MAKE IT YOUR BUSINESS: TOOLKIT 101

FUNDAMENTALS OF RACIAL AND HEALTH EQUITY

BlueCross BlueShield Minnesota

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WHAT IS DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION?

WHAT IS DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION?
INTRODUCTION

Businesses have been focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts at varied levels in recent years. The history of these efforts span decades, but many see the 1980s as the modern starting point of diversity programs and training in the workforce.

Diversity

Definitions of "diversity" vary widely, but most are rooted in the idea that diversity is a representation of multiple races, cultures, ethnicities, gender identities, abilities, religions, socioeconomic levels and lived experiences.

While diversity is essential in organizations, diversity efforts alone can run the risk of focusing too much on numbers and quotas. For instance, if a company is solely committed to increasing diversity in the organization, high priority would be placed on metrics like the percentage of employees who identifies as male or female, the percentage of employees who identify as Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC), etc. But diversity alone is not enough.

As Yomi Adegoke says in a recent article for the Guardian: "Quotas are often offered as a panacea to all diversity-workplace woes…Diversity itself is only one part of the puzzle – inclusion is the bigger, most integral piece. If the culture of a workplace doesn't genuinely embrace diversity of thought, the backgrounds of its staff mean nothing."[1]

Liese Rodger expands upon this idea: "Meeting a diversity quota is not enough. To ensure success, development and sponsorship are required. Company-wide discussions about race are required. Equal pay is required. Representation is required. An inclusive environment must exist. This doesn't mean that annual diversity training hosted by HR checks the box. It means acknowledging uncomfortable situations… understanding that diversity does not mean racism ceases to exist and amplifying voices of people of color in order to combat unconscious biases."[2]

Diverse talent should exist across all levels of an organization, from the board of directors and executive leadership to entry level positions. It also means that the organization retains and supports people of color and diverse employees after they join.

For an organization to be most effective, and for everyone in its workforce to be set up for success, it is essential to go beyond the first step of increasing diversity. Which leads to equity and inclusion.

MEETING A DIVERSITY QUOTA IS NOT ENOUGH

WHAT IS DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION?
INTRODUCTION

Equity

The term "equity" has become more commonplace in recent years, including how it is different and distinct from equality. One way to think about the difference: equality means everyone has access to the same thing, while equity means everyone has access to what they need.

From a business perspective, it is essential to embed equity into an organization's culture in order to achieve success. A recent article from HR Technologist offers this reflection: "Equity…attempts to identify the specific needs and requirements informed by demographic traits such as ethnicity, nationality, age, gender, etc. It then tries to address the differing needs of each group by bridging the gap…This makes equity central to genuine empowerment … and not just theoretical equality."[3]

There are many examples of racial inequity in the workplace. A recent Harvard Business Review article explored this issue, specifically related to the experience of Black employees and leaders:

"Black managers report receiving less psychosocial support than their white counterparts do. Black employees [compared to whites and Latinos] are less likely … to say that their company's mission or purpose makes them feel their job is important, that their coworkers will do quality work, and that they have opportunities to learn and grow. Black leaders are more likely than white ones to leave their organizations. It's clear that the norms and cultural defaults of leadership in most organizations create an inhospitable environment that leaves even those Black employees who have advanced feeling like outsiders — and in some cases pushes them out the door."[4]

Addressing these and other inequities is crucial in order to have a culture that can recruit, retain and empower all employees – particularly BIPOC employees.

EVERYONE HAS ACCESS TO WHAT THEY NEED

VIDEO RESOURCE
Equity vs. equality

WHAT IS DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION?
INTRODUCTION

Inclusion

Inclusion means that diverse perspectives and lived experiences are sought out, listened to, believed – and acted upon by making meaningful decisions and changes in the organization.

A blog post from the Kaleidoscope Group shared the following:

"Simply put, inclusion generates more favorable outcomes by facilitating deeper discussions. Each of us possesses our own unique worldview. Coming together and sharing our worldviews enables companies to formulate strategies that connect a company to its audience… Furthermore, utilizing employees stemming from different backgrounds or cultures adds depth to a conversation. Your all-so-important board meetings and discussions are not very effective if everyone is saying the same thing."[5]

In short, an inclusive culture benefits everyone.

