Considerations for Centering Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Research Syntheses

Session 2 | November 9, 2023

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AIR Inclusive Meeting Guidelines
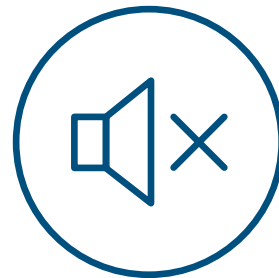## Hosting and Participating in Meetings

ENGAGE EVERYONE

BE HEARD AND SEEN

ACKNOWLEDGE SPEAKER

MAXIMIZE MICROPHONES

MINIMIZE NOISE

MAXIMIZE VISUAL DISPLAYS

These guidelines are intended to improve the meeting experience for virtual participants, as well as people with hearing loss, visual impairment, and those for whom English is an additional language.

Developed by the Access AIR and AIR CREW Employee Resource Groups with support from the AIR Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Office.

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How to Use Zoom

Click on the **Chat icon** to ask questions, share your thoughts and ideas when prompted, and let us know about any technical issues.
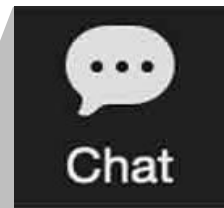
Click on **Reactions** to **Raise Hand** to ask a question during Q&A or to use one of the other reaction icons.
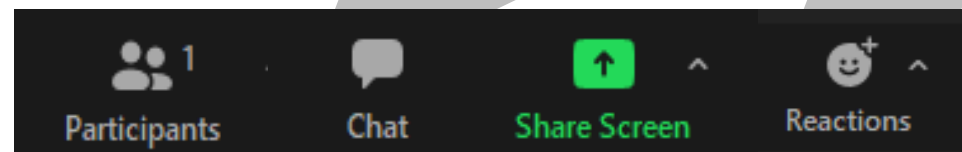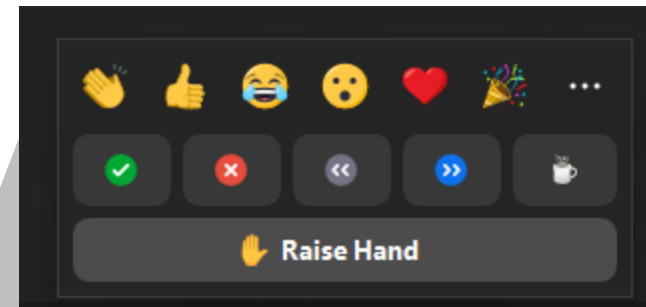
Meet the Presenters

Isabelle Edwards

American Institutes for Research

Rebecca Steingut, PhD

American Institutes for Research

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Pulse Check!

Time: 5 minutes

Instructions: In one word,

how are you feeling right now?

Navigate to **menti.com**

Use code 8511 6298

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Community of Practice Overview

Rebecca Steingut

Working Assumptions

You are important to this process.

Everyone has wisdom; **we need your voice!**

Assume positive intent. **This is a space of mutual learning**. It is also a continual process.

These may be sensitive topics—patience and empathy are important.

Norms

Active listening and engagement. **Participate and share your ideas!**

Questions or comments? Use the raise hand feature.

Cameras: Encouraged!

Audio: Mute and unmute. Be mindful of background noise.

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Goals of the Community of Practice

Community members will …

1. Gain awareness of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and cultural and linguistic competence (CLC).

2. **Expand their knowledge of how to operationalize and center DEI in research syntheses.**

3. Gain familiarity with the research synthesis process.

4. Explore planning and proposing a research synthesis that centers DEI principles.

5. Learn how to integrate DEI principles into ongoing research syntheses.

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Session 2 Agenda

1. Discuss risks of not centering DEI in research syntheses.

2. Review the *Considerations.*

3. Breakout rooms reflecting on the *Considerations.*

4. Discuss next steps.

   a. Complete intersessional activities.

   b. Stay connected.

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Risks of Not Centering DEI in Research Syntheses

Isabelle Edwards

Risks To Be Discussed

- Unintended meanings of language choices

- Publishing research that incompletely or inaccurately represents specific groups

- Suggesting solutions that won't appropriately center the specific groups studied

- Results that mislead policymakers into making decisions that negatively impact the specific groups studied

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Language Choices

The term *subgroup* can imply that a certain demographic in the study sample is "less than" or "beneath" another demographic.

