

three bias-based beliefs so they are able to identify them. Furthermore, in Chapter 5, I provide activities to reduce these beliefs and minimize their malicious nature so they stop being a natural or normalized frame of the ostensive and performative components of school practice.

## **BIAS-BASED BELIEFS IN PEDAGOGY AND SCHOOL PRACTICE: HOW DOES IT SHOW UP IN SCHOOLS?**

Substantive research highlights the relevance of bias, both implicit and explicit as operating in school settings. There are three types of bias-based beliefs relevant for leaders to understand: (1) colorblindness; (2) deficit thinking; and (3) poverty disciplining. We know from prior research that teacher ideologies and beliefs about the student population they serve can have a positive or negative effect on the student outcomes via the actions and behaviors teachers choose to employ in the classroom (e.g., Madon, Jussim, & Eccles, 1997; Madon et al., 1998; Madon et al., 2001; Proctor, 1984). Furthermore, in current research, bias-based beliefs in disproportionate school districts demonstrate colorblindness, racial discomfort, and deficit thinking as operating against teacher self-efficacy (Fergus, 2016). In other words, these bias-based beliefs are readily present when there is a lessened degree of teaching self-efficacy.

These beliefs, as I see them operating within the context of school policies and practices, are not mutually exclusive; they more often than not operate simultaneously. In fact, McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) claim that these beliefs are not only present in schools, but that leaders also struggle not knowing how to address them. The intention of this chapter is to equip school leaders with a complex understanding of these bias-based beliefs before moving forward onto how to structure staff and professional development in order for practitioners to replace those biases with equity principles.

### **COLORBLINDNESS BELIEF**

I was working with a superintendent with whom I developed a great friendship. Let's call her Sally. During a fall opening conference day, I provided a keynote on different forms of bias. Specifically, I talked about colorblindness as a form of bias in which racial/ethnic minority groups that experience being racially identified by their skin color perceive colorblindness as an oversight of their social reality. On the other hand, Whites may perceive colorblindness as the act of not judging individuals based on skin color or other external markers. However, as I stated to the group, "Not seeing that I am a Black Latino male means that you are omitting the basis for some of my lived experiences." After the presentation, Sally approached me about her own confusion about colorblindness, "Eddie, I don't see

your color and I don't treat you that way." And I responded candidly by saying, "If you are not seeing my color, that means you are treating me like yourself, which means that at some point I will do or say something that does not fit the image of the White woman you were treating me like." A colorblindness bias framework dangerously sustains a White cultural frame as the mode of looking at everything, such as when a White and Black student get into an argument in the hallway, or reprimanding Mexican American students for talking Spanish in the hallway, or continuously identifying Black students for "nice or matching clothes" they wear and not sufficiently for their good academic performance. In those examples, a White cultural frame omits the presence of different social realities due to identities that are different from a White social identity.

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2003) describes colorblindness as the new form of racial ideology that emerged after the civil rights era. Bonilla-Silva highlights the following as features of a colorblindness ideology: (1) the best form of removing racism is to omit race, gender, and other social identities as a descriptor; (2) it involves treating individuals as individuals and not considering their social identities; and (3) it focuses on discussing and framing the commonalities between individuals. Though viewing individuals' commonality is a desired state of humanity, colorblindness has also led to a pattern of rationalizing racial inequality as due to "market dynamics, naturally occurring phenomena, and Blacks' imputed cultural limitations" (p. 92). This ideology is used to make assertions such as, "Latinos' high poverty rate [due] to a relaxed work ethic, or residential segregation as due to natural tendencies among groups" (p. 92). A colorblindness belief views the presence of residential segregation in urban and suburban communities in connection to individual's home affordability and are blind to the subtle practices and processes of realtors limiting home or apartment views (Ondrich, 2003), or bank practices of subjectively rendering higher interest rates (Fishbein & Bunce, 2001) to low-income and racial/ethnic and linguistic minority groups. Colorblindness belief appears in explanations for differential outcomes in employment practices, even though numerous studies document patterns such as differential response to individuals based on race association to a name (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004), or Black applicants with no criminal record being offered low-wage jobs at lower rates than White applicants with a criminal record (Pager, Western, & Bonikowski, 2009).