WHAT IS DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION?
EXAMPLES

There is no "quick-fix" to create an equitable and inclusive business. Advancing DEI requires a long-term commitment to addressing inequities in the workplace, listening to and uplifting the voices of underrepresented employees, and ensuring representation in decision making across all sectors of the business. Here are two examples of what DEI can look like:

Assess the state of your business

To effectively identify DEI priorities and develop organizational policies, it is essential to assess the current state of your business. This will require collecting and analyzing data related to the demographics of your business at all levels. Having quantitative data provides a starting point to track trends and changes over time as you implement DEI-related goals. It is critical to ensure that any data collection process protects the privacy of employees and safeguards any personally identifiable information.

While quantitative data is essential to assessing the state of your business, it does not always provide a complete picture of what's going on. Actively listening to employees, particularly the voices of underrepresented employees and their experiences, will help to create a deeper understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Knowing that your voice will be heard, feeling seen, and having a sense of belonging are fundamental to an equitable and inclusive workplace.

Commit to DEI at the executive leadership level

Diversity, equity, and inclusion matter at every level of a business. Having executive leadership that represents diverse perspectives and lived experiences is critical to creating a healthy and successful workplace. Executive leaders also have a responsibility to advocate for a more equitable and inclusive culture and champion DEI efforts.

Having executive leaders regularly communicate their support for DEI efforts can help ensure employee buy-in and establish DEI as integral to the success of the business. A Harvard Law report found that board chairs and CEOs play a critical role in driving DEI goals, and set the tone for the importance of DEI as a strategic priority.[6]

DEI REQUIRES A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

WHAT IS DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION?
WHY IT MATTERS TO YOU AND YOUR BUSINESS

The benefits of DEI in the workplace are immense. Prioritizing DEI and building inclusive environments aren't just the right thing to do, they are also great for business.

According to Harvard Business Review, "enriching your employee pool with representatives of different genders, races, and nationalities is key for boosting your company's joint intellectual potential. Creating a more diverse workplace will help to keep your team members' biases in check and make them question their assumptions."[7]

Diverse companies are more likely to outperform their competitors financially. According to McKinsey & Company, "our latest analysis reaffirms the strong business case for both gender diversity and ethnic and cultural diversity in corporate leadership   and shows that this business case continues to strengthen. The most diverse companies are now more likely than ever to outperform less diverse peers on profitability."[8]

Other studies show that organizations with diverse leadership and staff innovate at a faster rate, as diversity of thought helps to drive innovation and new product development.

Diverse and inclusive businesses foster healthier workplace environments, where employees are more likely to feel valued and accepted. As a result, companies with greater diversity tend to have lower turnover rates.