Instead, use *specific group* to discuss smaller portions of a population.

Stakeholder is a catchall term to refer to a variety of individuals impacted by or interested in our work. It can be assumed that all stakes have equal merit, and we should do work that makes all these people happy.

Instead, use language that **explicitly identifies the individuals or groups** you mean to represent.

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Incompletely or Inaccurately Representing Specific Groups

Many syntheses will only focus on **overall findings**, leading readers to make assumptions about how specific groups fit into the sample (or don't fit into the sample).

Synthesists should comment on **data availability (or lack thereof) for specific groups** to be transparent about the data that did or did not factor into final analyses. Policy and practice recommendations may need to differ across specific groups, and that's okay!

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Suggesting Inappropriate Solutions

Ignoring or deliberately misunderstanding unfamiliar cultures and customs can lead researchers to suggest solutions that entirely go against the values of the specific groups that are included in a synthesis.

Researchers should do their due diligence with **independent background research on unfamiliar cultures and customs** before working with impacted communities to discuss potential solutions. These communities might even share that the "problem" researchers identified isn't even a problem for them!

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Publishing Results That Mislead Policymakers

If results show positive impacts for the study population at large but lack a strong sample of specific groups, policymakers may assume the study showed positive impacts for *all* participants when certain populations may not be fairly represented in the sample.

Clearly **address impacts on individual specific groups**, or explicitly discuss which groups were not fairly represented in your study. It's okay—and transparent—to share when you didn't have enough data available to make policy and practice recommendations.

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Questions?

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Considerations for Centering DEI in Research Syntheses

Isabelle Edwards

Purpose of the *Considerations*

To help synthesis leaders, team members, and interested parties operationalize and incorporate DEI values in their synthesis practices
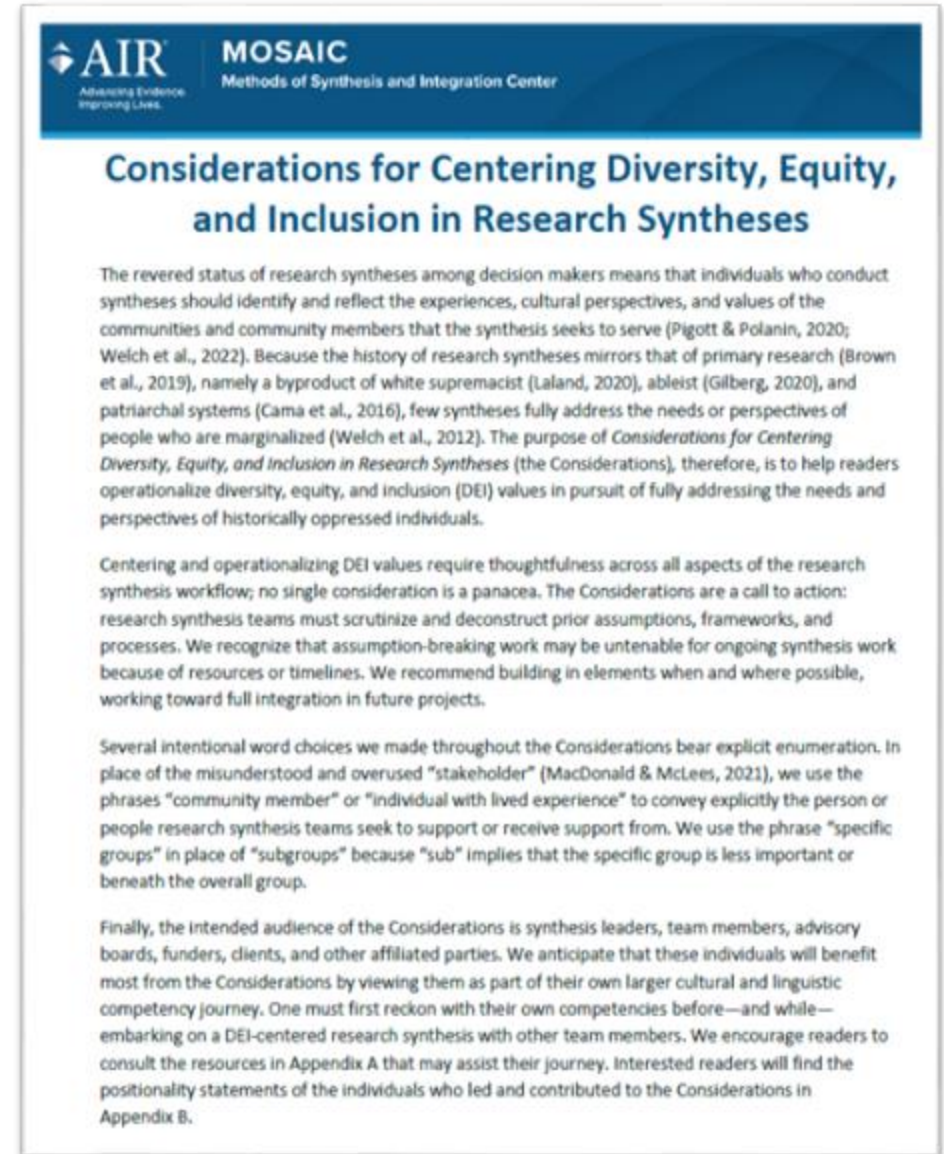
> " … in the pursuit of fully addressing the needs and perspectives of those historically oppressed. "

