



# The Role of Government and Organizations Creating and Sustaining Equity

# The Flint Water Crisis Report

## History & Key Findings



Over a 13 month period between **2016 and 2017**, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission heard from over **160** residents, experts and scholars about the Flint water crisis.

### Findings:

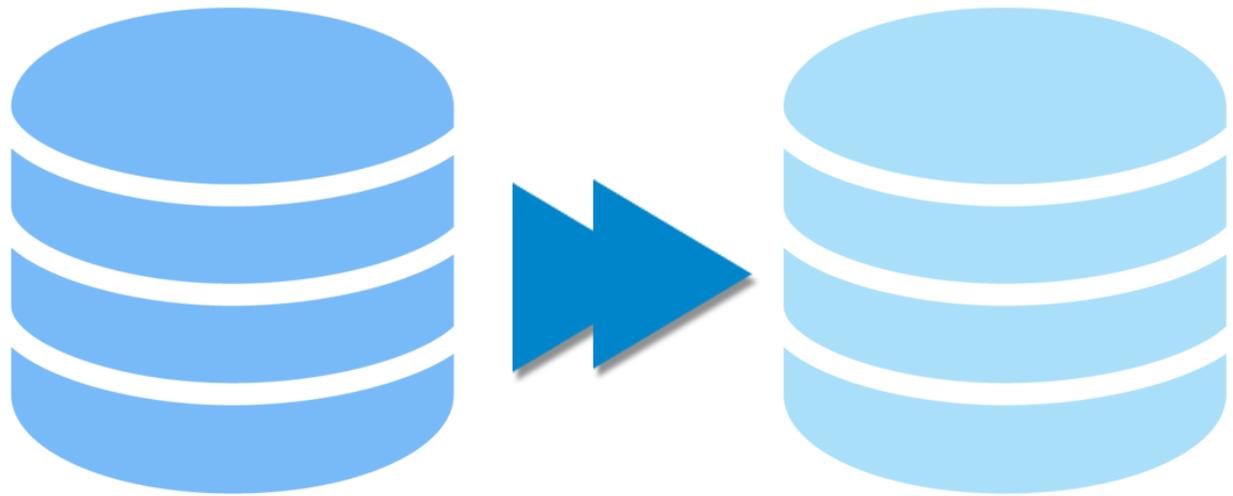
- **Primarily a community of color (60%)**
- Fiscally operating at deficit
- High crime rate
- **High unemployment, high poverty**
- Schools in total disarray with low education attainment
- **Spatially segregated**
- **Loss of trust and shared sense of hopelessness**

# Flint Water Crisis Report

## Central Question



How do systems of advantage produce and reproduce themselves over time?



## Key Recommendations

# A Framework



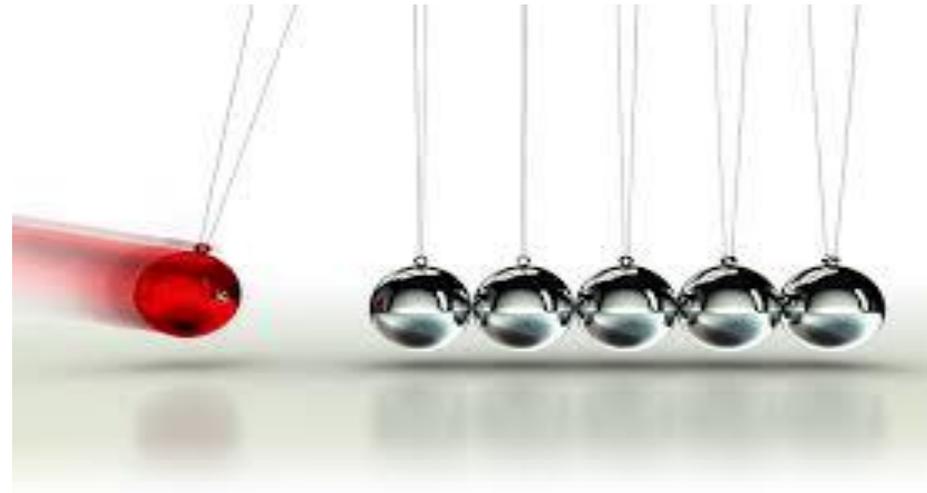
## Government and organizations need to:

- Understand implicit bias
- Focus and measure impact not intent
- Review and reshape structures of advantage
- Establish DEI training opportunities and implement tools to create change
- Develop systems solutions that move away from technical approaches – equity lens
- Make equity the goal

How does it impact  
you?



