Administrator Academy #1451
Teacher Evaluator Competency Skill Building
Assessing Danielson Domains 1 & 4

Materials Developed by:
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Most of us like to think that we are in control of our actions. Turns out, your brain can be a big jerk, and you are susceptible to a large list of biases and
reactions that can hold you back from acting objectively. Luckily, some good social psychology books (spurred on by well-research papers and experiments!) have revealed a large amount of these biases to the common reader.

Here are five notorious social biases and the ways that you can recognize them and react.

**Fundamental Attribution Error**

This is a very insidious bias that we all fall victim to from time-to-time.

The calling card of the fundamental attribution error is when we place a large amount of emphasis on **situational** explanations when rationalizing when things happen to us, but we use **personality-based** explanations when rationalizing what happens to others.

As an example:

If Alice saw Bob trip over a rock and fall, Alice might consider Bob to be clumsy or careless (personal/dispositional).

If Alice tripped over the same rock herself, she would be more likely to blame the placement of the rock (situational).

First uncovered by the classic study *The attribution of attitudes*, there are STILL no concrete explanations to explain its occurrence.

Some of the more common reasons cited include:

- The just-world phenomenon: our brains are naturally inclined to have a belief that the world is balanced or "fair", and that things that happen to
others happen for a reason. While we often see other people this way, we have a tendency to see ourselves as "victims" instead.

- **Salience of the actor**: individuals capture our attention, so when observing their situation, we are focused on them, when observing our own situation, we focus on the environment.

- **Automaticity & processing**: we often process things on a subconscious level, and it's often easier for our brain to wave away a situation as happening "just because they deserve it" rather than looking at the circumstances.

**Dealing with it**: Unfortunately, there isn't much beyond an agreed list of "best practices" when it comes to dealing with the fundamental attribution error (it's that pervasive!). The best I've got for you is to remind yourself of the old adage of, "Walking a mile in someone's shoes," and determining if the situation is playing a major role in the event.

For instance, if a beginner makes a mistake, recall a time when you were a beginner yourself at the same activity or another; it's likely that your nervousness, inexperience, and other outside factors caused you to make some errors as well.

**Halo Effect**

The Halo effect is an [attributional bias](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attribution_error) where our brain makes judgements about the character or competency of others based off of our general impression of them. In some cases, it can be viewed as a form of [social proof](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_proof).
The problem occurs when these impressions are wrong, and since they are often based off of superficial judgements (such as if the person is attractive to us), we can be wrong quite often.

What is also worrisome is that this bias seems to be present even at the highest levels of society in realms where objectivity should rule. In fact, it's been shown that on average, attractive people serve shorter prison sentences than others who were convicted of similar crimes.

**Dealing with it:** The most important way to battle against this bias is to try and detach yourself from the person at hand and to take the actions in as much of a "vacuum" as you are able.

If the same action were committed by someone whom you didn't admire, would it impact you the same way? We have a tendency to get swept up in the stories of others, so ask yourself if the "mystique" about someone was gone, would you perceive their actions differently?

It's important to ask yourself these questions when trying to objectively evaluate the actions of someone who may have left a strong impression on you or is someone who you truly respect: those qualities don't always lead to the person being right.

**Naive Cynicism**

The "naive cynicism" bias occurs quite often, even in the most trusting of people.

It states that people are, on average, likely to assume that others have more of an egocentric bias than themselves. This means that people believe that others are more likely to be egocentric than themselves when dealing with people.
We have data to show that this is not the case (statistically speaking), such as how Malcom Gladwell's *Blink* showed that most people do not sue their doctors when injured due to negligence, despite the often pervasive idea that patients are always taking advantage of malpractice in this manner.

In one series of experiments, groups including married couples, video game players, darts players and debaters were asked how often they were responsible for good or bad events relative to a partner.

Participants evenly apportioned themselves for both good and bad events, but expected their partner to claim more responsibility for good events than bad events than they actually did.

**Dealing with it:** The important thing to remember about this bias is that it's more of an outlook on others. While circumstance often plays a huge role in people's outlook on the world (those born in a crowded, crime-ridden city may have different views on other people than those who grew up in a quiet suburb), but it's important to remember that there are a LOT of people in the world and that, on average, most people evaluate situations in the same fashion that you do.

People by and large will give credit where it's due, and you should try to react to situations where you have some sort of inclination that the opposite will happen, not just assume that everyone is more egocentric than yourself.

**In-Group Favoritism**

This one probably didn't need a study to confirm it, am I right?
It's very obvious to many of us that people favor those who are in "their" group, but there is something a lot scarier about this bias than you may realize: people often form groups from the most trivial distinctions.

