



Unconscious Bias

moving from awareness to action

Today's Agenda

- Welcome
- Territory Acknowledgement
- Laying the foundation: Frames of references & intersectionality
- The 3 W's (and how) of Unconscious Bias
- The Ladder of Inference
- How does unconscious bias show up at the Improv Centre?
- Check Out Round



Territory Acknowledgement

X^wMəθK^wəY^əM

Səl'ílWəTA?

SKWXWÚ7MESH

Learning Outcomes

1. Develop a deeper understanding of unconscious biases and their impacts.
2. Explore your own unconscious biases.
3. Discover steps to mitigate the negative effects of unconscious biases.

Community Agreement



BE PRESENT

Create the atmosphere you need to actively participate.

WELCOME GROUP TENSION

View disagreements as a space of possibility and generative discussions.

ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR POWER

Examine your privilege and recognize how to take up space in the group.

SPEAK FROM YOUR EXPERIENCE

Be mindful of how your statements may generalize or reduce an individual or community's lived experience.

CALL IN

Centre compassion and content, not character, when providing feedback to others.

ENGAGE GENEROUSLY & RESPONSIBLY

Be attentive to the impacts of your engagement intentions.

KEEP YOURSELF OPEN TO LEARNING

There are no experts.

RESPECT CONFIDENTIALITY

What is said here stays here; What is learned here leaves here.

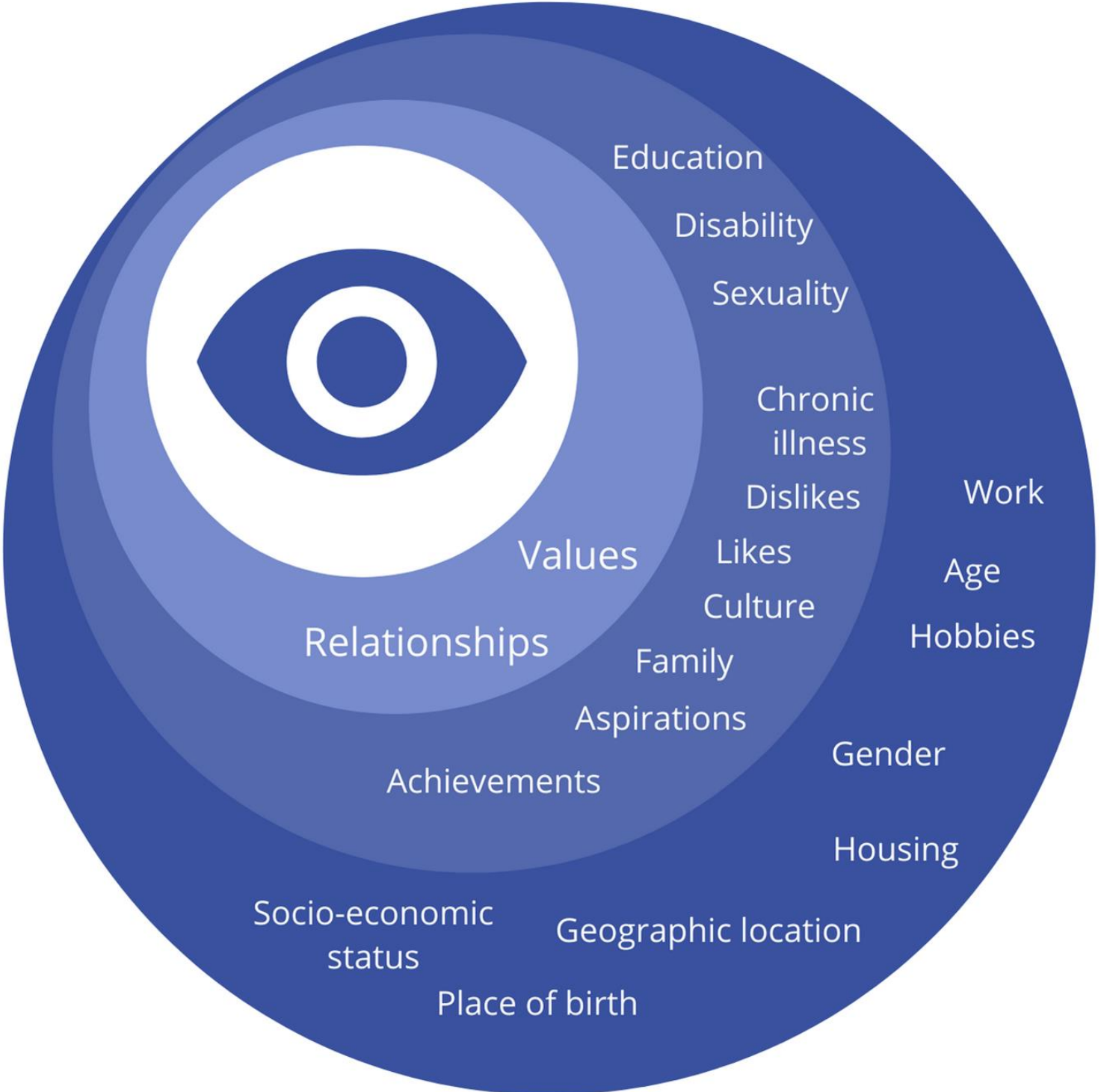
Laying the Foundation:

