Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards: Self-Awareness and Systems of Oppression

Illinois Administrative Rule Part 24
Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards for All Illinois Educators

Section 24.50
(a) Self-Awareness and Relationships to Others
Culturally responsive teachers and leaders are reflective and gain a deeper understanding of themselves and how they impact others, leading to more cohesive and productive student development as it relates to academic and social-emotional development for all students.

(b) Systems of Oppression
Culturally responsive teachers and leaders understand that there are systems in our society, especially, but not limited to, our school system, that create and reinforce inequities, thereby creating oppressive conditions. Educators work actively against these systems in their everyday roles in educational institutions.

Agreements help maintain a safe, supportive, and active learning environment.

Our agreements	What they look like in action
Be engaged and maintain confidentiality	Make the personal commitment to remain emotionally, intellectually, and socially involved in the dialogue. Seek to understand, not to agree. Honor privacy by avoiding "who said what."
Speak to and listen for one's own truth	Be open about your feelings and experiences – not just saying what you think others want to hear. Be open to the experiences of others, not comparing them to your own. Consider your own power dynamics and how it shapes what you see/hear and what you do not see/hear.
Experience discomfort	Stay focused on disrupting institutional oppression and building inclusive leadership skills. It is through dialogue — even when uncomfortable — that awareness happens and change begins.
Expect and accept non-closure	This work is ongoing. Be willing to take risks, sit through silence, and accept that this is about changing yourself and not others.

Avoid Communication Roadblocks

Problem-Solving	"Have you tried x, y, or z?"
Blame	"Do you think it might be because of the way you …?"
Coldness	"It's for your own good." "You'll be better for it."
False Assurance	"Oh, I'm sure it's nothing." "It will all turn out fine."
Judgment	"You're being overly sensitive."
Questioning	"Did that really happen?" "Are you sure you heard him correctly?" "Are you sure you are remembering that correctly?"

Silence Breakers* are prompts we may use to address common challenges in cross-racial discussions.

1   Talking about race makes me feel…

2   From my experience/perspective as (identity) …

3   This perspective is new to me, but I'm wondering if it is accurate to say that…?

4   I'm still working through / processing this, but right now where I am at is…

5   Can you help me understand whether what I'm thinking right now might be problematic?

*Excerpt from Sensoy and DiAngelo. Adapted from Anika Nailah and DiAngelo.

Reflection Question Framework

How does (perspective shared) challenge or expand the way I see the world?

How does this issue relate to my own experience? How have I been shaped by the issues being addressed?

Why is it hard for me to accept this as true? What about my life in relation to my race/class/gender might make it difficult for me to see or validate this new perspective?

What are my reactions? What do my reactions reveal about what I perceive is at risk were I to accept this information?

What do I need to do differently? If I were to accept this information as valid, what am I called to do?

Objectives

Section 1a: Self-Awareness and Relationship to Others
- Reflect on identity and how it shapes lived experiences.
- Reflect on how identity and lived experiences have influenced perceptions of others, their behaviors, and our interactions.
- Identify ongoing opportunities and practices for self-reflection.

Section 1b: Systems of Oppression
- Identify ways in which systems of inequity have impacted both educators and students.
- Examine how power and privilege shape systems of oppression.

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Section 1a: Self-Awareness and Relationship to Others

- Reflect on identity and how it shapes lived experiences.
- Reflect on how identity and lived experiences have influenced perceptions of others, their behaviors, and our interactions.
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Self-Awareness and Relationship to Others

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What is identity?

Identity

SOCIAL A group of persons marked by a label and distinguished by rules deciding membership and (alleged) characteristic features or attributes

PERSONAL Distinguishing characteristic(s) that a person takes special pride in or views as having social consequence

Identity also refers to social categories and sources of an individual's self-respect or dignity. Social identity is inextricably tied to the basis for one's self-respect and the respect one has for another.

Race Is a Social Construct

- Race is a made-up system of classification **<u>not</u>** a biological fact.
- Among other things, race was created to justify slavery, forced labor, and owning humans as property.
- There is no gene, trait, or characteristic that distinguishes racial groups.
- Race designations have changed over time.
- Just because race is socially constructed, that does not mean that it does not profoundly shape people's experiences.

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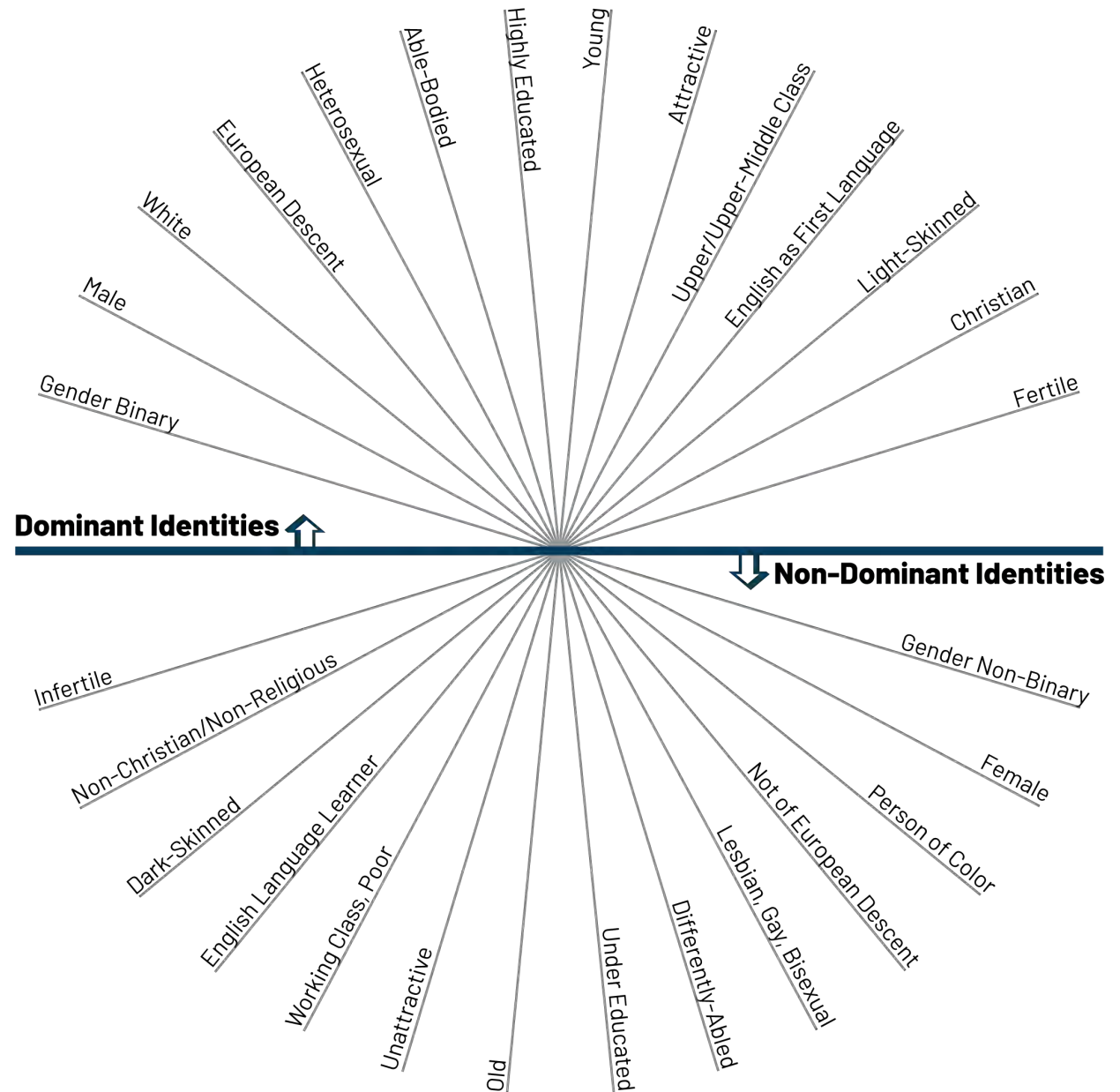
What do I need to do differently? If I were to accept this information as valid, what am I called to do?

