

## **MPSI Orientation to Culture**

A primary goal of the Missouri Prevention Science Institute is to prepare prevention scientists and school and community clinicians to be culturally responsive and proactive practitioners and scholars. We define culture as a way of thinking, acting, and feeling shared by a group of people. Culturally responsive practice and scholarship requires investigation and awareness of one's own culture and biases, and it values and validates the cultural backgrounds of diverse students, families, teachers, and all other personnel with whom we interact. Many aspects of culture, which have been linked to youth social, emotional, and academic outcomes, are examined throughout our research and outreach, including but not limited to gender, race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability status, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, and national origin.

On the one hand, we believe that many aspects of nurturing and effective home and school environments are universal, or nearly so. Much of our work focuses on ensuring all youth have access to these types of environments at home and school and in the community. On the other hand, we recognize that some aspects of nurturing and effective environments are culture-dependent and that these culture-specific dimensions are often invisible in dominant culture research and training programs. We believe that intentional, systematic, and repeated efforts are needed to identify and become mindful of these hidden cultural dimensions. To overcome this tendency and bias to ignore the culture-dependent aspects of nurturing environments and effective interventions, we expect MPSI faculty, students, and staff to seek out and participate in cultural experiences (such as coursework, community involvement, workshops, trainings, and lectures) throughout their education and career. We expect MPSI affiliates to continually reflect on their own biases and to pursue the expanding and challenging of their own cultural comfort zones. Furthermore, as a Institute we commit to taking action against and rejecting bigotry, discrimination, violence, or intimidation of any kind.