A current example of colorblindness is the manner in which various charter schools and charter advocacy groups justify their arguments for school choice. Specifically, charter schools are framed as the optimal response to educational policies limiting pedagogical innovation. However, the charter school movement does not acknowledge that this absence of innovation stems from historical inequalities in the education of marginalized populations. In this case, failing to acknowledge such inequalities demonstrates a colorblind frame. Thus, a colorblindness belief prevents an individual from understanding how the historical, political, economic, and

social translations of marginalized social identities into everyday practices is limiting access and opportunity, and thus create various reactions to limiting conditions (e.g., despair, anger, frustration, fear). It is these frames, as Bonilla-Silva describes, that operate as cul-de-sacs to interpret and rationalize the world; however, these frames misinterpret the world and make blind dominance and power in not having to ever experience or imagine marginalization.

Robin DiAngelo (2010, 2011) introduces two concepts critically important in supporting the continuation of colorblindness, making it a seductive intellectual and emotional and mental schema: (1) desire for individualism and (2) fragility of Whites in conversations beyond individualism. DiAngelo argues that Whites are enveloped by the experience and notion of being an individual; ways of seeing and traversing the world rests on an internal truth, "I am an individual. I make my own reality. I make my own path." However, this individualistic notion is erroneous according to the social science research on White-Black inequalities, which are primarily considered to be a result of social policies favoring Whites (Feagin, 2000). DiAngelo (2010) describes the manner in which individualism obscures experiences of marginalization:

The Discourse of Individualism does more than posit that opportunity is equal and people arrive at their achievements through hard work alone, thus positioning dominant group members in a favorable light; it simultaneously obscures structural barriers and positions members of social groups who have achieved less in an unfavorable light. (pp. 4-5)

This discourse of individualism plays a prominent role in why practitioners will continuously focus on naming the racist act of the individual versus the systemic textures of racism based on 200 years of racialization. This "individualism" strategy for all intent removes racism as a systemic problem and assists in promoting the individual and colorblind perspective as a rational mental schema (see "Sample Colorblindness Statements"). In other words, as long as I understand racism as an individual act and not a system predicated on favoring certain characteristics and behaviors, I can feel absolved of any guilt and perceive the capacity of *not* seeing color as a more elevated social perspective.

DiAngelo's second concept, White fragility, speaks to the idea that when Whites encounter a slight level of racial stress due to their limited experience with racialized dialogue, they begin having emotional reactions like anger, guilt, blame, etc. Furthermore, DiAngelo (2011) argues that White fragility appears for several reasons: (1) Whites exist in segregated lives in which there are minimal feelings of loss when there are no

### Sample Colorblindness Statements

I try to ignore skin color in order to view minority students as individuals.

Sometimes I wonder why we can't see each other as individuals instead of race always being an issue.

I try not to notice a child's race or skin color in the classroom setting.

Latino students who speak English should refrain from speaking Spanish at school so they don't alienate other students or teachers.

racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse populations surrounding them; thus they have limited experiences to draw from to understand racism; (2) Whites' experiences of individualism obscure their perspectives to be understood as objective; and (3) Whites' perspective of themselves as outside of culture or "with no culture" encourages the idea of this experience as universal. Over time, colorblindness becomes treated and discussed as a more culturally evolved concept. It can be found among school practitioners who are continuously advocating, "Why can't we stop looking at each other based on color?" or "My students need to see their similarities, and not focus on differences." Thus, many teachers and administrators strive to build a colorblindness perspective among their students because they have a well-intentioned belief that, for example, if Black students successfully absorb the colorblindness perspective, this will be a cultural advancement for them, or if Spanish-speaking Latinos successfully adopt English language skills and remove Spanish language, it will be a cultural advancement for them.

What follows are various vignettes in which a colorblindness belief operated as a primer. The purpose of these vignettes is to provide an opportunity to practice understanding how the dimensions of a colorblindness belief appear in school settings. The incidents are based on actual events.

### **Vignette 1a: "I'm a good White person."**

During a staff development observation, practitioners were sitting in circle discussing the latest book study, *Multiplication Is for White People* by Lisa Delpit, a book that challenges practitioners to consider the nuances that emerge in the lived experiences of Black students and what that means for educational practice. As the practitioners were sharing their thoughts, a White female elementary teacher shared the following:

One of my African American students told me that her parents said that "White people can't be trusted, they discriminate against us." I told the student, "I care about you and that shouldn't apply to me; we need to like each other." It's things like that why we can't change parents.

