



## Project Two

### Part One: Analyzing the Impact of Implicit Bias and Stereotype Threat on DEI

Develop a 2- to 3-paragraph summary for each of the following rubric criteria as they relate to the ability to view others through a DEI lens.

1. **Describe the socio-psychological implications of implicit bias on our ability to view others through a DEI lens. Address the following in your response:**
  - A. **How can the assumptions we make about social groups unconsciously influence our attitudes, language, and actions in subtle ways?**
  - B. **Given the shift from unconscious to conscious perception, describe how an implicit bias could become an explicit bias.**
  - C. **Given the notion of bias as a learned construct, describe what you believe is the most effective step that a person could take to unlearn bias.**

Implicit biases are automatic and unintentional biases found within all of us (National Institutes of Health, 2022). Whether we wish to accept this reality or not, our implicit biases exist. These biases are often at the core of many of our beliefs and tend to steer our choices. Take, for example, a section 8 program director in an inner city housing authority, this individual often handles the difficult cases and is responsible for managing those who break program rules. Over the years, this individual has had a lot of experience with one particular racial group breaking the rules. Despite the statistics of the area being predominantly this racial group, the housing director has subconsciously become biased against this particular group as they have only caused trouble (based on personal experience). When dealing with this particular racial group, the director unintentionally experiences the bias that there will be trouble because ‘most people’ of this race cheat the program or break the rules. If the program director was able to recognize that the bias existed, there would then be an opportunity to explore whether or not there was justification in the bias. What the program director might likely find is that the reason that difficulties were experienced with mostly this group is that the percentage of individuals of that race in the program were 80% - and that, statistically, the interactions had less to do with only that race being the issue are more to do with the fact that most of the people in the program were that race. Maybe the program director would be able to look at larger statistics and see that the bias was unfounded and that would reduce negative feelings towards this group of people, providing opportunities for open discussion and learning from these individuals in order to improve relations within all groups and create an atmosphere of community.

Furthering the discussion, if one isn’t made aware of their implicit biases, or – if the individual doesn’t see flaws in their implicit biases, those biases may then take a larger and more concrete form. Maybe the housing director gives less chances to those in the race seen as ‘problem makers’ or gives preference to someone of a different race. The director is aware of the decisions being made and continues to make them based on bias and not on need or equality.

Biases are learned...which means they can be unlearned (Edgoose et al., 2019). As seen in Kirsten Weir’s article on dismantling hate, breaking barriers, and opening conversations in the way that Daryl Davis did with KKK members provides an opportunity to understand situations, people, and communities as a whole (Weir, 2018). By employing the principles in Allport’s



contact theory, Davis spent time with the people who despised them the most. This contact fostered a deeper understanding and dispelled inaccurate perceptions, ultimately changing the minds of many. Davis' journey is an example of how important it is to take time to be willing to see more perspectives than just your own. This willingness promotes collaboration, discussion, and positive interactions in our communities and groups. Understanding that attitudes follow norms, we need to be willing to have discussions about 'norms' and also beliefs because those have the power to shape our attitudes (Weir, 2018).

**2. Describe the socio-psychological implications of stereotype threat on our ability to view others through a DEI lens. Address the following in your response:**

- A. What are the factors that could place a person at risk of confirming a negative stereotype about their own social group?**
- B. If your group suffers from a negative stereotype, what are the implications of this judgment on psychosocial well-being?**
- C. Assuming that biases and stereotypes are defined by values, what are some useful strategies for reducing stereotype threat?**

Stereotypic threats, as defined by Claude Steele and Joshua Aronson as threats that are “being at risk of confirming, as a self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one’s group” (Kujan, 2022). When a person is at risk of confirming a negative stereotype, there are many things that can influence the outcome. For example, stress can impact performance. Telling a student that their grade will reflect on the competency of their gender or race will add stress to the student. They may feel that intense pressure to do well or they will fail not only themselves, but also their gender/race. It sets them up to have a reduction in success even before they start. Research has shown that stress impacts our performance by affecting our memory, group performance, decision making (LeBlanc, 2009). By adding the stress of feeling like they have to prove something, their performance could be hindered unnecessarily and skew the actual results. Russell McClain also posited in his Tedx talk that anxiety (or ‘excessive load’) also creates barriers in performance (McClain, 2020, 05:50).

When groups suffer from negative stereotypes, they often find themselves facing an uphill battle. They feel like they always are in the spotlight, that they have to prove themselves – and, if they don’t succeed, they’re only letting themselves down, they’re letting their entire group down. The pressure to disprove negative stereotypes creates pressure and increases likelihood of individuals being so concerned about confirming the stereotypes that they doubt themselves and their abilities leading them to fall into a self-fulfilling prophecy of confirming the negative stereotype (Heaning, 2022). This impacts self-esteem, self and group confidence, and reduces the potential that the individual and/or the group can rise to.

Stereotype threats can be reduced by reducing stereotypes. Human beings are unique, each of us have different qualities and characteristics that bring richness to our society. By creating an environment that focuses on and celebrates diversity, we reduce stereotypes and introduce positive and healthy ideas about the people around us. Fostering a growth-mindset also encourages individuals to see their efforts outside of the light of ‘success and failure’ and more in the light of ‘growing and learning.’ A growth mindset gives the learner a new lens to look at themselves with. With a growth-mindset, the learner doesn’t see failure, they see opportunities to improve (McClain, 2020, 08:23).