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What Are the *Considerations*?

A series of statements, elaborations, and examples that articulate DEI values and issues for research synthesis teams to *consider* during each of the 12 synthesis phases.

MOSAIC
Methods of Synthesis and Integration Center

Considerations for Centering Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Research Syntheses

The revered status of research syntheses among decision makers means that individuals who conduct syntheses should identify and reflect the experiences, cultural perspectives, and values of the communities and community members that the synthesis seeks to serve (Pigott & Polanin, 2020; Welch et al., 2022). Because the history of research syntheses mirrors that of primary research (Brown et al., 2019), namely a byproduct of white supremacist (Laland, 2020), ableist (Gilberg, 2020), and patriarchal systems (Cama et al., 2016), few syntheses fully address the needs or perspectives of people who are marginalized (Welch et al., 2012). The purpose of *Considerations for Centering Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Research Syntheses* (the Considerations), therefore, is to help readers operationalize diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) values in pursuit of fully addressing the needs and perspectives of historically oppressed individuals.

Centering and operationalizing DEI values require thoughtfulness across all aspects of the research synthesis workflow; no single consideration is a panacea. The Considerations are a call to action: research synthesis teams must scrutinize and deconstruct prior assumptions, frameworks, and processes. We recognize that assumption-breaking work may be untenable for ongoing synthesis work because of resources or timelines. We recommend building in elements when and where possible, working toward full integration in future projects.

Several intentional word choices we made throughout the Considerations bear explicit enumeration. In place of the misunderstood and overused "stakeholder" (MacDonald & McLees, 2021), we use the phrases "community member" or "individual with lived experience" to convey explicitly the person or people research synthesis teams seek to support or receive support from. We use the phrase "specific groups" in place of "subgroups" because "sub" implies that the specific group is less important or beneath the overall group.

Finally, the intended audience of the Considerations is synthesis leaders, team members, advisory boards, funders, clients, and other affiliated parties. We anticipate that these individuals will benefit most from the Considerations by viewing them as part of their own larger cultural and linguistic competency journey. One must first reckon with their own competencies before—and while—embarking on a DEI-centered research synthesis with other team members. We encourage readers to consult the resources in Appendix A that may assist their journey. Interested readers will find the positionality statements of the individuals who led and contributed to the Considerations in Appendix B.

The *Considerations* Are a Call to Action

Research synthesis teams must scrutinize and deconstruct prior assumptions, frameworks, and processes *before, during, and after* the synthesis process.

Team members should view the *Considerations* as part of their larger DEI and CLC journeys.

Where Did We Start and What Were Our Influences?

Research Synthesis Perspective

- Nine technical working group (TWG) members have experience applying DEI principles in their work or interest in doing so.

- About half of TWG members had prior synthesis experience.

- MOSAIC leadership have contributed to or led 50+ syntheses.