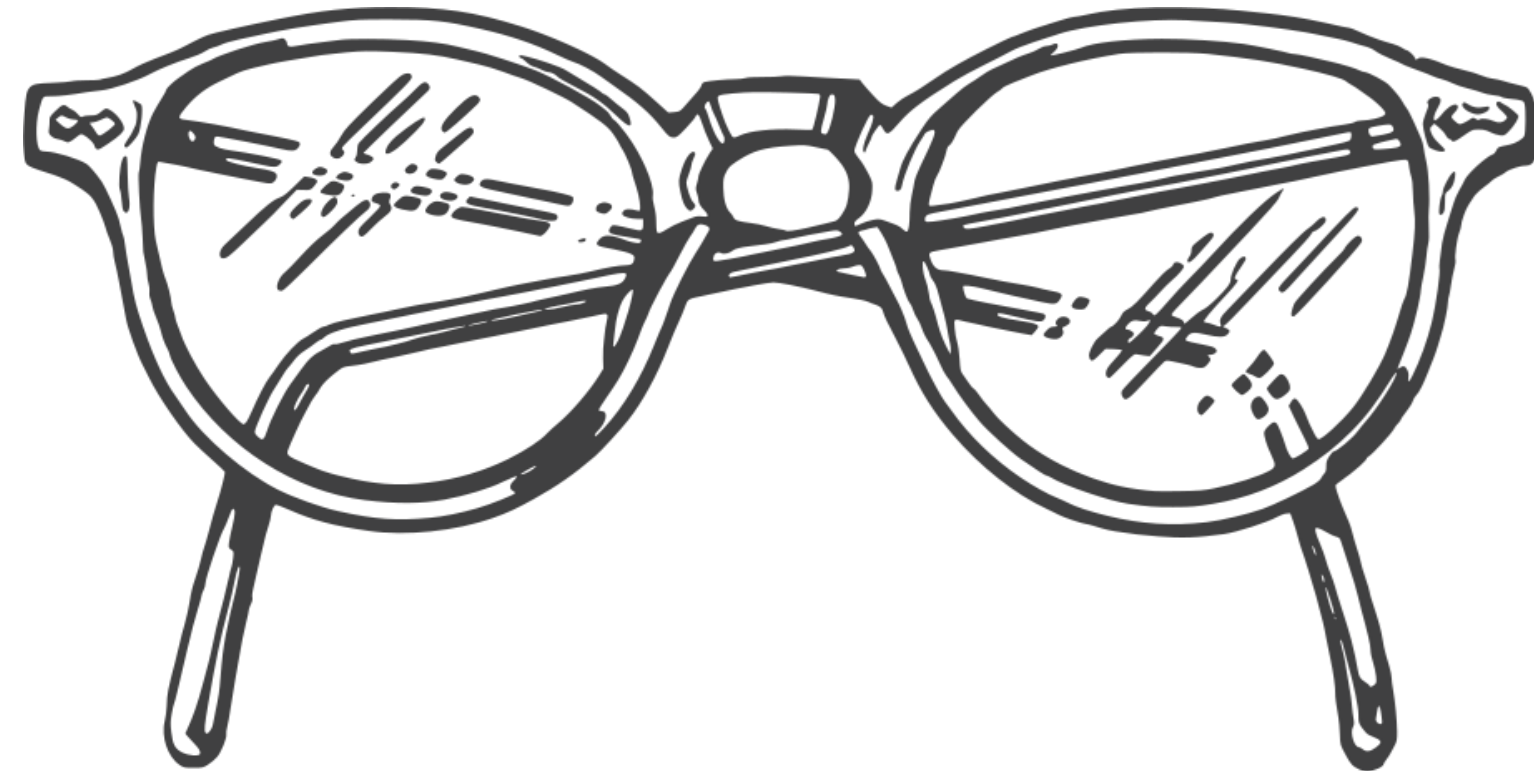
Frames of reference & Intersectionality

Your Frames of Reference



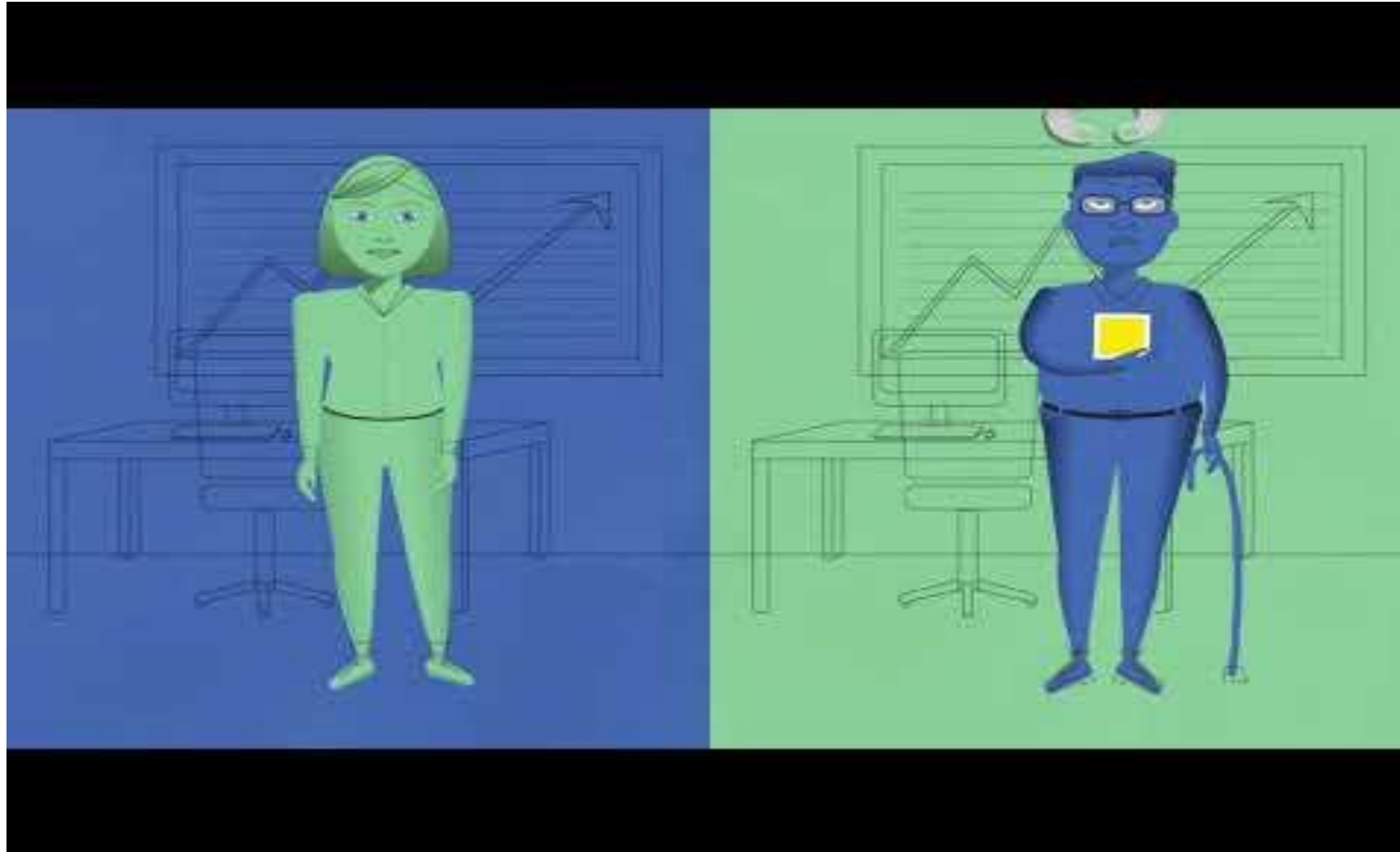
Your Lens



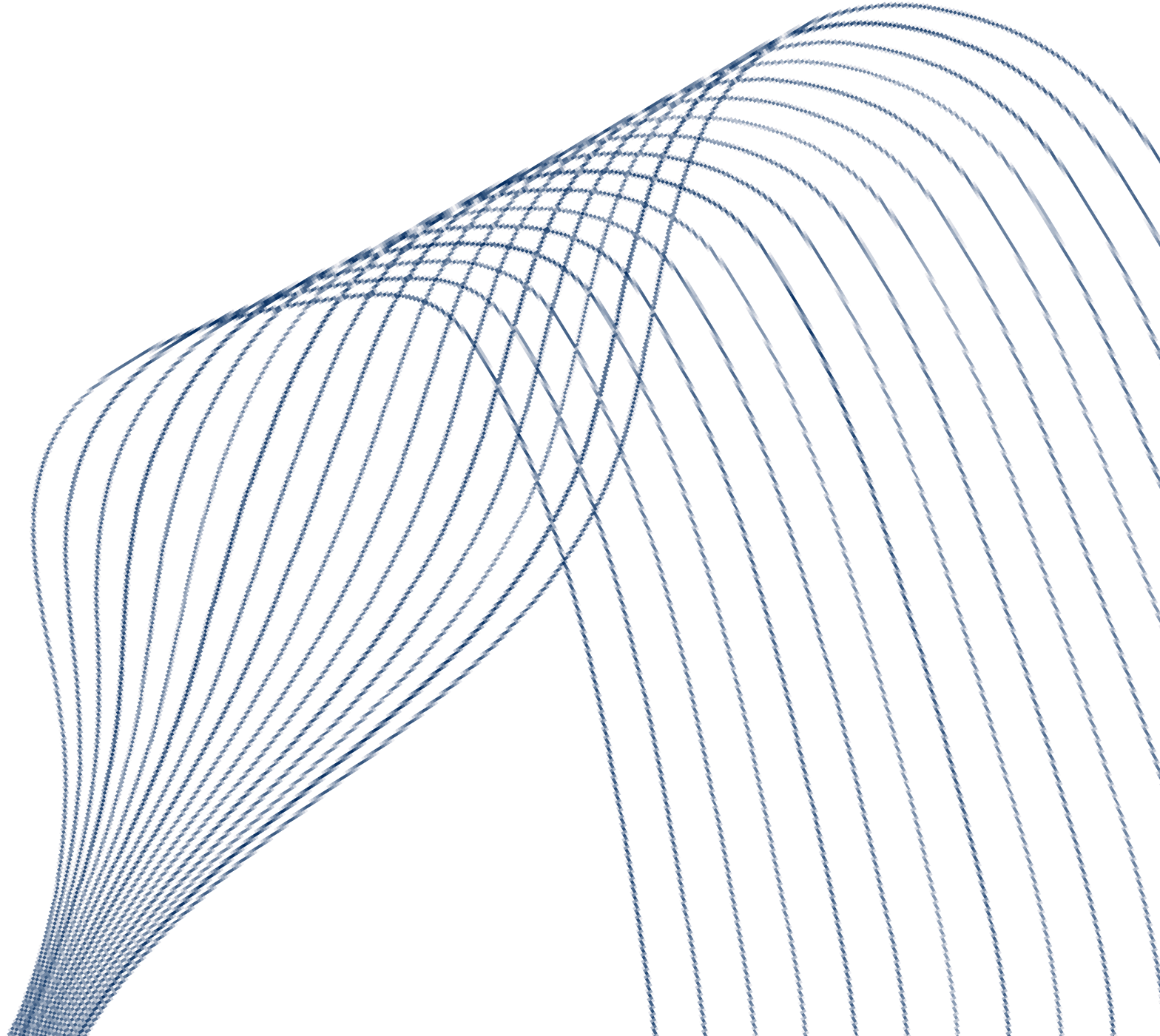
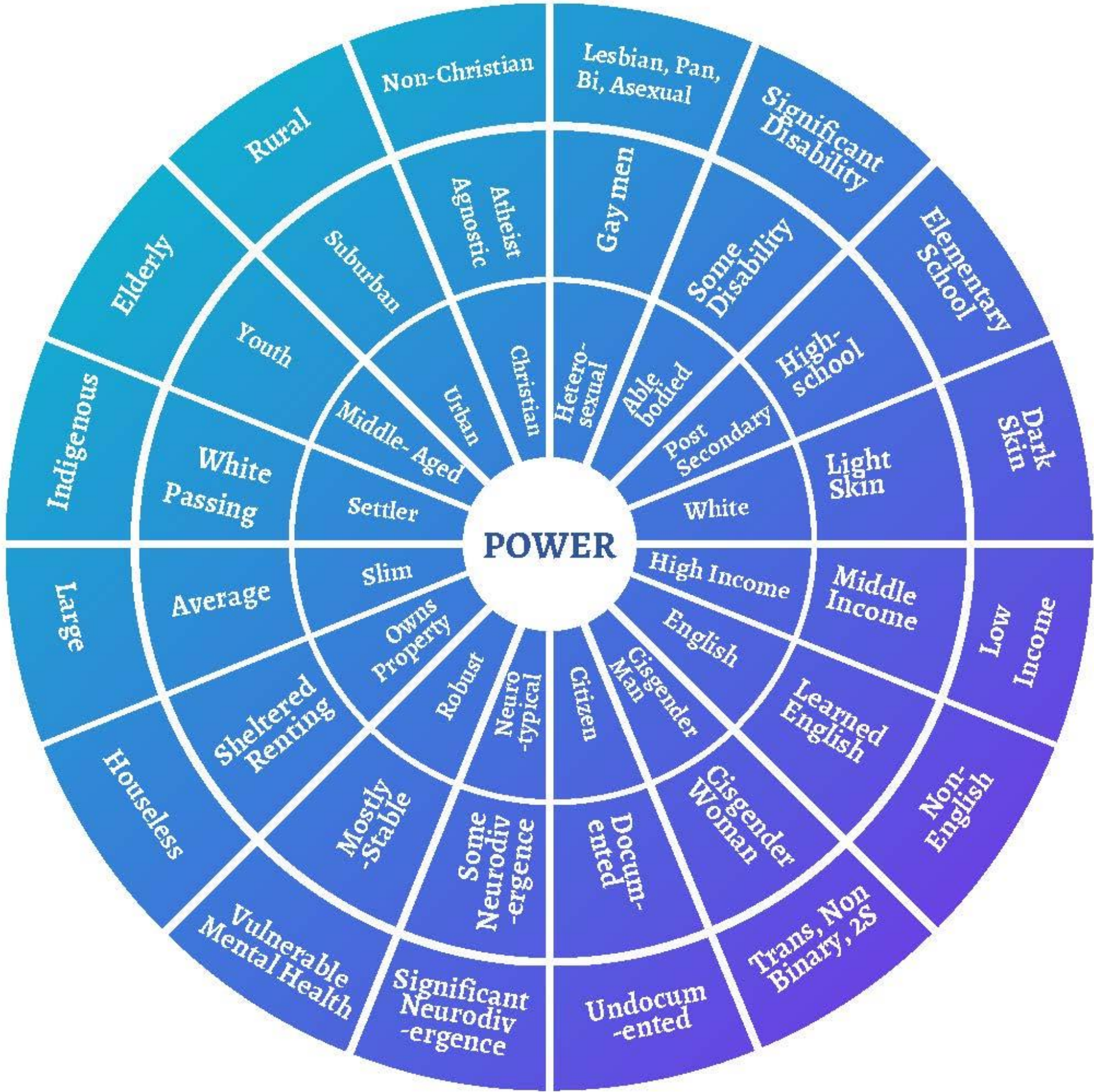


