

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

## Equitable Learning Opportunities through Culturally-grounded, Anti-bias Child Assessments

Research Professor, Public Policy  
Fellow, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute (FPG)  
Founding Director, Equity Research Action Coalition at FPG (*The Coalition*)

Early Childhood Investigations  
April 18, 2021



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STRIVING FOR ANTI-BIAS/ANTI-RACIST CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE ASSESSMENT.

## Thank you for the invitation!



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## Honoring Native Lands

I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I LIVE,  
WORK, AND BUILD MY FAMILIES'  
ECONOMIC WEALTH ON THE  
LUMBEE TRIBE TAKEN THROUGH  
COLONIZATION AND ATTEMPTED  
ERADICATION BY SETTLERS.



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## Honoring Black Bodies

Many parts of the US was built by enslaved Africans and their enslaved descendants, and only within the past generation were Black people afforded full rights.

Today, Black individuals and People of Color disproportionately work as service staff across the country. This community is largely responsible for the maintenance of our daily lives, the food and food service available, child care, health care, and many other basic necessities that make our lives easy.



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“Speaking like this doesn’t mean that we’re anti-white, but it does mean we’re anti-exploitation, we’re anti-degradation, we’re anti-oppression.”

MALCOM X  
CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST



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Who am I? Who are you? Who are your families, children, and colleagues?

- Black Nigerian heritage
- Mother of two Married to Bahamian
- Unidentified DLL Professor at UNC
- Food & Housing Security One of seven girls
- English speaker & so much more...
- What about you? What about does you work with or work on behalf of?

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### Objectives for this session

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Understand the purposes and goals of child assessments	Examine how adult behaviors and environment may influence child assessments	Explore how child assessments can better capture the assets and competencies of Black children and other child of color	Introduce a tool to help provide you an equity and anti-bias, anti-racist lens for your classroom



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#### CALL TO ACTION: ENGAGE IN BEING R.I.C.H.E.R.

### Take Home Points

- Culture is all around us and children
- Child assessments should be used as a guide for improvement and not punishment
- Engage in the 4Es of ABAR CRA
- Be careful of the danger of a single story
- Assess children, but also assess the condition of the learning environment



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#### UNIVERSAL FINDINGS

### Science of Early Development

- **Early experiences are essential for building brain** connections that underlie biobehavioral health, and current understanding of whole-child development relies on an interplay of organ systems with each other and the environment.
- **Early adversity can change the timing of critical periods of brain development**, impacting the "plasticity" of developmental processes that are driven by experiences in the life of the young child and the family.
- Healthy development of the child **begins in the preconception period** and is dependent upon a strong foundation **built prenatally**.
- Among all the factors that may serve to buffer negative outcomes produced by toxic stress, **supportive relationships between the child and the adults in life are essential**.



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DETRIMENTAL IMPACT OF SYSTEMIC INEQUITIES

Lessons from the Science of Early Development

- **The influence of access to basic resources prenatally**, particularly nutritional, psychosocial, and health care components, **is powerful**. Resources to help families to limit chronic stress may reduce risk for disrupted fetal development and help close disparities based on race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (SES).
- **Both institutional racism and interpersonal experiences of discrimination can influence the health and well-being of both children and adults in multiple ways**, including reducing access to material resources and services that promote long-term health and development and acting as a psychosocial stressor that can lead to worse outcomes over time.



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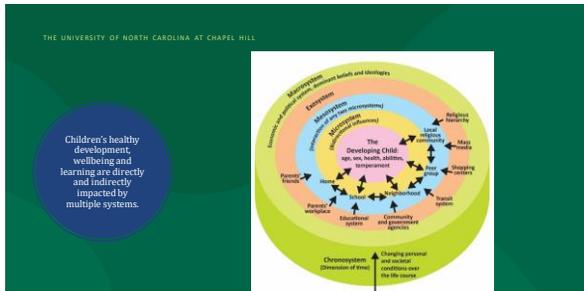
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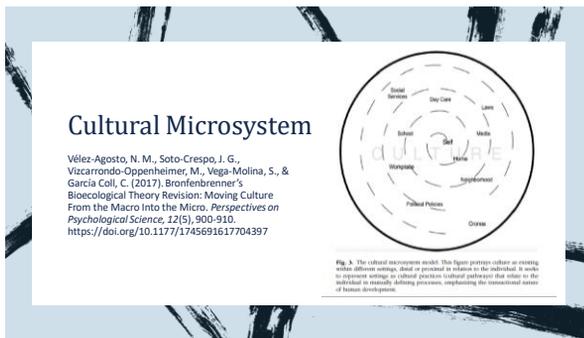
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### What is cultural microsystem?