### **How Is This Colorblindness Belief?**

This teacher's understanding and response demonstrates several conditions prevalent in our school integration environments—(1) a desire to live colorblind and build that capacity among student, and (2) a preoccupation with not feeling or being guilty or at fault. School practitioners find themselves spewing the mantra of colorblindness to their students all the time: "It's not polite to describe each other by race"; "See each other's commonalities, not your race." The difficulty is that acknowledging an individual's social identities does not necessarily reduce them solely to that identity; in fact, it provides an opportunity to explore how social identities are historically, socially, economically, and politically constructed.

### **Vignette 2a: "I want answers in English only."**

During a kindergarten field trip to the local zoo, the students along with the teacher were sitting in a training classroom with a zoo staff member. The White teacher asked the students to provide another word besides *big* to describe the animal the zoo staff member was holding. These 5- and 6-year-olds, which represented various ethnic groups, started using various foreign words, such as *grande* (Spanish), *grand* (French), and *groß* (German). The teacher immediately replied, "No, no. English only. I want your answers in English."

#### ***How Is This Colorblindness Belief?***

The students in this example were actually demonstrating the beauty of cultural and linguistic diversity—the cultural variation in seeing the same thing. The practitioner in this situation could not see the asset in the students' cognitive capacities, but rather was blind to their diversity and centered the instruction around a "no-culture" approach.

### **Vignette 3a: "I don't see anything wrong with the Black students playing the role of slaves."**

During a seventh-grade lesson on the Middle Passage, the slavery trade between west Africa and the Americas when Africans were boarded under inhumane conditions on overcrowded ships, a teacher wanted to help students understand the deplorable conditions experienced by Africans. The White teacher asked the only two Black female students in the class to bind their hands and feet and crawl under the desks in order to simulate the Middle Passage.

#### ***How Is This Colorblindness Belief?***

In this example, the practitioner is blind to what it means to be the only Black students in a classroom and school, reducing students' Blackness to a performance, and in this curricular unit, forcing the Black students to perform a stereotypical notion of Blackness.

### **Vignette 4a: "I didn't mean anything by it . . . why didn't she say anything to me?"**

This story was experienced by the author: Over the course of my daughter's third-grade school year, her hair became a point of concern. My daughter has really curly and big hair; her mother is a White Puerto Rican and I am a Black Panamanian. She started saying to us, "I want to straighten my hair so that nobody touches it," or "I hate my hair, I want it to be like everyone else's." We often talked about her wonderful hair. One day, she comes home and talks about not liking that sometimes her third-grade teacher would stand behind her while teaching a lesson and play with her hair! As concerned parents, we went and talked to the teacher about it, and we framed it that we want our daughter to feel culturally safe in the classroom. The teacher replied, "I didn't

mean anything by it . . . why didn't she say anything to me?" And we replied that there is a power dynamic that will prevent kids from letting a teacher know that something he or she is doing is making them feel uncomfortable.

### ***How Is This Colorblindness Belief?***

This practitioner is allowing her individual fascination with curly hair drive her perception of why it is okay to touch someone else's hair. Her absence of experience in knowing what it is like to be part of social identity group in which hair is treated like an exotic artifact results in colorblind actions.

### **Vignette 5a: "But our school rules state that they have to say Mr. or Ms. when addressing a teacher. What's wrong with that?"**

During a Spring semester working with a high school group on reducing the disparity in behavioral referrals and suspensions experienced among the Black and Latino students, a new school rule was instituted in which students needed to address all school staff as Mr. or Ms. After a quarter of implementing, the high school group noticed that Latino students were receiving an increased number of behavioral referrals for not following the new school rule. One committee member stated that the students are saying Maestra or Maestro (which is a formal way of addressing a teacher in various Latin American schools). However, the team struggled with whether they should allow them to say it in Spanish when the school rule states it must be Mr. or Ms.

### ***How Is This Colorblindness Bias?***

In this example, the practitioners are unable to understand how their rules reflect a colorblind perspective—that is, they did not take into consideration the 40% of Spanish-speaking Latino student population. Every policy and practice is developed from the premise of a universalized experience; the question for these practitioners and others is whether they are willing to redevelop those policies and practices once they are made aware of the colorblindness approach present, as well as their disproportionate outcomes.

### Colorblindness Reflection Activity

The following reflection activity is intended to provide leaders an opportunity to practice the understanding of this belief. This practice involves being able to identify the types of social identities made invisible in each vignette and brainstorm the ways in which to address the issue in the moment or over time. Sometimes, the difficulty with addressing bias-based beliefs is “not knowing what to say”; this reflection activity helps to find an appropriate answer.