We all have multiple, complex identities.

These identities come with different levels of power and privilege.

Dominant Identities ⇧

Non-Dominant Identities ⇩

Gender Binary
Male
White
European Descent
Heterosexual
Able-Bodied
Highly Educated
Young
Attractive
Upper/Upper-Middle Class
English as First Language
Light-Skinned
Christian
Fertile

Infertile
Non-Christian/Non-Religious
Dark-Skinned
English Language Learner
Working Class, Poor
Unattractive
Old
Under Educated
Differently-Abled
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual
Not of European Descent
Person of Color
Female
Gender Non-Binary

Adapted from Morgan, K.P. Describing the emperor's new clothes: Three myths of educational (in-) equity. In *The Gender Question in Education: Theory, Pedagogy, & Politics.* Westview Press, Boulder, CO, 1996, 105–122.

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Explore your identity.

1. Which identity do you think about **most often?**
2. Which identity do you think about **least often?**
3. Which identity do you think **others notice about you first?**

Breakout Groups

Here's what to expect:
- ✓ A facilitator will be joining you. They'll lead you through a series of reflection questions about the identities you think about **most often**, **least often**, and which identity you think **others notice about you first**.
- ✓ You'll be in groups that have been randomly assigned.
- ✓ You'll be pulled back to the main session; unfortunately, it might be mid-sentence. We know this can feel weird.

Community Agreements Reminder:
- ✓ Stay engaged
- ✓ Expect and accept a lack of closure
- ✓ Speak your truth
- ✓ Expect to experience discomfort
- ✓ Bring your identity
- ✓ Develop and use the language of identity in our discussions
- ✓ Use first names

Breakout Session 1 ... Most Often

- **Serial Sharing:** Share your name and position, then your response to the **Which** and **Why** reflection questions. *(30-45 seconds per group member, 4-6 minutes total)*
- **Group Discussion:** Based on what you shared and what you learned from others, discuss the other reflection question as a group. *(4-5 minutes)*

Prompt	Reflections
1 Which identity do you think about **most often?**	• **Which** identity do you think about most often? • **Why** do you think about it most often?

Breakout Session 2 ... Least Often

- **Serial Sharing:** Share your response to the **Which** and **Why** reflection questions. *(30-45 seconds per group member, 4-6 minutes total)*
- **Group Discussion:** Based on what you shared and what you learned from others, discuss the other reflection question as a group. *(4-5 minutes)*

Prompt	Reflections
2 Which identity do you think about **least often?**	**Which** identity do you think about least often? **Why** don't you think about it very often?

Breakout Session 3 ... How Others See Us

- **Serial Sharing:** Share your response to the **Which** and **Why** reflection questions. *(30-45 seconds per group member, 4-6 minutes total)*
- **Group Discussion:** Based on what you shared and what you learned from others, discuss the other reflection question as a group. *(4-5 minutes)*
- **Regroup:** Come back to the main room.

Prompt	Reflections
3 Which identity do you think **others notice about you first?**	**Which** identity do you think others notice about you first? **Why** do you think others notice this identity about you first?

Breakout Session 1a … Dominant Culture & Privilege

Working with a partner who shares a **dominant culture identity**, draw on experiences from your own life in order to generate examples of how your **internalized privilege** (as common members of the group identity you share) manifests itself.

Reflection

1a   What examples can you think of in which your identity as a member of a dominant culture influences your own privilege?

Breakout Session 1b … Non-Dominant Culture & Oppression

Working with a partner who shares a **non-dominant culture identity**, draw on experiences from your own life in order to generate examples of how **internalized oppression** (as common members of the group identity you share) manifests itself.

Reflection

1b

What examples can you think of in which your identity as a member of a non-dominant culture influences your own internalized oppression?

Cultural Reference Points

Step 1:

Take 5 minutes to reflect on the questions about your past experiences and how they influence your interactions with students and teachers.

- How do your answers to these questions inform your expectations for students and your interpretations of their behavior or performance?
- How do your answers to these questions inform how you respond when students are struggling?
- How might your interpretations of student actions differ if you answered these questions differently?

