

# Improving Culturally Sensitive Practices by Adapting the Ayres Sensory Integration Intervention for Black and African American Communities

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# Acknowledgements

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# Identity-First Language Clarification

In a recent survey conducted in the United States, 87% of autistic adults responded with a preference for identity-first language. They expressed that this “embraces all aspects of one’s identity.”

(Taboas et al., 2023)

# Learning Objectives

- Learn about the perceived barriers and facilitators to occupational therapy access.
- Describe how the findings were used to adapt the Ayres Sensory Integration manual.
- Apply the information presented in a case study for applicability in future practice.

# Black and African American families experience disparities in services



[Click here to watch this short video.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=33a9xY8nbXY)

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=33a9xY8nbXY>

(Baio et al., 2014; Maenner et al., 2023; Nevison & Zahorodny, 2019; Rivera-Figueroa et al., 2022; Stahmer et al., 2019)

# Background and Need

- Racial and ethnic minority families with autistic children experience delays in access to and utilization of intervention in comparison to white children.
- Delays result in decreased quality of life, increased caregiver stress, burden, and increased medical costs.
- Interventions that are not culturally-adapted result in less minority participation, thus, less effective.

(Dababnah et al., 2022; Kang-Yi et al., 2018; Stahmer et al., 2019; Williams et al., 2019)

# So...how do we support families?

# Evidence for Culturally Adapted Interventions

- Previously adapted autism interventions have focused on Hispanic/Latino and Chinese families.
- No sensory interventions have been adapted for Black and African American families.
- They are considered feasible and acceptable to consumers and are up to 4x more effective than non-adapted interventions or solely language-adapted programs (i.e. translated from English).
- The outcomes include a positive impact on multiple factors for the parents/caregivers, autistic child and the services received.

(Griner & Smith, 2006; Kang-Yi et al., 2018; Leung et al., 2019; Magaña et al., 2020)

# Project Purposes

- To learn about the challenges and facilitators of access to occupational therapy services for Black and African American families of autistic children experience
- To culturally adapt the manualized protocol of occupational therapy (Schaaf & Mailloux, 2015) using Ayres Sensory Integration(OT-ASI) intervention for Black and African American families of autistic children

# Methods

## Focus Groups

1. Parents/Caregivers
2. OT Practitioners
3. Cultural Experts

## Thematic Analysis

## Surveys

# Methods



What are some ways to increase the trustworthiness/rigor of a qualitative study?



# Data Analysis

## Focus Groups

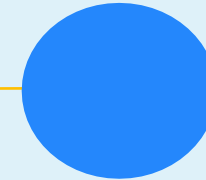
- Parents/Caregivers
- Cultural Experts
- OT clinicians

## Inductive Coding

- Familiarization with the data
- Initial coding
- Re-code as needed



**Transcripts**  
• Quality checks (3x)



(Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Kiger & Varpio, 2020)

