

1.5 IMPLICIT BIAS

Essential Question(s): What is bias? What is implicit bias? In what ways could bias have an impact on your civic participation?

Overview

The U.S. Constitution embodies ideals of equal opportunity and fair treatment for *all* and is reinforced by laws like the Civil Rights Act and Title IX. Yet marginalized people who have historically experienced discrimination and unfair treatment continue to do so in the present day. The stories in the news and social media seem to indicate that racism, antisemitism, sexism and other forms of bias and discrimination are becoming more pervasive. Why? In part, it is because people discriminate based on factors they are not even aware of: implicit biases.

Understanding bias and discrimination is integral to civics education because it relates to our civil rights. Our institutions, from schools to law enforcement to the court systems, need to treat people fairly. In order to do so, it is crucial that we understand our own implicit biases.

Snapshot

What Students Will Learn:

In this lesson, students explore implicit bias and self-reflect about situations in which they have experienced or encountered everyday types of bias.

Standard(s):

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.2

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1

Time: 50 minutes





Key Vocabulary

bias
explicit bias
implicit bias

Objectives

- Understand what implicit and explicit biases are and provide examples.
- Reflect on situations in which students have experienced everyday bias, either as a target or a witness.
- Differentiate between implicit and explicit bias.

Differentiation

Consider assigning students to small groups. You may also want to assign tasks for each student (reader, scribe, organizer, etc.).

What's Needed

- Writing utensil and paper or 1:1 technology
- Internet, computer, screen or projector, speakers
- "Peanut Butter, Jelly and Racism" video clip (2016, 3 min., POV/*New York Times*, www.nytimes.com/video/us/100000004818663/peanut-butter-jelly-and-racism.html)
- Make copies of the "Implicit Bias Thought Patterns" handout, one for each group.

Classroom Setup

For this lesson, it is best to have desks or tables in small groups.

Direct Teaching

1. Ask students, "What is bias?" Elicit responses, then share the following definition.

Bias is an inclination or preference, either for or against an individual or group, that interferes with impartial judgment.

Provide an example or have students share a few examples.

2. Show students the video "Peanut Butter, Jelly, and Racism."
3. After watching the video, engage students in a brief discussion by asking the following questions:
 - What is implicit bias?
 - How is implicit bias different from racism?
 - Does the difference matter?
 - What does implicit bias have to do with peanut butter and jelly?

4. Elicit and share with students the definitions of **implicit bias** and **explicit bias**.

Explicit bias is the *conscious* attitudes, stereotypes and overt intentional actions (positive or negative) toward members of a group merely because of their membership in that group.

Implicit bias is the *unconscious* attitudes, stereotypes and unintentional actions (positive or negative) towards members of a group merely because of their membership in that group.

Explicit Bias	Implicit Bias
<ul style="list-style-type: none">— Aware— Voluntary— Intentional	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— Unaware— Involuntary— Unintentional
<i>Example: A teacher says, “I need two boys to help me lift this desk because boys are stronger than girls!”</i>	<i>Example: A teacher asks for two students to help lift a desk. Before any volunteers could raise their hands, the teacher picked two boys from the class.</i>

Further explain the difference between the two terms.

5. Explain that it is not always possible to distinguish between *explicit* and *implicit* bias. If implicit bias is unconscious, only the individual engaging in biased behavior knows what is going on in their mind and they may not even be aware of their bias.
6. Divide students into small groups. Distribute the “**Implicit Bias Thought Patterns**” handout to each group. Explain to students that they are to work in their groups to complete the handout. They are to discuss each implicit bias example and write down the thought pattern that could be associated with that example.
- Note:** Give students as much time as they need—the goal of the activity is not completion. The key to this activity is having students discuss what they are capturing on the handout.
7. Reconvene the whole class. Each group should share one thing they discussed in their small groups. Then ask students the following questions:
- What is the difference between implicit and explicit bias?
 - Does the difference matter in cases where bias is shown? Does it matter if a person is unaware that they are doing something wrong due to implicit bias versus knowing outright that it is wrong due to explicit bias?
 - Does the impact of implicit vs. explicit bias matter to the person targeted? Why or why not?
 - How can implicit bias affect your civic life?

Closing

Have students write down one thing they learned today and one question that they have.

IMPLICIT BIAS THOUGHT PATTERNS

Name: _____ Class: _____

Directions: Read the following examples of implicit bias aloud in your small groups. For each example, discuss what the unconscious thought pattern might be and write down your group's final answer. The first example has been completed as a guide to completing this task.

1. **A counselor is reading a college application. After seeing that the student participated in robotics club, the counselor uses male pronouns for the review.**

***Thought pattern:* Because robotics clubs are often male-dominated, the counselor thought the student applying was male.**

2. A high school student is door-knocking for their favorite politician. When the homeowner answers the door, he says, "I was expecting someone much older than you!"

3. A police officer was called to the scene of a burglary. Upon arriving, she looked around the perimeter for the suspects and was surprised when her partner pointed to two teenage girls.

4. In conversation, a peer shared that they were voting for whoever looks the most "presidential." When asked what that looks like, the peer said that the candidate should wear a suit, have short and combed-back hair, and at least be in their 50's.

5. A jury is deliberating the evidence of a crime. Jury member number one says, "... of course it is a young Black teenager."

6. When assigning students to specific jobs at the election booth, the election judge assigned all the Asian students to count the ballots.
