



Bias Bite #2: In-Group Bias

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Overview

This mini-lesson is designed to help your students recognize and better understand in-group bias. This cognitive shortcut can help foster strong relationships within a group, but it can also lead to discrimination, a lack of viewpoint diversity, and limited collaboration with anyone outside the group.

The following activities will guide students in an exploration of how in-group bias works, when it happens, and most important, how to recognize it in themselves. By developing this self-awareness, students can become more open to different perspectives and engage in more thoughtful, civil discussions both in and out of the classroom.



Driving Question

Why do we tend to favor people “like us” more than others?

Objectives

- Explain the bias.
- Provide examples of the bias in practice.
- Construct strategies for overcoming and dealing with the bias.

Materials Needed

- Prompts for the “Activate” Learning Activity (see in lesson plan)
- Mental Notes graphic organizers for students

Bias Description

The in-group bias is characterized by the favoring of in-group members by other in-group members over out-group members. In-group bias occurs even when the performance and characteristics of both groups are comparable. This bias can manifest in various ways, such as giving more favorable evaluations, attributing positive traits, and offering more help or support to in-group members.

PROS AND CONS OF THE BIAS

Pros

- Can foster strong relationships and camaraderie among like-minded individuals
- Promotes group cohesion and supportive environments within in-groups

Cons

- Leads to stereotyping and discrimination against out-group members
- Limits diversity of thought and minimizes collaboration with those outside one's group

REAL-WORLD EXAMPLES OF THE BIAS

- People might believe their own sports team is the best, even ignoring evidence that another team performs better.
- Students form close friendships with classmates who share similar interests or extracurricular activities, often excluding others who don't fit into their social group.

Learning Activities

OPEN

Have students write the name of the day's bias and the driving question on their Mental Notes graphic organizer.

ACTIVATE

Agree upon a silent hand signal for "Me too" and "I feel that."

Have students stand in a circle and step forward (if they're comfortable) when a prompt applies to them. Begin by asking "Who here . . . ?" and fill in the prompts that follow:

- Who here . . .
 - Speaks more than 1 language at home?
 - Has lived in more than 1 state or country?
 - Practices a religion or spiritual tradition?
 - Has family traditions that are important to you?
 - Is the oldest child in your family?
 - Is the youngest child in your family?
 - Is an only child?
 - Has a name with a special meaning or story?
 - Plays a musical instrument?
 - Participates in a sport?
 - Enjoys reading for fun?
 - Likes to cook or bake?
 - Enjoys creating art or crafts?
 - Loves math or science?
 - Prefers working with your hands?
 - Likes to play video games?
 - Enjoys listening to music?

Ask at least 1 student to share after each prompt that applied to them. Allow students to use silent signals to communicate "Me too" and "I feel that."

After the activity, ask students to reflect on the experience with the following questions.

- What did you notice about your thoughts as you did the activity?
- What surprised you or stood out to you?
- What are some things we all have in common?

- What is the value of establishing what we have in common?
- What might be the value in recognizing that humans change?

EXPLAIN

Describe in-group bias to students.

Tell students that in-group bias can manifest in 3 different ways.

- The 1st way it can manifest itself is through the out-group homogeneity effect. This effect occurs when individuals see members of an out-group as more similar to one another than members of their in-group, even when there is considerable individual variation within each group. This tendency can contribute to negative stereotypes and prejudices toward out-group members.
- The 2nd way it can manifest itself is through social categorization. Putting individuals into groups can activate in-group and out-group biases, even when those groups are arbitrary or meaningless. These incidents suggest that categorization itself can play a significant role in shaping intergroup relations.
- The 3rd way it can manifest itself is through intergroup threat. This feeling is the perception that an out-group poses a threat to the in-group's resources, values, or sense of identity and can intensify negative attitudes and conflict between groups. This threat can be perceived as economic, political, cultural, or symbolic.

Explain that in-group bias is primarily explained by social identity theory, which suggests that our group memberships form a significant part of our identity. To maintain a positive self-image, we tend to favorably compare our own groups to others, thereby boosting our self-esteem.


Tell students that they can effectively deal with in-group bias in the following ways:

- Actively identify and name similarities between groups.
- Work together toward a shared goal that benefits both groups to promote cooperation between groups. This approach emphasizes commonalities and interdependence, fostering positive intergroup interactions.
- Make an effort to engage positively with members of other groups. Positive intergroup contact allows individuals to challenge negative stereotypes, develop empathy, and appreciate the similarities between groups.

DISCUSS

Divide students into groups and have them discuss the following questions:

- In what situations can in-group bias be helpful? Harmful?
- When have you seen this bias in action?
- When are people most susceptible to this bias?
- How can people recognize when they are being affected by this bias?

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- What are some ways to overcome and deal with this bias?
 - What is the relationship between this bias and humility? In what ways can our awareness of this bias improve our relationships with others?

SYNTHESIZE AND CLOSE

Ask each group to share what they discussed for at least 1 of the questions. Revisit the driving question and make sure each student has responded to the driving question in their Mental Notes for the day.