Article

How (and Why) to Leverage Leaders to Change Social Bias

Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences
2026, Vol. 13(1) 177–185

DOI: 10.1177/23727322251399132
journals.sagepub.com/home/bbs

Tessa E.S. Charlesworth

Abstract

To reduce bias and promote equality, we cannot rely simply on changing individual minds (micro-level interventions), nor on waiting for governments to pass legislation (macro-level interventions). Instead, research suggests a critical but often-overlooked role can be played by leaders positioned at the "meso-level" between the populace and elites in power (e.g., middle managers, influencers, community mobilizers). Especially in contexts of political polarization and anti-elite backlash, these meso-level leaders occupy a uniquely trusted, connected, and persuasive position in change initiatives. After summarizing insights from micro- and macro-level interventions, I review empirical evidence and case studies demonstrating that meso-level leaders are uniquely helpful in: *tailoring* and adapting initiatives to suit local contexts, including by facilitating feedback loops between senior leaders and everyday people; and *spreading* adoption of new diversity and inclusion practices by acting as brokers between networks, and by making practices visible and concrete. To best leverage meso-level leaders' potential, organizations and policy should ensure job security, promote risk-taking, formalize feedback, and empower leaders to be brokers and first movers towards practices of equality and inclusion.

Keywords

attitudes, discrimination, leadership, social change, stereotypes

Social Media

Bias won't disappear with top-down mandates or attempts to change minds alone. Deep change will also require the oft-overlooked mid-level leader. Let's empower leaders to adapt equity efforts to local needs and spread equity practices through their networks—they might just be our strongest force for lasting change

Key Points

- Effective change to reduce bias and promote equity will benefit from including meso-level leaders–leaders positioned between the needs of everyday people (including entry-level employes, community members) and the concerns of senior leaders (e.g., those who hold formal power and symbolize an institution, such as a CEO, board of directors).
- Empower and protect meso-level leaders through job security and psychological safety, enabling them to initiative, implement and adapt equity initiatives without fear of reprisal.
- Invest in training, mentorship, and accountability of meso-level leaders so that they understand, internalize, and champion diversity and inclusion goals, even if they come from advantaged or majority groups.
- Adopt a "glocalization" model for diversity and inclusion: define and standardize global values while empowering leaders to adapt values into practices that address local needs.
- Formalize feedback systems for meso-level leaders to communicate between everyday people and executives making policy decisions, ensuring they continuously update change initiatives in response to new needs.
- Use meso-level leaders to test, pilot, and prove the strengths of new ideas for diversity and inclusion. Then leverage their role as brokers to scale and spread successful pilot initiatives across organizations and society.

How (and Why) to Leverage Leaders to Change Social Bias

In 2025 in the United States (U.S.), and in many countries around the world, political elites and public opinion have begun to turn against diversity, equity, and inclusion. In the U.S., for example, federal DEI programs were abruptly canceled (The White House, 2025), basic research on prejudice

Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL, USA

I am grateful for feedback and discussions from Joshua C. Jackson, Leitian Zhang, Katherine Mackenzie, and Jennifer Charlesworth.

Corresponding Author:
Tessa Charlesworth, Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL, 2211 Campus Drive, 60208, USA.
Email: Tessa.charlesworth@kellogg.northwestern.edu

was defunded (Schwabish & Axelrod, 2025), more than 2,000 DEI jobs were eliminated (Abdelwahed, 2025), and federal law on affirmative action was repealed. In such a divisive context, the questions arise: Is it even still possible to pursue change towards less bias? If so, how do we do it? And how can we motivate and mobilize others to do the same?

I propose that there is still hope for changing attitudes and beliefs and, even eventually, shifting behaviors and norms towards equity and inclusion. But to do so, we will need to understand that change operates at multiple levels, from everyday individuals (micro-level) to middle leaders (meso-level) to broader society (macro-level). Leveraging all levels at once will help create the most sustainable progress (Dasgupta, 2025; Kurdi & Charlesworth, 2023; Stephens et al., 2021). And yet, as I review below, research has focused almost exclusively on either (a) the micro-level, such as by changing individuals' attitudes and beliefs (although rarely considering behavior and norm change), or (b) the macro-level, such as by implementing top-down policies and laws that are widespread and imposed on all people in a society. In contrast, the middle role of meso-level leaders in changing bias has remained largely neglected(cf. Kalev & Dobbin, 2023).

To be clear, these meso-level leaders are a *type* of leader rather than a specific role. These leaders are connected to, and advocate for, the populace, and are seen to be separate from the macro-level establishment, institutions, or senior leadership. Thus, depending on the context, meso-level leaders could include middle managers, politicians (e.g., governors, mayors), policymakers, community mobilizers, or more. For instance, a governor that stands against the president to defend the interests of their state constituents would be defined as a meso-level leader. Or a high schooler who has the support of their peers yet stands against a widespread societal norm of bullying would be a meso-level leader. Notably, the majority of research I review below focuses on *formal* leaders in formal institutions (e.g., middle managers in companies) with relatively little work on informal leaders (e.g., community mobilizers). Thus, in discussing each finding below, I note how findings may generalize (or not) to informal leadership contexts.

