

Using the Multicultural Orientation Framework to Integrate Racial Justice in Behavioral Health Care

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today

*“Every interaction is a
multicultural interaction”*

~ Paul Pedersen

- Setting Intentions
- Cultural Fortitude
- Multicultural Orientation (MCO) Framework
- *Why does MCO matter?*
 - *Racial-ethnic health disparities*
 - *Building MCO Mind*
- Practice



reflection for intention

Think about a time when you learned something new about a someone you thought you knew very well and were surprised by what you learned!

- How did it feel to learn this new piece of information?
- How did this influence your subsequent interactions or change your relationship?
- What did you learn about yourself?

Cognitive, emotional, physiological, and interpersonal strength
in the face of psychological discomfort, which
can spark motivation and courage to move toward
racial repair and cultural healing.



Cultural Fortitude

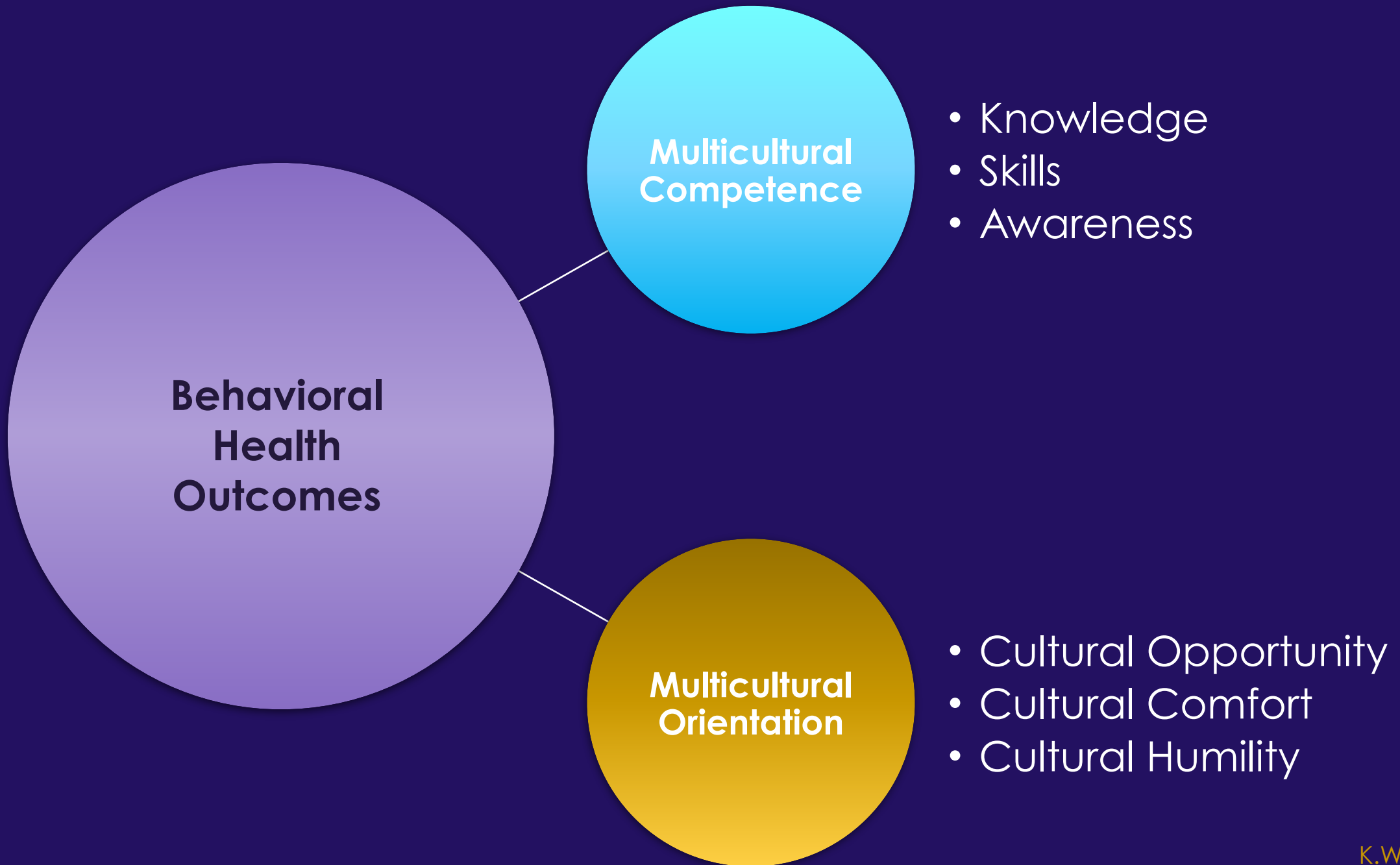


Multicultural Competence

- Doing

Multicultural Orientation

- Being



Multicultural Orientation

How we:

