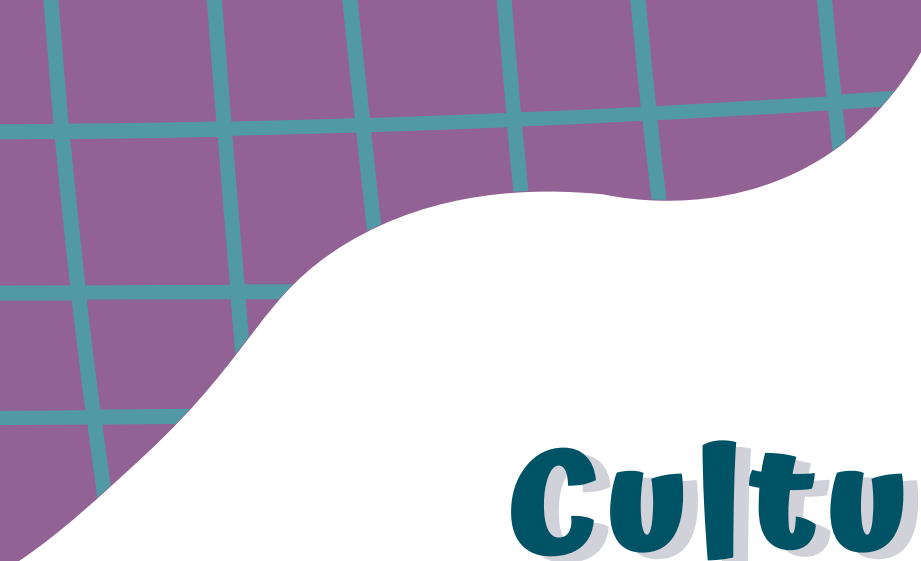
Intergenerational Trauma

Native/Indigenous Americans:



Black Communities:





Cultural Responsiveness = Flexibility

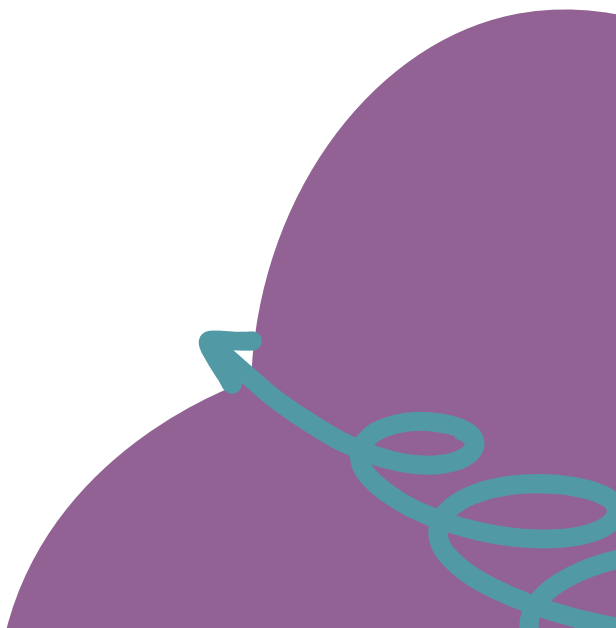


Many minoritized communities do not respond well to non-directive and abstract forms of intervention.

Traditional attachment and early childhood interventions can take a time, are costly, and often do not use themes that resonate with minoritized communities



Family-Centered/Collaborative Care

- The family is your partner
 - Intervention is fluid
 - Respect and dignity for differences
 - Empower
- 
- 



"Make Space for Race"

Children notice differences early and want language to understand the world around them. Welcome their curiosity and validate their experience by naming race-based experiences

Black children and teens experience on average more than 5 experiences of microaggression and racial discrimination daily

5+



1.

Understand your own biases

Implicit Bias

- Unconscious attitudes that manifest in our environments (i.e. workplace, school, healthcare, etc.)
- These attitudes and stereotypes can influence our actions, decisions, and understanding in an unconscious way that makes them difficult to control.
- You can have different implicit and explicit attitudes which makes these shifts even more difficult to obtain

Questions to ask:

- Question 1: Who are your closest friends?
- Question 2: Do you automatically exclude certain neighborhoods as places you might live or send your kids to school?
- Question 3: Do you have a 'gay friend'? "Asian friend" A 'black doctor/(or any professional)?

