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Based on the excellent foundation provided by the Task Force on the Experience of Women in the Rabbinate, and the individual interviews conducted by NewPoint, this document includes eleven scenarios for CCAR’s Implicit Bias Awareness Leadership Training Program. The scenarios can be used to facilitate dialogues with rabbinic search committees, boards, and rabbis as employers. Although every scenario can spark valuable conversations, we have identified specific scenarios that may be most relevant to each of these target audiences.

The scenarios are intended to focus primarily on issues of gender bias, but also may include other biases to demonstrate the intersectionality of identity and how individuals can also be stereotyped or treated differently because of other aspects of their identity, including race, economic background, age, and sexual orientation.

Each scenario is written in a two-part format.

**Part A:** The characters and the situation are introduced. This is followed by general discussion questions that invite participants to examine what assumptions they’re making about the situation. Part A of the scenarios could be discussed in small groups.

**Part B:** After discussing Part A, the facilitator projects a slide with Part B of the scenario on a screen, a look inside the perspective of one of the characters in the scenario. The Part B slide includes a photo of that character as well. Part B highlights how that character is actually feeling and what challenges they’re experiencing.

The discussion questions following Part B are more specific to that particular situation and the learning points that the facilitator aims to make in the discussion.

This two-part format brings more depth and nuance into the exploration of implicit bias and what we can do to interrupt bias to be more inclusive and make better decisions.

**Note:** Part B offers another individual’s perspective and experiences that are contributing to their behaviors. This is meant to spark thoughtful dialogue among readers, and, help us realize that there is often more under the surface. It is not meant to say that any one individual in the scenario is right or wrong. Person B may have their own unconscious bias just as everyone else.

As you read Parts A and B, reflect on your own personal reaction to each person’s behaviors and perspective. What assumptions are you making? What personal experiences from your life influence how you react to each scenario?

After both parts of each scenario, there is a section called “Learning Points.” These points are for the facilitator’s reference in preparing for the workshop. Many of these points will likely emerge organically during the discussion of the scenario. Any points that do not emerge during the discussion can be made by the facilitator at the end of the discussion of the scenario at hand.
Scenario 1: Back to Work
(Board Members, Rabbi as Employer)

Part A:
Rabbi Rosenshine recently had a baby and has returned to work after maternity leave. As a member of the board, you’re really happy to have her back in time for Passover. Though Rabbi Rosenshine was pretty happy when she first returned, you notice that she doesn’t seem to be her cheerful self recently. She doesn’t spend as much time talking with members of the congregation after services, and she’s not smiling much either. You’re concerned about her, but don’t want to make her feel like she can’t do her job after having a baby.

Discussion questions:
1. Why do you think Rabbi Rosenshine has been “less cheerful” lately?
2. What are some other possible explanations?
3. How could you approach Rabbi Rosenshine to share your concerns?

Part B:
Rabbi Rosenshine: “I thought coming back to work was going to be easier. Everyone is so happy for me and thrilled to meet the baby, and that’s great. But members of my congregation just won’t stop commenting on my appearance. I’m getting all of this unsolicited advice about how to lose the baby weight. I just wish I could focus on my job as a spiritual leader instead of feeling self-conscious about how I look!”

Discussion questions:
1. How does hearing Rabbi Rosenshine’s perspective impact your interpretation of her behavior since she returned from maternity leave?
2. What implicit biases might be impacting this situation?
3. How could you and other congregational leaders better support Rabbi Rosenshine?

Learning Points:
- The implicit biases in this situation have to do with gender and body size.
- Women are often expected to live up to narrowly defined standards of beauty. It is more common for people to comment on the appearance of a woman (dress, hair, make-up, size, etc.) than a man.
- While all larger-size people (both women and men) face social stigma, women often deal with more unsolicited comments about their size, especially after childbirth.
- All of the attention on a woman’s physical appearance means that less attention is paid to her intellectual, spiritual, social, and emotional capabilities. This can be very frustrating for women who expect to be valued as professionals and leaders.
- Other congregational leaders could support Rabbi Rosenshine by focusing their attention on job-relevant conduct, and not commenting on irrelevant factors such as physical appearance. When they hear someone else make a comment about the need to lose weight, they could politely point out that unsolicited advice is not helpful and Rabbi Rosenshine will seek out support IF she would like it.
Scenario 2: Don’t Give It Another Thought (Board)

Part A:
You are an associate rabbi for a large congregation in a metropolitan area. You and the cantor are both men, and the senior rabbi, Rabbi Katz, is a woman. An older male visiting scholar is giving a lecture to the congregation, and, refers to you as the senior rabbi and Rabbi Katz as the associate. In the moment, you decide not to correct him so as to be polite, and he delivers the rest of the lecture. The congregation seems very interested and he receives hearty applause at the end of the lecture.

