

## **Title of presentation**

Examining Multicultural Education in Psychology Higher Education

## **Presenters**

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## **Abstract**

The importance of developing intercultural competence is recognized by education at all levels. However, a clear policy of how this can be achieved is often missing. Multiple theoretical frameworks underpin multicultural education, and there are gaps in knowledge around its measurement, specifically in terms of perceptions of support for multicultural education within institutions. Precision in measurement could potentially improve the success of inclusion-promoting interventions, which in turn may lead to better student outcomes. Further, given the need for sensitivity to context in multicultural education research (Padilla, 2004), we argue it is prudent to design discipline-specific measures of perceptions of multicultural education to enhance the quality of research on this topic.

We focused on Banks' theoretical framework of multicultural education (1993), which highlighted five critical aspects, as this framework can be clearly applied to psychology training in higher education. For example, in terms of content integration, while educators and schools may attempt to diversify the curriculum, psychology as a discipline is often criticized because of its one-sided focus on WEIRD (Western, educated, industrialized, rich, democratic) samples (Jones, 2010). Using Bank's framework (1993), we aimed to develop a new measure of multicultural education in psychology higher education and, using this new measure, to investigate the associations between multicultural psychology education and student adjustment. Using a qualitative pilot study (interviews with two students and two academic staff) and a main quantitative survey study (completed by 194 psychology higher education students), we documented the development of a new scale of multicultural education in

psychology, which was found to have four dimensions – multicultural curriculum; equity pedagogy; diversity & composition of the staff and student body; and school values & policies. Survey results revealed that the aspect of multicultural education most recognized by students was school values and policies that are supportive of multiculturalism, and the aspect they perceived to the lowest degree was a multicultural curriculum. Moreover, when students perceived their school to be more multicultural, they reported higher school belonging, domain identification with psychology, and respect for diversity. We also found that two aspects of multicultural education –school values and policies and to some extent equity pedagogy– most strongly predicted student adjustment and respect for diversity. Our findings of these constituent parts of multicultural education, therefore, show where efforts to enhance student adjustment and respect for diversity might need to be concentrated, given the discrepancies in perceptions of these constituent parts of multicultural education.