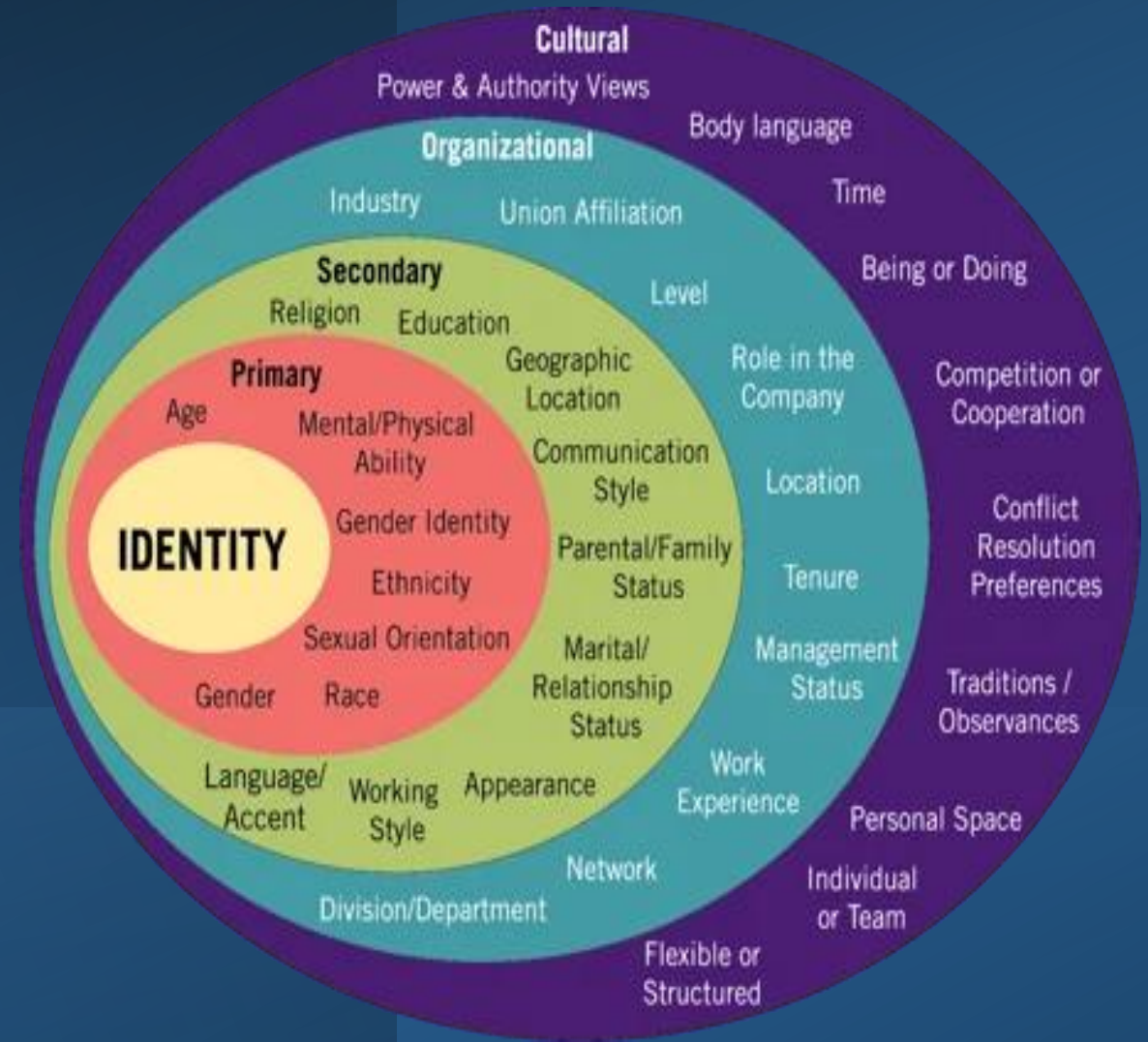




Beyond Awareness: Practical Strategies to Recognize and Reduce the Effects of Unconscious Bias

By: Luther Wright, Jr.

What the National Debate about DEI Keeps Missing



There are Four Types of Diversity

Internal diversity:

Consisting of observable traits such as race, gender, age, physical ability, ethnicity, and cultural identity.