After the lecture, you are talking with the cantor when Rabbi Katz walks up.

Cantor: “Well that was an interesting conversation, wasn’t it?”

Rabbi Katz: (hesitates) “Yes. It certainly was.”

You (Associate Rabbi): “It was a bit awkward when he got us mixed up!”

Rabbi Katz: “That was disappointing. And even before the lecture, he directed all his comments to you rather than me. It happens so often --”

Cantor: (quickly laughing and cutting in) “Don’t give it another thought! You can’t teach old dogs new tricks, right?”

Discussion questions:
1. What is causing Rabbi Katz to be concerned about the assumption that she is not the senior rabbi?
2. What is the possible impact of the cantor responding to Rabbi Katz this way?
3. How might you or the cantor have responded if Rabbi Katz were a man?

Part B:
Rabbi Katz: “Well if that wasn’t just too ironic. As I expressed my concern about being overlooked or dismissed by men…the Cantor butts in and makes a joke out of it. I’ve been at the synagogue for 6 months and have already been asked to clean up after meetings, patronized, and interrupted more times than I can count. I thought that if I chose a large congregation in a more urban environment I would be able to escape some of this sexism, but it seems to follow me anywhere I go. And nobody bothered to even correct his error. It makes me feel like my own colleagues don’t support me.”

Discussion questions:
1. How does hearing Rabbi Katz’ perspective impact your interpretation of the meeting?
2. How could you, as the associate rabbi, better support Rabbi Katz?
3. What can the cantor do to better support Rabbi Katz?
4. How can Rabbi Katz best deal with her frustration about how she is being treated?

Learning Points:
- The implicit biases in this scenario have to do with gender and possibly age.
- Female rabbis have often reported being mistaken for a less senior position, or that the men they are with (e.g. colleague, spouse) are assumed to be the rabbi.
- Gender biases are prevalent around the world and in the U.S. Women, including women in leader positions, are more often than men asked to engage in administrative or menial tasks, such as being asked to take notes, fetch coffee, or even clean up a room after a meeting.
- Women are interrupted more than their male colleagues, and by their male colleagues. Women are less likely to interrupt others, either male or female.
- When the cantor dismissed Rabbi Katz’ claim that she was being treated disparately, even if his intentions were to console her, the impact was that he was denying or discrediting her experience.
Scenario 3: Just Ignore It
(Rabbi as Employer)

Part A:
You are a cantor at your synagogue and are helping to orient a new associate rabbi, Rabbi Roth, who has recently moved from a large city to a smaller college town. The senior rabbi at your synagogue, Rabbi Bergman, has been a rabbi for 25 years and is very well respected by the congregation and in the wider Reform community. Both rabbis are women. You observe the following interaction in a meeting:

Rabbi Bergman: “So, how are you feeling after your first month here?”
Rabbi Roth: “Everyone has been so welcoming! I appreciate all of the warmth in this community. I have to say, though, if one more person comments on the clothes I’m wearing, I might just lose it."
Rabbi Bergman: “Oh, that’s nothing! In my early years as a rabbi, people would literally tell me what to wear and give me recipes to cook for large gatherings. I mean, they called me Rabbi Lisa, instead of Rabbi Bergman! Can you imagine the former senior rabbi being called Rabbi David? It simply wouldn’t have happened!”
Rabbi Roth: “So, what did you do? How did you handle it?”
Rabbi Bergman: “Oh you just have to ignore that stuff and focus on the important things. They don’t mean anything by it. You’re going to need to develop a thick skin to do this job.”

Discussion questions:
1. Why might the perspectives of Rabbi Bergman and Rabbi Roth be so different?
2. What biases might they have about each other?
3. What is the potential impact of these potential blind spots on their relationship?

Part B:
Rabbi Roth: “I’m feeling pretty lonely here in this new town. It’s such a big adjustment to serve in this congregation. I thought I would have some support with a female senior rabbi, but Rabbi Bergman doesn’t take my concerns seriously. I’d like to actually change how people in the congregation engage with female clergy, but I don’t think that change is going to happen unless I say something and am backed up by the senior rabbi.”