Cultural Reference Points

Step 2:
Find a partner (does not need to be from your site) and take 5 minutes to share your answers to the previous questions and compare.
- How were your experiences similar?
- How were your experiences different?
- What did you learn about your partner that challenged your assumptions?
- What, if any, questions does this raise for you about how you interact with students?
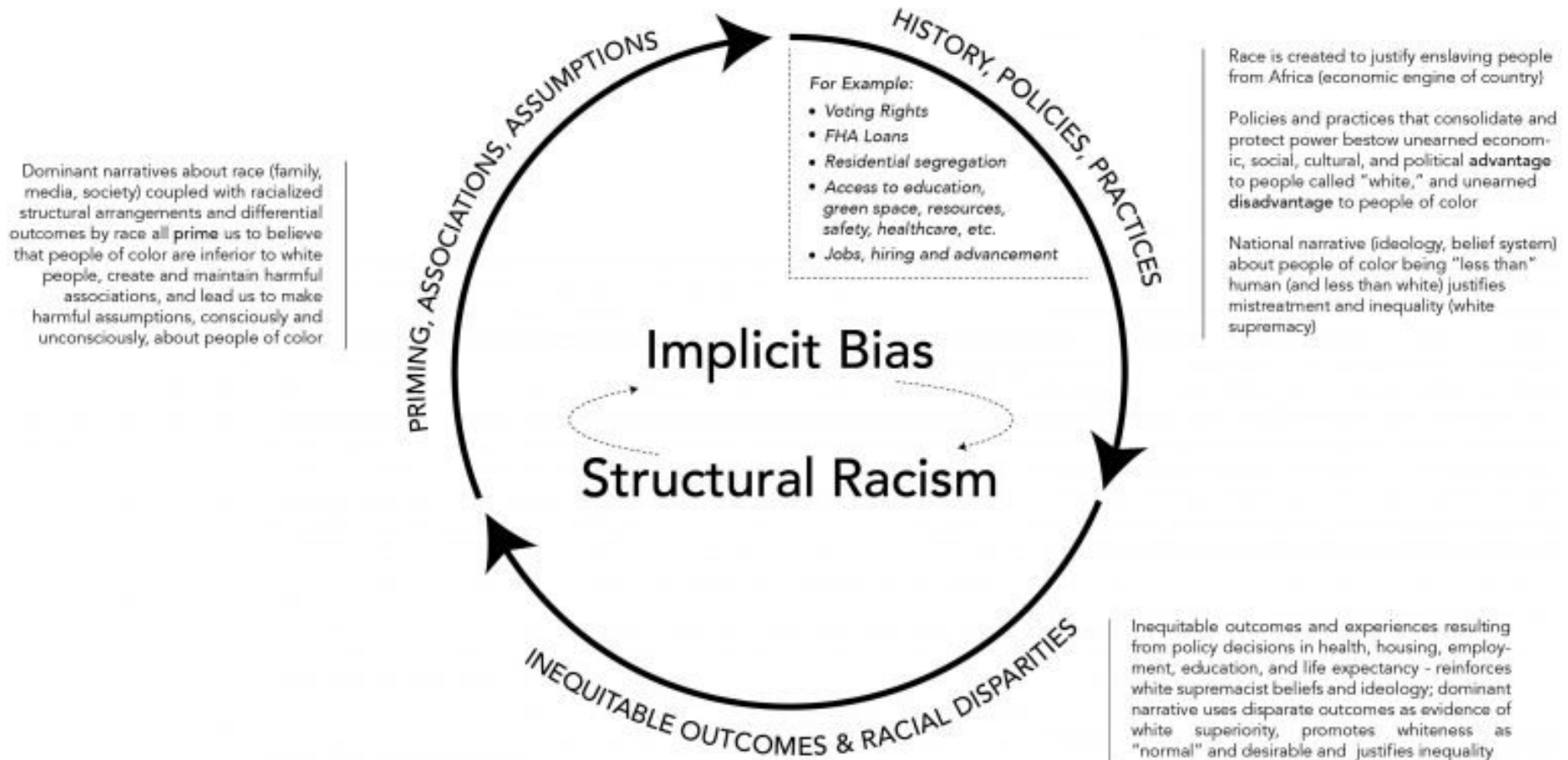
Cultural Reference Points

Step 3:

Finally, take just a minute to make note of any judgments that you have about experiences or beliefs that are different from yours.

- Did you find yourself disbelieving anything your partner shared, wondering if they remember it correctly?
- Did you find yourself judging or evaluating the experiences of your partner, thinking that anything they shared sounded hard or sad?
- When you are working with students who have had different experiences than you, how might these judgments or evaluations affect your interactions with them?
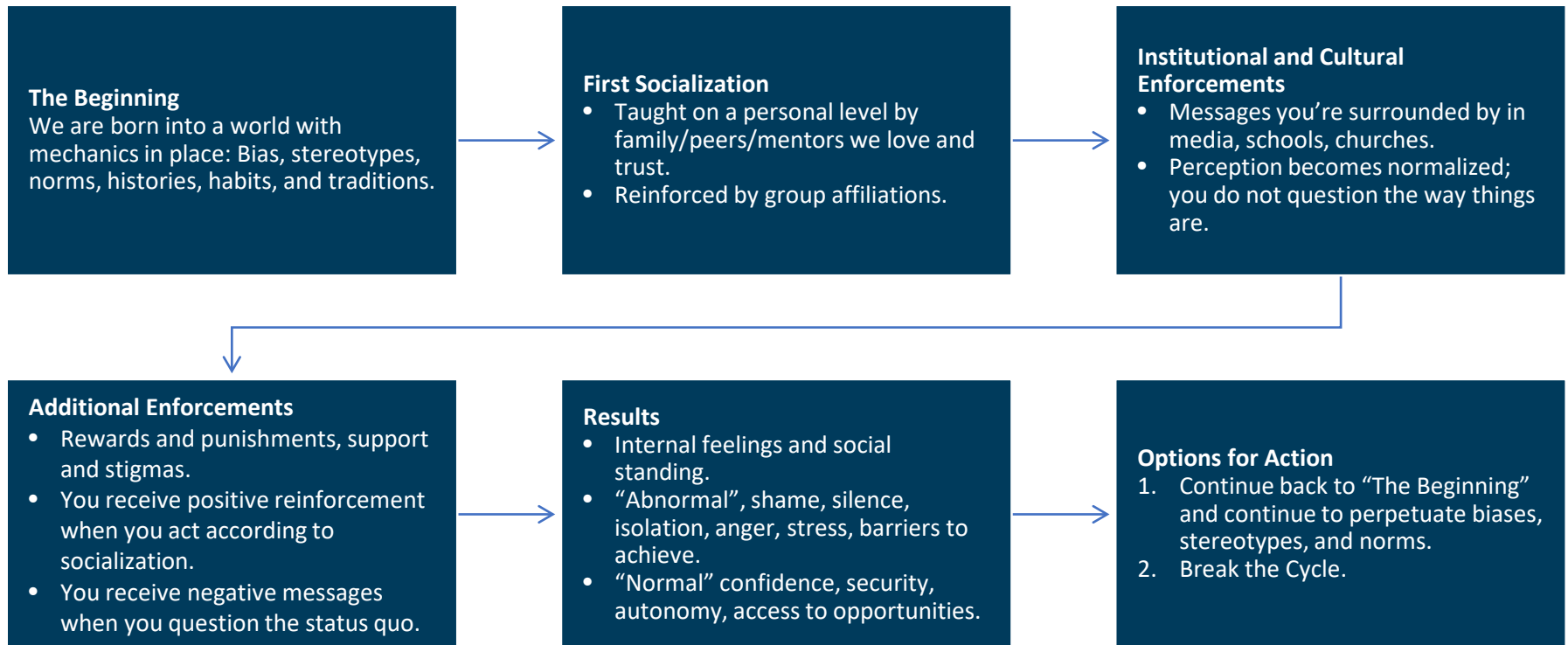
Implicit Bias and Structural Racism

