Communicating Respectfully in a Diverse World

Cynthia Werner
Professor of Anthropology (College of Liberal Arts) and Director of ADVANCE (Office of the Dean of Faculties)
Outline

• Key Definitions.
• Video.
  • Breakout Room Discussion
• Why People Stay Silent
• Skills Practice
  • Breakout Room Discussion
• Concluding Remarks
Learning Objectives

• After completing this workshop, you should be able to:

(1) Understand the impact of stereotypes and biased statements, even when casually said.

(2) Recognize the most common reasons that people stay silent in the face of bias and stereotypes.

(3) Identify skills for speaking up against stereotypes without blame or guilt.
Definitions

- **Stereotype**: an oversimplified image or statement applied to a whole group, without regard for the individual; cognitive domain.

- **Bias**: a predisposition to see events, people, or items in a positive or negative way; attitude or belief.
Definitions (cont)

• Stereotypes can be explicit or implicit.
  • Explicit: consciously and deliberately maintained.
  • Implicit: unconscious linkages that are automatically activated.

• Examples with height and the relationship with power and leadership.*


"No, where are you REALLY FROM?"

"You don’t act like a normal black person, ya' know?"

"Was your brother in a gang?"
"Why do you sound White?"

"What are you?" is NOT a cute introduction.

Well you don’t look Indian...
The University as a Diverse Community

• Although universities like Texas A&M are places that generally respect and embrace a diverse views and experiences...
  • Students, faculty, and staff all have stereotypes and biases

• And, sometimes people working in university settings say things, intentionally or unintentionally, that may be hurtful to some individuals
Stereotypes and Bias on Campus

Unfortunately, universities are not free of stereotypes and bias.

It is not uncommon for egregious cases to make it into the news.
Closer to Home

• Black Lives Matter Movement has brought greater awareness to the experiences of Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color students at Texas A&M

• #RacismAtTAMUFeelsLike
• #hateisthehiddencorevalue

• Protests to remove the Sul Ross statue
An Important Note....
More Definitions

• **Micro-Aggressions** – small and daily verbal or behavioral actions, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate a prejudiced view towards members of a group

  • Micro-Aggressions add up quickly, and help explain why a person might seem “sensitive” to one well-intended comment
Stereotypes and Student Experiences

• Negative stereotypes can impede the performance of students who often live up to the low expectations set for them.
  • Ex. Women struggle with math, and lose interest, because they hear messages that women aren’t good at math

• In a survey at UC-Berkeley, about a quarter of Berkeley’s students, faculty members, and staff members said that they had experienced conduct that they considered “exclusionary, intimidating or hostile.”

• Claude Steele, *Whistling Vivaldi: And Other Clues to How Stereotypes Affect Us* (2010)
Why Speak Up?

Silent collusion versus ally behavior.

“The simply act of naming a bias as such or objecting to it on the spot establishes a social atmosphere that discourages it: saying nothing serves to condone it.” – Daniel Goleman.
Impact of Stereotypes
Breakout Room Discussion

1. How does this video relate to you? Have you been the recipient or target of a stereotype?

2. Which situations are most difficult for you? What is the impact of sitting silent?

3. Have you used any of these techniques before? If so, share your experience (whether it was good or bad).
Review: Six Techniques for Speaking Up

Assume good intent and explain impact
Ask a question
Interrupt and redirect
Make it individual
Broaden to university human behavior
Say “ouch!”
Silent Collusion

• When a person goes along with something by remaining silent
• Silence is perceived as agreeing

“We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people.”

– Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Why We Can’t Wait (Letter from Birmingham Jail)
Passive Bystander vs. Pro-Active Ally?

- **Bystander** – refers to a person who is present, but not involved; chance spectator; onlooker

- **Passive Bystander** – witnesses a negative situation, but remains silent

- **Pro-Active Ally** – witnesses a negative situation, and responds by taking action to address the situation
Examples of Techniques for Pro-Active Allies

• Ask a Question

• Appeal to Empathy

• Interrupt & Redirect

• Make it Individual/Personal
Skills Practice
Other Ways to “Do Something”

• **Be An Ally.** Seek out programs and resources that will teach you to be an effective advocate for diversity and social justice.

  diversity.tamu.edu – Programs & resources
  greendot.tamu.edu – Bystander Intervention Training

• **Report Hate or Concerning Behavior.** Report anonymously or confidentially.

  stophate.tamu.edu – Online reporting system for hate/bias incidents
  tellsomebody.tamu.edu – Online Reporting system for concerning behavior

• **Engage in Self Care.** If you are impacted, remember to take actions to protect your own physical, mental, and emotional well-being.
Reflection

• What are the key points you learned from this workshop?

• How can you apply this material to your personal or work life?
Learning Outcomes (Review)

• Having completed this session, you should now be able to:

(1) Understand the impact of stereotypes and biased statements, even when casually said.

(2) Recognize the most common reasons that people stay silent in the face of bias and stereotypes.

(3) Identify skills for speaking up against stereotypes without blame or guilt.