Discussion questions:
1. How does hearing Rabbi Roth’s perspective affect your interpretation of what happened in the meeting with Rabbi Bergman?
2. How could Rabbi Bergman better support Rabbi Roth?
3. What’s the best way for Rabbi Roth to bring this up with Rabbi Bergman?
4. How could you (as an observer in this situation) help facilitate greater understanding between Rabbi Bergman and Rabbi Roth?
Learning Points:

- The implicit biases in this scenario are gender and age.
- Even as more women have entered the clergy, many report that people comment on their clothing or style, comments that would not be directed toward a male rabbi.
- From a cross-generational perspective, Rabbi Bergman’s experience as a rabbi was different than Rabbi Roth’s. She might have felt like she had to endure biased behaviors in order to keep her position. Often, women who “paved the way” for subsequent generations feel a sense of frustration with what they may perceive as a sense of entitlement or lack of recognition for the kind of challenges they had to suffer through.
- For Rabbi Roth, she expected to have support and empathy from Rabbi Bergman. She wants to challenge the status quo and push progress, and, is frustrated that another woman leader is not appearing to support her.
- Both women have an opportunity to listen and empathize with one another. Rabbi Bergman especially may need to recognize the value in supporting the next generation of female leaders and encouraging progress rather than trying to force Rabbi Roth to accept the status quo.
Scenario 4: It’s Your Attitude
(Board, Rabbi as Employer)

Part A:
You are the Chair of the Board. Rabbi Luria is meeting with you to talk about an upcoming event. You ask Rabbi Luria about his recent performance review with Rabbi Weinberger, the female associate rabbi.

Rabbi Luria: Sighs. “I don’t really know how it went. I gave her the feedback about the importance of appearing warm and friendly, but she didn’t seem very receptive.”
You (Board Chair): “Why? What did she say?”
Rabbi Luria: “She didn’t actually respond to that feedback, but changed the subject.”
You (Board Chair): “Well, I hope that she heard you. We really need Rabbi Weinberger to connect well with our congregation. ”

Discussion questions:
1. What do you think happened during this performance review?
2. Why do you think Rabbi Weinberger changed the subject?
3. What are some other possible explanations?

Part B:
(Rabbi as Employer, Board, Search Committee)

Rabbi Weinberger: “And so it happens again! No matter how competent I am, the only feedback I ever get is about my attitude. ’ Couldn’t you smile more?’ ’Why do you look so serious all of the time?’ I’m sick of it! When I speak my mind like any other male rabbi can, I get to hear about my unpleasant and aggressive tone. I don’t get any feedback about the substance of my work. This is not why I went to rabbinical school!

Discussion questions:
1. How does hearing Rabbi Weinberger’s perspective impact your interpretation of her behavior in the performance review?
2. How might implicit biases be contributing to Rabbi Luria’s and the Board Chair’s perspective of Rabbi Weinberger?
3. What could Rabbi Luria do differently in future feedback conversations?
4. How could you, as Board Chair, better support Rabbi Weinberger?

Learning points:
● The implicit biases at play here concern gender.
● Quite often, women are judged based on whether or not they meet gender norms around attitude. Namely, that women should be pleasant, smile all of the time, and avoid looking
serious or upset. Men who look serious or upset do not receive the same negative judgments that women do for the same nonverbal expressions.

- There are significant consequences to women being assessed on attitude differently than men:
  - Women’s substantive job-related contributions are often overlooked.
  - Women do not get the same opportunities to develop professionally because they’re labeled as unpleasant or difficult.
- In future feedback conversations, Rabbi Luria could focus on Rabbi Weinberger’s primary job responsibilities and accomplishments. If he were to give feedback about attitude, it should be with the focus on building relationships with congregants to foster trust.
- When discussing with a search committee, discuss how committee members may want to stay conscious of potential biases in the way they characterize candidates. For instance, what words are we using to describe female versus male candidates and how does that impact the way we judge their suitability for the job?
Scenario 5: A Little Prickly  
(Board, Rabbi as Employer, Search Committee)  

Part A:  
You are the president of your temple, and a woman. Although you have never experienced it firsthand, you have seen the senior rabbi, Rabbi Liebman, act in somewhat dismissive ways to other women. You believe he means well, and he is beloved by the congregation, so women typically just give him a pass when he calls them “sweetie” or “honey” or “mansplains” to them in meetings. 

Tali is a rabbinical student who has recently come to your congregation to serve as a rabbinic intern. 

After temple one day you notice both Tali and Rabbi Liebman talking with an elderly congregant who recently lost her husband and seems distraught. You are pleased to see that Rabbi Liebman is including the student in his interactions with congregants. 

A couple of weeks later, you have the following exchange with Rabbi Liebman. 

