

## Dominique NC Lewis, MS HDFS

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Dominique has committed her career to working in the community with organizations that benefit children and their families. She believes that the opportunity to create a long-term impact on access and equity exists with investments for children. In her career, Dominique has created workshops to build teaching practices for educators, supported non-profit organizations in strategic planning and curated materials to gain competencies in diversity, equity and inclusion. Ms. Lewis attributes her array of techniques to her experiences serving children in varied roles across the community. In her work, Dominique is often drawn to specific initiatives supporting children of color and diverse background. She was most recently featured in the Head Start Region 7 Sandbox magazine with her article on Inclusive Classrooms. In her free time, Dominique stays active with her family and friends.



# Free, Not Reduced Milk:

Advocating for Breastfeeding for Mothers of Color

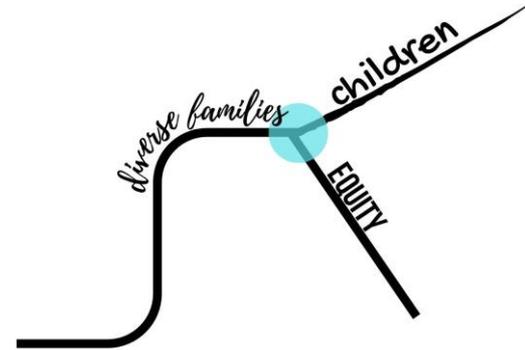
Dominique NC Lewis, MS HDFs





**Dominique NC Lewis, MS HDFS**  
Program Manager, Education and Learning  
Office of Equity and Diversity

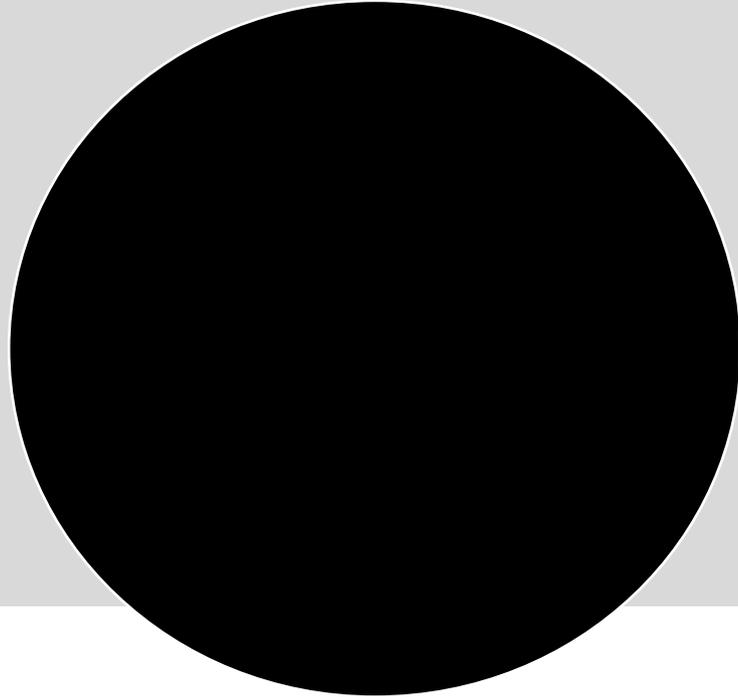
Life-long Child and Family Advocate



# Quick Agenda

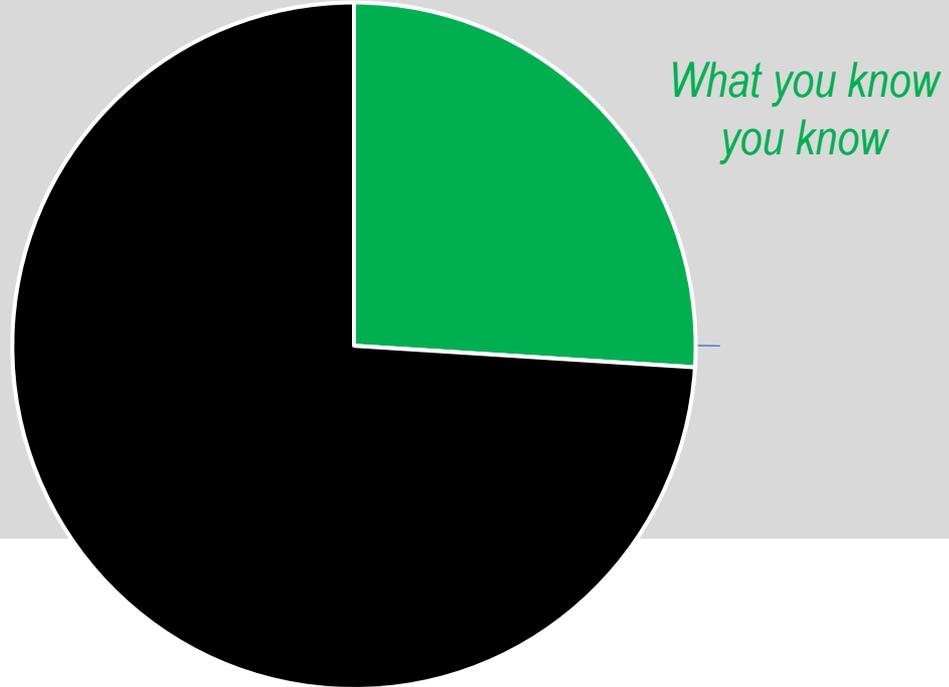
- Introduction of the Know/Don't Know Model
- Know / Know: Tour of data and stats on MOC
- Don't / Know: Unpacking workforce barriers
- Know / Don't: Nonverbals and dismissal of effort
- Don't / Don't: Missing social capital of support