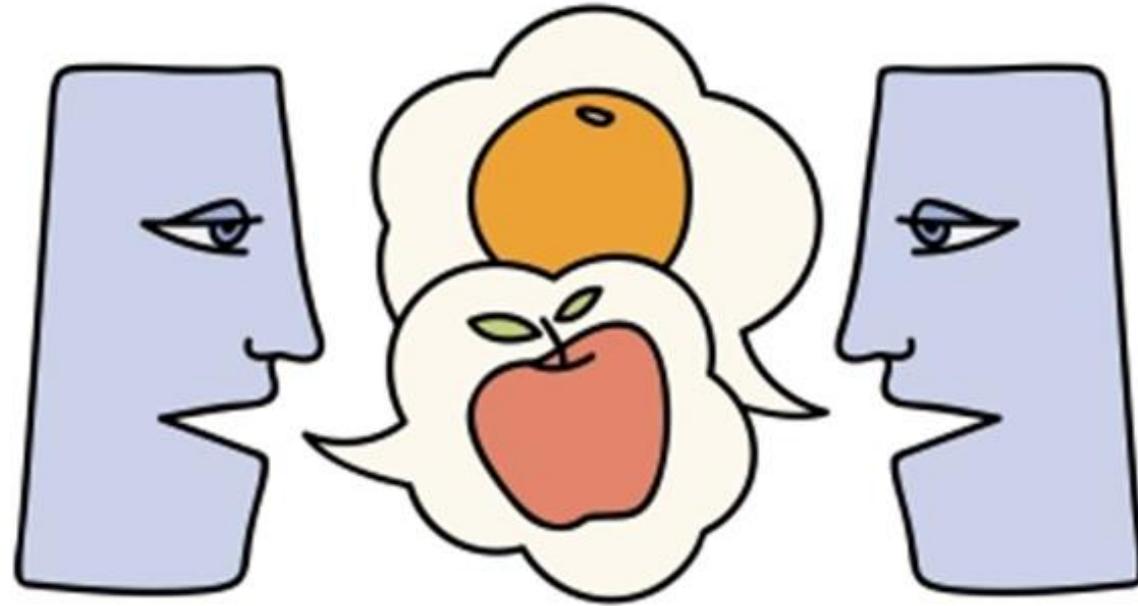
How does **implicit bias** impact you, the work  
you do, the people you serve?



# STRATEGIES TO DISMANTLE BARRIERS

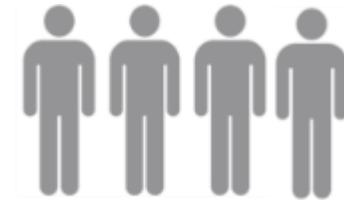
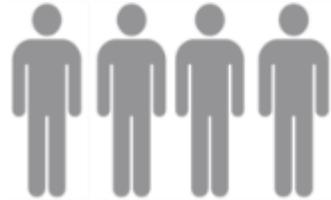
## Creating a Common Language to Talk about Race

*maximize clarity to engage in  
meaningful dialogue through  
clear and concise definitions*