DEI/CLC Perspective

- Internal organizational DEI/CLC work

- "Stakeholder" and patient-centered engagement in research syntheses

- Participatory research processes and ongoing AIR projects

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Review of the *Considerations*

Isabelle Edwards and Rebecca Steingut

Determining Research Questions

Consideration: Develop research questions that center specific groups.

Examples of non-DEI values-centered practice	Example of DEI values-centered practice
• Concentrates on findings of overall average effects • Determines research questions in isolation or in consultation only with other synthesis leaders	• Centers specific groups that may (or may not) benefit from the intervention • Vets research questions with members of applicable specific groups within and outside the synthesis team

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Creating and Training the Synthesis Teams

Consideration: Create the research synthesis team of individuals who reflect the samples within the studies included in the research synthesis. Train team members as needed so everyone can participate fully.

Examples of non-DEI values-centered practice	Example of DEI values-centered practice
• Selects team members based on previous experiences working together • Uses domain-specific skill sets instead of lived experiences to determine who should be included on the team	• Communicates staffing opportunity via broad announcement at organization, specifying staffing needs • Recruits individuals without lived experience only when team members with lived experience do not have domain-specific skill sets necessary for the review

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Planning the Budget

Consideration: Include time and financial resources for processes and procedures that fall outside the traditional research synthesis framework.

Examples of non-DEI values-centered practice	Example of DEI values-centered practice
• Includes funding only for non-DEI-centered research review process • Compensates substantive and methodological experts at rates higher than community members	• Includes funding for traditional review process plus monetary stipends for advisory board members, community members, and individuals with lived experiences • Includes time (i.e., additional labor hours and extended timeline) for integrated reflection on synthesis processes, consideration of cultural perspectives, and adaptation of materials for all audiences

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Drafting the Synthesis Protocol and Additional Documentation

Consideration: Write language in all documentation that every team member understands in a similar way.

Examples of non-DEI values-centered practice	Example of DEI values-centered practice
• Writes documentation more easily understood by team members with research experience • Trains members of the review staff on an ad hoc basis and does not include the advisory board members in the training	• Uses language accessible to all team members, and defines any specific research terms in a separate review protocol dictionary • Creates space for each member of the review team to provide feedback about the review protocol before it is implemented

Breakout Activity #1!

Time: 15 minutes

Instructions:

1. You will be assigned to a breakout room.

2. Select a member to take notes and report out.

3. Consider revisiting the text of the *Considerations*.

4. Discuss the following:

   – How could you expand or amend your proposed synthesis (drafted as part of the intersessional activity) to better consider DEI in research questions, synthesis teams, budgets, and protocols?