Implicit Bias Activity

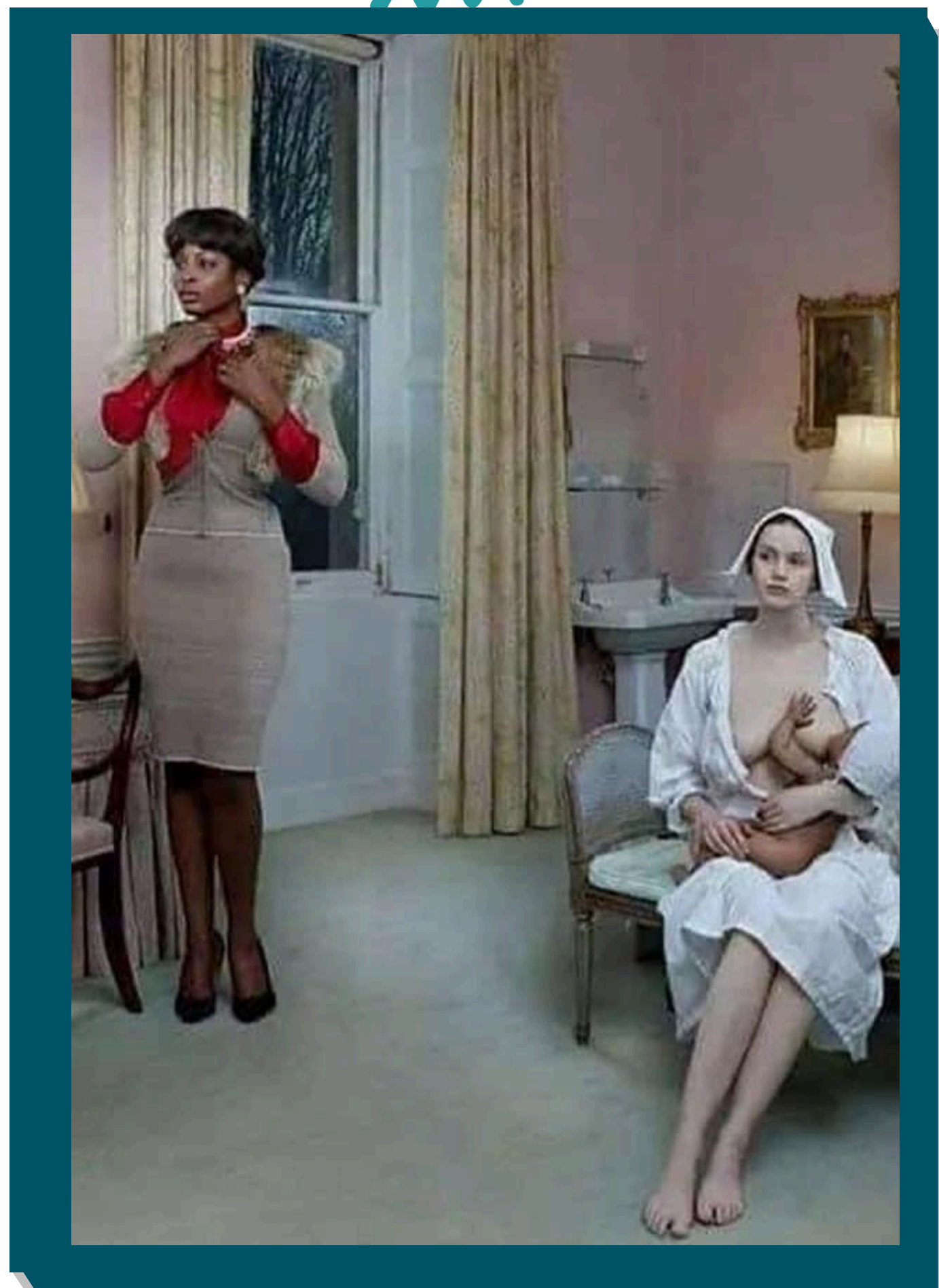
For this activity:

Step 1. Take a moment to observe the picture

Step 2. Answer the following questions

1. What was your initial automatic thought?
2. What feelings did you immediately feel? What feelings did you have after reflecting on the pictures
3. Take note of which picture stands out to you the most. Why?





2. Understand your privileges

What is Privilege?

The social advantages, prestige, or benefits that an individual may have by belonging to a certain social identity/group



3. Educate Yourself

Color Blind Ideology: "I Don't See Color"

Sometimes people think saying things like "I don't see color" are helpful approaches to discussions about race and skin color, but these statements ignore the experiences of marginalized groups. For children, it invalidates their experiences with understanding these differences and teaches them to avoid meaningful discussions about race and culture.



5. Teach Accuracy and Embrace Mistakes

Admit: Anti-racists admit they sometimes are racist but are committed to being better

Apologize (sufficiently): Do not defend yourself. Avoid defensiveness- “I sorry, what I said/did was wrong and hurtful.”

Repentance: You need to fully commit to doing better and different. Avoid participating in that action again. Work to right the wrongs. Commit to growing.



6. Reflect & Repeat

Remember*

Inclusion and equity landscapes are actively evolving. We also change a lot as individuals. It is important we reflect on our learnings and continually go through the process of appraisal. This is a life-long commitment.





Racial Socialization



What is it?

The process by which individuals learn about behaviors, values, practices, identity, and race-related stressors. This process is facilitated by parents. All families engage in racial socialization practices; however, for racially minoritized families, these processes are more explicit and can serve as a necessary protective measure.

Why is it important?

Research shows that individuals who are more racially socialized have better mental health outcomes and more protective factors. Exposure to others helps build individual identity, pride, empathy, and kindness