VIDEO RESOURCE
What is racial equity?
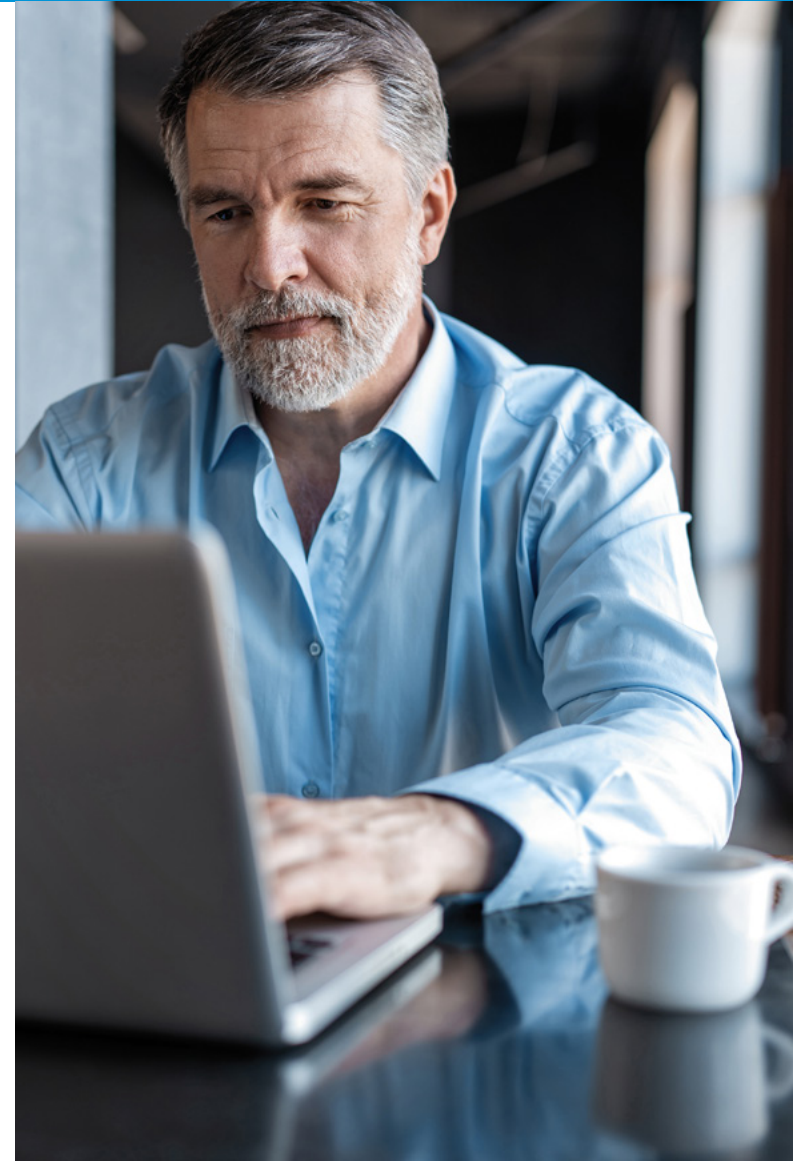
WHAT IS DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION?
ACTIONS

✓ ACTION 1

Conduct an Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) assessment of your leaders and employees

The IDI assesses intercultural competence, cultural intelligence, and cross-cultural adaptation.

- These features have been identified as key capabilities in job performance and organizational effectiveness.

- Create individual and collective action plans based on IDI results.

- Let employees and leaders know that everyone has a responsibility for their personal growth and engagement – and hold folks accountable through goal setting, performance reviews, etc.

WHAT IS DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION?
ACTIONS

ACTION 2

Create or expand DEI efforts in your organization

- Institute anti-racism policies and racial-equity training.

- If diversity, equity and inclusion are not embedded in your organization's culture and values, redefine your culture and values to include them.

- Explore creating a DEI council to advise on decision making, recruitment and retention of BIPOC employees and leaders, career development opportunities, etc.

- Establish recruiting relationships with historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs).

- Expand supplier diversity.

- Recognize holidays that contribute to telling a more complete history of our country (Juneteenth, etc.) and that support full civic engagement (Election Day).

- Encourage all employees to utilize additional resources and create space for them to advance their learning and cultural competency.

WHAT IS DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION?
MORE RESOURCES AND FURTHER READING

1. "I'm Still Here" by Austin Channing Brown

2. "We Can't Talk about That at Work! How to Talk about Race, Religion, Politics, and Other Polarizing Topics" by Mary-Frances Winters

3. "How to be an Antiracist" by Ibram X Kendi

4. "Understanding Inclusion at Work – and Why it's Important"

VIDEO RESOURCE
What does it mean to be anti-racist?

ROOT CAUSES OF RACISM

ROOT CAUSES OF RACISM
INTRODUCTION

To understand the impact of racism, it's important to understand its root causes. Research says[9] that there are seven major contributing factors to racism in American culture:

- Categories
- Factions
- Segregation
- Hierarchy
- Power
- Media
- Passivism

Let's look at each in more detail.

VIDEO RESOURCE
What does BIPOC mean?

Categories

Grouping people into racial categories is not something we inherently do from birth. It is something we are taught. We categorize people in several ways – by how they look, if they're in a majority or minority, or how they've been labeled (e.g., Asian, Black, Latine, white) by an authority. These labels are particularly important because they were created by our federal government and passed down to citizens.

There is an important link between categorizing people and understanding stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination. If we believe that categories occur naturally, then we can attribute a trait of one person to an entire group. If we attribute a negative trait to an entire racial category, we might be motivated to avoid contact or share resources with that category, or support policies that form boundaries between categories.

