

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

FROM DIVERSE TEAMS TO
MORE INNOVATIVE RESEARCH!



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	6
Reminder of Main Concepts	8
EDI: a Priority for Federal Granting Agencies Advancing Excellence in Research <i>by Karine Morin</i>	10
Designing and Advertising a Project, Internship or Job Posting	11
Testimony Overcoming Unconscious Biases to Build a More Inclusive World of Work <i>by Marie-Noëlle Morency and Carolyn Levy</i>	14
Interviewing, Selection and Hiring	15
Testimony Equal Access to Employment: a Systemic Solution to a Systemic Problem <i>by Gemma Mejia</i>	20
Unconscious Bias in The Selection Process	21
Testimony Making the Shift to Diversity for the Benefit of All <i>by Sébastien Arcand</i>	26
Overview of Challenges Facing Designated and Marginalized Groups	27
Testimony Navigating Law School as Black Women <i>by Djeinabou Barry and Marie-Clarisse Berger</i>	37
Inclusion of Team Members	39
Testimony Persons With Disabilities: Beyond the First Impression, or the Art of The Encounter! <i>by Sylvain Le May</i>	43
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion: Awareness-Raising and Training for Team Members	44
Testimony Let's Discuss our Unconscious Bias, our Privileges and our Discomforts in Relations Between Indigenous and non-Indigenous People: a Collaboration Between the Réseau interuniversitaire québécois pour l'équité, la diversité et l'inclusion (RIQEDI) and Mikana <i>by Bibiana Pulido, Widia Larivière and Léa Lefevre-Radelli</i>	47
Writing And Evaluating Letters of Recommendation	49
Testimony Letters of Recommendation: a Quest Amid Troubled Waters <i>by Emilie-Jade Poliquin</i>	55

Managing a Diverse Team	56
Testimony	
Managing a Diverse Team: a Commitment to Be Strengthened Through Coherent Action by <i>Tania Saba</i>	61
Taking Diversity Into Account in Research: an Introduction to GBA+, ADS+ AND SGBA.....	62
Testimony	
ADS+ as a Prerequisite for Greater Equality by <i>Amélie Keyser-Verreault</i>	69
Testimony	
The Journey of an Educator by <i>Hélène Dumais</i>	70
Conclusion	72
About the Chair for Women in Science and Engineering in Quebec.....	73
Acknowledgments.....	74



INTRODUCTION

The last few years have witnessed a growing movement toward equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) around the world. Government authorities as well as institutions, cities and private businesses are all participating in this movement which is in alignment with the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) of the United Nations (UN). Canada is no exception. [Rigorous measures](#) have been put in place to reduce inequalities in various spheres targeted by the United Nations, with notable repercussions in the worlds of higher education and research.

Whether through the Canada Research Chairs program or the provincial and Canadian research grant programs, to name but these examples, EDI requirements are increasingly emerging. This shift, while essential to building a more open, creative, prolific and representative ecosystem, raises questions and uncertainty: What is EDI? Why is it important in research? How can one meet the requirements? Where to begin?

In the field, the Chair for Women in Science and Engineering (CWSE) team in Quebec recognized an urgent need for awareness-raising, training and support within higher education institutions and the research community, and saw this as an opportunity to mobilize stakeholders and stimulate the cultural change that is needed. In this context, a resource creation project was launched with the collaboration of Université de Sherbrooke and the financial participation of the Canada Research Chairs program and the Secrétariat à la condition féminine.

The project led to the creation of many resources, including this white paper, which is the primary medium for presenting the resources in question. The present paper shares most of the literature that was developed, in addition to featuring unpublished texts by specialists or experts by experience. The 11 testimonies put forward in this paper help approach certain issues from a different angle, and humanize and contextualize concepts that are more difficult to grasp.

Each section of this paper corresponds to a specific topic. A wide range of issues are covered, from designing project proposals to writing letters of recommendation, from recruiting to managing diverse research teams, and from developing a research project to inclusive writing. To facilitate understanding of these issues, each section has a “Did you know?” section highlighting obstacles and challenges that are still too often misunderstood or ignored. This is followed by a “Recommendations” section with examples of actions that can serve as inspiration and be adapted according to one’s own environment. Next, the “Resources” section refers interested readers to practical guides and tools, sometimes developed by the CWSE, sometimes by other stakeholders.

Please note that the reader may encounter redundancies within this paper. This is because specific obstacles and challenges can be found in multiple spheres of higher education and research and have consequences at all hierarchical levels of institutions. Moreover, in order to offer standalone sections that can be consulted individually, it was sometimes necessary to repeat certain information. This is why the references are located not at the very end of the paper, but after each topic addressed.

The team of the Chair for Women in Science and Engineering recognizes that many challenges lie ahead and that the resources do not have an answer for everything. Moreover, there are most likely blind spots that are not covered by the resources. Nevertheless, we hope that this white paper will contribute to stimulating change in a spirit of benevolence, openness and listening. Building a more sensitive and inclusive ecosystem is sure to benefit both the higher education and research communities.

The Chair for Women in Science and Engineering in Quebec Team



REMINDER OF MAIN CONCEPTS

Below are some definitions of the main concepts that will be useful for understanding the issues addressed in the paper. They are drawn from a fact sheet entitled [“Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education and Research: What They Are and Why They Are Needed: Main Concepts.”](#)

The Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) triad emphasizes the need to focus on all three concepts. Together, they provide a more complete representation of a situation, project or program.¹

Equality, in this paper, means that each person has access to the same opportunities.² However, the pathway to these opportunities is not the same for everyone. For example, members of designated groups collectively face more systemic barriers.³

Equity is an approach to correcting the historical disadvantages that exist between groups.⁴ It can also be described as an approach designed to treat all individuals fairly by taking their particular situations into account and eliminating any systemic barriers.

Diversity refers to a group of individuals who differ in their identity, geographic, cultural or religious background, age, sex, gender, sexual orientation, academic discipline, etc.⁵

Inclusion means taking steps to establish an environment in which diversity is respected and all members of the community are fully integrated and supported in ways that promote their well-being and achievement.⁵

Intersectionality refers to the many disadvantages historically experienced by people who belong to more than one designated group⁶, for example, women who are also members of visible minorities.⁵

An unconscious bias [or unintentional bias] is an implicit attitude, stereotype, motivation or assumption that can occur without one's knowledge, control or intention.⁷ Unconscious bias can lead to direct, indirect or systemic discrimination.⁸

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EDI: A PRIORITY FOR FEDERAL GRANTING AGENCIES

Advancing excellence in research

The year 2020 was marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, increased racism toward members of various communities, and the highlighting of several other inequities in our society. These phenomena brought to light situations and realities that have been decried by members of underrepresented groups for far too long. If equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) may appear misunderstood by many, the past year has confirmed that EDI work remains vital and essential.

In the field of research, precarious gains made in recent years by members of underrepresented groups have eroded, and this is worrying. A recent example speaks volumes: the proportion of academic papers submitted by women has dropped significantly since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, which will have long-term consequences for their careers.

For a number of years already, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) have been striving to prioritize the integration of EDI into their programs and policies. It is thanks to their past and recent experience that the granting agencies have been able to respond quickly and develop measures adapted to the pandemic, among other things by extending the period of use of scholarships and grants for students and postdoctoral fellows and by providing reimbursement for dependent care expenses for members of evaluation committees, which sometimes differed from one agency to another.

Hence, agencies remain more committed than ever to fostering equitable access to funding opportunities and to increasing inclusive participation in the research community. The purpose of efforts along these lines is to support research excellence and training for emerging researchers in order to support unprecedented, high-quality research that will be able to solve local, national and global problems.

To achieve these objectives, the agencies have developed an [EDI action plan](#). They wish to work with all players in the research community, particularly through the [Dimensions: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Canada](#) pilot program, in which post-secondary institutions are invited to contribute to a profound and lasting change in culture within the research ecosystem.

This will make it possible to develop the inclusive culture needed to achieve research excellence and results that are rigorous, relevant and accessible to a diversity of population groups.

More than ever, it is crucial to continue to strengthen EDI in our institutions, in our organizations and in the field of research more generally. The work of individuals from underrepresented groups must be encouraged, highlighted and given the recognition it deserves. Agencies have realized that much work remains to be done and that in order to achieve this, we need to work together to bring about equity, embrace diversity and foster inclusion in research.

Karine Morin (elle, she/her)

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Natural Sciences and Engineering Research
Council of Canada

DESIGNING AND ADVERTISING A PROJECT, INTERNSHIP OR JOB POSTING

DID YOU KNOW?

Below are examples from the research that reveal observed impacts of identity characteristics on ways of designing and advertising a project, internship or job posting. In the cited references:

- An unconscious (or implicit, hidden) bias [or “a preference for or against a person, thing, or group held at an unconscious level”¹ (p. 4)] entails that individuals may be inclined to favour their family, community, or people with shared characteristics or experiences, for example, in a job offer;^{1,2}
- Job postings that use language with a masculine connotation (e.g., “dominate the market”) have been found to be less appealing to women³ (see the [gendered words White Paper](#) for more information);
- Eighty-five percent of women have reported applying for a job only if they felt that they “completely” or “very closely” met the requirements of the job posting. In addition, male employees have been observed to be more likely to apply for management positions than their female peers, even if they only partly meet the criteria for the job;⁴
- Public service job postings have been found to often have very short posting periods and application deadlines, thereby limiting application opportunities for people from minority groups, especially when they are in low-income jobs with long work hours;⁵
- Immigrants have been found to struggle with accessing jobs where they are not overqualified, particularly in conjunction with the non-recognition of their diploma and the absence of a well-developed social network outside of their ethnic network;⁶
- People with visual impairments reportedly often encounter the problem of job postings that are poorly adapted to their situation.^{7,8}



RECOMMENDATIONS

The following examples of practices associated with designing and advertising a project, internship or job posting are provided for inspiration.

- Adapt the recruitment process to the different designated groups (e.g., in predominantly male environments, personally invite women to apply in response to a posting);^{CWSE}
- Organize formal recruitment events that are inclusive and open to all interested individuals (e.g., a lab tour) in order to compensate for the limitations associated with an informal network;⁹
- Create project, internship or job postings to attract more applications in order to fill available positions. Avoid limiting the applications to people who contact the poster spontaneously;¹⁰
- In project, internship or job postings, use inclusive, unbiased, non-gendered, plain language; list only essential skills and competencies rather than using wording such as “would be an asset,” in order to avoid self-exclusion^{2,11} (see the [guide available online](#) [French only] for more information);
- Make sure that a given group of people (e.g., persons with disabilities) is not disadvantaged by certain job requirements;²
- Specify in the posting that accommodations can be granted to those who require them;⁷
- Add an employment equity commitment statement;⁸
- Add optional sections in application forms so that candidates can give their preferred pronouns (e.g., *elle*, she, her) and their former first name(s) if there has been a change;¹²
- Have an EDI specialist look the posting over before advertising it;¹¹
- Invite members of designated groups and marginalized groups to apply by explicitly valuing diversity⁸ and giving examples of inclusive and equitable practices that are in place;^{CWSE}
- Make the posting more accessible by offering multiple ways of submitting an application (e.g., online, by email, in person);⁸
- Advertise and distribute the postings in a variety of locations (e.g., on various websites, search groups and job search sites for designated groups) over a sufficient period of time to increase their visibility;^{11,13}
- Make sure that the locations where jobs are posted are accessible to persons with disabilities;⁷
- In male-dominated fields, encourage application submissions from female candidates by leveraging the networks of staff members.¹⁴



ORGANIZE FORMAL RECRUITMENT EVENTS THAT ARE INCLUSIVE AND OPEN TO ALL INTERESTED INDIVIDUALS (E.G., A LAB TOUR).

RESOURCES

Sample EDI posting: Detailed sample posting from Montana State University.

https://www.montana.edu/nsfadvance/documents/Sample%20TT%20Job%20Ad_2015.pdf

White Paper on Gendered Words.

<https://wwest.mech.ubc.ca/diversity/>

Inclusive writing guide for the sciences [French only].

https://www.usherbrooke.ca/sciences/fileadmin/sites/sciences/documents/Faculte/EDI/FacSciences_guide_de_redaction_inclusif_web.pdf

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TESTIMONY

OVERCOMING UNCONSCIOUS BIASES TO BUILD A MORE INCLUSIVE WORLD OF WORK

Carolyn and I, both mothers and managers, have chosen to work at a company that recognizes women's unique contribution to the world of work. In 2020, Randstad Canada was recognized as one of the **Best Workplaces™** for women and received Bronze certification from the Women in Governance certification program, which helps Canadian businesses achieve gender parity in the workplace. This recognition is a testament to the progress we have made and the awareness campaigns conducted with Randstad staff, our customers and our talents, as well as the general public. But we know that there are still many shortcomings and that they have even been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In Canada, 20% of women have lost their jobs, compared to 13% of men.