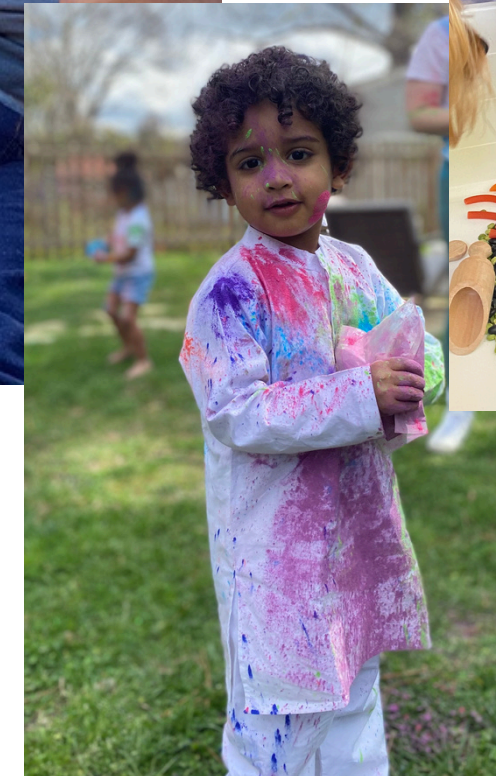


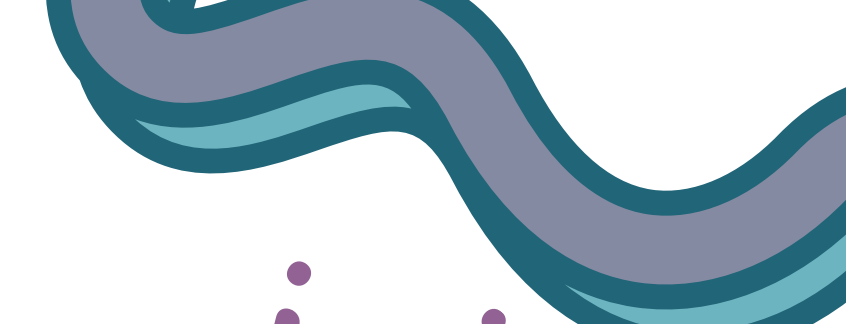
1. Celebrate Differences

Teach children to welcome differences and celebrate them. Expose them to different type of media and toys, talk about how each form is special and unique. e.g.; "Our differences make us special, they are what make us unique." "Differences exist and are welcomed in our home."

2. Expose children to media from their culture

Representation is critical to healthy identity development in children. We develop our identities based on the content we consume. Cultural identity development is important for mental health as it provides a sense of belonging and understanding. Have conversations about your family's cultural practices openly to build pride and self-esteem in one's identity.