IT IS SOMETHING WE ARE TAUGHT

ROOT CAUSES OF RACISM
INTRODUCTION

Factions and cliques

Once we find ourselves grouped into categories, we can extend our own positive perceptions of ourselves to the rest of the group we're in. This can apply to the racial categories we are in or the company we work for or the gender we identify as. Once we've extended this positive perception to our entire group, we start preferring the group we're in over others. This leads to trusting our group more than others, or competing with other groups.

Segregation

Segregation is when racial categories are kept apart. It happens broadly across the country as a result of racist policy. Redlining, for example, systematically denied communities of color access to real estate and set the precedent for policies that continue to harm communities of color today.

Another form of segregation is based off preference. When parents raise their children without interracial contact, children can develop a familiarity with certain racial groups, which may contribute to social preferences later in life. Since white Americans are the majority in the U.S., most Americans have more frequent contact with white people than with BIPOC, which can result in negative feelings toward BIPOC.

Hierarchy

All societies are ordered through hierarchy, and the U.S. is no exception. The U.S. has an explicit hierarchy based on race. Though the country is roughly 77% white,[11] the highest positions of status are held by white Americans at a vastly disproportionate rate. In 2021, 93% of CEOs at

Fortune 500 companies were white.[10] This hierarchy in corporate America – rooted in American history and perpetuated by racist ideologies, practices and policies – reinforces the concept that white Americans are superior to others.

IN 2021, 93% OF CEOS WERE WHITE

Power

White Americans represent the majority in the United States. They have occupied most positions of power, which has enabled them to establish societal norms, achieve goals, give orders, control resources, and dominate and exploit others. This power is so deeply interwoven into the fabric of U.S. society that nearly every facet of life is marked by the stain of white supremacy. It is so deeply engrained that white people often don't notice it, and worse, remain silent when made aware of it.

Power is hard to relinquish, and white Americans maintain power by remaining silent on issues involving white supremacy. This continues the cycle of the disproportionate allotment of power in our society.

Media

The portrayal of racial categories, factions, segregation, hierarchy and power in the media all reinforce American racism at a massive scale. For example, underrepresentation of Indigenous peoples contributes to the crisis of invisibility that Indigenous people have faced for centuries.

ROOT CAUSES OF RACISM
INTRODUCTION

When it comes to representation of Black people, the proportion of high-status Black characters in entertainment media between 2003 and 2009[12] declined, while the proportion of low-status Black characters tripled. This representation results in viewers being more likely to perceive Black people as criminals.

The media is a powerful, collective voice that shapes American culture. More diverse voices are needed to change the narrative from one dominated by white supremacy to one of equity and inclusion.

Passivism

Passivism is apathy toward systems of racial advantage, or denial that those systems even exist – and it is probably the most prevalent component of American racism. There are several paths to passive racism, but the following are the most common:

Ignorance: If an adult is ignorant about historical American racism, they are more likely to deny the existence of racism today.

Denial: If a person won't accept that racism is a major problem facing society, they're less likely to support antiracist policy and advocacy – and could even promote the belief that racial inequality is justified.

78%
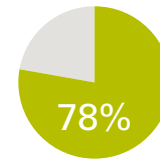
According to a study from Illuminative, 78% of Americans reported wanting to learn more about Native peoples, their histories, cultures, and contemporary stories.[13]

Watching the inaction of others: If others in your circle, family, workplace or place of worship do nothing about racism, then you may believe that there isn't a problem in the first place. And so, you follow your group into passivity. For white Americans, this has no consequence other than that it continues to further their advantage.

PASSIVISM IS APATHY TOWARD SYSTEMS OF RACIAL ADVANTAGE

ROOT CAUSES OF RACISM
ACTIONS

When doing nothing results in advantage, people will choose inaction over effort every time. So how can you take deliberate action to work toward being an anti-racist organization?

✓ ACTION 1

Move your business away from passivism and toward action through education – whether that is starting a monthly book club or film club, providing company time for employees to attend conferences on racism and equity, hiring a consultant to lead a team through workshops or retreats, requiring regular online trainings for all employees or promoting volunteer opportunities that serve marginalized communities.

