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# Implicit Bias in Early Childhood Settings





Let's Talk

# Implicit Bias

- Even though we believe we see and treat people as equals, hidden biases may still influence our perceptions and actions.



# IMPLICIT BIAS

- Implicit bias is the mental process resulting in feelings and attitudes about people based race, age and appearance.
- It is an unconscious process and we are not consciously aware of the negative racial biases **that develop over the course of our lifetime.**
- Implicit bias supports stereotypes.





# Implicit Bias

Hidden

- Implicit racial bias resides in our “unconscious mind,” the part of the brain that many researchers believe is beyond our direct control

Less  
Egalitarian

- Unconscious attitudes are less egalitarian than what we explicitly think about race

Self-  
reinforcing

- Our refusal to talk about and confront issues of race reinforces implicit racial bias

**Tom Rudd, Kirwan Institute for the  
Study of Race and Ethnicity**

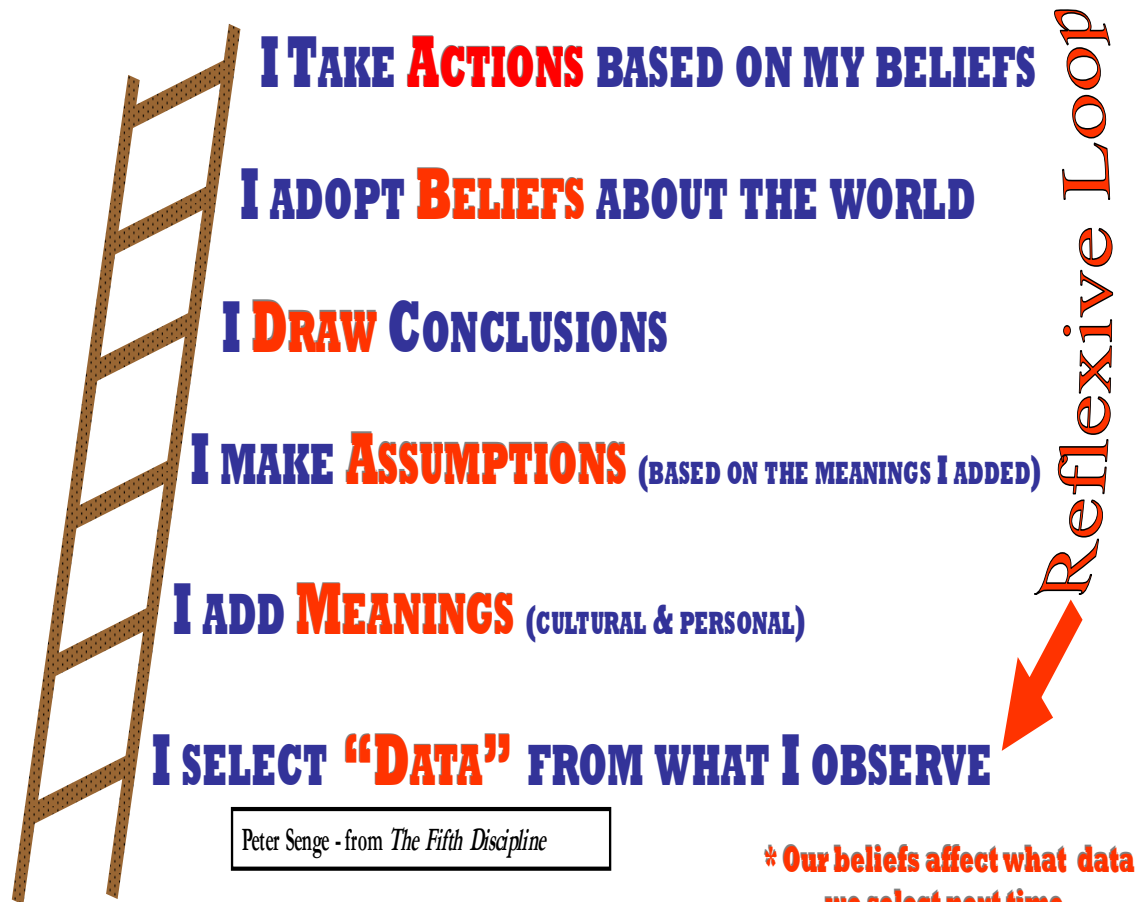
# KIRWAN INSTITUTE RESEARCH

It is important to understanding the **causes** of implicit racial bias and **intentionally** work to bring it to the conscious level in order to mitigate the negative consequences.