Dominant narratives about race (family, media, society) coupled with racialized structural arrangements and differential outcomes by race all **prime** us to believe that people of color are inferior to white people, create and maintain harmful associations, and lead us to make harmful assumptions, consciously and unconsciously, about people of color

PRIMING, ASSOCIATIONS, ASSUMPTIONS

HISTORY, POLICIES, PRACTICES

For Example:
- *Voting Rights*
- *FHA Loans*
- *Residential segregation*
- *Access to education, green space, resources, safety, healthcare, etc.*
- *Jobs, hiring and advancement*

Implicit Bias

Structural Racism

INEQUITABLE OUTCOMES & RACIAL DISPARITIES

Race is created to justify enslaving people from Africa (economic engine of country)

Policies and practices that consolidate and protect power bestow unearned economic, social, cultural, and political **advantage** to people called "white," and unearned **disadvantage** to people of color

National narrative (ideology, belief system) about people of color being "less than" human (and less than white) justifies mistreatment and inequality (white supremacy)

Inequitable outcomes and experiences resulting from policy decisions in health, housing, employment, education, and life expectancy - reinforces white supremacist beliefs and ideology; dominant narrative uses disparate outcomes as evidence of white superiority, promotes whiteness as "normal" and desirable and justifies inequality

Source: National Equity Project

Cycle of Socialization

Why do we go along with what we are socially taught?
- We know what it feels like to be isolated.
- We are scared of what we don't know.

The Beginning
We are born into a world with mechanics in place: Bias, stereotypes, norms, histories, habits, and traditions.

First Socialization
- Taught on a personal level by family/peers/mentors we love and trust.
- Reinforced by group affiliations.

Institutional and Cultural Enforcements
- Messages you're surrounded by in media, schools, churches.
- Perception becomes normalized; you do not question the way things are.

Additional Enforcements
- Rewards and punishments, support and stigmas.
- You receive positive reinforcement when you act according to socialization.
- You receive negative messages when you question the status quo.

Results
- Internal feelings and social standing.
- "Abnormal", shame, silence, isolation, anger, stress, barriers to achieve.
- "Normal" confidence, security, autonomy, access to opportunities.

Options for Action
1. Continue back to "The Beginning" and continue to perpetuate biases, stereotypes, and norms.
2. Break the Cycle.

Source: Adapted from Bobbie Harro, 2004

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What are my reactions? What do my reactions reveal about what I perceive is at risk were I to accept this information?

**What do I need to do differently?** If I were to accept this information as valid, what am I called to do?

What is bias?

| Bias | A judgment made even with compelling data and information to the contrary. |

| Unconscious Bias | A judgment made without being aware that we are doing so. |

Both influence how we categorize, treat, engage, and position people we interact with on a daily basis.

And both require self-awareness in order to move further along the journey of cultural competence.

Shared Understandings

1. Everyone has bias and unconscious bias.
2. We have unconscious bias because of the way our brains are wired.
3. Unconscious bias can have a positive or negative effect on students.
4. We are not aware of our unconscious biases, but we can become aware. It is our obligation to address and mitigate them.

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Our brain's automatic, unconscious categorizing can be extremely helpful, but it's also why we have biases.

Envision a person who was formerly incarcerated.

Our brain's automatic, unconscious categorizing can be extremely helpful, but it's also why we have biases.

Envision a refugee.
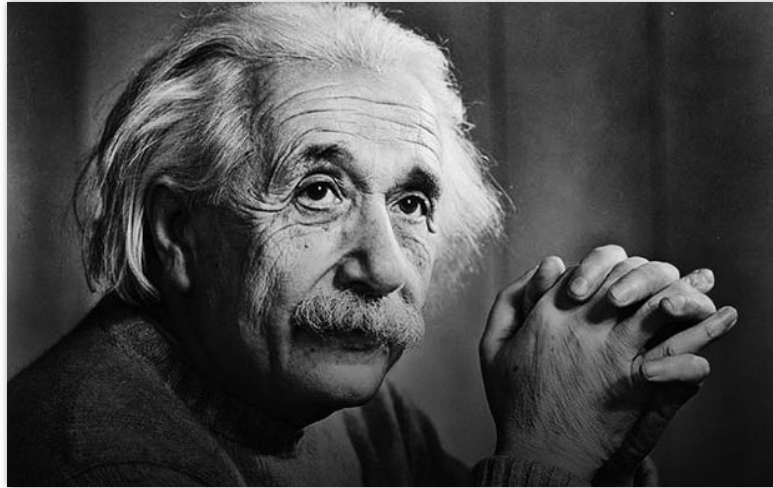
Talking about our biases -- and recognizing them -- is the best way to build awareness of our biases so that we can disrupt them.

▶

Vernā Myers: How to overcome our biases? Walk boldly toward them

Breakout Session

Group Discussion: Based on what you learned from the video, discuss the reflection questions as a group.

Prompts	Reflections
1 How to overcome our biases? Walk boldly toward them. **(Verna Myers video)**	- What did you notice about the way she talked about her biases? - How did her bias go from unconscious to conscious? - What resonates with your personal and professional experiences?

Commitments

Commitments	The commitment I will make to be more aware of my identity in the next month:
Choice	I chose this next step in my learning because:
Action	The action I am planning to take because of this learning will be:
Results	I hope the results of this learning will be:

Objectives

Section 1b: Systems of Oppression

- Identify ways in which systems of inequity have impacted both educators and students.
- Examine how power and privilege shape systems of oppression.