	What identities were made socially blind in this example?	Brainstorm strategies for addressing this situation.
Vignette 1a		
Vignette 2a		
Vignette 3a		
Vignette 4a		
Vignette 5a		

## DEFICIT-THINKING BELIEF

Richard Valencia (1997) defines deficit thinking as an ideology used within the field of education and in schools to explain academic performance as a result of deficiencies within an individual and group. A deficit ideology discounts the presence of systemic inequalities as the result of race-based processes, practices, and policies. Most importantly, a deficit ideology blames the group for the conditions they find themselves experiencing; as Valencia states, deficit thinking is “a type of cognition that is a relatively simple and efficient form of attributing the ‘cause’ of human behavior.” According to Valencia, what supports this deficit thinking are three paradigms of thought: (1) genetic pathology model, (2) a culture of poverty model, and (3) a marginalization of low-income and students of color model. The first two models are of particular interest for describing the genesis and process of deficit thinking.

A genetic pathology model, popularized during the early 20th century, argued the “scientific” marking of hereditary or genetic traits (e.g., cranial size) was associated with “superior” genetic traits. The resulting theory was that individuals of European descent with better genetic traits were intellectually superior to individuals from other continents. The “science” of genetic pathology spurred the development of laws prohibiting interracial marriage in states such as California, Oklahoma, Maryland, and Louisiana, until these mandates became unconstitutional in 1967 (see *Loving v. Virginia*), as well as influenced the development of national legislative actions, such as the Immigration Act of 1924, which stipulated the restriction of individuals from specific countries (i.e., Southern and Eastern Europe). Although there is sufficient evidence to refute such genetic arguments, social remnants that support the idea of genetic differences between racial groups continue to surface (for example, cultural projects such as the PBS series “Finding Your Roots” and “African American Lives,” which use forms of genetic testing to fuel the notion that race is biological and less about social construction).

Culture of poverty model, also known as cultural deficiency, refers to an explanation of poverty that argues the cultural attributes or practices often associated with historically disenfranchised racial/ethnic groups (specifically, Blacks and Latinos) have prevented them from assimilating and attaining social mobility within U.S. society. Examples of cultural deficiencies include limited attitudes and outlooks of the future, failure to internalize work value ethics, instant gratification behavior, lack of parent involvement in schools, low intellectual abilities, emphasis on masculinity and honor, and an aversion to honest work (see “Sample Deficit-Thinking Statements”). Other so-called deficiencies may include early initiation to sex

### Sample Deficit-Thinking Statements

Students of color from disadvantaged homes just seem to show a lack of initiative.

Disadvantaged students generally do not have the abilities necessary to succeed in the classroom.

It is important that students of color assimilate so that they can succeed in mainstream American culture.

The values and beliefs shared by those in disadvantaged neighborhoods tend to go against school values and beliefs about what makes up a good education.



among children, female-headed households, fatalistic attitude toward life, and limited interest in education (Eitzen & Baca-Zinn, 1994). This notion seeks to establish a causal link between cultural attributes and socioeconomic mobility.

The combination of these two concepts—genetic pathology and culture of poverty—provides the foundation for deficit-thinking bias. In other words, thinking of racial/ethnic minority groups as genetically inferior and culturally deficient supports deficit ideas of groups. Consider, for example, the deficit-thinking statements given above; each demonstrates how ideas of superiority and inferiority are projected upon and about racial/ethnic minority groups. Also, the vignettes that follow provide a closer look at the ways in which deficit thinking appears in some innocuous ways in our educational practice.

### **Vignette 1b: “Teachers need to see low-income communities.”**

When asked how he helps teachers understand where their student population comes from, a superintendent mentioned a bus tour organized for new teachers during the orientation week. New teachers are encouraged to participate in a bus tour going through the district and various communities. A particular emphasis, according to the superintendent, is on the low-income community. “I need for them to see where some of our Black and Latino students are coming from, and hopefully, they will have some sympathy.”

#### ***How Is This Deficit-Thinking Belief?***

Such types of “National Geographic” experiences with a singular focus on differences in neighborhoods, location, esthetics, etc., only reinforce the view of low-income environments as lacking resources. These tours do not include the framing of the resilient behaviors and accommodations found within low-income communities.

### **Vignette 2b: “Our kids’ parents don’t believe in education, especially college education.”**

During a school retreat focused on getting a staff of nearly 50 to agree on the values and beliefs about education, staff engaged in some fruitful conversation. While mapping the things that matter most to staff about education and the schooling process, several staff members shared out their idea on why parents are not on board: “Our kids’ parents don’t believe in education, especially college education.” This sentiment was echoed by other staff members.