# Know/Don't Know Model

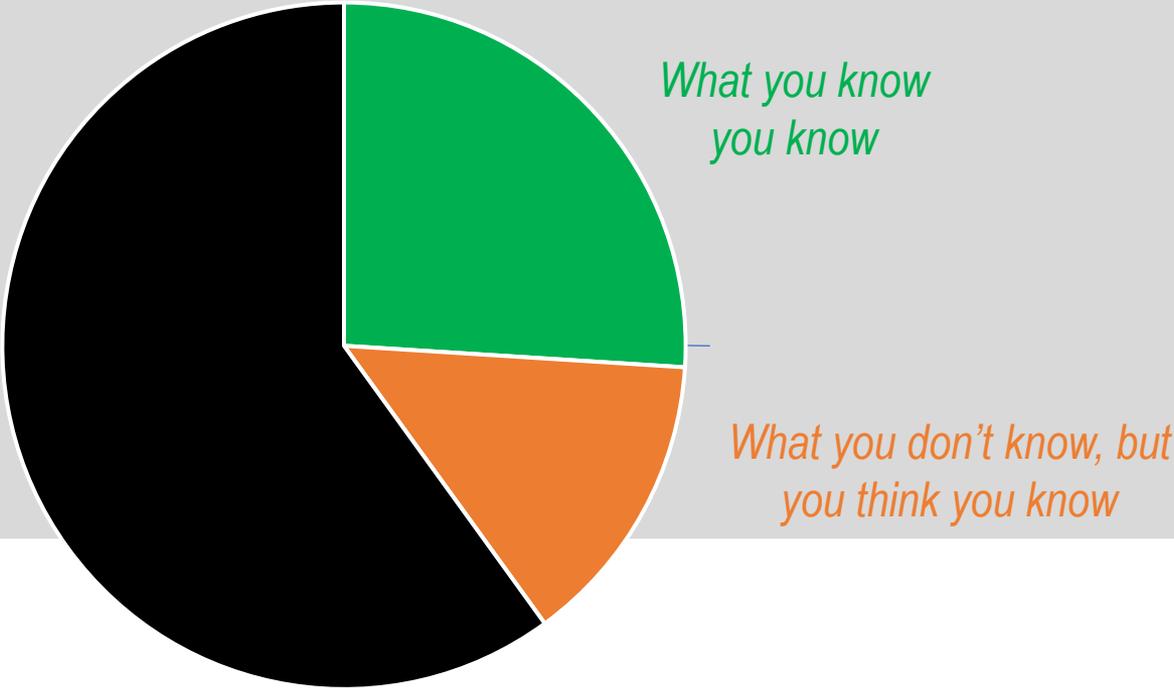


*All the  
knowledge in  
the world!*

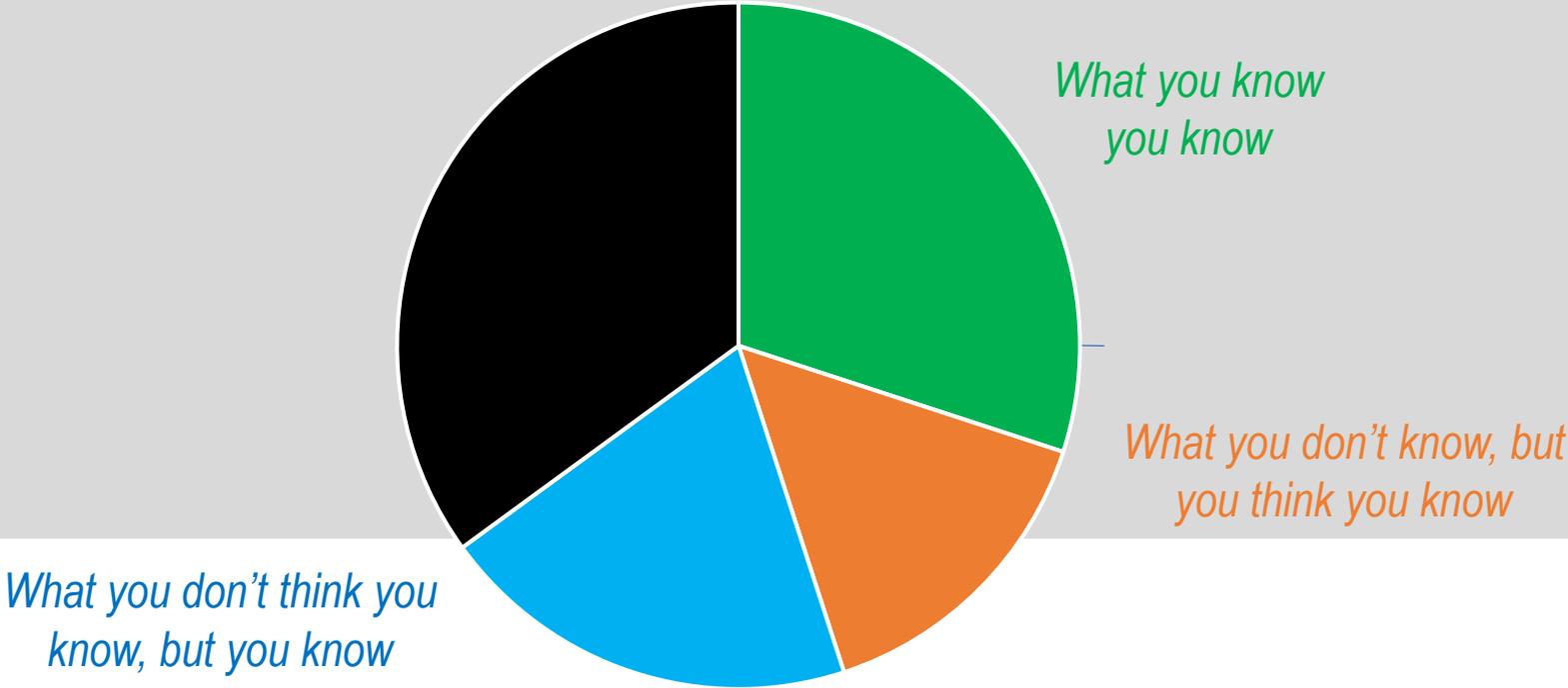
# Know/Don't Know Model



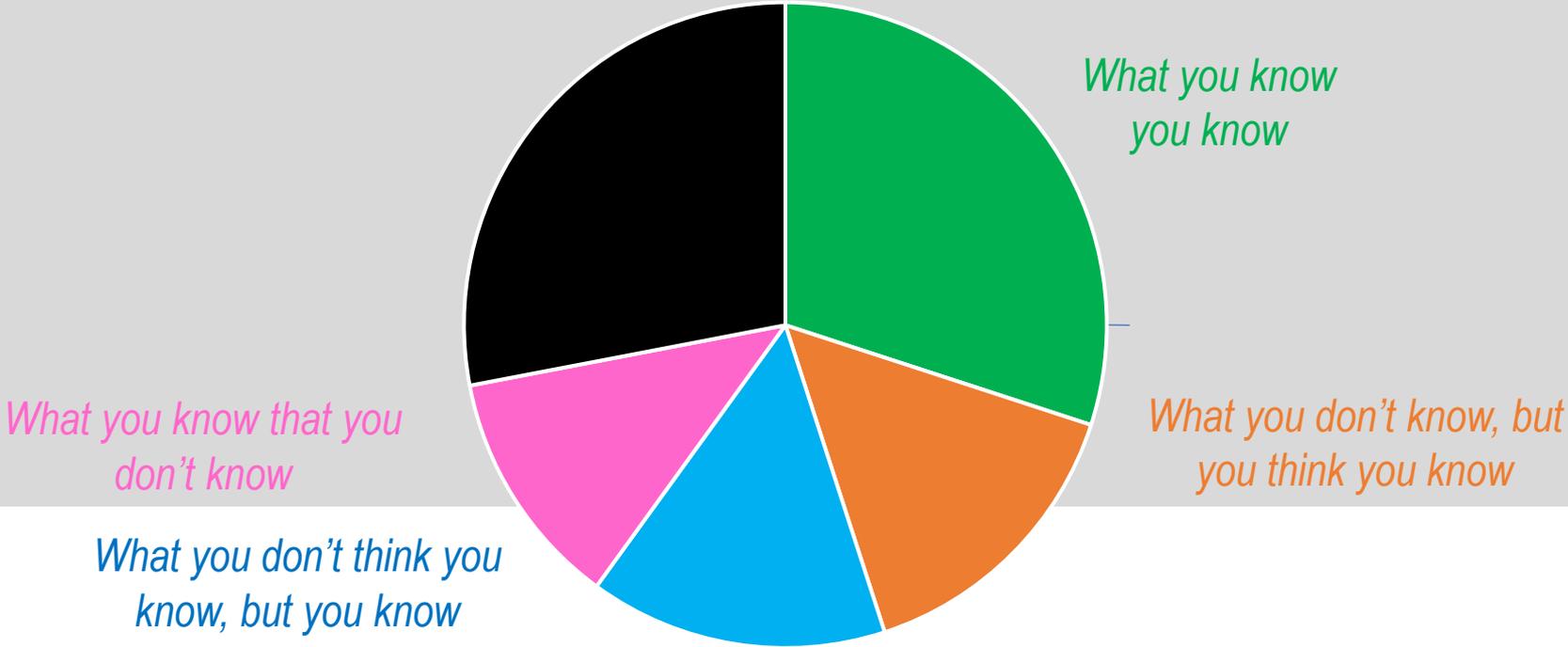
# Know/Don't Know Model



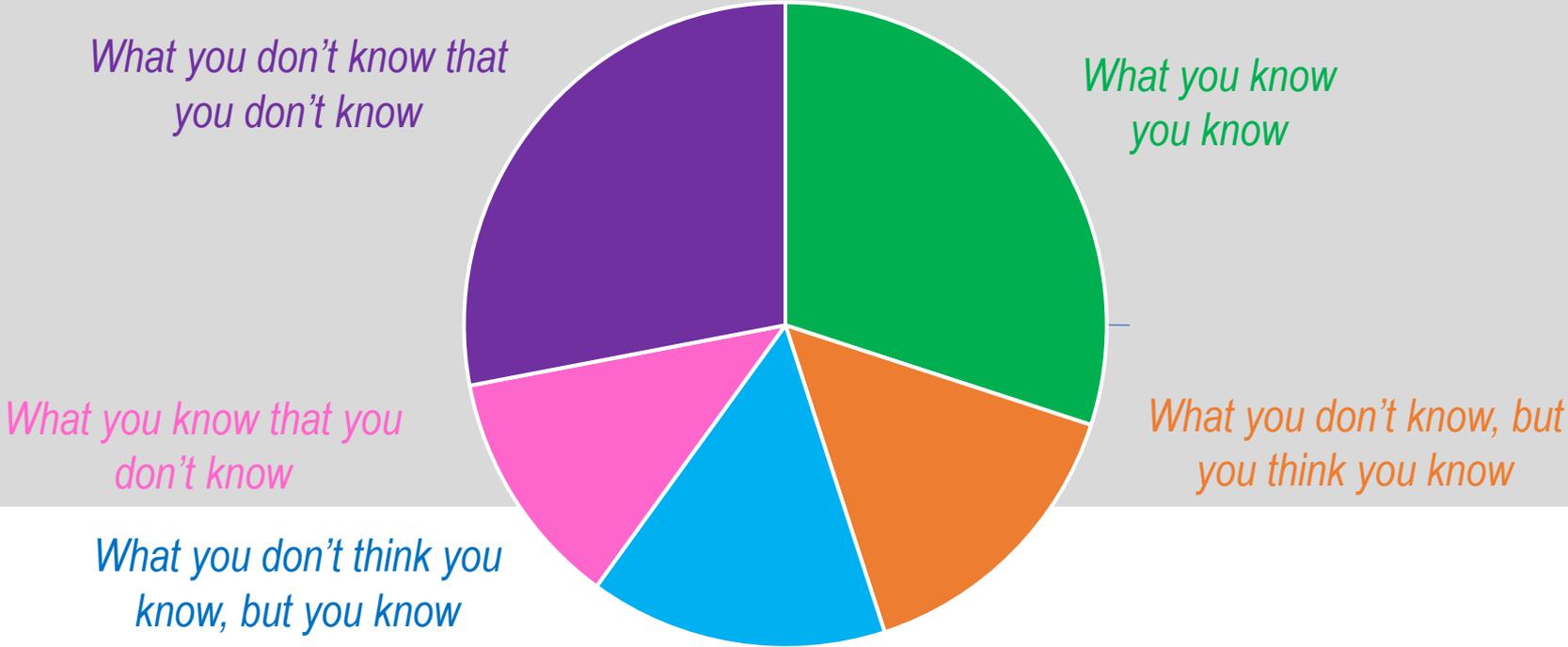
# Know/Don't Know Model



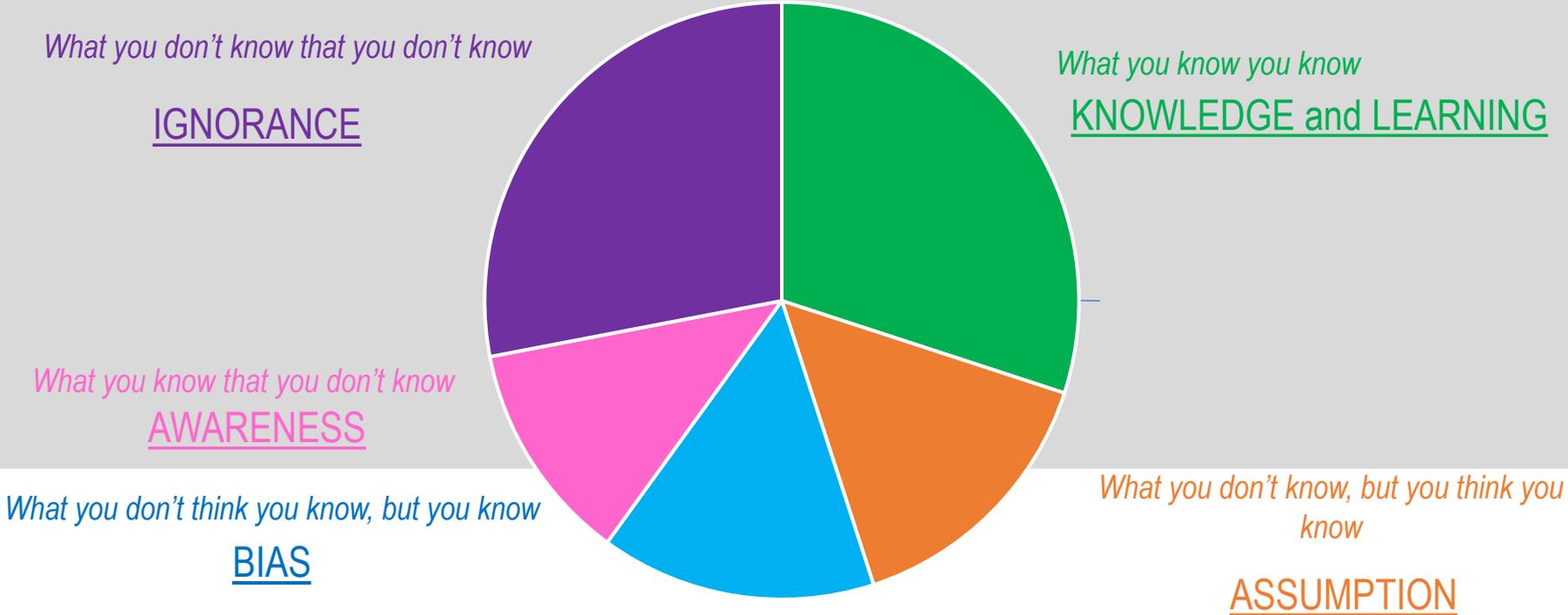
# Know/Don't Know Model



# Know/Don't Know Model



# Know/Don't Know Model



# What We Know



The Data.



# What We Know

Breastmilk has numerous benefits for baby and mom.