“We don’t see things as they are, we see them as we are” - Anonymous

WHAT IS INTERSECTIONALITY?



The Wheel of Power and Privilege

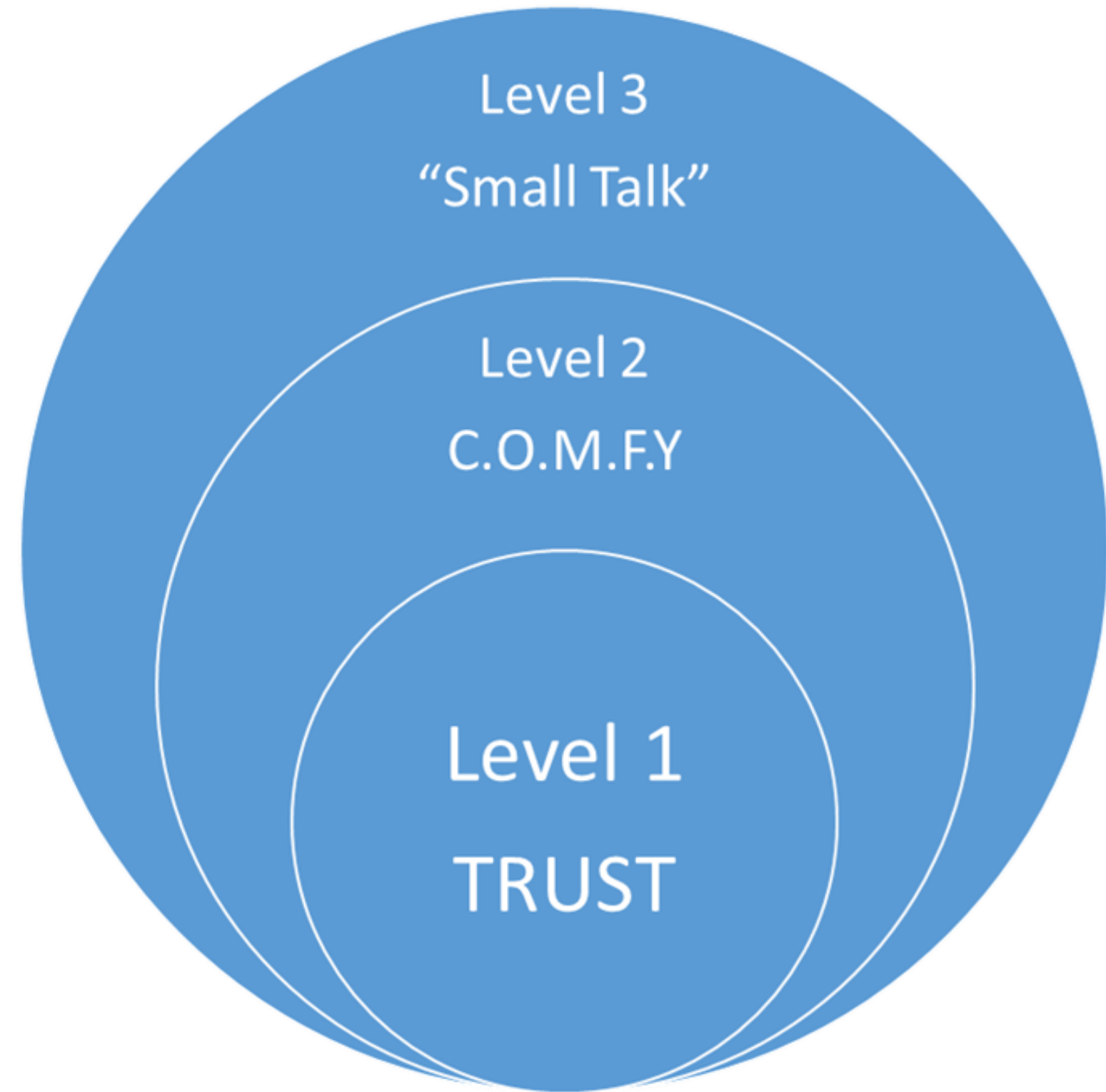


Privilege for sale

1. Using public restrooms and restrooms, change rooms etc. without being worried about accessibility, being misgendered, fear, or anxiety.
2. Being able to receive medical care, including emergency medical care, without worrying that any aspect of your identity (gender, sex, race, language, income etc.) affect the quality of care that you receive.
3. Seeing movies/reading scripts where you share identities with the characters.
4. Being able to buy clothes without hesitation or fear of being mocked, questioned, or made to feel uncomfortable.
5. Raising children without worrying about government intervention.
6. Feeling unthreatened and safe in your interactions with authority figures and police officers.
7. You can afford to live in a safe neighborhood of your choice.
8. Being able to travel without worrying about your safety.
9. Applying for a job/promotion without worrying your name, gender or other aspects of your identity will hold you back.
10. Being accepted by your neighbours, colleagues, and new friends.
11. Being able to sponsor your partner(s) for citizenship.
12. Being certain that you can physically navigate a new building, neighbourhood.

Unconscious Bias: what, why, when & how

TRUSTED 5



What is unconscious bias?

Unconscious Bias is a neurological term used to describe subconscious thoughts or feelings that influence judgment and perception.

