

Everyday Bias

Compelling Question: *Why are we seeing so many incidents of everyday bias lately?*

Grade Level		Time	Common Core Standards
K-2	3-5	60 Minutes	Reading: R1, R2 Speaking & Listening: SL1, SL3, SL5 Language: L5, L6
MS	HS		



Web Related Connections

Lessons

- [Anti-Muslim Bigotry and Being an Ally](#)
- [Experiences with Race and Racism](#)
- [Microaggressions in our Lives](#)
- [Slurs, Offensive Jokes and How to Respond](#)

Tools & Strategies

- [Challenging Biased Language](#)
- [Race Talk: Engaging Young People in Conversations about Race and Racism](#)

Key Words

(See ADL's [Glossary of Education Terms](#).)

aggressor
bias
confronted
discrimination
dispute
documented
ICE
immigration
impact
implicit bias
intent
racism
sexism
slur
target
transphobia
unconscious
values
xenophobia

LESSON OVERVIEW

It seems like we are seeing more and more news and social media stories about people experiencing bias as they go about their daily lives—riding the subway, shopping in a store, dining in a restaurant and hanging out with friends. Indeed, the surge of such stories makes it seem like racism, sexism and other forms of bias and discrimination are becoming more pervasive. Over the past month, we saw someone call the police because five African-American women were playing golf too slowly. We read about a man who attacked a group of five young men with a knife while asking them, “are you American boys?” And a candidate for the U.S. Congress reportedly barged into a bathroom stall of a transgender woman and exclaimed, “There’s a man here saying that he’s a lady.”

In the wake of the April 2018 Starbucks incident (a white employee called the police about two African-American men who were waiting for a colleague and had asked to use the bathroom without making a purchase), are bias incidents like these on the rise, or are we just hearing more about them? Are there more stories coming out because there is greater public consciousness about bias or because people are using their smartphones to record these incidents?

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

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will understand what explicit and implicit bias is and provide examples.
- Students will explore recent examples of everyday bias in the news by reading about recent incidents and searching hashtags.
- Students will reflect on situations in which they have experienced everyday bias, either as a target or a witness.

MATERIALS & PREPARATION

- “Peanut Butter, Jelly and Racism” video (2016, 3 mins., POV/The New York Times, www.nytimes.com/video/us/100000004818663/peanut-butter-jelly-and-racism.html)
- [Examples of Everyday Bias](#) (one copy for each student)

PROCEDURES

Video Viewing: “Peanut Butter, Jelly and Racism” POV episode of *Who, Me? Biased?*

1. Ask students: *What is bias?* Elicit/explain the definition of **bias** as 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. Play 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?
 - What does the narrator mean when she says, “not let you off the hook?”
 - How is implicit bias like fog?

Defining Terms: Implicit and Explicit Bias

1. Ask students: *What is implicit bias?* Elicit/explain the definition of implicit bias as follows:

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. These associations develop over the course of a lifetime beginning at a very early age through exposure to direct and indirect messages. When people are acting out of their implicit bias, they are not even aware that their actions are biased. In fact, those biases may be in direct conflict with a person’s explicit beliefs and values.
2. Explain that **explicit bias** usually involves the aggressor being aware of what they are doing and their actions are (1) voluntary, (2) on purpose and (3) with intent. Explain that with implicit bias, the aggressor is usually (1) unaware of what they are doing (2) not conscious of their bias and (3) not acting with intent.
3. Ask students to share an example of implicit bias and/or provide the following examples that contrast explicit with implicit bias.

Explicit: A college student says, “I do not want to take a class with that professor because women teachers are overly emotional and terrible professors.”

Implicit: Students were asked to rate teachers of an online course and they never saw the teachers. In the study, some male teachers claimed to be female and vice versa. When students took a class from someone they believed to be male, they rated the teacher significantly higher than the very same teacher, when believed to be female.
4. Explain that it is not always possible to distinguish between explicit and implicit bias. If implicit bias is unconscious, only the aggressor knows what is going on in their mind and they may not be even be aware of their bias.
5. Ask students: *From the target’s point of view, does it matter whether the bias is implicit or explicit?* Explain that for the person targeted, the impact of the biased action is what really matters, not necessarily the intent of the aggressor. For example, if a white store clerk calls the police because she feels (unreasonably) that an African American man is “acting suspiciously,” no one except the clerk knows what sort of bias might be implicated. But in cases of bias, the impact on that African-American man can range from embarrassment to anger to potentially serious consequences like an arrest, even though he is innocent. Make the point that we sometimes focus on distinguishing between implicit and explicit bias, which is helpful in understanding how our minds work and in challenging one’s own biases. At the same time, if you are the target of bias, you have no way of knowing what is in the aggressor’s mind or whether their actions were intentional or not. Therefore, while it is important to understand the many complexities of bias, it is more important to consider the impacts of bias, whether implicit or explicit, on targets or others in that identity group.