But where do these disparities in treatment come from? They are often born of prejudices that we help perpetuate every day, in spite of ourselves. For example, typically masculine (as opposed to feminine) traits—such as “driven,” “dominant” or “competitive”—tend to be used to describe leaders. Doubts continue to be harboured about the ability of pregnant women and young mothers to truly be invested in their careers. Such erroneous thinking leads to the assumption, for example, that girls are not as good at mathematics as boys, with repercussions on the pursuit of careers in science or engineering.

Conscious and unconscious biases affect all minority groups, be they women, persons with disabilities, the LGBTQ2+ community or BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and Peoples of Colour). And if there is an ecosystem that emphasizes stereotypes, it is the world of work and the world of recruitment.

A few examples that speak volumes:

- A study by the University of Toronto and Stanford University found that resumés with African American identifiers received [250% fewer job interview offers than “white” resumés](#).
- More than 100,000 jobs listed on the website Indeed use the [pronouns “her/his” instead of a more inclusive choice such as “their”](#).
- In a [Catalyst survey](#), more than half of Indigenous respondents (52%) said they expected to experience prejudice in their workplace.

As a leader in HR solutions, we at Randstad work every day to support organizations in their efforts to foster diversity and inclusion. We help them write more neutral job descriptions, implement blind resumé and application-selection processes, train managers to conduct stereotype-free job interviews, identify unconscious biases that hinder team cohesion, and develop a more inclusive corporate culture.

More than ever, at a time when the world of work is changing in step with technological and social advances, the obstacles that continue to face people from minority groups must be tackled. It is important to be aware of all the prejudices and stereotypes that perpetuate inequalities when it comes to access to employment and career advancement. This requires humility, discipline and a genuine commitment to building a more inclusive world of work. Because the world of work of tomorrow is full of great professional opportunities—for everyone.

Marie-Noëlle Morency (elle, she/her)
Director of Communications

Carolyn Levy (elle, she/her)

Head of Diversity and President, Randstad Technologies
Randstad Canada

INTERVIEWING, SELECTION AND HIRING

DID YOU KNOW?

Below are examples from the research that show impacts of identity characteristics on an individual's interview, selection or hiring. In the cited references:

- Members of minority groups applying to the public service reportedly face various barriers in the recruitment process (e.g., conscious or unconscious bias on the part of hiring managers);¹
- Unconscious biases have been found to affect the judgment of individuals responsible for recruitment, evaluation and selection processes² (see the [Unconscious Bias White Paper](#) for more information);
- Intersectionality, which refers to the intersection of designated groups, has been generally observed to lead to more discrimination. For example, when someone with a disability is from an Indigenous, ethnic or visible minority community, they may be more likely to be doubly discriminated against³ (see the [Understanding Intersectionality White Paper](#) for more information);
- The testing method (submitting pairs of identical fictitious resumes with different names) shows that a foreign-sounding name can limit the chances of being called for an interview;^{4,5}
- Women have been observed to be interrupted more often than men during interviews;⁶
- Women have been found to convey less authority in interviews, in particular through their body language. This difference is likely not to their advantage, especially if they are seeking an executive or senior management position;^{7,8}



- A person's tone of voice has been found to influence how others perceive their leadership. People with deep voices may be viewed as more capable of taking on leadership roles, which may put women at a disadvantage;⁹
- Women have been found to be more humble when it comes to taking credit for a task.¹⁵ This may also be the case of members of Eastern cultures in which individuals may tend not to take credit for success, compared to Western cultures;¹⁰
- Persons with disabilities may be disadvantaged by a selection process that is not adapted to their particular condition (e.g., reduced mobility);⁵
- Cultural differences between the candidate and the interviewer can influence the latter's judgment when evaluating the application;¹¹
- The sum of individual intelligences has been found not to predict the intelligence of a group. Collective intelligence is understood to have a relational and interactive component, so that it cannot be boiled down to the sum of its parts.¹²



RECOMMENDATIONS

The following examples of interviewing, selection or hiring processes are provided for inspiration.

1

Preparing the committee and developing the hiring process

- Broaden the pool of potential candidates and seek out diverse candidates from designated and marginalized groups^{2,13,14} (see the [posting design and advertisement pamphlet](#) for more information);
- Make sure that each part of the process is accessible¹⁵ (e.g., for candidates with disabilities);
- Learn about the advantages and potential challenges of diversity in higher education and research (see the [documentation available online](#) for more information);^{CWSE}
- Make sure that the hiring committee is diverse and aware of EDI;¹⁵
- Increase accountability and transparency for each step in the hiring process¹ (e.g., make the hiring committee accountable by asking them to justify why a person belonging to a minority group was not selected for the position);¹⁵
- Standardize the evaluation process in an equitable way.¹⁵

2

Preparing and conducting an inclusive and equitable interview

- Identify and rank the evaluation criteria before reviewing applications;¹²
- Use a structured interview;³
- Avoid criteria or questions that could be discriminatory regarding subjects protected by the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* (e.g., about age or disability);²
- Include interview questions related to inclusion (e.g., ask the candidate to describe a situation in which they defended respect, equity, diversity and inclusion in their job);¹⁶
- Inform the interviewee that their evaluation will not be negatively affected by a past interruption of employment for medical, family or community-related reasons.¹⁵

3

Application review and final selection

- Identify prejudices, stereotypes and microaggressions in hiring committee deliberations and discuss with each member to help them break free of these elements;¹⁵
- Look beyond the traditional excellence and merit criteria (e.g., number of publications, amounts of grants obtained^{CWSE}) to consider non-linear pathways¹⁷ and First Nations knowledge systems;¹⁸
- Take into account the particular circumstances of each individual to ensure that the evaluation is equitable (e.g., regarding the applicant's vision of their integration into the department and the faculty, an external candidate must be evaluated equitably with respect to an internal candidate, as they have a different knowledge of this environment);^{CWSE}
- Take into account cultural and individual differences (e.g., gender differences in self-presentation and communication style)^{7,15} in order to promote "fair and equitable treatment" of all candidates;¹⁵
- Take into account that the best-qualified candidates are not automatically those with the most years of experience¹⁵ (e.g., regarding their vision of integration into the department and the faculty, an external candidate must be evaluated equitably with respect to an internal one, as they have a different knowledge of this environment);^{CWSE}
- Base the evaluation on the application package of the candidate and not just on their performance in the interview (e.g., men often distinguish themselves more than women in interviews, but are not necessarily always the best qualified for the position);⁷
- Avoid stereotypes and giving greater importance to traditionally male personal characteristics such as "enterprising," "competitive" or "ambitious";¹⁵
- Write a report to be reviewed by an EDI specialist justifying why a person from a designated group was not selected.¹⁵

RESOURCES

Intersectionality White Paper.

<http://cfsg.espaceweb.usherbrooke.ca/download/4696/>

Documentation on the potential benefits and challenges of diversity in higher education and research.

<http://cfsg.espaceweb.usherbrooke.ca/edi-in-higher-education-and-research/>

Pamphlets on EDI in research: Job posting design and advertising; Unconscious bias.

<http://cfsg.espaceweb.usherbrooke.ca/resources-for-implementing-edi-in-research/>

Guide for university hiring committees: Searching for excellence and diversity.

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TESTIMONY

EQUAL ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT: A SYSTEMIC SOLUTION TO A SYSTEMIC PROBLEM

In Quebec, the *Act respecting equal access to employment in public bodies* seeks to correct the situation of persons belonging to certain groups that have historically been victims of discrimination in employment, including women, aboriginal persons, visible minorities, ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities ([see the legal description](#)).

Women and senior management jobs

In organizations subject to the Act, women have seen the greatest increase in representation. Yet despite this, their upward mobility into higher organizational spheres remains a real issue, as they are poorly represented in management and faculty positions at universities. In spite of the existing legislation, systemic barriers, such as the “glass ceiling” phenomenon, continue to hold women back from higher-ranking positions associated with knowledge and senior management.

Equal Access to Employment Programs (EAEP)¹

In Quebec, organizations subject to the Act, such as higher education institutions, develop and apply various remedial and equal opportunity measures in implementing their EAEPs. By removing barriers to employment, universities can eliminate discrimination and contribute to a greater equality of outcomes among citizens.² For example, these programs can help improve the processes of the employment system, provide access to a broader pool of skilled workers, and prevent complaints of discrimination.

Temporary corrective measures

Temporary corrective measures are a key component of such a program. When properly applied, they have a direct impact on increasing the number of women by giving them access to certain jobs or types of jobs in which they are poorly represented. These measures remain in effect as long as targets are not met by the employer, and as long as they do not unduly prejudice the interests of others (whether belonging to other targeted groups or not). It should be noted that the remedial measures apply to all groups covered by EAEPs. Indeed, intersectional analysis shows that visible minority women, aboriginal women and handicapped women face additional barriers related to employment.

Questions for reflection

A number of elements can constitute systemic barriers to equal access to employment. Consider the following questions:

- In your institution, organization, faculty, department or research group, what factors contribute to increasing or limiting the upward mobility of women and other designated groups?
- Are the factors the same, or similar, for all job types (e.g., management, teaching and traditionally male jobs)?
- How is power produced and how are forms of domination, exclusion, inequality and resistance reproduced?³

Gemma Mejia (elle, she/her)

Equal Access Advisor
Equal Access and Advisory Services Branch
Commission des droits de la personne et des
droits de la jeunesse

¹ The Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse supports public bodies and private companies that develop and implement an equal access to employment program; verifies the program's composition; and offers awareness-raising activities and training to counter and prevent systemic discrimination in employment.

² Charest, É. & Chicha, M.-T. (2012). La discrimination en emploi : un phénomène systémique. *Bulletin de l'Observatoire international sur le racisme et les discriminations*, 8(2), 9-11.

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UNCONSCIOUS BIAS IN THE SELECTION PROCESS

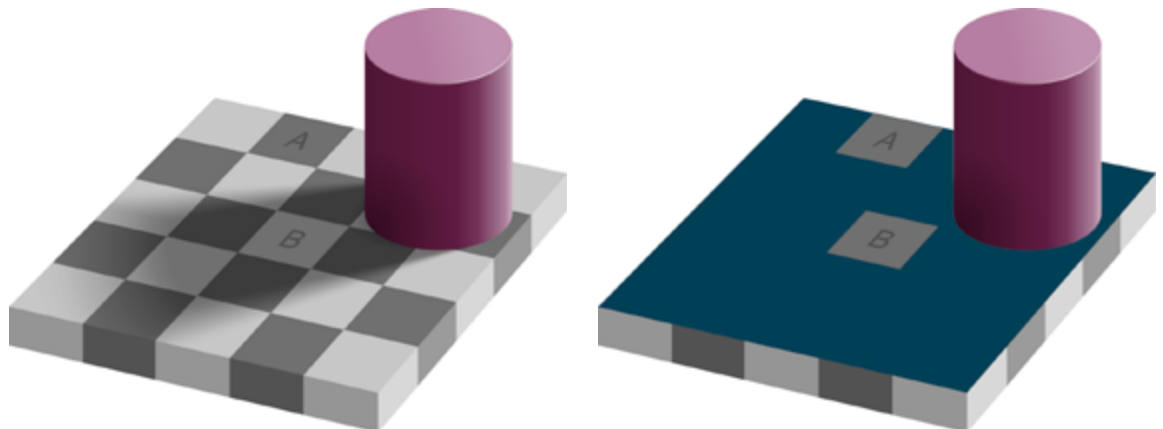
UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

An unconscious bias can unintentionally and unwittingly arise in the mind of any individual, in the form of prejudice, stereotyping, an assumption, a motivation or an implicit attitude.¹

Example of Adelson's checker-shadow

The brain has been found to automatically create shortcuts in order to analyze situations and quickly access information. These shortcuts reportedly use known categories such as stereotypes and perceptions in order to interpret the world.² Applying this explanation to Adelson's chessboard, an optical illusion that involves brightness and contrast, due to our brains' rapid information processing, we tend to think that squares A and B in the first image are not the same colour—the brain is fooled by the presence of the cylinder's shadow.