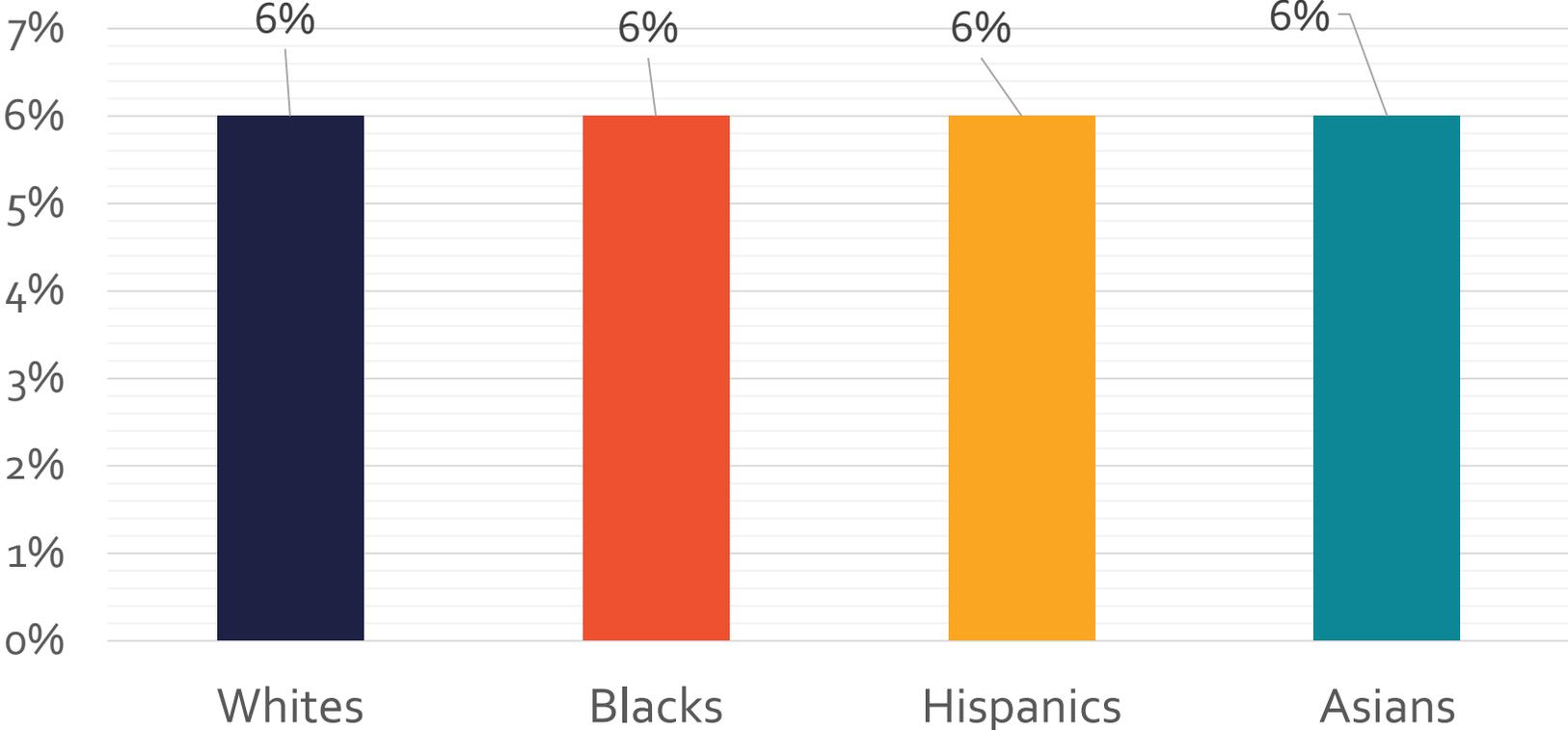
Defining Terms  
What is *racial equity*?

The **systemic fair treatment** of people of all races and ethnic backgrounds that produce equitable opportunities and outcomes for all people.

