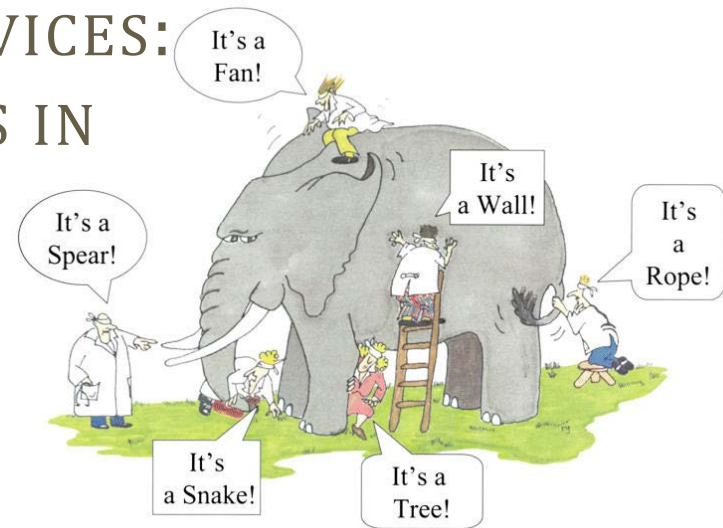


# CULTURE & EMPLOYMENT SERVICES: REDUCING RACIAL DISPARITIES IN EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT



 **RAMSEY COUNTY**  
Workforce Solutions

# Welcome

- **Purpose:** We hope to help each other succeed in our provision of employment and family stabilization services to encourage and enable all families to attain and retain employment, increase their income from all sources, move out of poverty, and contribute to their families and communities in ways that are meaningful to them. Specifically, we aim to establish common understanding among our agencies and support each other in:
  1. accommodating all the cultures and ethnic groups within the MFIP/DWP population,
  2. considering and responding to a power imbalance and working towards restoring racial equity between participants and agencies as well as employers,
  3. analyzing and reflecting upon an inequitable distribution of power in larger society,
  4. reducing education and employment racial disparities.

# Welcome, continued

- **Objectives:**

1. Identify 7 basic expectations of culturally appropriate service delivery;
2. Identify areas in which culture and race diverge and converge;
3. Identify 5 faces of oppression in relation to reducing disparities;
4. Identify migration/ colonization and labor history as factors related to education and employment disparities;
5. Understand prior associations;
6. Identify 4 levels on the continuum of systemic oppression;
7. Recognize elements of individual resilience against colonization, racism, inequality, and poverty as strengths;
8. Recognize examples of collective resistance against colonization, racism, inequality, and poverty as strengths;
9. Identify reflective practice and communities of practice as possible next steps.

# Format

- **Critical Theory**

1. How do I actually know what I think is true?
2. What are the consequences of thinking this way?
3. Who is not at the table?

- **Critical Pedagogy**

1. “Putting names to things you already know”
2. Asking “why?”

- **Ground Rules (*posted*)**

1. Remember our common goal of economic prosperity for all participants.
2. Commit to keeping an open mind and learning something new.
3. Share responsibility for creating a respectful learning environment for everyone.
4. Meet each other wherever we are; honor each other’s unique life experiences.
5. Give each other the benefit of the doubt; exercise compassion in our efforts to understand and communicate with each other.

# Background

- **Cultivating Economic Prosperity & Combating Concentrated Areas of Poverty**
  1. ...[G]rowth does not happen equitably.... Ramsey County has the highest proportion of census tracts identified as Concentrated Areas of Financial Poverty.
  2. Concentrated areas of financial poverty do not just create challenges for people living within them.
  3. Ramsey County is and will remain significantly more diverse than the Region, meaning that race-based disparities will have a greater impact.
  4. Racial disparities in academic achievement persist regardless of family income level. (Saint Paul Children's Collaborative Master Youth Plan Baseline Data)
  5. Racial disparities in employment persist even when factors of education, experience, and preparation are equal. (Everybody In)

# Background, continued

- **“Ramsey County...cannot ever achieve its overall Mission/ Vision/ Goals without addressing racial equity”**
  1. The County will only be successful in meeting its goal to be a leader in responding to the changing demographics in Ramsey County when the diverse populations served by Ramsey County receive...services from staff representing the available county workforce.... All residents regardless of skin color should have equal access to government services and equity in outcomes of county services.
  2. Despite the County’s rich cultural heritage, the distribution of social and economic opportunities is unequal. Racism is a significant factor.... Racial inequities in Ramsey County are systemic problems, cutting across one’s lifespan and cutting across institutional systems.
  3. Disparities are part of the fabric of Ramsey County—documented in health, poverty status, education, employment—and in Ramsey County services and staff makeup.

# Operational Definitions

- **Culturally Appropriate services (*handout*)**

1. providing a service-delivery environment and materials that reflect and accommodate the range of identities represented in the MFIP/ DWP population that each agency serves, including through the provision of translation and disability accommodations;
2. employing staff or purchasing interpreter services to meet the language needs of the MFIP/ DWP population each agency serves;
3. recruiting, hiring, and retaining donors, board members, and staff members at all levels who increasingly reflect the range of identities represented in the MFIP/ DWP population that each agency serves;
4. diversifying vendors and contracted suppliers of products and services to include local, minority-, and women-owned businesses;
5. developing relationships and coordinating services with culturally-specific and community-based resources and programs that reflect the range of identities represented in the MFIP/ DWP population each agency serves;



# Operational Definitions, continued

- **Culturally Appropriate services, continued**

6. involving participants' family and/ or community members in decision-making and service-delivery when determined appropriate and possible by both participant and agency;
7. continually engaging all levels of staff in training to increase their understanding of the historical and global context underlying the current inequitable distribution of power among people from various communities/ identity groups, and employers, educational and nonprofit institutions, as well as government programs.

- **Culturally Informed services (*handout*)**

- **Cultural Competence among Staff (*handout*)**

- **Culturally Specific services & racial Disparities Reduction Strategies (*handout*)**



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**Effective Date:** January 1, 2014

**Contact Person:** Your Agency Planner

## **OPERATIONAL DEFINITION:**

*Culturally appropriate service delivery* means:

In providing services, vendors are expected to accommodate all the cultures and ethnic groups in the MFIP population. Expectations for culturally appropriate service delivery include:

- 1) providing a service-delivery environment and materials that reflect and accommodate the range of identities represented in the MFIP population that each contracted agency serves, including through the provision of translation and disability accommodations;
- 2) employing staff or purchasing interpreter services to meet the language needs of the MFIP population that each contracted agency serves;
- 3) recruiting, hiring, and retaining donors, board members, and staff members at all levels who increasingly reflect the range of identities represented in the MFIP population that each contracted agency serves;
- 4) diversifying vendors and contracted suppliers of products and services to include local, minority-, and women-owned businesses;
- 5) developing relationships and coordinating services with culturally-specific and community-based resources and programs that reflect the range of identities represented in the MFIP population that each contracted agency serves;
- 6) involving participants' family and/ or community members in decision-making and service-delivery when determined appropriate and possible by both participant and contracted agency;
- 7) continually engaging all levels of staff in training to increase their understanding of the historical and global context underlying the current inequitable distribution of power among people from various communities/ identity groups, and employers, educational and nonprofit institutions, as well as government programs.