Ultimately, the thesis of this paper is simple: because meso-level leaders are uniquely trusted, inter-connected, and able to incubate new change initiatives, they are one of our most useful, yet oft-overlooked, tools for changing bias and promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion from the "middle out." To defend this idea, I first summarize evidence of the successes and limitations in interventions at the micro-level (i.e., individual-targeted interventions) and macro-level (i.e., policies, laws, and protests). Then, I highlight the role of meso-level leaders and explain why these leaders are uniquely positioned as a tool for change today, including in periods of geopolitical strife. I summarize both the empirical evidence as well as case study examples from companies, schools, governments, and non-governmental organizations that have leveraged the meso-level for generating and sustaining change.

Leveraging Micro- and Macro-Levels to Change Bias

Micro-Level Approaches: Information and Intergroup Contact

One consistently successful strategy to change individual attitudes is to provide counter-stereotypical information that challenges assumptions. Research shows that highlighting counter-stereotypical role models – such as female scientists or Black leaders – shifts implicit and explicit gender and racial biases (Dasgupta & Asgari, 2004; Kurdi et al., 2024; Lai et al., 2014). Indeed, one randomized field experiment found that students exposed to female peer mentors in engineering showed less stereotypical thinking about gender and STEM (Dennehy & Dasgupta, 2017). Similarly, interventions that encourage reappraisal of previous assumptions about people and groups are powerful tools for changing minds (Ferguson et al., 2019). For example, many people hold strong negative attitudes and assumptions about trophy hunters. But, after listening to a podcast challenging such assumptions and discussing potential benefits of trophy hunting for funding conservation, participants changed their attitudes (Kurdi et al., 2022).

Another widely successful strategy is intergroup contact: giving more visceral, direct experiences with members of different groups reduces bias (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Interracial roommate pairing in college is widely shown to reduce students' implicit and explicit racial biases over time (Gaither & Sommers, 2013; Page-Gould & Mendoza-Denton, 2011). Even indirect contact, such as through online connections, or imagined experiences of contact, have been shown to shift prejudices about outgroups (Dovidio et al., 2011).

Despite this potential, however, micro-level interventions face at least three major challenges. First, they have almost exclusively studied attitude and belief change, with limited consideration (or evidence) for durable effects on behavior (Forscher et al., 2019; Paluck et al., 2021). Second, micro-level interventions are usually seen as one-off, short-term fixes, with few efforts at structural reforms (Dasgupta, 2025; Onyeador et al., 2021). And third, micro interventions are difficult to scale up across people and places: they may reach a few dozen people making friends across group lines (e.g., through new roommates) or a few thousand who get new information (e.g., through a podcast), but not the millions of people needed for durable, collective progress. Ultimately, these limitations mean that, even if we do successfully change an individual's mind in the moment, those individuals will end up re-entering a society where the broader social and historical systems still perpetuate inequalities (Charlesworth & Hatzenbuehler, 2025). It is thus perhaps not surprising that even after billions of dollars invested in diversity training, there remain few examples of successful micro-level interventions that durably change behaviors and practices (Bezrukova et al., 2016; Kalev et al., 2006).

Macro-Level Approaches: Laws and Social Movements

This brings us to the other end of the spectrum – the macro-level of broader collectives – which I have argued are particularly important levers of change and the most likely causes of past changes in race and sexuality attitudes (Charlesworth & Banaji, 2022b). Macro-level changes are often exerted top-down (e.g., laws and policies). For example, the federal legalization of same-gender marriage in the U.S. in 2016 accelerated declines in anti-gay bias, both implicitly and explicitly (Ofosu et al., 2019; Tankard & Paluck, 2017). Similarly, state-level anti-bullying prohibiting LGBTQ + youth bullying reduced internalized stigma and suicide attempts (Hatzenbuehler & Keyes, 2013). Thus, laws reshape not only the dominant group's attitudes but can also shape feelings of the minority group itself and signal that they are safe and supported.

Macro-level, collective change in bias can also arise more bottom-up from large-scale protests and social movements (Sawyer & Gampa, 2022). As just a few examples: the U.S. Civil Rights movement of the 1960s-70 s changed attitudes towards support for racial integration (Taylor et al., 1978); the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 immediately shifted attitudes towards more pro-Black support in representative polling (Sawyer & Gampa, 2017); and the #metoo movement shifted perceived attitudes (as well as norms and behaviors) on reporting sexual assaults (Levy & Mattsson, 2023).

Yet macro-level interventions face challenges too. First, as noted above, any macro-level intervention that feels like top-down constraining rules can engender backlash because they limit people's agency (Dobbin & Kalev, 2019, 2021, 2022). Even when the macro-level intervention appears to come from the "bottom-up," as with social movements, if it feels like it is constraining people's agency or freedom, it can generate backlash (Rivera-Rodriguez et al., 2025). Indeed, there is some evidence that attitudes against Black Americans have risen again since the 2020 BLM protests (Horowitz et al., 2023), and support for police budgets has *increased* not decreased, especially in cities that had larger BLM protests (Ebbinghaus et al., 2025).