Having perceived the pattern of alternating dark and light squares, our brain automatically fixes the "mistake" that the shadow seems to produce, by lightening square B. This is how unconscious bias works. However, with conscious reasoning, which requires more control and effort, the brain is able to make a more complex analysis that sets aside shortcuts.² Indeed, in the second image in the figure, if we take the time to examine the board and isolate the squares, we can realize the error... and prevent errors in other similar situations!



DID YOU KNOW?

The following facts drawn from the literature speak to the impact of unconscious bias in the selection process. According to the cited references:

- Although people in academic settings tend to think that they are able to judge others objectively on the merits of their skills, they may in fact be influenced by various unconscious biases surrounding physical or social characteristics (e.g., related to ethnicity, gender, or home institution) that have nothing to do with people's qualifications yet nevertheless shape the evaluation process;³
- Similarity bias may generally cause evaluation committee members to favour someone who is similar to them and to disadvantage someone who is different from them;⁴
- There are believed to be several other types of unconscious biases that can have an impact on application evaluations (see pages 6 to 8 of the [unconscious bias and recruitment document](#) [French only]);
- It has been found to be possible to have unconscious biases toward one's own group¹ (e.g., a woman may have internalized stereotypes about women, and an immigrant may have prejudices toward people who share her background), since these biases are the result of a social construction⁵ (see the [Unconscious Bias White Paper](#) for more information);
- Bias has been found to have less negative influence when designated-group members make up more than 25% of the applicants;³
- Historically, in Canada, Indigenous people are believed not to have had access to the same chances or the same opportunities as non-Indigenous people, because they have been marginalized, excluded and disadvantaged by systemic barriers and prejudices;¹
- Persons with disabilities are reportedly among those most often excluded from the active labour force because of prejudice and stereotypes (e.g., the notion that everyone with a disability needs some kind of assistance, service or special setup to be able to work);⁶
- What is considered "professional" has been found to be often rooted in cultural stereotypes detrimental to the diversity of gender identities and expressions (e.g., expecting a certain haircut or style of clothing based on the candidate's gender);^{7,8}
- Women have been found to often be faced with the phenomenon of the double bind: "Research has shown that incongruities between perceptions of female gender roles and leadership roles can cause evaluators to assume that women will be less competent leaders. When women leaders provided clear evidence of their competence, thus violating traditional gender norms, evaluators perceived them to be less likeable and were less likely to recommend them for hiring or promotion"⁹ (p. 5);
- A Harvard Business School study found that, faced with the same resume, individuals were more likely to like and want to work with a male candidate named Howard than a female candidate named Heidi, even though she was deemed to be equally qualified.² Other studies in Canada, the United States and Europe showed that a foreign-sounding name (Arabic, African, Asian, etc.) limited the chances of being offered an interview;¹⁰

- When evaluators are distracted, they have been found to generally give a higher score to men than to women for the same evaluation.¹ This can be explained by the fact that, when someone cannot fully concentrate on a task, they may rely more on unconscious biases;¹¹
- The influence of unconscious bias and prejudice diminishes when evaluators are held accountable for their evaluation and must justify their decisions;³
- A structured interview is a more objective evaluation method that promotes equal opportunity and reduces the influence of unconscious bias.¹²

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following examples of practices aimed at avoiding unconscious bias are provided for inspiration.

Organizing the selection process

- Strive to increase the number of designated-group members among the pool of candidates^{3,4} (see the [posting design and advertisement pamphlet](#) for more information);
- Identify and rank the evaluation criteria in order of priority before reviewing applications;³
- Refrain from including criteria or asking questions that could be discriminatory regarding subjects protected by the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* (e.g., about age or disability);⁴
- Make sure excellence indicators in the evaluation criteria are free of unconscious bias;¹
- Form a diverse hiring committee;¹³
- Train the evaluation committee members or raise their awareness about the various unconscious biases and their impacts^{CWSE} (see training available online for more information: [Canada Research Chairs](#) and [RIQEDI](#));
- Make sure that the evaluation committee members are up to date on the policies surrounding EDI;⁷
- Use a structured interview;¹²
- Properly manage any appearance of bias that may exist prior to or that may emerge during the hiring process.¹⁵

Selection Committee

- Take the [Implicit Association Test](#) in order to recognize and control your biases;^{1,14}
- Accept the presence of unconscious bias in your own mind, regularly question your own beliefs and convictions, and be open to feedback;¹⁵
- As the chair of a selection committee, lead by example by naming your desire to recognize and control your own unconscious biases;¹⁴
- Apply the evaluation criteria uniformly to each application.^{1,3} However, it is also important to take into account each person's particular circumstances to ensure that the assessment is equitable (e.g., regarding their vision of their integration into the department and the faculty, an external candidate must be evaluated equitably with respect to an internal one, given that they have a different knowledge of this environment);^{CWSE}
- Regularly challenge one's own judgments during the evaluation process (e.g., is there currently a bias in play?);^{1,3}
- Make sure that each committee member has the opportunity to speak up on each application;⁴
- Allow enough time to assess each application;^{1,3}
- Assess the application as a whole rather than relying on any one specific element (e.g., letters of recommendation that may contain biases);¹
- Be able to provide logical and justifiable explanations for declining or selecting a person;³
- Be sure to collect only factual information that relates to the selection criteria and sub-criteria in order to avoid misinterpretations or false assumptions based on applicants' personal characteristics.¹



RESOURCES

Unconscious bias and recruitment pamphlet [French only].

https://rqedi.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Feuillet-BiaisInconscientsetRecrut_FinaleWEB.pdf

EDI in research pamphlet: Designing and advertising postings.

<http://cfsg.espaceweb.usherbrooke.ca/resources-for-implementing-edi-in-research/>

Unconscious bias training module.

<https://www.chairs-chaires.gc.ca/program-programme/equity-equite/bias/module-eng.aspx>

Training on bias.

<https://rqedi.com/en/workshops/>

Implicit Association Test.

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/canada/takeatest.html>

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- ^{cwse} Chair for Women in Science and Engineering in Quebec

TESTIMONY

MAKING THE SHIFT TO DIVERSITY FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL

Diversity in academia is generally shrugged off—after all, what could be more normal than diversity in an environment where ideas, innovations and social and technical transformations arise from a plurality of perspectives, points of view, and research subjects? Similarly, in the context of the internationalization of Quebec university institutions, what could be more natural than having student populations, faculty members, and other staff from diverse cultural backgrounds?

However, assumptions are often wrong, which is why it's important not to take for granted the supposed pluralism of academic institutions. Analysis of the facts shows that shortcomings remain and that diversity inclusion practices may not be as effective and efficient as one would like to believe. It is important to consider the subjectivity at work when it comes to attracting, integrating and retaining talent within an organization or institution.

“Unconscious bias” plays a decisive role in the attraction, integration and retention (AIR) process. Whether in terms of assumptions about cultures or people belonging to a gender different from ours or, on the contrary, intrinsic preferences toward individuals belonging to our own group, nobody is immune to these biases. Beyond training, support and coaching, it is important to develop an organizational and institutional culture that promotes encounters, and even clashes, between the perspectives inherent in different identities. It is thanks to such a culture that best practices can emerge within research teams, for example. These best practices underpin the innovations and creativity needed to advance and share knowledge in academia.

The first step in this transformation must be to define clear objectives in the areas of recruitment and promotion. In more managerial language, it could be said that the hallmark of a dynamic approach toward equity, diversity and inclusion is talent management built not only on openness to diversity, but on a recognition of the plurality of expressions of talents. Research subjects, approaches and career paths that are somewhat off the beaten track are too often sidelined in favour of replicating homogenous practices. This contributes to selecting people with similar profiles for specific positions or roles within universities, such as chairholders. Promoting an efficient and effective approach to diversity requires integrating an approach that takes AIR into account. This approach should include elements such as openness to different profiles, culturally sensitive evaluation methods, communication of available positions outside the usual networks, and measures to promote career progression for all, in a spirit of equity.

Much progress has been made in recent decades in attracting, integrating and retaining people from diverse backgrounds within our institutions, but more needs to be done. Of course, diversity in itself is not a guarantee of excellence (nor is homogeneity, for that matter) but the very foundations of our universities, their openness and the opportunities they offer, are premised on valuing encounters, dialogue and equitable opportunities for all. And this is what any EDI policy must demonstrate, free of presuppositions or discriminatory practices.

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OVERVIEW OF CHALLENGES FACING DESIGNATED AND MARGINALIZED GROUPS

DID YOU KNOW?

Below are facts and concepts as well as examples of challenges facing certain groups in educational and professional contexts. They are classified according to the topics addressed in the [*Guide to Identifying Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Challenges Experienced by the Members of a Research Team*](#).

Key concepts

- In Canada, the *Employment Equity Act* uses the term “designated groups” to refer to four groups that face persistent employment barriers, for example, in terms of their hiring, placement and job advancement: women, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities;¹
- In this pamphlet, the term “marginalized groups” refers to minority groups that are discriminated against or excluded from activities and services (e.g., discussions, decision-making, access to resources, access to mentoring). This goes beyond the four groups designated in the *Employment Equity Act* and may include, for example, groups of parents, first-generation students, persons of various gender identities or sexual orientations, and persons with various religious affiliations;^{CWSE}
- “Intersectionality,” which refers to the intersection of designated or marginalized groups, has been found to generally lead to more challenges. For example, if a person with a disability is also a member of an Indigenous community, an ethnic minority or a visible minority, they may be doubly discriminated against² (see the [intersectionality White Paper](#) for more information).

Potential challenges

In this pamphlet, the concept of challenge is viewed collectively. In other words, it refers to the difficulties encountered collectively by a group. Comparisons between women and men, for example, reveal that collectively, women experience more difficulties in the area of employment. This being said, individually, some women may experience less difficulty than some men.

Onboarding and integration

- It is reported that relatively few Indigenous people enter the field of research, and when they do, they may have to work in an academic context with little awareness of or receptiveness to Indigenous cultural perspectives;^{CG}
- First-generation university students have been found to feel like they are entering a foreign country upon their arrival at university. Thérèse Bouffard, a professor with the Department of Psychology at UQAM, explains that “because [the] parents [of first-generation students] are unfamiliar with the culture of the academic world including its rules, practices and requirements, these elements are of limited assistance in guiding and advising students adequately in their academic plans [...]” (freely translated);³
- Immigrants reportedly often contend with a lack of recognition of skills acquired outside of Canada, thereby affecting their integration. In fact, 64.9% of immigrant women in Quebec have been found to be overqualified for their jobs.⁴



Psychological work and study climate

- Although the situation appears to be improving according to recent research,⁵ people belonging to LGBTQ2+ communities experience more harassment and discrimination in academia;^{6,7}
- Microaggressions are “subtle, mundane exchanges that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to individuals based on group membership.” They have been found to be experienced regularly by women, members of the LGBTQ2+ community, visible minorities, persons with disabilities and members of underrepresented groups^{8,9,10} (see the [Microaggression White Paper](#) for more information);
- Members of designated or marginalized groups who have been awarded a scholarship, grant, chair or position associated with diversity targets or quotas may often be subject to microaggressions over their skills;^{BP, CWSE}
- The research community is an environment in which individuals often encounter the same people. Thus, it may be difficult for individuals who are victims of harassment or racism to bring up the subject, for fear of reprisals or the judgments of their peers. In addition, it is reportedly rarely possible to simply change employers since positions are difficult to obtain;^{BP}
- Prejudices and stereotypes related to social, cultural, political and economic exclusion are forms of intimidation reported to be frequently directed at Indigenous people by non-Indigenous persons;¹¹
- Minority stress (stress experienced by minorities as a result of social stigma) has been found to be detrimental to mental health and caused, in part, by the stigma attached to the minority status of persons belonging to the LGBTQ2+ group;¹²
- According to one study, 33.5% of students had experienced sexual harassment since their arrival at university by someone affiliated with that university. This percentage appears to break down into 54% gender minorities, 37.1% women and 22.9% men;¹³
- People with autism spectrum disorder (which is part of neurodiversity) reportedly experience discrimination in the labour market, as do people with disabilities.¹⁴