*Culturally informed* means:

Culturally informed services manifest a consideration of and response to the inequitable distribution of power mentioned above. Focusing less on what staff members know about other cultures and more on what they don't know, contracted agencies develop programs in consultation with representatives from participants' communities, communicate to participants respectfully in a language and format they are comfortable with, and deliver services in a manner that attends not just to programmatic and administrative details, but also to human details. Human details encompass considerations about a participant's race, ethnicity, and culture; formal educational level and socio-economic class; gender identity, sexual orientation, and marital status; language, nationality, and citizenship or documentation status; age and disability

Drafted or Revised 12/30/2013

status; as well as other dimensions along which access to resources and decision-making power varies.

*Cultural competence* means:

The willingness and ability of staff at all levels to analyze and reflect upon the power imbalance mentioned earlier. Beyond the mastery of knowledge about particular cultures, cultural competence refers to staff members' emphasizing the importance of treating participants as they would like to be treated, not as staff members would like to be treated. Cultural competence requires a willingness and ability to exercise humility—adopting a stance of inquiry and refraining from making assumptions—in interactions with participants, other service providers, and community members representing all racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. It also involves recognizing participants' individual resilience and their traditions of collective resistance against colonization, racism, inequality, and poverty. Such traditions are represented most prominently in the U.S. by the Civil Rights and American Indian Movements, which benefited members of all communities, and by movements against colonial rule and oppressive regimes in the native countries of many MFIP participants who are immigrants or refugees.

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**Effective Date:** January 1, 2014

**Contact Person:** Your Agency Planner

## **OPERATIONAL DEFINITION:**

### Culturally Specific Services

Workforce Solutions (WFS) contracts two culturally specific providers to provide specialized Employment Services (ES) for select African American and American Indian Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) participants. The culturally specific agencies currently selected to provide specialized services are 1) YWORKS, 2) Network for the Development of Children of African Descent (serving African American participants), and 3) the American Indian Family Center, all of which have agreed to serve as agents of change in partnership with Ramsey County, building upon a shared critical consciousness.

Culturally specific ES should be considered within the context of a strength-based approach, meaning that the services incorporate and build on participant, family, community, and cultural assets by providing support, resources, and skills to help participants support themselves and contribute to the welfare of their families and communities. As such, strength-based, culturally specific ES reflect and draw from participants' individual resilience as well as the African American and American Indian traditions of collective resistance against colonization, racism, inequality, and poverty evidenced most prominently by the Civil Rights Movement and American Indian Movement that benefited all communities in the United States.

In particular, *culturally specific* ES means:

1. the contracted agency employs, or intends to employ, management and direct service staff who, in part, reflect the race(s), ethnicities, and culture(s) of the participants;
2. the agency delivers services to increase participants' employability in a manner that both acknowledges and responds to the legacies of historical trauma, racism, inequality, and poverty that have negatively affected African Americans' and American Indians' access to, and success with, education and employment opportunities; and
3. agency services incorporate and build on participants' values, beliefs, worldviews, and traditions, many of which are rooted in or informed by culture and experience.

### Racial Disparities Reduction Strategies

The disproportionately high number of African American and American Indian participants on MFIP beyond the 60-month lifetime TANF limit and the disproportionately low number of American Indian participants who meet Workforce Participation Rate requirements under Ramsey County's current system of service delivery substantiate the

need for culturally specific ES.

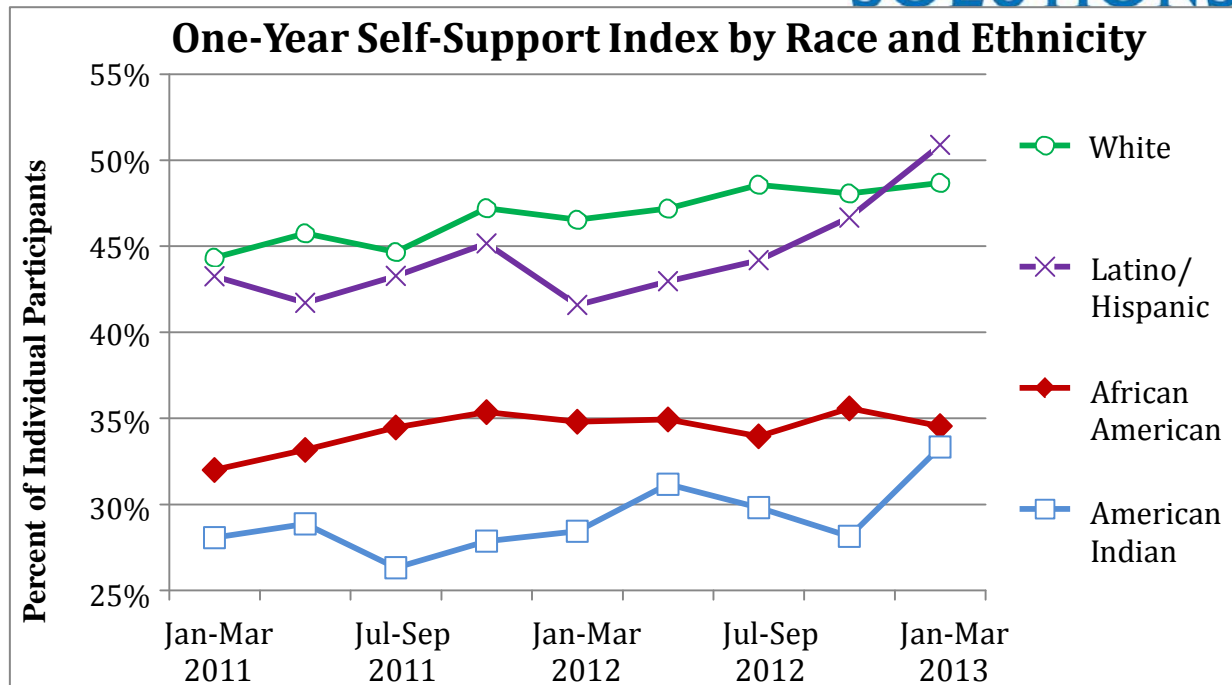
Historically, two MFIP Report Card outcome measures—the Self-Support Index (S-SI) and the Workforce Participation Rate (WPR), both described below—have reflected the extent of the above disproportionalities. Differences in outcome measures between white participants and participants from other racial/ ethnic groups that are greater than 5 percentage points constitute a *racial disparity* that mandates County and agency attention according to the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) guidelines. Historically in Ramsey County, differences between both African American and American Indian participants and white participants on the S-SI have significantly exceeded 5 percentage points, as have differences between American Indian and white participants on the WPR. This has led Ramsey County to expect all MFIP-ES contracted agencies, including culturally specific agencies, to incorporate racial disparities reduction strategies into their ES delivery.

Additional funds, however, are available annually to selected culturally specific agencies for their efforts directed at reducing disparities that, starting in 2014, will be measured along four MFIP outcomes (Self-Support Index, Workforce Participation Rate, Paid employment, and Length of time on MFIP, all of which are detailed below). The selected culturally specific agencies will work with WFS administration and other community leaders to participate in an ongoing process of formally evaluating and refining their racial Disparities Reduction Strategies (DRS) services.

### *Self-Support Index (S-SI)*

Starting in April 2014, the S-SI will be a primary DHS indicator of disparities. It tracks whether, one year after being on MFIP, participants do one or both of the following for three consecutive months: 1) work an average of 30 hours or more hours per week, or 2) no longer receive the cash portion of their monthly grant (as a result of increased household earned or unearned income) without exiting MFIP by reaching their lifetime limit or being sanctioned. In essence, the S-SI measures the extent to which families increase their income or retain full-time employment so as *not* to qualify for MFIP cash assistance.