External diversity:

Based on factors external to people's innate characteristics, such as education, socioeconomic background, marital status, parental status, religious beliefs, and life experiences.

There are Four Types of Diversity

Organizational diversity:

Encompassing the variety of roles and perspectives within a company, including differences in job function, hierarchical level, department, and union affiliation.

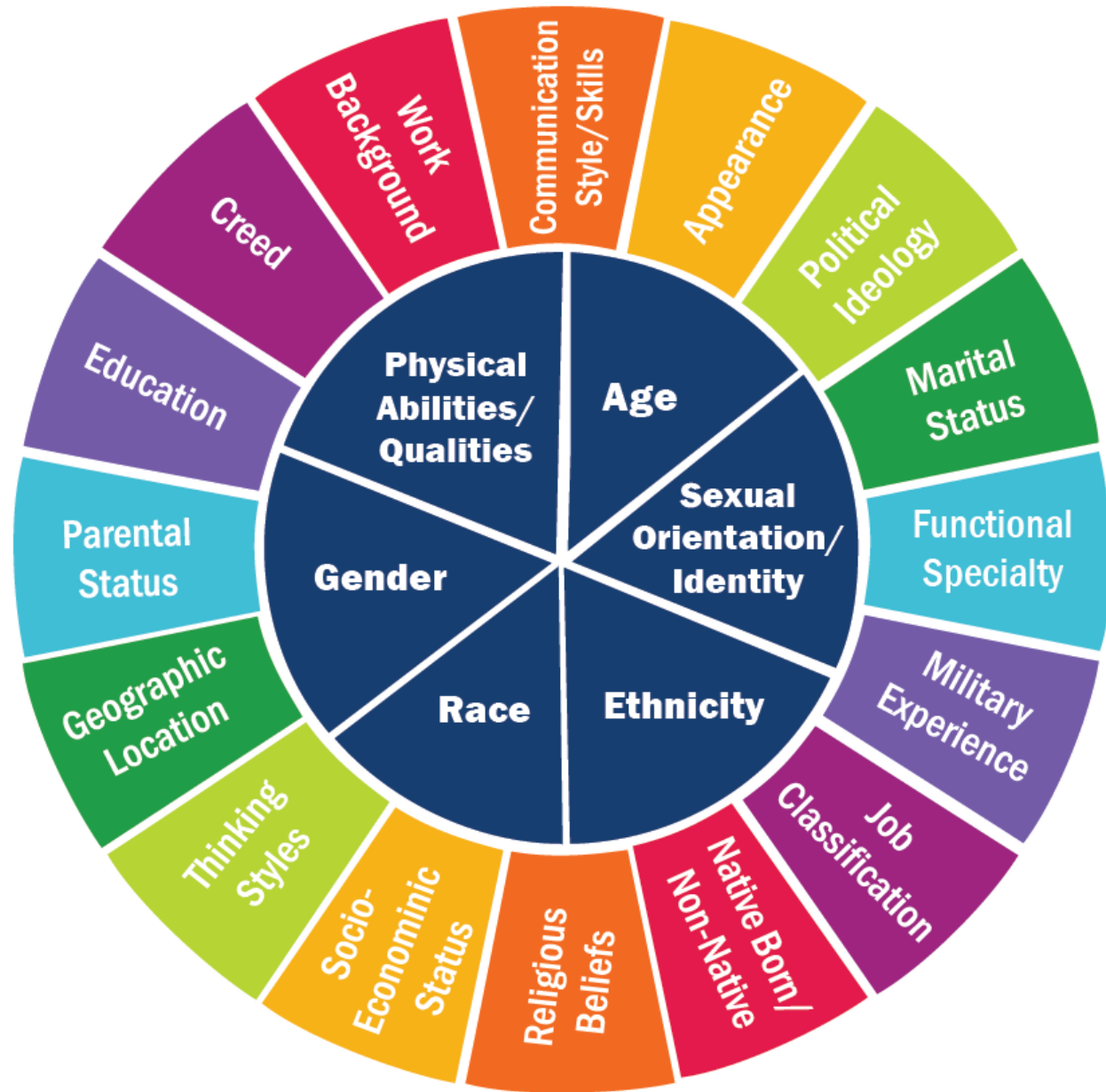
Worldview diversity:

Referring to the variety of perspectives and beliefs individuals hold, shaped by their cultural, philosophical, religious, and personal experiences.

