

BRIDGE Exploring Bias Personal Reflection

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.
- Go through the journal reflection exercise once yourself to ensure that you have a clear understanding of the activity and how to explain it. This will help you clarify the aims and allow you to give examples to participants as you guide them through the process.

Learning Outcomes

- Acknowledge one's own biases towards worldview perspectives
- Articulate ways to disrupt and counteract stated biases
- Assess the role that 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?

Exploring Personal Biases Activity

Be sure to invite participants into this exercise as far as they feel comfortable doing so. They can complete the activity in different ways. They can reflect on a bias they know that they have toward a certain group, or they can reflect on a bias that they have encountered about their own worldview (this requires that they put themselves in the shoes of the other). Tell participants: Take ten minutes for the following exercise.²

¹ Oxford University Online Dictionary.

² Adapted from Cook Ross Unconscious Bias Workbook.

<http://shop.cookross.com/docs/UnconsciousBiasWorkbookSample.pdf>.

Journal Exercise (10 minutes)

Get out a sheet of paper and divide the sheet into four quadrants:

<i>Things you were told (either explicitly or implicitly) about a particular worldview</i>	<i>Your feelings about what you were told</i>
<i>Times when you felt what you were told was true of that worldview</i>	<i>Times when you felt what you were told was untrue/incomplete</i>

Continue: Take a few minutes to fill out your chart as best you can from your own experience. You can offer as many examples as you like. The purpose is to understand what we carry with us, not to assign blame or to berate ourselves. You will not be expected to share this.

Now that you have completed your chart, please turn the sheet over and write down a time you acted on these ideas- a time you favored an individual or group over another.

Interactive Exercise (25 minutes)

Tell participants: Let's take some time to reflect on how we reacted to the biases we either encounter or witness. Imagine the room is a map of the world. North-South-East-West are the directions in each corner of the room. I'm going to offer you a series of questions; position yourself on the map nearest the option that resonates with you the most. Feel free to place yourself between corners if you find yourself feeling that way.

First, think of a time when you witnessed someone act in a biased way toward another. Did you:

- (North) Immediately speak out about what you observed?
- (East) Notice that the bias was expressed but didn't know how to respond in the moment?
- (West) Say nothing in the moment but bring it up later?
- (South) Say nothing?

Pause for a brief discussion about where people are standing. Invite folks to reflect on WHY they reacted the way they did. They don't have to describe the situation, only their response to it.

Now think of a time when you experienced a bias personally. Did you:

- (North) Immediately speak out about what you observed?
- (East) Notice that the bias was expressed but didn't know how to respond in the moment?
- (West) Say nothing in the moment but bring it up later?
- (South) Say nothing?

Ask participants: Why might your response be different in this scenario than when you witnessed a bias, rather than being on the receiving end?

Discussion (15 minutes)

Thank you for your engagement in this reflection. Understanding bias is an essential but difficult element of engaging identities of all kinds, including worldview identity.

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

- What are your personal take-aways from these reflection exercises?
- Have you discovered ways to identify and counteract your own biases, either through this exercise or in other parts of your life?
- How do you view your responsibilities to disrupt your own biases?
- How do you view your responsibilities to disrupt biases when you encounter them in others?

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 follow-up resources to support your continued engagement with worldview. Lastly, please don't hesitate to be in touch and consider me a thought partner for incorporating worldview into your daily work. Thanks again!