In the most recent measurement period (January-March 2013), the current system of service delivery in Ramsey County achieved a one-year Self-Support Index for white MFIP parents that was 14.1 percentage points higher than that for African American participants and 15.4 percentage points higher than that for American Indian participants. In both cases, the difference is greater than 5 percentage points and constitutes a disparity mandating attention.



## Workforce Participation Rate (WPR)

WPR is the federally mandated work activity performance requirement for cases paid by the federal TANF program. In the most recent measurement period (January-March 2013), for the approximately one-third of MFIP cases who are included the measure, the current system of service delivery in Ramsey County achieved a WPR of 27.0% for American Indian cases and 45.5% for white cases, yielding a difference of 18.5 percentage points. This difference constitutes a racial disparity. (The WPR for African American participants was 43.8%, which is within 5 percentage points of that of White participants and thus *not* considered a racial disparity.)

## Paid Employment

Ramsey County has added an MFIP outcome starting in 2014 for culturally specific agencies to measure the percent of all MFIP adults working who have accumulated fewer than 60 of their 60-month lifetime limit on TANF. On average per month in 2012 within Ramsey County, 21.6% of American Indian participants were employed, whereas 27.3% of white participants were. This difference of 5.7 percentage points constitutes a racial disparity. (The percent of African American participants employed was 31.9%, which is not only within 5 percentage points of whites, but also higher than that of white participants.)

## Length of Time on MFIP

Ramsey County has also added an MFIP outcome starting in 2014 that considers the percentage of the County's caseload that has accumulated fewer than 60 of their 60-month lifetime limit on TANF in relation to the percentage that has accumulated 60 or more by race/ ethnicity. On average in the Ramsey County MFIP caseload during 2012, the ratio of the percentage of all MFIP parents exhausting their lifetime limit who were African American (52.2%) relative to the

# WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

percentage of all MFIP parents with less than 60 months who were African American (35.0%) was 1.49 (the result of 52.2% divided by 35.0%). In comparison, the ratio of the percentage of all MFIP parents exhausting their lifetime who were white (21.5%) in relation to all MFIP parents with less than 60 months who were white (21.3%) was 1.01 (the result of 21.5% divided by 21.3%). The difference between 1.49 and 1.01 is greater than 0.05, constituting a racial disparity.



# Similar concepts

- Cultural awareness/ sensitivity/ humility
- Culturally affirming/ responsive
- “Cultural” is sometimes preceded by “cross,” “inter,” or “trans”
- “Competence” is sometimes used interchangeably with “competency,” although there is a distinction

# What is culture anyway?

- **Definitions (*handout*)**

1. an embodiment of a worldview through learned and transmitted beliefs, values, and practices, including religious and spiritual traditions.... It also encompasses a way of living informed by the historical, economic, ecological, and political forces acting on a group (American Psychological Association).
2. the learned patterns of behavior (i.e., traditions and customs) characteristic of a society (American Anthropological Association).
3. a way of interpreting life situations that is handed down or otherwise shared with others.

## **Definitions**

### Culture

1. an embodiment of a worldview through learned and transmitted beliefs, values, and practices, including religious and spiritual traditions.... It also encompasses a way of living informed by the historical, economic, ecological, and political forces acting on a group (American Psychological Association).
2. the learned patterns of behavior (i.e., traditions and customs) characteristic of a society (American Anthropological Association).
3. a way of interpreting life situations that is handed down or otherwise shared with others. These interpretations involve:
  - a. basic, taken-for-granted assumptions about the nature of things;
  - b. values; and
  - c. norms for how people should and shouldn't act. Rather than realizing that our way of thinking is only one viable way, we tend to experience cultural interpretations as "only natural," reflecting what "anyone in their 'right mind'" would think.
4. Points to keep in mind:
  - a. Culture is an interpretive system; as such, it is NOT a group of people.
  - b. Not all interpretations are cultural. People interpret things through other lenses, as well.
  - c. Everybody has or comes from a cultural lens or perspective, and likely more than one.
  - d. Culture is not only informed by race/ ethnicity: there are also youth cultures, deaf cultures, GLBTQ cultures, some argue a "women's culture," organizational cultures, etc.

### Race (American Anthropology Association)

1. "Race" as it is understood in the United States of America was invented during the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a mode of social classification referring to those populations brought together in colonial North America:
  - a. the conquered peoples indigenous to this continent,

- b. the English and other European settlers on this continent,
  - c. African peoples brought to this continent to provide slave labor, and
  - d. later, East Asians allowed to this continent specifically to provide indentured labor (to build railroads).
2. The idea of “race” has no basis in biology, but different physical traits became markers or symbols of differences in status.
3. Cultural and behavioral characteristics became associated with each “race”.
4. “Race” was not limited to the colonial situation. Under Adolf Hitler, the Nazis expanded the ideology of “race” and “racial” differences and exterminated 11 million people of “inferior races” during the World War II Holocaust.
5. “Race” fuses cultural/ behavioral and biological/ physical features together, implying that both are genetically determined.
6. “Race” is a hierarchically organized set of artificial social and political categories, whereas culture emerges and develops among groups of people as we interact with others and adapt to our continually changing situations.

- Cultural dominance is where culture and race—among other aspects of identity—converge; it is the opposite of culturally appropriate, informed, competent, or specific services.
- Because *cultural dominance* contributes to *racial oppression*, *cultural practice* can contribute to *racial equity*.

#### Migration (National Geographic)

- the movement of people from one place in the world to another, often across a political boundary, to take up permanent or semi-permanent residence

#### Colonization (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

- the subjugation of one people to another, usually through by settling on their territory

#### Labor (University of Toronto)

- human talent and exertion (mental or physical) in the production of goods and services

# What is culture anyway? continued

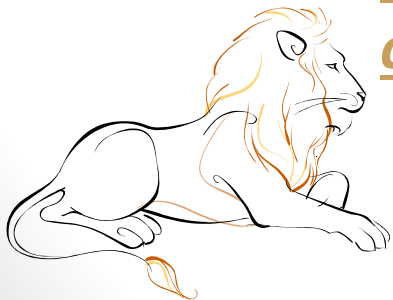
- Why are we talking about culture when the disparities are racial—not cultural?

1. “Race” is a hierarchically organized set of artificial social and political categories, whereas culture emerges and develops among groups of people as we interact with others and adapt to our continually changing situations.

- 2.5 Faces of Oppression (*handout*)

- Cultural dominance is where culture and race—among other aspects of identity—converge; it is the opposite of culturally appropriate, informed, competent, or specific services.