Second, in 2025, efforts towards diversity and bias change have become polarized, even weaponized, in political sectarianism (Finkel et al., 2020). Once diversity initiatives become associated with a political party, they risk rejection by part of the population that supports a different political party. And in such a polarized context, there is no guarantee that any federal or state legislation will endure: the repeal of race-conscious admissions or abortion access, for example, are early signals that macro-level levers have become increasingly fragile and inaccessible.

The Overlooked Meso-Level: Why Leaders are Agents of Change

If micro-level interventions cannot scale and macro-level policies risk backlash, then what remains in our toolkit of change? The answer, I suggest, is the meso-level leader: intermediaries that connect individuals and larger institutions. Here I focus on the meso-level leader, with a focus on evidence for formal leaders in formal organizations (i.e., middle managers, policy analysts), as a meso-system that interprets, translates, and implements broad macro-level policies into micro-level experiences of people's everyday lives.

Why do meso-level leaders matter? First, they are *trusted* by their local communities, employees, and networks. Surveys consistently show that most people trust their manager more than their CEO or political leaders (Edelman Trust Institute, 2024). Such trust comes, at least in part, because meso-level leaders are seen to belong to, and advocate for, "the masses," rather than for the interests of institutions; such a positioning is likely to become especially important as anti-elite sentiment continues to rise (Licht et al., 2025).

Second, meso-level leaders are *connected* to both those in power and those on the ground, acting as a conduit for feedback between these levels (Wooldridge et al., 2008). Meso-level leaders can "influence down," helping executives/senior leaders interpret and implement their policies into the everyday lives of people (Balogun, 2003). But leaders can also "influence up": they advocate for the needs and concerns of everyday people and influence how executives or legislators construct macro-level policies (Dutton et al., 1997). Notably, while the "influence up" role is possible for formal meso-level leaders (who have direct access to senior leaders) it may be less accessible for informal leaders (e.g., activists) who may need to use tools like social proof, movements, or boycotts to gain the attention of senior leaders.

Third, because of their connected position, the meso-level leader is ideal for *spreading new ideas*. Meso-level leaders are often brokers in social networks—connecting people across multiple teams (Kwon et al., 2020; Stovel & Shaw, 2012). Brokers play a critical role for spreading ideas and generating the necessary "critical mass" of adopters for social proof (Centola et al., 2018). Brokers can also be critical in connecting divergent networks and may therefore be better able to spot, test, and tailor creative solutions to address bias change (Battilana & Casciaro, 2012; Burt, 2004).

In summary, meso-level leaders have a unique role in changing social biases and discrimination because they are trusted, connected, and capable of identifying and spreading new practices. But, just like other levels, meso-level leaders will also face challenges. For one, most formal meso-level leaders still come from dominant groups. Reports from McKinsey and LeanIn have documented a persistent representation gap in middle management: For every 100 men promoted from entry level to manager, only 81 women are promoted, with even lower rates for Black and Latina women (McKinsey, 2025). As such, formal meso-level leaders may lack the lived experience with discrimination and require education and coaching to first change their own minds and develop intrinsic motivations to change.

More problematically, mid-level managers occupy sometimes precarious roles in an organization: they are often the first to be cut in reorganizations, making up more than 50% of layoffs in 2023 (Live Data Technologies, 2024) and they are concerned that the transition to Artificial Intelligence (AI) automation is likely to harm their roles[1] (Edelman Trust Institute, 2024). As with any group who perceives that their position is threatened, managers may feel particularly resistant to innovating new ideas (Aliane et al., 2023) and generally resistant to social change (Jost, 2015). Creating psychologically safe structures (Edmondson & Lei, 2014) that encourage testing new ideas without penalties on job security, will therefore be necessary to support mid-level leaders to step into their roles as bias change agents.

Leveraging Meso-Level Leaders to Change Bias

As trusted and connected brokers, meso-level leaders can be used to facilitate sustainable bias change through: (1) *tailoring* or adapting broad macro-level policies to suit local needs; and (2) *spreading* or rapidly adopting new ideas and practices.

Use Leaders to Tailor Change Efforts to Local Contexts

Sitting at the intersection between everyday people and senior leadership, meso-level leaders can adapt broad macro-level policies to local needs, providing the necessary cultural context and relevance. Here, the goal is "glocalization" (Lauring, 2013; Özbilgin et al., 2013; Roudometof, 2016) which balances global standards (e.g., valuing equal treatment) alongside adaptation to local cultural norms by gathering data on local needs, and tailoring the methods, language, or focus of the change initiative.

For example, in the gender equity initiatives of CARE International, local facilitators in Uganda identified that a primary barrier to reducing gender-based discrimination were *men's* perceived norms about the distribution of housework vs. leadership (see also experimental evidence in (Block et al., 2019; Croft et al., 2015). Local facilitators (i.e., meso-level leaders) therefore adapted global CARE International awareness-raising sessions and other programs to specifically engage men and boys in their intervention. An interim evaluation of the program showed an 11-percentage point change (from 45% to 56%) in support for women's leadership, with changes also seen on attitudes about housework and domestic violence (Care Uganda, 2023), although evidence for behavior change remains to be documented in future evaluation.