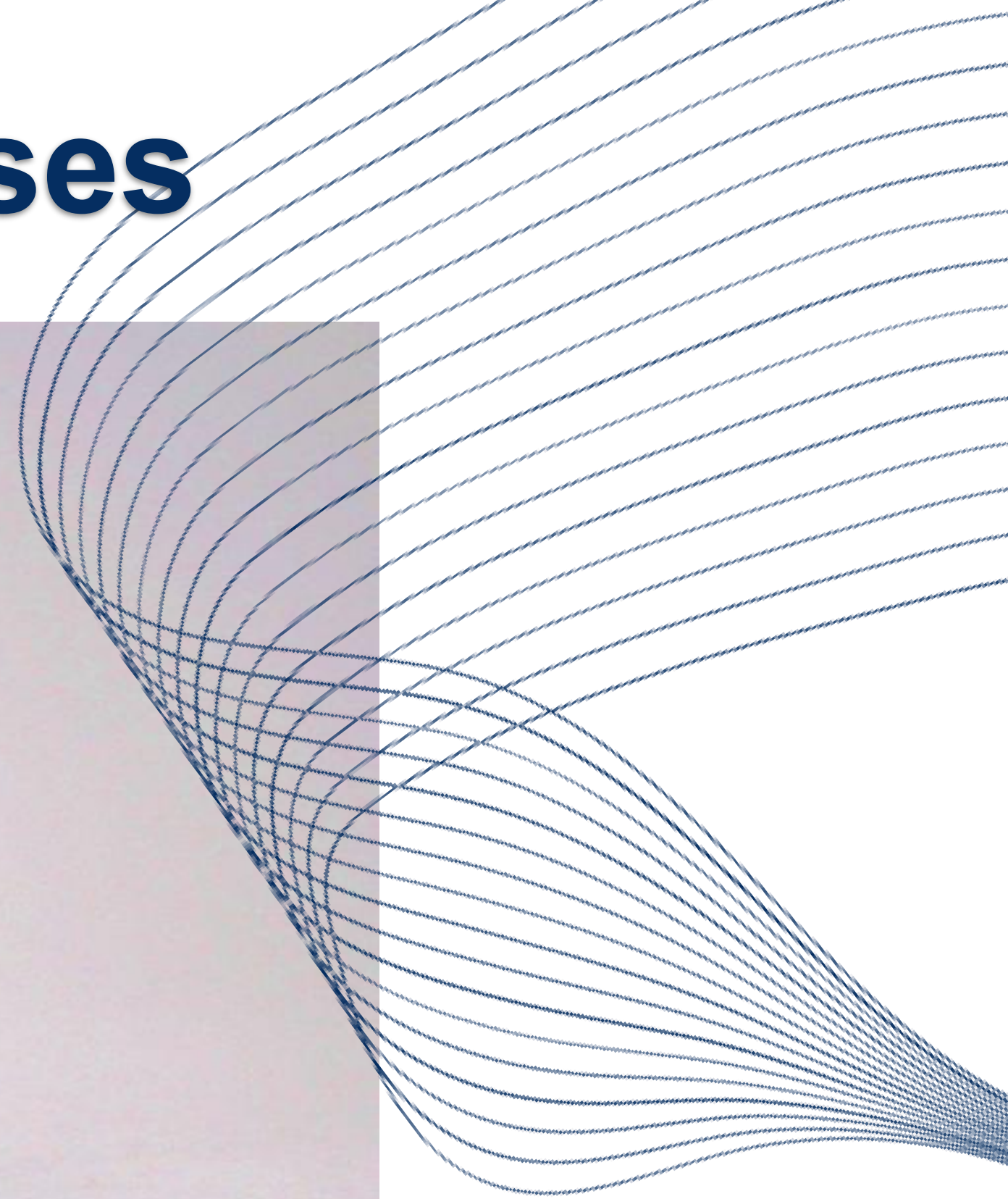
Researchers theorize that people are bombarded with **11 million** pieces of information in an instant and can only consciously process **40** pieces of information at a time.

Our brains rely on mental shortcuts to guide functional decision making.

What is unconscious bias?

Unconscious Bias are social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness. Everyone holds unconscious beliefs about various social and identity groups, and these biases stem from one's tendency to organize social worlds by categorizing.” – UCSF

Common Types of Biases



Affinity Bias

Often your bias can appear favorable towards people who have the same characteristics as you such as culture, religion, or race.

Age

Gender identity

Family history

Mobility

Culture

Cognitive Abilities

Relationships

Origin

Ability

Gender

Language

Hearing

Work Status

Living environment

Communication Style

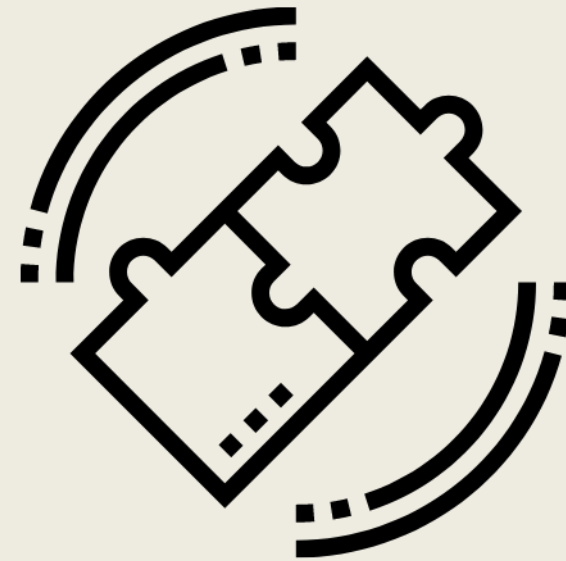
Attribution Bias

The tendency to explain a person's behaviour by referring to their character rather than any situational factor.



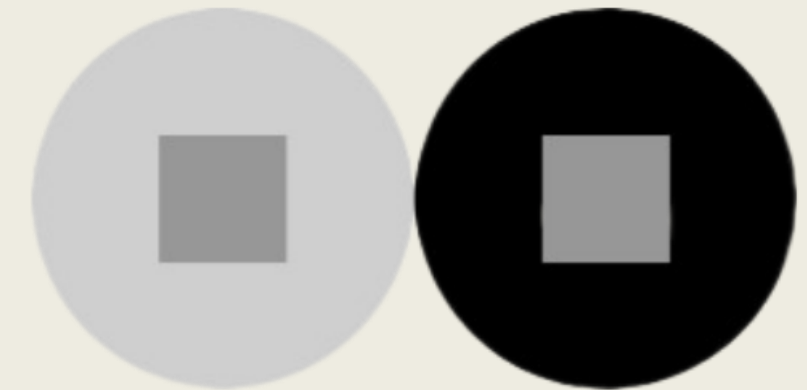
Confirmation Bias

The tendency to look for information or interpret the information available, in a way that confirms one's pre-existing beliefs or hypotheses.



Contrasting Effect

A cognitive bias that distorts our perception of something when we compare it to something else, by enhancing the differences between them.



Why do unconscious biases occur?

We ALL have unconscious bias as it is a part of our neurological processing.

However, bias is different depending on your background and life experiences that shape our preferences for or against something (socialization).