In a notorious study called *Social categorization and intergroup behaviour*, social psychologist Henri Tajfel was able to show that people could be placed into groups from meaningless choices (choosing between two painters who they had never met) and then have these choices affect their reactions when it came time to dole out real rewards.

**Think about that.**

People who chose the same painter (again, the choice was meaningless) would then, when queued to deal out real rewards to any participant, chose to FAVOR those who chose the same painter and DISCRIMINATE against those who didn't.

To make matters worse, in a study on customer loyalty programs, consumer researchers showed that people became more loyal to the programs when they knew that they were in a "gold" class and above other people enrolled in the program, showing that meager distinctions of superiority can make people more loyal to a supposed in-group.

Additional studies have shown that things as shallow as similar purchases can trigger the effect. So if you meet someone and they also own some tennis racquets, terrariums, a pair of Crocs, or a *Dolphin Power Boat* (yes, that's real), you are susceptible to in-group favoritism rearing its ugly head. Meeting someone with a common item, such as a guy who also wears pants, probably won't trigger the effect, or at least I hope so...
Dealing with it: This (as with all of these biases) is tough to handle, but this one is especially tricky because it can encounter it due to the actions of others. To maintain our own objectivity, the best way is to envision an interaction without group constructs in place.

If this or that person weren't connected with you in some way, would you still feel the same about their actions? Conversely, if someone from the "other team" were on your side, would their actions be different in your eyes? It's important to consider these distinctions when evaluating individual situations because, as the research shows, we can be heavily influenced by them.

Dunning-Kruger Effect

No list would be complete without this one.

The Dunning-Kruger effect states that unskilled individuals are likely to suffer from illusory superiority, mistakenly rating their ability much higher than average. Conversely, those who are highly competent may have feelings of inferiority, because they believe everybody else has the same competency that they do.

According to Charles Darwin:

"Ignorance more frequently begets confidence than does knowledge."

It turns out that he was far more correct than many of us would like to admit.

In some recent research (2008), Dunning & Kruger asserted that individuals who were most likely to suffer from illusory superiority were those who were disinclined to receive feedback from others on their performance. Blocking out of
any critiques allowed them to create a sense of accomplishment that wasn't necessarily true.

**Dealing with it:** Lacking confidence in oneself is just as bad as being overconfident. What then can we do to avoid falling victim to both sides of the Dunning-Kruger effect?

I think that the solution is best addressed in one of my favorite quotes by Ernest Hemingway:

"There is nothing noble in being superior to your fellow man; true nobility is being superior to your former self."

Focusing on improving yourself and not worrying about the performance of others or your skill in relation to them.

It's fine to be competitive, but when you spend too much time analyzing what other people are doing (especially if it's not for a competitive sport or activity), you're just setting yourself up for disappointment as you set goals based on other people's lives rather than your own.

**Over to You**

I'd like to hear from you: which of these social biases do you encounter most often? Do you find yourself getting tricked by any in particular?

5 Ways to Avoid Natural Reactions that Prevent You from Making Good Decisions | Buffer
Gregory Ciotti is the founder of **Sparring Mind**, the blog that takes psychology and persuasive marketing and makes them play nice together. Download his [free e-book](#) on ‘Conversion Psychology’ for more research or follow Greg on [Twitter](#).

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The distinction between clarifying questions and probing questions is very difficult for most people working with protocols. So is the distinction between probing questions and recommendations for action. The basic distinctions are:

**Clarifying Questions** are simple questions of fact. They clarify the dilemma and provide the nuts and bolts so that the participants can ask good probing questions and provide useful feedback later in the protocol. Clarifying questions are for the participants, and should not go beyond the boundaries of the presenter’s dilemma. They have brief, factual answers, and don’t provide any new “food for thought” for the presenter. The litmus test for a clarifying question is: Does the presenter have to think before s/he answers? If so, it’s almost certainly a probing question.

*Some examples of clarifying questions:*
- How much time does the project take?
- How were the students grouped?
- What resources did the students have available for this project?