Supervision and advancement

- In spite of the equity initiatives that have been in place for many years, the highest positions in Canadian universities appear to continue to be predominantly held by white men (e.g., rectorships: 66.7% white men, 33.3% white females and 0% visible minorities);¹⁵
- Motherhood has been found to often have a negative impact on career advancement (e.g., fewer publications to enhance one's resumé) whereas fatherhood generally has a positive impact (e.g., bonuses, promotions or recognition);¹⁶
- Research with 67 PhD students in biology in the United States suggests that both women and visible minorities experience inequities in the distribution of lab work, doing more low-value support work and spending less time on research;¹⁷
- People in LGBTQ2+ communities are more likely than cisgender heterosexual people to experience difficulties and prejudice in the course of networking and hiring and promotion processes.⁷

Values in work and study environments

- Considering that standing out in the area of research requires coming out of the shadows, some people belonging to the LGBTQ2+ community may wish to avoid being noticed, even positively, in their field of research in order to protect themselves from the discrimination that could result;⁶
- A team can comprise multiple forms of diversity such as ethnocultural diversity, gender diversity and professional and generational diversity, which may generate tension and conflict;¹⁸
- Interdisciplinarity within a team is believed to foster creativity and problem solving. The potential of such a team may, however, be compromised and generate opposition if it is not properly exploited.¹⁸

Finances and scheduling

- It is estimated that 67% of full-time students and 39% of part-time students live in financial insecurity;¹⁹
- Academic realities such as classes and group meetings held outside standard work, day care centre, child care centre and school hours²⁰ may mean that certain single-parent families must pay for an evening babysitter in addition to paying for day care during the day.²¹



**MICROAGGRESSIONS
HAVE BEEN FOUND TO BE
EXPERIENCED REGULARLY BY
WOMEN, MEMBERS OF THE
LGBTQ2+ COMMUNITY, VISIBLE
MINORITIES, PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES AND MEMBERS OF
UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS.**

Physical work and study environment

- The lack or inadequacy of adaptations is believed to be an obstacle for persons with disabilities, preventing them from integrating into their work environment and hindering the proper performance of their duties.² Moreover, the mismatch between a person's environment and personal characteristics has been found to generate situations of disability;²²
- In predominantly male activity sectors, the physical environment (e.g., images, photos, furniture) may reinforce male stereotypes and deter women from pursuing these fields.²³

Policies and measures

- Policies and resources for the academic community appear to often be poorly known. Indeed, many people, if they needed something, would not know where to turn;^{CWSE}
- Some academic communities, such as engineering faculties, may have particular characteristics that result in a higher risk of harassment.²⁴ Yet policies to prevent harassment and discrimination often seem to be more of an institutional practice than a faculty practice.²⁵

EXAMPLES OF EDI PRACTICES

The following examples of practices to prevent and eliminate challenges that may be encountered within research teams are provided for inspiration. They are divided according to the same topics as the previous section and in accordance with the [Guide to Identifying Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Challenges Experienced by the Members of a Research Team](#).

Identify challenges and find solutions

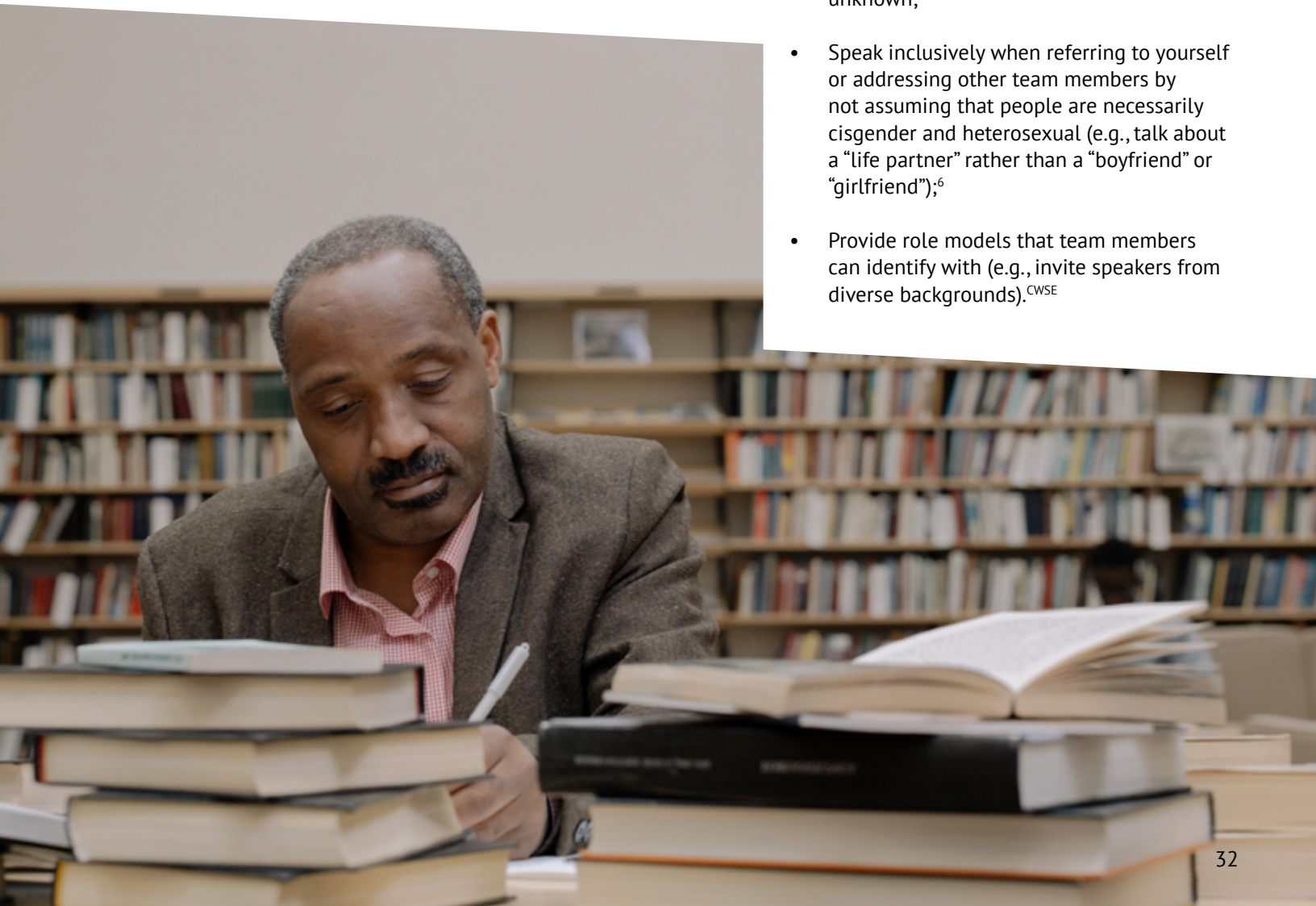
- Raise challenges with team members through interviews or questionnaires^{18,26} (see the [Guide to Identifying EDI Challenges](#) for more information);
- Where appropriate, ask them if they have any suggestions for improving the work climate or environment;^{CWSE}
- Take the diversity-related challenges faced by team members seriously and manage them proactively.²⁷

Onboarding and integration

- Introduce new team members to academic and community resources and suggest that they use them if needed;^{CWSE}
- Focus on developing a sense of belonging²⁵ (see the [team member integration pamphlet](#) for more information);
- Organize networking and mentoring activities;²⁵
- Learn about the history of colonization and its effects on the marginalization of Indigenous peoples today;¹¹
- Include the desired pronoun to use within one's personal signature to indicate belonging or to raise awareness of different gender identities (e.g., elle/she/her).²⁸

Psychological work and study climate

- Raise team members' awareness and get them thinking about microaggressions so they can define, recognize and deconstruct them, and recognize their impact^{8,9,10} (see the [Microaggression White Paper](#) for more information);
- Raise awareness of EDI and its challenges among the people in charge and team members²⁶ (see [the documentation available online](#) for more information);
- Actively listen to colleagues and treat them with respect;²⁹
- Listen to each team member equitably and if a colleague's words did not receive the attention or consideration they deserved, speak up about it;³⁰
- Avoid using gendered titles (mister, missus and miss) when someone's preferred title is unknown;³¹
- Speak inclusively when referring to yourself or addressing other team members by not assuming that people are necessarily cisgender and heterosexual (e.g., talk about a "life partner" rather than a "boyfriend" or "girlfriend");⁶
- Provide role models that team members can identify with (e.g., invite speakers from diverse backgrounds).^{CWSE}



Supervision and advancement

- Become aware of your own biases and prejudices¹² (see the [unconscious bias pamphlet](#) for more information);
- Assign roles and responsibilities equitably among team members;^{CWSE}
- Take into account non-linear pathways (e.g., maternity and caregiving leave, immigration processes);³²
- Make adaptive measures (e.g., flexible schedules, clear instructions) available to all staff rather than assigning them on the basis of disability. This may promote the retention of neurodiverse individuals and have benefits for all employees.³³

Values in work and study environments

- Educate yourself, as a manager, about EDI issues;^{CWSE}
- Make sure you know your team well with respect to the forms of diversity it contains in order to be able to better understand issues and act appropriately;^{30,34}
- Make sure that team members share the same core goals;³⁵
- Where appropriate, draw a link between diversity and team performance so that the team understands the benefits of diversity and is aware of the potential losses if diversity is neglected;³⁰
- Provide opportunities for all team members, whether from the student community or staff, to learn about the issues facing LGBTQ2+⁵ communities, women, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and persons belonging to visible minorities.^{CWSE}

Finances and scheduling

- Demonstrate supervisory flexibility by taking into account the delays that can result from certain situations;^{CWSE}
- Allow some scheduling flexibility for those who need it and clarify with the team that this is not a special privilege but an accommodation;^{CWSE}
- Take into account individual characteristics and interests when organizing activities (e.g., avoid evening activities for parents; have different types of team-building activities).^{CWSE}

Physical work and study environment

- Ask people to specify if they require any adjustments⁶ (e.g., seating at meetings to facilitate lip reading for a deaf person, limited noise for people with attention issues);^{CWSE}
- Diversify visuals such as photos on walls³⁶ and on the website;^{CWSE}
- Make sure that each person has access to work tools (e.g., adapted software) and safety accessories properly adapted for them.^{NSERC}

Policies and measures

- Be familiar with the policy and the law on psychological and sexual harassment in the workplace and provide each team member with a copy;³⁷
- Adopt a zero-tolerance policy toward acts such as violence and harassment (this has a positive impact on individuals' retention and advancement);^{27,25}
- Include a paragraph on the team's commitment to EDI and on the anti-discrimination policy in effect in the research contract;³⁸
- Inform individuals of the remedies available in the event of discrimination or harassment.²¹

RESOURCES

Guide to identifying EDI challenges in a research team and pamphlets on EDI in research: unconscious bias; integration of team members.

<http://cfsg.espaceweb.usherbrooke.ca/resources-for-implementing-edi-in-research/>

Neutral and gendered pronouns pamphlet.

<https://www.the519.org/education-training/training-resources/our-resources/creating-authentic-spaces/gender-specific-and-gender-neutral-pronouns>

Gendered titles pamphlet.

<https://www.the519.org/education-training/training-resources/our-resources/creating-authentic-spaces/starting-conversations>

Diversity in science and engineering: Intersectionality; Microaggressions.

<http://cfsg.espaceweb.usherbrooke.ca/download/4696>

<https://wwest.mech.ubc.ca/diversity/>



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TESTIMONY

NAVIGATING LAW SCHOOL AS BLACK WOMEN

Microaggressions

Navigating law school as a black woman means...

Wondering if our haircut will be frowned upon. When our hair is sometimes perceived as unprofessional, how can we emancipate ourselves as emerging lawyers? Our hairstyle is part of our identity and heritage. Caucasian standards aren't the only ones that should be promoted and respected.

Navigating law school as a black woman means...

Being told that we are too emotional when we stand up for our rights. Is it even possible for us to speak up without our words being dismissed based on the tone we adopt? When white men express themselves strongly and have character, people say they are passionate. Women? They're too sensitive and should learn to control their emotions. In our case, this is compounded by the stereotype of the always-angry black woman. This pervasive stereotype prevents us from being taken seriously.

"We knew that our daily life as future lawyers would be to argue and defend our points of view, but no one warned us that we would have to do these things for ourselves every day."

Djeinabou Barry

Intersectionality

Navigating law school as a black woman means...

Trying to break down the barriers of patriarchy while fighting for our place as a black person. Striving to make a place for ourselves without having role models that resemble us—the faculty and guest experts are mostly white. What message does this send us? That only white people are entitled to success? Yet we believe that we are successful and intend to continue to be successful as black women in our future careers.