- Culture is an aspect of every human behavior
- Culture can be seen in the ways we interact, our bedtime routines, our classroom routines, how we interact with each other and young children, etc.
- Culture provides the "guidelines" for what is expected and how children are socialized – routines, expectations, norms, events, language, interactions, etc.
- Culture guides how parents/caregiver rear children, including their styles and beliefs about engagement and interactions
- Culture shapes what happens in the classroom -- didactic v. scaffolding, communal vs. individual



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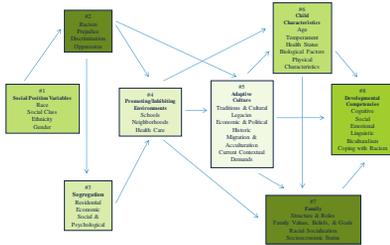
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### Minoritized Child Development



SANCHEZ, COLL, C., SAMBRINO, R., STRONACH, A., NEARDO, M. P., DENIC, S., WADIA, A. N., & SANCHEZ, M. V. (2010). AN INTERCULTURAL MODEL FOR THE STUDY OF DEVELOPMENTAL DIFFERENCES IN MINORITY CHILDREN. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 31*(1), 109-132. doi:10.1016/j.appdev.2009.12.014



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ENSURING ABAR CRP IN ASSESSMENTS

# Turning to assessments



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### Purpose of Child Assessment



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Assessment tools provide a structure for assessing and organizing information about children's early learning and development.  
 BUT knowing which instrument to select or if you are using the right one can be confusing and complex.

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### Selection of Tools

Need for programs to be intention in selection of tools and incorporate into their services, coherent *systems of assessment organized to address the following purposes:*

- **Δ Screening** - To identify potential problems in development; ensure development is on target.
- **Δ Instructional** - To inform, support, and monitor learning.
- **Δ Diagnostic** - To diagnose strengths and areas of need to support development, instruction, and/or behavior. To diagnose the severity and nature of special needs and establish program eligibility.
- **Δ Program Evaluation/Accountability** - To evaluate programs and provide accountability data on program outcomes for the purpose of program improvement.

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Selecting Tools (cont'd)



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ENSURING ABAR CRA IN ASSESSMENTS

# Anti-bias, Anti-racist Culturally Responsive Assessment



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- Whose lens drives the standards and developmental?
- Whose knowledge and world view are being privileged?
- Who says it is valid and reliable?
- Is it a measure of privilege, advantage, Whiteness?

TABLE 1. PPVT-II Items Identified as Having Salient Alternative Meanings in African American Community

Item	Alternative meaning
12 fly	cool, stylish
13 digging	liking somebody
20 wrapping	heard as "rapping," a popular style of music
27 square	unsaid, not stylish
52 diving	reading for cars, and so forth, as in "dumper diving"
57 drilling	harassing
58 hook	divined nicely as in "the get the hook up," or connected up with someone
60 dripping	said of ghost cars—that you "follow the drip" or, due to pronunciation differences, children heard the word as "tripping"
69 squash	"squash flat" means to end current activity
72 frame	physique
79 trunk	a person's denials

Note. PPVT-II = Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Third Edition [Dunn & Dunn, 1997]).

Source: Champion, et al. 2003. "A Matter of Vocabulary": Performance of Low-Income African American Head Start Children on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-II. *Communication Disorders Quarterly*, 24, 151-157.



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ANTI-BLACK RACISM IN EDUCATION

Educators often seen Black children as less than...

- Less close and more conflictual than other children (*Iruka et al., in press; Redding et al., 2019*)
- Lower ratings of competences in early learning skills (e.g., cognitive, language, numeracy, prosocial behavior, classroom connection/engagement) than other children (*Graves & Howes, 2011*)
- Higher ratings of conduct problems and disruptive behaviors than other children (*Derame et al., 2009*)
- View parents as less involved and engaged than parents of other children (*Hughes et al., 2005*)




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But Black children and other children of color have...