**Probing Questions** are intended to help the presenter think more deeply about the issue at hand. If a probing question doesn’t have that effect, it is either a clarifying question or a recommendation with an upward inflection at the end. If you find yourself saying “Don’t you think you should …?” you’ve gone beyond probing questions. The presenter often doesn’t have a ready answer to a genuine probing question. *Since probing questions are the hardest to create productively, we offer the following suggestions:*

- Check to see if you have a “right” answer in mind. If so, delete the judgment from the question, or don’t ask it.
- Refer to the presenter’s original question/focus point. What did s/he ask for your help with? Check your probing questions for relevance.
- Check to see if you are asserting your own agenda. If so, return to the presenter’s agenda.
- Sometimes a simple “why...?” asked as an advocate for the presenter’s success can be very effective, as can several why questions asked in a row.
- Think about the concentric circles of comfort, risk and danger. Use these as a barometer. Don’t avoid risk, but don’t push the presenter into the “danger zone.”
- Think of probing questions as being on a continuum, from recommendation to most effective probing question. For example, [on next page — from an actual Consultancy session in which a teacher was trying to figure out why the strongest math students in the class weren’t buying in and doing their best work on what seemed to be interesting math “problems of the week”]:
  1) Could you have students use the rubric to assess their own papers? (recommendation re-stated as a question)
2) What would happen if students used the rubric to assess their own work? (recommendation re-stated as a probing question)
3) What do the students think is an interesting math problem? (good probing question)
4) What would have to change for students to work more for themselves? (better probing question)

In summary, good probing questions:

- are general and widely useful
- don’t place blame on anyone
- allow for multiple responses
- help create a paradigm shift
- empower the person with the dilemma to solve his or her own problem (rather than deferring to someone with greater or different expertise)
- avoid yes/no responses
- are usually brief
- elicit a slow response
- move thinking from reaction to reflection
- encourage taking another party’s perspective

Some final hints for crafting probing questions. Try the following questions and/or question stems. Some of them come from Charlotte Danielson’s Pathwise work, in which she refers to them as “mediational questions.”

- Why do you think this is the case?
- What would have to change in order for…?
- What do you feel is right in your heart?
- What do you wish…?
- What’s another way you might…?
- What would it look like if…?
- What do you think would happen if…?
- How was…different from…?
- What sort of an impact do you think…?
- What criteria did you use to…?
- When have you done/experienced something like this before?
- What might you see happening in your classroom if…?
- How did you decide/determine/conclude…?
- What is your hunch about…?
- What was your intention when…?
- What do you assume to be true about…?
- What is the connection between…and…?
- What if the opposite were true? Then what?
- How might your assumptions about…have influenced how you are thinking about…?
- Why is this such a dilemma for you?

Some Examples of Probing Questions:

- Why is a “stand-and-deliver” format the best way to introduce this concept?
- How do you think your own comfort with the material has influenced your choice of instructional strategies?
- What do the students think is quality work?
- You have observed that this student’s work lacks focus – what makes you say that?
• What would the students involved say about this issue?
• How have your perspectives on current events influenced how you have structured this activity?
• Why aren’t the science teachers involved in planning this unit?
• Why do you think the team hasn’t moved to interdisciplinary curriculum planning?
• What would understanding of this mathematical concept look like? How would you know students have “gotten it”?
• Why did allowing students to create their own study questions cause a problem for you?
• Why do you think the expected outcomes of this unit weren’t communicated to parents?
• What was your intention when you assigned students to oversee the group activity in this assignment?
• What evidence do you have from this student’s work that her ability to reach substantiated conclusions has improved?
• How might your assumptions about the reasons why parents aren’t involved have influenced what you have tried so far?
• How do you think your expectations for students might have influenced their work on this project?
• What do you think would happen if you restated your professional goals as questions?
• What other approaches have you considered for communicating with parents about their children’s progress?
Lesson Plan

**Teacher:** Ms. Regular Education and Ms. Special Education

**Date/Time:** October 1, 1:30

**Grade/Subject:** Fourth grade Co-taught Class

**Common Core for State Standards (IL):**

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

b. Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.

d. Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.

**Specific Outcomes/Objectives for Today’s Lesson:**

Revise the students’ narrative writing to include:

- Specific dialog from the character
- Character’s tone of voice
- Specific actions of the character

**Materials/Resources:**

Good Qualities of Narrative Writing chart

Students will use their own narrative draft which includes dialog of characters.

**Student Information/Groupings/Needs/Differentiation:**

Students with varying abilities and needs, including special education, ADD, and ELL students.

**Lesson Activities and Strategies:**

- Review of good qualities of narrative writing, specifically with WHAT is said, TONE of voice, and ACTIONS of the character.
- Model the editing of the draft narrative to include the qualities above
- Provide guided and independent opportunities for students to edit/enhance their narratives

**Assessment of Learning:**

Increased use of dialog, tone, and actions through the editing process. This will be documented for each student through a checklist containing the concepts to be learned.

**How does this lesson fit into long-term planning for your class?**

This lesson falls toward the end of our fictional writing unit. It also aligns with the reading unit on character reading. This helps to show students the connection between reading and writing in storytelling.