Systems of Oppression

Culturally responsive teachers and leaders understand that there are systems in our society, especially, but not limited to, our school system, that create and reinforce inequities, thereby creating oppressive conditions. Educators work actively against these systems in their everyday roles in educational institutions.

Any system produces what it was designed to produce.
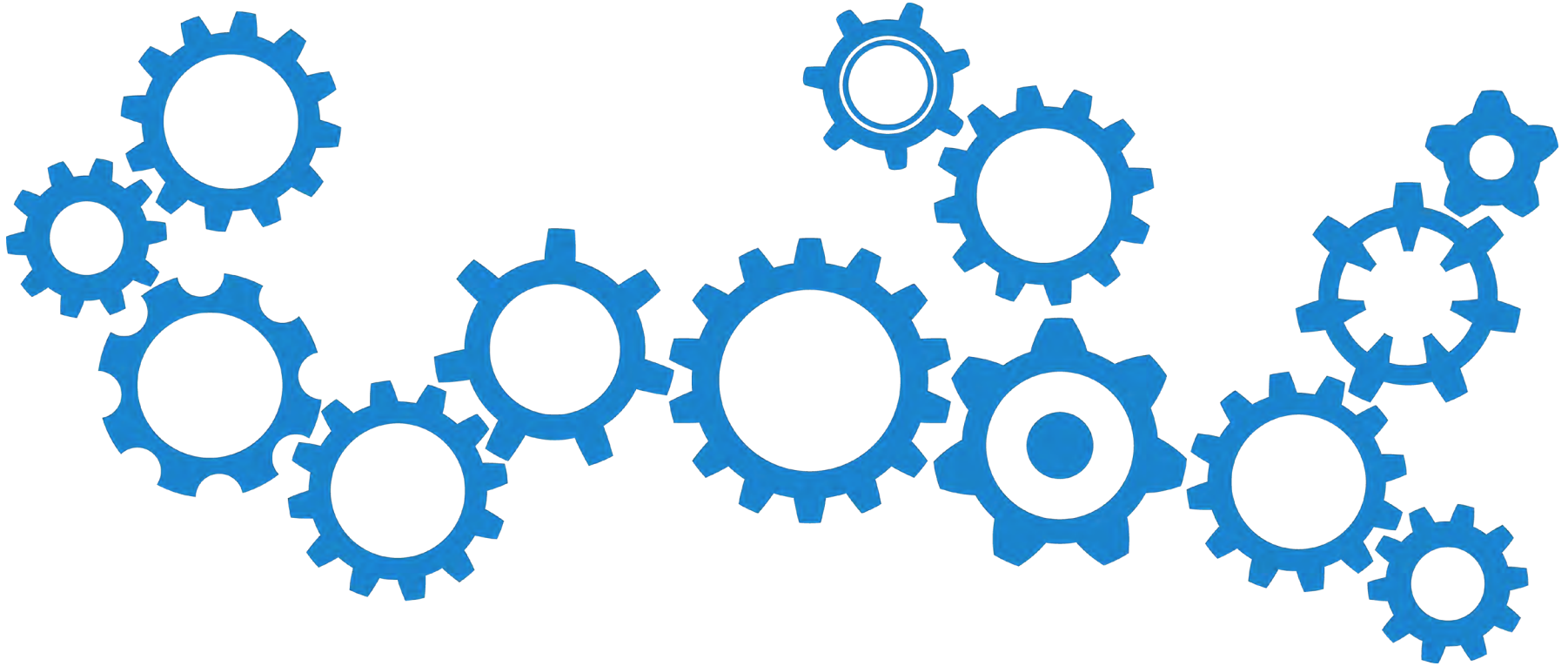
The Effects of Oppression on the Learner's Brain

"Oppression is a social trauma … that impacts entire communities. … If these (traumatic) experiences … are not immediately followed by restorative experiences of finding safety and being acknowledged, these (automatic survival) reactions become stored in the body. Trauma stored in the body in this way shapes our perceptions and worldview in profound ways, … the world around us may seem inherently unsafe."

- Vanissar Tarakali in *Surviving Oppression, Healing Oppression*

NATIONAL
EQUITY
PROJECT

Five Domains of Social Needs

Element	Description
Status	A sense of importance or value relative to others; a person's perceived role in the "pecking order"
Certainty	An ability to predict what will happen next; a sense of consistency
Autonomy	A feeling of having control or influence over events or one's environment; having choices
Connection	The feeling of being safe and connected with others; being part of a "tribe" or community
Fairness	The perception that interactions between people are unbiased and appropriate based on shared standards; decisions are just

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Watch Dena Simmons' TED talk called "How Students of Color Confront Imposter Syndrome."

How does Dena Simmons' experience connect
to what we just learned about trauma?

Sometimes, it's the small things that create a ripple effect.

Micro-Messages
Small, sometimes unspoken, and unconscious messages that are sent and received many times a day.

+ Micro-Affirmations	− Micro-Inequities
Subtle or apparently small acknowledgements of a person's value and accomplishments.	Small gestures, actions, or comments that, over time, cause people to feel devalued, discouraged, or excluded.

Student Voices: Reflections on Teacher Biases and their Impact on Students

Social psychologists Anthony Greenwald and Mahzarin Banaji found that social behavior is driven by learned stereotypes that operate unconsciously when we interact with other people.

Microaggressions

The culturally responsive teacher and leader will:

- (c) (1) Learn from and about their students' culture, language, and learning styles to make instruction more meaningful and relevant to their students' lives.
- (d) (2) Make authentic connections between academic learning and students' prior knowledge, native language, culture, and values.
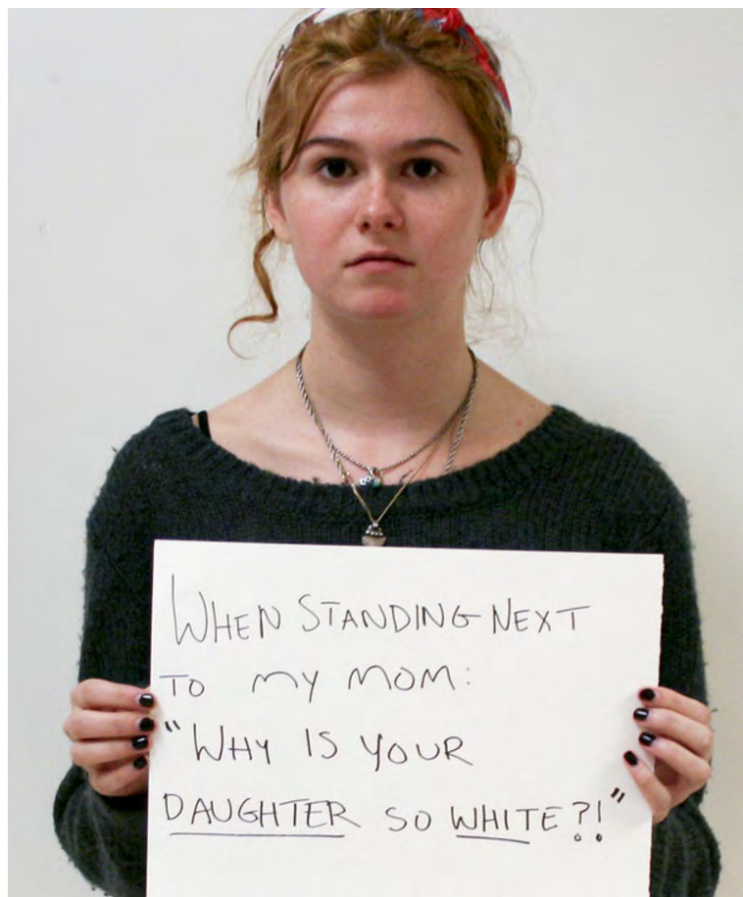

What are microaggressions?
Brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color.

Microaggressions: Examples
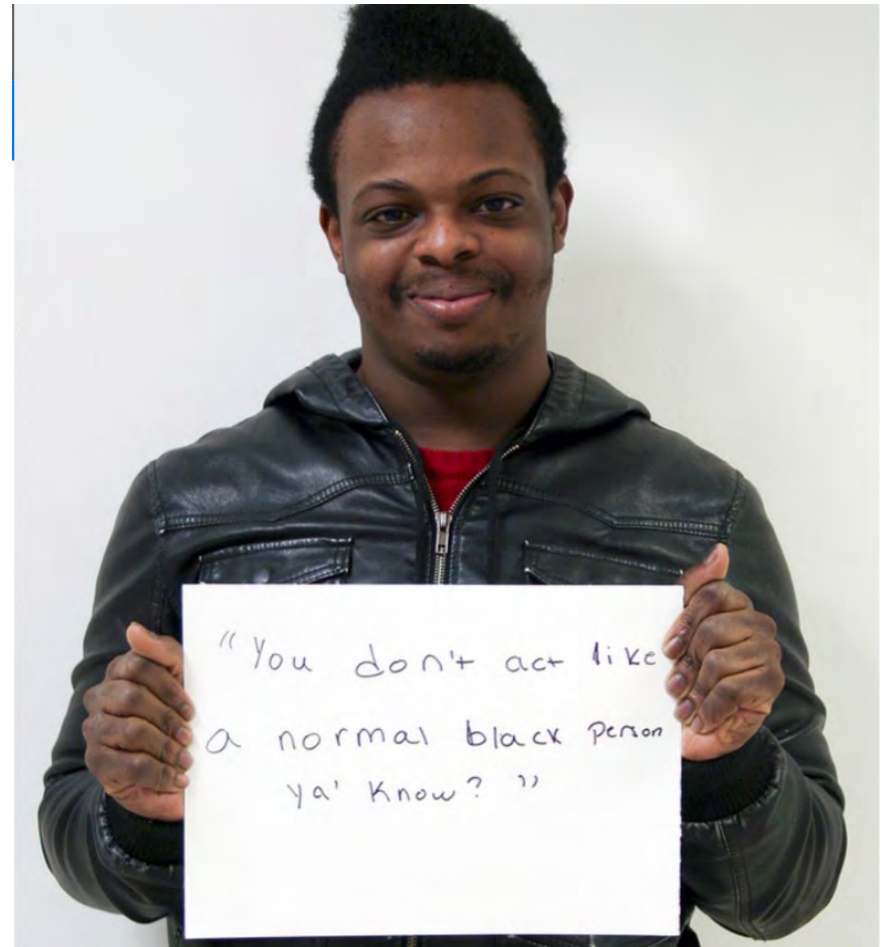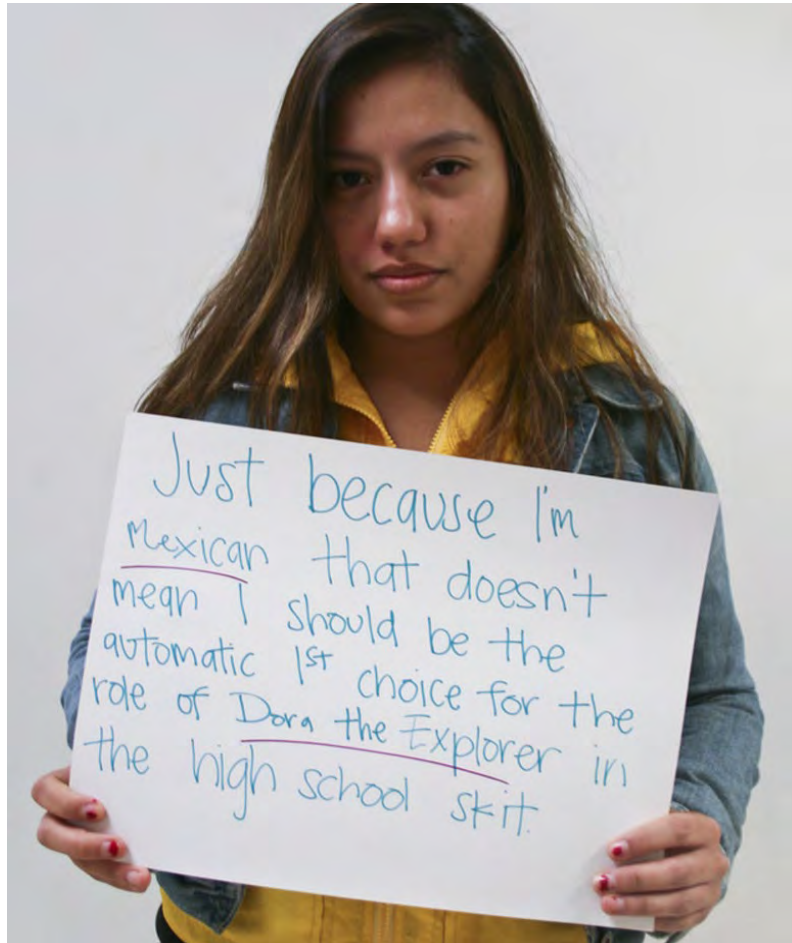
Microaggressions: Examples

How does the language we use to talk about students' identities impact our stories, beliefs, and assumptions about students?