## REFLEXIVITY

- Acknowledgment of Bias



## THEMATIC ANALYSIS

## TRIANGULATION

- Data Triangulation
- Investigator Triangulation



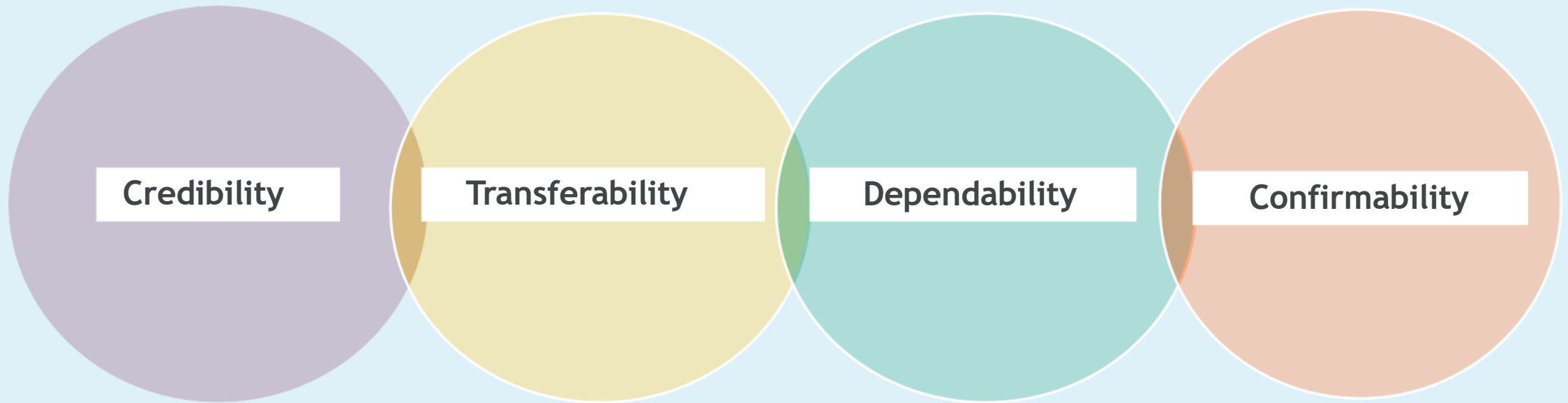
## MEMBER CHECKING

- Surveys



(Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Saldaña, 2016)

# Establishing Trustworthiness



(Nowell et al., 2017)

# Results

# Results

Characteristics of Stakeholders	Parents / Caregivers (n = 4)	OT Practitioners (n = 5)	Cultural Experts (n = 2)	Totals (% of total)
Race				
Black or African American	4	0	2	6 (54.5%)
Caucasian	0	5	0	5 (45.5%)
Ethnicity				
Non-Hispanic	2	5	2	9 (81.8%)
Hispanic	1	0	0	1 (9.1%)
Missing	1	0	0	1 (9.1%)

# Time to interact!

What do you think were some of the challenges/barriers identified?



# Challenges



```
graph LR; C((Challenges)) --- C1[Access and Delivery of Services (OT/CE/P&C)]; C --- C2[Systemic barriers (OT/CE/P&C)]; C --- C3[Lack of cultural humility practices (CE/P&C)]; C --- C4[Scheduling challenges (P&C)]; C --- C5[Obtaining an ASD diagnosis (P&C)];
```

Access and Delivery of Services  
(OT/CE/P&C)

Systemic barriers (OT/CE/P&C)

Lack of cultural humility  
practices (CE/P&C)

Scheduling challenges (P&C)

Obtaining an ASD diagnosis  
(P&C)

# Time to interact!

What do you think were some of the facilitators/supports identified?



# Identified Supports



```
graph LR; A((Identified Supports)) --- B[Cultural humility & client-centered practices (OT/CE/P&C)]; A --- C[Use of therapeutic principles (CE)]; A --- D[Parent/caregiver preferences, experiences & support building (P&C)]; A --- E[Changes at a legislative and professional level (CE)]; A --- F[Increased education/ training about ASD (P&C)]; A --- G[Awareness of the scope of OT (P&C)]; A --- H[Therapeutic service delivery (OT/CE)];
```

Cultural humility & client-centered practices (OT/CE/P&C)

Use of therapeutic principles (CE)

Parent/caregiver preferences, experiences & support building (P&C)

Changes at a legislative and professional level (CE)

Increased education/ training about ASD (P&C)

Awareness of the scope of OT (P&C)

Therapeutic service delivery (OT/CE)

# Parent/ Caregiver experiences & roles

```
graph LR; A((Parent/  
Caregiver  
experiences  
& roles)) --- B[Successful strategies (P&C)]; A --- C[Advocacy efforts (P&C)]; A --- D["OT: OT practitioners  
CE: cultural experts  
P&C: parents/caregivers"];
```

Successful strategies (P&C)

Advocacy efforts (P&C)

OT: OT practitioners  
CE: cultural experts  
P&C: parents/caregivers

# Parent/Caregiver Experiences

*“Being black is very difficult with receiving any sort of services, because there’s also the stigma in the community. And then I also don’t think people realize how many black educators are uneducated on mental health.”*

*“It’s really crazy because as a black woman I already experienced it, but raising a black boy on the spectrum. It’s like it’s a constant, ‘no, you need to listen to what I’m saying’”.*

*“I had to be like, my son needs help. So, it was really fighting, like you say, in calling to everyone else and trying to prove to them that he needed all these things.”*