Intersectionality

The concept of intersectionality describes the ways in which individual characteristics like age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class and other identities “intersect” to create unique dynamics and effects.

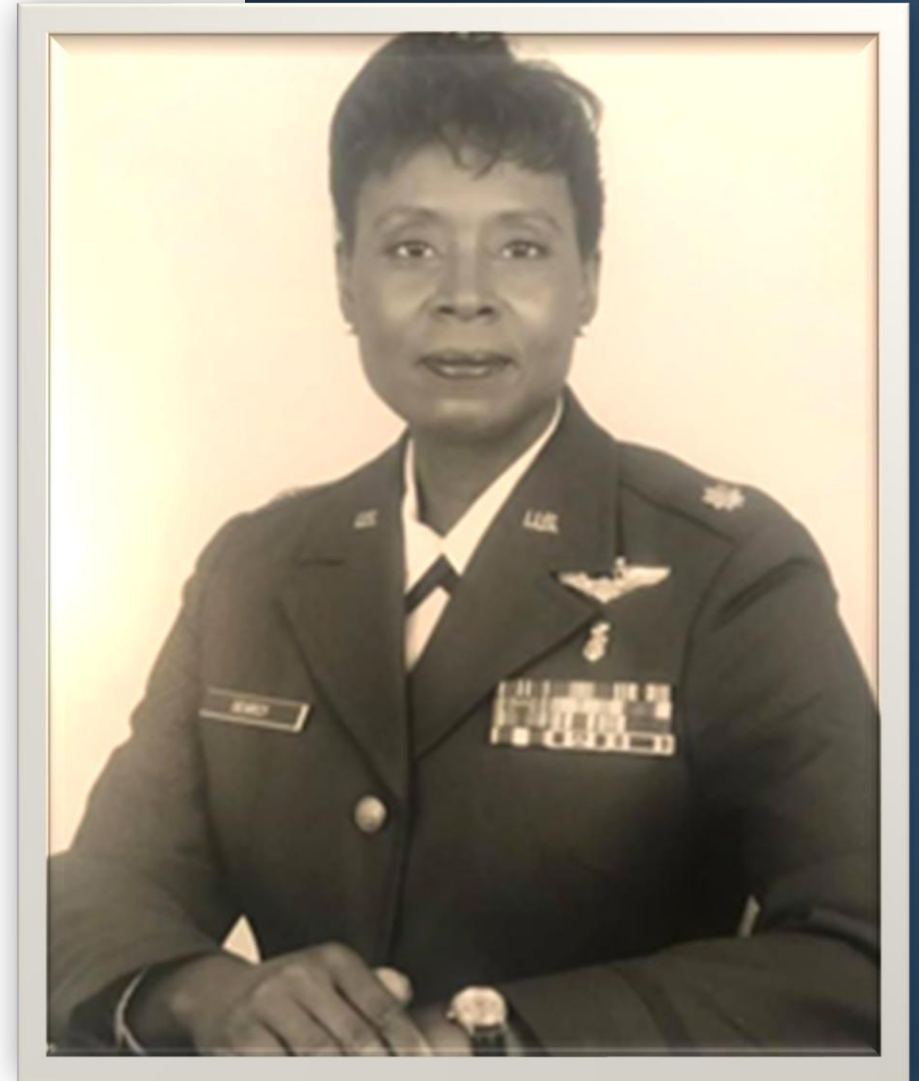
i.e. the workplace may be experienced by a straight, 20-year old Hispanic Female differently than a 55-year-old Hispanic Female who also identifies as LGBTQ



Intersectionality Example

Gwendolyn Searcy

- Born into segregated South in Tennessee (attended integrated high school as a senior)
- Youngest of 12 children from a poor family
- Married and a mother since the age of 17 (now 73)
 - Ultimately mother of two daughters
 - Grandmother of two
- Joined the military and became a flight nurse in the 1980s (served during Desert Storm)
- Earned multiple college degrees from three Universities, including a Nurse Practitioner Degree
- Retired Nurse Practitioner from the VA after 30 years
- Ordained Minister in Missionary Baptist Church
- Mother of one daughter who identifies as LGBTQ
- Lives on an active farm in a rural county
- **Has me as a son-in law . . .**