Notably, adaptation in the case of diversity and inclusion initiatives is critical because "diversity" often means different things in different places (Özbilgin et al., 2013). In the U.S., for example, much research on diversity has so far centered on Black-White race relations (Calanchini et al., 2022; Charlesworth & Banaji, 2022a). But Black-White race relations are not as relevant in other cultural contexts, such as in Germany, where people appear reticent to discuss ethnic and racial differences (see Özbilgin et al., 2013 for a review). Thus, if an international organization imposes a macro-level policy that focuses entirely on ethnic and racial diversity, they will likely encounter backlash if exported to a country where those distinctions are taboo (Vassilopoulou, 2011).

The glocalization of bias change initiatives also matters *within* nations, even within companies and teams, where there may also be wide variation in perspectives on what diversity is. For instance, research on political differences in the meaning of diversity (Howard et al., 2022) suggests that it may become necessary to tailor broad values into practices and language that feel relevant and meaningful to different political orientations. For example, meso-level leaders facing more conservative audiences may benefit from reframing diversity language to focus on shared American values such as values that emphasize respect, belonging, and free expression of the self (Day et al., 2014; Graham et al., 2009).

Balancing Global and Local Through Feedback Loops

To be clear, local autonomy afforded to meso-level leaders must be effectively balanced with global values and standardization. Too much local autonomy (e.g., allowing each meso-level leader to create their own idiosyncratic hiring plan) will result in subjectivity and ambiguity that begets more bias (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004; Moers, 2005). On the other hand, too much "global" (e.g., vague statements that aren't adapted in locally relevant ways) may ironically reduce feelings of belongingness and make diversity commitments seem inauthentic (Kirby et al., 2023).

To balance local and global, leaders need to be able to rely on *feedback loops*. Again, research from organizational theory shows that, because of their intermediate position, meso-level leaders are uniquely positioned to serve a feedback role (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997; Rydland, 2020). But it is critical to ensure that such feedback is formalized and incentivized, such as through the creation of diversity task forces made up of diverse middle leaders (and other roles in the firm; (Kalev & Dobbin, 2023).

One such example of formalizing feedback in diversity task forces occurred at Deloitte, which, in the early 1990s established a task force to understand and change why women were less likely to be promoted and retained in the organization (Kanter & Roessner, 1999a; Sturm, 2001). The task force, which was comprised of leaders from across teams (consulting, audit, and tax), formalized feedback by interviewing everyday workers about what was (not) working and provided reports to senior leaders. Of note, one key recommendation of the task force was, in essence, to "glocalize"—decentralizing to allow adaptation by the leaders of each Deloitte office (e.g., in Chicago vs. Boston). All the while, these leaders were expected to

provide data and continuous feedback (via the task force) about how they were faring on women's promotion and retention. From the initiative's start in 1991 to evaluation in 1995, the numbers showed success: the percentage of women promoted to partner went from 8% to 21%, and turnover loss of women managers fell from 26% to 15%.

Although such efforts had strong initial success, I note that subsequent evaluations found that change was plateauing by 1999 (Kanter & Roessner, 1999b) and, in 2025, Deloitte's U.S. chapters cut nearly all of their support for DEI (Murray et al., 2025). Thus, even the best-laid efforts of leveraging middle leaders will need continuous re-invention, relying on feedback and accountability, to adapt to current contexts and changing political or organizational climates.

Use Leaders as Brokers to Spread and Demonstrate Change Initiatives

Once a new bias change initiative has been tested and tailored to suit the particular context, how can we ensure it is widely adopted? Meso-level leaders also play a key role here. As discussed above, meso-level leaders occupy brokerage roles that connect disparate community networks and thus diffuse new ideas. A powerful example of diffusion through meso-level leaders comes from research on promoting inclusion and reducing bullying in schools.

In a randomized field experiment with more than 24,000 students in New Jersey, Paluck et al. (2016) trained randomly selected groups of students to promote anti-bullying messages and encouraged them to take a public stance against conflict. The intervention reduced bullying reports by 30% after 1 year. But, critically, the effects were even larger if the students who took a stance against conflict were well-connected meso-level leaders in their school. That is, students seen as social leaders, centrally connected in the network, were the most likely to diffuse the new norms across the entire school (Paluck, 2010; Paluck & Shepherd, 2012). In organizations and communities, similar principles apply: meso-level leaders, with central connections in the network, will have an amplified effect on spreading new practices.

To be most effective these leaders need to make adoption *visible* and concrete. One way to make such practices visible is to advertise them in new norms. For instance, research on so-called "dynamic norms" shows that when people are told that a norm is increasing (e.g., "more and more people are promoting equitable pay policies in your organization"), they want to jump on the bandwagon and change their attitudes and behaviors (Sparkman & Walton, 2017, 2019). Indeed, one study of HR professionals showed that, when they were told that their peers were increasingly committed to egalitarian pay offers, the HR professionals became less likely to offer new women hires low starting salaries (Schuster et al., 2023). Meso-level leaders can therefore spearhead and spread communications about dynamic norms to promote DEI.

