

THE
CULTURE
of
AUTISM
SPECTRUM



By Catina Burkett LCSW

Culture definition

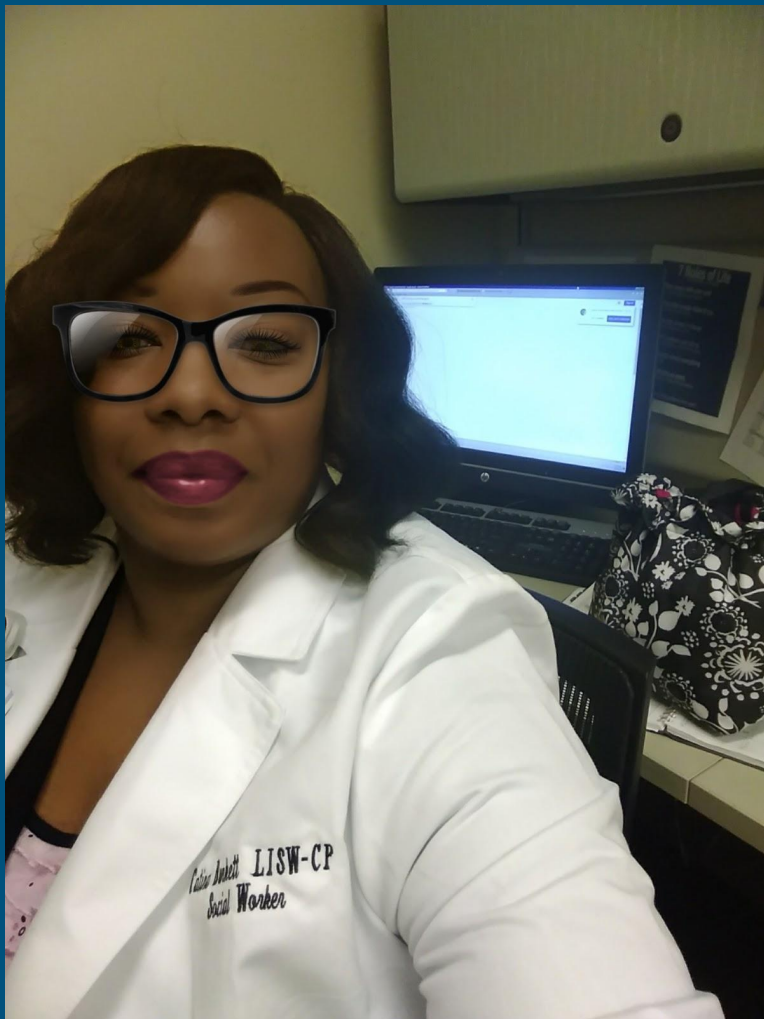
Culture is the characteristics and knowledge of a group of people, encompassing language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts.

Why Culture and not Race?

“**Race**” is a classification of people according to their physical appearances, geographic ancestry, and heritable characteristics.

“**Culture**” is a classification of people according to their beliefs and values that include spirituality, religion, region, language, and livelihoods.

Respecting culture can minimize misunderstandings, stereotypes and judgement.



Here I am. Happy and accomplished my professional goals. Im mature but still young enough to enjoy my life. My child is grown and married. I'm seeking peace and stability after years of school and hard work!

Woohoo!!!

However, my personal relationships were non-existent.

The relationships I had were one-sided, conditional, shallow and redundant. Redundant because everyone's life matured, changed, but my life stayed the same. No one could relate to me.

How can a person so smart and capable be stuck on a hamster wheel?

Watching life go by with my nose pressed against the glass.





What could be the problem?
I don't talk to or about others. I don't
bother anyone and I'm not a liar.

What personality issue triggers others
to be angry, relentless bullies
determined to get an emotional
reaction from you that you don't
possess?

AUTISM!!! ASPERGERS!!!

Uh oh. I think I'm on the spectrum...

If I don't get an official diagnosis, I'll never get help.