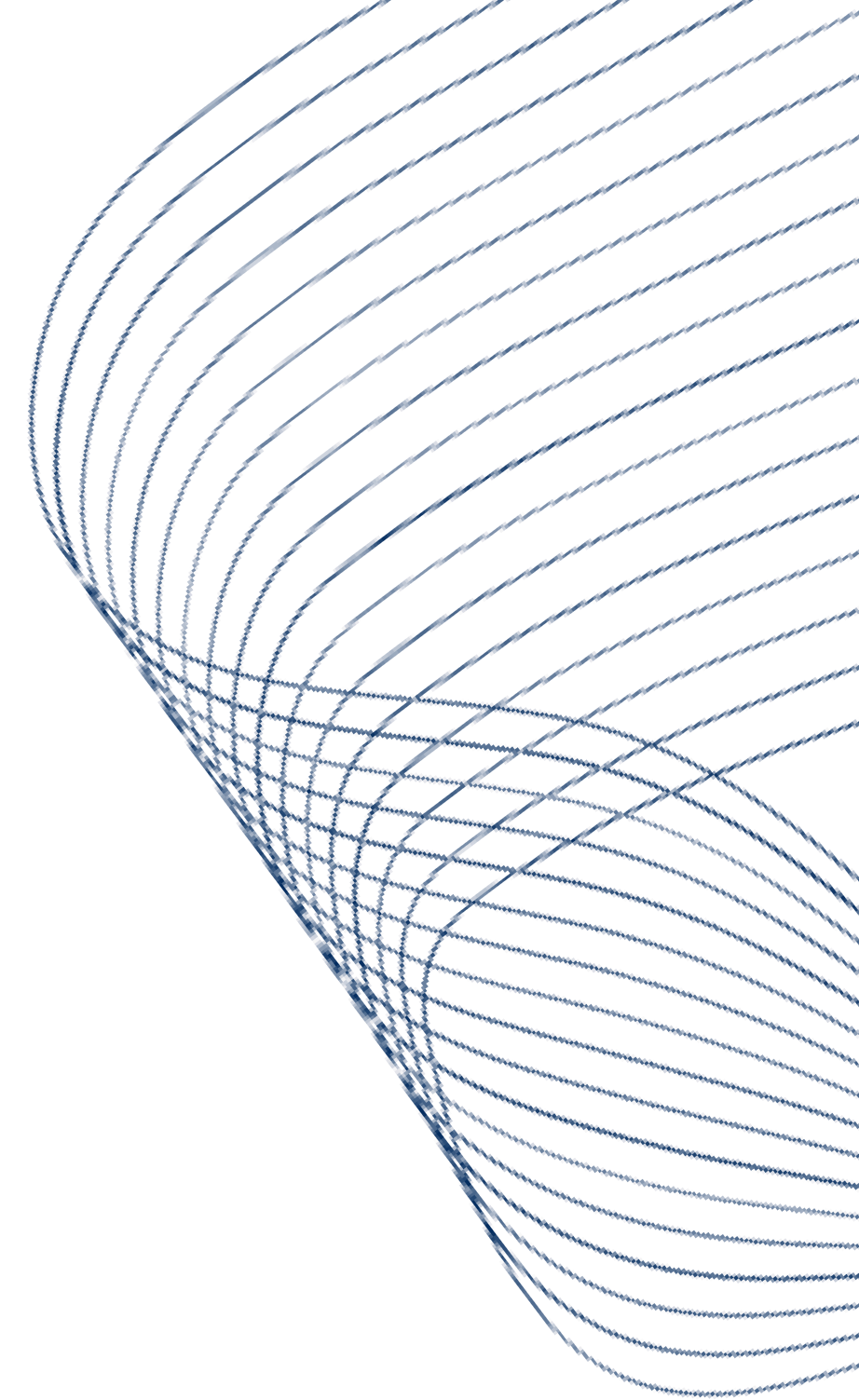
YOUR
Identities

+

YOUR
Life Experiences

=

YOUR
Bias

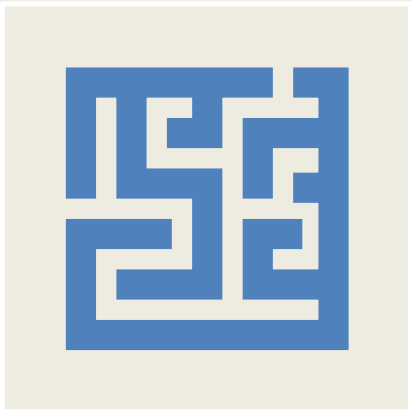


When do unconscious biases occur?

They are triggered when our brains make quick judgments about people, situations, and environments. They can create an automatic preference for or against something in a way that impacts your decisions and actions.

Unconscious bias is most prevalent when you are under pressure, a time crunch, or balancing multiple tasks.

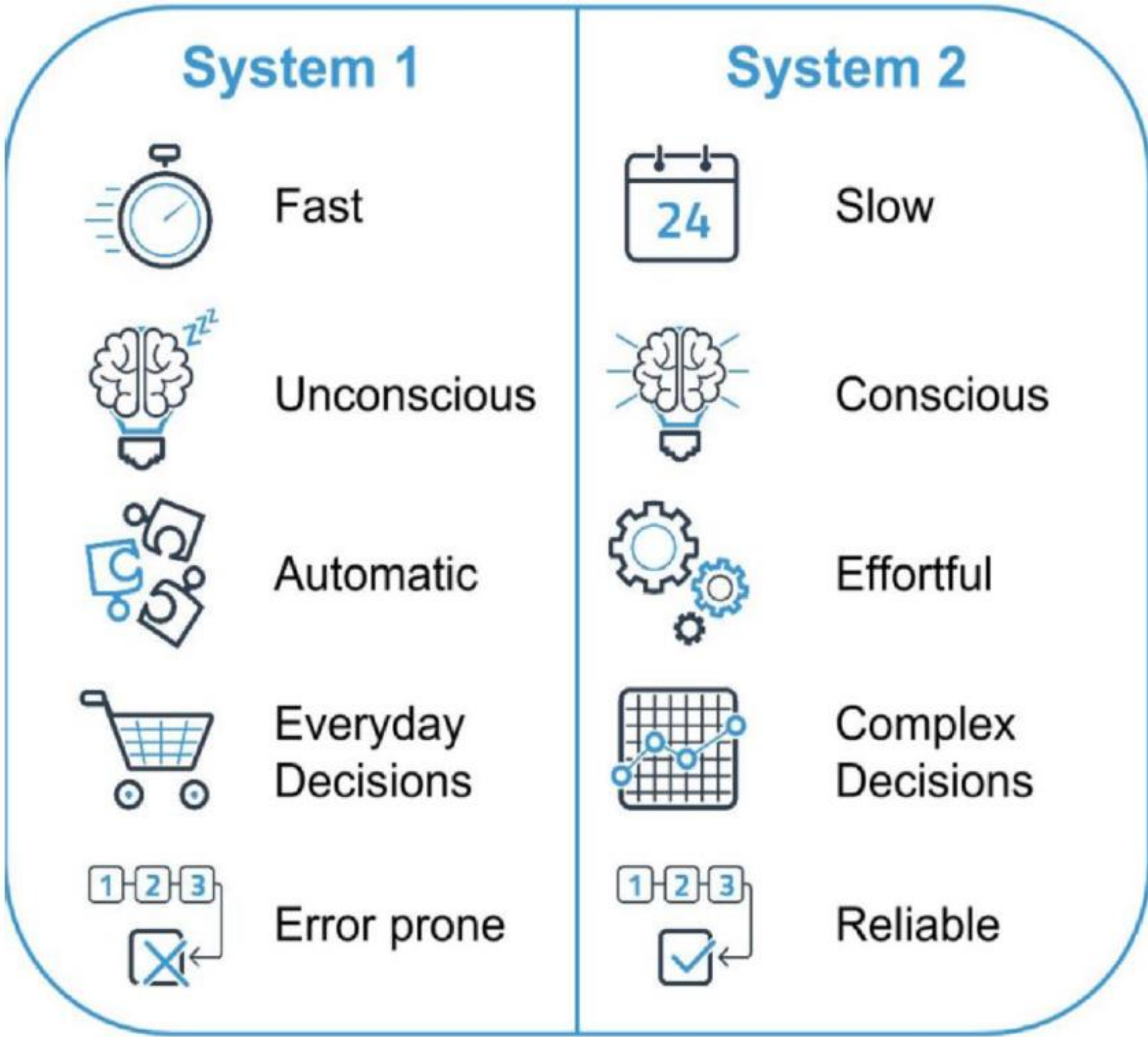
Unconscious Bias



Type of thinking that finds patterns based on limited information.