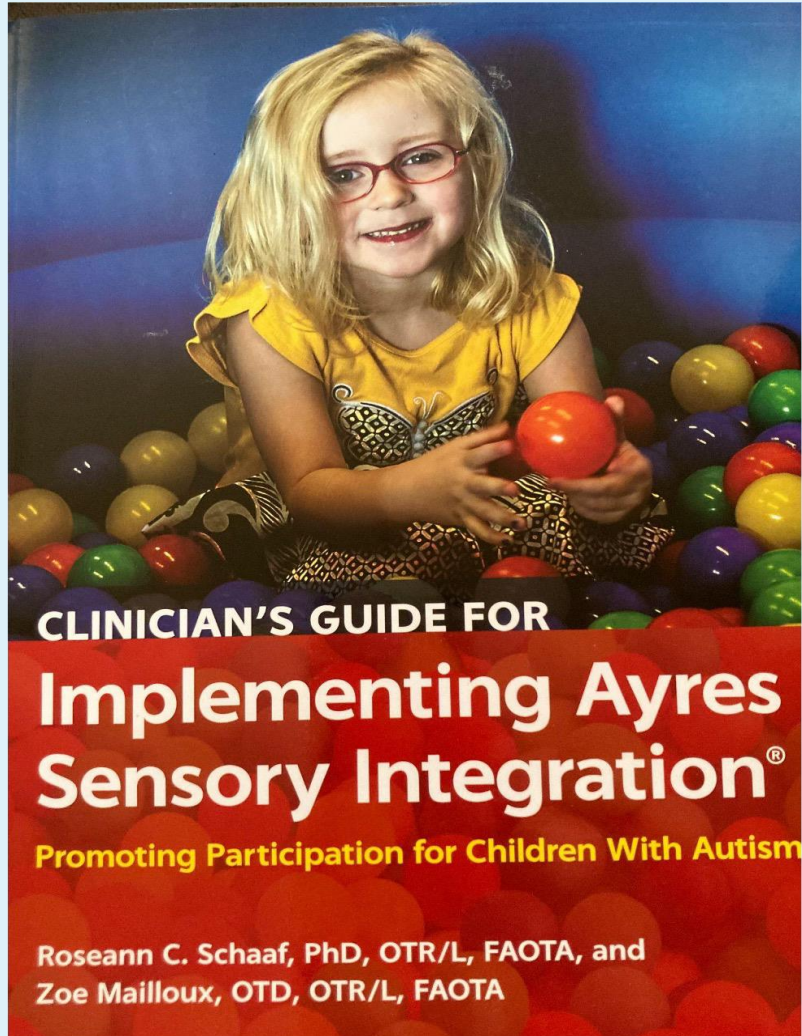


# Parent/Caregiver Experiences

*“There needs to be more training for just anybody, you don't have to be occupational or speech or SI, or physical therapist, it needs to be more training out here. In the world, it needs to be more training for the parents...”*

*“I would say for anyone's child if the occupational therapist is in school, having the parents number and having a relationship where they can text each other to me is a must. Because I text mine almost every day or every other day, or some sort of point of contact”*

*“But then I feel like there also needs to be a pool in the community for more black pretty much therapists, because, you know, you want more people to be involved. But you also would like, you know, people want to see themselves when they get there too, because that also helps with that familiarization sort of thing.”*