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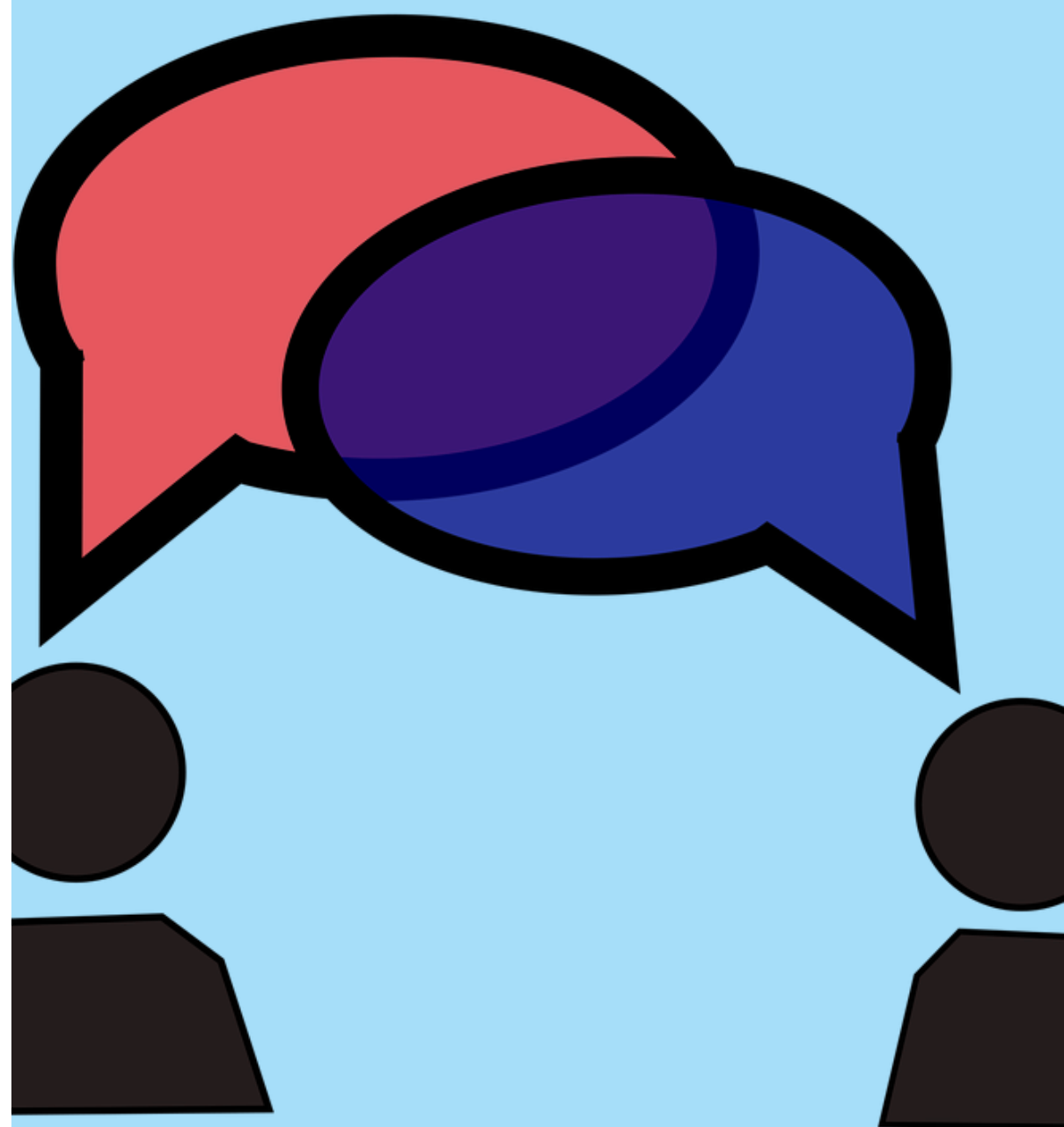
Searching the Literature, Screening for Eligibility, and Extracting Data from Studies

Consideration: Use literature search, eligibility screening, and data extraction databases and tools that are freely available and enable reproducibility.

Examples of non-DEI values-centered practice	Example of DEI values-centered practice
• Prioritizes ease of use over accessibility when making decisions about software • Excludes studies written in languages other than English	• Prioritizes free online databases and uses non-paywalled publications • Identifies opportunities for integrating freely available software into methodology

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Extracting Data of Specific Group Characteristics and Analyses

Consideration: Extract any variable included in the codebook for all relevant specific groups.

Examples of non-DEI values-centered practice	Example of DEI values-centered practice
• Uses rigid language adapted only when necessary for specific groups • Pilots codebook with small group of staff or with the review team leader only	• Includes codebook items that are flexible enough to capture various ways primary authors could capture specific group information • Uses the "We All Count" philosophy to code the following three questions regarding identity: (1) *Who made the identity selection?* (2) *What categories or framework was the identity selected out of?* (3) *Who determined those categories and defined their contents?*

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Conducting Quantitative, Qualitative, or Mixed Syntheses

Consideration: Synthesize findings by specific groups in addition to overall findings. For quantitative meta-analyses, synthesists should also investigate effect variation, via descriptive or moderator analyses, within specific groups.

Examples of non-DEI values-centered practice	Example of DEI values-centered practice
• Suggests policy and practice based on the overall averages • Conducts moderator analyses for overall findings, ignoring specific groups	• Highlights specific group findings in the abstract and briefing documents • Suggests policy and practice based on specific group findings or lack thereof

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Presenting Results for and by Multiple Audiences

Consideration: Invite synthesis team members and advisory board members to translate findings in their own voices, and then present the results alongside synthesis leaders.