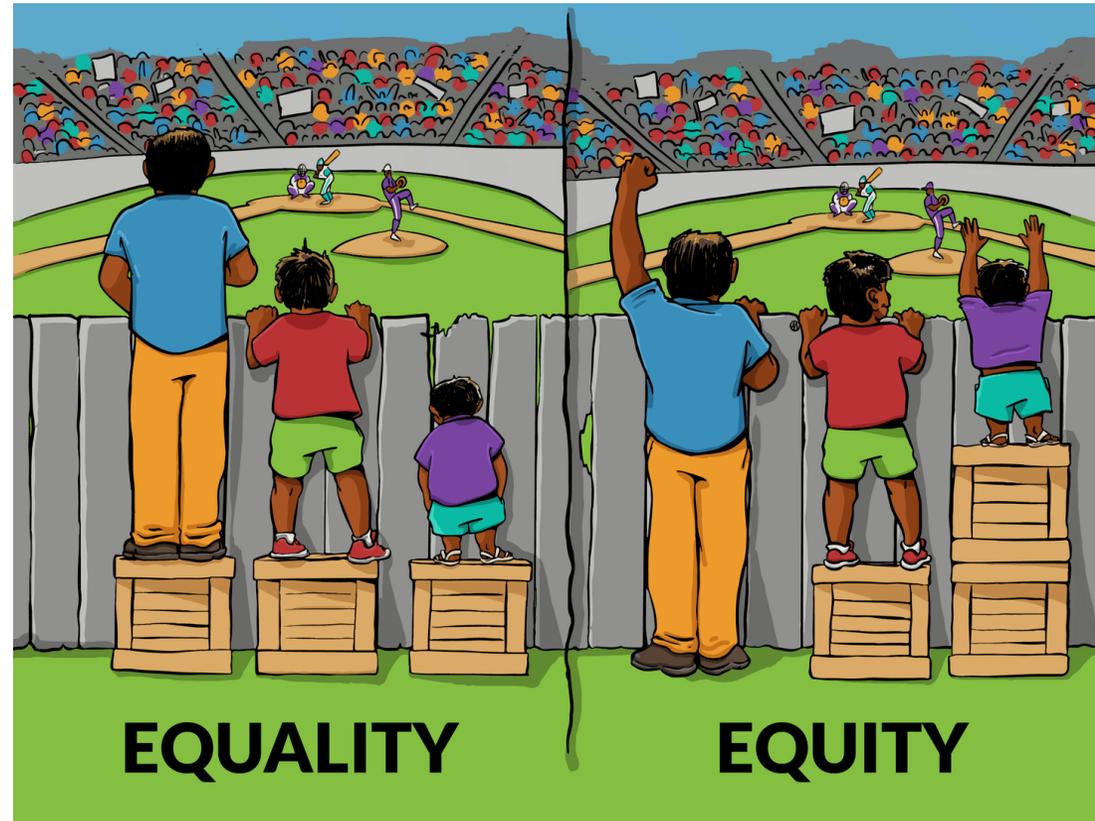


Racially Equitable  
Society

Poverty/Unemployment



# Understanding the Difference – defining the terms



## **Equality=Sameness**

Giving everyone the same thing → It only works if everyone starts at the same place