#### ***How Is This Deficit-Thinking Belief?***

The deficit-thinking perspective is found in the interpretation of parental responses to college readiness as endemic of the problem. This type of interpretation is typical among individuals who pursued and obtained a

college education and who believe that the process of attending college is universally understood and available for everyone.

### **Vignette 3b: "Immigrants don't belong in our community."**

During a classroom observation of middle school English language arts, the teacher wanted to have the students practice the concept of compare-and-contrast using a Venn diagram. The teacher drew on the board a Venn diagram and then wrote "U.S. Citizen" in the left circle and "Illegal Immigrants" in the right circle. The students were then asked to describe the two groups. The following are the words offered by the students: "U.S. Citizen"—*belongs here, born here, speaks English, gets help from government, birth certificate, and nice neighbors*; "Illegal Immigrants"—*doesn't belong here, born in another country, speak Spanish and are loud, can't get help from the government, no papers, sometimes not nice neighbors, and your family helps you a lot*. After the students shared these perspectives, the teacher focused on practicing the compare-and-contrast skill.

### **How Is This Deficit Thinking Belief?**

This example provides a nuanced operation of deficit thinking in which the practitioner does not need to espouse this belief, but rather creates the condition in which it shows up and by not redirecting the belief, the practitioner tacitly reinforces it. The deficit shown by the students is in the cultural inferiority of illegal immigrants: *not belonging here and being loud*.

### Deficit-Thinking Reflection Activity

The following reflection activity is intended to provide leaders an opportunity to practice the understanding of this belief. This practice involves being able to identify the types of social identities framed as deficient in each vignette and brainstorming ways in which to address the issue in the moment or over time. Sometimes, the difficulty with addressing bias-based beliefs is the “not knowing what to say”; this reflection activity helps to find an appropriate answer.

	What identities were made socially deficient in this example?	Brainstorm strategies for addressing this situation.
Vignette 1b		
Vignette 2b		
Vignette 3b		

## POVERTY-DISCIPLINING BELIEF

This belief, similar to deficit thinking, points to low-income people as at fault for persistent adverse conditions; however, poverty-disciplining belief considers changing the behavioral and psychological dispositions of these individuals as paramount to fixing their low-income condition. In other words, deficit-thinking bias is focused on a set of beliefs about ability, while poverty-disciplining bias is focused on changing behavior and thinking of low-income individuals. Joe Soss, Richard Fording, and Sanford Schram (2011) frame in *Disciplining the Poor* that over the last 20 years social welfare policy has involved promoting the notion that low-income individuals “civic incorporation can be achieved only by forcing the poor to confront a more demanding and appropriate ‘operational definition of citizenship’” (p. 5). In other words, in our society, we think and treat individuals living in low-income and extreme poverty conditions as requiring a level of disciplining so they could “learn the ways of being good citizens” and help themselves.

The practice that ensues from such a biased idea of individuals living in low-income conditions focuses on disciplining individuals into behaviors perceived as necessary/required for social mobility. For example, within the innovation of mixed-income housing (a housing strategy to integrate different income levels of families and individuals), various forms of disciplining the poor exist, and they are framed as “universal good resident” behaviors. For instance, since 2000, the Chicago Housing Authority has placed in mixed-income housing distinct restrictions on low-income renters and not for homeowners, such as renters cannot have grills on their patios, while homeowners can; renters cannot have visitors come and go freely; the building manager conducts “upkeep” visits of renters’ units; and renters are required to attend classes on how to be a good neighbor. Another example of policy with a disciplining-the-poor bias involves the move by various state governments to limit the types of

goods and services individuals living in low-income and extreme poverty are allowed to purchase with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) dollars. In May 2015, the Kansas state legislature passed restrictions on the amount of money TANF recipients can withdraw from an ATM to \$25 per day, which means less money they receive because each ATM withdrawal includes a user fee; additionally, TANF individuals are not permitted to redeem benefits at swimming pools, movie theaters, and tattoo parlors.

The last example of disciplining-the-poor bias can be found in the recent proliferation of “no excuses” approach to discipline in schools. The “no excuses” approach, most often associated with charter schools, but also prevalent in public schools, involves practices to change low-income and racial/ethnic minority student behaviors.

### Sample Poverty-Disciplining Bias Statements

Poor people don’t know the value of education and need to be educated about its value.

Poor kids are not exposed to the type of grit necessary to be successful in school.