- Strong oral language and story-telling skills (e.g., flexible use of language) (*Curenton et al., 2008; Gardner-Neblett et al., 2012, 2015, 2018*)
- Have strong communal/cooperative skills (*Barbarin et al., 2013; Iruka et al., 2020*)
- Have strong psycho-social competence (e.g., self-regulation, sense of humor) (*Barbarin et al., 2013*)
- Coping with racism/bias and low expectations
- Bicultural, bidialectal, multilingual
- Cultural and racial pride




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MAJORS & JACKSON (2020). BLACK GENIUS FRAMEWORK AND ELEMENTS. DURHAM, NC: VILLAGE OF WISDOM. [LINK](#).

Black Genius Framework by Village of Wisdom




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ABAR CRA

Defining anti-bias, anti-racist culturally responsive assessment

- Based on Iruka, Curenton, & Eke's 2014 definition of anti-bias, culturally responsive family engagement....

an assessment approach that **incorporates** the cultural knowledge, experiences, and communication styles of children from diverse families and communities, and **acknowledges** the social injustices, inequalities, and prejudices children face as



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Principles of ABAR CRA



Exploration



Education



Expectation



Equipment



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ASSESSMENT ARE SERIOUS BUSINESS

# The *How* of Assessment Usages



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### Questions??

- History of the measure – who, what, and why?
- Have you been well-trained?
- What is missing or not being measured?
- Who is often viewed as stronger/better?
- Do you have confirmation bias or self-fulfilling prophecy
- How do you supplement your information?
- Do you and your co-teachers and families see the same things? Why or why not?



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### Questions?? Cont'd

- How is this measure being used by you, your leadership, your program/school? Or is this a measure to say how YOU are doing as an educator?
- Will this information be shared with families and how? What message are you conveying to families about their child?
- Will this information be part of a child's file and shared with their next schoolteacher? What will it say about the children's areas of strengths and areas needing strengthening?
- Will this information provide an opportunity for the child's continued growth or is a "danger of a single story?"

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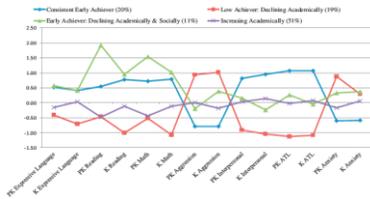
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## "See" Black Boys

### DANGER OF A SINGLE STORY



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Source: Iriba, J. U., Gardner-Nelson, N., Matthews, J. S., & Wren, D. M. C. (2014). Preschool to kindergarten transition patterns for African American boys. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 29(2), 106-117. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2013.11.004>

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### #1 Ingredient for children's optimal development

• FAMILY SOCIO-ECONOMIC POSITION AND WELLBEING

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### #2 Ingredient for children's optimal development



ECE Participation & Relationships

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### #3 Ingredient for children's optimal development

• RESPONSIVE, ENRICHING, AND SENSITIVE PARENTING



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CALL TO ACTION: ENGAGE IN BEING R.I.C.H.E.R.

Take Home Points

Culture is all around us and children

Child assessments should be used as a guide for improvement and not punishment

Engage in the 4Es of ABAR CRA

Be careful of the danger of a single story

Assess children, but also assess the condition of the learning environment



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Selected References

List of references including: Barbin, O., Iruka, I. U., Harradine, C., Winn, D. M. C., McKinney, M. K., & Taylor, L. C. (2017). Development of social-emotional competence in boys of color: A cross-sectional cohort analysis from pre-4 to second grade. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 89(2,3), 145-155. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajop.12023



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THANK YOU! IHEOMA U. IRUKA, PH.D. IIRUKA@UNC.EDU HTTPS://WWW.UNC.EDU TWITTER @IHEOMAIRUKA



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ABAR CRA: CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT

# Assessing Classroom Sociocultural Equity Scale (ACSES)



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## How to Measure Anti-Racist Practices in Classroom Interactions

Stephanie M. Curenton, Ph.D.  
Early Childhood Investigations  
April 15, 2021



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Goal

- To talk about the importance of anti-racist learning interactions in P-3<sup>rd</sup> classrooms
  - Assessing Classroom Sociocultural Equity Scale (ACSES)**
    - ACSES is unlike other measures in the field because it was intentionally designed to show the classroom experience of racially marginalized learners (RMLs)
    - Designed to look at the classroom interactions they are having with teachers and peers
    - intended to be used for continuous improvement cycle and the basis for PD on anti-racist work

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Cycle of Assessment and Professional Development for Anti-racist practices



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What do high quality anti-racist teaching practices look like?