3. Intentionally Interact with other communities

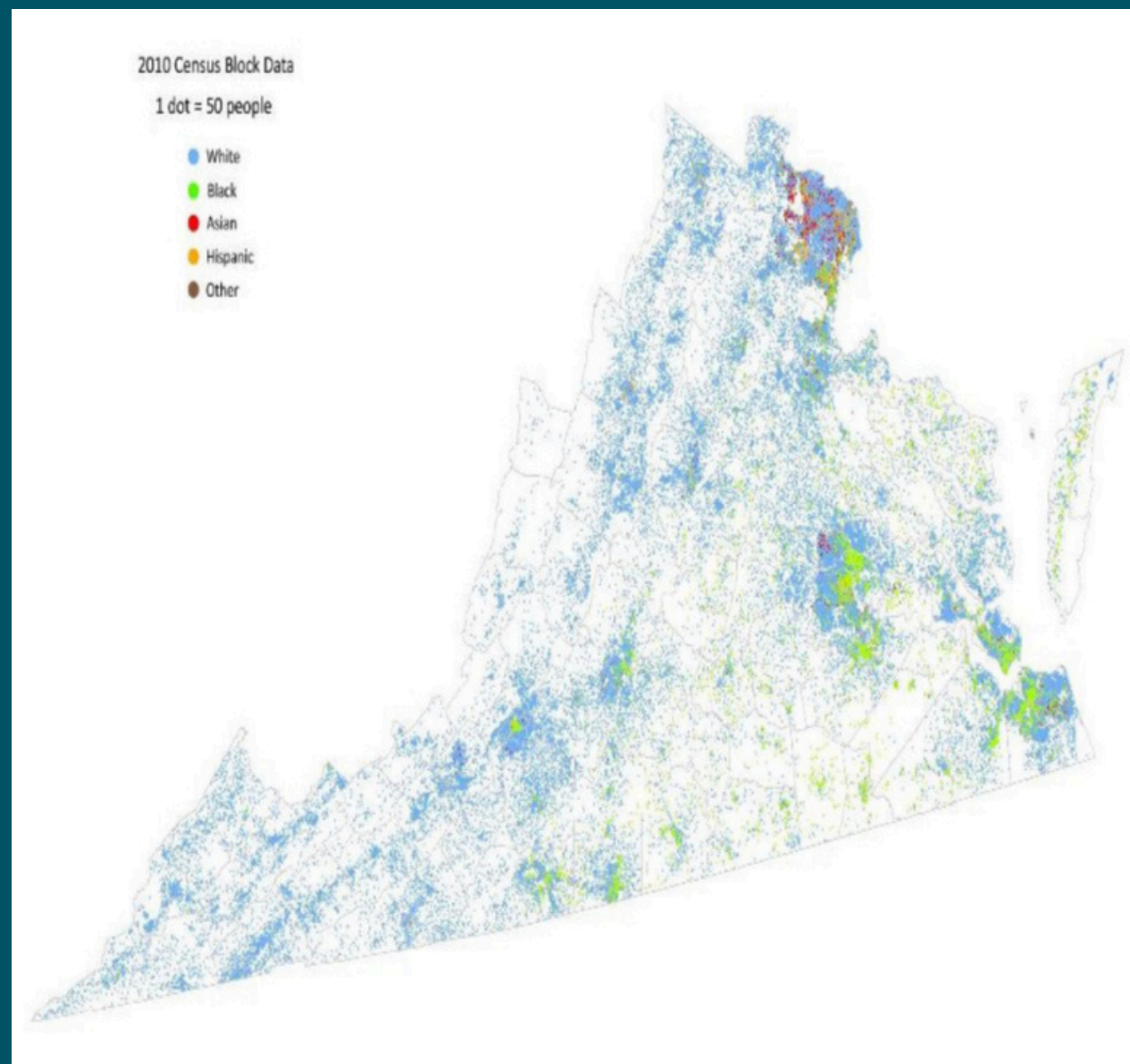
75%

of White people
have all-white
social networks and
friend groups

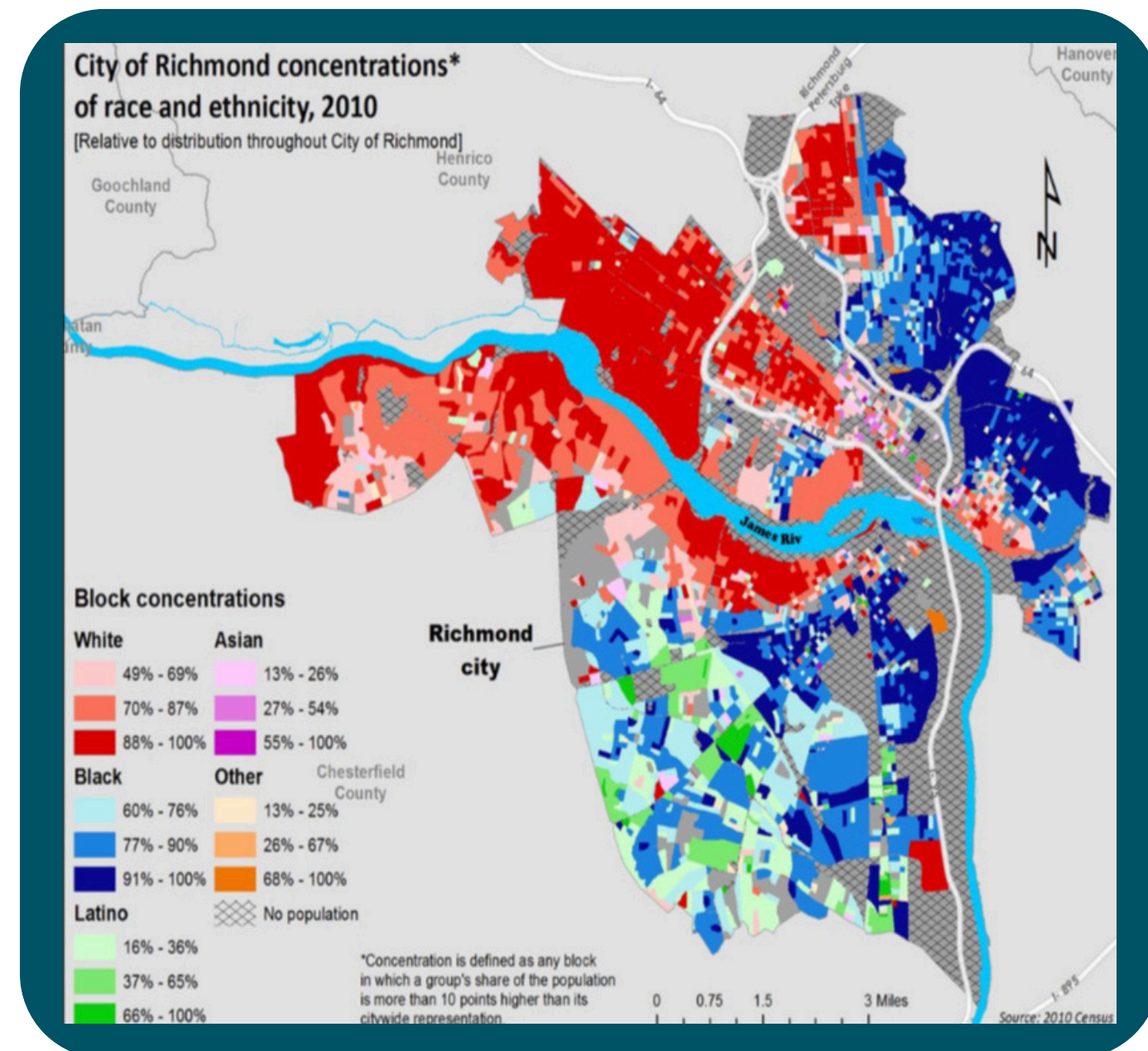
Socialization and interactions with groups that are different from our communities of origin expose us to different experiences and thoughts. Building relationships with peers and individuals who think, look, and practice differently from us helps children build empathy and kindness.