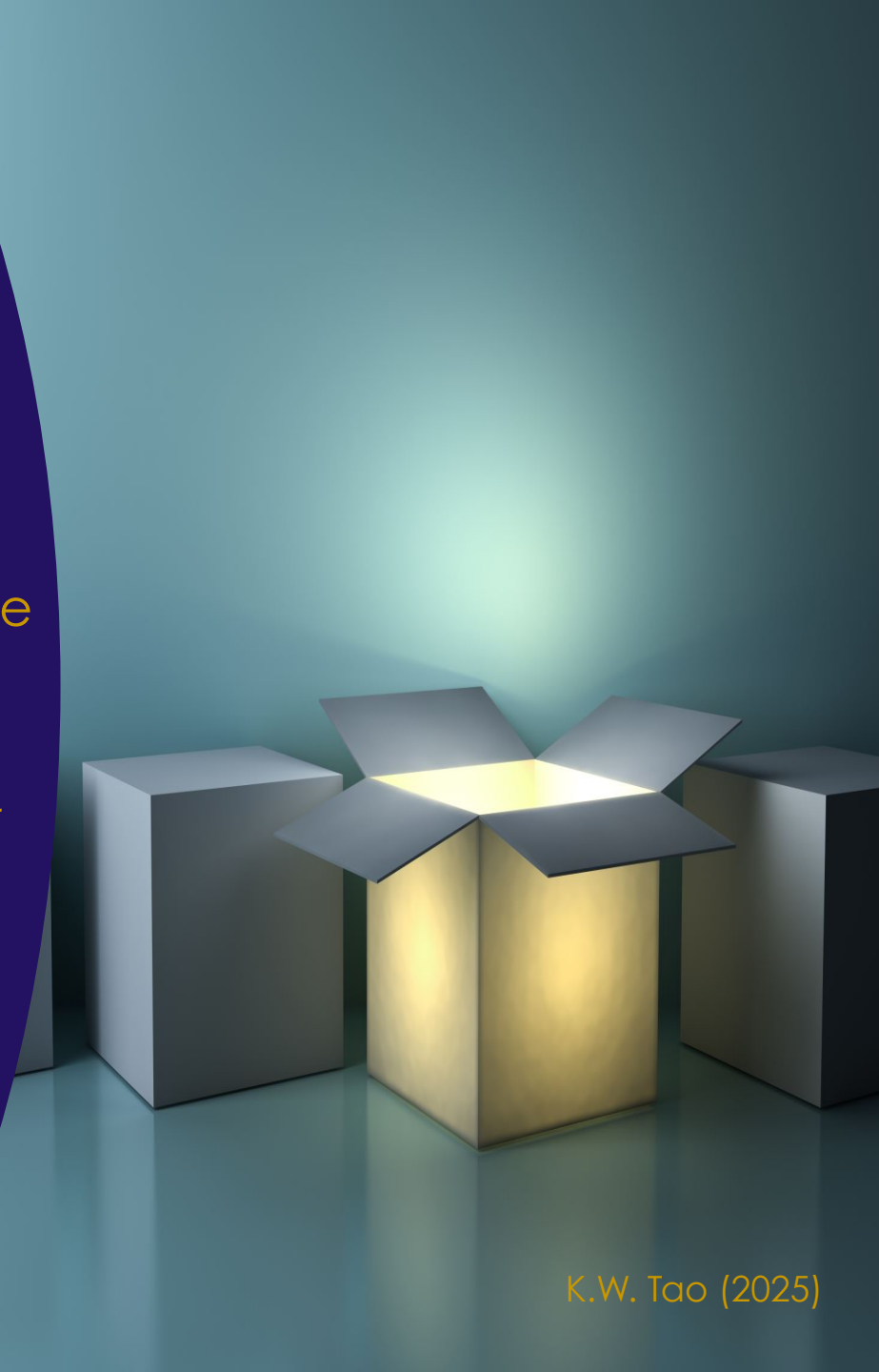
- Create a healing context where patients/clients can fully express their cultural selves
- Recognize our behavioral, affective, relational, & somatic responses to every interaction
- Make the implicit explicit
- Consider the “frame”
- Stay present



Cultural Opportunity

Moment in an interaction related to a patient's social and cultural identity(ies) offer opportunities to enhance dialogue

- *Let's explore this more*
- *This topic comes up often and I'm curious about what it means for you*
- *Seems like this is hard to talk about and something we might want to delve into more*



Cultural Markers

- **Client:** I think in part it has to do with my being the only Woman of Color in my office. Like I feel so on edge without a feeling of community and connection with my colleagues, and it wears on me all the time.
- **Therapist—Symptom Focus:** I can see it on your face; you seem exhausted just talking about this. I am wondering how this experience is affecting your ability to make the changes you've wanted at work and at home.
- **Therapist—Cultural Focus:** I can see it on your face; you seem exhausted just talking about this. It sounds isolating to be the only Woman of Color in your office. Would you share a bit more about what having community and connection would look like?