# THE LADDER OF INFERENCE



Peter Senge - from *The Fifth Discipline*

\* Our beliefs affect what data we select next time.

# Ladder of Inference

Makes the process of thinking visible.

A process by which we determine meaning about what is occurring around us.

This process takes milliseconds to complete and we are often unaware that it is happening.

High Level Inference

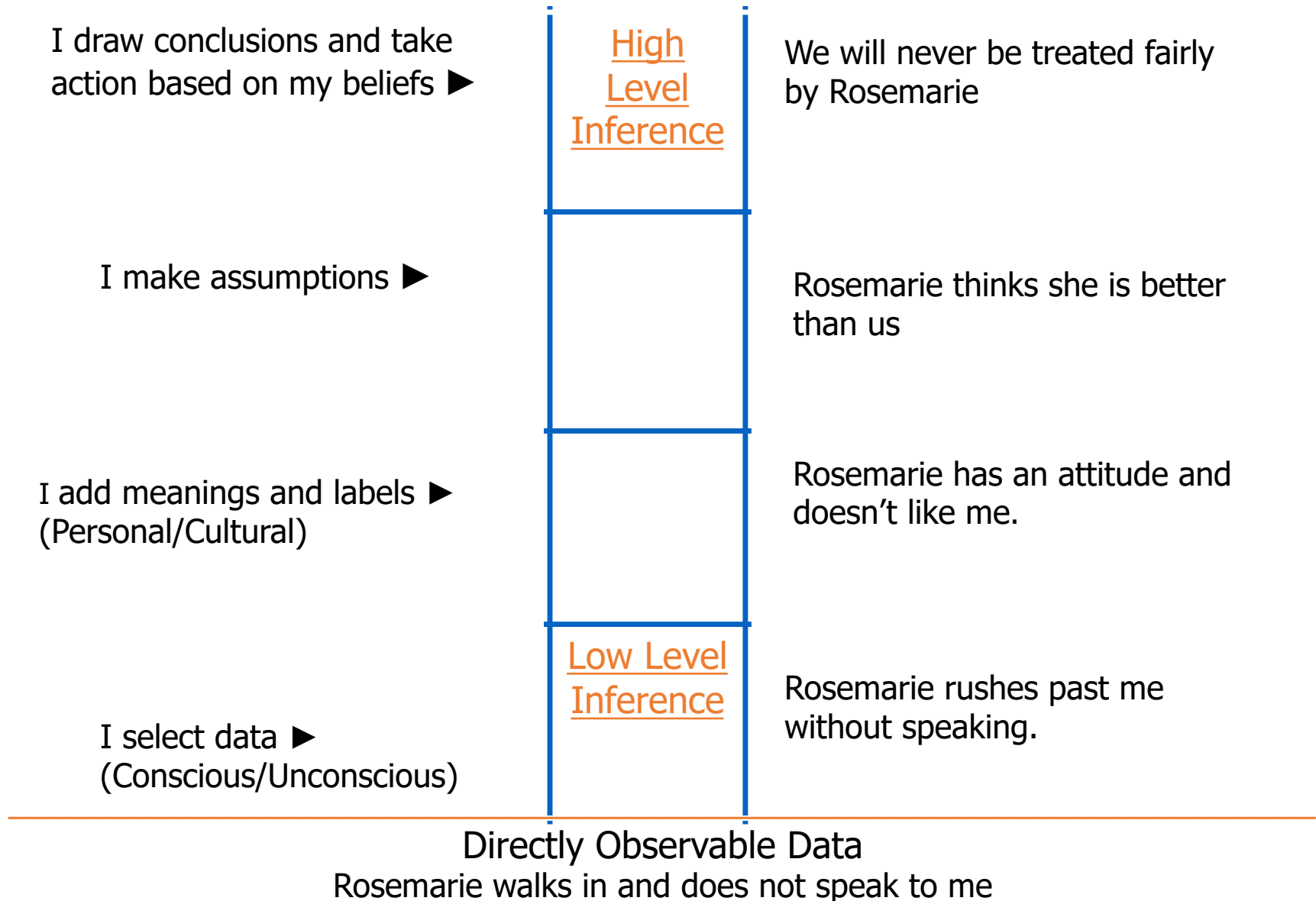
Low Level Inference

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Directly observable data



# Ladder of Inference



# Ladder of Inference

I draw conclusions and take action based on my beliefs ►

High Level Inference

I make less of an effort to get to know this student as a person

I make assumptions ►

I assume that she comes from a family that doesn't value manners, education, or school very much

I add meanings and labels ►  
(Personal/Cultural)

I think this is disrespectful.