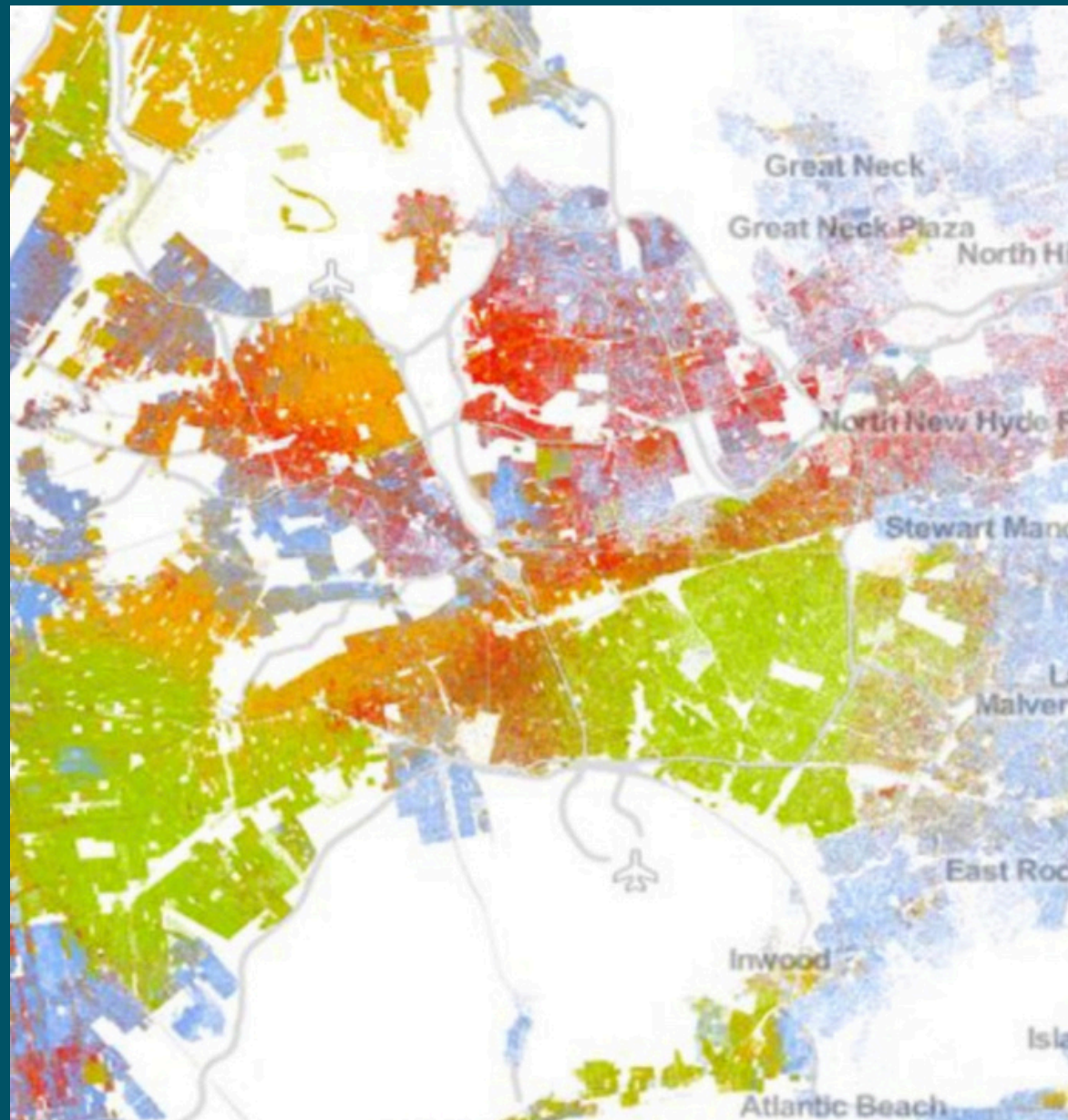
Virginia



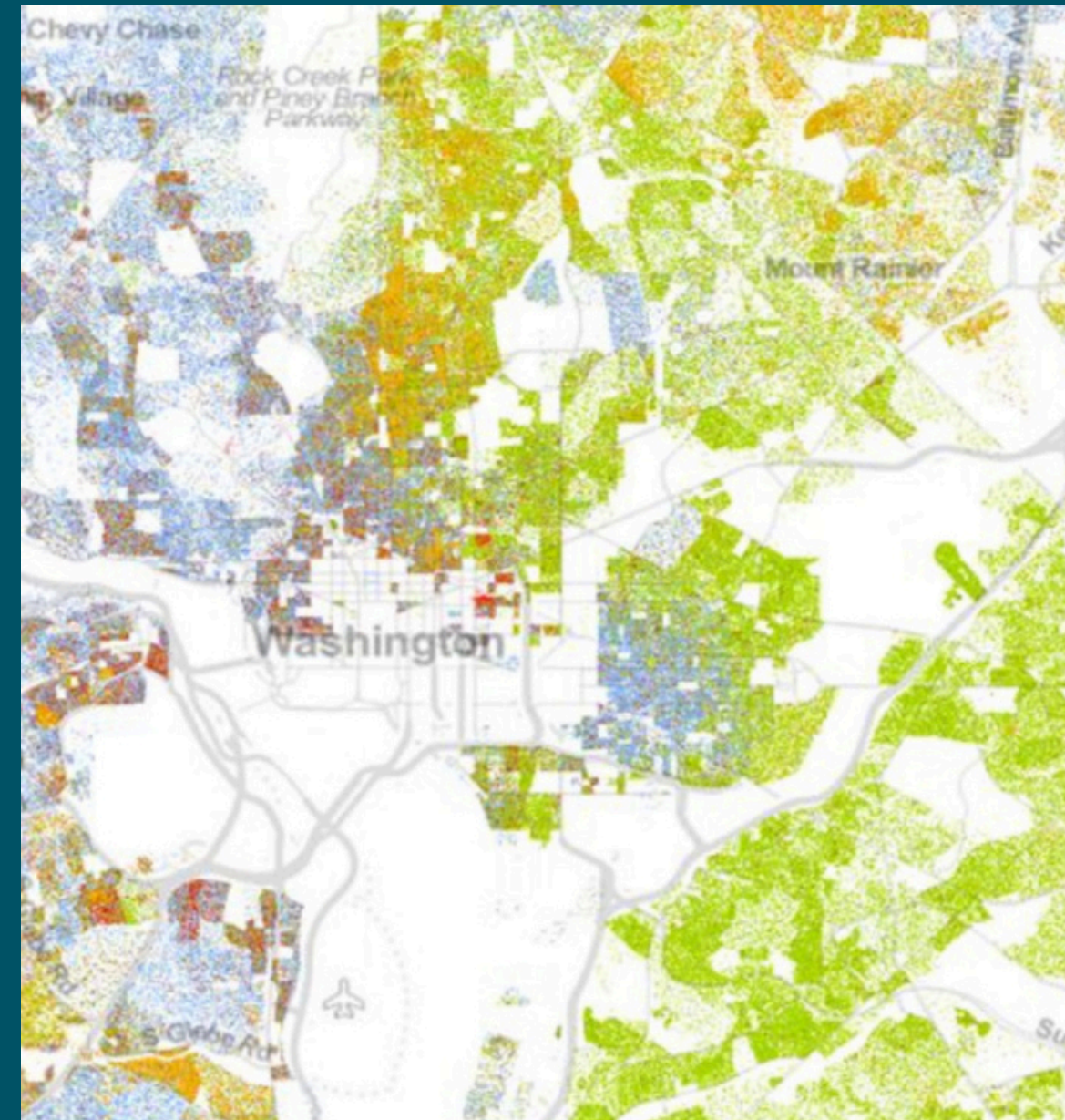
Richmond



New York



Washington D.C.