Rabbi Liebman: “What do you think of our young student, Tali? A little prickly, eh?”  
You: “I hadn’t noticed. She seems really smart and accomplished. Why?” (Temple President)  
Rabbi Liebman: “You haven’t noticed the room freeze over when she walks in? Every time I talk with her she seems angry and impatient. I guess it’s just the way of young people these days.” 

Discussion Questions:  
1. On what behaviors is Rabbi Liebman basing his assumptions of Tali? On what identity characteristics is he basing his assumptions?  
2. What assumptions is he making?  
3. What else could explain what he perceives as Tali’s “prickly” attitude? 

Part B:  
Tali: I am trying really hard to make this work but I can’t take one more minute of Rabbi Liebman’s sexism and ageism. He calls me a “nice girl” and “cute” in front of congregants, and the other day told me how surprised and impressed he is that I can speak in an intelligent way about the text. The real kicker was the other week when I was talking to Mrs. Stern about her husband’s death and he butted in right when she was opening up with me. He totally took over and walked her away from me, as though I can’t possibly console someone who is grieving? He knows nothing about me or what sort of loss I have experienced. And even if I haven’t, I don’t need to have experienced the same things in life to be a good listener and counselor to my congregants. If that were the case, Rabbi Liebman certainly couldn’t counsel any women on postpartum issues or miscarriages or menopause!
Discussion Questions:

1. How do you see the situation differently now that you have heard Tali’s story?
2. What could Rabbi Liebman do to act more inclusively and leverage Tali’s talent?
3. What can Tali do to make her feelings known to you and Rabbi Liebman?
4. As the temple president, what can you do to support both Tali and Rabbi Liebman in working together?

Learning Points:

- The implicit biases in this scenario are gender and age.
- Women often report “micro-inequities” or “micro-aggressions,” which are small, subtle acts of exclusion that are often unintentional but can send a message of inferiority. The examples shown here, of “mansplaining” and referring to women in diminutive terms like “sweetie” or “honey” or “nice girl” are common. People may shrug these small acts off as insignificant, but when they are a pattern of behaviors, they can erode trust and morale and leave women feeling like they aren’t held in as high regard as their male counterparts.
- Rabbi Liebman also shows bias in interpreting Tali’s reactions to him as “prickly” and commenting on “the way young people are.” Women are often judged more harshly for their actions if they don’t act amiable and deferential to men. And younger people are often stereotyped by older people as being disrespectful or impatient.
- Rabbi Liebman’s biased behaviors also include interfering with her conversation with the grieving widow, which sends the message to Tali that he thinks she is incapable of providing solace because of her age.
- Tali also is potentially drawing her own conclusions about why Rabbi Liebman broke in to the conversation with Mrs. Stern. Based on her previous interactions with him, she is assuming he began to talk to the grieving widow because he doubts Tali’s abilities, which may or may not be the case.
- When discussing with a search committee, discuss how committee members may want to stay conscious of potential biases in the way they characterize candidates. For instance, what words are we using to describe female versus male candidates, or younger versus older candidates, and how does that impact the way we judge their suitability for the job?
Scenario 6: Who Will My Husband Talk To?  
(Search Committee, Board)  

Part A:  
You have been asked to join the search committee for your congregation’s new rabbi. You are approached by several members of the congregation who mention that because you already have a female rabbi, they would like to see the senior rabbi position filled by a man in order to promote gender balance. When you bring this up at the search committee’s meeting, one of the other committee members, Debbie, rolls her eyes and says, “I’ve heard it even from women! I had a congregant come up to me and say we have to hire a man because otherwise, she said, ‘who would my husband talk to?’ Listen, we can’t let a handful of people override our progress.”  

The rest of the committee seems uncomfortable and you are unsure how to proceed.  

Discussion questions:  
1. What are the different perspectives being held in this situation?  
2. Why might Debbie have reacted the way she did?  
3. What assumptions are you making about Debbie’s behaviors and how might that impact your communication with her?  

Part B:  
Debbie: It’s moments like this I doubt our actual commitment to equity, especially for women. The committee says it’s interested in making the selection process unbiased and trying to hire for diversity, but then they immediately bend over backwards for anyone in the congregation who pushes back. What would be so terrible about having women in the senior rabbi, rabbi, and cantor roles? Heaven knows we’ve had all men in those positions long enough.”  

Discussion questions:  
1. How do you see the situation differently now that you have heard Debbie’s story?  
2. How could implicit bias affect the committee's evaluation of the qualified candidates?  
3. What could you do to ensure this selection process maximizes diversity and inclusion?  