6. Explain to students that in the next activity, they will hear about different forms of bias related to various social identity groups. The above example (college student) is about sexism, which is prejudice and/or discrimination against people based on their real or perceived sex. Then ask: *What other forms of bias are there?* Create a list on the board/smart board, which might include the following: racism, homophobia/heterosexism, anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim bigotry, ableism, ageism, transphobia, xenophobia, classism, etc. You can use the [Glossary of Education Terms](#) for definitions.

Information Sharing: Everyday Bias

1. Ask students: *Have you heard about incidents of bias in the news lately? What happened and what do you know?* As students share examples, ask them questions to assess what they know and how they know it.
2. Distribute the [Examples of Everyday Bias](#) handout to each student and explain that they will be reading other recent examples of everyday bias. Have students read the handout aloud or give them ten minutes to read it silently.

Note: As an alternative, divide students into five small groups and assign each small group to one of the articles included in the handout following the incident descriptions. Have the students in each small group read and discuss together their assigned article and then summarize it for the whole class.
3. Reconvene the class and engage students in a discussion by asking the following questions:
 - What are your thoughts and feelings about what you read?
 - Did any of the examples stand out for you and if so, why?
 - Could you relate to any of the examples? How so?
 - What are some of the differences among the examples?
 - What patterns do you see in the examples?
 - Are we seeing more of these incidents lately? Why or why not? How do you know?
 - What do you think the impacts of these incidents are on the people involved? On people of color or others in marginalized communities? On our society as a whole?
4. Provide a short summary of the historical context of discrimination in public spaces and in public accommodations.
5. Explain that “public accommodations” refer to public spaces or other spaces that are used by the general public. Examples include retail stores, restaurants, hotels, parks, pools, recreational facilities and transportation. There is a long history of discrimination against groups of people based on identity characteristics such as race, disability, religion, sexual orientation, etc. In fact, many of the protests during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s focused on these public accommodations (e.g. Montgomery Bus Boycott, Woolworth’s Lunch Counter protest) and major civil rights legislation enacted during this time period specifically addressed public accommodations. Even though there are laws in place, people are not always treated equitably and respectfully. To learn more, use ADL’s backgrounder on the [Civil Rights Movement](#) and accompanying lesson plans.

Social Media Activity: Hashtags about Everyday Bias

1. Explain that as a result of the everyday bias people experience, several related hashtags have been created to amplify them on social media. Ask: *Has anyone seen a hashtag like this?* Share some specific hashtags such as #DrivingWhileBlack, #ShoppingWhileBlack and #LivingWhileBlack. These hashtags have helped people share their own experiences and learn about others’ experiences with everyday racism.
2. If you allow students to use cell phones in your classroom, have them work in pairs or triads to research specific hashtags like these (and others) to learn more about experiences people have had with this type of everyday bias. Give students ten minutes to explore the hashtags and take notes on what they find.

Note: You can also give this as a homework assignment.

3. Reconvene the class and have students share what they learned by responding to the following questions:
 - What hashtags did you find and what do they mean?
 - What did you learn by exploring the hashtags?
 - Have you ever used a hashtag to express how you felt about everyday bias? If so, what happened?



Small Group Discussion

1. Divide students into groups of 4–5 students each. When students are situated, explain that they will respond to four questions, one at a time, related to everyday bias. Have them decide beforehand the order in which they will answer the questions.
2. Read each question and then provide a minute per student to respond to each question, reminding them to take turns and take one minute each. Move on to the next question by reading it aloud.
 - Have you ever experienced (as a target or witness) everyday bias in public spaces? What happened?
 - How did you feel when you experienced this bias?
 - What did you do or what did you wish you could have done?
 - What can people do about everyday bias?
 - (Optional) Have you ever acted upon an act of bias that you now realize was either explicit or implicit bias?
3. Reconvene the whole class and ask for volunteers to share something that came out of their small group discussion, by asking each of the four questions one at a time. Remind students that they should only share aloud their own thoughts, ideas and feelings, not what someone else shared.