I used my resources, researched and met with various professionals and agencies to get help and support. Including colleagues. The rejection was traumatizing.

I find myself a member of the
tribe of invisible social
misfits.

Where is there a place for us?



CALL 800-ANYWHERE
ELSE

How are there so many closed doors! Where do I go? What do I do?

The older I get, the worse it gets and I'm alone, misunderstood with no guidance or hope.

There are many BIPOC who are not counted as well as females who are overlooked and underdiagnosed.

Facts about Autism & Race

According to the CDC, Differences continue in the age at identification of ASD among black and Hispanic children compared to white children. Racial and ethnic differences still exist in how early ASD is identified through evaluation and diagnosis, especially when the child with ASD also has intellectual disability. Overall, black and Hispanic children with ASD received evaluations later than white children with ASD. This delay in diagnosis may limit opportunities to receive services that could improve outcomes and quality of life.

Tyrone and Wanda are on the spectrum. No intellectual disability. Their symptoms are overlooked and misunderstood.

His outburst, behaviors and awkwardness was a sign of a need for discipline. Tyrone is not considered for being on the spectrum. He is constantly told how to behave, he is labeled as difficult, defiant, poor temper, too sensitive and strange.



Wanda is described as sassy, sensitive, attitude, weird, angry, difficult to get along with others. She is not provided accommodations to help her succeed socially.

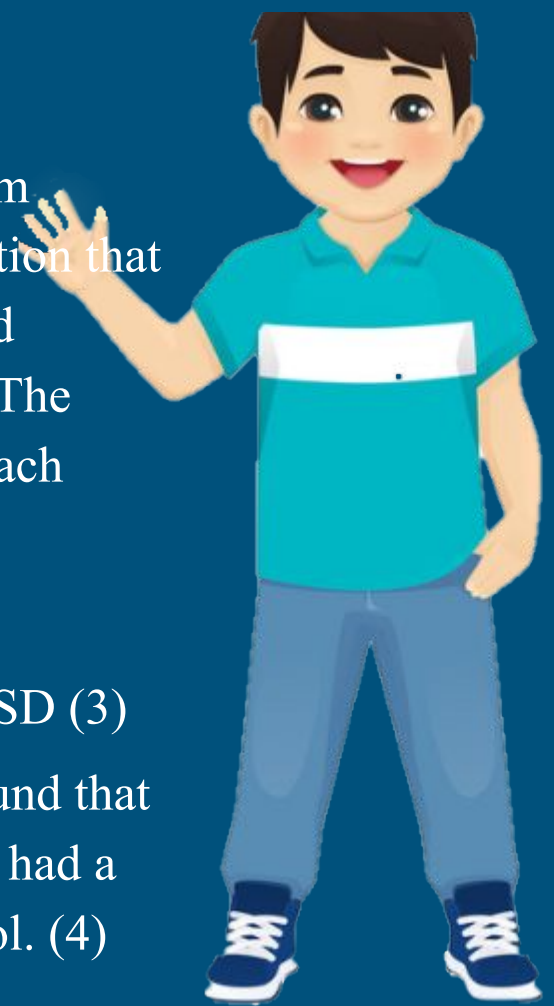
Facts about Autism

□ According to the American Psychiatric Association, an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is “A complex developmental condition that involves persistent challenges in social interaction, speech and nonverbal communication, and restricted/repetitive behaviors. The effects of ASD and the severity of symptoms are different in each person.” (1)

§ It is 4x more common in boys than girls (2)

§ According to the CDC 1 in 59 children is estimated to have ASD (3)

§ A study from the American Academy of Pediatrics in 2012 found that of 680 youth (ages 19-23) living with ASD, 35 percent had not had a job or received postgraduate education after leaving high school. (4)