It's also difficult to take our place and express ourselves on the issues we face, because often the people around us don't share the same reality and don't make the effort to listen. Having fundamental notions of systemic discrimination and ethnicity explained by people who don't experience racism on a daily basis is extremely violent. As soon as we express our feelings or talk about our experience, people take it personally and twist our words and gaslight us.

"It's very difficult to have healthy, productive conversations. How can we denounce problems and improve situations associated with ethnicity if, every time we express ourselves, we hit a wall? People say they want discussion and freedom of expression... but always under certain conditions."

Marie-Clarisse Berger



Inclusion and representation

Navigating law school as a black woman means...

Wondering if we're going to be the only Black woman in our class. Before starting a law degree, students ask themselves questions such as, "Will I be up to it? Will I be able to distinguish myself among all these brilliant people?" We, too, have asked ourselves these questions, but when you're a visible minority you also ask yourself whether you're going to be understood. It's already hard enough to cope with the pervasive performance stress in our field. Things are even more difficult when this stress is accompanied by the anguish of finding ourselves among people who will constantly question our personal and professional experience.

Taking concrete action to promote the inclusion and representation of racialized people in academic institutions and in the labour market is essential.

Djeinabou Barry (elle, she/her)

Bachelor of Laws student at Université de Sherbrooke
President and Founder of the Association des étudiants noirs en droit – UdeS

Marie-Clarisse Berger (elle, she/her)

Bachelor of Laws student at Université de Sherbrooke
Executive Council member of the Association Générale Étudiante de Droit (AGED)
Representative of the AGED Executive Board to the Association des Étudiant.e.s Noir.e.s en Droit – UdeS

INCLUSION OF TEAM MEMBERS

DID YOU KNOW?

Below are some examples from the research that show the importance of including all members of a team. According to the cited references:

- The need for belonging is considered one of the greatest motivators of behaviour in students. It is also considered a predictor of academic success and retention;¹
- Inclusion in the workplace is important since a person's occupation has been found to be one of the most influential dimensions in defining their identity;²
- Many individuals who have just arrived in Quebec report feeling alienated by the rapid adaptation that is required of them;³
- "All sorts of institutional and individual mechanisms, both sociocognitive [that depend on knowledge acquired through social relationships] and emotional, [appear to] create barriers to the smooth integration of visible minorities. The best known are xenophobia, racism and discrimination"² (freely translated, p. 7);
- Faculty members belonging to minority groups are reported to experience more exclusion, isolation, alienation and racism in predominantly white universities;⁴
- Women and members of minority groups among a given faculty may experience lower satisfaction with several aspects of their jobs compared to men who are in the majority;⁴
- Negative stereotypes toward women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM; e.g., the stereotype that women are less good at math than men) appear to negatively affect their sense of belonging;¹
- Sexism, whether benevolent or hostile, reportedly has a negative impact on women's performance, engagement, and sense of self-efficacy (belief in one's ability to succeed at a task in a given context);⁵
- When designated-group members find few similar individuals in their environment, they tend to feel that they don't belong (e.g., a woman in an all-male environment);¹
- Members of the LGBTQ2+ community seem to often fear being judged or ridiculed by others;⁶

- Women and members of minority groups reportedly consider that their contributions and words frequently go unheard or ignored;⁴
- People with disabilities frequently seem to report experiencing communication issues when they are onboarded at companies;⁷
- Persons with disabilities “[appear to] perceive social relationships in the workplace to be very difficult and are even convinced that interactions with other employees and even with the employer will be strained”⁸ (freely translated, p. 45);
- Individuals’ sense of belonging appears to be positively influenced when peer support is offered to team members from the beginning;⁹
- Individuals’ sense of belonging and an inclusive work environment may be fostered through mentoring;¹⁰
- The greater the presence of role models, the lower the belief in stereotypes;¹¹
- Proper integration of visible minorities into the team is reported to save time in the future in terms of staff effectiveness and retention.³



RECOMMENDATIONS

The following examples of practices associated with team members' inclusion are provided for inspiration.

- Prepare a predominantly male team for the arrival of a new female member by providing information on the benefits of a mixed team at work and the prejudices and stereotypes that must be broken;¹²
- Adopt a meeting format that includes cultural elements which show consideration toward members of visible minorities^{2,4} and members of other minority groups (e.g., Indigenous peoples);^{CWSE}
- Develop a common code of conduct that you create together, and then post it in laboratories and classrooms;^{CWSE}
- Promote the use of inclusive language and inclusive writing;⁴
- Adopt an intercultural approach to conflict management;²
- Create events that promote intercultural contact and speaking opportunities for members of visible minorities in a welcoming and relaxing context² (e.g., since a cocktail hour may exclude people with children, organize a group lunch instead);^{CWSE}
- Put in place clear policies and measures on harassment and discrimination within the team;¹⁰
- Set up an onboarding and integration program for members and follow up;²
- Inform new team members that accommodations are available to persons with disabilities according to their needs;⁷
- Conduct a “new hire feedback meeting” to collect the first impressions of any new person on the team roughly one month after integration, and respond by improving practices;¹³
- Identify materials that perpetuate stereotypes (e.g., readings and examples) and correct the situation;¹
- Make any necessary adaptations for employees with disabilities (e.g., adjustments to their workstation);⁷
- Facilitate job learning by offering support, coaching, mentoring or intercultural matching to new recruits;¹⁴
- Offer supportive coaching to persons with disabilities to facilitate their integration (e.g., useful information, advice);⁷
- Make sure that immigrants feel that their differences are welcomed and that, to this end, you respect their pace of integration;³
- Encourage conversation between colleagues in order to promote better relationships, a higher level of collaboration and a transfer of expertise;³
- Hire a significant number of visible minorities at all levels of hierarchy² as well as persons belonging to other minority groups;^{CWSE}
- Treat each person with politeness, consideration and respect, regardless of their culture, sex, gender, status, etc.;⁴
- Survey team members about their EDI experience and make any necessary modifications^{CWSE} (see the [guide to identifying EDI challenges](#) for more information);
- Acknowledge and value differences¹⁵ (e.g., by using the right pronouns¹⁶ and advocating the benefits of diversity^{CWSE}).

Documentation on the potential benefits and challenges of diversity in higher education and research.

<http://cfsq.espaceweb.usherbrooke.ca/edi-in-higher-education-and-research/>

Guide to identifying EDI challenges in a team and pamphlets on EDI in research.

<http://cfsq.espaceweb.usherbrooke.ca/resources-for-implementing-edi-in-research/>

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TESTIMONY

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES: BEYOND THE FIRST IMPRESSION, OR THE ART OF THE ENCOUNTER!

Disability reflects our own lacks and fears back to us. There is no courage in being a person with a disability, only the willingness to live with the reality of having a disability.

More personally, accepting one's difference and its associated realities and challenges is not an easy journey. As long as diversity is not the norm, being different by nature will always set us apart from others. Disability carries with it the gene of imperfection and, in a society where healthy bodies and performance are the norm, I will always be disadvantaged.

Accepting one's condition is a long-term struggle... and admitting it to an employer is yet another. Given that people with disabilities rarely feature in our media, how can I *normalize* my difference if I am not given a chance to show who I really am? How can I find it useful to disclose my needs and vulnerability if there is no positive benefit to doing so?

People with disabilities have to work harder than others to demonstrate the contribution they can make to our society and our communities. Yet far from being absent from higher education, [people with disabilities currently account for more than 26,000 students in CEGEPs and universities](#).

An article in the Portail du réseau collégial du Québec reports that, according to the Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur, the [college network has seen an 850% increase since 2009](#).

Yet persons with disabilities still face barriers in the labour market. The challenge is even greater when the disability is not visible and still not well known. The risks of incorrect interpretations and inappropriate interactions are even higher.

To tackle these barriers, we need to work within organizations to welcome and support persons with disabilities. We also need to raise awareness and train managers and teams who collaborate and will work with them.

Disability can take on many different forms; it is something personal that is continually shaped by our interactions. There are as many stories as there are people with disabilities and life paths shaped and influenced by social, cultural and environmental factors.

At the root of the words equity, diversity and inclusion are our education, references and knowledge of the topic, which must be challenged. Above all, these concepts should not be boiled down to an accessible parking space, because inclusion is so much more than this.

I have always been convinced that empathy is only possible when someone takes the time to get to know someone else. Engaging with difference, and not just addressing it, is in my opinion, a prerequisite for a better society. I agree with the quote that “we should not fear difference, what we should fear the most is indifference” (Christophe Tavernier).

And, as Albert Jacquard, a French geneticist and essayist, said in his book *Mon utopie*, “education is like an art; it is an ever-unfolding creation that progresses by provoking ever-new encounters” (translated freely).

It is up to us to contribute to the art of these encounters!

Sylvain Le May

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¹ This text reflects the views of the author only and not necessarily those of the CDPDJ.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION: AWARENESS-RAISING AND TRAINING FOR TEAM MEMBERS

DID YOU KNOW?

Below are examples from the research that demonstrate the impacts of awareness-raising (or lack thereof) on equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI). This section also includes observations, facts and concepts related to EDI.

Impacts of the presence or absence of awareness-raising or training

- An absence of knowledge about equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) among human resources professionals is considered to be a barrier to the achievement of established EDI goals;¹
- The ability of minority group members to integrate, develop and thrive in the workplace is believed to depend on the critical factor of managing diversity, equity and inclusion;¹
- Training activities are reported to often take place at the time when a team is created, and address the need to acquire knowledge and skills that should subsequently contribute to greater team effectiveness;^{2,3}

- “Education and reflection – individually, communally, and institutionally - are [believed to be] critical steps to making workplaces and community environments inclusive to all people regardless of the group they identify with”⁴ (see the [Microaggression White Paper](#) for more information);
- Mentoring is considered to be an opportunity to discuss the many challenges of EDI and to share related best practices.⁵

Impacts of EDI on a work team

- The terms “diversity” and “inclusion” often seem to be used together. However, they do not mean the same thing. Indeed, it is possible to have a diverse team but that partly or completely lacks inclusiveness;⁶
- It is believed that everyone has unconscious biases, which affect relationships with others. Often, this seems to happen when one generalizes the behaviour of a few group members to the entire group⁷ (see the [Unconscious Bias White Paper](#) for more information);

- Members of designated groups (DG) and marginalized groups (MG) appear to face recurring challenges and barriers.⁸ However, these challenges may not always be easy for non-concerned individuals to recognize^{CWSE} (see the [pamphlet on challenges faced by DG and MG](#) for more information);
- Intersectionality, which refers to the intersection between designated groups (e.g., an Indigenous woman), has been found to generally create more challenges for people who are subject to multiple forms of discrimination at the same time⁹ (see the [Intersectionality White Paper](#) for more information).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following examples of practices associated with EDI awareness-raising and training for team members are provided for inspiration.

- Take EDI training as a team leader and encourage team members to do the same;^{CWSE}
- Distribute information about the potential benefits of diversity to team members and provide them with training to make sure they understand the importance of EDI^{4,10} (see the [documentation available online](#) for more information);
- Raise team members' awareness and get them thinking about microaggressions ("subtle, mundane exchanges that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to individuals based on group membership") so that they can define them, recognize them, deconstruct their hidden meaning, recognize their impact, and deconstruct them⁴ (see the [Microaggression White Paper](#) for more information);
- Provide team members with training on inclusive writing^{CWSE} or use equitable writing techniques to properly represent each individual, regardless of the gender they identify with¹¹ (see the [guide available online](#) [French only] for more information);
- Make the team aware of unconscious biases so that team members can accept their presence in themselves, regularly challenge their own beliefs and convictions, and be open to feedback on this subject;⁷
- Provide the team with training on sex- and gender-based analysis (SGBA) (or SGBA+ and GBA+) and learn more about its applications^{CWSE} to promote more rigorous science by taking greater consideration of sex (biologically based) and gender (socio-culturally based; e.g., determinants of health)¹² (see the [SGBA+ and GBA+ pamphlet](#) for more information);
- Make EDI tools available to team members;^{CWSE}
- Provide team members with training on mentoring in a context of EDI.⁷



RESOURCES

Introductory course on GBA+, gender-based analysis +.

<https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/gender-based-analysis-plus/take-course.html>

Documentation on the potential benefits and challenges of diversity in higher education and research.

<http://cfsq.espaceweb.usherbrooke.ca/edi-in-higher-education-and-research/>

Pamphlets on EDI in research [French only].