Physical – Emotional - Mental

Health disparities exist. Patients of color are not receiving equitable care.  
At hospitals or at clinics.

These are all adult-made problems.  
Babies did not create this mess.

Many moms are working moms.

Prices of infant formula are rising.  
Access to formula is not.

# What We Know

Over half of American Indian and one-quarter of Black women reported not breastfeeding/stopping breastfeeding due to return to school/work concerns.

(Quintero et al 2023)

Breastfeeding also provides long-term preventive effects for the mother, including an earlier return to pre-pregnancy weight and a reduced risk of pre-menopausal breast cancer and osteoporosis.

(National Conference of State Legislatures 2021)

The disparity between Black and White infant deaths today is greater than it was under antebellum slavery.

(Owens & Fett 2019)

The American Academy of Pediatrics and the World Health Organization also recommend exclusive breastfeeding for about the first 6 months with continued breastfeeding along with appropriate complementary foods for up to 2 years of age or older.

Kansas nor Missouri have a milk bank. Donor milk is obtained from CO, IN or OK.

(Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition 2024)



**What you don't know, but think you know**

A hand is shown pointing towards a screen that displays blurred text, suggesting a focus on digital information or data. The background is a soft, out-of-focus yellow and green gradient.

**Unpacking workforce barriers**

# What you don't know, but think you know

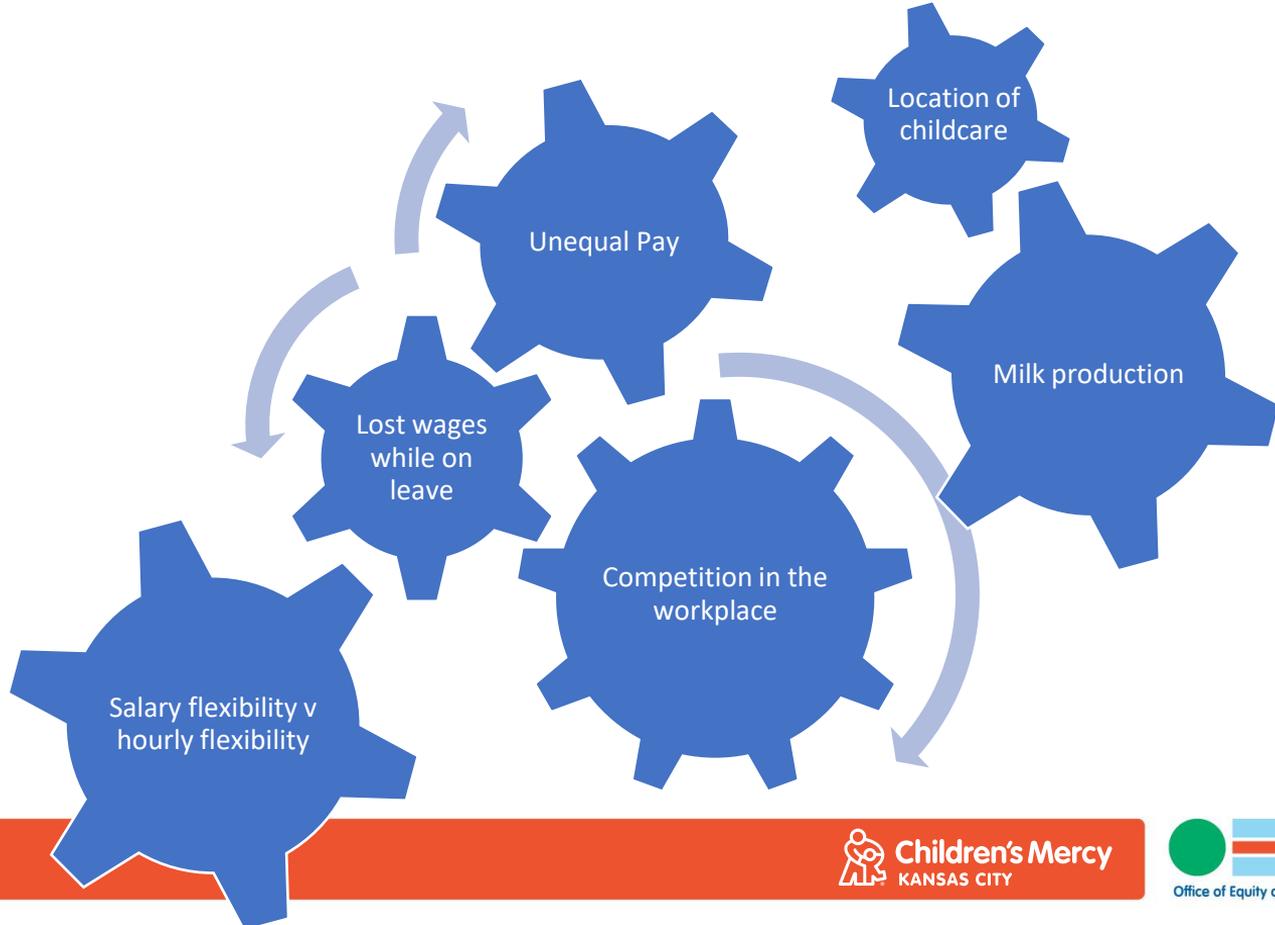
Yes we have laws...