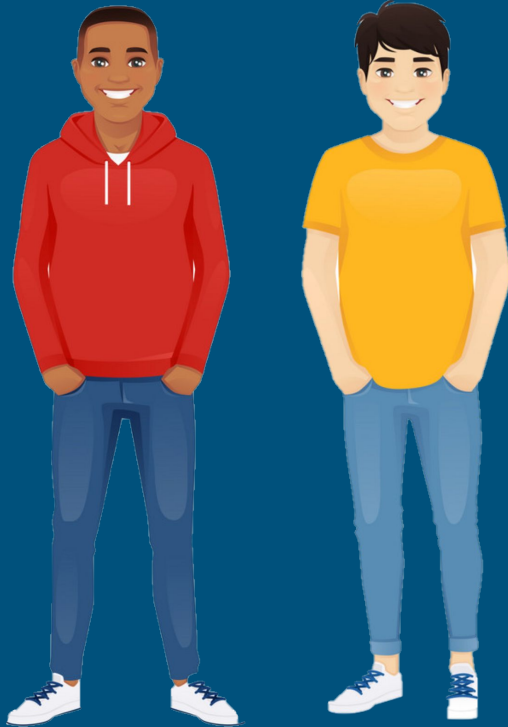


Facts about Autism & Race

According to West, Travers et.al. 408 peer-reviewed, published studies of evidence-based practices for autism intervention. Only 73 of them, or 17.9 percent, reported the race, ethnicity or nationality of participants. And of those, white children comprised a large majority. Of the nearly 2,500 participants in the studies, only 770 reported race, and 489 or 63.5 percent were white according to The Journal of Special Education.

For years, the medical community has studied and treated autism as a “white person’s” disease, and, today, research and therapy remain geared toward affluent, white people and families—leaving people of color in the lurch.

Tyrone & Sammy do not talk much. Both interact as needed, Behaviors can be odd but not troubling.



As Tyrone grows older. He will have the ongoing concern about Black males being 3X more likely to be approached by police. However Autistic males of any race must always be aware for safe police interaction.



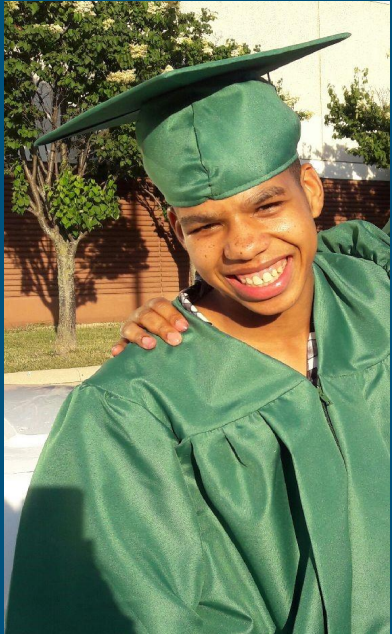
As fully grown adults without the right supports and interventions. Both may not live a fully independent life.



“Perceptions of Black boys. In 2014, for example, research by Professor Phillip Goff and colleagues revealed that beginning at the age of 10, Black boys are more likely than their white peers to be misperceived as older, viewed as guilty of suspected crimes, and face police violence if accused of a crime.”

J Blake, R Epstein, T González.(2017) *Girlhood interrupted: The erasure of Black girls' childhood.*
Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality

Off-Duty Sergeant Shot unarmed Autistic Teen



Around 5 a.m. on Aug. 13, 2017, Muhammad was getting home after working through the night. Driving alone in his girlfriend's SUV with Indiana plates and wearing a hoodie, the sergeant reached his Morgan Park block and encountered Hayes.

Muhammad said he saw Hayes standing by a neighbor's vehicle and worried the teen could be responsible for recent car break-ins in the area. COPA found that Muhammad spoke of only one break-in and did not provide specifics about it. COPA also found that the alleged offense happened nearly a mile away and that it did not give the sergeant reason to believe Hayes had committed any crime.

Muhammad's explanations for chasing Ricardo "Ricky" Hayes, 18, down a South Side block and firing two rounds at the teen, who suffered gunshot wounds but survived.

sergeant admitted that the 2017 shooting was "without lawful justification" in exchange for a 180-day suspension.