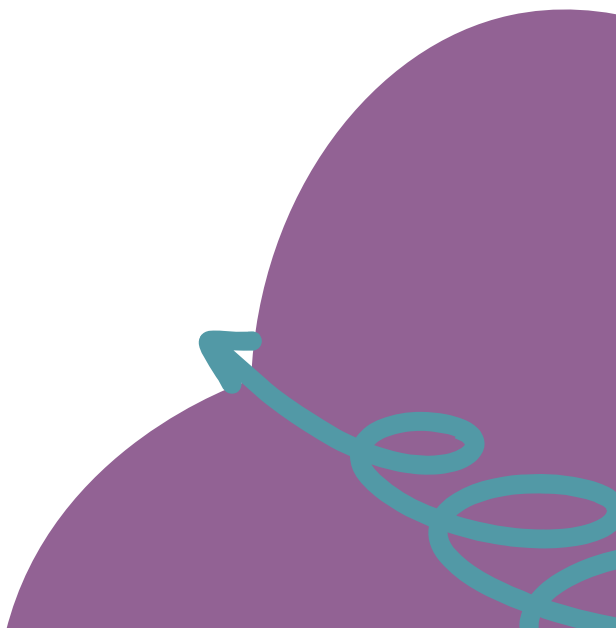
4. Find commonalities that are not culture- or race-specific.



Teach children that there is more to a person than their skin color. Ask them what they have in common with peers like activities, interests, and beliefs.



Example: "You and your friend do have different colored skin, AND you both like to play with dinosaurs."



5. Discuss power/ privilege and ways to cope

Along with celebrations of differences, we must also acknowledge differences in power and privilege. It is important children learn about systemic disadvantages for various groups and how to advocate for equity. Equally so, it is important that those from marginalized communities learn how to cope with these stressors. Teach them that it is OK to be angry, but learn ways to positively cope/channel their anger



CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

Example questions to engage your children in discussion:

1. *'Did you feel like both boys had a great day?' Why or Why not?*
2. *'Did you notice any differences in their day?' What?*
3. *'Did you notice any advantages in their day?' What?*
4. *'Which boy had the kind of day you would want to have?'*

RACISM IMPACTS ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT



5+

Black children experience five or more microaggressions daily

While microaggressions may appear subtle, cumulative stress over time can have profound impacts on development and mental well being

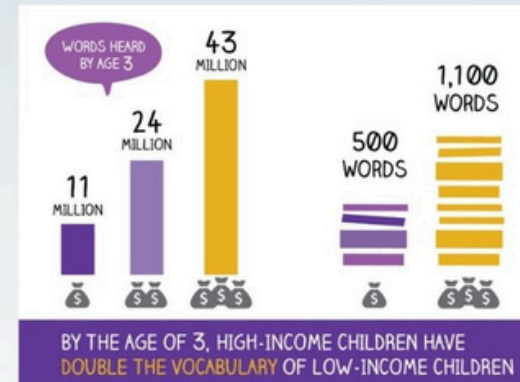
Experiences with racism in childhood increase risk for:

-  Anxiety/Mood difficulties
-  Academic challenges
-  Later health outcomes
-  Poor Social relationships
-  Poor Coping



For more information, visit www.parentingculture.org

"30 MILLION WORD GAP" ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT



Several studies have documented a significant word gap between privileged and underresourced families.

Often not discussed are the systemic challenges underresourced families face in narrowing the gap.

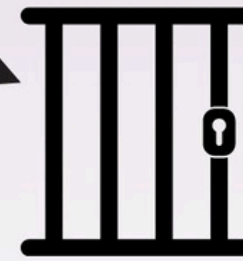
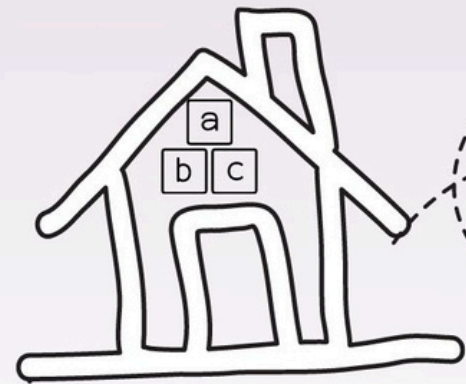
These gaps contribute to possible delays in language, academic abilities, social-emotional learning, and impact the parent-child relationship

A lack of access, barriers to resources, reduced time with children due to other demands, financial strains, etc. can impact a family's ability to close these gaps



For more information, visit www.parentingculture.org

PRESCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE



Black preschool children are 3.6x more likely to receive out-of-school suspensions as White peers

Black children make up 19% of preschool enrollment, but account for 47% of out-of-school suspensions

A recent study found that preschool teachers regardless of their own race tend to anticipate negative and challenging behaviors in Black children, even when the child is engaging in a neutral behavior



For more information, visit www.parentingculture.org



Name:

Date:Relat :

Cultural Values Assessment

We each have different and unique aspects of our histories that influence what is most important to us as individuals and parents. These values are oftentimes a product of our cultural upbringing. What aspects of your culture are most important to you and what you would like to incorporate in your parenting/treatment? Pick 10 from the list below:

Holidays

Racial/Ethnic Identity

Traditions

Clothing

Gender Identity

Language

Celebrations

Family Roles

Generational Status

Friendship

Education

Family

Food

Religion

Gender Roles

Work

Rituals

Literature/Media

Political Worldview

Art, Music, Media

Immigration Experience

Other: _____

Name: [Redacted]

Date:Relat [Redacted] :

Cultural Values Assessment

Now select your top 5 responses. Rank them below from 1 (most important/meaningful) to 5.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

Now tell us some more about the values you selected. What does each value mean to you. For example, if you selected "Holidays," tell us what holidays you celebrate and what is meaningful about that experience. How/if you would like to incorporate this value into therapy sessions and discussions about parenting?

