

UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Seneschal Symposium 2019 - by Jessica Van Hattem

DEI MISSION STATEMENT

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Office is committed to promoting the values of inclusion throughout the SCA. This office will identify opportunities for improvement, develop trainings for Kingdom Officers, conduct a comprehensive policy review, promote accountability based on our core values, and support our existing processes to address inequitable actions including discrimination and bullying. The DEI Officer will facilitate the necessary conversations and decision-making that can lead to a more equitable and inclusive SCA.

What the Corporate Officer for DEI is:

RESPONSIBLE FOR

- Recognizing, creating, and implementing plans to promote diversity and inclusion to create an atmosphere where all people feel welcome and valued.
- Researching and advising the board on diversity, equity, and inclusion issues.
- Reviewing the organization's policies and procedures to ensure that these are inclusive and suggesting policies relating to diversity, inclusion, and corresponding affected areas.
- Identifying external trends and recognizing best practices which will increase diversity in our membership.
- Working with officers of the SCA to improve our diversity and inclusion practices.
- Preparing diversity, equity, and inclusion training for officers.

What the Corporate Officer for DEI is not:

AN INVESTIGATOR

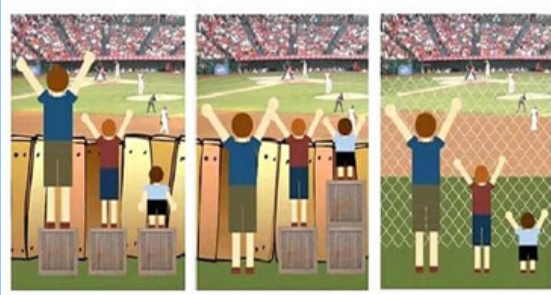
- The DEI officer will not be conducting interviews or engaging in other investigatory practices.

A SENESCHAL

- Though the DEI officer may work closely with seneschals, this is for the purpose of advice and gathering feedback.

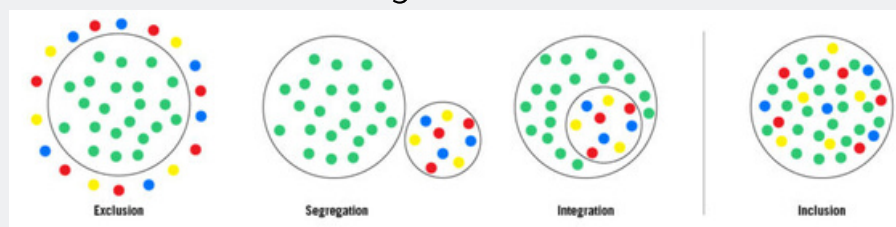
DEFINITIONS OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Put simply, **diversity** is the presence of those who belong to different social groups and have different group identities. Some social groups/group identities are things people can see easily (like race, physical disability, or assumed gender), while other social group identities are internalized and are not always easy to see (like a disability, socioeconomic status, or education level).



Equity is about fairness, meaning equal access to opportunities in your organization for everyone, regardless of social group.

Inclusion is about who you welcome and value. Inclusion speaks more to those with different identities being respected, expected, and integrated into an organization.



Inclusive Excellence is the recognition that the success of the SCA is dependent on how well it values, engages and includes the rich diversity in membership.

PRIVILEGE

"Privilege, particularly white or male privilege, is hard to see for those of us who were born with access to power and resources. It is very visible for those to whom privilege was not granted. Furthermore, the subject is extremely difficult to talk about because many white people don't feel powerful or as if they have privileges others do not. It is sort of like asking fish to notice water or birds to discuss air."

- Francis E. Kendall, Ph.D., 2002

Privilege: Unearned access to resources (social power) that are only readily available to some people because of their social group membership; an advantage, or immunity granted to or enjoyed by one societal group above and beyond the common advantage of all other groups. Privilege is often invisible to those who have it.

Social Power: Access to resources that enhance one's chances of getting what one needs in order to lead a comfortable, productive and safe life.

UNPACKING THE INVISIBLE KNAPSACK (IN BRIEF)

See Further Reading (page 8) for link to full text.

"My schooling gave me no training in seeing myself as an oppressor, as an unfairly advantaged person, or as a participant in a damaged culture. I was taught to see myself as an individual whose moral state depended on her individual moral will."