3. Because cultural dominance contributes to racial oppression, cultural practice can contribute to racial equity



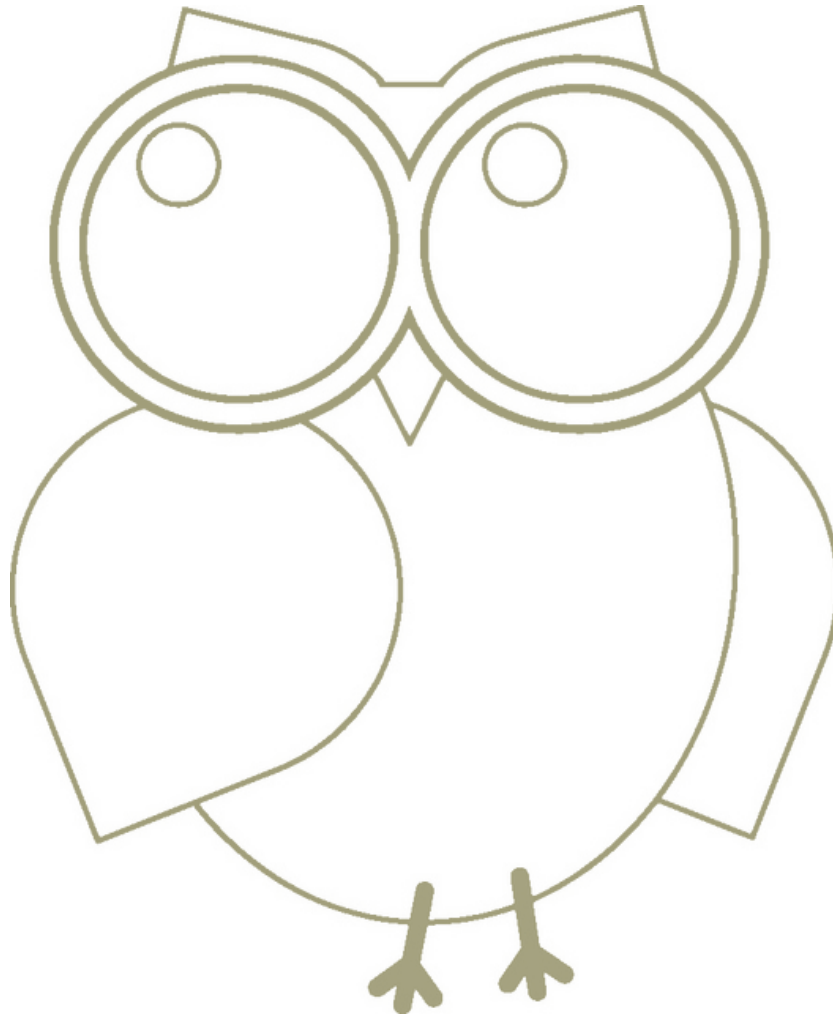
“Until the lions have their own historians, tales of the hunt always glorify the hunter.”  
—Nigerian proverb

## 5 Faces of Oppression

(derived from Young, I.M., 2010. *Justice & the Politics of Difference*. Princeton University Press.)

1. Cultural Dominance: involves the universalization of the dominant group's experience and culture, and its establishment as the norm. The cultural perspectives of other groups are simultaneously invisible, seen only in contrast to the dominant group (as falling short of it), and stereotyped. Those living under cultural dominance find themselves defined from the outside by those with whom they do not identify and who do not identify with them. In order to operate within the dominant culture, however, they must to some extent internalize its perspectives.
2. Marginalization: marginalized people are those that the system of labor cannot or will not use. In wealthy countries, the process of marginalization is achieved through incarceration, immigration, and reservation and members of this growing underclass are often dependent on the state.
3. Powerlessness: the powerless are those who lack formal authority, such that they must take orders and rarely have the right to give them. They have little opportunity to develop and exercise skills; have little to no work autonomy; and exercise little creativity or judgment in their work. Even in their private lives, they stand under the authority of professionals.
4. Exploitation: the steady process in which the results of the labor and energy expenditure of one social group is transferred to benefit another, continuously reproducing the relationship of domination between them. 'Menial labor', the unskilled, servile, low-paying work lacking in autonomy, was historically reserved for African Americans, Latino/as, Native Americans, and Chinese, and is a racially specific form of exploitation.
5. Violence: is less about specific acts of violence themselves than about the threat of potential violence that often serves to keep members of particular groups subordinate. Violence is a face of oppression because even though members of dominant groups sometimes experience violence simply because of their group status, they know that if the incident goes to trial, they will likely be supported by a justice system that was created by, is composed of, and tends to be sympathetic to members of their group.

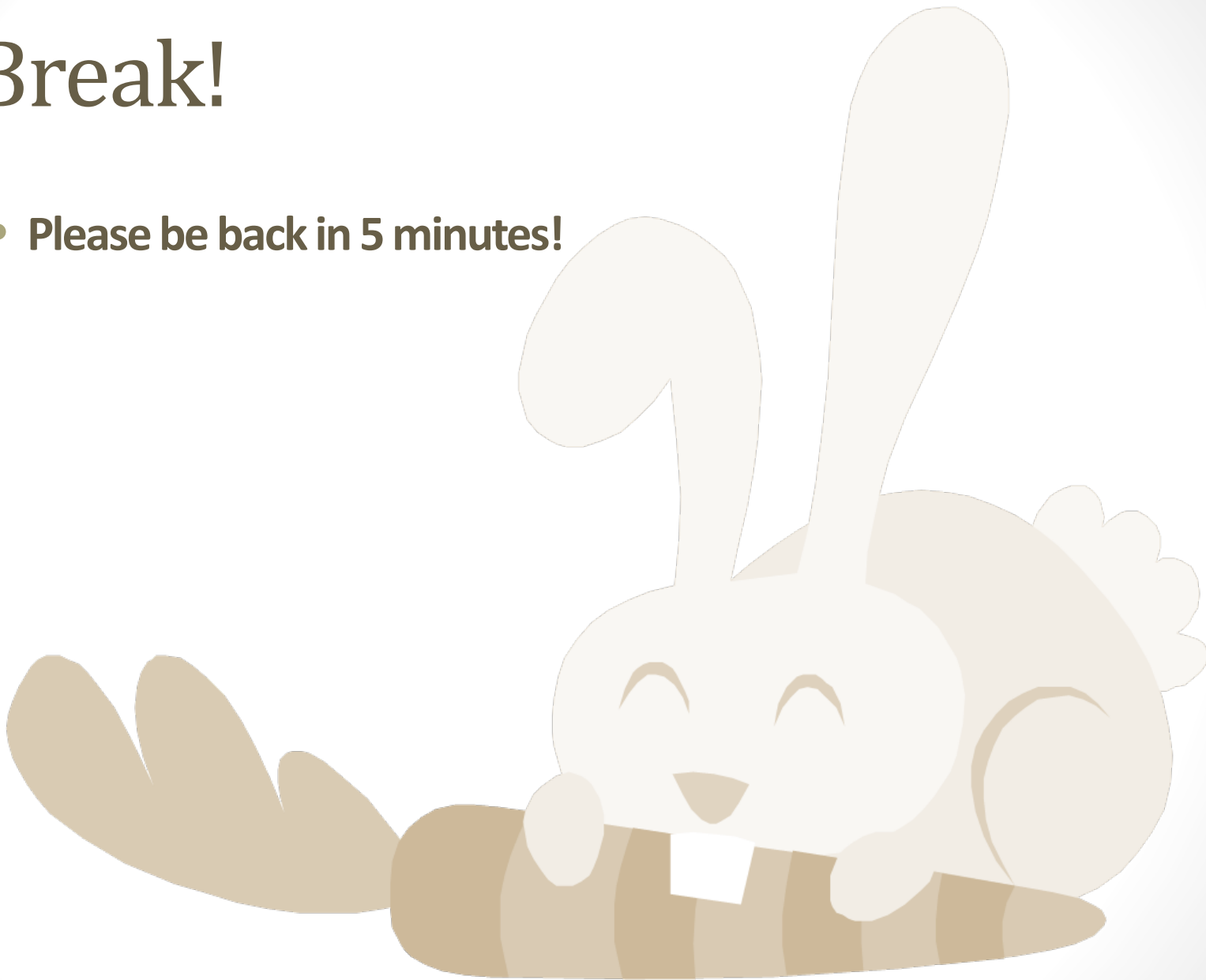
# Questions so far?