Examples of non-DEI values-centered practice	Example of DEI values-centered practice
• Senior review leadership publishes and presents findings only at researcher-oriented conferences or workshops • Writes findings only in English	• Creates opportunities for all team members to present findings and to the audiences of their choice • Translates materials into languages other than that or those of the synthesis team

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Providing Public Access to Datasets, Coding Manuals, and Materials

Consideration: Provide ideally free and public access to datasets, coding manuals, and other review materials after disseminating the results.

Examples of non-DEI values-centered practice	Example of DEI values-centered practice
• Ignores the possibility of future research synthesis teams using previously collected information • Does not publish publicly available scripts or datasets	• Limits the embargo of synthesis files to minimum amount of time necessary to publish findings • Embraces collaboration among future researchers who seek to update past research syntheses

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Questions?

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Breakout Activity #2!

Time: 15 minutes

Instructions:

1. You will be assigned to a breakout room.

2. Select a member to take notes and report out.

3. Consider revisiting the text of the *Considerations*.

4. Discuss the following:

   – How could you expand or amend your proposed synthesis (drafted as part of the intersessional activity) to better consider literature searching and screening, data extraction, synthesizing findings, presenting results, and providing public access to materials?

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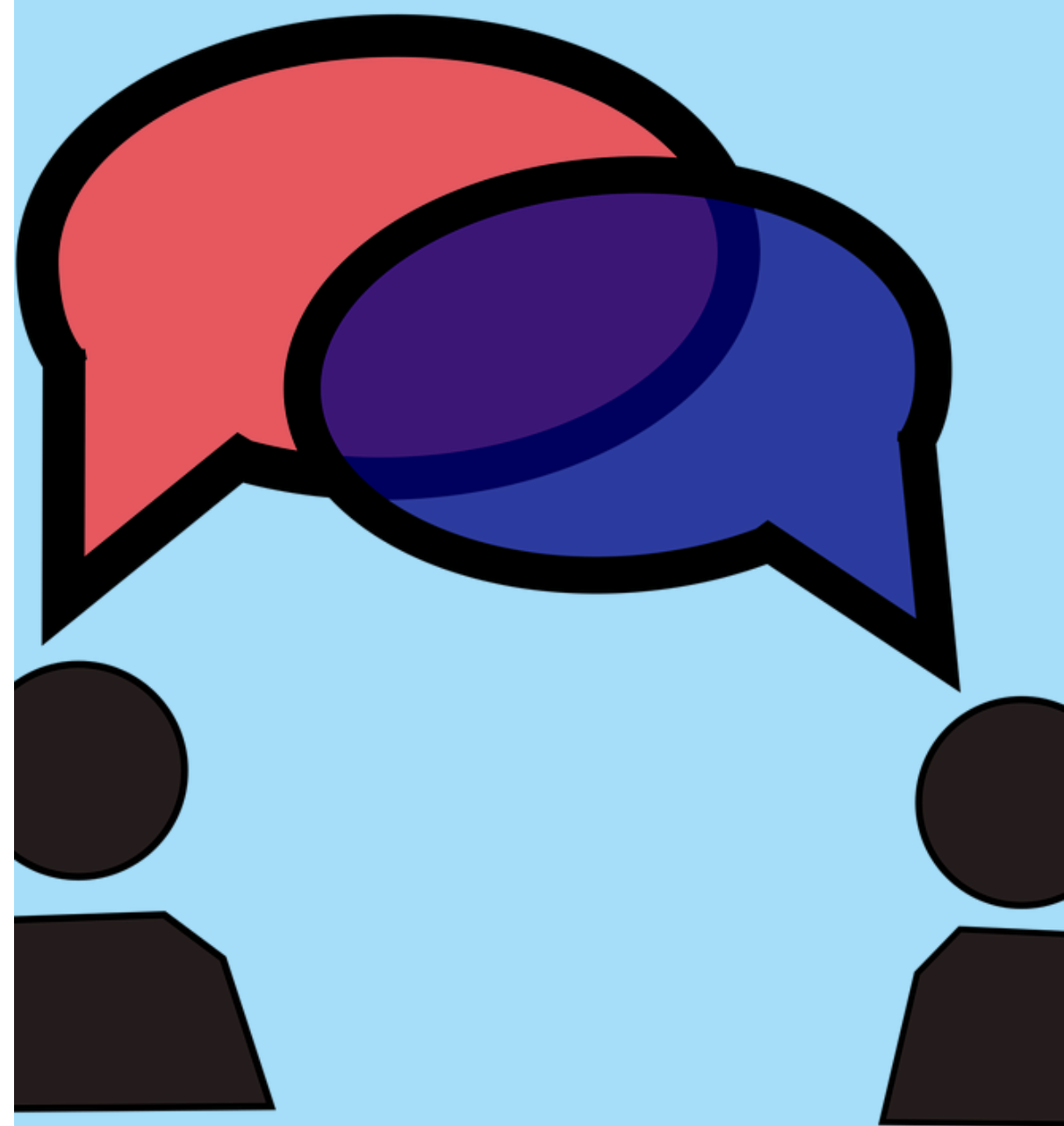
Whole-Group Discussion