<http://cfsq.espaceweb.usherbrooke.ca/resources-for-implementing-edi-in-research/>

Inclusive writing guide for the sciences [French only].

https://www.usherbrooke.ca/sciences/fileadmin/sites/sciences/documents/Faculte/EDI/FacSciences_guide_de_redaction_inclusif_web.pdf

Toolkits on EDI challenges in the workplace.

<https://ccdi.ca/toolkits/>

Webinar on mentoring in a context of EDI.

<https://rqedi.com/en/workshops/>

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^{CWSE} Chair for Women in Science and Engineering in Quebec

TESTIMONY

LET'S DISCUSS OUR UNCONSCIOUS BIAS, OUR PRIVILEGES AND OUR DISCOMFORTS IN RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLE:

A COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE RÉSEAU INTERUNIVERSITAIRE QUÉBÉCOIS POUR L'ÉQUITÉ, LA DIVERSITÉ ET L'INCLUSION (RIQEDI) AND MIKANA

The academic community has been mobilizing in recent years on issues of equity, diversity and inclusion, with the goal of having equitable practices and more inclusive environments for the entire community. A number of reflections, experiments and actions are being carried out in the different bodies of Quebec universities. However, Indigenous issues in the post-secondary environment remain complex to address, especially from the standpoint of a predominantly non-Indigenous and privileged population. In the context of research conducted for more than a year with the RIQEDI group on Indigenous issues, our reflections have uncovered many of the challenges that we face at our universities, including the admission of Indigenous persons into the student population, the hiring of Indigenous teaching staff, Indigenous identity, territorial recognition and how to carry out respectful and sincere practices with Indigenous communities. It is a fact that most of the discussions raise uncomfortable points that we struggle to address.

In the midst of the pandemic, during the summer of 2020, we, Widia, Léa and Bibiana, met informally to discuss and exchange views on the issues highlighted by various stakeholders in the post-secondary world. Having different perspectives—with Widia being an Indigenous woman and the director of Mikana; Léa being a university researcher who has studied the discrimination experienced by Indigenous students; and Bibiana being the director of RIQEDI and possessing an EDI perspective—we kept circling around the same question in our discussions: How can we make our collaborations concrete and join forces to raise awareness in our communities? We knew from the start that we were certainly not going to change the world, but we still wanted to rally together and look at how we could raise awareness on a smaller scale. Our trio embarked on the journey of developing an introductory workshop on bias, privileges and discomforts in relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people! It was very enjoyable putting this workshop together, and the experience was a great source of learning.

In October 2020 we launched a first invitation to participate in this workshop among our respective networks. We had no particular expectations, but we were taken by surprise when the workshop sold out in less than 24 hours. We were very pleased to see this desire for self-reflection and action on the part of the post-secondary community in order to improve relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Many more workshops followed in universities, CEGEPs, research centres, departments, government agencies, granting agencies, not-for-profit organizations and more. We met all kinds of people who shared with us their experiences, their desire to learn, their impatience to want to change things, the pressures they experience in their communities, and especially their discomfort.

The beautiful discussions and pleasant meetings that resulted spur us to continue working on this awareness and to develop new projects to “Indigenize” our post-secondary community. An important message that we want to convey is to stop focusing on quick, short-term solutions and instead, as Mikana states in its mission, to “[decolonize] minds and [redefine] our path together.”

Bibiana Pulido (elle, she/her)

Cofounder and Executive Director of RIQEDI

Widia Larivière (elle, she/her)

Cofounder and Executive Director of Mikana

Léa Lefevre-Radelli (elle, she/her)

Postdoctoral Researcher on Racial Issues

Concordia University and Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières



WRITING AND EVALUATING LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

DID YOU KNOW?

Below are examples from the research that demonstrate observed differences in the writing and interpretation of letters of recommendation according to identity characteristics. In the studies cited:

- People wrote better letters of recommendation for people who were similar to them with respect to gender and personality;¹
- The least persuasive letters of recommendation written for women often portrayed them as less professional and capable, while minimizing or omitting their professional achievements and personal qualities;²
- It was more common for a woman to receive a letter of minimal assurance (a brief letter missing important features) than for a man. Moreover, on average, male candidates received longer letters compared to female candidates;²
- Letters of recommendation written for women contained more features that raise doubt (e.g., negative wording: “although she isn’t my best student...”) than those written for men;²
- Women who wrote letters for other women were 16 times more likely to name the person informally (first name) than formally (title or last name),³ which can affect the credibility of the application;⁴



- Letters of recommendation did not use the same vocabulary for men and for women;
 - > Those written for men contain more adjectives associated with talent and skill (e.g., analytical), unlike those written for women;⁵
 - > Women were more often described as conscientious and hard-working, while men are more often described as excellent and accomplished.²
- Similarly, important differences according to ethnicity were noted in the vocabulary that was used. White individuals were more likely to be described in strong terms such as “remarkable,” “exceptional” and “best” than Black, Asian and Hispanic individuals were;⁶
- The characteristics most often associated with women in letters of recommendation (communal characteristics such as helpfulness, likeability, friendliness, sensitivity, tact, warmth and kindness) had a negative impact on university hiring decisions⁷ (see the [gendered expressions white paper](#) for more information);
- It may have been difficult to address the issue of disabilities in letters of recommendation, since this difference risked being perceived as incompetence or a deficiency in the view of the evaluation committee;⁸
- Letters of recommendation were not all written the same way and contained different features depending on the culture;⁹⁻¹²
- A letter of recommendation may have been interpreted in different ways because of the cultural differences that may exist between the person writing the letter and the person reading it.¹¹



**LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION
WERE NOT ALL WRITTEN THE
SAME WAY AND CONTAINED
DIFFERENT FEATURES
DEPENDING ON THE CULTURE.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following examples of practices associated with writing and reviewing letters of recommendation are provided for inspiration.

1

Writing letters of recommendation

BEFORE WRITING

Review the evaluation criteria and make sure that you know the candidate well enough before agreeing to write a letter of recommendation;^{CWSE}

Make sure you have the time to write a quality letter of recommendation;¹³

If the recommendation cannot be honest or without reservation, suggest that the candidate approach another person in a better position to write the letter of recommendation;¹⁴

Ask the applicant to provide their updated application package to help you write a personalized and targeted letter.²

DURING WRITING

In order to make it more convincing, write the letter in a personalized way, avoiding as much as possible the “fill-in-the-blanks” templates that only require a few pieces of information (unless this is a requirement);^{CWSE}

Name the person formally (full name or title) rather than informally (first name) to avoid affecting the application’s credibility;⁴

Include all of the basic information generally expected in a good letter of recommendation (e.g., involvement and relationship between the person writing the letter and the recommended applicant, description of the application’s work, an appraisal of their achievements, concrete examples to support claims) and address all the evaluation criteria;^{2,13}

Present the ideas carefully. For example, if it is not your intent to do so, avoid including features that may cast doubt on the skills, qualifications or any other aspects of the candidate for the person reading the letter (e.g., negative wording or language with negative connotations);²

Refrain from using stereotypical elements (e.g., saying a woman is maternal) to describe the person;¹³

Use superlatives (adjectives that express a higher degree of quality; e.g., exceptional, excellent) regardless of the person’s background, sex or gender.¹³ However, to avoid discrediting the candidate, be careful not to overuse such words;^{CWSE}

Leave out characteristics that could be considered discriminatory (e.g., nationality, culture, sexual orientation);¹⁴

From the beginning of the writing process, opt for gender-neutral writing and wording, as it is difficult to adapt a text that has been previously thought out and written in the generic masculine (see the [guide available online](#) [French only] for more information).

AFTER WRITING

Make sure that the letter does not imply either too detailed or too succinct a description of the person’s skills. An optimal length will minimize the risk of containing features that cast doubt as well as of omitting important information (a short letter providing a good summary can be more effective than a long letter that lacks coherence);²

Assume an objective point of view by reflecting on whether the letter you’ve written would be the same for a person from a different culture or belonging to a different sex or gender.¹³ Question your own biases and make sure that they did not impact¹⁵ the writing of the letter.

2

Evaluating letters of recommendation

- If in doubt about the content of a letter from a little-known or unknown culture, do not hesitate to contact the person who wrote the letter in order to validate their intention. This helps make sure the reader will correctly interpret the content;¹¹
- Take the time to read the letters of recommendation carefully¹⁶ and allow the same amount of time for each letter or application;^{CWSE}
- Avoid automatically thinking that a longer letter is a more positive letter;¹⁶
- Learn about bias in letters of recommendation and pay special attention to this issue¹⁵ (e.g., keep in mind that, compared to letters written for men, letters written for women may contain more features that raise doubt²).



FICTITIOUS EXAMPLES OF LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Example of a letter of minimal assurance

Dr. Alfred Koop,

It gives me great pleasure in writing this recommendation for Dr Sarah Gray. I have known Sarah as a resident and as staff at Mrahonod Metropolitan Hospital. She is knowledgeable, pleasant, and easy to get along with. I have no hesitation in recommending her for a faculty position at Centvingcinq. I will be happy to answer any further questions in this regard.

Charles Lewis, MD
Chairman, Department of Psychiatry

Example of a good short letter of recommendation

Dr. Koop,

I am pleased to recommend Dr Sarah Gray for faculty appointment as Clinical Assistant Professor. I have known Dr Gray for 8 years. She worked in research with me for 1 year and did fellowship training in our program for 2 years. She is a very good internist and endocrinologist. She is honest and reliable and of highest moral quality. She has good judgment in patient care and is very thoughtful and considerate towards those she is caring for. She is a good clinical teacher and should serve the department well in the capacity of instructing students and residents.

Charles Lewis, MD
Chairman, Department of Psychiatry

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TESTIMONY

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION: A QUEST AMID TROUBLED WATERS

Throughout my graduate years, some things were as immutable as the seasons themselves. The coolness of late summer reminded me that it was time to embark on my quest for letters of recommendation for grant competitions. Later in the year, spring would usher in not only the return of lovely weather, but my anticipation of the answers that I was still awaiting.

I went through this cycle again and again—for mobility, language immersion, master's, doctoral, and postdoctoral fellowship grants... The people who had agreed to be my references seemed pleased to comply with the request, especially since the outcomes were most often positive. Although several times I questioned my strategy of having recommendations from professors working outside of Canada, I confess that at the time, I never questioned the content of these letters and the possibility that cultural differences in how they were written might influence the review committee members.

When I entered the labour market, my relationship to this quest for letters of recommendation changed. Even if there were a limited number of positions in ancient studies, I quickly wished to respond to a multitude of calls for applications, both for lecturer and professor positions, at home and abroad. In most cases, three letters had to be sent by my reference persons to be able to submit an application. This step was starting to make me uncomfortable.

Was I asking them for too many letters? In my quest to improve my record, I had read some accounts from young professors who said they had had to apply more than 100 times before landing their position. Was I willing to go that far?

Was I giving them enough time to do things right? I assumed that over time, they had drafted three or four versions of my letter. When I sent them a request, all they had to do was update it. However, I did ask myself whether it might have been simpler to use a submission system that automatically sends letters to universities.

This job search in academia was difficult for me, as it was for many of my colleagues. The answers were almost always negative, when I received one at all. The more time went by, the less I believed in my chances.

The excellence of my application (number of publications, importance of the conferences I attended, relevance of my research projects, etc.) depended on me... except for one element: my letters of recommendation. While I never for a moment doubted the good faith of my reference persons, and their rigour in supporting me, there was no evidence that they were not victims of their own unconscious prejudices. Could the fact of being a woman, a new mother and a dedicated member of my community have tinted the way they spoke of my achievements? This is a delicate question to ask, especially since I am not sure that I did not fall into these traps myself when I sat on a selection committee.

For a variety of reasons, I ultimately decided to pursue a career in university administration. My work at the Institut national de la recherche scientifique (INRS) meshes perfectly with my desire to contribute to the development of graduate studies and research. The constant quest for letters of recommendation is now behind me... to my great relief!

Emilie-Jade Poliquin (elle, she/her)

Government Relations Officer

Institut national de la recherche scientifique

MANAGING A DIVERSE TEAM

DID YOU KNOW?

Following are examples from the research that demonstrate the potential benefits associated with diverse teams and that address the potential challenges of managing them.