Learning points  
- The implicit biases in this scenario are related to gender.  
- This scenario is not intended to argue for or against seeking gender balance. Rather, it is meant to provoke conversation about the unconscious assumptions that people may bring into the selection process and the complexities search committees have to navigate when hiring the right “fit” for their congregation and for their institutional values.  
- The members of the congregation may be demonstrating implicit bias in sharing their concerns about hiring another woman. The desire for “gender balance” may be legitimate, but it could also illustrate an unconscious discomfort with having more than one woman leader.  
- The congregant who asked, “who will my husband talk to?” also demonstrates the bias that even women internalize around who is fit for what position. Women have had to
confide in male rabbis for a long time. Why wouldn’t a man be able to confide in a female rabbi?

- Debbie may be frustrated if she feels like she is the only person challenging gender bias. Women who frequently speak up about gender or other inequality issues often feel like they are the lone voice. They want others to see and say something so it doesn’t always feel like it falls on their shoulders.

- The search committee may want to consider setting clear agreements up front about what qualities or outcomes they wish to prioritize.
  - What choice will be most aligned with our values, our goals, and our congregation’s needs?
  - How will we plan to communicate the reason behind our decision to others?

- If participants challenge the idea of having multiple women and ask why can’t we promote gender balance, you may want to introduce the fact that women and minorities have long been kept out of leadership positions, and even when they have been promoted they face an immense deal of bias. Also, studies show that having one woman as the “solo status” can be detrimental. Women experience "stereotype threat" where they are judged more harshly, when they’re in the solo position, especially in typically male-dominated environments. So ideally we would love to have "balance" and equal representation but considering the systemic barriers for women in leadership we should all be willing to create space for MORE women leaders in our congregations. This doesn’t have to be an “either/or” conversation, rather an invitation to explore and find common ground on what gender balance and equity should look like for your particular congregation.
Scenario 7: Too Young
(Rabbi as Employer)

Part A:
At a recent staff meeting, Rabbi Silverman asks the pre-school director and her staff what they have planned for summer activities. Jessica, a recent college graduate and teacher, enthusiastically shares that she has some great ideas for pride month in June. She wants to read the book, “Red: A Crayon’s Story,” with the kids to teach about gender identity and what it means to be transgender.

Jessica: “I’m so excited about this book! All of the characters are crayons. The main character is a blue crayon with a red wrapper. Everyone expects the crayon to color in red, and even try to help the crayon, but it can only color in blue. Eventually, the other crayons recognize that the crayon is actually blue and -“

Rabbi Silverman: (quickly interrupts) “Don’t you think these kids are a bit young to be talking about those kinds of things? I think you’ll just confuse them.”

Discussion questions:
1. Why might Rabbi Silverman be uncomfortable in this situation?
2. Why do you think Jessica might be so passionate about her idea for pride month?
3. What implicit bias might each person bring to this discussion?

Part B:
Jessica: “Why do we even hang a pride flag outside our synagogue? Rabbi Silverman thinks our students are too young to talk about gender identity, but this is such an important issue. And kids start categorizing their own gender by age 3! That’s why experts have written age-appropriate books like the one I suggested to talk to kids about gender identity so they know it’s ok. I was seriously considering inviting my friend, Dylan, who is trans, to join our congregation. Now, I’m not so sure. I don’t think this place is as open-minded as it claims to be.”

Discussion questions:
1. How does hearing Jessica’s perspective impact your interpretation of the disagreement in the staff meeting?
2. How could Rabbi Silverman respond differently to facilitate dialogue?
3. What could you, as an observer, say or do to help bridge differences between Jessica and Rabbi Silverman?

Learning Points:
● The implicit bias at play here is around gender expression and gender identity. There are also some generational differences in this situation.
● While there is increasing openness and acceptance for individuals who identify as gay or lesbian, there remains a lot of stigma against people who identify as transgender on nonbinary. Talking about gender expression and gender identity can be uncomfortable.
for some people, largely because it is unfamiliar and calls into question deeply held cultural beliefs.