Sammy and Sally. Are on the spectrum. No intellectual disability.



His outburst, behaviors and awkwardness was a sign of a need for help and attention. Sammy has been getting assessed and treated since age four.

Sally symptoms were overlooked and did not get diagnosed until late teens.



Sally is described as sassy, sensitive, attitude, weird, angry, difficult to get along with others. She is not provided accommodations to help her succeed socially throughout childhood.

An open door and Early intervention sets Sammy on a path of numerous possibilities.



QUALITY MENTAL HEALTH CARE

SOCIAL SKILLS T

APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS

ACCEPTANCE

EARLY INTERVENTION

As much as I'd like to get in this door. I know that best way to address this problem is to create a door of my own.

Let's check it out.

RESEARCH

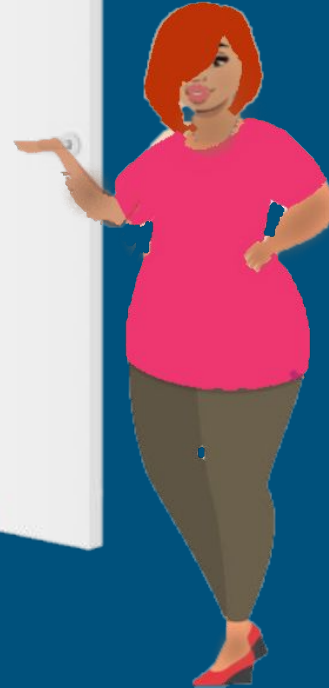
SUPPORT SERVICES



Culturally Prepared



These providers are ready to recognize symptoms and behaviors with BIPOC clients.



They understand how cultural significant behaviors and customs can mask symptoms.

There is another fact about autism. Autism is present in different cultures.

The culture of the autism spectrum impacts our individual lives in way unknown to most. We lack awareness of how autistic symptoms may present, especially High Functioning Autistics (HFA).

HFA's of color experience a unique level of isolation and rejection in and out of their community.

The CATINA Method was created to address this very issue.



A guide to Autism and Cultural Competence in Mental Health.

By Catina Burkett
LCSW and Sean
Inderbitzen APSW,
MINT



The **CATINA Method** is a guide to provide culturally competent care to all clients with unconditional positive regard.

Culture check

Ask questions

Test your EQ

Investigate

Nine-point check

Ally: Be an ally

Lets look at **C-A-N** of the **CATINA** method.

Check with your client for the importance of race and gender.

Do not underestimate how your BIPOC client has been conditioned to minimize themselves in the presence of caucasians.

This is your opportunity to ensure a safe space for healing with full acknowledgment of systemic racism presence in society.

“Do you feel competent to ask about, respond to, and support clients regarding their experiences of racism, oppression, and intersectionality?”

Ask yourself a few simple questions:

“Do you feel competent to ask about, respond to, and support clients regarding their experiences of racism, oppression, and intersectionality?”

The **Nine-point check**

These are a few examples of what black caregivers have said about loved ones who are on the spectrum and undiagnosed.

Caregivers complain about the individuals refusal to speak.

Symptoms: Delayed speech. Pointing to desired objects, non verbal. Episodes of unexplained frustration due to communication difficulties.

“What's the matter ? You can't say hello”?

“You only speak when you want to. That’s rude”.

Parent describes the child as quiet and well behaved.

Symptoms: The individual is overly compliant: goes along to get along with minimal pushback.

Johnny is my good child. Gives me the least problems and does what I say and he smart in school but doesn't have friends.

*This child is likely to not very mischievous. Goal is to please and cause least resistance.

Individuals are “different” from their siblings.

Symptoms: Very sensitive to their environment, whereas siblings and others are able to adjust. i.e. lights, sounds, city living.

Caregiver complains that the child/individual is stubborn and want things their way or want special treatment.

