

BRIDGE Exploring Bias Case Study Approach

Time for this module is approximately 60 minutes, depending on how the session is facilitated.

Preparation

- Prior to facilitating this module, please make sure to complete Module 1, Introduction/Space Setting (approximately 20 minutes, depending on how the session is facilitated). Establishing community agreements is critical.
- Cue video case study about [Ibtihaj Muhammad](#).

Learning Outcomes

- Acknowledge one's own biases toward worldview perspectives
- Articulate ways to disrupt and counteract stated biases
- Assess the role biases play in bridge-building efforts

Introduction (15 minutes)

There is quite a bit of information in this opening section. We suggest you read up a bit on bias so that you feel comfortable talking about it. We also invite you to use your own definitions and understanding of bias and draw upon other trainings you've led around similar topics.

Tell participants: It's important to clearly define the challenges that prevent people of different worldviews from engaging with one another. Often people carry biases toward those of different worldviews (and sometimes their own). We're going to spend some time discussing biases in general which will hopefully help us begin to interrogate our own biases.

We all have biases: they are the result of many things, including where and around whom we grow up, the messages we receive from our sources of information, and the encounters we have with people different from us throughout our lives. Research shows that most people pick up on the biases of others and internalize them when they are very young. Our biases are not our fault, but they are our responsibility.

Biases can be both positive and negative, but always favor an individual or group above another.

Tell participants: A bias, in the most rudimentary sense, is a cognitive shortcut—a way to create a definition based on small pieces of information.

In the dictionary bias is defined as “the action of supporting or opposing a particular person or thing in an unfair way, and allowing personal opinions to influence one’s judgment”.¹

Ask participants:

- What are some ways that bias can manifest in our day to day interactions and decision-making?
- In other words, are there people or groups that we select toward or away from in terms of our friendship, our support, etc.?
- What kinds of things inform the biases we carry?

Exercise: Case Study (30 minutes)

Story of [Ibtihaj Muhammad](#), the first American Olympian to wear the Muslim Hijab in competition.

Tell participants: Storytelling is a powerful way to build understanding. It also reveals the biases that people of different worldview encounter every day. This video is a story of the Olympic fencer Ibtihaj Muhammad, who competed for the United States and won a bronze medal at the 2016 Games. Take note of the challenges she has faced as a Muslim woman who covers and how the biases of others brought about those challenges.

Watch the video (12 minutes)

¹ Oxford University Online Dictionary.

Debrief (15 Minutes)

Ask participants:

- What stories did Ibtihaj share about her experiences as an athlete and as a Muslim?
- What kinds of biases do you think informed the ways people interacted with Ibtihaj?
- From where do you think these biases arise for people who hold them?
- Can you see any parallels between Ibtihaj's experiences and your own?
- How can we work to avoid marginalizing people because of their religious observances?

Discussion (15 Minutes)

Tell participants: As I said before, biases come from many places and they are our responsibility to be aware of and counteract whenever possible. Being aware of the existence of bias is one step, but the next step is understanding your own personal biases against particular worldviews. Take five minutes now and write down some personal reflections on what personal biases you think you might hold and what experiences you may have had that helped shape those biases. (Pause for 5 minutes to allow for silent reflection).

Ask participants the following reflection questions, pausing for conversation between each:

- How can we work to counter the biases we carry?
- How can our awareness of our biases toward certain worldview groups benefit your student relationships?
- Do you have an experience of recognizing and disrupting one of your other existing biases? What have you learned from that experience?
- Do you think the field of higher education or your college campus holds any particular biases toward/against worldview identity groups? Do you think there are worldview groups who feel welcome or less welcome in your campus community?

Potential Answers:

- Recognize them and interrupt our internal narratives
- Challenge generalizations about entire groups
- Build relationships with individuals

If you are ending the entire session here...

Tell participants: Thank you so much for your participation today! I will be sending a follow-up email that includes a link to a survey so you can provide feedback about your experience and how this workshop could be strengthened in the future. We really appreciate your input, so thank you for your time in advance. I'll also include some followup resources to support your continued engagement with worldview identity, and don't hesitate to be in touch to continue the conversation about how you can incorporate this into your daily work. Thanks again!