



## Bias Bite #2: In-Group Bias

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Bias Bites are written for administrators to help teachers explore their cognitive limitations through suggested protocols that can be implemented in school-wide meetings and other professional development opportunities. The following activities guide teachers to explore in-group bias, which is the tendency to favor in-group members over out-group members. While this cognitive pattern can help promote group cohesion, it can also lead to stereotyping and a lack of viewpoint diversity. The structured learning experiences in this Bias Bite provide educators with a more thorough understanding of this bias. They also help educators develop greater humility and awareness of their cognitive limitations, fostering more spaces for civil discourse in their schools.



### Driving Question

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

## Materials Needed

Slide deck for prompts (see Activate)

Mental Notes graphic organizers for students

## Bias Description

The in-group bias refers to the tendency by individuals to favor their in-group members over out-group members, even when the performance or 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. Every bias has its pros and cons. The pros and cons of in-group bias are as follows:

- Strong relationships. In-group bias can foster strong relationships and camaraderie among like-minded individuals.
- Group cohesion. This bias can promote group cohesion and supportive environments within an in-group.
- Stereotyping and inequitable practices. In-group bias can lead to stereotyping and discrimination against out-group members, which can result in inequitable practices and policies.
- Limited diversity of thought. This bias limits viewpoint diversity and minimizes collaboration with those outside one's group.

## Bias in Action: School-Based Examples

- A teacher unconsciously favors students who share similar backgrounds or interests, leading to unequal attention and support in the classroom.
- During group projects, students may gravitate toward peers who are similar to them, excluding others who may have valuable contributions to offer.
- A teacher may be more lenient with students who are part of the same social circle, while being stricter with those in a different group, leading to perceptions of unfair treatment.

## Professional Development Protocol for School Leaders

### ACTIVATE

- As a group, agree upon a silent hand signal for "Me too" and "I feel that."
- Have educators stand in a circle and step forward (if they're comfortable) when a prompt from the slide deck applies to them.

- Ask at least 1 educator who stepped forward to share comments after a prompt that applied to them.
- Reflect as a whole group using 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**

- Define in-group bias and its manifestations (listed below):
- Out-group homogeneity effect. Individuals often perceive 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 homogenization can contribute to negative stereotypes and prejudices toward out-group members.
- Social categorization. The mere categorization of individuals into groups can activate in-group and out-group biases, even when those groups are arbitrary or meaningless. This bias suggests that categorization itself can play a significant role in shaping intergroup relations.
- Intergroup threat. The perception that an out-group poses a threat to the in-group's resources, values, or sense of identity 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.
- Share mitigation strategies.
  - Actively identify and name similarities between groups
  - Working together toward a shared goal that benefits both groups can reduce in-group bias and promote cooperation between groups. This approach emphasizes commonalities and interdependence, fostering positive intergroup interactions.
  - Increased contact between members of different groups, particularly under positive conditions, can reduce prejudice and improve intergroup relations. This contact allows individuals to challenge negative stereotypes, develop empathy, and appreciate the similarities between groups.

## **DISCUSS**

- Engage in a whole-group discussion about the following questions.
  - What is the relationship between this bias and the others you're learning about?
  - How can in-group bias show up in schools for different stakeholders (e.g., students, teachers, administrators, families)?
  - Under what conditions or in what situations are we most susceptible to this bias?
  - How could one recognize when this bias is affecting them?
  - What are some strategies to overcome this bias?
  - What is the relationship between this bias and humility? In what ways can our awareness of this bias improve civil discourse?

## **SYNTHESIZE**

- Revisit the driving question and have participants respond.