# Break!

- Please be back in 5 minutes!



# DHS's main racial & ethnic categories for MFIP/ DWP (in alphabetical order)

- **Migration/ colonization and labor policies & history** (*handout & small group exercise*)
  1. African American
  2. American Indian
  3. Hmong
  4. KaRen
  5. Latino/ a
  6. Somali
  7. White
- **Migration**=the movement of people from one place in the world to another to take up permanent or semi-permanent residence
- **Colonization**=the subjugation of one people to another, usually by settling on their territory
- **Labor**=human talent and exertion in the production of goods and services

## **Migration/ Colonization & Labor Policies & History** (adapted from powell & Cagampang Heller, 2011)

Using the collective knowledge of your small group, think through how migration/ colonization and labor policies and histories have affected the main racial and ethnic groups represented among MFIP participants. Please assign a spokesperson to report back to the large group.

How might the policies and histories you note below relate to each group's current educational and employment situation? Your answers will form the basis of the next exercise.

<b>Group</b>	<b>Migration/ colonization policies &amp; history</b>	<b>Labor policies &amp; history</b>
<b>African American</b>		
<b>American Indian</b>		
<b>Hmong</b>		

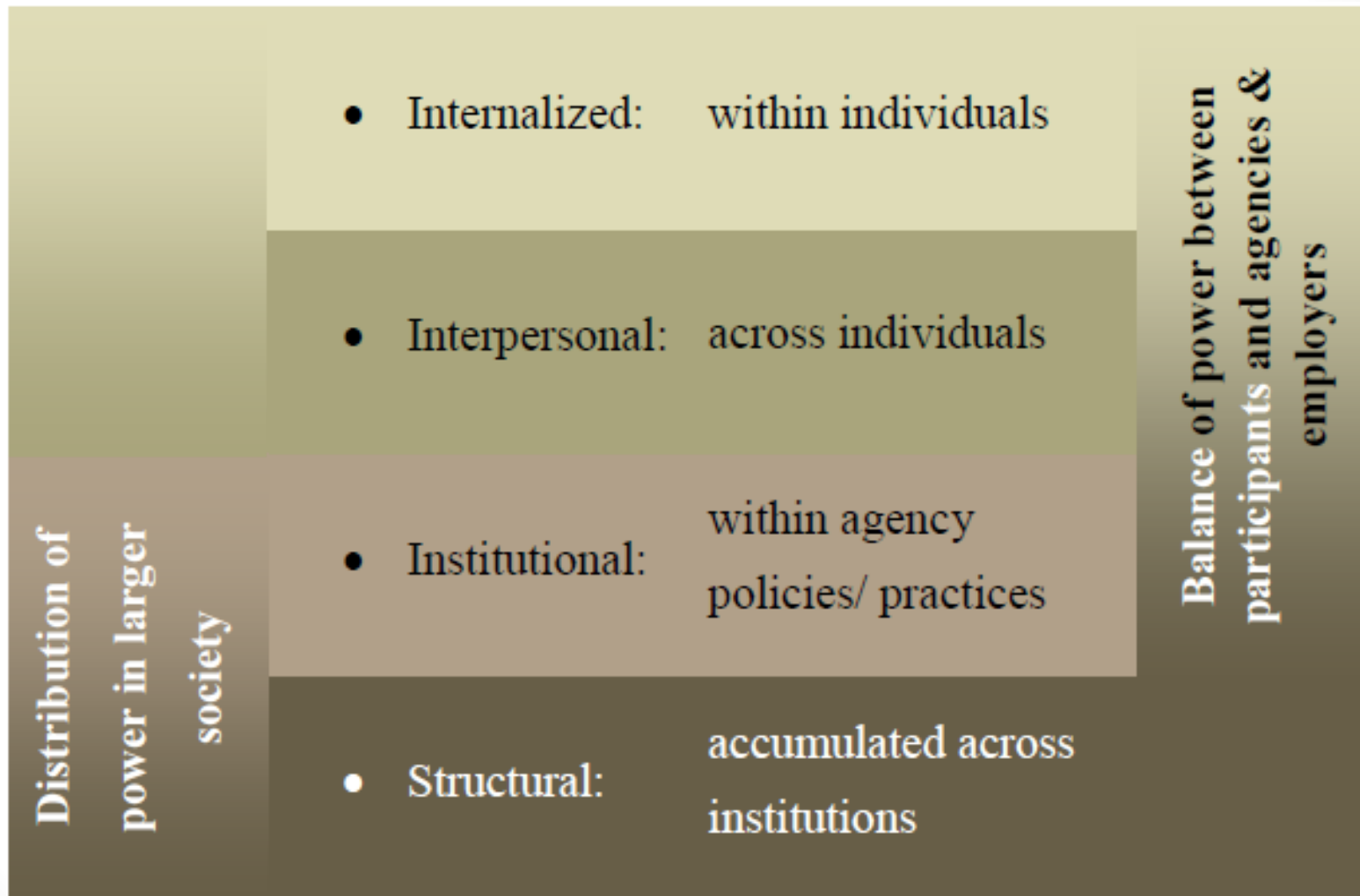
Group	Migration/ colonization policies & history	Labor policies & history
<b>KaRen</b>		
<b>Latino/a</b>		
<b>Somali</b>		
<b>White</b>		

# Migration/ colonization & labor policies and history

## ● Reflection

1. Remain in your small groups
2. Refer to your worksheets
3. Generate an initial list of some possible sources of the racial disparities that we see in education and employment
4. Report back to the large group

# Analytical levels of oppression



# Now for a brief bit of brain science

- **Stroop Test adaptation (*handout*)**

1. begin communication with a shared, values-based goal;
2. connect with our listeners to create a common “we”;
3. address implicit bias by creating room for everyone involved to voice anxieties;
4. acknowledge progress and pointing out our collective failures.
5. after listening, offer solutions that align with our shared values.





**I. Say the color of the word. (Do NOT read the word that is written.)**

1.	Cvur zxyq
2.	Vhrn wwte
3.	Vgeb peow
4.	Xoc jbnl oew
5.	Zre ytu vee

**II. Say the color of the word. (Do NOT read the word that is written.)**

6.	Dirt
7.	Grass
8.	Sky
9.	Stop sign
10.	Sunshine

**III. Say the color of the word. (Do NOT read the word that is written.)**

11.	Dirt
12.	Grass
13.	Sky
14.	Stop sign
15.	Sunshine

**IV. Say the color of the word. (Do NOT read the word that is written.)**

16.	Blue
17.	Brown
18.	Green
19.	Red
20.	Yellow

**V. Say the color of the word. (Do NOT read the word that is written.)**

21.	Blue
22.	Brown
23.	Green
24.	Red
25.	Yellow

**Implicit Bias** (derived from powell, j. a. & Cagampang Heller, c. 2011. *Systems Thinking and Race: Workshop Summary*. The California Endowment.)