- "I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented."
- "I can go into a music shop and count on finding the music of my race represented, into a supermarket and find the staple foods which fit with my cultural traditions, into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who can cut my hair."
- "I do not have to educate my children to be aware of systemic racism for their own daily physical protection."



MITIGATING UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

"We naturally assign people into various social categories divided by salient and chronically accessible traits, such as age, gender, race, and role. And just as we might have implicit cognitions that help us walk and drive, we have implicit social cognitions that guide our thinking about social categories. Where do these schemas come from? They come from our experiences with other people, some of them direct (i.e., real-world encounters) but most of them vicarious (i.e., relayed to us through stories, books, movies, media, and culture)... Though our shorthand schemas of people may be helpful in some situations, they also can lead to discriminatory behaviors if we are not careful."

-Jerry Kang, *Implicit Bias, a Primer for Courts* (2009)

Also called implicit bias, unconscious bias is a mental model or shortcut that we aren't aware we have. Decades of science tells us that unconscious bias operates in our brain at a very subtle level, below our awareness or perception. These biases help us make sense of the huge amount of information that we process each day, and are based partly in human biology and partly on life lessons.

Our brains are designed to assess verbal and visual cues to create shortcuts as we assess people and their capabilities. However, if we are not vigilant, it is possible that we will allow our bias to structure our opinions on a person or group of people.

- Implicit biases are pervasive. Everyone possesses them, even people with avowed commitments to impartiality such as judges.
- Implicit and explicit biases are related but distinct mental constructs. They are not mutually exclusive and may even reinforce each other.
- The implicit associations we hold do not necessarily align with our declared beliefs or even reflect stances we would explicitly endorse.
- We generally tend to hold implicit biases that favor our own ingroup, though research has shown that we can still hold implicit biases against our ingroup.
- Implicit biases are malleable. Our brains are incredibly complex, and the implicit associations that we have formed can be gradually unlearned through a variety of debiasing techniques.

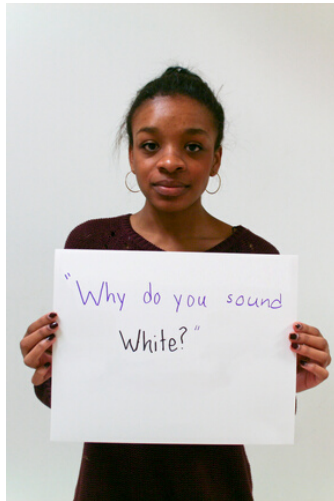


Interrupt bias through:

- **AWARENESS**
- **KNOWLEDGE**
- **SKILLS**
- **ACTION**



MICRO-AGGRESSIONS AND MICRO-INEQUITIES



In 1973 Mary Rowe working for the President and Chancellor at MIT, coined the notion of micro-inequities, which she defined as "apparently small events which are often ephemeral and hard-to-prove, events which are covert, often unintentional, frequently unrecognized by the perpetrator, which occur wherever people are perceived to be 'different.' "

Generally speaking, a micro-inequity is a slight that demeans or marginalizes the recipient, while a micro-aggression is an act that stereotypes or denigrates the recipient. These terms are often used interchangeably, however.

The following statements have all been reported or witnessed:

"You don't look Jewish."

"He is Christian, but very open-minded."

"It's great you don't have any accent!"

"Your hair is so nice, I didn't know it could be like that. I thought it was a wig."

"How can I help you? Oh, you're here for the SCA event?"

"I never would have guessed you were gay."

"You have a lot of energy for an old guy."

"If you want to research your heritage, you could portray a slave."

Remember: unlike many other forms of discrimination, the perpetrator of a microaggression may or may not be aware of the harmful effects of their behavior. Often, the comments occur as a result of unconscious bias, or may even be intended as a compliment. We must be aware, therefore, of how our statements may be interpreted, despite our best intentions.

CORPORA & BYSTANDER INTERVENTION

EXCERPTS FROM CORPORA

Corpora II B - Requirements for Participation

"Anyone may attend Society events provided he or she wears an attempt at pre-17th century clothing, conforms to the provisions in Corpora, and complies with any other requirements (including but not limited to site fees or waivers) which may be imposed."