**3. Describe how cultivating a growth mindset can help to reduce biased, stereotypical thinking and promote DEI. Address the following in your response:**

- A. In what ways can a growth mindset help us to become aware of our implicit biases?**
- B. How can a growth mindset help us to reduce stereotypical thinking?**
- C. Assuming that people can be influenced to change their minds, what are some practical strategies for shifting from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset?**

People are imperfect beings...although we don't like to view ourselves as anything but 'good' and 'perfect,' we are far from it. In order to help us accept that we have implicit biases, we first have to foster an environment that doesn't view missteps as failures, they are opportunities to grow and learn (Washington University in St. Louis, 2022). Providing this growth-mindset offers a safe space for people to recognize and accept their behaviors in the context of growth and not failure. When seeing their missteps as building blocks towards bettering their understanding of individuals/situations, the ability to receive information is less obstructed and more open to grasping ownership of past and future behavior in a positive light. When we see others as individuals and not as 'groups of people' or race, intelligence, gender, orientation, we create new lines of communication and new dialogue within ourselves and within our communities. This communication and dialogue helps to remove veil that stereotypes place on others and allows us to see people for who they are underneath...unique beings that are more than a label. Changing a fixed mindset first begins with self-awareness. Understanding the things that keep us stagnant in our growth allows us to problem solve and remove the chains that keep us fixed in our mindset. According to Anne-Laure Le Cunff, some fixed mindset triggers are as follows: Hard work, setbacks, negative feedback, challenges, comparison (Cunff, 2020). Once we identify our triggers, we can use it as a starting place to move ahead. As stated earlier, a growth mindset is the ability to see missteps as opportunities to learn and evolve, so now we have to evolve! Being mindful that the process isn't instantaneous *and* embracing the idea that our learning never really stops, we are empowered with the ability to change how we view the world around us (Cunff, 2020). How we talk to ourselves impacts the way we view our learning. Telling myself that I'm a failure and acknowledging failure as an opportunity to grow are vastly different things (Cunff, 2020). One is the period at the end of our sentence (you're a failure), while the other is a comma within our sentence (I didn't succeed, yet). While it's important to acknowledge our weak areas, the key is how we interpret our weak areas. If we tell ourselves we are weak without embracing and then exploring ways to strengthen those weak areas, our mindset is fixed because we don't leave room for growth (Cunff, 2020). When at first you don't succeed, don't quit. Being able to see our efforts as movement towards a goal as opposed to success/failure reduces the chance of falling into a fixed mindset and gives us the opportunity to grow with others (Cunff, 2020).

**Part Two: Responding to the Challenges of Instituting DEI**

In a 2- to 3-paragraph summary, you will use the knowledge you have acquired pertaining to DEI, coupled with theories of social psychology, to develop recommendations designed to encourage members of your university system to adopt diversity, equity, and inclusivity as core values of community well-being. Address the following rubric criteria in your recommendations:

- 1. Using one theory of social psychology to support your position, develop recommendations to help the university system promote diversity.**



2. **Using one theory of social psychology to support your position, develop recommendations to help the university system promote equity.**
3. **Using one theory of social psychology to support your position, develop recommendations to help the university system promote inclusivity.**

University systems that are sensitive to ensuring that diversity not only exists but is celebrated are crucial in our world today. Understanding Social Identity Theory, one recognizes that there is a need for a healthy sense of personal and social identity. Ensuring that students have a diverse experience and that they are not a minority on campus helps them achieve a healthy sense of self and social identity. Having a sense of belonging somewhere improves our self-esteem and the health of our group. We categorize and label (ourselves and others), identify with those like us, and compare ourselves with others who are not like us (Myers & Twenge, 2018, p. 254). Recognizing this, universities can promote diversity by having a group within their institution be focused on creating an atmosphere that brings the groups together. This entity could host diversity forums or topics that are relevant to the student body where people can come together and grow their understanding of themselves and other groups. This entity can host diversity events that aim to promote interactions between groups. Finally, this entity can work to ensure that there is equal representation on campus and a way for people to address concerns if they feel there is an issue with diversity on campus (PeopleAdmin, 2022).

Using Allport's Contact Theory, creating an opportunity for cooperative work together helps to reduce prejudice and conflict (Nickerson, 2021). For example, creating a campus project that has a focus on a campus issue that impacts many different groups on campus allows for students of all walks of life to come together and work on an issue is relevant to all. Giving a common cause where groups can work together helps to remove biases about others and fosters an environment where a unifying goal can also create an opportunity for understanding others as we get to see them in an individual context rather than the context we've created with our labels (Nickerson, 2021). Doing so provides the opportunity to create a more equitable environment for all, not just the majority groups.

There is growing evidence that promotion and targeting of inclusive behaviors is more effective than altering explicit and implicit biases (Moreu et al., 2021). Thus, if we utilize social constructivism and view opportunities to learn through Vygotsky's lens, we see learning as a collaborative process. Allowing opportunities for collaboration amongst students and even faculty facilitates growth and inclusivity (Berkley Graduate Division, n.d.). People will feel like their voices are heard and that those voices matter. We can also target the behaviors we want to promote and model ways in which we can grow through utilization of the Zone of Proximal Development. For example, if I want to model inclusivity, I could host a campus town hall where we talk about inclusivity and discuss different approaches the school has come up with and how to implement them.



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