

Biases and Career Choices



Unit
What I Want for Myself



Length
75 Minutes

About This Lesson

To build awareness of workplace biases that may be influencing their own decisions, students will explore common career biases, learn how bias can influence career choices, and reflect on the bias(es) that may have influenced their initial opinion of a career.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- identify biases of gender, ethnicity, ability, and class in the workplace
- explore how biases can influence career choices
- reflect on the bias(es) that may have influenced their initial opinion of a career

Driving Question

How do biases influence my career decisions?

Future-Ready Skills

Collaboration

Critical Thinking

Research

Lesson Breakdown

30
minutes

Activity 1 - Career Trailblazers

In this activity, students will work in small groups to explore one common career bias and share the story of one trailblazing hero who overcame the odds.

25
minutes

Activity 2 - Xello Lesson: Biases and Career Choices

Direct students to complete the Xello lesson titled **Biases and Career Choices** to learn how bias can influence career choices and explore assumptions and biases related to careers.

20
minutes

Activity 3 - Non-Traditional Career Matches

In this activity, students will revisit their career matches to reflect on the bias(es) that may have influenced their initial opinion of a career and identify at least one strategy that could help them pursue the career if they choose.



Xello Entry Point

Students can dive right into the Xello lesson, but it's recommended that they have completed the first phase of **Matchmaker** prior to Activity 3.

Vocabulary

- Bias
- Race
- Class
- Ability
- Gender

Ontario Career Studies

B2.2 identify factors and conditions other than an individual's strengths, interests, and needs that inform education and career/life choices, and explain which of these factors may be influencing their own decisions

Activity 1 - Career Trailblazers



Unit
What I Want for Myself



Length
30 Minutes

Inquiry Prompts

- What career-related biases exist today?
- How do career-related biases impact career choices?
- How have others overcome a career-related bias?

Teaching Strategies

In this activity, students will work in small groups to explore one common career bias and share the story of one trailblazing hero who overcame the odds.

- 1 Create a minimum of 4 groups, 1 for each common career-related bias. You may want to create more groups to ensure everyone participates in the activity.
- 2 Provide each group with 1 career-related bias and definition and check their understanding of the bias they've been assigned.
 - **Class Bias:** harmful ideas based on a person's wealth or social status.
 - **Race Bias:** harmful ideas based on a person's physical traits, culture, nationality, or ethnicity.
 - **Gender Bias:** harmful ideas based on a person's gender.
 - **Ability Bias:** harmful ideas based on a person's perceived mental or physical abilities.
- 3 Determine how your students will share their career trailblazer's story (ie. a Google Doc that can be virtually shared, on chart paper for an in-class gallery walk, or on a presentation deck that can be displayed in class or online).
- 4 Provide the [instructions](#) on the next page to your students.

Materials Required

- [Student Instructions](#)
- Computer or tablet with internet access
- Collaborative space for small group work

Artifacts

Students will work in small groups to share back a story about one career trailblazer who overcame a common career bias to succeed in their profession.



Culminating Project Tip

Add your students' questions about career biases to the discussion guide. For example: How would you describe your workplace's culture?

Continued on next page

Career Trailblazers

Student Instructions

It's natural to make assumptions about careers. But it's also important to know that the ideas and biases we have about fields of work can have an impact on our career decisions. Although laws have been written to combat biased hiring practices it does not mean the stereotypes or assumptions no longer exist. In this activity you will work as a team to share the story of one individual who overcame the odds in their field of work.

- 1 Review the career-related bias your group has been assigned. Can you think of a recent news story on this topic?
- 2 As a group, brainstorm a list of careers you think are or have been impacted by this career-related bias. Set a timer for 4 minutes for the brainstorm.
- 3 Review the list as a group, and discuss the career-related bias your group has been assigned:
 - **Class Bias:** Who is notably famous for overcoming poverty or contradicting their social status to succeed in this career?
 - **Race Bias:** Who is notably famous for overcoming their physical traits, culture, nationality, or ethnicity to succeed in this career? Who was the first of their race to be represented in this profession?
 - **Gender Bias:** Who is notably famous for being the first of their gender in this career field?
 - **Ability Bias:** Who is notably famous for overcoming their perceived mental or physical abilities to succeed in this profession?
- 4 Select 1 career trailblazer from your discussion who you'll research the following information on to share back to the rest of the class:
 - **Who** is your career trailblazer and what bias did they break?
 - **Why** was it thought to be unlikely for them to succeed in this career?
 - **How** did they achieve their professional success? What strategies did they use to overcome the odds?

Activity 3 - Non-Traditional Career Matches



Unit
What I Want for Myself



Length
20 Minutes

Inquiry Prompts

- Are there unfair biases surrounding careers I'm interested in?
- Has an assumption I've made affected my opinion on a career?
- Do I think I would be swayed by someone else's opinions?
- Can I think of a career-related bias I have?

Teaching Strategies

In this activity, students will revisit their career matches to reflect on the bias(es) that may have influenced their initial opinion of a career and identify at least one strategy that could help them pursue the career if they choose. It is important they have completed at least the first phase of **Matchmaker** prior to this activity.

- 1 Provide the [instructions](#) on the next page to your students.

Materials Required

- [Student Instructions](#)
- Computer or tablet with internet access

Artifacts

Students will save one career they'd discounted as an option for themselves and reflect on the career-related bias(es) that may have influenced their initial opinion in the **My Notes** card of the career profile.



Culminating Project Tip

Add your students' questions about career biases to the discussion guide. For example: How would you describe your workplace's culture?

Continued on next page

Non-Traditional Career Matches

Student Instructions

After you completed the first phase of Xello's **Matchmaker** career assessment were you surprised by any matches? What first came to mind when you saw some matches? **Matchmaker** is not meant to predict or identify your future path, but rather introduce you to professions you may not have considered before, expanding your career choices rather than limiting them.

- 1 In Xello, navigate to **Explore Careers** to review your career matches. You can sort the careers by your assessment results. As you look over the list of careers are there any you've discounted for yourself? Did you think, "even if I wanted to consider it an option I couldn't"?
- 2 Select a career you've discounted for yourself. Not one that clashes with your values, but one that you think you just don't have a chance succeeding at. Think about what stopped you from saving this career.
- 3 Review the career profile and although you may be skeptical as a possible career choice for yourself, save it anyways, as you can always change how you feel about it:
 - It's a possibility
 - Not sure it's a good fit
 - Definitely not for me
- 4 After identifying how you feel about it, access the **My Notes** card at the top of the career profile to respond to the following questions:
 - What assumption did you have about this career prior to reading the career profile? or How does TV tend to portray this career? or What unfair biases surround this career?
 - Did any of the information in the career profile surprise you? Explain.
 - If you had a friend who was interested in pursuing this career, but the career-related bias was stacked against them, what strategy would you suggest they explore to help them break down the barrier (ex. Apply for a scholarship/bursary, enroll in a related high school course, seek out a mentor in the field, or complete a job shadow placement) and explain why this would be a good strategy for them.