Think about the many Intersections



The bias challenges presented by Intersectionality

- Proliferation of Blind spots
- Rejection of “one-size fits all” solutions
- Prevention of honest dialogue

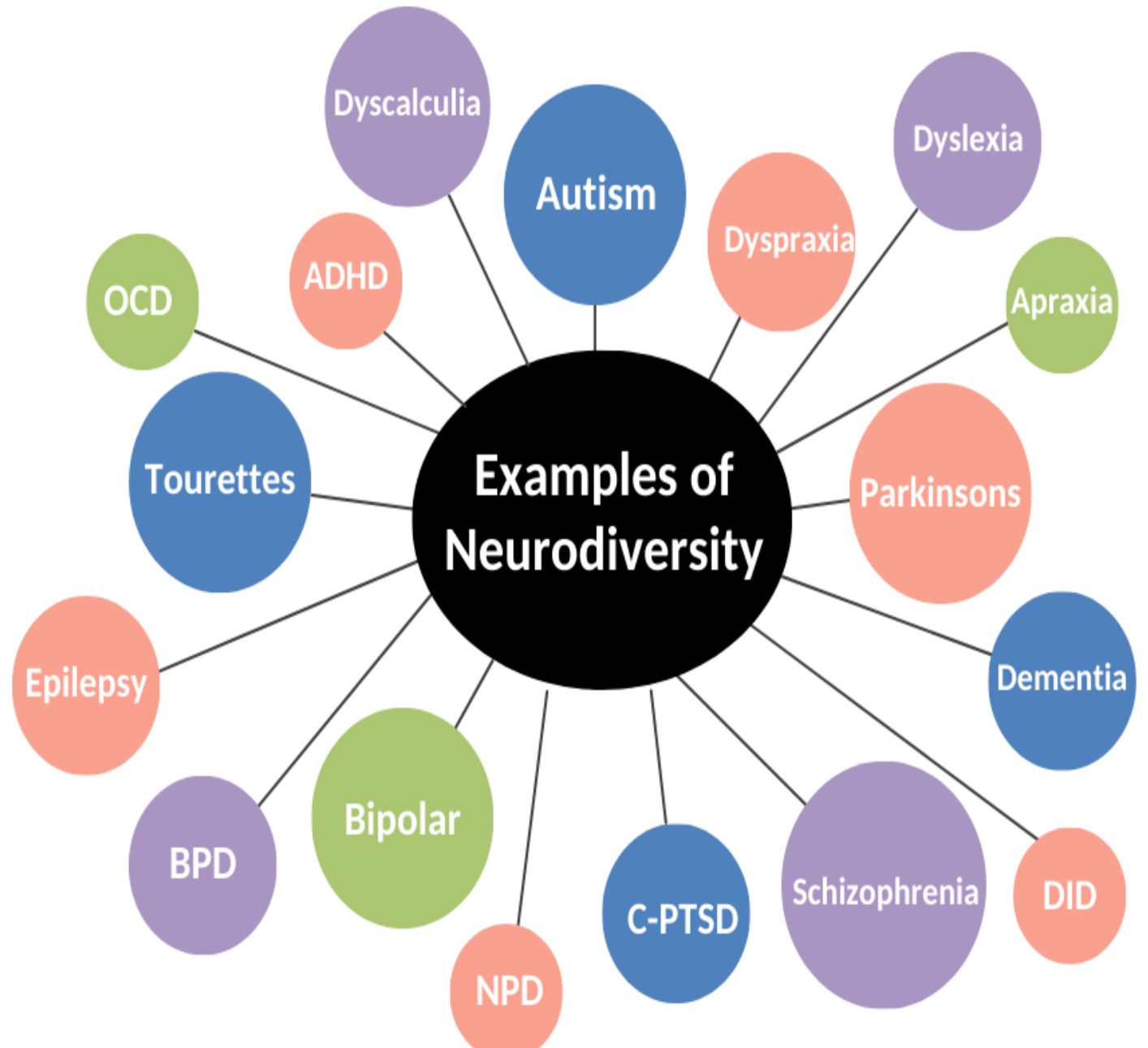
To overcome we must

- Learn to break down “thought silos”
- Reject “representational diversity” in favor of a holistic approach
- Amplify the unique voices of all persons by creating a transparent culture



