

# Stemming the Tide: Transforming Academic Deficiency Bias into Equity Literacy

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*Emily Reed, Research and Instruction Librarian*

[emilyreed@psu.edu](mailto:emilyreed@psu.edu)



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# Participants will . . .

Learn how to recognize widespread cognitive biases of deficit thinking within the higher education academic context and articulate their harmful effect on underrepresented students.

Practice transforming common deficit-based narratives into equity-based perspectives.

Identify strategies for planning library instruction experiences grounded in strengths-based approaches.

# Agenda

1. *Brief* presentation

2. Group discussions

3. Wrap up

# Quick Definitions

And I mean, quick!!!!



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# Deficit Thinking

“the belief that there is a **narrow, prescribed, ‘correct’ way of doing things**, also known as **the ‘norm,’** and that those living outside of the norm are operating at a deficit and **need to be ‘fixed’** in order to be **successful**” (Heinbach et al., 2021, p. 9).

- Differences are viewed as hindrances or obstacles
- Expectation that students need to conform to the norm to succeed
- The student is solely responsible for their academic success or failure

# Deficit Thinking in Higher Education

- Goal of higher education: prepare and develop academically successful students
- Higher education in the U.S. has its roots in educating students from certain populations with certain characteristics (Thelin, 2011)

Academic failure is often **perceived** to be caused by the student's lack of . . .

money

intelligence

motivation

obedience

conformity

# Deficit language

Lacks

Gaps

Challenges

Limitations

# Cognitive Biases

unconscious, systematic errors in thinking that occur when people process and interpret information in their surroundings (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974).

# Cognitive Biases

Can be challenging to recognize!

“unconscious, systematic errors in thinking”

1. Learn how to recognize
2. Reflect and interrogate
3. Persist in disrupting and negating

(Hoffman & Winter, 2022)

# Cognitive Biases Reproduce Deficit Narratives

Stereotyping

Zero-risk bias

Conservatism  
bias

Repetition bias

Bandwagon

(Friedman, 2020; Monash University, n.d.).

# Educational Equity and Equity Literacy

## Educational Equity

- every student “receives what they need to develop to their full academic and social potential.” (National Equity Project, n.d.).

## Equity Literacy

- building knowledge about the history of educational equity in order to recognize and illuminate current inequitable practices, systems, and structures
- building skills to advocate for urgent, sustainable, and meaningful change

# Connecting It All Together



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# Instructions

1. Select a prompt to review.
2. Reflect on each question as it relates to the prompt.
3. Choose another prompt and repeat!
4. Take note of any best practices or supporting resources that come to mind.

*Asynchronous participation welcome, even if you are viewing the slides after LOEX is over.*

To see what participants accomplished during the workshop (view only):

- <https://tinyurl.com/loex26-reed-viewactivity>

If you would like to **contribute asynchronously**, you can do so here (editable):

- <https://tinyurl.com/loex26-reed-editactivity>

# References

- Friedman, R. (2020, December 3). *7 things to know in the fight against 'fake news'*.
- Heinbach, C., Mitola, R., & Rinto, E. (2021). *Dismantling deficit thinking in academic libraries*. Litwin Books.
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- Thelin, John R. 2004. *A history of American higher education*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1974). Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases. *Science*, 185(4157), 1124–1131.

# Thank you! Safe travels!

*And please complete the LOEX survey.*

[emilyreed@psu.edu](mailto:emilyreed@psu.edu)



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