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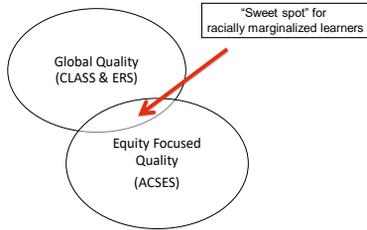
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### Two "Lens" to View Quality



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### Existing measures of classroom quality

- Measure global aspects of structural and process quality
  - Small to moderate effects for children, regardless of ethnicity (Keys et al., 2013; Mashburn et al., 2008)
  - Inconsistent predictor of learning for RMLs (Downer et al., 2012; López, 2011)
- Do not assess sociocultural factors that may influence the quality of teacher instruction (e.g., biases, stereotypes)

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### Why view quality from perspective of RMLs?

- RMLs might experience the classroom differently, even when that classroom is still high quality
- Research shows that children of color are treated differently, especially when these children are in predominantly White or mixed classrooms or when RMLs may have behavior challenges
- To enhance RMLs achievement they might need an interaction that is more frequent or specific in nature; this is the very nature of what equity is – responding to each child according to their needs

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### What is ACSES?

- Assessing Classroom Sociocultural Equity Scale (ACSES) measures process quality within interactions—specifically related to equity of classroom interaction—for racially minoritized learners (RMLs) in early childhood classrooms.



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### Why Use the ACSES Measure?

- Can provide a window into RMLs' daily classroom interactions
- Can provide understanding as to why RMLs are thriving or how they are being stifled
  - ACSES is predictive of child outcomes, especially those social-emotional outcomes
- Can show us where those interactions need to be improved . . . And we can build PD around that
  - Revamp our in-service and pre-service education and child care training
- Can give us the classroom level data we need to change education policy
  - Data is used to inform decision-making and drive change

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What do equitable sociocultural interactions look like in the classroom?

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### Equitable Sociocultural Interactions



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### Equitable sociocultural interactions *operationalized* (cont.)

#### Equitable sociocultural interaction

- Intentional and explicit emphasis on building positive cultural identities, appreciating diversity, and striving for social justice
- Equitable learning opportunities in which all children have occasions to participate and grow, and they are treated with respect and dignity
- Equitable discipline based on redirection and encouragement for positive behavior and that utilizes social-emotional problem-solving rather than judgmental chastising
- The incorporation of intellectually-stimulating instructional content, curriculum, viewpoints, etc. that challenge the status quo of present day knowledge and social hierarchy and that incorporate children's ethnic and sociopolitical heritage

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### Equitable sociocultural interactions *operationalize*

#### Equitable sociocultural interaction

- Open classroom dialogue that encourages children to express their knowledge and share their world view and social identity
- Connections between children's home language traditions and school language to ensure all children's voices and experiences are valued
- A nurturing and affirming classroom climate in which children have the freedom to express their unique personalities, emotions, abilities, and ideas and demonstrate leadership abilities
- Instruction that is connected to children's lived experiences at home and in their communities and grounded in peer collaboration and a sense of communal effort

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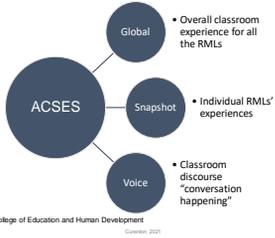
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How would we measure it?



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Examples Classroom Discourse (Qualitative)

- Criticism/Judgement
  - "You are not making good choices"
- Verbal Threats
  - "I am going to send you away from the circle"
- Reprimands
  - "Stop moving up and down in your seat"
- Fairness/Justice/Upstander
  - "What could we do if we saw someone treating a person unfairly because of their skin?"
- Empathy for RMLs' Plight
  - "How would you feel if someone told you you couldn't play because of the way you looked?"
- Biased/Stereotypical statements
  - "Girls should go first because 'ladies first'"

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What does anti-racist PD look like?

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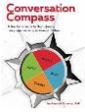
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### Options for Anti-bias PD

- Webinars/workshops
  - "One stop" experiences that they the foundation and "open the mind"
- Book study
  - Continuous engagement with group learning that requires "self-interrogation" that "changes the mind"
- Equity coaching using ACSES model
  - Ongoing support that directly targeted to teacher or program needs that "changes behavior"

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### THANK YOU! QUESTIONS?



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