- Jessica expects that a congregation that calls itself progressive and flies the pride flag should be open and welcoming to anyone from the LGBTQIA+ community. She could offer to do a brownbag on gender expression and gender identity for anyone interested in better understanding transgender issues.
- Rabbi Silverman could respond differently by being curious rather than shutting down the conversation. Perhaps he could ask to read the book or talk with Jessica individually to learn more about what she wants to teach in preschool.
Scenario 8: Membership Comes at a Price
(Board)

Part A:
You are the chair of the membership committee for your temple. As part of a new inclusion campaign, Rabbi Stein sends an email to all of the committee chairs to incorporate a focus on diversity and inclusion. At the next membership committee meeting, the group has a conversation about the rabbi’s email and several members discuss ideas for focusing on diversity, specifically on women and the LGBTQIA+ community. You notice one of the other members, Michael, purse his lips, fold his arms, and look away. He stays quiet through the meeting. Michael is typically very outspoken in meetings, so you begin to wonder if he’s not interested in supporting this effort.

Discussion questions:

1. What is your interpretation of Michael’s behaviors?
2. What implicit bias or assumptions might you have about Michael?
3. What else could explain his actions?
4. How can you respond effectively in this situation?

Part B:
Michael: Of course I am dedicated to equality in every way in our congregation. I sometimes feel like our congregation leadership has some bias around other populations who may not feel included, like people from a different socioeconomic background, people of color, or immigrants. We’re in a wealthy neighborhood and our congregants can all easily afford membership dues and contribute to our fundraising efforts. There are people who live in our area, but are left out because they can’t afford entry into our community. But I can’t say anything because if I try to steer the conversation away from gender or sexual identity, they might label me as narrow-minded. I feel like I’m better off just staying quiet.

Discussion questions:

1. How does hearing Michael’s perspective impact your interpretation of his behaviors in the meeting?
2. What can Rabbi Stein do to address Michael’s concerns?
3. How can you ensure that all implicit bias issues get an adequate amount of attention?
4. What can you do as the committee chair to ensure a commitment to inclusion?

Learning points:

● This scenario deals with biases around gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.
● People tend to be more aware of the biases that others possess but are far less able to notice their own biases. As Michael points out, the members who want to focus on gender and sexual orientation might be missing out on other identity groups that are marginalized or experiencing bias. This could be an opportunity to explore how the
membership committee broadens their focus to be actively inclusive of other communities.

- Michael may have some of his own implicit bias when it comes to gender and/or sexual orientation bias. As a straight white male, he may be uncomfortable acknowledging where he has automatic advantages, especially if he consciously supports equality and inclusion. It’s possible that he is being dismissive of gender and sexual orientation issues because it’s easier for him to talk about issues of race or economic inequality.
- Michael has a good point, but also needs to shift his mindset from seeing this as an either/or situation. Focusing on building an inclusive community for people of all economic backgrounds, races, and nationalities should not preclude the committee from addressing gender and sexual identity issues.
**Scenario 9: Welcome!**

(Board)

**Part A:**
Rabbi Fierst has organized a dinner for potential new members of the congregation. You are a board member in charge of the catering and are setting up the buffet table when the first guests arrive. They’re a family of four: Rebecca (a black woman), Aaron (a white man), and their two young children. You welcome them and introduce them to Rabbi Fierst.

Rabbi Fierst: “Welcome! So good to meet you.”

Aaron: “Thanks for having us.”

Rabbi Fierst: “Glad you could make it and that you brought the kiddos!”

Rebecca: “Hi, Rabbi Fierst. How long have you been a rabbi for this congregation?”

Rabbi Fierst: “Oh it’s been a good ten years now. And how about you Rebecca - when did you get involved in Jewish life? After marrying this lucky guy [pats Aaron on the back]?”

Rebecca: “Oh my mother is Jewish, and I grew up going to synagogue. Aaron actually started coming to services after marrying me.”

**Discussion questions:**

1. What are the potential automatic assumptions that Rabbi Fierst might make?
2. How might Aaron and Rebecca react to this and their decision to join the temple?
3. What might be the impact on their relationship?

**Part B:**
Rebecca: “Here we go again! I go out of my way to find the most progressive religious community I can, but I’m always an outsider. Never mind that I grew up Jewish and Aaron never went to synagogue before meeting me. In the eyes of the world, he’s the real Jew and I just don’t belong.”