## **Equity=Fairness**

We must first ensure equity before we can enjoy equality

Understanding the  
Difference –  
defining the terms

**Diversity:** the state of having people who are of different races or cultures in a group.

**Inclusion:** the state of being incorporated within a group.

*Inclusion is not a natural consequence of diversity.*

## Understanding the Difference – defining the terms

**Prejudice** is a *preconceived judgment or opinion*, usually based on limited information.

**Racism** is a *system of advantage* based on race.

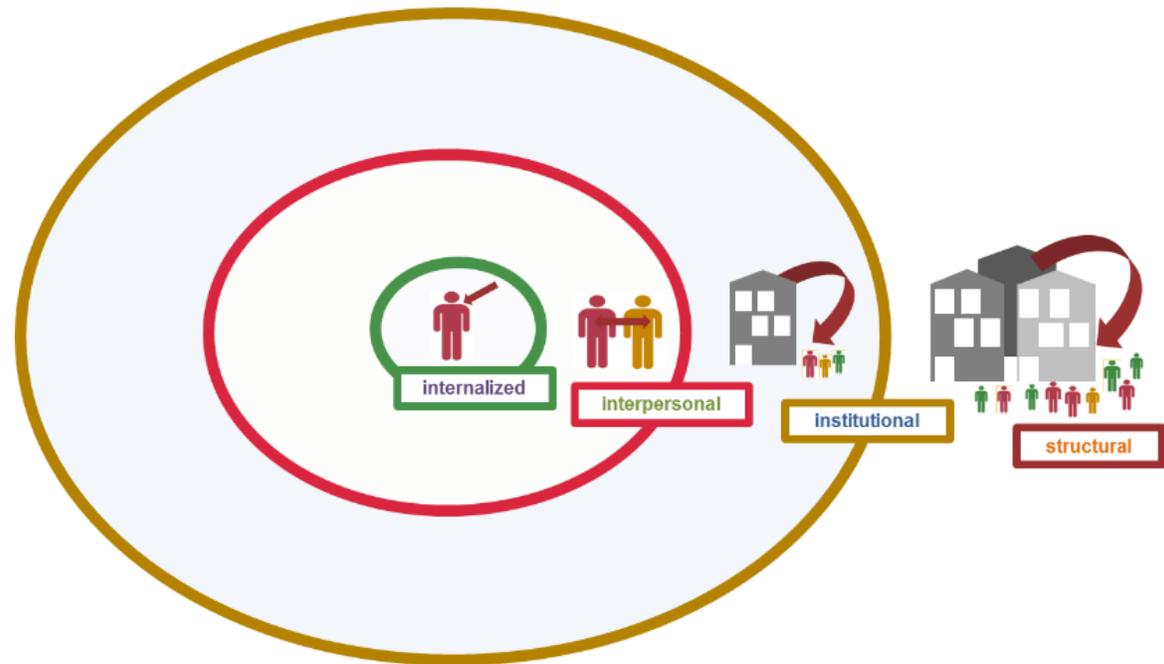


## System of Advantage

# Prejudice + power = system of advantage

**System:** connected parts forming a complex whole

**Power:** access to social, cultural and economic resources and decision making. Power is guided and sustained through dominant narratives



Prejudice + Power =  
*System of Advantage*

*Power is guided and  
sustained through dominant  
narratives*

## Gender prejudice + power = sexism

**Dominant Narrative:** *we are all the same, regardless of sex or gender. Sexism is a thing of the past – women are the problem or at least a big part of it.*

**System:** connected parts forming a complex whole

**Power:** access to social, cultural and economic resources and decision making

Prejudice + Power =  
*System of Advantage*

*Power is guided and  
sustained through dominant  
narratives*

## Dominant narrative

An *explanation or story* that is told in *service of the dominant social group's interests and ideologies*. It achieves dominance through repetition, the apparent authority of the speaker (often accorded to speakers who represent the dominant social groups), *and the silencing of alternative accounts*. Because dominant narratives are so normalized through their repetition and authority, *they have the illusion of being objective and apolitical*.

Prejudice + Power =  
*System of Advantage*

*Power is guided and  
sustained through dominant  
narratives*

## Dominant Narratives

- Before the Civil War, a common defense of slavery was: “If slavery is abolished, former slaves wouldn’t have the means or ability to take care of themselves.
- Males are logical, tough and decisive
- Females are sensitive, emotional and nurturing

System of  
Advantage

A look at race

**Racial prejudice + power = racism**

**Dominant Narrative:** *we are post-racial, we don't see color, we are all the same, talking about race is the problem*

**System:** connected parts forming a complex whole

**Power:** access to social, cultural and economic resources and decision making

A Need for an  
Extensive Focus  
*The impact of not talking  
about race*



## *Why Should We Talk about Race?*

- **Race has been a principal force** in building, sustaining and shifting social and political structures.
- It plays a significant role—either explicitly or implicitly—in many of the decisions that we make in our **personal, professional and social lives: where we live**, who our children’s friends are, who our friends are, etc.
- Our **understanding of race has been incomplete** and distorted.
- A transformative dialogue on race can shine light on **the structural dynamics of social and economic disparities**.
- **When we start with race, we start from the bottom** – we are building equity for all when we work on racial equity.