Social stereotypes about groups of people that we form unconsciously

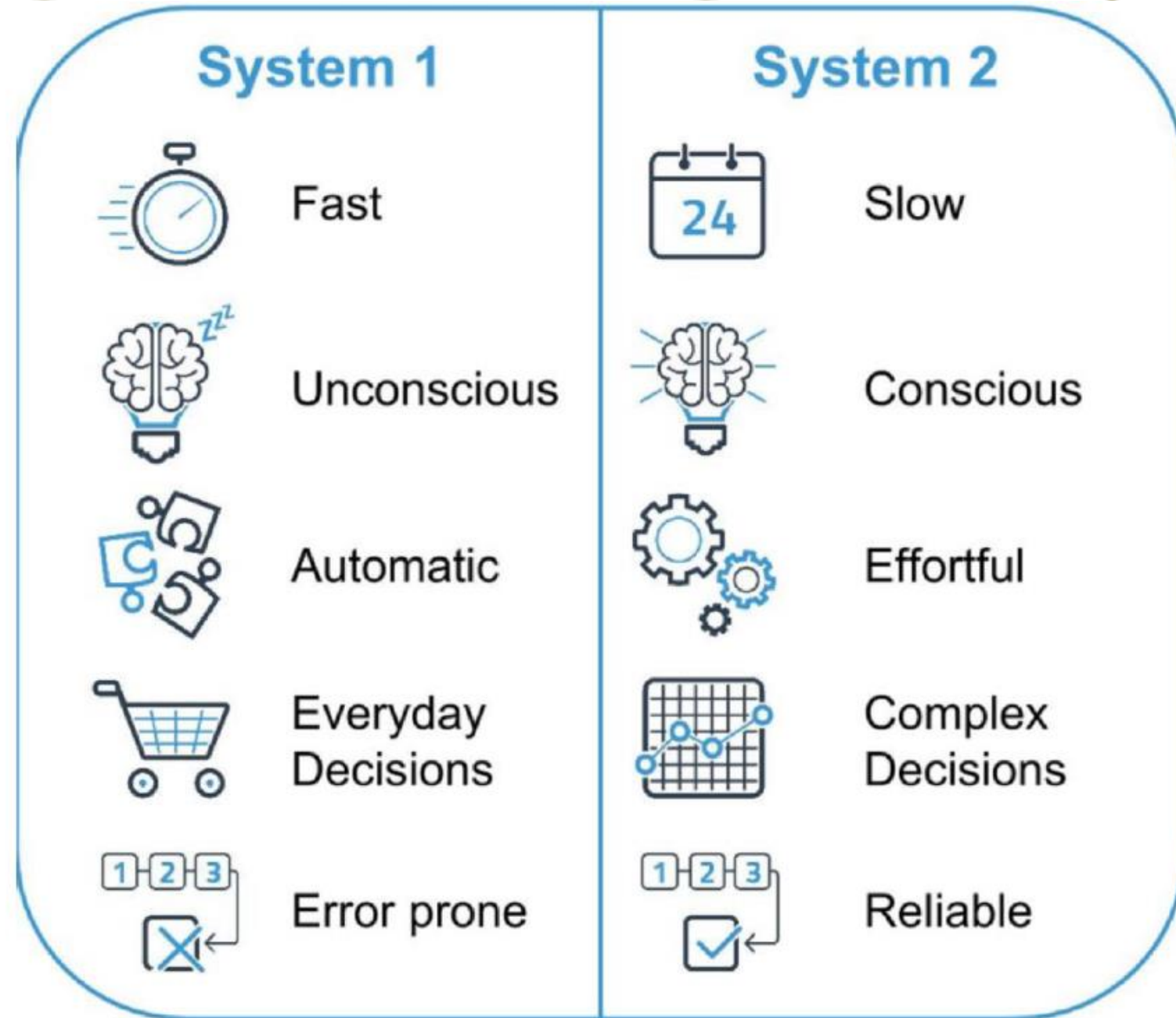


Example

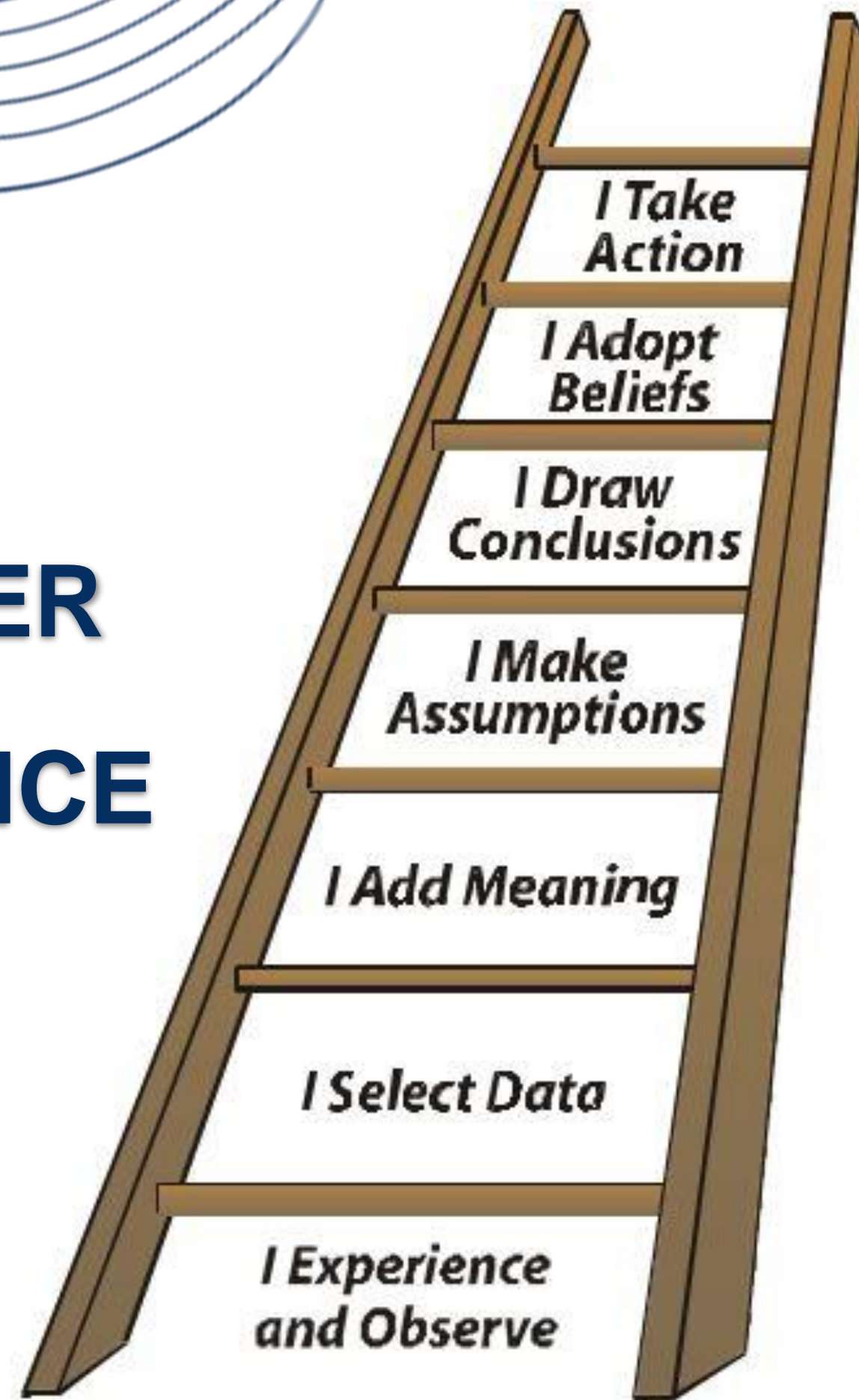
$$2 + 2 =$$

vs.

$$17 \times 24 =$$



THE LADDER OF INFERENCE



I act based on my beliefs as if they were proven facts. And I adjust new data to fit my beliefs

I adopt beliefs, based on my conclusions, as if everyone has the same conclusions and beliefs.

I draw conclusions, based on my assumptions, and based on what is best for me, and those I care for.

I make assumptions that my data and meaning are accurate, and represent reality.