Potential benefits of a diverse team

- In terms of identity, training and experience, a diverse team has been found to exhibit greater cognitive diversity.¹ Indeed, perspectives, heuristics, interpretations and predictive models, which are useful for problem solving and prediction, have been shown to be influenced by individual identity, so that each person has a unique toolkit to draw from;²
- Diversity reportedly lowers the risks associated with the psycho-sociological phenomenon of groupthink;^{1,3}
- A positive association is believed to exist between decision-making diversity and performance.⁴ For example, a study appears to have uncovered a link between the diversity of executives and financial performance;⁴
- Gender diversity in work teams has been reported to foster innovation, diversify perspectives and contribute to developing better social relationships as well as a more open climate of work and debate;^{1,5}
- Teams with diverse identities have been found to have a variety of concerns and to take an interest in multiple issues.¹ For example, in journalistic publications or more specifically in opinion pieces, certain topics appear to be less present when women do not publish;⁶
- Diversity has been reported to stimulate skill development in a student population.^{1,7,8}

Potential challenges of managing a diverse team

- In a multicultural society such as Quebec, the world of work is made up of individuals with different beliefs, ways of thinking, and behaviours. While these cultural differences represent many benefits, they may also produce misunderstandings in some situations between individuals from different cultures.^{1,9} To dispel these misunderstandings, dialogue often remains the best way forward;^{CWSE}

- People belonging to minority groups may experience personal difficulties such as exclusion, isolation, discrimination and harassment;^{10,11,12}
- Microaggressions (“subtle, mundane exchanges that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to individuals based on group membership”) have been found to be experienced regularly by women, members of the LGBTQ2+ community, visible minorities, persons with disabilities and members of underrepresented groups¹³ (see the [Microaggression White Paper](#) for more information);
- A diverse team can comprise multiple forms of diversity (e.g., ethnocultural diversity, gender diversity and professional and generational diversity) which may generate tension and conflict;¹⁴
- Interdisciplinarity within a team is believed to foster creativity and problem solving. The potential of such a team may, however, be compromised and generate opposition if it is not properly channelled;¹⁴
- When people on the same team do not share the same basic preferences or core goals, problems may develop between them.^{1,2}

Other challenges include onboarding and integrating team members, supervision and advancement, finances and scheduling, the physical work and study environment, and policies and measures. These challenges are addressed in the [pamphlet on challenges encountered by designated and marginalized groups](#).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following examples of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) practices that can be put in place for managing diverse teams are provided for inspiration.

Training and awareness

- Educate yourself, as a manager or team leader, about EDI issues;^{CWSE}
- Learn about EDI and its challenges and raise awareness among team members¹⁵ (see the [documentation available online](#));
- Adopt the tools to become an ally and give your team members the resources they need in order to learn how to become allies as well;^{CWSE}
- Where appropriate, draw a link between diversity and team performance so that team members understand the benefits of diversity and are aware of the potential losses if diversity is neglected;¹⁴
- Become aware of one’s own biases and prejudices about the groups represented in a diverse team¹⁴ (see the [Unconscious Bias White Paper](#) for more information);

- Take advantage of the role of manager to lead by example in order to reduce the barriers that people from diverse backgrounds face in diverse work teams.¹⁵

Reflection on challenges and solutions

- Make sure to know one's team well with respect to the forms of diversity it contains in order to be able to better understand issues and act appropriately;¹⁴
- Identify challenges with team members through interviews or questionnaires with a view to taking targeted action¹⁵ (see the [online guide to identifying EDI challenges for more information](#));
- Request the team's participation in the problem-solving process in order to help implement strategies.¹⁴
- Adopt a zero-tolerance policy toward acts such as violence and harassment;¹⁶
- Use constructive feedback (discuss objectively by using facts and demonstrating the intention to improve things rather than issue judgment);¹⁵
- Adopt a meeting format that includes elements which show consideration toward members of visible minorities¹⁷ and members of designated or marginalized groups (e.g., use inclusive language, schedule meetings at convenient times for parents);^{CWSE}

Inclusive management

- Review management practices according to the forms of diversity present in the team with a view to adopting new practices that will take into account the challenges of diversity (e.g., review the processes for integrating new people into the work team);¹⁴
- Make sure that team members understand new management practices by introducing them to any such practices;^{14,15}
- Stay current on practices' evolution by instituting an occasional review and follow-up on practices (e.g., surveys, debriefs or interviews);¹⁴
- Encourage continuous improvement in team functioning by adopting a vigilant and attentive attitude;¹⁴
- Make sure that team members share the same vision of the tasks to be accomplished, and the same core goals;²
- Appreciate what each person brings to the team;¹⁵
- Openly welcome different ways of working;¹⁸
- Make adaptive measures (e.g., flexible schedule, clear instructions) available to all staff members rather than assigning them on the basis of disability. This may promote the retention of persons with invisible disabilities (e.g., neurodiverse individuals) and may have benefits for all employees.¹⁹

RESOURCES

Diversity in science and engineering: Unconscious bias.

<https://wwest.mech.ubc.ca/diversity/>

Documentation on the potential benefits and challenges of diversity in higher education and research.

<https://cfsq.espaceweb.usherbrooke.ca/edi-in-higher-education-and-research/>

Guide to identifying EDI challenges in a team and pamphlets on EDI in research.

<https://cfsq.espaceweb.usherbrooke.ca/resources-for-implementing-edi-in-research/>

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TESTIMONY

MANAGING A DIVERSE TEAM: A COMMITMENT TO BE STRENGTHENED THROUGH COHERENT ACTION

Nowadays, the discourse on the importance of openness and taking advantage of diversity is predominant. Yet it is important to remember that how equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are managed within work teams depends on the goals and the means used to achieve them.

An organization or work team is said to be inclusive when it develops and implements [“a set of coordinated actions and interventions with the aim of creating an environment that will allow all employees to reach their full potential while pursuing the goals of the organization.”](#) It is true that productivity and efficiency objectives are essential for any organization. However, EDI management (EDIM) remains a moral imperative, a legal obligation and a factor in performance. Actions in the area of EDI touch upon hiring, career advancement and improving the representation of members of targeted groups in all job categories and components of the organization.

The strengths of diversity

Whether one is aware of it or not, all work groups are prone to misunderstandings and inequities that are more or less sneaky, systemic and demotivating, leading to the non-recognition and non-integration of certain members. There are many reasons for this. Human beings tend to value what is similar to them and to reject or, at best, tolerate difference. Ethnocentrism refers to the attitude of favouring the social group to which one belongs and making it one's only reference model. Similarity/attraction theories are premised on the idea that individuals feel comfortable in a group of people who are similar to them while they feel less confident in the presence of individuals who differ in status, origin, age, gender or any other personal characteristic. Such mistrust is believed to exacerbate conflicts within groups. In contrast, similarity in values and demographic characteristics has long been considered a factor in workplace effectiveness.

Paradoxically, both theory and practice show that work groups made up of members from different backgrounds tend to share more information, which leads to better performance than in the case of homogeneous teams. Information and decision-making theories suggest that diversity improves performance by contributing to better decisions and leveraging a wider range of ideas and solutions.

Removing barriers

There are many barriers that make it more difficult to implement EDIM programs. The difficulty of recruiting qualified candidates from diverse backgrounds is one of the main reasons cited as preventing teams from diversifying their members. This motive, referred to as the “pipeline,” is reflected in managers' reluctance to show support for diversity. Yet the support of management is essential to putting actions in place and achieving their goals.

Coherent actions

EDI actions within teams must be an integral part of strategic planning and a coherent action plan. They must be strengthened by an inclusive culture, by qualitative and quantitative measures to monitor the achievement of objectives, as well as by awareness-raising and training.

Changing mindsets, making commitments regarding access and support throughout career paths, and implementing follow-up measures are key to the effectiveness and success of more inclusive work teams.

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TAKING DIVERSITY INTO ACCOUNT IN RESEARCH:

AN INTRODUCTION TO GBA+, ADS+ AND SGBA

DID YOU KNOW?

Following are a few concepts and facts associated with GBA+, ADS+ and SGBA.

- Gender-based analysis (GBA+) is the term used in Canada since 1996, while *analyse différenciée par les sexes plus* (ADS+) is the term used in Quebec since 1997;¹
- The “+” in GBA+ and ADS+ means that the analysis is intersectional. Hence, beyond sex and gender, this analysis encompasses intersecting factors such as ethnic background, age, religion, the presence of a physical or intellectual disability, and much more;^{2,3}
- The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) contrastingly use the term “sex and gender-based analysis” (SGBA). SGBA can also take into consideration the influence of determinants such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, sexual orientation, immigration status, age and geography on aspects associated with sex and gender;⁴
- This analysis is used to assess the potential impact of policies, programs or initiatives on various groups of people—women, men or others.² It is applied to a variety of fields, including research;
- Using this analysis helps determine whether different groups in a population are affected differently. For example, concussions can affect anyone, but GBA+ (similar to ADS+ and SGBA) has suggested that adolescent and adult (pre-menopausal) women with concussions exhibit more symptoms, have longer reaction times, and experience greater impairment of their cognitive abilities than men in the same age categories;⁵
- By taking into account the different realities and needs of each group of people, this method makes it possible to refine analysis and offer a more accurate portrait of the population;⁶

- This analysis helps to make science more rigorous as well as to increase understanding of certain subjects (e.g., determinants of health).⁴ It helps minimize our blind spots and become aware of the many remaining social inequalities;¹
- There are three approaches that share the same goal of diminishing social inequality:
 - > **The specific approach** aims at correcting situations of inequality related to systemic discrimination against women¹ through measures that address women's status;⁷
 - > **The societal approach** seeks to bring about a change in institutional culture and foster the support of social stakeholders through policies, for example;⁷
 - > **The cross-cutting approach** (includes GBA+, ADS+ and SGBA) is used when the initiative does not exclusively address women¹⁰ and is complementary to the two other approaches.⁷
- GBA (similar to ADS+ and SGBA) is a tool that helps guide initiatives in order to reduce inequality. It is therefore important to integrate this analysis into all steps, and throughout the process.⁸



To give an example, the following figure represents the “ministry pathway for integrating GBA plus or ADS plus* [GBA+, ADS+] into a project”⁹. **The plus refers to intersectionality. **A project may be defined by a law, regulation, policy, program, measure or service for citizens, or by any other decision”⁹ (translated freely).

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

PROJECT STAGES	PROJECT PREPARATION				PROJECTION COMPLETION			DEBRIEFING	
PHASES	ANALYSIS				INTEGRATION			IMPACT AND RESULTS	
STEPS	Identify the problem and issues, and do research	Consult	Set goals and indicators	Develop scenarios leading to decision-making	Design the project	Carry out the project	Communicate	Follow up and assess	
COMPONENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate gender-based quantitative and qualitative data. Integrate other gender-based variables. Make gender-based observations. Explain the causes and consequences of significant gaps between genders. Determine the issues for women and for men, and for different groups of women and men, affected by a project (youths, elders, immigrants, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reach out to an equitable proportion of women and men. Give experts, community groups and academics specializing in equality between men and women a chance to express their points of view. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Break down goals and indicators if possible. Plan followup indicators to assess the project's impact on equality between women and men. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make recommendations to authorities according to gendered observations and the issues identified. Explain who (women and/or men) will benefit from the proposed advantages. Equitably assign roles and work between women and men. Explain to the authorities the consequences of a scenario that fails to take gendered observations and identified issues into account. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure the project does not create, confirm or reinforce other stereotypes associated with the two genders' roles and responsibilities. Draw up an action plan and operational activities to diminish or eliminate the gaps observed between women and men. Make sure that women and men benefit from equitable conditions and criteria in terms of access to resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure that the resources and financial means devoted to the project are allocated equitably according to the gender differentiation observed. Organize the data collection with a view to assessing the project's impact on equality between women and men. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure, according to the project's circumstances, to have a diversity of images (men, women, youths, elders, etc.). Craft messages that speak to women as much as men. Write gender-neutral texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure that data collection, analysis and interpretation as well as recommendations illustrate the project's impact on women and men. Make a judgment on the lack of gendered data and take corrective action if necessary. Suggest modifications to the project to better take into account the different realities or women and men. 	
MINISTRY AUTHORITIES	Make sure components are taken into account, prioritize needs according to GBA, and choose the best scenario				PC1	Confirm the definitive project, communicate the GBA process and make sure components are taken into account		PC2	PC3 Take action based on the results and the project's impact on the targeted population

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following examples of practices for integrating diversity into a research program or project are provided for inspiration.