Neurodivergence

the range of differences in individual brain function and behavioral traits, regarded as part of normal variation in the human population



Neuro-Diversity

15-20% of the workforce and 43% of senior leaders in companies identify as neurodivergent; **only 1% of law firm lawyers and 4.5% of law students identify as disabled**

Most Common Examples:

- Autism
- ADHD
- Tourette's
- Anxiety*
- Depression*

Why do you think so many leaders are neurodivergent and so few lawyers identify as such?





Example Behaviors:

- Social communication difficulties;
- **Speech and language challenges;**
- Learning challenges;
- **Inflexibility**
- Ability to stay focused for long periods
- **Outside-the-Box Thinking**
- **Attention to Detail**
- Strong skills in areas (music, art, technology, science)



Ways to support:

- Awareness
- Willingness to accommodate
- Encourage Investment in Resources/Tech
- Sensitivity/Educate on social differences
- Think about hiring and qualifications differently



Socioeconomic Diversity

Differences in employee's access to material goods, money, power, friendship networks, healthcare, leisure time, or educational opportunities.

- **Areas of Concern:**

- Bias about economic means/ability
- Educational Requirements for Hiring/Advancement
- Overlooked/Missed Opportunities



Socioeconomic Diversity

A few statistics to consider:

- About **14.3%** of adults had an advanced degree in 2021, up from **10.9%** in 2011.
- People from more modest socioeconomic backgrounds are **32% less likely** to become managers.
- **67% of job postings** for production supervisor in the United States required a bachelor's degree or higher, even though only **16% of the people** who already held the title had that qualification



Socioeconomic Diversity

What are some examples of how socioeconomic differences manifest themselves in the workplace?

- Child/Parent Care
- Company gatherings (golf outing, gatherings at someone's home)
- Picking-up a Group Tab
- Discussion of family life or financial expectations



Socioeconomic Diversity

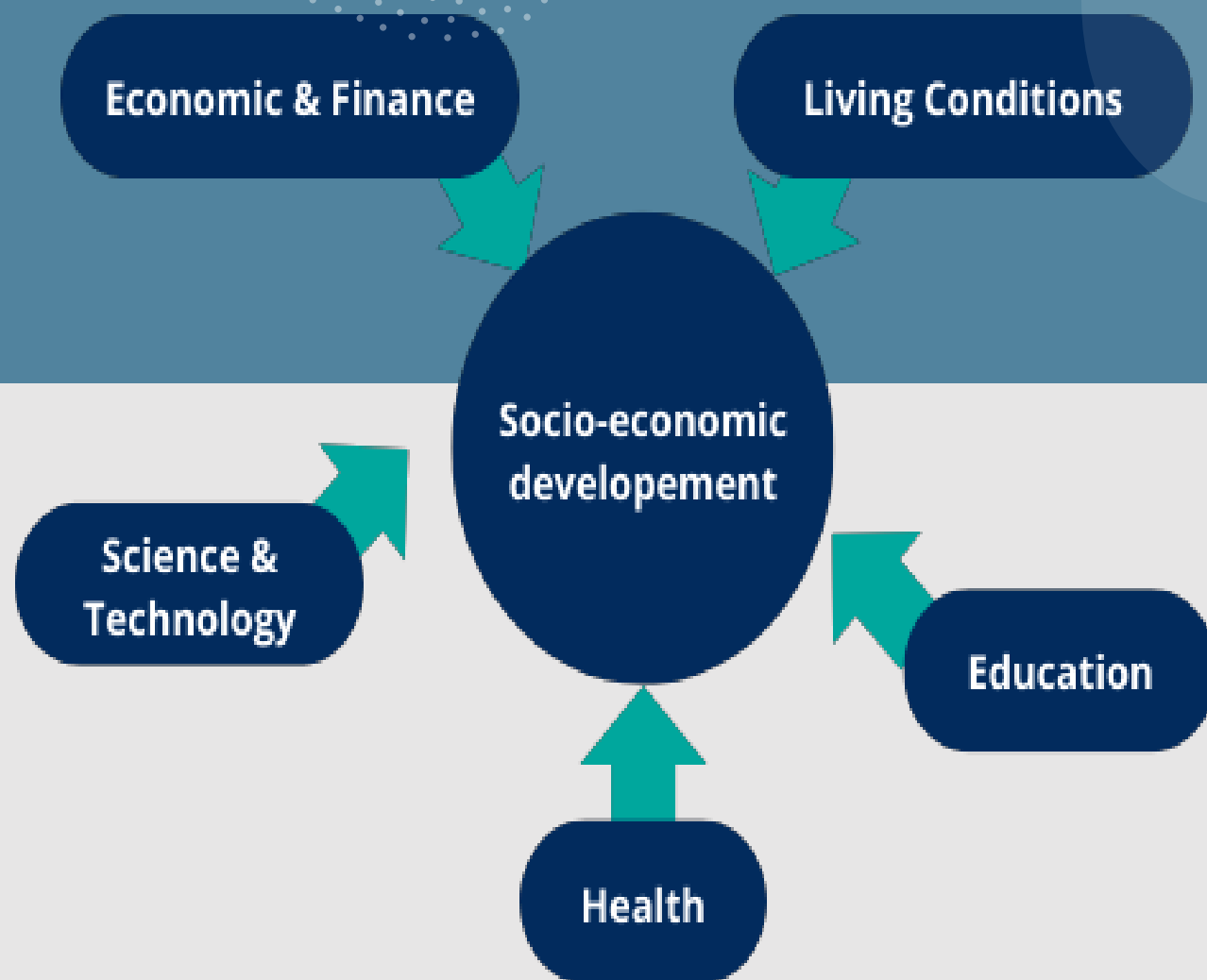
What advantages can we gain from having socioeconomic diversity in the workplace?