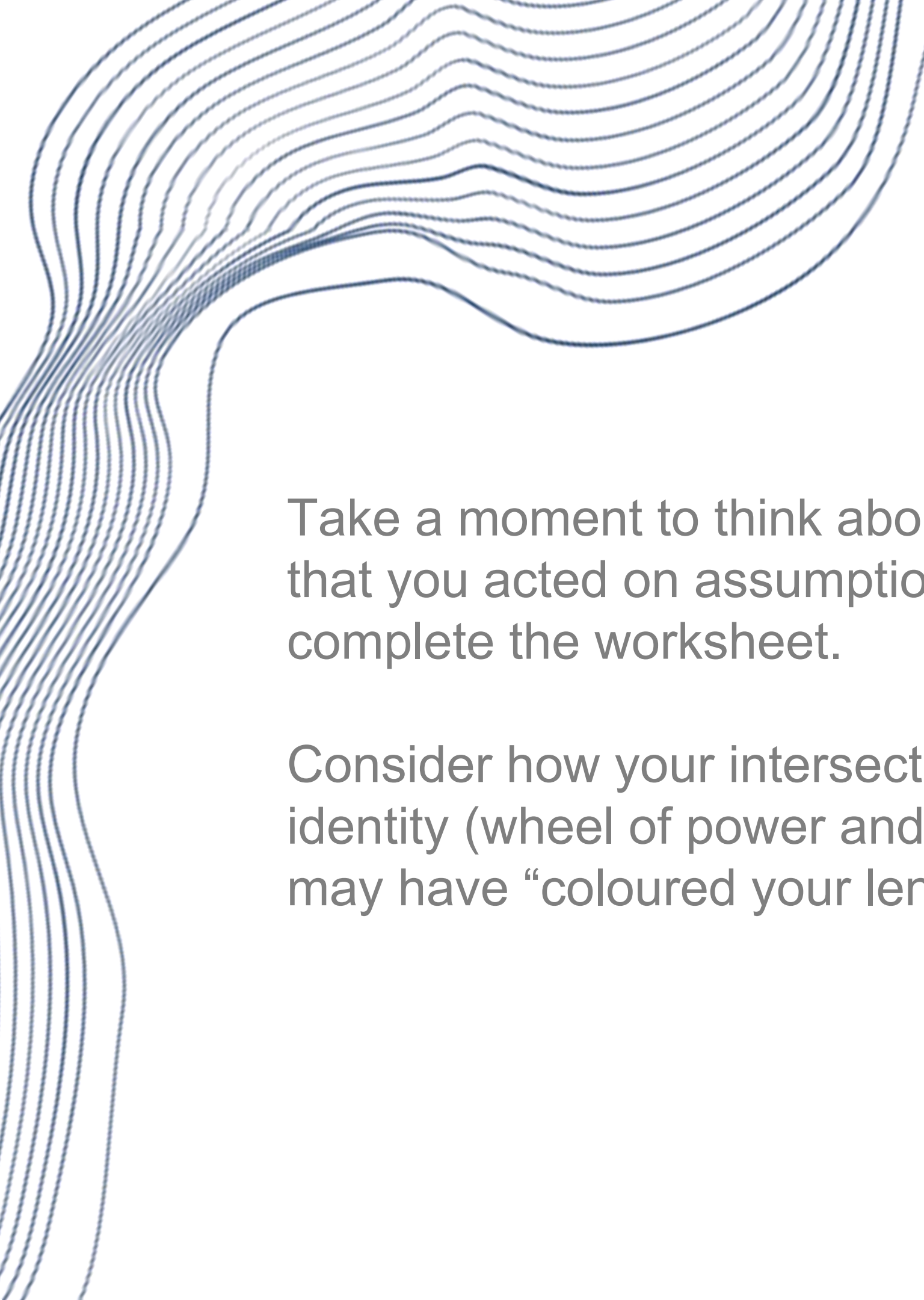
I add meaning, based on what I feel is reasonable, according to the data I selected.

I select data that I feel is relevant, and discard data that seems irrelevant.

I experience and observe data as a video camera captures data. I hear words, observe body language collect information.

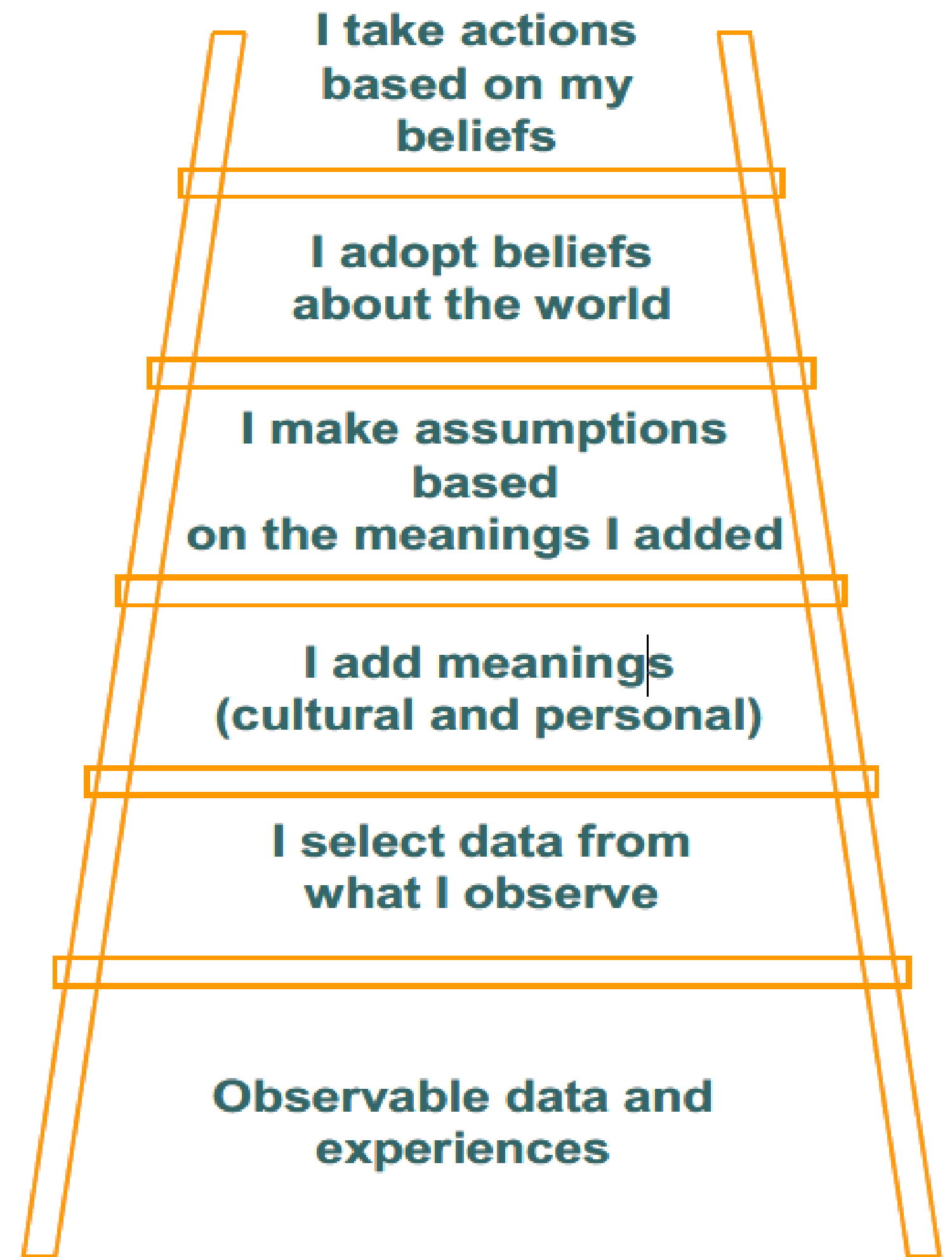
The Ladder of Inference in action





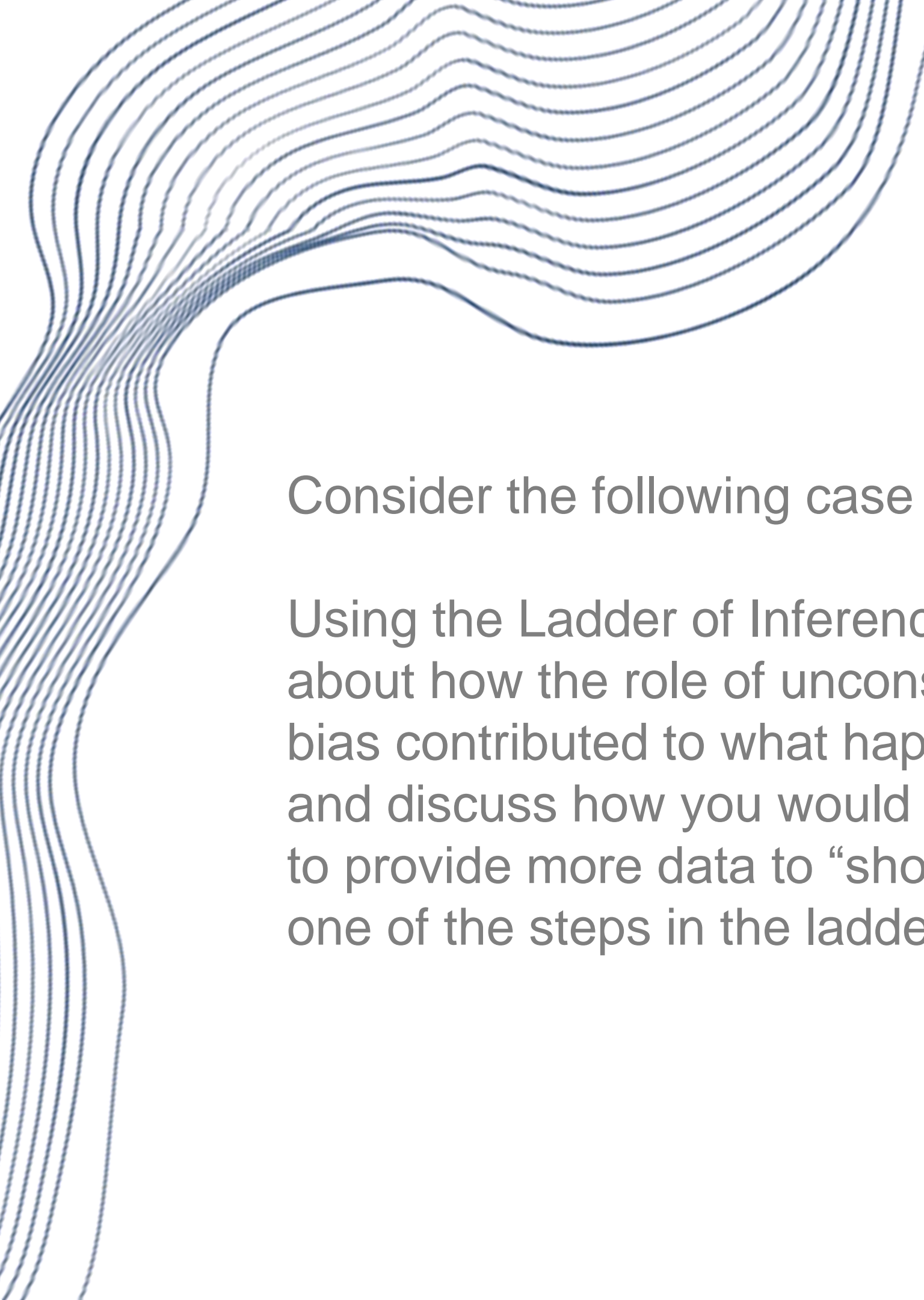
Take a moment to think about a time that you acted on assumptions and complete the worksheet.