Meso-level leaders can also make the new changes visible by acting as "first movers" in equity practices. This has been a helpful tool to increase adoption of paternity leave, and support gender equity. That is, although macro-level policies increasingly support paternity leave as a means to promote gender equity (Andersen, 2018), uptake of such policies remain limited among fathers due to fears of stigma, career or pay penalties (Kaufman, 2018; Petts et al., 2020). Yet, a study of Norwegian fathers showed that, when a manager is a "first mover" to take paternity leave, they increase uptake of paternity leave among their co-workers (Dahl et al., 2014). Importantly, while this study found that *any* peer taking paternity leave (including same-level co-workers) increased paternity leave uptake by 15 percentage points, the effect was 2.5 times larger when that peer was a highly visible manager in the organization. Evidently, when leaders are first adopters of change initiatives, they can have an outsized influence in shifting norms.

Recommendations for Organizations and Policy

Zooming out, the empirical evidence and case studies reported here suggest at least three broad actions to leverage the overlooked meso-level leaders. First, remove barriers that prevent them from engaging in change. Practices that create job security and psychological safety, such as normalizing that leaders can admit mistakes, acknowledge uncertainty, and speak up without fear of retaliation (Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson & Lei, 2014), will support meso-level leaders to take risks in supporting DEI.

Second, support leaders to tailor and "glocalize": give them autonomy to test and adapt standardized, global diversity values into practices that are relevant to their local contexts. Simultaneously, ensure effective and formal feedback mechanisms, such as through task forces, where meso-level leaders can both learn from community members on-the-ground, while remaining accountable to oversight from senior leadership and data-driven benchmarks.

Third, support leaders as brokers to spread adoption: position them to network across disparate teams and diverse populations (e.g., as centrally positioned high schoolers or the Deloitte task forces). And then use this positioning to act as first movers (e.g., as the male leaders taking paternity leave) and broadcast clear norms to get everyone on the bandwagon of change. While these recommendations are far from a guarantee for successful change, it is only by mobilizing leaders and using all levels of change that we can be equipped to tackle social bias and regain the public and political will towards the goals of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

Tessa E.S. Charlesworth https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5048-3088

Note

1. Although emerging data on AI automation currently suggests that entry-level (not manager) roles are most at risk (Brynjolfsson et al., 2025).

References

Abdelwahed, L. (2025). *The rise and fall of DEI in corporate America | Revelio Labs*. https://www.reveliolabs.com/news/social/the-rise-and-fall-of-dei-in-corporate-america/

Aliane, N., Al-Romeedy, B. S., Agina, M. F., Salah, P. A. M., Abdallah, R. M., Fatah, M. A. H. A., Khababa, N., & Khairy, H. A. (2023). How job insecurity affects innovative work behavior in the hospitality and tourism industry? The roles of knowledge hiding behavior and team anti-citizenship behavior. *Sustainability*, *15*(18), 13956. https://doi.org/10.3390/SU151813956

Allport, G. W. (1954). *The Nature of Prejudice*. Addison-Wesley.

Andersen, S. H. (2018). Paternity leave and the motherhood penalty: New causal evidence. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *80*(5), 1125–1143. https://doi.org/10.1111/JOMF.12507

Balogun, J. (2003). From blaming the middle to harnessing its potential: Creating change intermediaries. *British Journal of Management*, *14*(1), 69–83. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.00266

Battilana, J., & Casciaro, T. (2012). Change agents, networks, and institutions: A contingency theory of organizational change. *Academy of Management Journal*, *55*(2), 381–398. https://doi.org/10.5465/AMJ.2009.0891

Bezrukova, K., Spell, C. S., Perry, J. L., & Jehn, K. A. (2016). A meta-analytical integration of over 40 years of research on diversity training evaluation. *Psychological Bulletin*, *142*(11), 1227–1274. https://doi.org/10.1037/BUL0000067

Block, K., Croft, A., De Souza, L., & Schmader, T. (2019). Do people care if men don't care about caring? The asymmetry in support for changing gender roles. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *83*(July 2018), 112–131. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2019.03.013

Brynjolfsson, E., Chandar, B., & Chen, R. (2025). *Canaries in the coal mine? Six facts about the recent employment effects of artificial intelligence*.

Burt, R. S. (2004). Structural holes and good ideas. *American Journal of Sociology*, *110*(2), 349–399. https://doi.org/10.1086/421787

Calanchini, J., Hehman, E., Ebert, T., Esposito, E., Simon, D., & Wilson, L. (2022). Regional intergroup bias. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, *66*, 281–337. https://doi.org/10.1016/BS.AESP.2022.04.003

Care Uganda. (2023). *Advancing gender equality programs in Uganda*. https://www.care.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CARE-Uganda-Brief.pdf

Centola, D., Becker, J., Brackbill, D., & Baronchelli, A. (2018). Experimental evidence for tipping points in social convention. *Science*, *360*(6393), 1116–1119. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aas8827

Charlesworth, T. E. S., & Banaji, M. R. (2022a). Evidence of covariation between regional implicit bias and socially significant outcomes in healthcare, education, and law enforcement. In *Handbook on economics of discrimination and affirmative action* (pp. 1–21). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-33-4016-9_7-1

Charlesworth, T. E. S., & Banaji, M. R. (2022b). Patterns of implicit and explicit attitudes: IV. Change and stability from 2007 to 2020. *Psychological Science*, *33*(9), 1347–1371. https://doi.org/10.1177/09567976221084257