This inability to adjust is viewed as the refusal to comply, go along and get along.

The individual is said to not like people when this is far from the truth.

Symptoms: Child/ individual enjoys solitary activities and interests. Does not want others touching their things. The inability to engage others and read non verbal cues presents an obstacle.

From childhood through early twenties, young people can be mean spirited and intentionally deceive an unknowing target.

“Those people are not your friends, you let your friends use you”.

You would have friends if you would try to be nice and make others comfortable. You stuck in your ways.

Aside of the lack in research and medical considerations there are contributing factors to why BIPOC are not considered for a mild disability. The possibility that a mild social disorder is not considered. Instead most adults react in defense that the child or individual is acting with willful intent instead that these behaviors are a sign for help.

A groundbreaking study by the Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality provides—for the first time— data showing that adults view Black girls as less innocent and more adult-like than their white peers, especially in the age range of 5–14.

SNAPSHOT OF THE DATA

Compared to white girls of the same age, survey participants perceive that

- Black girls need less nurturing
- Black girls need less protection
- Black girls need to be supported less
- Black girls need to be comforted less
- Black girls are more independent
- Black girls know more about adult topics
- Black girls know more about sex

J Blake, R Epstein, T González.(2017) *Girlhood interrupted: The erasure of Black girls' childhood.*
Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality

As a teen, Wanda Sally may unintentionally send mixed messages by being unaware of her sexuality.

Wanda & Sally has HFA. Her symptoms will be overlooked,



Fully grown, they are likely to experience isolation and depression and abuse



Facts about Autism & Females

Females are substantially less likely to be diagnosed with ASD .

- As stated earlier females are 4x less likely to be diagnosed
- Often times females do not receive the treatment for their ASD they need as a result. (20)
- One proposed explanation of the ascertainment bias against females with ASD is that there is a female autism phenotype; a female-specific manifestation of autistic strengths and difficulties, which fits imperfectly with the current conceptualisations of ASD (21)

Facts about Autism & Females

- An example of this female phenotype, is empirical evidence that girls and women with ASD show higher social motivation and a greater capacity for traditional friendships than do males with ASD.
- * Too often intelligence is mistaken for maturity.
- * Compliance is mistaken for kindness.



We are responsible for
the checks and
balance for our
Cultural Competence

Tyrone, Wanda and Sally and Sammy. Fully grown adults. Do we know what services are needed for them?



What about their Golden years. How is one to plan?



Suicidality in autistic adults

The current study is the first to use validated assessment tools, and survey co-designed with autistic people, to explore unique risk factors for suicidality in this group. Results reiterate that rates of suicidality in autistic adults are higher than the general population, and ASC diagnosis and autistic traits are independent risk markers for suicidality.



Suicidality in autistic adults

Importantly, unique risk markers for suicidality in ASC include camouflaging one's ASC in order to fit in in social situations and number of unmet support needs. These explain small but significant additional variance in suicidality in ASC, above a range of known risk factors common with the general population. Future research must further explore these and identify other unique mechanisms driving suicidality in ASC to develop new effective suicide prevention strategies for this group.



This presentation is
dedicated to Ellie and
her special guy.



If we get this right, Ellie and the man in her life can care and enjoy each other for the rest of their days without worries that her special guy will be okay.



Works cited

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- (2018) Risk markers for suicidality in autistic adults.Sarah Cassidy, Louise Bradley, [...], and Simon Baron-Cohen. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6069847/?report=reader>
- [https://www.npr.org/Your Health](https://www.npr.org/Your-Health)
Black And Latino Children Are Often Overlooked When It Comes To Autism

Learning Objectives

1. Increase confidence interacting with people of various cultures with Autism and Mental Health
2. Learn about the (CATINA Method) to help recognize non-white people on the Autism Spectrum.
3. Providers can practice using the CATINA method worksheets in your own child welfare or mental health practice setting with patients with Autism and comorbid Mental Health conditions.