Multicultural Orientation

Emotion
Cognition
Behavior
Somatic
Relational



- **What aspects of client's cultural identities are salient?**
- **How might this be important to explore further?**

Cultural Humility

- Other-oriented stance
- Sense of openness, curiosity and genuine investment in another
 - Clear view of who you are (provider)
 - Remaining open (not neutral)
 - There is much more I can learn
 - Each interaction is a new interaction



Enacting Cultural Humility

- Listen Actively: Show genuine interest in their story.
- Ask Openly: "Tell me more about..."
- Reflect Inward: Be aware of your own biases.
- Partner Equally: Share decision-making.
- Learn Continuously: Every client/patient teaches.

Example:

Patient: "I think the reason I hear voices is because my auntie gave me mal de ojo. She cursed me."

Clinician: Thank you for sharing that with me. I understand that mal de ojo is an important belief in many cultures. Could you tell me more about how you think this has affected you and your experiences with hearing voices?

Multicultural Orientation

- **What else is important to learn?**
- **Why am I drawn to this aspect of the client's narrative?**



- **What aspects of client's cultural identities are salient?**
- **How might this be important to explore further?**

Emotion
Cognition
Behavior
Somatic
Relational

Cultural Comfort

- Thoughts and feelings - before, during, and after cultural conversations
- Degree of ease, openness, calmness
- Discomfort is also very important to sit with
 - Knowing what I don't know and being ok
 - Here and now dialogue
 - We feel it in our bodies. Where does this show up for you?

When discussing a culturally charged topic where do you feel it in your body?

This is important data.
We are feeling thinkers.

shake
clenched back
face shoulder feet
sweaty
faster
fist heat
tightens throat leg
heartbeat
chest

Multicultural Orientation

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- What else is important to learn?
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Cultural Humility

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Cultural Opportunity

Cultural Comfort

- **Somatic cues?**
- **What am I (not) doing?**
- **How come?**

MCO Therapy & Supervision Matters

- Cultural opportunities → better therapy outcomes¹
- Group level cultural humility → clients' improvement²
- Missed cultural opportunities → negative outcomes²
- Cultural comfort within group → more positive outcomes²
- Windows of opportunity – so many ways to address cultural opportunities without directly naming a client's identities³
- Supervisors who exhibited cultural humility and addressed cultural opportunities in supervision → higher supervisee satisfaction with supervisory experience⁴

¹Owen, J., Tao, K.W., Drinane, J.M., Hook, J., Davis, D.E. & Foo Kune, N. (2016). Client perceptions of therapists' multicultural orientation: Cultural (missed)opportunities and cultural humility. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 47, 30-37.

²Kivlighan, D. M. III, Drinane, J.M., Tao, K.W., Owen, J., & Liu, W.M. (2019). The Detrimental Effect of Fragile Groups: Examining the Role of Cultural Comfort for Group Therapy Members of Color. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 66(6), 763-770.

³Trevino, A.M., Tao, K.W., & Van Epps, J. (2020). Windows of Cultural Opportunity: A Thematic Analysis of How Cultural Conversations Occur in Psychotherapy. *Psychotherapy*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pst0000360>

⁴Wilcox, M. M., Drinane, J. M., Black, S. W., Cabrera, L., DeBlaere, C., Tao, K. W., Hook, J. N., Davis, D. E., Watkins, C. E., & Owen, J. (2022). Layered cultural processes: The relationship between multicultural orientation and satisfaction with supervision. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology*, 16(3), 235–243. <https://doi.org/10.1037/tep0000366>

What does considering
the frame mean?

These cows are sick. Why?



What prompted your
initial guesses?



Our initial assumptions come from somewhere

- Previous experience on farms and working with cows
- I made a guess based on what I could see in the picture.
- Media influence – Mad cow! E Coli! Poor animal care!
- Book about the environment and climate change
- Knowledge about water sources and problems
- Emotional reaction to how cows appeared
- Anthropomorphic reaction – There are so few cows and they are feeling isolated and maybe depressed.
- The grass looks too green, so there is something fishy going on.

The full(er) frame



We can't address what we don't (want or try to) notice

- States with higher anti- Black racism associated with lower effectiveness of psychotherapy with Black youth (Price et al., 2021)
- Collective trauma and anti-black racism (Williams et al., 2019)
- Linked to depression and anxiety in Black youth, with rumination mediating this relationship and developmental age amplifying its effects. (Bernard et al., 2023)
- Meta Analysis of 43 studies: racial discrimination significantly associated with suicidal ideation and attempts across marginalized racial groups. (Coimbra et al., 2022)

Do you really know me?