Value #1 _____:



- Research shows that cultural awareness workshops improve intermediate outcomes in health professionals

- Researchers critique the efficacy of short-term workshops, noting that workshops are rarely long enough to absorb meaningful information that can be implemented into practice





Racial Attribution Bias:

- When the cause/effect of someone's behaviors are attributed to racial characteristics/stereotypes

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- 
- To address racial attribution bias, the current study developed an interactive training model that incorporates application of emotionally-relevant information
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Training

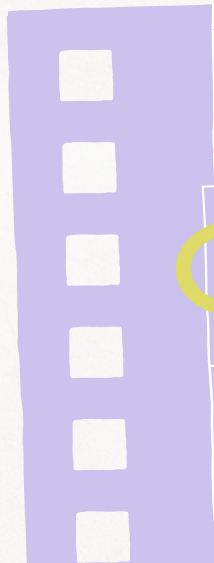
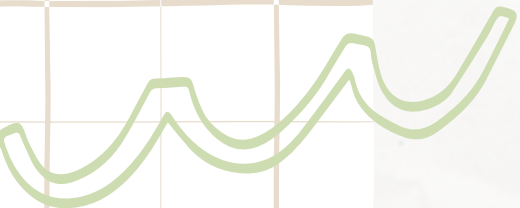
Interactive trauma-informed training serves as an avenue to educate healthcare providers, child development specialists, child care facilities, paraprofessionals, and policymakers about disparities in care

3-part interactive training series was designed. Incorporated Diversity Informed Tenets and IECMH Endorsement Competencies

This culturally responsive training model for early childhood practitioners' increased understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and aided in developing a system that supports diversity.



Study Purpose

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- Compare the efficacy of a 3-part interactive training with a short, single-contact training
 - Identify if/when racial attributional shifts occur
 - Determine themes and applications of learning principles in participants

Procedures ✨

- Two Cohorts were provided a version of the training model
- Cohort 1: was provided a 3-part interactive workshop series over the course of 9 months (every 3 months)
- Cohort 2: was provided one condensed workshop lasting 1.5 hours for a large conference audience

Participants

Cohort 1

31 completed the
preworkshop
questionnaires

12 completed the
workshop in entirety

Participants included
early headstart
professionals and staff

Cohort 2

100 participants attended
the workshop

21 self-elected to complete
the survey post-workshop

Professional titles ranged
from family coordinators,
registered nurse, family
specialist, EI coordinators,
health managers



Quantitative

Modern Racism Scale (1980)

Symbolic Racism Scale (2002)

Qualitative

1. Name three of the things you learned as a result of participating in the training series
 2. How do you plan to use what you've learned from this training series in your practice
 3. Has the training course dealt with some of your difficulties or weaknesses in developing anti-racist projects and practice?
 4. After this training, what do you feel are your strengths and weaknesses in relation to Inclusion and Group Initiatives?
 5. How do you think future training can be improved?
 6. Is there anything else you'd like us to know?
- 



Measures





Key Themes

Cohort 1:

1. Gain Knowledge
2. Understand Racial Trauma
3. How to Apply Information
4. Awareness of Racism
5. Introspection of Implicit Bias
6. Advocacy
7. Overall Satisfaction

Cohort 2:

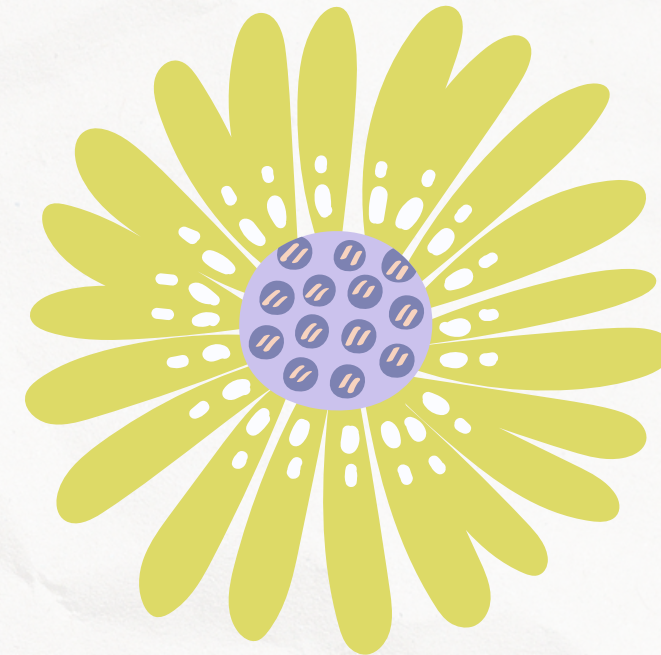
1. Understand Systemic Racism is Current
 2. Desire to Utilize Training Materials
 3. Desire for Longer Training
 4. Content Rejection
- 

Those in the longer course exhibited lower racial attribution biases following their training.

