

# Implicit bias and English Wikipedia

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Hello! I'm Jackie Koerner, independent qualitative researcher focused on issues surrounding bias and equality. I am a contributor to English Wikipedia, a visiting scholar at SFSU.

# Session Agenda

- What you'll learn
- Small activity
- Implicit bias information
- Learn how to recognize bias
- Find out what you can do about bias

Here we have our session agenda. To start us off, I will read what we will learn in this session today. We will do a small activity. The small activity isn't anything to be stressed about.

# What you will learn today

You will leave this room and be able to:

- Recall the ways we develop implicit biases
- Identify ways to impact implicit bias in your own life
- Impact implicit bias on Wikipedia

# Embrace Discomfort

Today we will think about our own biases.

This discussion today will make you uncomfortable.

*That's okay.*

When we are uncomfortable, that means growth is happening!

Learning new things can be hard, especially when they tell us more about ourselves.

You do not need to share anything with the group unless you want to. Please do participate in your mind even if you do not want to share.

**Stop trying to be  
good people.**  
*We need real people.*  
-Vernā Myers

Vernā Myers said it best. We all want to be good people. Be honest with yourself. Society will grow only if we grow.

# Small Activity

## **Cats or Dogs?**

How many of you prefer cats?

How many of you prefer dogs?

*\* If you like both cats and dogs,  
pick the one you like the most.*

# Small Activity

Dog people:

what do you think about *cats*?

Cat people:

what do you think about *dogs*?

Examples of the thoughts people might have:

“Oh, cats are so aloof!”

“Dogs are smelly!”

**That was bias.**

**And that's ok.**

**We can disagree.**



# But how can we find common ground?

When people hold beliefs, and they encounter facts counter to their beliefs, it only further polarizes them. So presenting facts to someone who feels differently than you won't change any minds and won't make you any friends. We have to find what is important to you both - what you have in common.

**Perhaps we agree pets  
are good companions?**

Finding common ground will open up the discussion and start the understanding needed to locate the solution.

Another example: vaccines for children. We can all agree we want the best for children. We may disagree on the details, but our intentions come from the same desire.

**This wasn't implicit bias,  
but the method can be  
the same!**

# What is bias?

The stories we make up about people, places, or things, before we really know who or what they are.

Feelings, thoughts, or beliefs you automatically associate with the people, places, or things, without even thinking about it.

# Which bias is which?

**Conscious biases**, when they might be inappropriate, we know we should hide them.

**Implicit biases** are sneaky. You can only see them by looking at your past situations.

Hiding not to be secretive or dishonest but not to be offensive to the other person

# What is Implicit Bias

Implicit bias goes deeper than bias.

Implicit bias is unconscious. It's your default setting.

It's what makes you feel safe. It's what you're afraid of.

It's bias we learn and we don't consciously realize we have.

Sometimes bias is just an unexamined set of defaults, but those can be just as damaging.

Examples of my own bias

Bias from Women's March mom and dad and two mothers (implicit)

Bias about people who voted for Trump (not implicit)

# How is bias a problem?

- Wikipedia's contributors are largely white and male (Cohen; Glott, Schmidt, and Ghosh)
- Perceived authority make combatting bias challenging
- Creates gaps in content  
“Wikipedia is characterized by uneven geographies, uneven directions, and uneven politics...” (Graham, 271)
- We can't possibly quantify it, but it's big.

Sometimes bias is just an unexamined set of defaults, but those can be just as damaging.

# Check Your Bias

When entering into a discussion or topic, first ask yourself, “What are my biases?”

What is my bias about

- this situation?
- this person?
- this topic?

Biases are the reactions and thoughts we have first in a situation. They're our own individual default setting.

Biases can come up with emotions. Think about when you were mad about something or scared. What biases did you feel, even if just for a moment.



# Practice!

- **Ask questions**  
Written text is always hard to decipher without voice and facial expressions to give it context.
- **Follow the 24-hour rule**  
Don't respond immediately. Emotions are often fueled by bias. Pause and reflect.
- **Write in a reflexive journal**  
Researchers do this to help reveal any bias that may be affecting the project!

# Practice!

- **Challenge bias**  
Be civil. No one likes hearing they were wrong.
- **Be open to being challenged**  
We make mistakes. Sometimes we think with our bias and do not realize it.
- **Be an advocate**  
Bring attention to groups which might be excluded due to bias. Tell others how this bias affects inclusion.

Respond to people. This is a caring act. They care about you and other people by bringing your attention to your bias

# Your Challenge:

Find topics that need help becoming unbiased.

Check out the talk pages.

Ask questions. Be interested. Learn about the concerns.

Really connect on a human level.

Work to find common ground.

Changing our bias takes time, but just like everything else we do, the more we do it, the easier it gets. Go try something new. Join a group or conversation you might not normally. Talk to someone and get to know them on a human level.

# Bias examples

**When are additional voices eligible for inclusion in voice actor articles?**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia\\_talk:WikiProject\\_Anime\\_and\\_manga](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia_talk:WikiProject_Anime_and_manga)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Video\\_game\\_controversies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Video_game_controversies)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Guide\\_to\\_addressing\\_bias](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Guide_to_addressing_bias)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Catalan\\_independence\\_referendum,\\_2017](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Catalan_independence_referendum,_2017)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Articles\\_for\\_deletion/Jorja\\_Smith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Articles_for_deletion/Jorja_Smith)

This past week I looked at the recent changes on English Wikipedia and found some examples of implicit bias to give to you. I tried to stay away from examples of bias where people may feel triggered. These examples have to do with relevance, non-US politics, BLP, and sources. Notice there is even an essay titled “Guide to Addressing Bias”! I’ll upload this presentation and the notes to commons so you may visit the examples.

# Thank you!

I would love to connect with you!

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Thank you for coming to this session! I hope the information will be useful for you.

I enjoy learning and connecting on projects. I would love to continue this conversation or start a new one. You can contact me on my website [jackiekoerner.com](http://jackiekoerner.com), on-wiki I'm Jackiekoerner, and on Twitter I'm JackieK. Enjoy the celebration!

# References

- Cohen, Noam. "Define Gender Gap? Look Up Wikipedia's Contributor List." *The New York Times*. The New York Times Co., 30 Jan. 2011. Web. 5 Mar. 2014.
- Glott, Ruediger, Schmidt, Philipp, and Rishab Ghosh. "Wikipedia Survey Overview." *UNU-MERIT*. Wikimedia Foundation, Mar. 2010. Web. 7 Feb. 2015.
- Graham, Mark. "Wiki Space: Palimpsests and the Politics of Exclusion." *Critical Point of View: A Wikipedia Reader*. Eds. Greet Lovink and Nathaniel Tkacz. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2011. 269-282. Web. 4 Mar. 2014.

Want more material about Wikipedia and bias? I'd be glad to give you suggestions or more resources, or provide those materials if you cannot access them. Just let me know!