It is more difficult—and takes more time—to say the color of the word that we see when we already have some prior association of the word’s meaning and what we see differs from our prior association. It is easier—and quicker—when we have no association of the word’s meaning (when the words are gibberish) or when our association of the word’s meaning corresponds with the color of the word (for example, when sky is written in blue). Why?

Different regions of the brain serve different purposes. The limbic system categorizes what we perceive. The Amygdala, in the older region of the brain, is in charge of unconscious processing. It helps us fight or flee from perceived threats and is therefore quick to respond. This is important for survival situations. The Prefrontal Cortex, which continues developing later in life, is in charge of conscious values. It helps us with thoughtfulness and self-control. As a result, it is much slower to respond than the Amygdala. Because it continues developing, we can train it with practice.

*Schemas* are mental frameworks for organizing new information so that every time we face a new situation, we can rapidly decide whether we need to fight or flee. Though schemas are unconscious (so we are largely unaware that they exist) **the frameworks we use and the meanings attributed to the categories within those frameworks are learned.**

Because we already associate the word sky with the color blue, it takes our brains a lot longer to overcome that association and state the color that we see before us. Our tendency is to state our prior association instead.

It is the same with our interactions with people. When those of us in the United States meet someone, our minds very quickly and unconsciously assign that person to a racial category **because of what we’ve learned about the importance of “race” in our context.** It takes more time to see people as human beings rather than as our prior association of their racial category. And when people trigger a prior association that we may have of their racial category (as when sky is written in blue), we have a tendency to make decisions based on our prior associations rather than taking time to see what is before us. This is called implicit bias.

Somewhat like the Stroop Test that we just did an adaptation of, researchers have used the Implicit Association Test to see how long it takes test-takers to match images of various individuals with pleasant and unpleasant words. They’ve found that **not** automatically matching people of color with unpleasant words requires more than two-thirds of test

takers—including people of color—considerably more time, because they must use the part of their brains focused on thought and values to overcome their prior associations. When asked, however, most of these people do not hold any conscious association between people of color and unpleasant words.

In fact, the majority of Americans consciously believe in equality. Overt bigotry persists among only 10% of the population. Because the United States is deeply racialized and structural oppression permeates our society, though, racial anxiety is in the air whether we are talking about race specifically or not. Despite our best efforts, therefore, it is impossible to be colorblind. Research shows that denying our prior associations can actually increase rather than decrease their power because doing so stimulates the parts of our brains that respond to fear and anxiety. A better tactic is to acknowledge them and stimulate the parts of our brains that respond to thought and values—through individual reflection or collective dialogue.

Everyone has prior associations. But not everyone is in a position to make decisions that affect other people based on those associations and not everyone is in a position to have decisions made about them (see “powerlessness” in the 5 Faces of Oppression). We have already seen that *people of color in Ramsey County are more likely to be receiving employment services than providing them.* Now we have learned that *people of color are also more likely to have unpleasant words associated with them.* Though we consciously value racial equality, we may act and make decisions upon prior associations that we have internalized without even being aware that we have any such associations at all.

If our goal is to make judgments without regard to racial category (and other dimensions of identity), our brains can do that—with practice. Cultivating work environments that stimulate our Prefrontal Cortex rather than our Amygdala can reduce the extent to which we allow prior associations to influence our interactions with people. In other words, we can *focus on issues that involve thought around shared values instead of focusing on fear and anxiety around perceived threats* by:

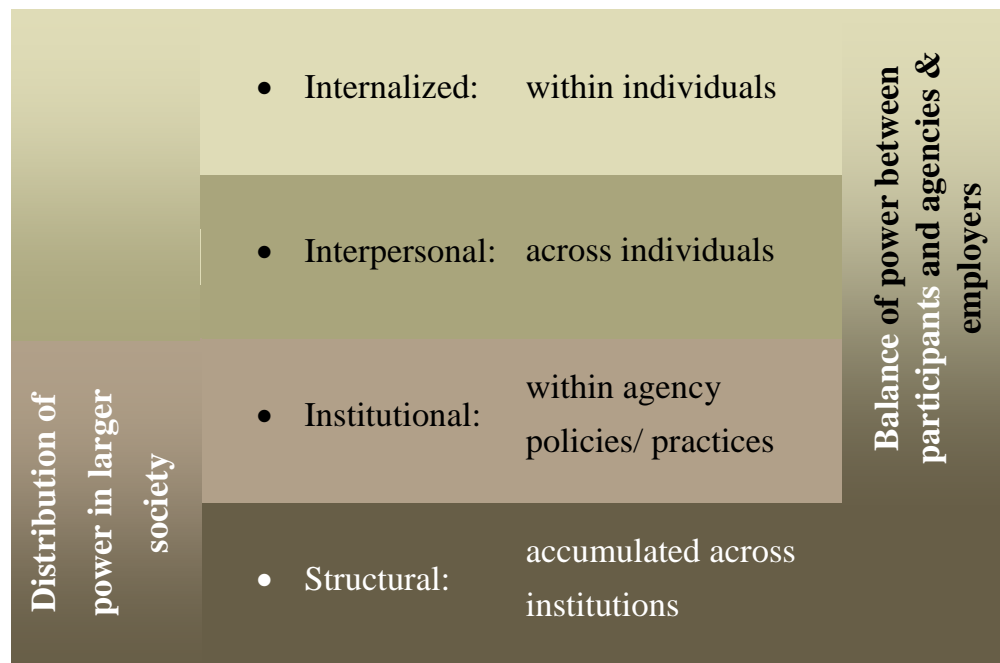
- Beginning communication with a shared, values-based goal;
- Connecting with our listeners to create a common “we”;
- Addressing prior associations by creating room for everyone involved to voice their anxieties;
- Acknowledging progress and pointing out our collective failures;
- After listening, offering solutions that align with our shared values.

# Problem Analysis: racial disparities in education and employment (*flipchart*)

<1900		>1900	
Internalized		Within individuals	Balance of power between participants and agencies & employers  Distribution of power in larger society
Interpersonal		Across individuals	
Institutional		Within agency policies/ practices	
Structural		Accumulated across institutions	

**Problem Analysis (derived from powell, j. a. & Cagampang Heller, c. 2011. *Systems Thinking and Race: Workshop Summary*. The California Endowment.)**

The two exercises completed so far—the first on the migration/ colonization policies and histories of the main racial and ethnic groups represented in MFIP and the second on implicit bias—were intended to introduce us to the continuum of systemic oppression. This continuum includes oppression at the following analytical levels:



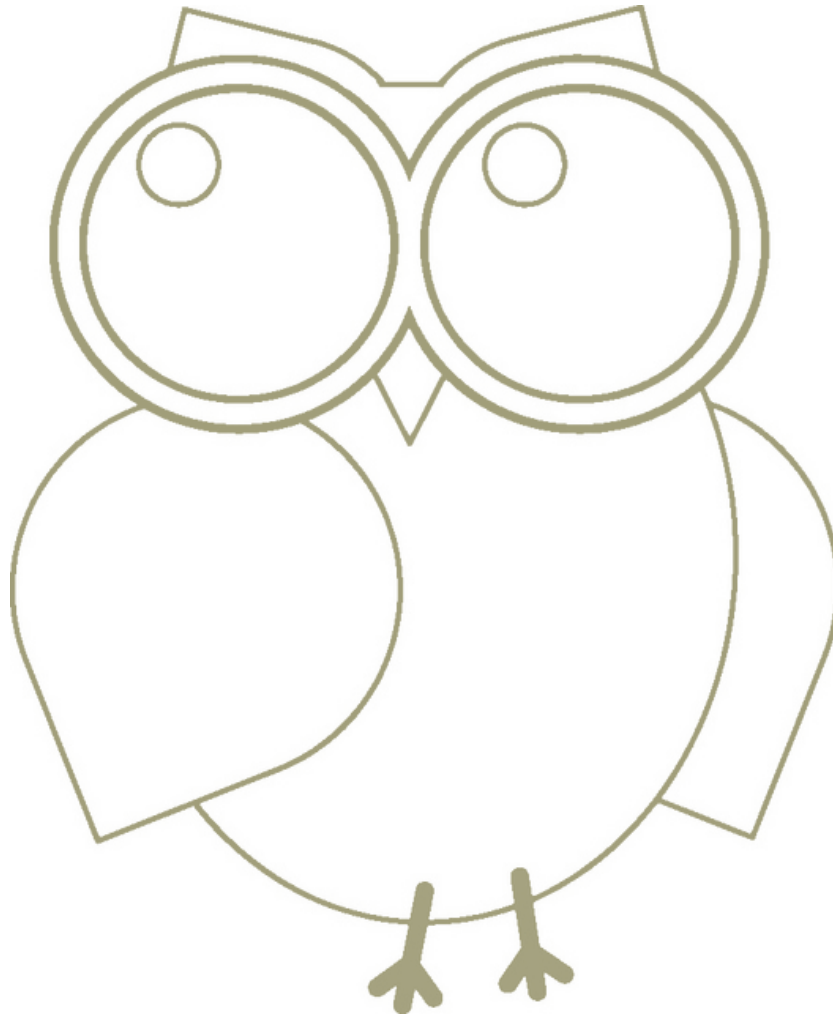
Oppression is systemic because the different analytical levels on the continuum interact with and reinforce each other. For example, implicit biases have not only institutional and structural origins (because they define our prior associations), but institutional and structural effects. Let us consider a common prior association about females—that they are not good at math. Girls may find few opportunities to develop any early interest in math (institutional and structural levels). They may not be encouraged by teachers and other adults close to them to invest time and energy into math (interpersonal and institutional levels). Their fear of fulfilling the stereotype that they are not good in math (internalized level) may further discourage them from pursuing math and contribute to greater anxiety when taking math tests. As a result, many females may in fact perform poorly in math. And then their poor performance reinforces the notion—for them as individuals (internalized level), for the people (interpersonal) and institutions (institutional) that interact with them directly, and for society as a whole (structural)—that females are not good at math.

Questions that we can ask ourselves that have the potential to help us be more effective in identifying the sources of a problem include:

- What are common prior associations that impact our issue area?
- Do any of these prior associations prevent us from seeing the full range (structural, institutional, interpersonal, internalized) of sources of the problem?
- What does this awareness suggest for developing a full range of solutions for this problem?

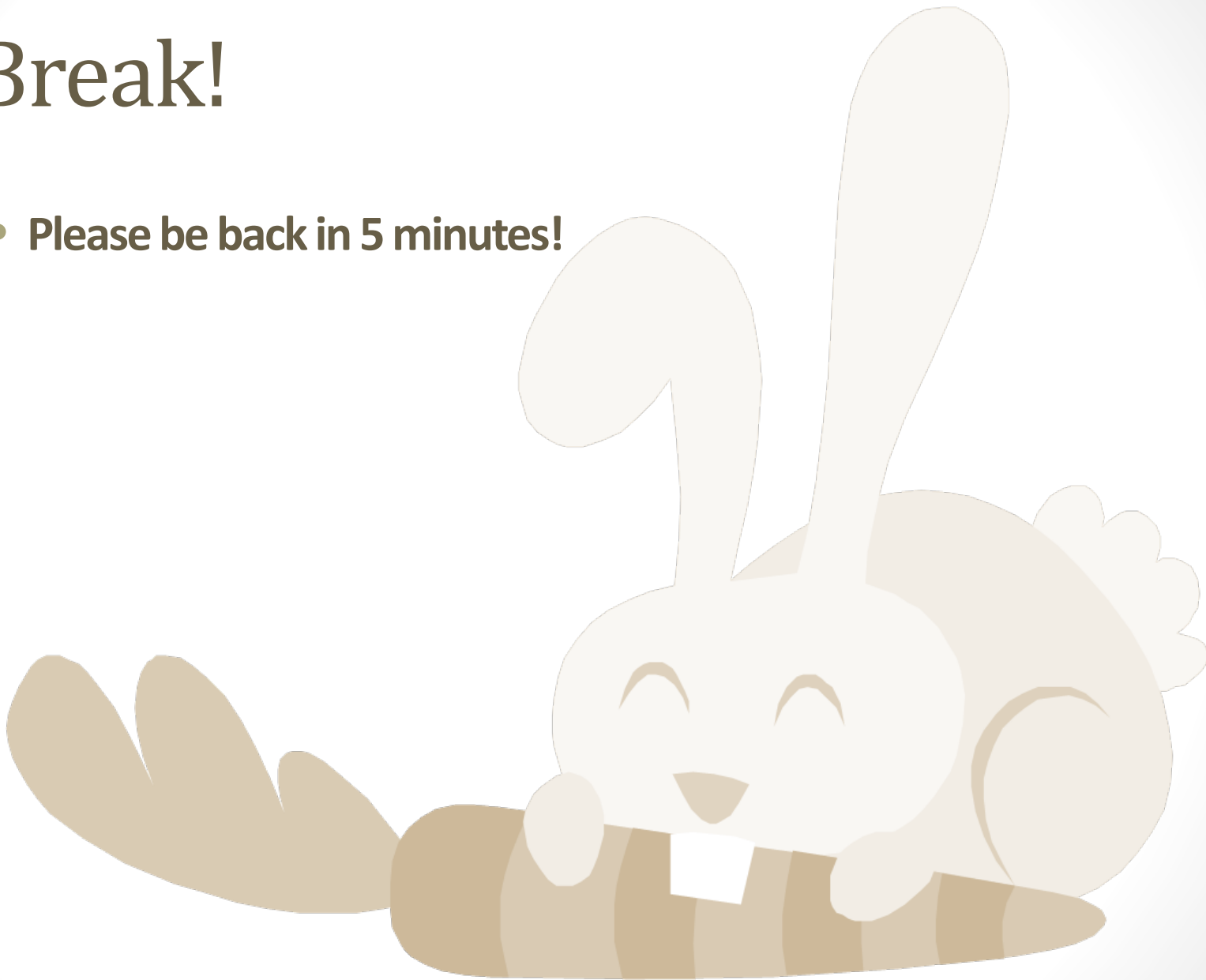
Level	Source of problem	Interventions that our agencies are already doing or could do
<b>Structural</b>		
<b>Institutional</b>		
<b>Interpersonal</b>		
<b>Internalized</b>		

# Questions so far?



# Break!

- Please be back in 5 minutes!