✓ ACTION 2

Consider how your workplace is influenced by racist structures. Reflect on how many positions of power in your company are held by white people, whether your business takes an active, anti-racist position or passive position on racism, if your company requires trainings on racial equity and how your business is planning to advocate for racial justice in your community.

✓ ACTION 3

Model commitment and vulnerability in this essential work by understanding your own biases and participating in racial equity trainings as a leadership team and with employees.

HOW IS YOUR WORKPLACE INFLUENCED BY RACISM

ROOT CAUSES OF RACISM
CREATE SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

Leadership is needed at the highest level of the organization to dispel disbelief and denial around racism. Here are a few strategies to consider that will position your organization, and your employees, on a path toward active education and acceptance.

- Declare broadly that the organization will not tolerate any form of racism both internally and externally with clients.

- Condemn acts of racism and violence immediately when they occur locally or nationally, and offer support to employees who may be experiencing difficulty processing news.

- Embed anti-racist language through visible corporate policy, hiring practices and client communications.

- Recognize significant cultural holidays and events, and develop an inclusive environment

- Encourage your teams and direct reports to pursue education that advances their cultural comprehension, and model that behavior by doing the same

CONDEMN ACTS OF RACISM AND VIOLENCE

ROOT CAUSES OF RACISM
MORE RESOURCES AND FURTHER READING

1. "How To Be An Antiracist," by Ibram X. Kendi

2. "Beverly Daniel-Tatum on passive racism vs active racism," Hive Learning

3. "Changing the Narrative: How News Media Covers Race in America," Aspen Institute

4. "How to build an actively anti-racist company," Quartz at Work

5. "Companies are speaking out against racism, but here's what it really looks like to lead an antiracist organization" by Jennifer Lu, CNBC

MANAGING ALL TYPES OF BIAS

MANAGING ALL TYPES OF BIAS
INTRODUCTION

What is bias?

Unconscious bias (also known as implicit bias) is an attitude someone has — either positive or negative — without being aware of it. Unconscious biases are developed over the course of someone's life, and result from exposure to other people and the media. Usually, these assumptions drive people's actions. People can hold unconscious biases about many things, but they are often about race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and religion. And these biases are pervasive.

Let's look at some examples on the next page.

VIDEO RESOURCE
What is implicit bias?

ASSUMPTIONS DRIVE PEOPLE'S ACTIONS
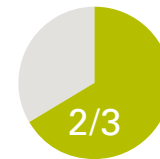
MANAGING ALL TYPES OF BIAS
EXAMPLES

Unconscious bias in health care

Unconscious bias in health care can take many forms, including how a doctor interacts with a patient, the level to which a patient's symptoms are believed, and recommended treatment plans.

The Kirwan Institute has elevated many studies on these topics, highlighting doctors' personal perceptions that they do not hold any explicit bias toward people based on race, gender and other characteristics. However, one report found that two-thirds of the doctors in a study were found to have an implicit bias against Black people and Latinos – a bias that showed up in how the doctor communicated with the patient and whether the doctor showed concern.[14] This unconscious bias affected the care patients received, with doctors in some cases recommending different treatment plans based on the patients' race or gender.

Similarly, a review of studies involving medical professionals found that racial bias in healthcare providers is associated with undertreatment of pain, poor provider communication, less patient-centered care for Black patients, and views of Black patients as less medically adherent than White patients.[16]

2/3

Two-thirds of the doctors in a study were found to have an implicit bias against Black people and Latinos – a bias that showed up in how the doctor communicated with the patient and whether the doctor showed concern.

MANAGING ALL TYPES OF BIAS
EXAMPLES

Unconscious Bias in the Workplace

A recent LinkedIn Learning module offers common examples of unconscious bias in the workplace:

- Affinity bias: a positive response to people who are similar to us

- Halo effect: admiring all of a person's actions because of past praiseworthy actions

- Perception bias: stereotypes and assumptions about certain groups that make it difficult to be objective about individual members of those groups

- Confirmation bias: seeking out evidence that confirms initial perceptions, ignoring contrary information

- Group think: when seeking harmony or conformity in the group results in incorrect decision-making[18]

These types of unconscious bias show up in different ways in the workplace. A good example is José Zamora's job-hunting experience highlighted in this Huffington Post article.[15] José sent out 50-100 resumes a day during his job search and received no response. So as an experiment, he dropped the "s" in his name and applied as Joe Zamora – and suddenly his inbox was full.