- Title VII (enforced by the EEOC), which:
  - Protects an employee from discrimination based on [pregnancy](#), childbirth, or related medical conditions; and
  - Requires covered employers to treat a worker affected by pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions the same as other workers similar in their ability or inability to work;
- The ADA (enforced by the EEOC), which:
  - Protects an employee from discrimination based on [disability](#); and
  - Requires covered employers to provide reasonable accommodations to a person with a disability if the reasonable accommodation would not cause an undue hardship for the employer.
  - While pregnancy is not a disability under the ADA, some pregnancy-related conditions [may be disabilities](#) under the law.
- The [Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993](#) (enforced by the U.S. Department of Labor), which provides covered employees with unpaid, job-protected leave for certain family and medical reasons; and
- The [PUMP Act](#) (Providing Urgent Maternal Protections for Nursing Mothers Act) (enforced by the U.S. Department of Labor), which broadens workplace protections for employees to express breast milk at work.

US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

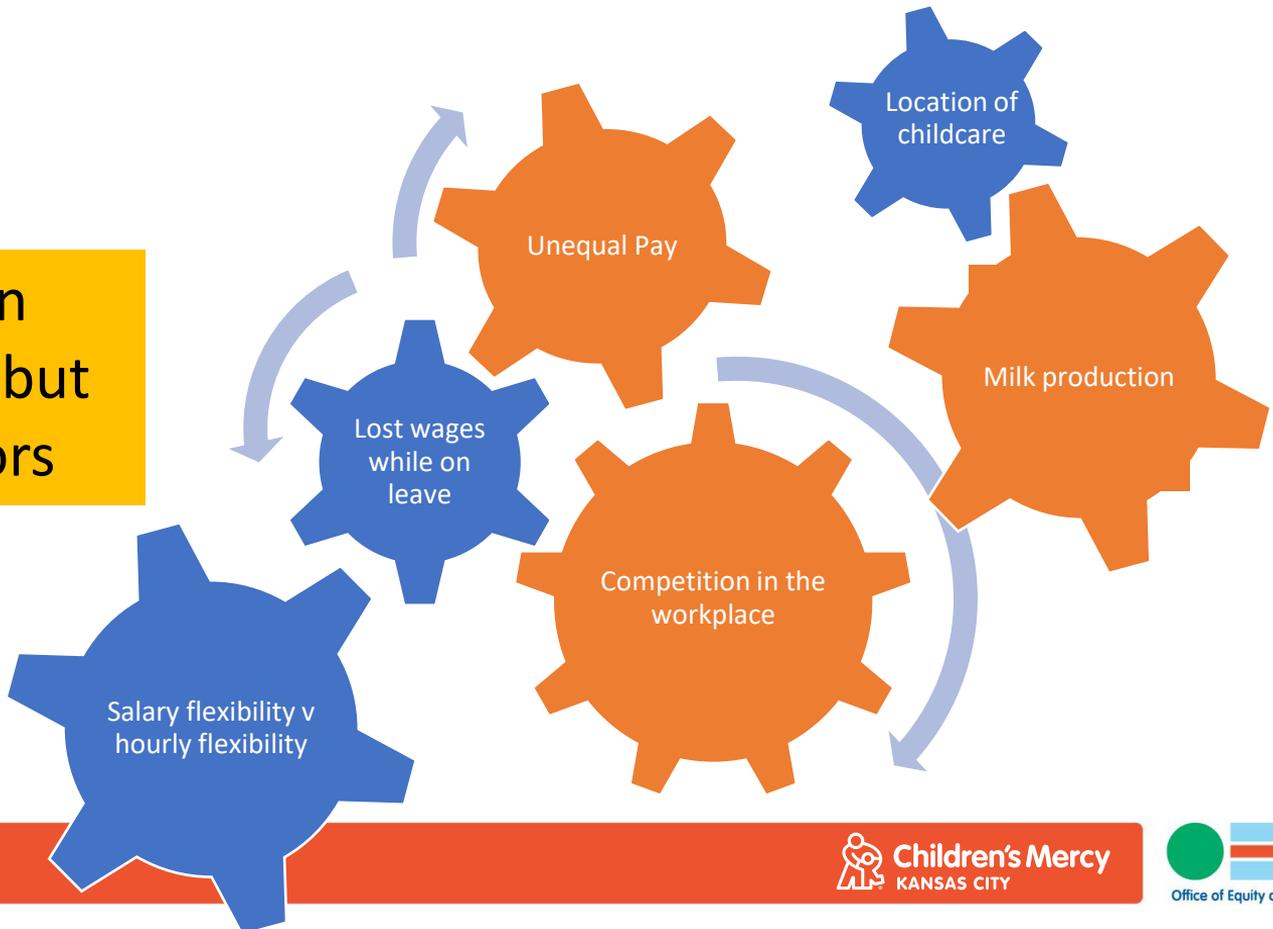
# What you don't know, but think you know