Strategies for  
Dismantling a  
System of  
Advantage  
*change the focus*

**Traditional**

**Away from blame/shame**

- |                  |                  |   |                                    |
|------------------|------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| <b>Cause:</b>    | who is a racist? | - | what is causing racial inequities? |
| <b>Effects:</b>  | good intention   | - | impact of my actions               |
| <b>Response:</b> | sense of guilt   | - | empowered sense of responsibility  |

# 1. Human nature predisposes us to be biased





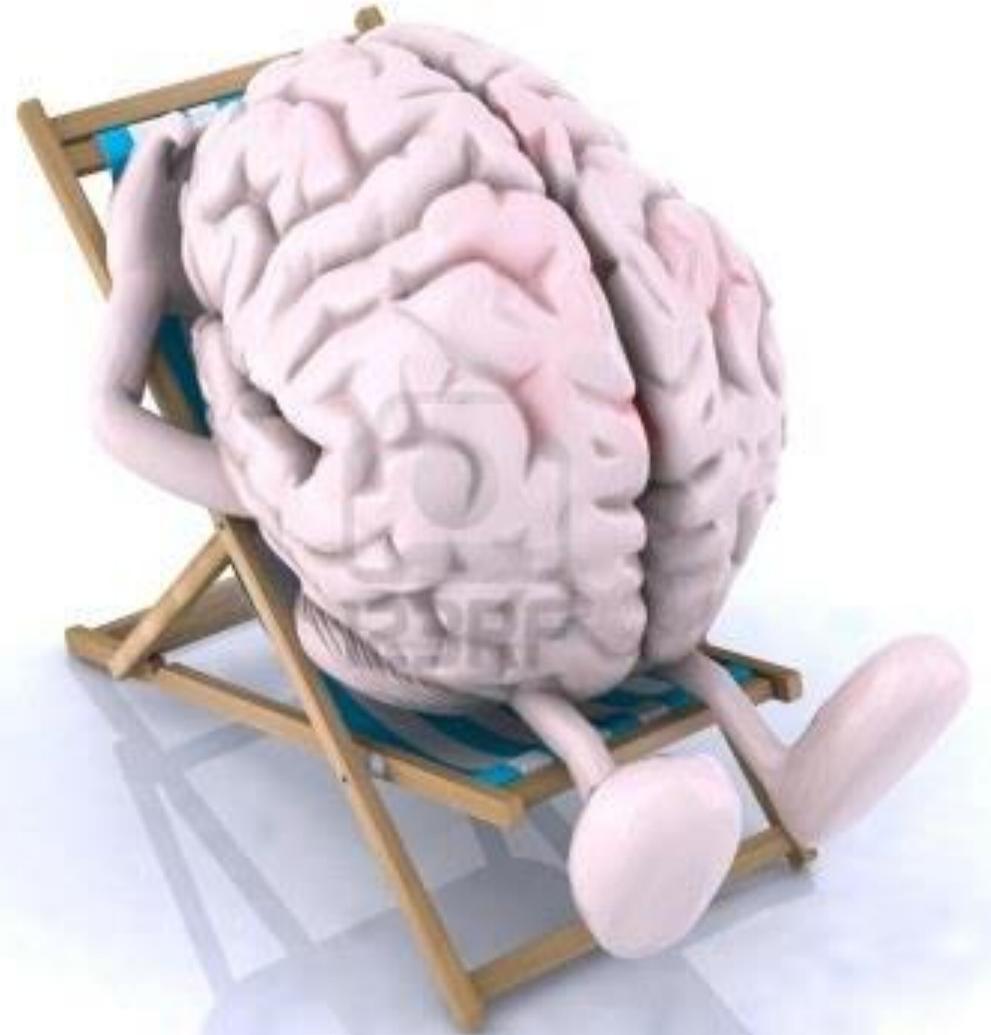
2. We live in a polarized society where we receive repetitive





## Our Brain Likes to Relax

- Cognitive Scripts
- Primed to focus on certain things
- Influenced by repetitive messages
- Messages shape behavior and responses