I select data ►  
(Conscious/Unconscious)

Low Level Inference

I notice that child did not use Ms. Allen to address me.

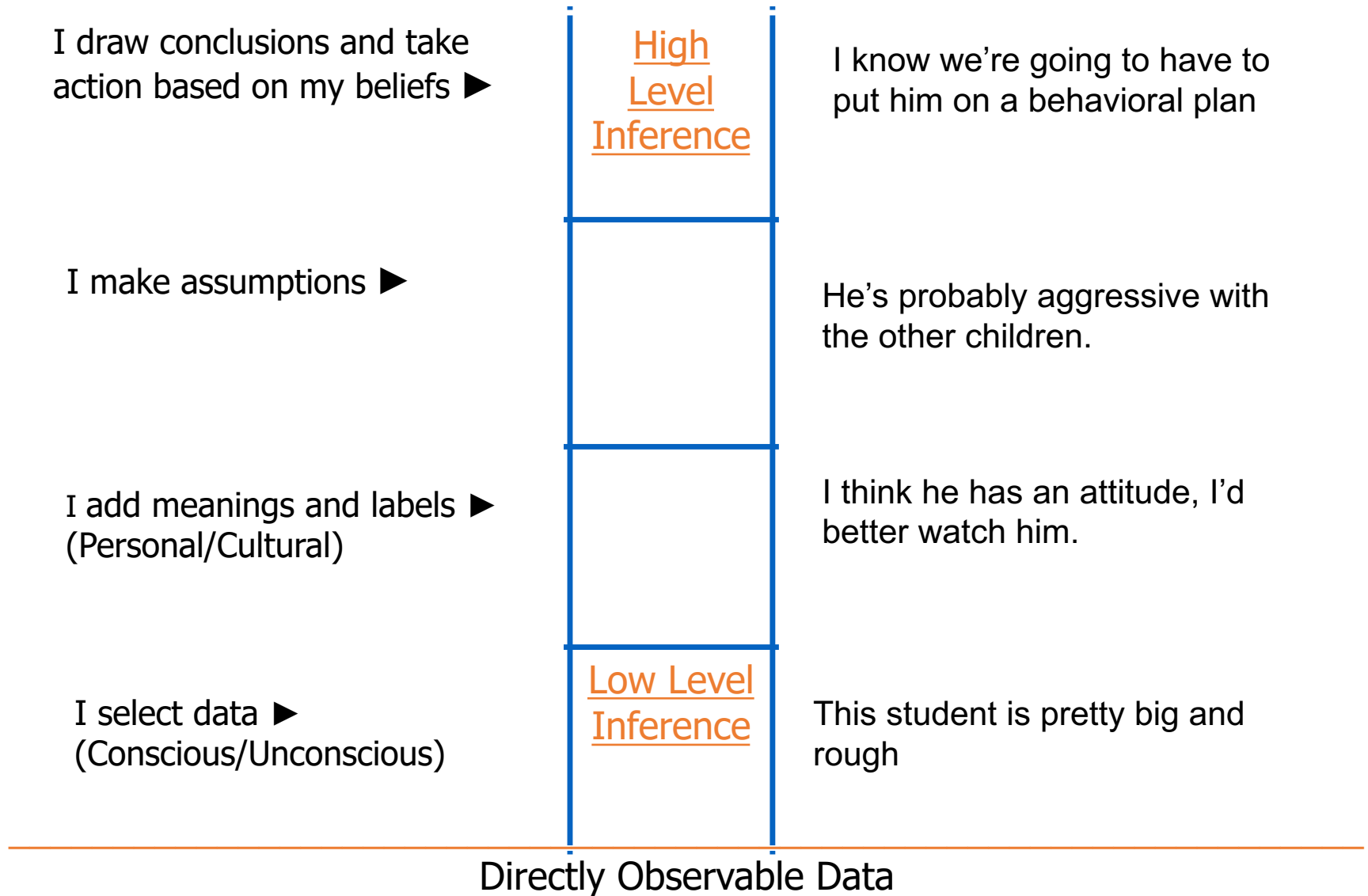
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Directly Observable Data

My student won't address me by "Ms." in class.