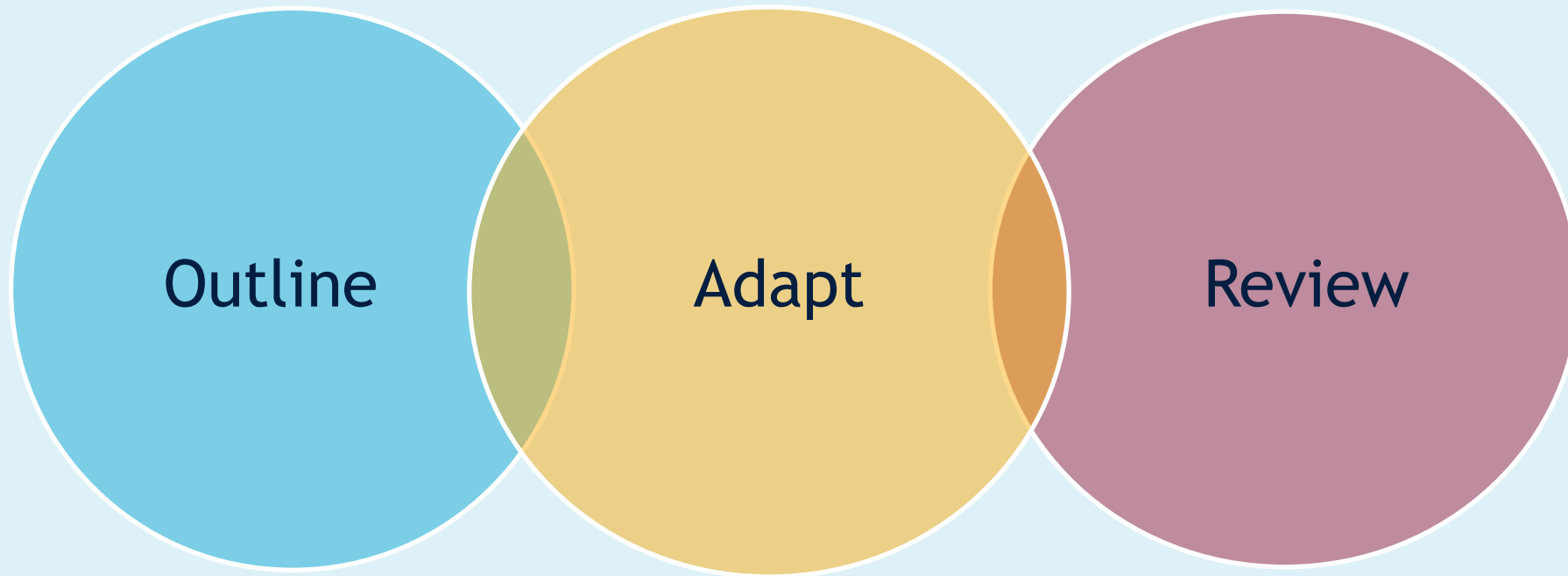
## Occupational Therapy Using Ayres Sensory Integration for Autistic Children:

### A Culturally Adapted Manual for Black and African American Families

(Schaaf & Mailloux, 2015)

# Manual Adaptations

Adaptations to the ASI manual were completed in three phases:



# Examples of Adaptations Made

## Cultural Humility:

- Information on cultural humility
- Trainings and resources
- Importance of cultural values, traditions and beliefs during intervention