What assumptions come to mind when you hear:

|		
Learning Disability	vs	Learning Difference
English Learner	vs	Multilingual Learner
Autistic Child	vs	Child with Autism

How do your assumptions about students vary based on the terms used?
How might these terms impact the stories students tell themselves?

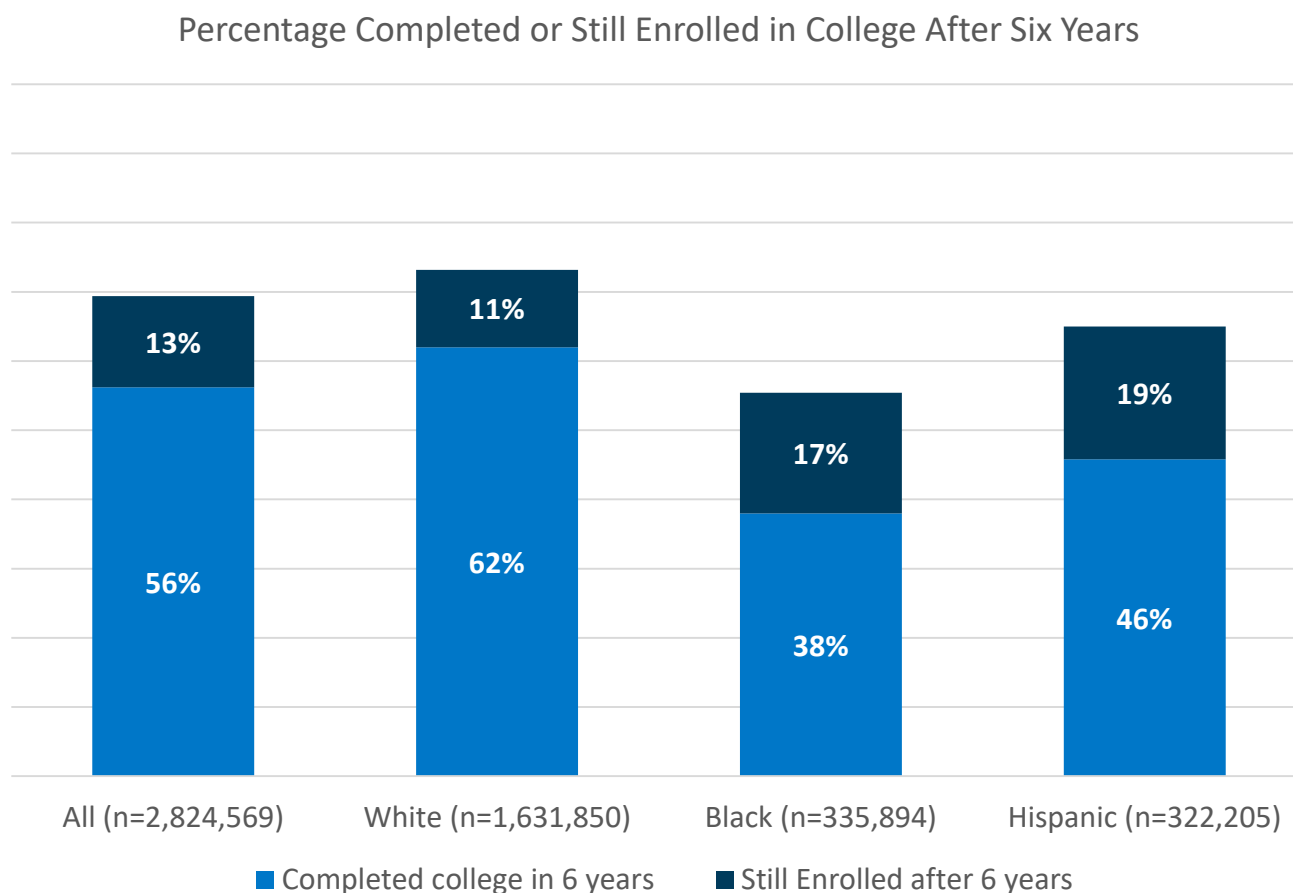# What headline would you write for the graph below?

Headline: As a whole, English Learners still lag behind in terms of academic achievement.