What feels most difficult in operationalizing DEI values in your work? What feels easiest?

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Next Steps

Isabelle Edwards

Intersessional Activity!

Time: Complete prior to Session 3 (November 30, 2023)

Instructions: Choose and complete **one** of the following activities before Session 3:

1. Reflect on one of your own, existing proposals or the one you wrote for the last intersessional activity and list three Considerations you could incorporate. Detail how you will address each Consideration.

2. Select from this list of STEM-related syntheses to read and answer the following question: In what ways were the values outlined in the *Considerations* integrated and what opportunities are there for improvement?

    a. *Williams et al. (2022)*
    b. *Neitzel et al. (in preparation)*

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Visit the Community of Practice Learning Space
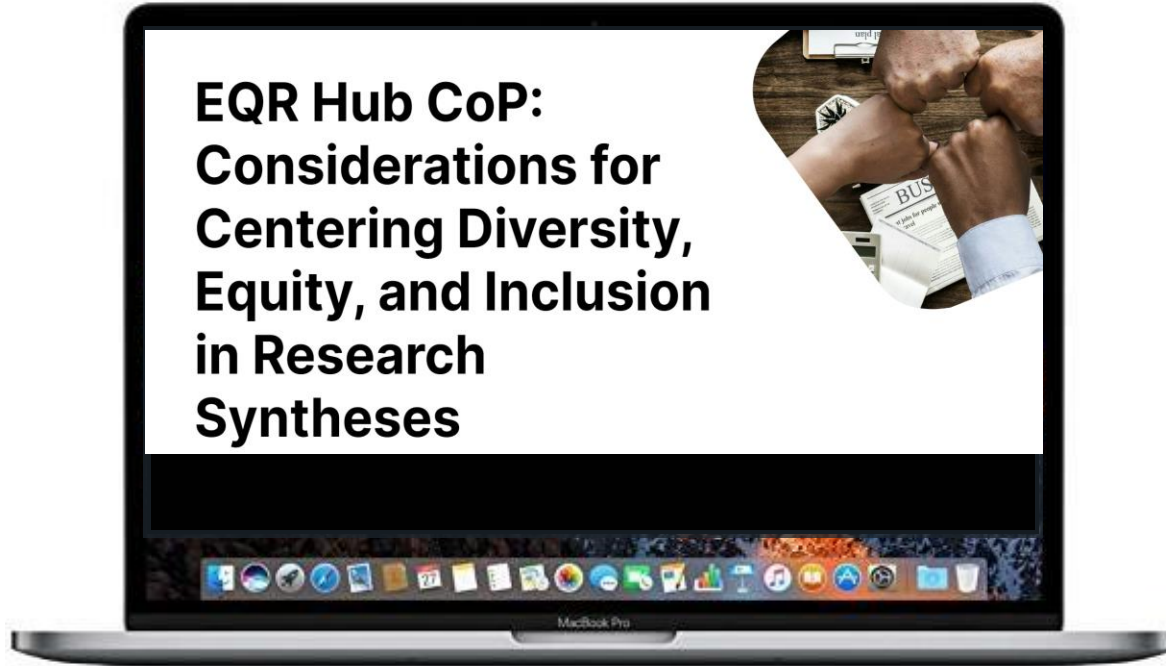
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Thanks for attending!