# Ladder of Inference



AWARE  
Is  
Halfway  
THERE





A man and a woman are shaking hands in front of a modern building with large glass windows. The man is on the left, wearing a white shirt and dark trousers, smiling. The woman is on the right, wearing a light blue shirt and a beige skirt, also smiling. They are both looking at each other. The background shows a multi-story building with greenery on the balconies.

We must talk about the issues!



## Why Don't We Want to Talk About Race?

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“We have become so politically correct that we don't know what to say and when to say it. We don't know what to say to anyone anymore.”

*Lee Jones, Florida  
State University.*







Black

Negro

Colored

Afr. Am.

# Danger of Color-blind ideology





# Let's Pretend it doesn't exist!

- Racial Etiquette: Not polite to discuss that which makes us uncomfortable (Omi and Winant, 2002).
- Saying “We’re all the same”, or “I don’t see color” fails to acknowledge difference others experience (Harries, 2014).



## Color Blind Ideology:

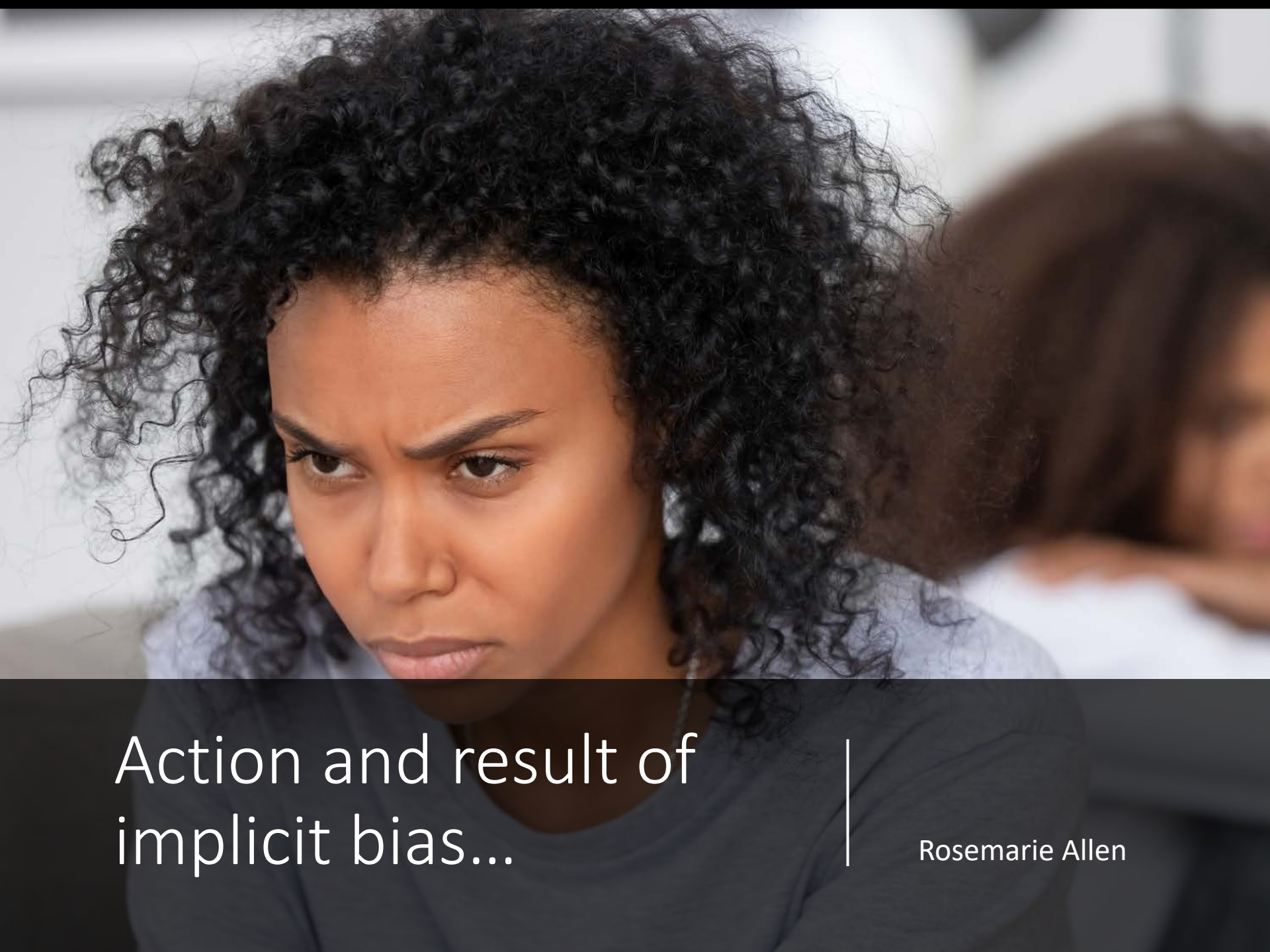
Issues of equity  
are often  
avoided by  
adopting a  
colorblind  
ideology