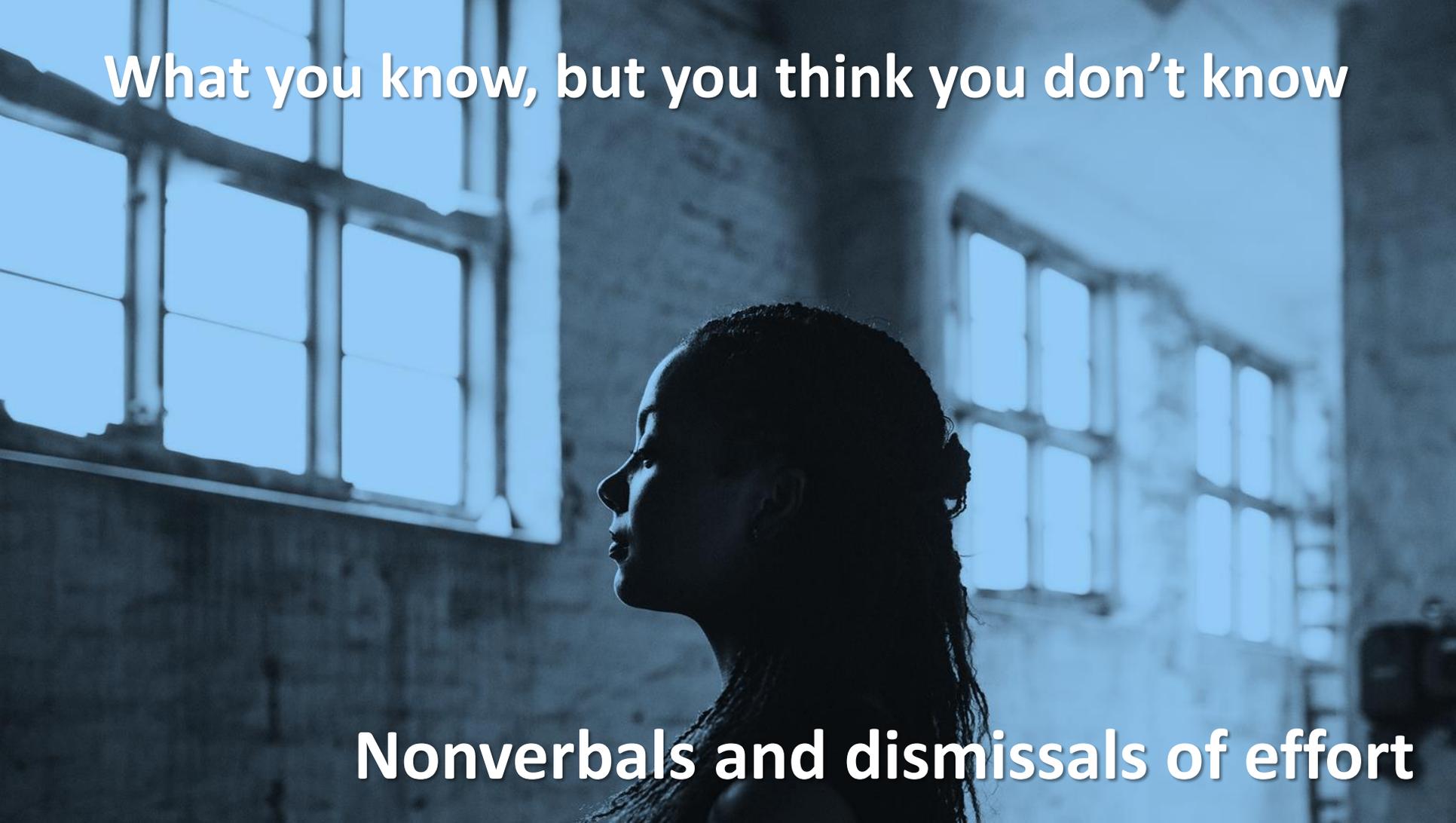
But...



# What you don't know, but think you know

Privilege can help some, but not all factors



A woman is shown in profile, looking out of a window. The scene is bathed in a deep blue light, creating a contemplative and somewhat somber atmosphere. The woman's face is in silhouette, and her hair is pulled back. The window she is looking out of is on the left, and another window is visible in the background on the right. The overall mood is one of quiet reflection or perhaps a sense of longing.

**What you know, but you think you don't know**

**Nonverbals and dismissals of effort**

# What you know, but you think you don't know

- How do we learn the rules of engagement?