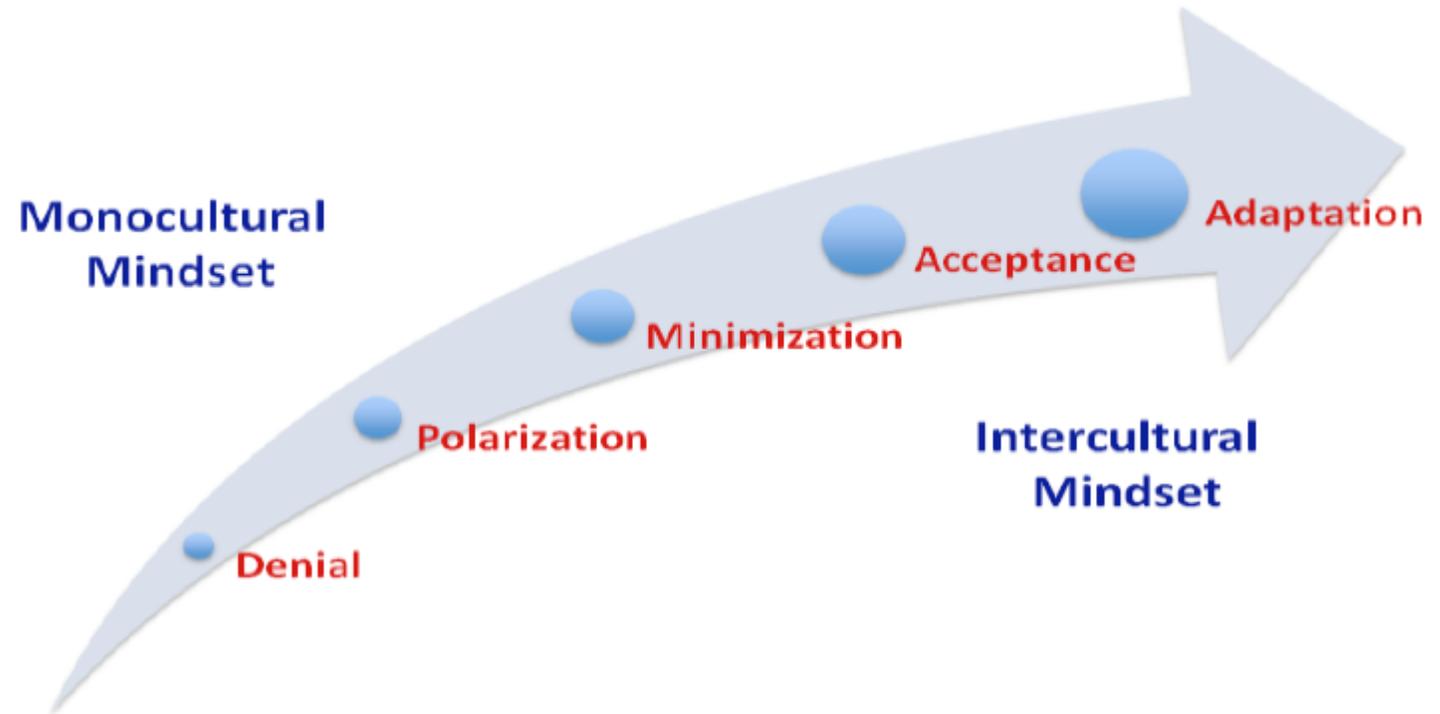


Unconscious racial **biases**  
Unconscious racialized **behavior**

Dissonance between our conscious and unconscious values

*Identifying the gap between  
perceived actions and actual  
procedures*

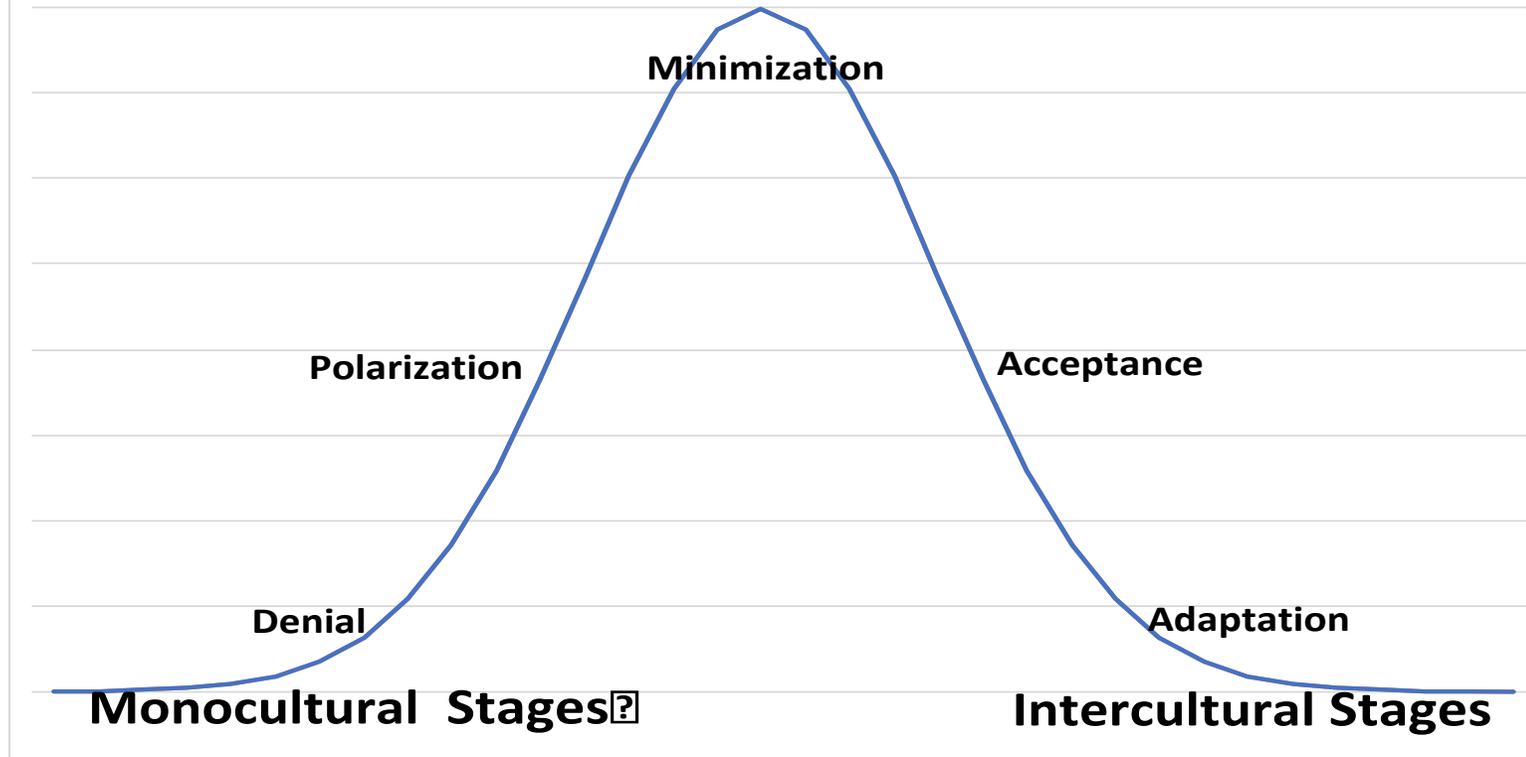
## Intercultural Development Continuum



*Increasing racial  
consciousness through  
cultural competency –  
foundation for  
transformation and  
measuring growth*



## IDC Continuum Distribution



Normal distribution" (where "100" represents the mean average) is Denial = 3.05%, Polarization = 15.55%, Minimization = 66.25%, Acceptance = 14.65%, Adaptation = 1.55%

*IDI  
Connecting the dots and  
measuring growth –  
personal/interpersonal  
change shaping institutions  
and structures*



Exclusive “Segregated Organization” = **denial**

Passive “Club Organization” = **denial/polarization**

Symbolic Change “Multicultural Organization” =  
**polarization/minimization**

Identity Change “Diverse Organization” = **minimization**

Structural Change “Transforming Organization” = **acceptance**

Fully Transformed “Fully Inclusive and Effective Multicultural  
Organization” = **adaptation**

How does it impact  
you?



How does **implicit bias** impact you, the work  
you do, the people you serve?