- Multiple and different perspectives
- Additional ways to connect with clients
- Different problem-solving skills/approaches/experiences

Socioeconomic Diversity

Ways to Address:

- Vet recruiting strategies/Company events for socioeconomic issues
- Emphasize Skills and Experience
- Offer Developmental/Educational Opportunities
- Robust Mentoring Programs
- Thoughtful communications




Generational Diversity

the coexistence of multiple generations within a single workplace, each characterized by distinct experiences, values, communication styles, and work preferences

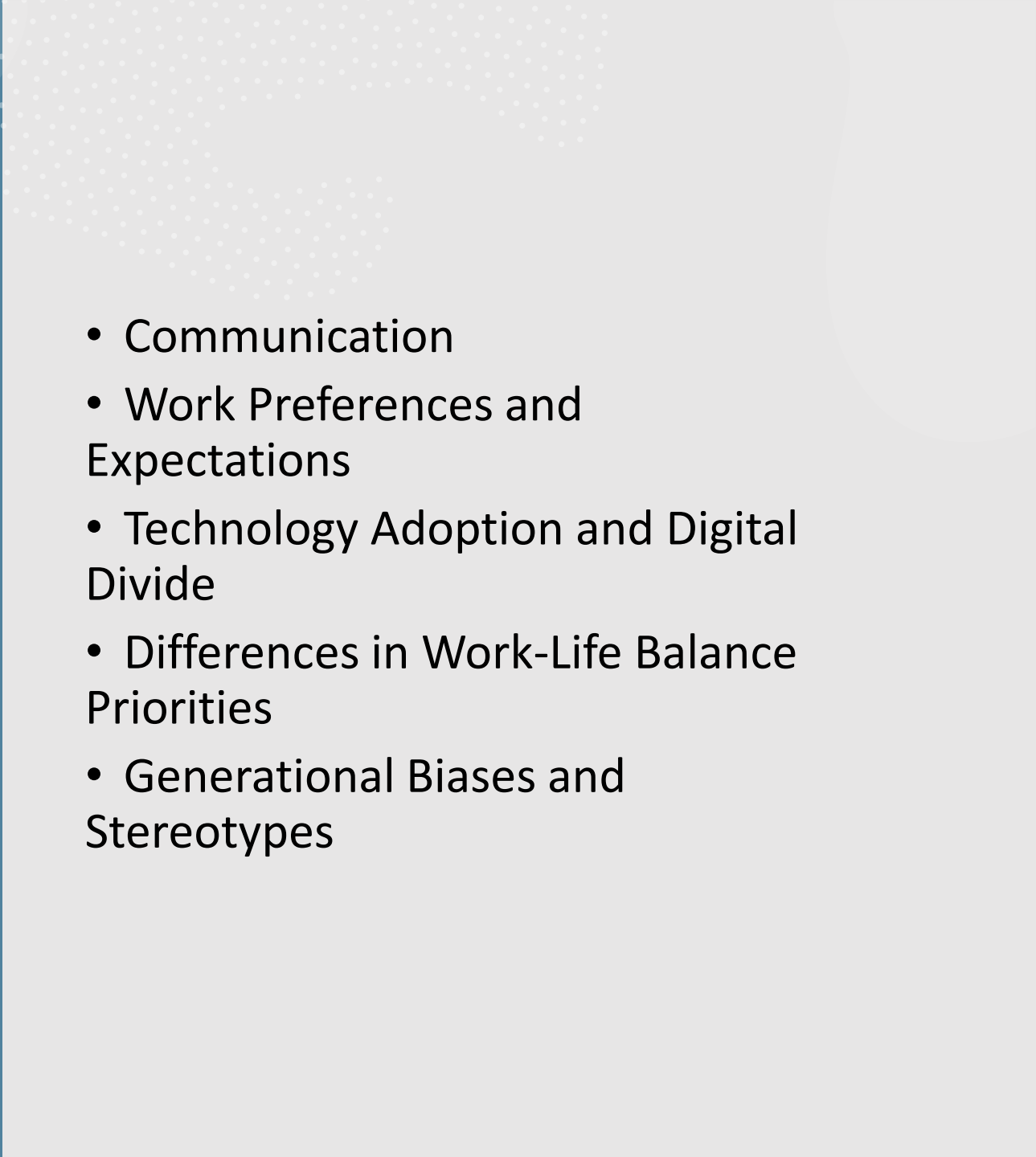


Workplace Generations Defined

- **Traditionalists (1926-1945)** – Heavily influenced by Depression-era and rationing hardships and tend to be admired for their work ethic and appreciation of simplicity.
- **Baby Boomers (1946-1964)** –born during a period of unprecedented economic growth and at or nearing retirement.
- **Gen X (1965-1980)** –the smallest generation in number; first generation to consistently change jobs and in many cases are caring for both children still at home and aging parents.
- **Millennials (1981-1996)** –Millennials are well into adulthood and are comfortable in the digital age; average time on job is much less than prior generations. (*75% of global workforce as of 2025*)
- **Gen Z (1997-2012)** – the oldest Gen Zers have graduated from college and entered the work force (*30% of workforce by 2030*)