Charlesworth, T. E. S., & Hatzenbuehler, M. L. (2025). The stigma stability framework: An integrated theory of how and why society transmits stigma across history. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, *19*(3), e70051. https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.70051

Croft, A., Schmader, T., & Block, K. (2015). An underexamined inequality: Cultural and psychological barriers to men's engagement with communal roles. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *19*(4), 343–370. https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868314564789

Dahl, G. B., Løken, KV, & Mogstad, M. (2014). Peer effects in program participation. *American Economic Review*, *104*(7), 2049–2074. https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.104.7.2049

Dasgupta, N. (2025). *Change the wallpaper*. Yale University Press. https://yalebooks.yale.edu/book/9780300270228/change-the-wallpaper/

Dasgupta, N., & Asgari, S. (2004). Seeing is believing: Exposure to counterstereotypic women leaders and its effect on the malleability of automatic gender stereotyping. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *40*(5), 642–658. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2004.02.003

Day, M. V., Fiske, S. T., Downing, E. L., & Trail, T. E. (2014). Shifting liberal and conservative attitudes using moral foundations theory. *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin*, *40*(12), 1559–1573. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167214551152

Dennehy, T. C., & Dasgupta, N. (2017). Female peer mentors early in college increase women's positive academic experiences and retention in engineering. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *114*(23), 5964–5969. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1613117114

Dobbin, F., & Kalev, A. (2019). The promise and peril of sexual harassment programs. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *116*(25), 12255–12260. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1818477116

Dobbin, F., & Kalev, A. (2021). The civil rights revolution at work: What went wrong. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *47*, 281–303. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-090820

Dobbin, F., & Kalev, A. (2022). *Getting to diversity: What works and what doesn't*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Dovidio, J. F., Eller, A., & Hewstone, M. (2011). Improving intergroup relations through direct, extended and other forms of indirect contact. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, *14*(2), 147–160. https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430210390555

Dovidio, J. F., & Gaertner, S. L. (2004). Aversive racism. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, *36*, 1–52. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(04)36001-6

Dutton, J. E., Ashford, S. J., O'neill, R. M., Hayes, E., Freeman, A. B., & Wierba, E. E. (1997). Reading the wind: How middle

managers assess the context for selling issues to top managers. *Strategic Management Journal*, *18*, 407–425. https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1097-0266(199705)18:5<407::AID-SMJ881>3.0.CO;
2-J

Ebbinghaus, M., Bailey, N., & Rubel, J. (2025). The effect of the 2020 black lives matter protests on police budgets: How "defund the police". *Sparked Political Backlash. Social Problems*, *72*(3), 1198–1215. https://doi.org/10.1093/SOCPRO/SPAE004

Edelman Trust Institute (2024). *Edelman trust barometer special report: Trust at work*.

Edmondson, A. C. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *44*(2), 350–383. https://doi.org/10.2307/2666999

Edmondson, A. C., & Lei, Z. (2014). Psychological safety: The history, renaissance, and future of an interpersonal construct. *Annu. Rev. Organ. Psychol. Organ. Behav*, *1*, 23–43. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-031413-091305

Ferguson, M. J., Mann, T. C., Cone, J., & Shen, X. (2019). When and how implicit first impressions can be updated. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *28*(4), 331–336. https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721419835206

Finkel, E. J., Bail, C. A., Cikara, M., Ditto, P. H., Iyengar, S., Klar, S., Mason, L., McGrath, M. C., Nyhan, B., Rand, D. G., Skitka, L. J., Tucker, J. A., Van Bavel, J. J., Wang, C. S., & Druckman, J. N. (2020). Political sectarianism in America: A poisonous cocktail of othering, aversion, and moralization poses a threat to democracy. *Science*, *370*(6516), 533–536. https://doi.org/10.1126/SCIENCE.ABE1715/SUPPL_FILE/ABE1715_FINKEL_SM.PDF

Floyd, S. W., & Wooldridge, B. (1997). Middle management's strategic influence and organizational performance. *Journal of Management Studies*, *34*(3), 465–485. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6486.00059

Forscher, P. S., Lai, C. K., Axt, J. R., Ebersole, C. R., Herman, M., Devine, P. G., & Nosek, B. A. (2019). A meta-analysis of procedures to change implicit measures. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *117*(3), 522–559. https://doi.org/10.1037/pspa0000160

Gaither, S. E., & Sommers, S. R. (2013). Living with an other-race roommate shapes Whites' behavior in subsequent diverse settings. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *49*(2), 272–276. https://doi.org/10.1016/J.JESP.2012.10.020

Graham, J., Haidt, J., & Nosek, B. A. (2009). Liberals and conservatives rely on different sets of moral foundations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *96*(5), 1029–1046. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015141

Hatzenbuehler, M. L., & Keyes, K. M. (2013). Inclusive anti-bullying policies and reduced risk of suicide attempts in Lesbian and Gay youth. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *53*, 21–26. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2012.08.010

Horowitz, J. M., Hurst, K., & Braga, D. (2023). *Support for the Black lives matter movement has dropped considerably from its peak in 2020*. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2023/06/14/support-for-the-black-lives-matter-movement-has-dropped-considerably-from-its-peak-in-2020/