Racial blindness promotes the fallacy that people are beyond bias and racism, ignores racial disparities, and places blame on the behaviors of communities of color





A close-up photograph of a Black woman with dark, curly hair. She is looking down and to the left with a serious, almost somber expression. Her eyebrows are slightly furrowed, and her lips are set in a firm line. The background is blurred, showing another person with dark hair in the distance. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of her hair and the contours of her face.

Action and result of  
implicit bias...

Rosemarie Allen



# Microaggressions



# Microaggressions

“Brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, sexual-orientation, and religious slights and insults to the target person or group” (Sue, 2010, p.5)



[illegible]



# Microaggressions

- **Micro-Insults**
- **Micro-Invalidations**
- **Micro-Assaults**





# MICROINSULTS

Conscious or subconscious verbal insults that portray a negative tone connected to marginalized populations



# MICROINVALIDATIONS

Dismissive statements of a marginalized person's expressed thoughts or feelings about a discriminatory situation.



# MICROASSAULTS

Verbal or non-verbal  
attacks meant to hurt  
at an individual level



MACRO-aggression








## What is "White Space?"

- Spaces that are overwhelmingly white, such as neighborhoods, schools, universities, workplaces, restaurants, and other public spaces.
- Spaces that are perceived to be off limits to people of color.
- People of color experience acute disrespect, during which they are reminded that they don't belong (Anderson, 2018).



A man in a dark blue suit and striped tie stands on the left, looking towards a woman on the right. The woman is wearing a grey sleeveless dress and has her hands clasped in front of her. They are in a modern office setting with a wooden desk and a laptop in the background.

Have our schools  
become “White  
Spaces?”

- 
- Are students of color experiencing acute disrespect?
  - Harshly disciplined?
  - Overly policed?
  - Referred to law enforcement?
  - Reminded that they don't belong?





What does this look like?





Blacks are 18 percent of K-12 enrollment and they are:

- 35 percent of those suspended once,
- 46 percent of those suspended more than once and,
- 39 percent of all expulsions (Lewin, 2012).

Of all students involved  
in school-related arrests  
or referred to law  
enforcement 70% were  
Hispanic or Black





A young African American girl with dark skin and her hair styled in many small braids, some with pink hair ties. She is lying on her stomach in a lush green grassy field, resting her chin on her clasped hands. She is looking towards the camera with a gentle smile. The background is a soft-focus green field with some trees in the distance.

African American  
girls are 20% of  
female population  
but 54% of girls  
suspended from  
preschool  
(United States  
Department of Education,  
2016)





Daily Messages  
that convey some  
children do not  
belong:






Mispronouncing,  
making fun of, or  
shortening children's  
names that are not  
traditionally "white"  
names.

Iruka, Curenton, Durden, & Escayg, 2020



Assuming a Spanish speaking Hispanic child is undocumented.



A close-up portrait of a young Black girl with her hair styled in small braids, each adorned with a purple clip. She is smiling broadly, showing her teeth. She is wearing a blue denim jacket. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green foliage and white vertical slats, possibly a fence or chair back.

Assuming  
students  
eat only  
stereotypic  
ethnic  
foods

Favoring one group of children over other groups.







Calling on some children while ignoring others based on race, gender, language, class, etc.



Treating a child differently because of their hair style



School counselor cut student's hair.





Assigning roles based on gender or race.