*All of the ways of life for a group of people*

*Behaviors*

*Customs*

*Beliefs*

*What is okay... what is not okay*

# What you know, but you think you don't know



# What you know, but you think you don't know

- Communication is a key component of culture

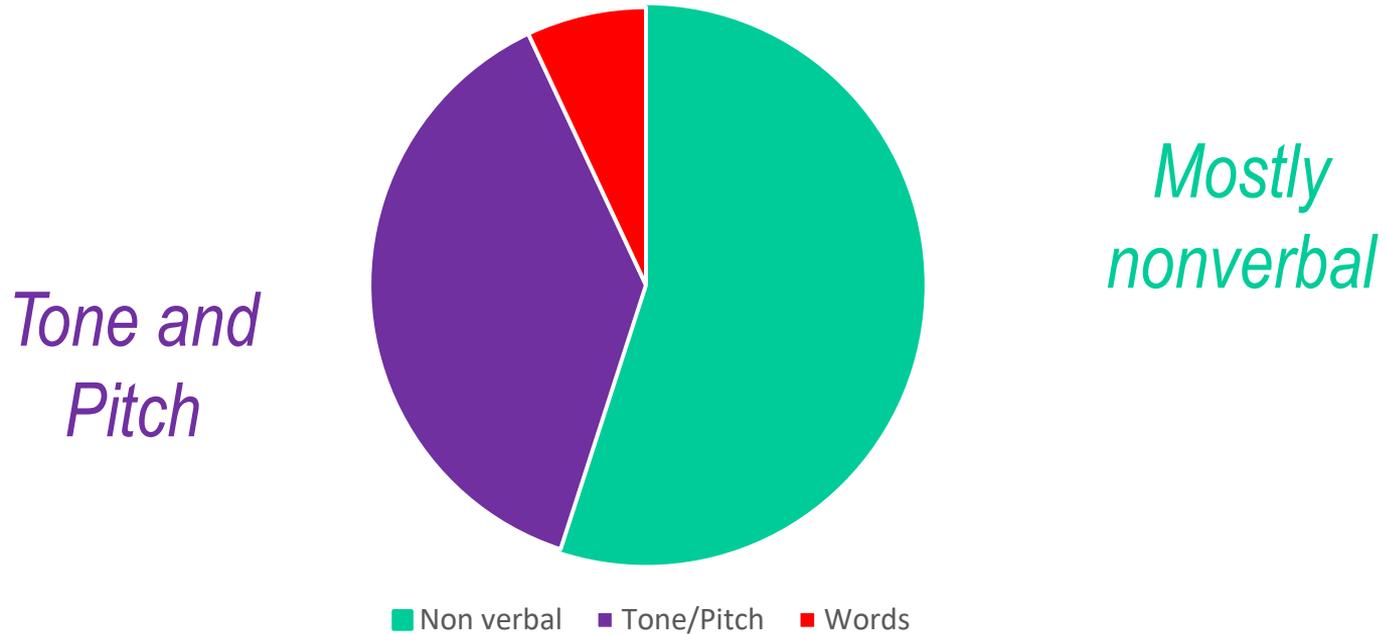
*How do you  
answer the  
phone?*

*How do you  
communicate  
with friends v  
folks from work?*



# What you know, but you think you don't know

- Communication is a key component of culture



Albert Mehrabian 1980.

# What you know, but you think you don't know

- Communication is a key component of culture

*Tone and  
Pitch*

*Avoiding  
Not answering questions  
Gaslighting  
Non Representation  
Exclusion  
Whitewashing*

*Mostly  
nonverbal*

# What you know, but you think you don't know

- Communication is a key component of culture

*Social archetype of: The Strong Black Woman*

*The truth gets silenced: The history of wet nurses is left out of most historical context when teaching about slavery in the United States.*

*Health team does not reflect a diverse population, which you serve.*

*Patient brochures, pictures, commercials and materials that do not reflect diverse patient population... which you serve.*

**What you don't know that you don't know**



**Social capital of support**

# What you don't know that you don't know

## Social Capital

Center for Women Policy Studies found 21% of women of color surveyed did not feel they were free to be "themselves at work.

Just when you may think you're facing challenges on your own, someone is there to push and encourage you to remain positive through it all.

(Jake Smith, Impact of Affinity Groups. City Year 2021)

# What you don't know that you don't know

Social Capital



# What you don't know that you don't know

## 2 hard truths.

# What you don't know that you don't know

Each person's story is their own.

EX: I am not the spokesperson for all Black Mothers.

# What you don't know that you don't know

Each person's story is their own.

You may create space for everyone to sit.

Take ownership of your DEI Journey.



# What you don't know that you don't know

Sometimes medical advice can feel like judgement.

EX: Co-sleeping while a cultural practice, is dangerous for a young infant. It is better to put them in a crib or bassinet.

- *Is my culture wrong? And your culture is right?*
- *No one has shown me another way, how was I supposed to know.*

# What you don't know that you don't know

Sometimes medical advice can feel like judgement.

EX: Co-sleeping while a cultural practice, is dangerous for a young infant. It is better to put them in a crib or bassinet.

- *This is another cost.*

# What you don't know that you don't know

Sometimes medical advice can feel like judgement.

You may develop practices and policies that allow each person to be successful from where they are.



What you know, you don't know know



But, now you know -  
Awareness

# Next Steps



# References

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Office of Equity and Diversity