Howard, K. A., Cervone, D., & Motyl, M. (2022). On the varieties of diversity: Ideological variations in attitudes toward, and understandings of diversity. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *48*(7), 1039–1053. https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672211028141

Jost, J. T. (2015). Resistance to change: A social psychological perspective. *Social Research*, *82*(3), 607–636. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/603152 https://doi.org/10.1353/sor.2015.0035

Kalev, A., & Dobbin, F. (2023). How firms turn middle managers into diversity leaders. *Seattle University Law Review*, *46*(2), 493–522. https://digitalcommons.law.seattleu.edu/sulr/vol46/iss2/10

Kalev, A., Dobbin, F., & Kelly, E. (2006). Best practices or best guesses? Assessing the efficacy of corporate affirmative action and diversity policies. *American Sociological Review*, *71*(4), 589–617. https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240607100404

Kanter, R. M., & Roessner, J. (1999a). *Deloitte & Touche (A): A hole in the pipeline | Harvard Business Impact Education*. Harvard Business School Case Publishing. https://hbsp.harvard.edu/product/300012-PDF-ENG

Kanter, R. M., & Roessner, J. (1999b). *Deloitte & Touche (B): Changing the workplace - case - faculty & research - Harvard Business School*. Harvard Business School Case Publishing. https://www.hbs.edu/faculty/Pages/item.aspx?num=379

Kaufman, G. (2018). Barriers to equality: Why British fathers do not use parental leave. *Community, Work & Family*, *21*(3), 310–325. https://doi.org/10.1080/13668803.2017.1307806

Kirby, T. A., Russell Pascual, N., & Hildebrand, L. K. (2023). The dilution of diversity: Ironic effects of broadening diversity. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *51*(2), 268–283. https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672231184925/

Kurdi, B., & Charlesworth, T. E. S. (2023). The 3D framework of implicit attitude change: Levels of analysis, sources of change, and timescales. *Trends in Psychological Science*, *27*(8), 745–758. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2023.05.009

Kurdi, B., Mann, T. C., & Ferguson, M. J. (2022). Persuading the implicit mind: Changing negative implicit evaluations with an 8-Minute podcast. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, *13*(3), 688–697. https://doi.org/10.1177/19485506211037140

Kurdi, B., Sanchez, A., & Dasgupta, N. (2024). When) do counterattitudinal exemplars shift implicit racial evaluations? Replications and extensions of Dasgupta and Greenwald (2001). *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *126*(4), 543–565. https://doi.org/10.1037/PSPA0000370

Kwon, S. W., Rondi, E., Levin, D. Z., De Massis, A., & Brass, D. J. (2020). Network brokerage: An integrative review and future research agenda. *Journal of Management*, *46*(6), 1092–1120. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206320914694

Lai, C. K., Marini, M., Lehr, S. A., Cerruti, C., Shin, J. E. L., Joy-Gaba, J. A., Ho, A. K., Teachman, B. A., Wojcik, S. P., Koleva, S. P., Frazier, R. S., Heiphetz, L., Chen, E. E., Turner, R. N., Haidt, J., Kesebir, S., Hawkins, C. B., Schaefer, H. S., & Rubichi, S., …, B. A. Nosek (2014). Reducing implicit racial preferences: I. A comparative investigation of 17 interventions. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, *143*(4), 1765–1785. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0036260

Lauring, J. (2013). International diversity management: Global ideals and local responses. *British Journal of Management*, *24*(2), 211–224. https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1467-8551.2011.00798.X

McKinsey & LeanIn. (2025). *Women in the workplace 2024: Key findings & takeaways*. https://cdn.leanin.org/women-in-the-workplace

Levy, R., & Mattsson, M. (2023). The Effects of Social Movements: Evidence from #MeToo. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. https://doi.org/10.2139/SSRN.3496903

Licht, H., Abou-Chadi, T., Barbera, P., & Hua, W. (2025). Measuring and understanding Parties' anti-elite strategies. *The Journal of Politics*, *87*(1), 275–290. https://doi.org/10.1086/730711

Live Data Technologies. (2024). *Report: Layoffs by job level (2018–2023)*. https://www.livedatatechnologies.com/layoffs-by-job-level

Moers, F. (2005). Discretion and bias in performance evaluation: The impact of diversity and subjectivity. *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, *30*(1), 67–80. https://doi.org/10.1016/J.AOS.2003.11.001

Murray, C., & Bohannon, M., & Forbes Staff. (2025, April 11). IBM reportedly walks back diversity policies citing inherent tensions: All the major companies and orgs dumping their DEI programs. *Forbes*. https://www.forbes.com/sites/conormurray/2025/04/11/ibm-reportedly-walks-back-diversity-policies-citing-inherent-tensions-here-are-all-the-companies-rolling-back-dei-programs/

Ofosu, E. K., Chambers, M. K., Chen, J. M., & Hehman, E. (2019). Same-sex marriage legalization associated with reduced implicit and explicit antigay bias. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, *116*(18), 8846–8851. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1806000116

Onyeador, I. N., Hudson, S., Kiera, T. J., & Lewis, N. A. (2021). Moving beyond implicit bias training: Policy insights for increasing organizational diversity. *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, *8*(1), 19–26. https://doi.org/10.1177/2372732220983840