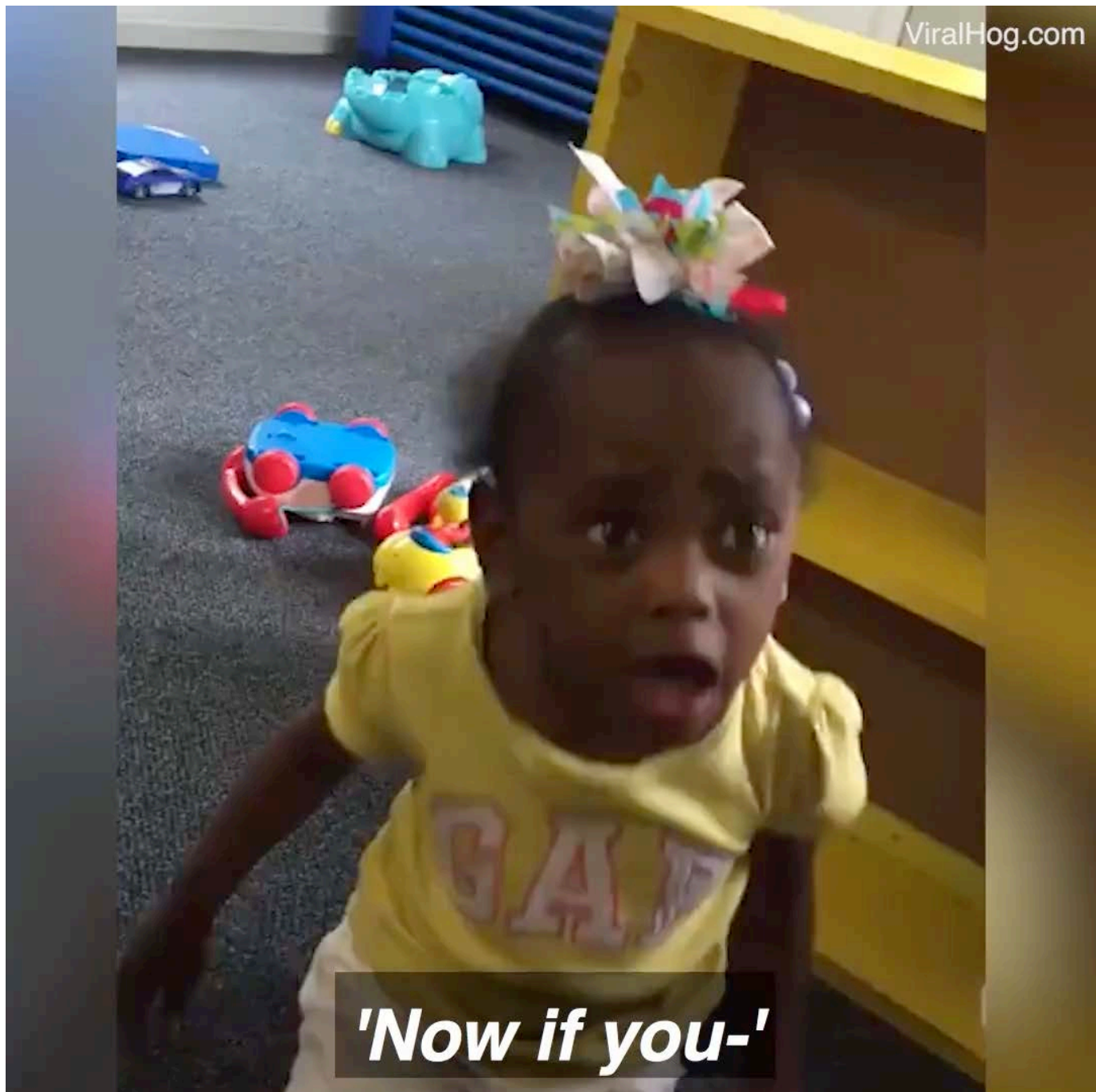


Stereotyping Black girls as too loud, too angry, too sassy, etc.



Mis-interpreting children's actions and 'ways of being' as defiant.





***'Now if you-'***



All children deserve to be treated with respect.