Figure 2. Average reading scores of 4th-grade students, by English language learner (ELL) status: Selected years, 2002–11
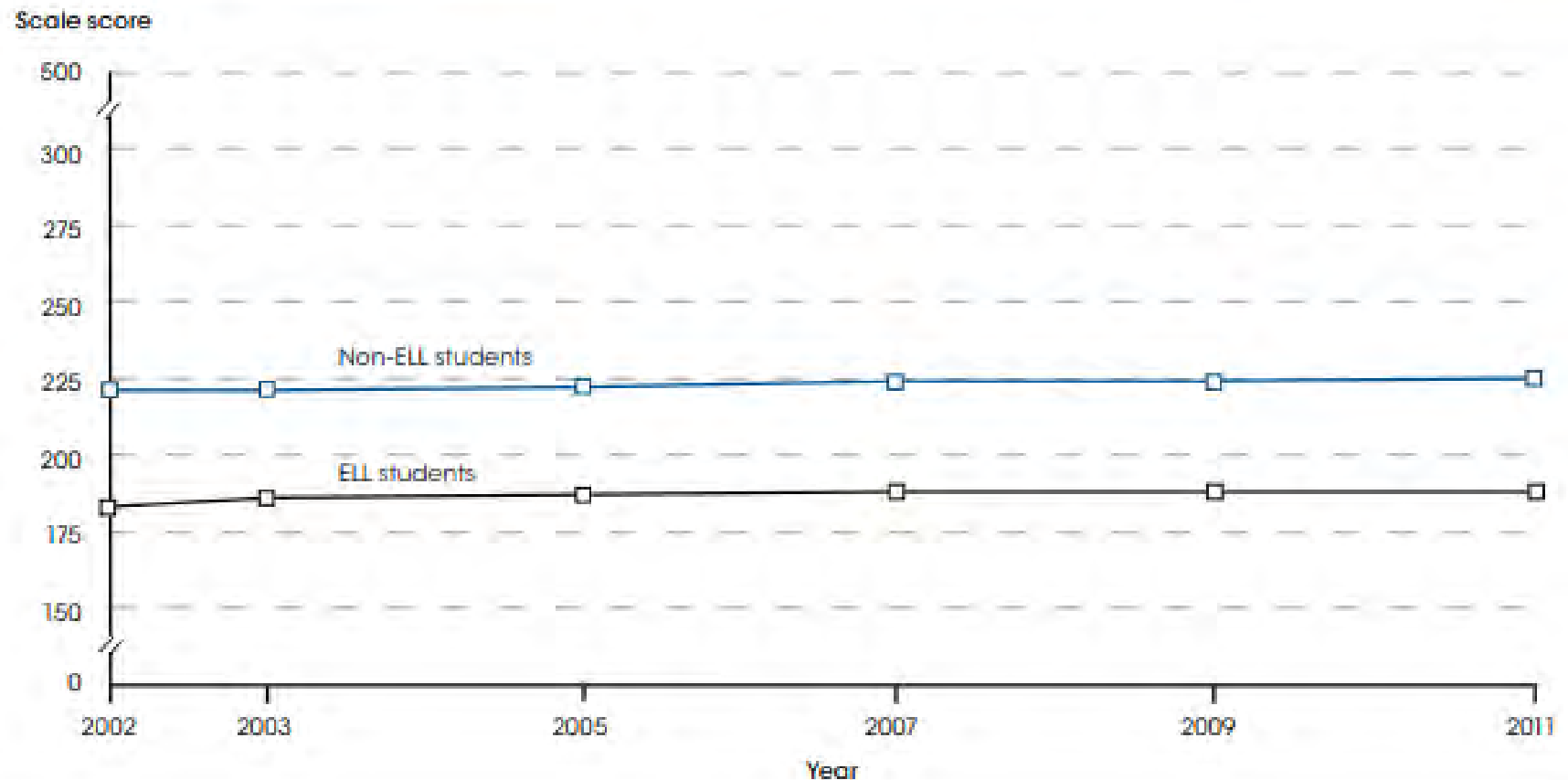
We know almost all students want to go to college, but we see big differences in college completion rates by race.

What are some explanations you've heard to explain the data below?

Percentage Completed or Still Enrolled in College After Six Years

- All (n=2,824,569): Completed college in 6 years 56%, Still Enrolled after 6 years 13%
- White (n=1,631,850): Completed college in 6 years 62%, Still Enrolled after 6 years 11%
- Black (n=335,894): Completed college in 6 years 38%, Still Enrolled after 6 years 17%
- Hispanic (n=322,205): Completed college in 6 years 46%, Still Enrolled after 6 years 19%

■ Completed college in 6 years ■ Still Enrolled after 6 years

Inside Higher Ed

Data Through the Lens of the Observer

Systems Level	Individual Level
Culture *(over policing)*	**Climate** *(she has a criminal background)*
Cause *(scarce job opportunities)*	**Consequence** *(people are poor)*
Institution *(staff diversification)*	**Program** *(institute PBIS)*

Where are interventions primarily focused?
Where is the actual power?

Any system produces what it was designed to produce.
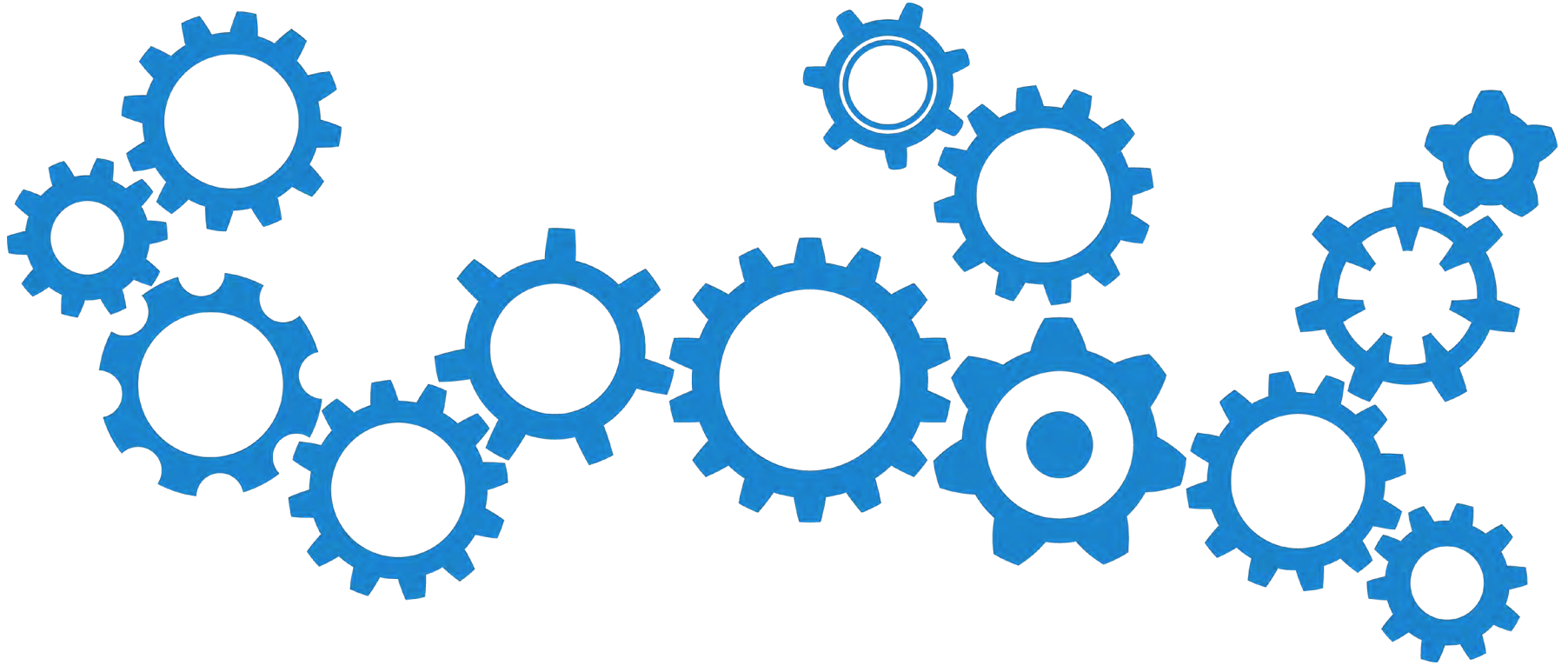
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