Withholding parts of ourselves or having who we are unacknowledged¹

- Related to poorer mental health
- Stereotypes and assumptions
- Delusions of understanding
 - The dialectic of knowing and unknowing.
 - I can never know your experience AND I will always try AND there are so many points of shared humanity.



Drinane, J.M., Owen, J. & Tao, K.W. (2018). Cultural concealment and therapy outcomes. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*. Cultural concealment and therapy outcomes. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 65(2), 239-246.

Building our MCO Muscles

What did you notice?

What are you curious about?

What parts of who you are may be influencing your curiosities?

Cultural Frames of Reference

Gender

Race

Ethnicity

Country of
origin

Citizenship

Social class

Religion

Indigenous
identity

Sexual
orientation

Ability

Immigration
Status

Mental
health

Physical Size

Other salient
identities



Let's Put this Together: Meet Van

Based on your
cultural frames
of reference
(identities)

What do you notice?

What are you curious about?

What identities might be
influencing your curiosities?

Van (Client)

- Vietnamese American woman
- 30-years-old
- Bisexual
- Seeking treatment for depression symptoms
- Recently moved from OK to San Francisco
- Works at a small tech company
- Parents were refugees

Miles (Psychiatrist)

- White man
- 60-years-old
- Jewish
- Gay
- Married w/ 2 children (ages 22 and 27)
- Parents both have PhDs
- Upper Middle Class
- Grew up in Berkeley

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What do you notice?

What are you curious about?

What identities might be influencing your curiosities?

Symptom Focused Interaction

Van: (Deep sigh). I've been so exhausted. I sometimes wonder if I am a Vietnamese Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz. I don't know how I got here. Coincidentally, my dog's name is Toto (laughs out loudly)

Miles: (laughs with Van). That is a coincidence. You've been so exhausted? Tell me more what this looks like.

Van: Well.. I just can't seem to get enough sleep. Even when I sleep for 8 hours, I wake up tired and I'm just dragging through the day. I've needed more caffeine than usual.

Miles: How does your energy level and sleep pattern differ from the past?

Van: I prided myself on having great morning routine! Before I moved here, I went to bed at 10:00, woke up at 6, went to the gym or for a run, and even had time to meditate for 15 minutes almost every morning. None of that's happening now.

Miles: What has your mood been like?

Van: Pretty low. Nothing overly concerning.. just blah.

Miles: Nothing too concerning? Tell me more

Van: I mean I'm not suicidal or anything. Just feeling kinda numb.. no real highs or lows.

Miles: Based on how you've described your general mood in the past, this is unusual for you. You also mentioned feeling like Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz. What do you mean by that?

Van: Haha. Yeah.. for sure. There's no place like home, right? Maybe I should have stayed in Ohio.

Culturally Focused Interaction

Van: (Deep sigh). I've been so exhausted. I sometimes wonder if I am a Vietnamese Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz. I don't know how I got here. Coincidentally, my dog's name is Toto (laughs out loudly)

Miles: I know the original story. Tell me more about what you mean by being a Vietnamese Dorothy.

Van: Hmm.. I grew up in a town where there very few Vietnamese and Asian people and now I'm here in New York where there are SO many! You'd think I'd feel like I felt at home, but instead, I feel out of place. Everything in San Francisco is also so expensive!

Miles: I imagine it can feel even more isolating when you had expected to feel a greater sense of belonging in a city with much more racial diversity and a bigger Vietnamese community. What does it feel like to be Vietnamese here in San Francisco?

Van: This is going to sounds strange, but I don't feel like I'm legit. I don't speak Vietnamese. I don't celebrate any of the holidays. I feel like a fraud. Last week during Vietnamese New Year, I went out alone for a burrito.

Miles: Speaking Vietnamese and continuing some traditions would make you feel more legit? How so?

Van: Growing up, my parents always wanted me to speak Vietnamese at home. Their English was not very good, so I was embarrassed by their accents. Now, I feel a lot of guilt about not listening to their stories or learning the language.

Miles: Sounds like you want to be more connected to your Vietnamese heritage, yet don't know how to do that. Moving away from Oklahoma has led to this realization.

Van: For sure. I don't know...

Miles: This feels heavy for you, a lot to unpack.

Van: (Sigh. Looks down at lap). For sure, a lot. And I'm also still unpacking boxes too (chuckles)

“Well, that really is my ambition: how to have a conversation so that the space can hold discomfort, so that the thing isn’t a thing that you have to put over there, so that we can get over ourselves, in a sense — and I mean all of us, people of color, white people — that we have, suddenly, a moment where we have an investment in a kind of possibility that is beyond our negotiation of each other. I think the messiness of just saying what it is, when it is. “ ~Claudia Rankine



Questions & Comments

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Questions Regarding the Equity and Justice Focused Integrative Behavioral Health Training Project can be directed to:

ibhequity@sfsu.edu

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