

Kevin Kryston
Statement of Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

As an educator and scholar, I am committed to diversity, equality, and inclusion in all facets of my professional life. These three principles are critical to university education and my devotion to these principles manifests through my scholarship, research practices, and in the classroom.

My research, which focuses on social influence in a media context, can be used to understand socio-cultural issues. Specifically, I have examined how individuals' behaviors are influenced by perceptions of other in- and out-group members' behavior and these group members' approval of a given behavior. Recently, I began work on a project that explores how racial in- versus out-group characters are morally judged in narratives based on their appearance and behaviors. Although my research focuses on the context of entertainment media, the mechanisms should govern most evaluations and behaviors. Thus, my research helps to determine how groups and media narratives influence individuals' biases and discover ways to use these mechanisms to overcome in-group biases and favoritism and/or encourage prosocial behaviors and attitudes.

My research practices always allow equal opportunity for inclusion regardless of socio-economic, ethnic, and/or demographic background. I also recruit diverse representative samples when necessary to understand the broader implications of the results. In one instance, my team paid for an ethnically-diverse sample for a project studying group influence on media selection behavior to see if effects varied across Asian, Black, and white participants. Similarly, my project regarding racial in- and out-group characters will purposefully recruit a diverse sample.

Finally, in the classroom and as a mentor, I strive to be an enthusiastic and understanding teacher. I do my best to be aware of and attend to students' strengths, weaknesses, and needs. I show this enthusiasm and care for *all* students, regardless of his/her/their background. My course material (e.g., example pictures/videos) feature people of all ages, color, and ethnicity, and I ensure that exam questions use names of different genders and cultural backgrounds so that students feel represented. Additionally, I taught and mentored students from various socio-economic and demographic backgrounds, especially at Sam Houston State, a Hispanic-serving institution that ranks highly in social mobility and diversity metrics, and Clark State, a community college. My interaction with diverse students convinced me that understanding, adapting to, and respecting students' unique experiences, strengths, and struggles can help a student learn and succeed. Likewise, at MSU, I mentored domestic and international research assistants from various backgrounds as Dr. Allison Eden's lab manager. Getting to know these students and understand their experiences helped me to integrate course practices that encourage inclusion and respect diversity. Luckily, these experiences seem to have paid off; my students, especially those at SHSU, have noted my care, enthusiasm, and passion for their success.

Recently, I have taken additional steps to listen to students and community members, revisit my teaching practices and review student feedback to ensure that my classroom etiquette, grading, and interactions are anti-racist, anti-sexist, fair, and invite respectful free speech. I will continue to listen and self-scrutinize throughout my career. I also increased my research focus on issues of race and diversity so that my work can benefit intergroup interaction and reduce racial biases.

In sum, all students can make an incredible contribution to the classroom, academia, and beyond. Moreover, all students are capable of success and deserve my respect and attention as an instructor, mentor, and colleague, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, and/or socio-economic status. As such, I try to create academic environments and individual instruction that nurtures success regardless of my students' and colleagues' backgrounds.