**Discussion questions:**

1. How does hearing Rebecca’s perspective impact your interpretation of this exchange at the dinner?
2. How do you think Jews of color might feel when it’s assumed that they are not Jewish?
3. What could Rabbi Fierst do differently to welcome potential members of color?
4. Who might be in the best position to give Rabbi Fierst some feedback about his own implicit bias about race and how could they bring it up?
5. How could you as the committee chair anticipate this false assumption and prevent or respond to such comments?
Learning Points:

- The implicit bias at play in this situation is around race and skin color.
- Jews of color experience these kinds of situations quite often. Even though it’s unintentional, leaders and community members can exclude individuals who don’t “look Jewish” and make them feel like outsiders.
- To be more inclusive, Rabbi Fierst could simply ask any potential new member what brought them to the synagogue and what their previous experiences in Jewish communities have been. That would remove assumptions and allow for a more open conversation.
- If you are a white leader within the congregation, consider giving Rabbi Fierst this feedback. Rather than the burden of pointing out bias to fall on the group that is the target of the bias, this is an opportunity for someone from the dominant group to be an ally and provide constructive feedback.
Scenario 10: The “Right” Kind
(Board, Search Committee)

Part A:
You are the board secretary of a small, rural congregation. Rabbi Pereira has just recently arrived. He is joined by his husband and two young children. When Rabbi Pereira arrived, you sat down with him and the temple president, Abel.

Abel: “Well, first of all, I just want you to know that we have had gay rabbis in the past and it’s ok if you are gay. Whatever your preference, we welcome you.”

Rabbi Pereira: “Thank you. I’ve had straight presidents before and it’s ok with me if you are not gay.

Abel: (laughs) Hey listen, you have a solid family life and two adorable children. We are excited to welcome you all to our community.

Discussion questions:
1. What do you think are Abel’s intentions?
2. What blind spots might Abel have?
3. How might either of his statements be received by Rabbi Pereira? How might Rabbi Pereira interpret these comments?

Part B:
Rabbi Pereira: What I heard in that conversation was an older straight man telling me he will tolerate me even if he doesn’t agree with my life. And would he or others in the community be as accepting if I wasn’t married with children? Would they see me as promiscuous, unstable, or less trustworthy around their kids?

Discussion questions:
1. How might hearing Rabbi Pereira’s perspective alter your interpretation of this conversation?
2. What information might Abel have missed in your conversation with the rabbi?
3. What can you do to ensure Rabbi Pereira feels truly included in the community?

Learning Points
● The implicit biases here are sexual orientation and possibly age.
● Even though Abel likely intended to make Rabbi Pereira feel welcome and comfortable, by calling out his sexual orientation and saying, “it’s ok if you are gay,” may indicate to Rabbi Pereira that he is an outsider and that his sexual orientation is tolerated but still seen as the “Other.”
● Abel’s comments about Rabbi Pereira’s family life indicates to Rabbi Pereira that Abel has negative stereotypes about single gay men.
This scenario is a good opportunity to discuss the importance of focusing on the impact of one’s behaviors regardless of the intent. Regardless of one’s good intentions, their actions may have an adverse effect on the message receiver based on that person’s lived experiences and identity lenses. In the future, Abel should consider how Rabbi Pereira might interpret such statements based on his experiences as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community.

In discussing this scenario with a search committee, make the point that in the selection process they need to question what hidden stereotypes they may be unconsciously holding about who is suitable and who isn’t when it comes to a rabbi’s sexual orientation, as well as relationship status and parental status.
Scenario 11: Find a Way
(Search Committee, Board, Rabbi as Employer)

Part A
Rabbi Friedman is a new associate rabbi for a suburban congregation. He has recently moved to the area with his wife and two young children, ages two and five. The senior rabbi, Rabbi Diamond, has been with the congregation for 25 years. He and his wife are empty-nesters and recently became grandparents. In a recent meeting, they have the following exchange:

Rabbi Friedman: “I was just looking at next month’s schedule, and it looks like there are a number of administrative and finance meetings scheduled for Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings.”

Rabbi Diamond: “Yes, there is a lot we need to work through, and we need to involve some Board members who are only free in the evenings.”

Rabbi Friedman: “I appreciate the Board members’ schedules, but I won’t be able to make meetings on Monday and Wednesday evenings because I have to take care of the kids. Could we possibly reschedule for early morning or lunchtime?”

Rabbi Diamond: “Can’t your lovely wife take care of the kids? We need you to attend these meetings.”

Rabbi Friedman: “My wife has regular work commitments those evenings, so she’s not available to take care of the kids.”

Rabbi Diamond: “Well you’re a smart, creative young man. Maybe call your mom or mother-in-law to help out. I’m sure you can find a way.”

Part B
Rabbi Friedman: “Rabbi Diamond is so old school. I bet his wife was a stay-at-home mother when their kids were young. The thing is that my wife and I have an equal partnership. We co-parent, and it’s just as much my responsibility to care for our two young kids as it is hers. I know that my job requires some evening and weekend work, but I don’t think it’s too much to ask that some administrative meetings take place during the day. If I were a woman, I wonder if Rabbi Diamond would have the same expectation that my spouse take care of the children.”

