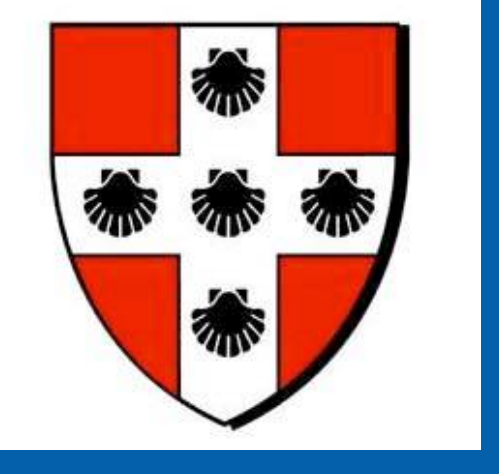# WESLEYAN ANTI-BIAS CURRICULUM

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## INTRODUCTION

Children as young as three years old are aware of race, gender, economic status, and language among other social categories constructed by society.[1, 2] While children in preschool may be too young to understand the complexities of social categories, they are still aware of them. [2]

Research supports that not discussing biases (i.e., colorblindness) is harmful to children.[3] To confront biases, parents and educators need to address social categories instead of ignoring them. Currently, there is a lack of educational resources available to promote this discussion. [3] We aim to address this gap by building a preschool-appropriate anti-bias curriculum.

## RESEARCH GAP

**Lack of preschool anti-bias resources**

**Children develop biased views in as early as preschool**
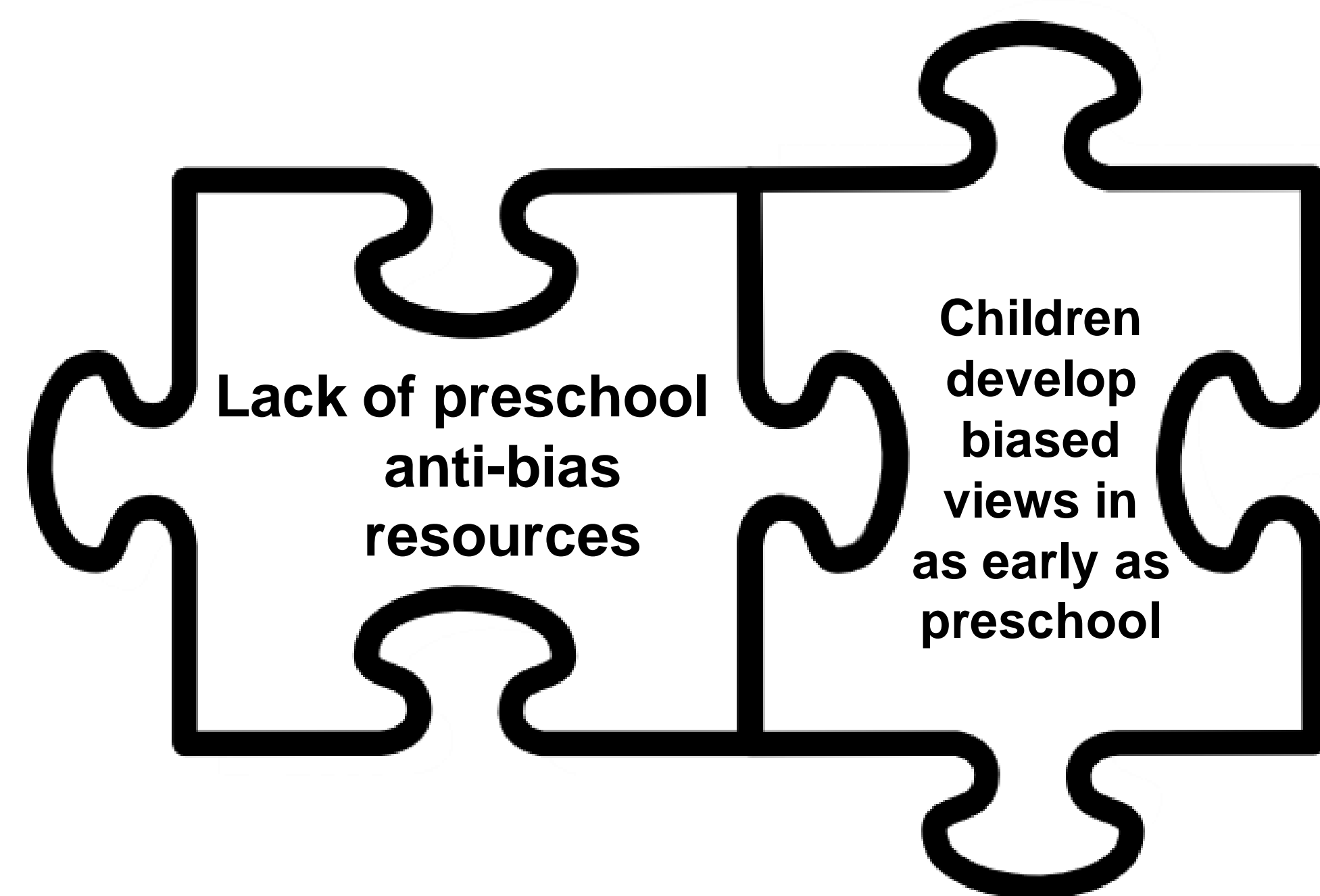
## RESEARCH QUESTION

**How can we take pre-existing childhood developmental research and translate it into an anti-bias intervention for pre-school children?**

## RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

Research on how children perceive language

- Children assume that parents and teachers are experts and the labels that they use are exact. [2]
- Preschool children develop ingroup biases toward novel social groups [1]
- Children are sensitive to generic language vs. non-generic language. [2]
  - Example: Girls have long hair vs. Sally has long hair
- The development of essentialist beliefs in children requires additional input, which they receive from their environment [2]
  - "Essentialist thought is characterized by the belief that members of a category share important, nonobvious properties, or essences, and these essences give rise to observable similarities" [1]

The language and behavior that children digest through cues like generic language from adults support children's understanding that categories are coherent and consistent, which elicits essentialist beliefs and ingroup preferences. [1, 2]

## RESEARCH INSPIRED TRANSLATION

- Focus on individuality
- Build on children's self-awareness and awareness of others
- Avoid using verbal group labeling and generic language with children
- Ensure that the language that is being used with children is intentional
- Explain essentialism to have children understand that "essence" is not an indicator of character or preference

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## ACTIVITY EXAMPLE

**Identity Collage Activity**

The **goal** of the activity is to combat the development of essentialism and intergroup bias in children. By centering the activity around identify, multiple topics can be introduced to children.

**Message**: How you look and how you act are not related. Your hair and eye color does not determine if you choose to be kind, what you like, or your creativity.



Inner circle= essential characteristics (ex: eye color, birthday, number of siblings, etc.)

Outer circle= characteristics that are subjected to change (ex. Favorite candy, favorite activity, favorite movie, etc.)

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Research-based decisions are the foundation of our project. Some next steps include:

- Establishing what biases we want to address in the curriculum
- Reviewing the literature as we build the curriculum
- Field testing through parents and preschools

## REFERENCES

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