Brick walls and glass ceilings

VOCABULARY PRACTICE
ADVANCED | C1

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 Match each advanced term with its definition.

1 intersectionality ____	**a** the overlapping and compounding effects of multiple forms of disadvantage
2 structural inequality ____	**b** disadvantage embedded in the ordinary functioning of institutions rather than individual prejudice
3 homophily ____	**c** the tendency to favour and associate with people similar to oneself
4 credentialism ____	**d** excessive emphasis on formal qualifications, sometimes beyond their practical relevance
5 institutional isomorphism ____	**e** the tendency for organisations facing similar pressures to become structurally alike
6 stereotype threat ____	**f** the psychological effect of anxiety about confirming a negative stereotype, which can impair performance
7 occupational segregation ____	**g** the concentration of particular demographic groups in specific jobs or industries
8 symbolic capital ____	**h** prestige or status recognised by others, distinct from material wealth
9 double bind ____	**i** a situation where conflicting expectations make success difficult regardless of the choice made
10 epistemic injustice ____	**j** unfair treatment of someone specifically in their capacity as a knower, e.g. having testimony dismissed

2 Choose the most precise term for each context.

1 Overlapping, compounding disadvantage is intersectionality / a single cause.

2 Disadvantage embedded in institutional functioning is structural inequality / individual prejudice.

3 Favouring people similar to oneself is homophily / random selection.

4 Excessive emphasis on formal qualifications is credentialism / practical experience.

5 Anxiety about confirming a stereotype impairing performance is stereotype threat / confidence.

6 Concentration of groups in specific jobs is occupational segregation / equal distribution.

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7 Conflicting expectations making success difficult either way is a double bind / a clear choice.

8 Unfair treatment of someone as a knower is epistemic injustice / factual accuracy.

3 Match the verbs with the noun phrases to form academic collocations.

1 perpetuate ____	**a** structural barriers
2 dismantle ____	**b** existing disparities
3 internalise ____	**c** a negative stereotype
4 legitimise ____	**d** entrenched hierarchies
5 compound ____	**e** a discriminatory norm
6 disrupt ____	**f** a double bind
7 institutionalise ____	**g** existing disadvantage
8 navigate ____	**h** prevailing power structures

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4 Complete the analysis with terms from the box.

credentialism | double bind | epistemic injustice | homophily | institutional isomorphism | intersectionality | occupational segregation | stereotype threat | structural inequality | symbolic capital

Scholars applying the concept of 1 _____ examine how overlapping forms of disadvantage, such as gender and ethnicity together, compound in ways that single-axis analysis misses. Much of this disadvantage reflects 2 _____ rather than individual prejudice, embedded quietly in ordinary institutional practice. Hiring committees exhibiting 3 _____ tend to favour candidates who resemble themselves, inadvertently reinforcing existing patterns of 4 _____ across industries. Rising 5 _____ can further disadvantage capable candidates lacking formal qualifications, regardless of practical competence. Women in male-dominated fields sometimes report a 6 _____: assertive behaviour is penalised as unlikeable, while more modest behaviour is dismissed as lacking leadership potential. This dynamic can trigger 7 _____, undermining performance through anxiety about confirming negative assumptions. Meanwhile, organisations facing similar external pressures tend towards 8 _____, adopting similar structures regardless of genuine effectiveness. Some scholars extend this analysis to 9 _____, noting how the testimony of marginalised employees is sometimes dismissed regardless of its accuracy, and to unequal distribution of 10 _____, the prestige some groups accumulate more easily than others.

5 Read the text and answer the questions briefly.

Rethinking workplace fairness

Contemporary scholarship increasingly frames workplace inequality as a structural phenomenon rather than the sum of individual prejudiced decisions, arguing that ordinary institutional processes such as informal networking, credentialing requirements and performance evaluation criteria can systematically disadvantage certain groups even without any individual intending discrimination. This reframing has significant implications for intervention: addressing structural inequality requires examining and potentially redesigning institutional processes themselves, rather than relying solely on individual bias training, which research suggests produces only modest and often temporary effects. Critics of purely structural framing counter that individual accountability remains important, cautioning that structural explanations should not become a means of diffusing responsibility entirely.

1 How does contemporary scholarship increasingly frame workplace inequality? _____

2 Give two examples of institutional processes mentioned. _____

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3 What significant implication does this reframing have for intervention? _____

4 What does research suggest about individual bias training alone? _____

5 What do critics of purely structural framing argue? _____

6 What do critics caution structural explanations should not become? _____

6 Replace the words in bold with a precise term or collocation.

1 The disadvantage was built into ordinary institutional practice, not individual prejudice. _____

2 The overlapping forms of disadvantage compounded each other. _____

3 She faced conflicting expectations that made success difficult either way. _____

4 The anxiety about confirming the stereotype affected her performance. _____

OVER TO YOU

Write a 160-190 word critical commentary on how structural factors, rather than individual prejudice alone, shape workplace inequality, distinguishing observation from inference.

[ ] Use at least twelve target expressions. [ ] Include four academic collocations. [ ] Maintain a precise, balanced register.

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ANSWER KEY

1 Advanced terms

1 a 2 b 3 c 4 d 5 e 6 f 7 g 8 h 9 i 10 j

2 Precise terms

1 intersectionality 2 structural inequality 3 homophily 4 credentialism 5 stereotype threat 6 occupational segregation 7 a double bind 8 epistemic injustice

3 Academic collocations

1 b perpetuate existing disparities 2 a dismantle structural barriers 3 c internalise a negative stereotype 4 e legitimise a discriminatory norm
5 g compound existing disadvantage 6 h disrupt prevailing power structures 7 d institutionalise entrenched hierarchies 8 f navigate a double bind

4 Analysis

1 intersectionality 2 structural inequality 3 homophily 4 occupational segregation 5 credentialism
6 double bind 7 stereotype threat 8 institutional isomorphism 9 epistemic injustice 10 symbolic capital

5 Reading - suggested answers

1 As a structural phenomenon rather than the sum of individual prejudiced decisions.
2 Any two: informal networking, credentialing requirements, performance evaluation criteria.
3 Addressing structural inequality requires examining and potentially redesigning institutional processes themselves.
4 That it produces only modest and often temporary effects.
5 That individual accountability remains important.
6 A means of diffusing responsibility entirely.

6 Precise terms and collocations

1 structural inequality 2 intersectionality 3 a double bind 4 stereotype threat

Over to you

Answers will vary. Look for conceptual precision, evidence-aware reasoning and balanced evaluation.