# A bit more brain science

- **Focused attention** (*video*)

1. Structural implications?
2. Institutional implications?
3. Interpersonal implications?
4. Internalized implications?



# Participants' & communities' strengths (*handout*)

- **“Cultural Resiliency is a term we use to describe the competencies people develop through diverse life experiences” (JuanCarlos Arauz)**
  1. Innovation
  2. Cross-cultural communication
  3. Adaptability
  4. Teamwork
  5. Critical analysis

## Examples of cultural resilience from literature

Society views us as unemployed Indians who need wage jobs. That is not how we view ourselves. Our work is about strengthening our [own] traditional economy...thereby strengthening our traditional culture as well, so that we can produce 50% or more of our own food independently, and can eventually produce enough surplus to sell.... Other parts of our strategy include language immersion programs to restore our language and the revival of drum ceremonies to restore our cultural practices. These are part of an integrated restoration process that is focused on the full human being.

From “Voices from White Earth: Gaa-waabaabiganikaag,” by Winona LaDuke

This education you’re going off to get would be a wonder to most people I worked with in the South. There’s still plenty of people can’t read down there.... I taught a ninety-three-year-old woman on a tenant farm to read and write. She told me she wanted to learn so she could write with her own hands what she wanted put on her tombstone. We started out reading funeral home calendars, then moved to a church hymnal, then the Bible.... I got her to reading and writing pretty well and a few months later we sat up one night and she wrote her will and epitaph. She got in bed that night and she didn’t say goodnight. She said goodbye. And when I came around the next day, the whole family was crying. She’d died in her sleep. I went into her room...and that old woman had died with a small, crooked smile on her face. She hadn’t had much say about her life, but she’d managed to have the last word about her death.”

Esther rested her arm on Logan’s shoulder and said, “Take that old lady’s spirit with you in every classroom you go into.”

Logan had waited for a miracle. And it had arrived as miracles do, with so much simplicity that not until Esther removed her arm from his shoulder was he aware of what he had received.

From *Long Distance Life*, by Marita Golden

My father had passed the competency test for high school, and the welfare people wanted him to work. They told him that he was a man in America and that a man's job anywhere is to take care of his family. My mother wanted my father to continue going to school. She told him that if he didn't learn more English, he would have to work that one job for the rest of his time in America. She said that we had been poor in Thailand and being poor for a little longer was not impossible to live through. They didn't have young children—just Dawb and me and we were in school. She convinced my father to apply to a community technical college to learn about operating heavy machinery. He called the welfare man.

"I have only two little girls," my father said. "My wife goes to school. I don't know English. We have only just come to this country. I want to work and support my family.... I ask you for a chance to learn more so that I can get a better job. I am not scared to work. I understand that in life we all work. Please help give me time so that I can take care of my girls as best as I can in America."

From *The Latehomecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir*, by Kao Kalia Yang

Being a sandbar means getting a breather from being a perpetual bridge without having to withdraw completely. The high and low tides of your life are factors which help you to decide whether or where you're a sandbar today, tomorrow. It means that you're functioning as a "bridge" (maybe partially under water, invisible to others) and that you can somehow choose who you'll allow to "see" your bridge, who you'll allow to walk on your "bridge"—that is, who you'll make connections with. A sandbar is more fluid and shifts locations, allowing for more mobility and more freedom. Of course, there are sandbars called shoals, where boats run amuck. Each option comes with its own dangers.

From "Bridge, Drawbridge, Sandbar, or Island," by Gloria Anzaldúa

# Participants' & communities' strengths, continued

- **Collective resistance against colonization, racism, inequality, and poverty**
  1. Civil Rights Movement
  2. American Indian Movement
  3. United Farm Workers of America
  4. Justice for Fong Lee
  5. Somali Action Alliance

# Culture is part of the solution rather than the problem!

- Increase awareness of these strengths among ourselves, participants, and employers to foster employment retention, economic security, and family stability
- MFIP/ DWP participants are defined by neither their cultural perspectives nor their racial/ ethnic categories alone:
  - 1.all are parents;
  - 2.the majority are women;
  - 3.many have disabilities;
  - 4.some are teens;
  - 5.we do not collect data regarding sexual orientation but based on the larger population, approximately 10% likely identify as GLBTQ.

# What could we do next?

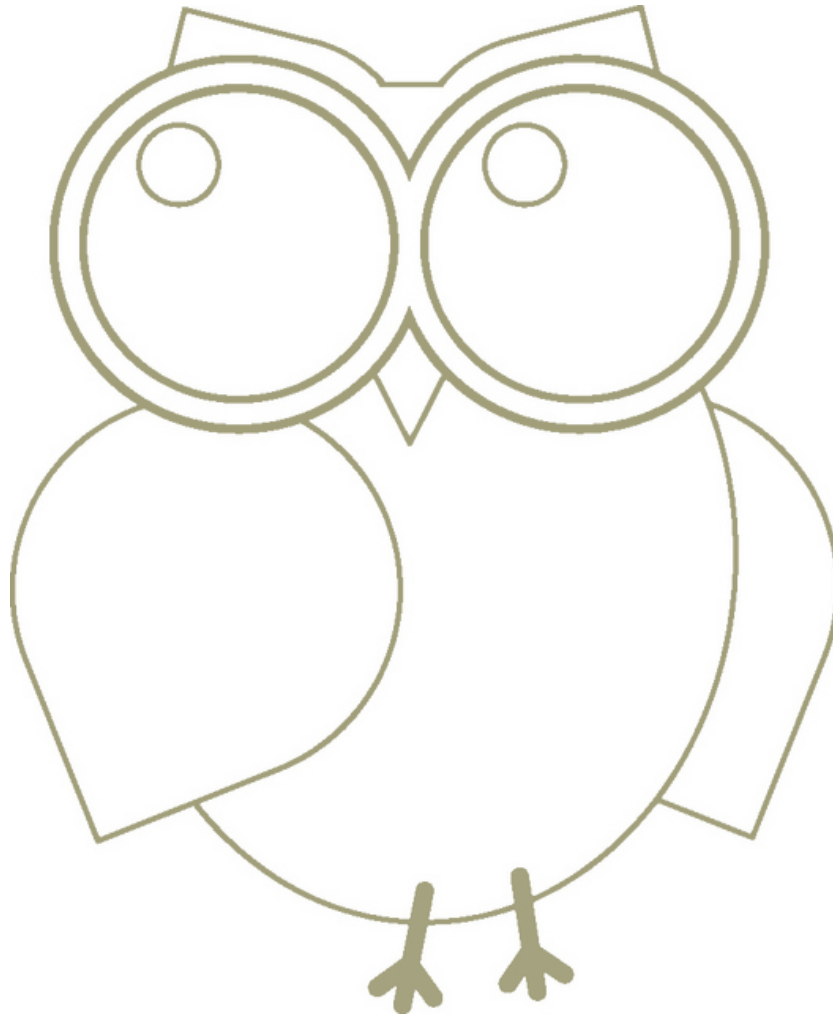
- **Possibly...Reflective Practice? (individual level)**

1. Setting aside time and space (such as a journal) to record and think about everyday working practices to improve skills in observing and describing situations, problem-solving, and self-awareness.
2. Reviewing it regularly constitutes a form of research.

- **Possibly...Communities of Practice? (collective level)**

1. People who engage in a process of sustained interaction and relationship-building that enables collective learning about and improvement in a shared area of practice.
2. Developing a shared repertoire of resources, experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems.
3. Sharing information, experience, and models/ prototypes; coordinating efforts/ purchasing power; documenting recurring problems or decisions; discussing issues; conducting site visits; knowledge mapping and gap analysis.

# Questions?





# Thank you!

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