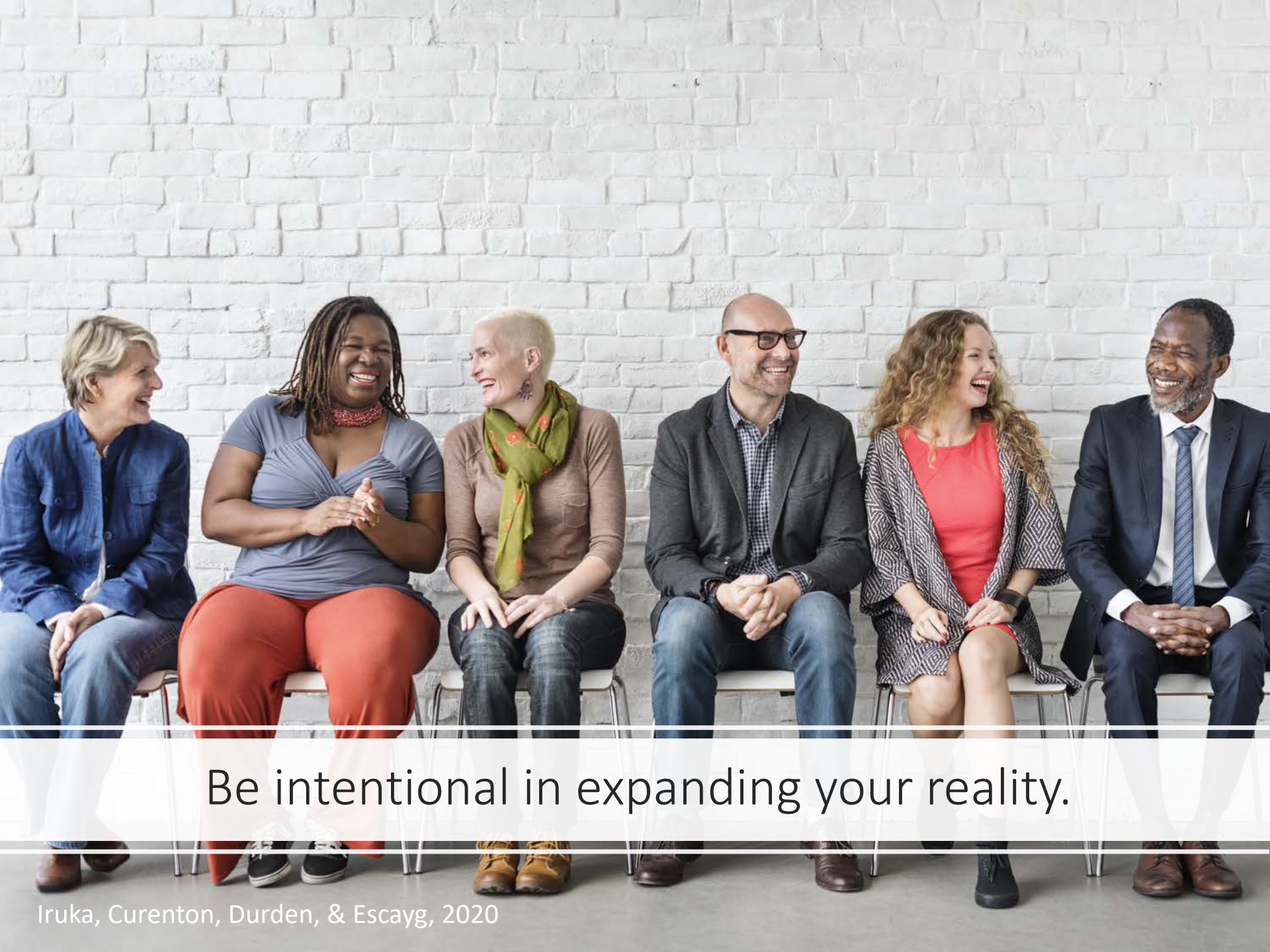
- It begins with you!
- Be willing to look at yourself...

# Controlling implicit bias

- Deprogramming!
- Retrain your brain
- Accept and expect discomfort.







Be intentional in expanding your reality.





Seek opportunities to positively interact with other racial groups



Get involved with social groups that are racially and ethnically diverse.



A woman with long dark hair, wearing a light blue cardigan, is smiling and holding a bunch of fresh green herbs in a grocery store. The background shows shelves stocked with various products, including bags of chips and other packaged goods.

Share your  
non-biased,  
anti-racist  
beliefs with  
those in your  
network.

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Stand up to  
biased and  
racist  
individuals  
to make the  
implicit,  
explicit.



A young boy with dark skin and short hair is shown in profile, drinking from a clear plastic water bottle. He is wearing a red polo shirt. The background is a blurred green landscape. A semi-transparent white circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing text.

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Risk Factors for  
Suspensions: **BBB+D**







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