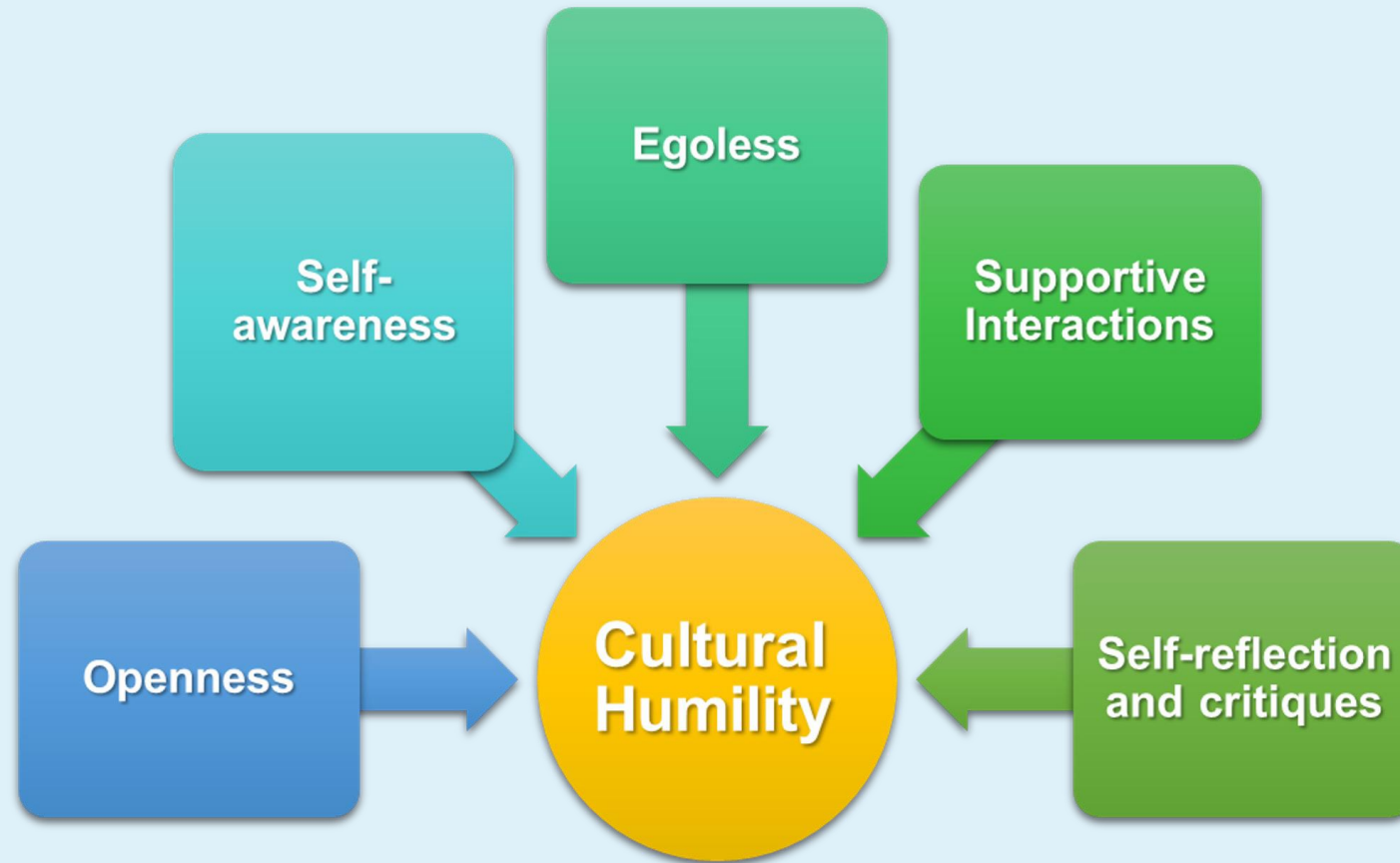
## Important Cultural Considerations:

- Health literacy
- Importance of communication
- Collaboration with caregivers
- Consideration of biases

## Family Considerations:

- Taking note of family structures
- Family schedules
- Addressing family member's by the correct name/relation to child

# Cultural Humility



# Cultural Humility Resources



Self-Reflect  
on Cultural  
Humility



Guided  
Cultural  
Humility  
Resources



Recommended  
Resources

# Cultural considerations during the ASI process



## Improved cultural humility practice

- Remember traditions, values and interests that may be relevant for the child and their family!
- Engage in cultural humility training and self-reflection throughout interactions with the child and family.



## Improved therapeutic service delivery

- Parent education: discuss the process and what a strength and participation challenge may look like for their child.
- Health literacy: ensure parents/caregivers understand terms and jargon being used when discussing strengths and participation challenges.












## Parent supports

- Parent efforts: recognize parents'/caregivers' efforts to obtain services for their child and efforts to support their child's well-being.

# Examples of Recommended Materials

**Table 6.** Useful items and equipment for OT-ASI

Item	Example	
Props to support engagement in play (dress-up clothes, sports equipment, dolls, puppets)	   	
Materials for practicing daily living skills (school materials, clothing, hygiene & home-related objects)	  	
Weighted objects (balls, bean bags) in a variety of sizes	 	

# What can we do as practitioners?

# Case Study

J.R. is a 5 year old African American autistic male. He lives with his mother, father, two sisters and grandmother. He attends preschool during the day and will be attending kindergarten next year.

In school, J.R. receives occupational and speech therapy services.

J.R. was recently evaluated and his results support the need for ASI intervention and YOU will be his provider!

As the treating therapist, how can you implement culturally sensitive practices in his case?

# Instructions

- Divide into groups
- Discuss the case study
- Consider:
  - Questions for the family
  - Cultural considerations when delivering services
  - Cultural humility
  - Communication with the family
  - Potential challenges
  - Potential supports

# Let's discuss!



# Thank you for joining us today!

Feel free to contact the Jefferson Autism Center of Excellence at:

<http://bit.ly/jefface-contact>



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