Consider how your intersectional identity (wheel of power and privilege) may have “coloured your lens.”



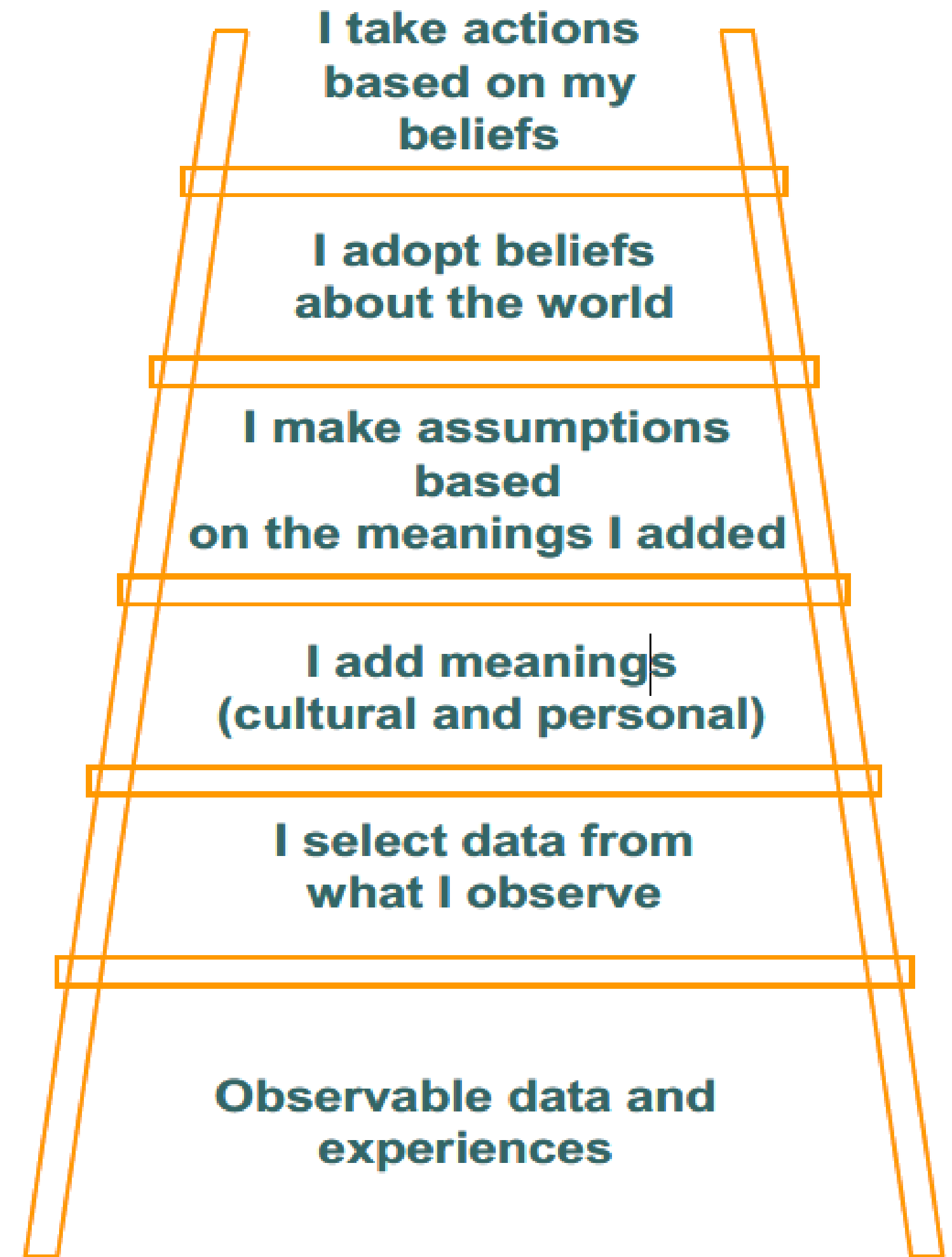
Discussion Question

How does
unconscious bias
show up at the
Improv Centre?



Consider the following case scenarios.

Using the Ladder of Inference think about how the role of unconscious bias contributed to what happened and discuss how you would intervene to provide more data to “short circuit” one of the steps in the ladder.



Case Scenario

For performers:

During a performance your ensemble is asked for scenes inspired by the word “gum,” and two non-Asian actors begin to fake Chinese accents – creating a world where two stereotypical Chinese characters are working in a gum assembly line.

You are cringing on the inside and by the silence of the audience (broken only by one nervous sounding giggle) you suspect you’re not alone in your reaction.

*This scenario has been adapted from one described by Stephanie Ellen Chan in her article [“Punching up or simply punching “not racist.” \(Medium, May 1, 2017\)](#)

For front of house and office staff:

You are washing her hands in the women’s washroom when you notice an audience member (non-staff person) enter the washroom. The person is dressed in a suit and tie and has what you consider a masculine hairstyle. Just then a colleague enters the washroom. Your colleague looks at the person takes a step back as if to check the sign on the washroom door then exclaims, “You’re in the wrong place! The men’s room is down the hall.” The audience member looks upset and makes eye contact with you.



Strategies to mitigate Unconscious Bias

Mitigating Unconscious Bias

as an individual

1. Understand what unconscious bias is, the various forms it takes, where it shows up, and how it uniquely affects you.
2. Find opportunities for thoughtful exchange on DEI and bias.
3. Be methodical in decision making, consider your frame of reference and lens and use it to plan out criteria for making decisions.
4. Reflect on your reactions, consider your frame of reference and lens and use it to better understand hidden biases so you can change behaviour if necessary.
5. If you are portraying characters with identities you do not share on stage, are you relying on stereotypes?

Mitigating Unconscious Bias

as an organization

1. Establish a collective understanding of unconscious bias and how it shows up differently for people depending on their frames of references.

2. Create policies and process that recognize and accommodate the impacts of unconscious bias, in decision-making, interviewing/auditioning, hiring/casting, mentoring, promotions, and other operations.

3. Commit to ongoing educational opportunities to unearth and analyze your biases and how it affects your work.

4. Consider who is being represented on stage and whose stories are being told (and not told).

Mitigating Strategies

for hiring process

1. **Anonymizing** - if this isn't already in place this practice can potentially prevent biases based on gender and ethnicity.

2. In the first round, **don't compare** applications to the one that preceded it. Rather try to assess based on guidelines and rubrics.

3. During later rounds, **try chunking** - only look at sections at a time when comparing responses to application questions.

4. Try **randomizing**- so applications are looked at in a different order each time when chunking.

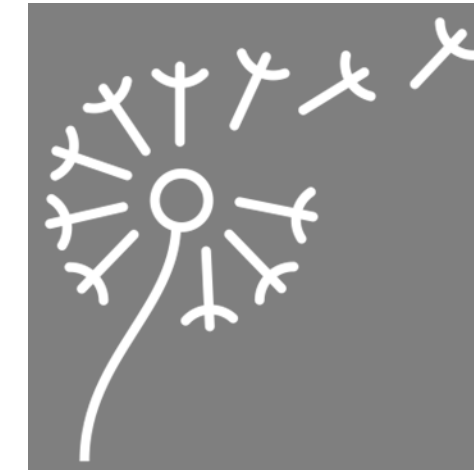
Check Out



One thought, you
are leaving with



One feeling, you
are connected to



One action you
commit to taking

END