Corpora II E - Duty To Enforce Requirements

"The officer(s) of the sponsoring branch responsible for an event shall ensure that the event operates according to the rules set forth in this document. If transgressions occur which seriously compromise the integrity of the event or endanger the health and safety of the attendees, the responsible officers shall correct the problem immediately as follows:

Disruptive elements at an event may be removed from the event by the individual responsible for that event or other appropriate officer. Offenses against contemporary civil or criminal law should be dealt with through the appropriate legal system. This does not preclude the Society from taking other appropriate actions as described in Corpora X."

Corpora X A 4 - Policy On Hate Speech

"Hate speech is not tolerated in the Society. Hate speech is speech or symbols that offend, threaten, or insult individuals or groups, based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability or other traits. ... The use by any participant in the Society may result in possible sanctions up to and including revocation of membership and denial of participation. Please report any possible instances of hate speech to your Kingdom Seneschal, the Society Seneschal or the President of the SCA immediately. For more information about hate speech and the reporting of same, please refer to the Society Seneschal's Handbook."

DIRECT Directly intervene

"Hey, that wasn't appropriate to say."

DISTRACT Distract either party

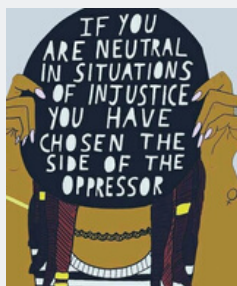
"My Lord, I need your advice. Can you step away with me for a moment?"

DELEGATE Get help from others

"Your Grace, there's a problem on the field that would benefit from your expertise."

DELAY Check in later

"I saw that situation earlier. Are you okay? Can I do anything?"



EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN THE SCA

Several events have offered a "quiet room" (or tent/space) - a low-sensory area that can be used by those who may be overwhelmed by the volume or crowds that are often present at events. This is also a good spot for those who would like to engage in prayer or meditation, or those parents who may be breast-feeding.



Baron Decius Felix of the Barony of Three Mountains (Portland, OR) debuted this: Instead of a kneeling pillow, there is now a "convertible" stool. People will be given the choice whether to stand, sit on the stool, or flip the stool "upside down" where there is a kneeling pillow (and the legs of the stool can be used to lever oneself up gracefully when the ceremony is done.) It has been tested to hold up to 600 pounds of weight. The credit for the design and construction of this piece is attributed to Drusa Saturnina.

Sport of Kings utilized several strategies in 2019 to make the event more accommodating and inclusive. These included creating an accessibility staff position, designating a charging station for medical devices, providing respite benches at regular intervals throughout the site, offering large print programs, and including heraldic language on color-coded signs for those who have color-identifying visual deficiencies.



Things add up. It is important to remember to not let perfect be the enemy of good when improving inclusive practices - Something as simple as a large-print program may be the thing that makes an event special and enjoyable for someone.

FURTHER READING

A Disability History of the United States, by Kim E. Nielsen (2012)

Dreamers: An Immigrant Generation's Fight for the American Dream, by Eileen Truax (2015)

The New Jim Crow, by Michelle Alexander (2012)

Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? By Beverly Daniel Tatum (2003)

We Should All Be Feminists, by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2015)

Black Wealth / White Wealth, by Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro (2006)

The Culture Map: Breaking Through the Invisible Boundaries of Global Business, by Erin Meyer (2014)

The Loudest Duck: Moving Beyond Diversity while Embracing Differences to Achieve Success at Work, by Laura A. Liswood

Privilege, Power, and Difference, by Allan G. Johnson

Readings for Diversity and Social Justice, by Keri Dejong, Warren J. Blumenfield, D. Chase J. Catalano

Unruly Bodies: Life Writing by Women with Disabilities, by Susannah B. Mintz (2007)

35 Dumb Things Well-Intended People Say: Surprising Things We Say That Widen the Diversity Gap, by Maura Cullen (2008)

[White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack, by Peggy McIntosh \(1989\)](#)

[How to Think About Implicit Bias, by Scientific American; Keith Payne, Laura Niemi, John M. Doris \(2018\)](#)

[What is Race? by PBS](#)

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