Discussion questions:
1. What assumptions is Rabbi Diamond making in this situation? Where do those assumptions come from?
2. What assumptions is Rabbi Friedman making in this situation? Where do those assumptions come from?
3. What could Rabbi Diamond do to accommodate Rabbi Friedman’s request?
4. What could Rabbi Friedman do to further explain his needs?
Learning Points:

- The implicit biases in this situation are around gender and generation.
- Addressing gender bias means critically examining expectations of both women and men. In this situation, a man is not being afforded the same flexibility to address childcare needs that a woman might be afforded in the same position.
- Men who are actively involved in parenting and childcare are often praised and celebrated for work that women typically do without any acknowledgement because it’s simply expected.
- Rabbi Diamond raised a family during a very different time with more fixed gender roles. He needs to see beyond his own experience to appreciate shifting gender roles and accommodate work/life balance needs of all clergy and staff - both women and men.
- Rabbi Friedman is of a generation that believes in more flexible gender roles. He shares parenting responsibilities with his wife and is looking for some flexibility. He may need to further explain what he and his family need and set some clear boundaries with Rabbi Diamond.
- If discussing with a search committee, point out that the committee may need to consider what hidden stereotypes or unconscious biases they may have when it comes to the gender of the rabbi and expectations around who needs flexibility to care for young children.
Scenario 12: Not a “Good Fit”
(Search Committee)

Part A
You are part of a search committee for your congregation’s new rabbi. Your committee just conducted a virtual interview with one of the candidates, Alona. When she showed up on the screen, you did a small double take. You were expecting a White woman. Alona is Black. You felt a small twinge of guilt realizing your surprise at her skin color, but wave it off, saying to yourself, “It was just unexpected, but I am not a racist.” The interview goes well and you believe Alona is a strong candidate.

Later on, as the selection committee gathers to narrow down the candidates for the next round, several of the committee members show a preference for other candidates (all White) and do not place Alona’s name in the top 3. You ask, “what about Alona?” One of the committee members, Bryan, replies, “I found her to be a bit too forceful. We want someone with charisma and passion but she was kind of ‘in your face’. I’m not sure she would resonate with some members of the congregation.”

Discussion questions:
1. What implicit biases are present in this situation and how might they impact the selection process?
2. What could you as the member of the search committee do to manage these biases?

Part B
(Alona, Candidate for rabbi position):
“I don’t think I will get a call back from that committee. The minute I came on the screen I could see the surprise on their faces. My parents purposely gave me a Jewish name because they wanted me to feel like I was part of the community. I sometimes think it works against me. No matter what, I am always seen as ‘different’ and not in a good way. I tried my best not to be too opinionated, but maybe I was too “honest” on some of those hard questions. I just didn’t sense a lot of confirmation with my answers. The Reform community says it’s so progressive, yet it wasn’t until I went to Jewish school as a kid that I experienced racism. I want to help be a face for the next generation of biracial and Black Jewish leaders. But it is so exhausting to feel like no matter what I do it won’t be good enough.”

Discussion questions:
1. What new insights did you gain from listening to Alona’s story?
2. How might Alona’s past experiences impact her perceptions and behaviors?
3. What could the search committee do differently to mitigate potential biases in its decision making?

Learning points:
• Implicit biases and associations often occur when we experience something or someone we perceive as “atypical.” If people generally are accustomed to associating “Jewish”
with a White person, their brain has trouble processing a Black person as Jewish. This can lead to cognitive dissonance, where our brain has trouble processing the new information it’s receiving because it is counter to what we have experienced or believed in the past.

- When we experience cognitive dissonance, we sometimes engage in confirmation bias. We look for data that upholds our preexisting beliefs and experiences, and discount or ignore data that challenges those beliefs. For example, the selection committee member has to justify their double take when encountering Alona by reminding themselves “I’m not a racist.”

- Bryan, the committee member who critiqued Alona’s passionate, assertive responses as too “forceful” and “in your face,” he drew a judgment of her actions that may reveal a bias. Often, women of color are “tone policed”, where they are told they’re coming off as too aggressive. This plays into the stereotype of the Angry Black Woman. Also, Bryan’s statement, I’m not sure she will resonate with some members of the congregation” may show a racial and/or gender bias.

- The selection committee should be very intentional and up front about managing biases. A best practice is to decide early on in the process how to structure every interview to give each candidate equal opportunities for success. The committee should also agree upon selection criteria up front. Watch out for any statements by committee members that make assumptions or judge a person’s character rather than evaluating actual behaviors.