Özbilgin, M., Jonsen, K., Tatli, A., Vassilopoulou, J., & Surgevil, O. (2013). Global diversity management. In Q. M. Roberson (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of diversity and work* (pp. 419–441). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199736355.013.0022

Page-Gould, E., & Mendoza-Denton, R. (2011). Friendship and social interaction with outgroup members. In L. R. Tropp & R. K. Mallett (Eds.), *Moving beyond prejudice reduction: Pathways to positive intergroup relations* (pp. 139–158). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/12319-007

Paluck, E. L. (2010). Peer pressure against prejudice: A high school field experiment examining social network change. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *47*, 350–358. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2010.11.017

Paluck, E. L., Porat, R., Clark, C. S., & Green, D. P. (2021). Prejudice reduction: Progress and challenges. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *72*, 533–560. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-071620-030619

Paluck, E. L., & Shepherd, H. (2012). The salience of social referents: A field experiment on collective norms and harassment behavior in a school social network. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *103*(6), 899–915. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0030015

Paluck, E. L., Shepherd, H., Aronow, P. M., & Wachter, K. W. (2016). Changing climates of conflict: A social network experiment in 56 schools. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *3*(113), 566–571. https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/29199

Pettigrew, T. F., & Tropp, L. R. (2006). A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *90*(5), 751–783. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.90.5.751

Petts, R. J., Knoester, C., & Li, Q. (2020). Paid paternity leave-taking in the United States. *Community Work Family*, *23*(2), 162–183. https://doi.org/10.1080/13668803.2018.1471589

Rivera-Rodriguez, A., Mercado, E., Tropp, L. R., & Dasgupta, N. (2025). When social hierarchy, power, and collective autonomy motivate social movement and counter-movement mobilization among disadvantaged and advantaged groups. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*. 0(0). https://doi.org/10.1177/10888683241305662

Roudometof, V. (2016). *Glocalization: A critical introduction*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315858296

Rydland, M. (2020). Middle Managers' role during strategic change:One size does not fit all. *BETA Bulletin of Experimental Treatments for AIDS*, *34*(1), 05–22. https://doi.org/10.18261/ISSN.1504-3134-2020-01-01

Sawyer, J., & Gampa, A. (2017). Implicit and explicit racial attitudes changed during black lives matter. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *44*(7), 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167218757454

Sawyer, J., & Gampa, A. (2022). Social movements as parsimonious explanations for implicit and explicit attitude change. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *27*(1), 28–51. https://doi.org/10.1177/10888683221095697

Schuster, C., Sparkman, G., Walton, G. M., Alles, A., & Loschelder, D. D. (2023). Egalitarian norm messaging increases human resources professionals' salary offers to women. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *108*(4), 541–552. https://doi.org/10.1037/APL0001033

Schwabish, J., & Axelrod, J. (2025, July 9). *NSF has canceled more than 1,500 grants. Nearly 90 percent were related to DEI*. Urban Institute. https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/nsf-has-canceled-more-1500-grants-nearly-90-percent-were-related-dei

Sparkman, G., & Walton, G. M. (2017). Dynamic norms promote sustainable behavior, even if it is counternormative. *Psychological Science*, *28*(11), 1663–1674. https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797617719950

Sparkman, G., & Walton, G. M. (2019). Witnessing change: Dynamic norms help resolve diverse barriers to personal change. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *82*(January), 238–252. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2019.01.007

Stephens, N. M., Rivera, L. A., & Townsend, S. S. M. (2021). The cycle of workplace bias and how to interrupt it. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, *40*(100137). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.riob.2021.100137

Stovel, K., & Shaw, L. (2012). Brokerage. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *38*(2012), 139–158. https://doi.org/10.1146/ANNUREV-SOC-081309-150054/CITE/REFWORKS

Sturm, S. (2001). Second generation employment discrimination: A structural approach. *Columbia Law Review*, *101*(3), 458. Available at: https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/faculty_scholarship/217

Tankard, M. E., & Paluck, E. L. (2017). The effect of a supreme court decision regarding gay marriage on social norms and personal attitudes. *Psychological Science*, *28*(9), 1334. https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797617709594

Taylor, G. D., Sheatsley, P. B., & Greeley, A. M. (1978). Attitudes toward racial integration. *Scientific American*, *238*(6), 42–49. https://www.jstor.org/stable/24955752 https://doi.org/10.1038/scientificamerican0678-42

The White House. (2025). *Ending radical and wasteful government DEI programs and preferencing – The White House*. Available at: https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/ending-radical-and-wasteful-government-dei-programs-and-preferencing/

Vassilopoulou, J. (2011). *Understanding the habitus of managing ethnic diversity in Germany. A multilevel relational study* [Doctoral dissertation]. University of East Anglia. https://ueaeprints.uea.ac.uk/33505/1/ThesisVassilopoulouPrintVersion.pdf

Wooldridge, B., Schmid, T., & Floyd, S. W. (2008). The middle management perspective on strategy process: Contributions, synthesis, and future research. *Journal of Management*, *34*(6), 1190–1221. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206308324326