Closing

Following up on the last question from the small group activity and have students do a go-round, each sharing one thing they think should be done to address bias.

ADDITIONAL READING

- [“4 ways you might be displaying hidden bias in everyday life”](#) (CNN, November 25, 2015)
- [“Being Black in Public”](#) (Slate, April 19, 2018)
- [Discrimination and Prejudice](#) (Pew Research Center)
- [“Everyday racism in America: Being black means constantly rendering yourself unthreatening to white people”](#) (NBC, May 29, 2018)
- [“Racial Bias, Even When We Have Good Intentions”](#) (*The New York Times*, January 3, 2015)
- [Understanding Implicit Bias](#) (Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity)
- [Widespread Discrimination Continues to Shape LGBT People’s Lives in Both Subtle and Significant Ways](#) (Center for American Progress, May 2, 2017)

Common Core Standards

CONTENT AREA/STANDARD
Reading
R1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
R2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
Speaking and Listening
SL1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
SL3: Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.
SL5: Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.
Language
L5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
L6: Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

Examples of Everyday Bias

1. In April 2018, five African American women were playing golf at the Grandview Golf Course in Pennsylvania. They were told by the club's owners that they were moving too slowly on the golf course and then called the police. When the police arrived, they learned the reason they were called was because of a dispute between the club's management and the golfers. They talked with both groups for about 20 minutes and then determined that further police involvement was not necessary. One of the women said, "I felt like we were discriminated against. It was a horrific experience." (Rachel Siegel, "[White golf course owners said five African American women were playing too slowly. Then they called the police.](#)" *The Washington Post*, April 25, 2018.)
2. In May 2018 in California, Jazmina Saavedra, a Republican U.S. congressional candidate, barged in on a person, who appeared to be a transgender woman, using the restroom at a Denny's restaurant and livestreamed the episode. She turned the camera to the stall door and said "there's a man here saying that he's a lady." Saavedra then confronted the woman, who eventually came out of the bathroom in a black hoodie and was escorted out of the restaurant. As she left the restaurant, Saavedra screamed, "Next time use the men's room." Denny's apologized and called the behavior "disrespectful." (Crystal Hill, "[House candidate livestreams Denny's bathroom over 'man inside saying he's a lady,' video shows.](#)" *The Sacramento Bee*, May 18, 2018.)
3. In May 2018, at a Starbucks in California, the word "beaner" (a racial slur for Mexican people) was printed on the cup of a Latino customer. The customer was out on a coffee run from work; when he returned to work at a nearby restaurant with the cup, his colleague noticed the word on his cup. The colleague called Starbucks to complain about the incident and was told that "their employee couldn't understand what Pedro had told them" then offered her a \$50 gift card. (Nikita Richardson, "[Starbucks Didn't Fix Racism at Its Stores Fast Enough.](#)" *Grub Street*, May 18, 2018.)
4. In May 2018 in a restaurant in New York City, a man berated customers and employees for speaking Spanish and then threatened to call immigration officials. According to a video recording of the incident, the man says "Your staff is speaking Spanish to customers when they should be speaking English. Every person I listen to: He spoke it, he spoke it, she's speaking *it*. This is America!" He continued to rant to an employee and then threatened to call ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) officials saying, "My guess is they're not documented. So my next call is to ICE to have each one of them kicked out of my country." (Faith Karimi and Eric Levenson, "[Man to Spanish speakers at New York restaurant: 'My next call is to ICE'.](#)" *CNN*, May 17, 2018.)
5. In May 2018 in Florida, a man approached five young men who were eating in a McDonald's parking lot and asked them, "Are you American boys?" The young men, all international students from Egypt who ranged in age from 19 to 23, did not respond. According to the report, the man then flashed his pocket knife, opened and closed it and shouted, "Get the ... out of my country!" using the f-word, and then said, "You don't deserve American food!" At this point the five men decided to leave but the man grabbed a [stun gun](#) from his truck and as the men rushed to get back into their cars, the man charged at them with the stun gun drawn. As the man continued coming at them, they got out of the parking lot and called the police. (Meagan Flynn, "[You don't deserve American food!': Muslim students attacked at McDonald's, police say.](#)" *The Washington Post*, May 25, 2018.)