- Undergo training on GBA+, ADS+ or SGBA and learn more about its applications;
- Validate whether a consideration of diversity applies to one's research by conducting a GBA+, ADS+ or SGBA:
 - > If so, take diversity into account in the project;
 - > If not, explain why not.
- Determine if the project or program requires the use of a specific or cross-cutting approach;¹⁰
- Use the resources and tools available to researchers;⁴
- Make sure that diversity has been taken into account in all stages of the project;¹⁰
- Question one's prejudices or unconscious biases to make sure the options under consideration are not skewed, and make sure to consider all the possibilities.⁸



TAKING DIVERSITY INTO ACCOUNT IN RESEARCH

Inspired by the website [Gendered Innovation](#), here are a few points to reflect on in order to taking diversity into account in research (non-exhaustive list):

Examples of areas of research in which failing to take the population's diversity into account could affect the results:

- Health: biomedical, clinical, population-health research, etc.;
- Environment: climate change impacts on animal populations and species, chemicals' impact on animal populations and species, design and use of urban spaces, etc.;
- Systems and services for the population: health, education, social services, human resources, etc.;
- Technological innovations: artificial intelligence, social robotics, facial recognition, product design for the population, etc.;
- Infrastructure: mobility, water management, etc.;
- Etc.

Examples of questions to ponder when choosing working hypotheses and research questions:

- What is known about the impact of sex, gender, or other specificities in the population (e.g., background, age, socio-economic status, lifestyle)?
- Are there interactions between two or more specificities (e.g., intersectional analysis or the “+” in GBA+ and ACS+)?
- Who could be consulted?
- Which perspectives would be relevant?
- What is not known about the problem?
- Why is it not known (e.g., no existing research, findings not differentiated by specificity)?
- What is the impact of knowing (or not knowing) on the search for and development of solutions?
- What could be examined to deepen knowledge and validate or improve current practices?
- Should diversity-related factors be included in order to improve the research?
- Should the targeted group participate in establishing the research question and hypotheses?



Example of questions to consider when developing the research methodology:

- How to determine the level of diversity to attain in the sample?
- How can diversity be controlled within the sample (e.g., participants, animals studied, cells used)?
- How can the recruitment process be prevented from limiting diversity (e.g., persons with reduced mobility require specialized transportation, which can complicate their participation in research)?
- What are the challenges of recruiting a diversified sample?
- How is it possible to limit the methodology's impact on diversity (e.g., schedules can limit the availability of certain groups such as caregivers or relatives)?
- What data might be useful during analysis in order to evaluate the impact of diversity on the results?
- What should be included in the methodology to take diversity into account in analysis (e.g., questionnaire, anthropometric measurements, biomarker assessment)?
- Are the measurement tools biased (e.g., the threat of stereotyping can influence test scores; see [the Stereotype Threat White Paper](#) for more information)?
- Is it possible for the team that is taking measures to introduce biases (e.g., because of preconceived notions)?

Examples of questions to ponder when analyzing the results:

- How would it be possible to examine the presence or absence of interaction between the population's various specificities?
- Might the team analyzing the results introduce biases (e.g., because of stereotypes or blind spots)?
- Will targeted populations be involved in analyzing the results?

Examples of questions to ponder when disseminating the results:

- How can the data be presented in order to show the presence or absence of differences between groups?
- To which populations will the results be disseminated?

RESOURCES

Introduction to GBA+ course.

<https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/gender-based-analysis-plus/take-course.html>

Gender-Based Analysis in Government Practices and Those of Local and Regional Decision-Making Bodies.

<http://www.scf.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/Documents/ADS/ADS-guide-2007-2010-en.pdf>

Online Training Modules: Integrating Sex & Gender in Health Research.

<https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/49347.html>

Gendered innovations website.

<https://genderedinnovations.stanford.edu/>

Toolkit: *L'ADS pour y voir clair*. (French only) Link to order the kit:

<https://www.femmescentreduquebec.qc.ca/fichiers/Promo-trousse-ADS.pdf>

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TESTIMONY

ADS+ AS A PREREQUISITE FOR GREATER EQUALITY

Originally trained in sociocultural anthropology and Taiwanese studies, then in feminist, gender and sexuality studies, I began working in gender and intersectional analysis (ADS+) purely by chance in the context of a management job. Ever since, my outlook has been coloured by an “ADS+ perspective.” I went on to teach ADS+ at Université Laval, conducted a research project on the subject and led a number of training courses in various settings.

Experience has taught me that some elements must be in place to successfully implement ADS+ as an organizational practice, while others are real barriers to integrating this approach.

Barriers

The myth that equality has already been achieved is probably the greatest barrier to the establishment of ADS+ as a formal organizational practice. Indeed, why conduct such an analysis if equality has already been attained? Many people are further discouraged by the myth of the complexity of this approach. The truth, however, is that ADS+ is merely a form of “common sense” to develop in the way research issues are analyzed. Another obstacle is the lack of training and the turnover of competent staff on the subject. To this end, there is a need to perpetuate this knowledge in the organization. Another factor cited as the main obstacle to the use of ADS+ is a lack of time and (financial and human) resources. Here, it is essential to stress that a project that does not integrate ADS+ from its inception is very likely to be biased, to generate inequalities and even to worsen existing ones. As such, the use of catch-up measures will prove even more resource-intensive than if ADS+ had been integrated from the beginning in the first place. Finally, another issue that remains is the availability of data disaggregated by gender and other identity factors. To overcome this, it is possible to consult the quantitative and qualitative studies on a given subject as well as designated groups,

which are the specialists on their own situations. It then becomes important to compensate these groups who share their knowledge and who should not have to bear the burden of inclusion initiatives.

Conditions for success

When it comes to the implementation of ADS+, several conditions must be united. First, and in connection with the above, it is important to emphasize the critical role of women’s and other social justice groups with whom alliances can be promising in conducting analyses and deciding on priorities. It is important to work on co-constructing knowledge with these groups. It is also necessary to have a strong organizational commitment to social justice that is supported by the sustained presence of an “equality leader” within the organization (ministry, agency, university, research team, etc.). Sometimes EDI initiatives are introduced, but never followed up, making it impossible to know the impact of these actions. When ADS+ is incorporated into a project, it is imperative to put in place follow-up measures in order to make any required course corrections. Finally, the most important condition for success is making children aware of social justice issues from an early age and providing the next generation with a non-gendered education.

ADS+ should be a prerequisite for any project in order to avoid generating new inequalities or exacerbating existing ones for various historically marginalized groups. It is a tool for moving toward genuine equality and should be a priority for the authorities in our societies.

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TESTIMONY

THE JOURNEY OF AN EDUCATOR

Is French a sexist language? Most people would like a specific answer. It should be kept in mind that language is a social and historical product. It reflects the structures and values of society and as such, it carries within it prejudices and myths. Despite its slow evolution, French is managing to adapt to new realities. Consider, for example, the IT field, where recent creations have prompted the emergence of neologisms. The evolution of society and of language can therefore go hand in hand.

My career as a trainer illustrates the possibility of incorporating changes in language and finding answers, while emphasizing the diversity and multiplicity of solutions.

In the early 1980s, I completed a master's thesis in French linguistics on the feminization of the names of professions. I was then approached by the Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec (MEQ) in order to produce a guide to "non-sexist writing." In the 1980s, women were demanding titles in the feminine: through an educational movement, they wanted to incorporate feminized terms into texts. The guide, developed in 1984, was first tested by the editors at the MEQ. Its publication in 1988 led me, as a freelancer, to propose to the MEQ the creation of training sessions in order to present the guide in the world of education. Requests quickly abounded, reflecting open-mindedness and a need to acquire a working method. The training allow me to meet with teaching and management staff at all levels of education (primary, secondary, college and university). In addition to the school network, the public and semi-public sectors also require training on the topic. I have visited a variety of workplaces (ministries, municipalities, dioceses, professional orders, etc.). Over time, writing and speaking habits are gradually changing in many sectors.

The influence of gender-neutral writing—an expression that replaced "non-sexist writing"—is not limited to Quebec. Through my training workshops, I also have also been reaching the Maritimes and Western Canada. My participation in symposia has been another opportunity to introduce and convey Quebec's ways of doing things in this respect.

In 2016-2017, "gender identity" was enshrined in law as grounds for discrimination, opening the door to further transformations. Beyond using language that encourages and highlights the presence of women, care is being taken to include all groups in the writing process. Indeed, texts must reflect human diversity. The ingenuity of the French language is impressive: it contains within it many solutions, and innovation in this area should not be a barrier for language users, but rather encourage perseverance.

For more than 30 years, I have been stressing the importance of approaching changes as an enrichment of the language rather than a burden: they must be seen as a means of giving each person their place in society. One way to do this is to pursue research and try things out, and avoid hiding behind the status quo.

It's important to remember that language, like society itself, is always evolving, and that novelties sometimes arise and disrupt established habits. Finally, the very usage of language—an undeniable force—is also born of a collective will to bring about linguistic changes and improvements in order to contribute to the progress of the world.

Hélène Dumais

Linguist

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In the original version of this white paper, an entire section is devoted to inclusive writing in French. There are also subtleties in English. Find out more in the resources below.

RESOURCES

Gender inclusivity: pronouns.

https://www.btb.termiumplus.gc.ca/tpv2guides/guides/wrtps/index-eng.html?lang=eng&lettr=indx_catlog_g&page=9k2ol9zeqQzo.html#zz9k2ol9zeqQzo

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/grammar/pronouns/gendered_pronouns_and_singular_they.html

Gender-inclusive language guidelines.

<https://authoring.prod.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Gender-inclusive%20language/Guidelines-on-gender-inclusive-language-en.pdf>

<https://www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/guidelines.shtml>

Gender-inclusive writing: correspondence.

https://www.btb.termiumplus.gc.ca/tpv2guides/guides/wrtps/index-eng.html?lang=eng&lettr=indx_catlog_g&page=9tZXuAe4oZYs.html#zz9tZXuAe4oZYs

CONCLUSION

Without a doubt, the answers to many questions can be found within the pages of the white paper *Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education and Research: From a Diverse Team to More Innovative Research*. For anyone asking themselves what EDI means, the reminder section defines the key concepts thereof. Others might have questions about the importance of EDI in research. The section on the challenges faced by designated and marginalized groups demonstrates why they should be taken into account in team training and management, while the section introducing ADS+ explains the importance of this component in a research project. In response to the question, “What can I do to improve my EDI practices?” each of the sections of this white paper sets out recommendations, whether for writing an internship posting, interviewing and hiring, or managing a diverse team.

Now, where to begin? As the artist Constantin Brancusi put it so well, “Things are not difficult to make; what is difficult is putting ourselves in the state of mind to make them.” A sound first step, in order to start off smoothly, is to undertake a more personal journey by pondering the information provided on unconscious biases, how to write letters of recommendation, or inclusive writing. Next, this journey can be pursued with the sections on team member inclusion and EDI awareness, which serve as a starting point for drawing up a concrete action plan. This plan will help guide reflections regardless of the task to be accomplished or the decision to be made.

Other tools developed by the Chair for Women in Science and Engineering may also be helpful in crafting such an action plan or writing grant applications, such as the *Guide to Identifying Equity, Diversity and Inclusion-Related Challenges Experienced by Members of a Research Team* and *EDI in a NSERC Discovery Application: Frequently Asked Questions*. These documents are available free of charge on the [Chair website](#), as are all sections of this book, which can be consulted in the form of standalone pamphlets.

It is quite possible to successfully incorporate the principles of EDI into one’s work environment in higher education and research. Even if it may seem difficult and cause some discomfort, in a climate of solidarity and goodwill, it can be done. We need only remember that EDI above all speaks to human and social values that are essential for making a necessary cultural shift, and ultimately bringing about a better society that ensures that every person is heard.

Here’s to a more equitable, diverse, inclusive and innovative community!

ABOUT THE CHAIR FOR WOMEN IN SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

The mission of the Chair for Women in Science and Engineering (CWSE) in Quebec is to increase the representation and maintain the participation of women in the field of science and engineering (SE).

The Chair's main action area is working with young girls and the people close to them to introduce and demystify the opportunities that SE have to offer. The Chair also works with students and professionals to better equip them to overcome the obstacles that continue to affect their careers. Furthermore, the Chair collaborates with various stakeholders to rally efforts around equity, diversity and inclusion in higher education and research. The second action area of the Chair is to conduct research in order to understand and raise awareness of the problem. In this way, the Chair contributes to submitting solutions to the various bodies concerned, with a view to bringing about change.



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