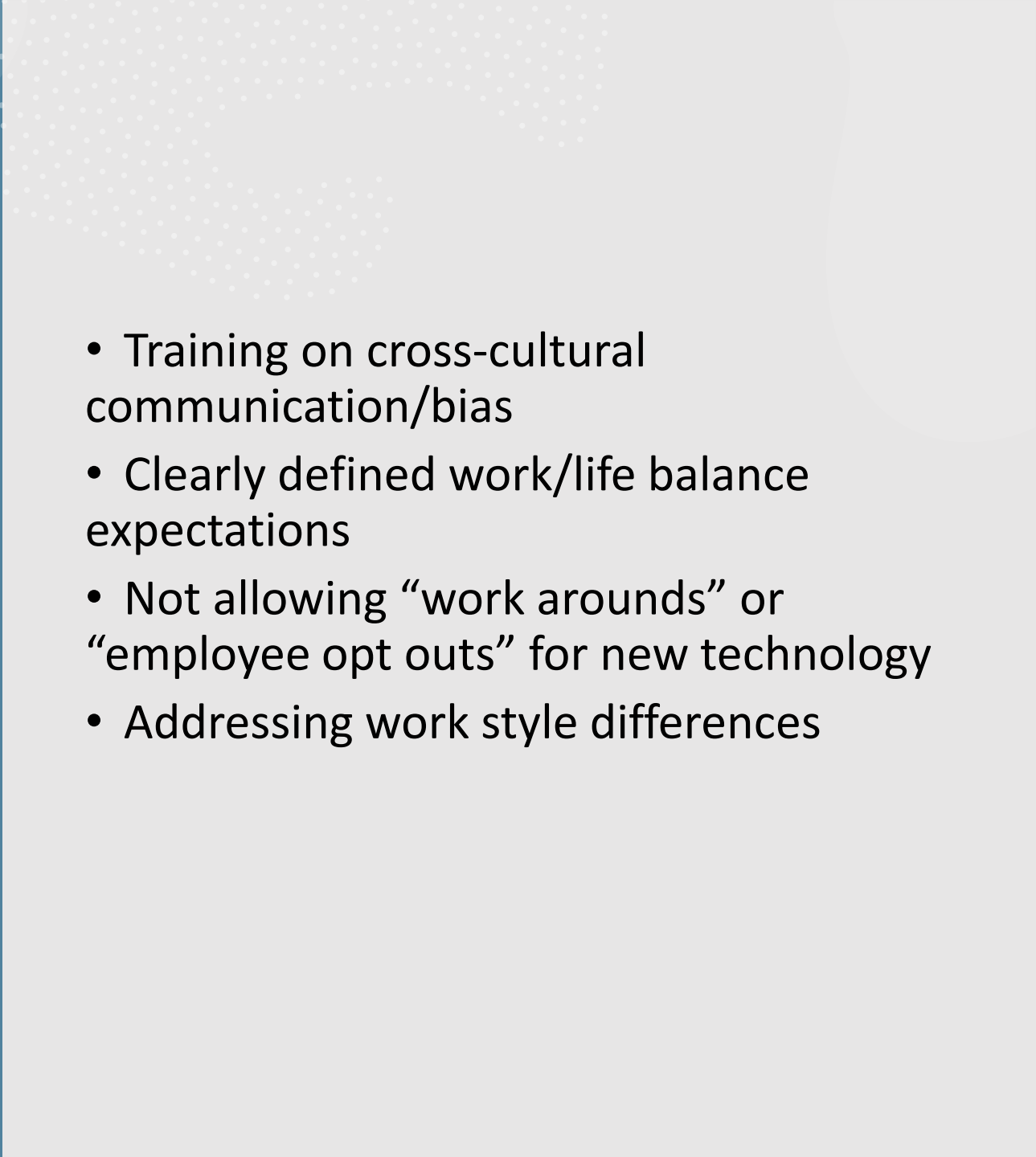


What do you think
are the most
common bias issues
based on
generational
differences?

- 
- Communication
 - Work Preferences and Expectations
 - Technology Adoption and Digital Divide
 - Differences in Work-Life Balance Priorities
 - Generational Biases and Stereotypes



What do you think the solutions are?

- 
- Training on cross-cultural communication/bias
 - Clearly defined work/life balance expectations
 - Not allowing “work arounds” or “employee opt outs” for new technology
 - Addressing work style differences

the belief that an employee will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with concerns, ideas, questions or mistakes. It is a shared expectation held by members of a team that they will not be embarrassed, rejected, or punished for sharing ideas, taking risks, or soliciting feedback.

Psychological
Safety

Historical Examples of Successful Anti-Bias Initiatives



Major League Baseball (then other sports)





Motown Record Company Leadership 1960s

Sara Lee Corporation



"The suggestion to do away with the tag didn't come out of racial experience or socioeconomic status, says Palmore, who works for Sara Lee in Chicago. "But the fact of the matter is that **the idea came from a black woman.**"

Excerpt from a 2003 article by Paul Holmes:

*In Conclusion, the PR launch of the Hanes Tagless T transformed a simply smart product innovation into a marketing and sales milestone for Hanes. **With average retail sales up 30 to 70 percent since launch**, the Hanes T-shirt is something to talk about - and when was the last time you talked about your underwear T-shirt?"*

Commonalities

- A compelling reason for action
- A deliberate thought process and commitment to execution
- A complete rejection of stereotypes and biases and willingness to change
- A sophisticated understanding of the relevant marketplace and societal/industry factors
- Significant Investment of Resources - Time, Money, Energy
- Lots of “Profit” and positive societal impact



QUESTIONS?

Thank you!



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