A study from the National Bureau of Economic Research reports similar findings.[17] In their study, researchers responded to job postings with fake resumes and measured the number of callbacks each resume received. The experience listed would be similar between the resumes, but half

would be assigned names that would likely be perceived as white (such as Emily Walsh or Greg Baker) and the other half would be assigned names that would likely be perceived as Black (such as Lakisha Washington or Jamal Jones). The result? Resumes with names that would be perceived as white received 50% more callbacks. The researchers also noted that, based on their estimates, "a white name yields as many more callbacks as an additional eight years of experience."

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS SHOWS UP IN DIFFERENT WAYS

MANAGING ALL TYPES OF BIAS
WHY IT MATTERS TO YOU AND YOUR BUSINESS

Not acknowledging our own biases negatively impacts ourselves, our relationships, and our organizations. Bias can adversely affect organizations and create a negative workplace culture. When bias goes unrecognized and unchallenged, discrimination can quickly become the norm within an organization. Bias can also directly impact recruitment, employee retention, promotions, and organization growth. It is important to examine our own unconscious biases and actively work to eliminate them through education and reflection.

DISCRIMINATION CAN QUICKLY BECOME THE NORM

VIDEO RESOURCE
What is race and racism?

MANAGING ALL TYPES OF BIAS
ACTIONS

✓ ACTION 1

Assess what unconscious biases exist in your organization

Encourage leaders and employees to explore their unconscious biases through tools like Harvard's Implicit Association Test.[19] (Individuals can also find relevant resources about this topic here).

✓ ACTION 2

Implement unconscious bias training programs throughout your organization

Check out resources like the Kirwan Institute's implicit bias training series.[20] Encourage your senior leadership team to work through the training together, as well as roll it out to the broader organization.

MANAGING ALL TYPES OF BIAS
ACTIONS

✓ ACTION 3

Encourage and support courageous conversations throughout the organization

- This work will be challenging, and it is important for people—particularly white people—to lean into the discomfort they may feel as they learn more about these issues.

- Having courageous conversations with peers is an integral step in an organizations acknowledging and moving past unconscious biases.

- It will be critical that these conversations encourage vulnerability and openness.

- Equally as important is that these conversations do not put marginalized employees and leaders in a situation that will exacerbate stress and trauma.

  » Employees who identify as BIPOC, LGBTQ+, women and those with a disability will have likely been on the receiving end of these biases, so it may create stress for them to process these biases alongside folks who are learning about them for the first time.

  » We recommend introducing the topic of unconscious bias broadly, encouraging employees to learn more and identify their own unconscious biases, and creating a "build your own training" platform to meet people where they are at developmentally.

MANAGING ALL TYPES OF BIAS
MORE RESOURCES AND FURTHER READING

1. "Unconscious Bias" from LinkedIn Learning

2. "Project Implicit" from Harvard University

3. "Combatting Racial Bias in the Workplace" by the Kirwan Institute

4. "Blindspot – Hidden Biases of Good People" by Mahzarin R. Banaji and Anthony G. Greenwald

VIDEO RESOURCE
What are microaggressions?

FUNDAMENTALS OF RACIAL AND HEALTH EQUITY
CHECKLIST

☐ Conduct an Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) assessment of your leaders and employees

☐ Create or expand DEI efforts in your organization

☐ Move your business away from passivism and toward action through education

☐ Consider how your workplace is influenced by racist structures

☐ Model commitment and vulnerability in this essential work by understanding your own biases and participating in racial equity trainings as a leadership team and with employees

☐ Assess what unconscious biases exist in your organization

☐ Implement unconscious bias training programs throughout your organization

☐ Encourage and support courageous conversations throughout the organization

FUNDAMENTALS OF RACIAL AND HEALTH EQUITY
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[19]https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/iatdetails.html

[20]https://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/implicit-bias-training