The shorter model resulted in greater instances of rejection of material and less willingness to engage in equity discussion



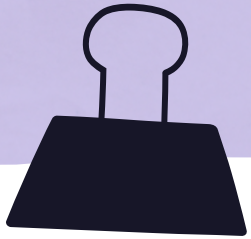
Results



Results demonstrate participants' racial attributional impacts and a renewed commitment to incorporating culturally responsive efforts in their communities and workplaces. ★

Results





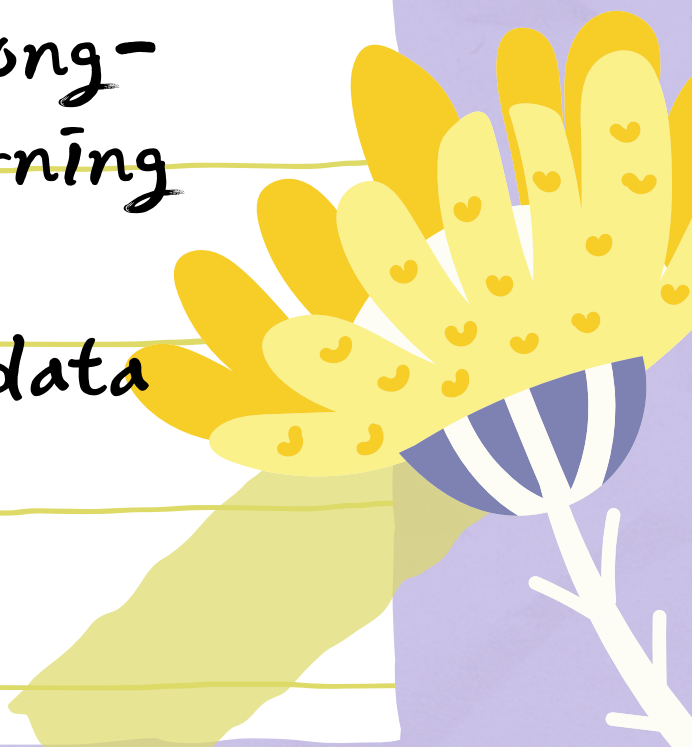
Future Directions

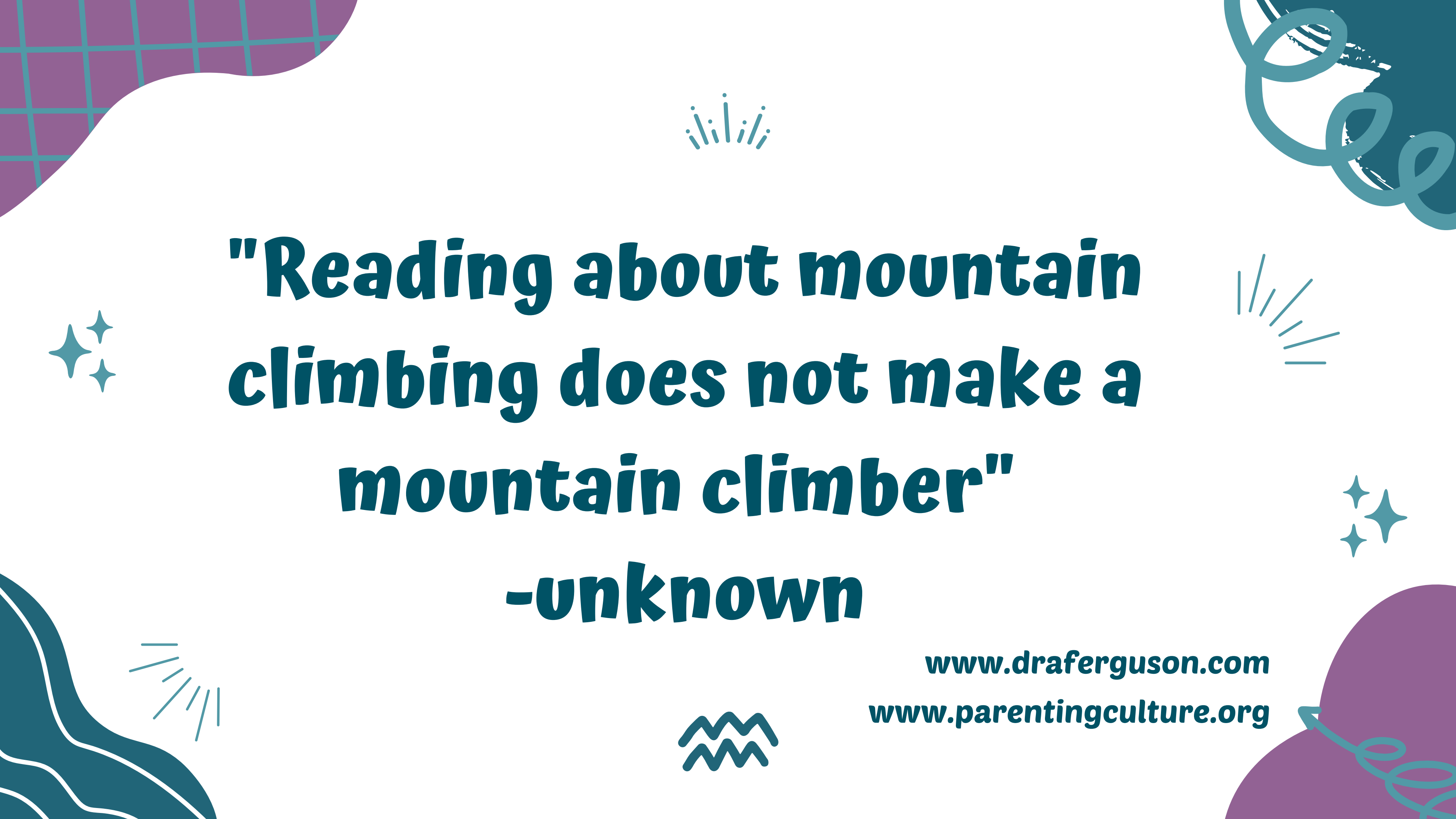


Increase access of long-term workshop model with larger groups (We have since developed an 8hr professional development course and have administered the model across a number of professions and groups in Virginia)

Expand the model into long-term communities of learning

Re-run statistics with data from larger cohorts





**"Reading about mountain
climbing does not make a
mountain climber"
-unknown**

www.draferguson.com
www.parentingculture.org