Discipline is an important tool when working with poor kids.

They need to pull up their pants; otherwise they won’t get jobs.

For example, in a charter network, students begin the school year on the floor and have to demonstrate appropriate behaviors in order “to earn” their desks, teachers, and other school activities; in several charter and public schools, students receive detention for dying their hair colors perceived as “unnatural” (e.g., pink, green, orange), wearing dangling earrings, or talking in the hallway between classes. In a large urban school district, the predominantly Black and Latino elementary schools require students to walk in the hallway pretending to have bubbles in their mouth and hugging themselves. This is called the “hugs and bubbles” approach.

A second component of this belief involves the premise that poverty causes compromised development among children and family units. O’Connor and Fernandez (2006) provide a succinct discussion arguing against this theory of compromised human development (TCHD). O’Connor and Fernandez list the following arguments: (1) poverty affects access to resources that influence child development; (2) the resource distribution only influences the effectiveness of the developmental process; (3) the reciprocal interactions between children, and parents are the engines that drive the developmental outcome; and (4) key interactions between child and parent such as verbal interactions, literacy tasks, disciplinary practices, and parenting approaches influence the developmental outcomes.

In the text box on page 42 are sample poverty-disciplining bias statements; each one reflects the notion of disciplining low-income individuals for being poor by changing their behavioral and psychological dispositions. Also the vignettes that follow provide a closer look at the ways in which poverty-disciplining bias appears in some innocuous ways in our educational practice.

### **Vignette 1c: “They need to pull up their pants . . . they just aren’t serious about school and they won’t get jobs like that.”**

During a walkthrough in a suburban high school, the principal was commenting on the “PBIS” signs posted throughout the hallway. At a point during the walkthrough, several Black boys walked by, and the principal turned to me and said, “Don’t they know they need to pull up their pants . . . they just aren’t serious about school and they won’t get jobs.”

### ***How Is This Poverty Disciplining Belief?***

The premise of the principal’s statement is that this youth culture dressing style should be used as an example of school and work engagement. The principal is using an interpretive lens in which specific behaviors of low-income individuals need to be removed so that they would become successful. The reality is that all the behaviors and psychological dispositions of low-income individuals are perceived through the same lens—their poverty is due to those individual behaviors, not the system.

**Vignette 2c: "We overly discipline our students because they are coming from poor conditions."**

During a district meeting about why they were being cited for disproportionate suspension of Black students, the superintendent began to argue the oversuspension of Black students is because they are poor, and not because they are Black. In fact, the superintendent conducted additional analysis to demonstrate this point: "See, these kids are poor, and do you understand how poor kids behave?"

***How Is This Poverty-Disciplining Belief?***

There is a common association between poverty status and the "culture of poverty" as demonstrative of behaviors opposite to the discipline code. Such perspective on what it means to live in poverty-laden conditions is biased due to several misconceptions: (1) There is a presumption that a discipline code provides a universal understanding of behavioral concepts, such as respect, obedience, etc.; (2) the behaviors associated with poverty status are stereotyped and portrayed as an antithesis to academic success and engagement; (3) disciplining children from poor conditions will minimize "poverty behavior" and enhance academic engagement; etc.

**Vignette 3c: "Isn't the problem of disproportionality in special education because they are poor?"**

During a districtwide presentation on disproportionality with staff charged with providing interventions, a school psychologist posed a question that many practitioners explicitly state or implicitly suggest: "Have you looked at this data by poverty? Because isn't the problem of disproportionality in special education because they are poor?" My response focused on describing the research that discounts the significance of poverty as a contributor.

***How Is This Poverty-Disciplining Belief?***

There is a sentiment that poverty obstructs development of children from low-income families, and high classification rates in special education represent a rational response to this fact. Furthermore, the role of special education is to accommodate or discipline such children for having a compromised human development. This misguided notion treats the markers of disability categories as objective and does not consider that they are influenced by subjective views of evaluation practitioners.

### Poverty-Disciplining Reflection Activity

The following reflection activity is intended to provide leaders an opportunity to practice the understanding of this belief. This practice involves being able to identify the types of behaviors that need to be changed in each social identity and brainstorming ways in which to address the issue in the moment or over time. Sometimes, the difficulty with addressing bias-based beliefs is the “not knowing what to say”; this reflection activity helps to find an appropriate answer.

	What identities involved poverty disciplining in this example?	Brainstorm strategies for addressing this situation.
Vignette 1c		
Vignette 2c		
Vignette 3c		