Identifying and Challenging Stereotypes:  
An Experiential Activity

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Agenda

- Identity
- In-groups/Out-groups
- Generalisations and Stereotypes
- Impact on Cross Cultural Communication
- Hierocles - Circles of Identity
- Activity
- De-brief of Activity
- Overcoming Stereotypes
Identity

- The way we think about ourselves are our identities
- Social Identity - we identify ourselves in terms of groups to which we belong

A group or social category to which we consciously belong is our membership group

- Belonging – a sense of connectedness to a particular place. You feel comfortable and define yourself by the qualities, symbols and values of that place.
- What does it mean to belong? – Highly Subjective
- Provides context of where people “come from”? 
Socialization into In-groups and Out-groups

- We are socialised to interact with people who reflect our ethnic heritage, religion, social class, etc – in-groups
- The groups with whom we are taught not to associate with are the out-groups (Gudykunst and Kim 1997).
- Natural for this distinction to be made by all societies (Brewer and Campbell 1976).
- In-group attitude to out-group members passed on to children from adults and reinforced by peer group interaction.
- Who is a member or non-member of an in/out-group may vary according to context and situation.
Feelings of warmth towards others

- Perception of individuals and groups - underpinned by the degree of warmth that these individuals or groups invoke in us.

- Warmth is characterised by such traits as morality, trustworthiness, sincerity, kindness, and friendliness.

- Judgement of warmth (+ve or –ve) results in an emotional and behavioural reaction to the specific group
  - Evolved as a result of the social structures and relationships evident in a community.
  - Helps interpret and perceive events quite instantaneously when meeting members of that group.
  - Helps establish interpersonal markers to understand our relationships and interactions with others (Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick 2008).
Distinguishing positive and negative

- Where a group is seen positive and warm, the group and information about that group generally elicits positive global evaluations, whereas negative cold information elicits negative evaluations of that group (Cuddy, Fiske and Glick, 2008)

- In a similar vein Deaux (1991) argues that we can perceive and split social identities such as ethnic groups, gender, disability, age, social class, between desirable and undesirable ones.
Generalisation

- Talking in all encompassing terms about a group of people without regard to the true characteristics of that group or individuals belonging to that group.
- A generalisation taken and applied in every case is a stereotype.

Stereotyping

- taking images/qualities of people belonging to a group and saying individual members of that group have those qualities. May be based on ethnic identity, occupation, age, sex etc.
- Stereotyping is essential and normal when faced with a new situation. Why?
Stereotyping of In/Out-groups

- Involves an in-group and out-group.
- Our stereotypes influence the way we process information.
- We remember favourable information about in-groups and more unfavourable about out-groups.
- See greater difference in in-group than out-group – “they are all the same”.
- Differences within the stereotyped out-group are often not acknowledged.
- Stereotypes do not increase the accuracy of our predictions.
Stereotypes

- Distinction is important – communication with individuals belonging to groups perceived negatively or as undesirable can be problematic as our biases against such groups influence the way we communicate with them (Gudykunst and Kim 1997).
- Can lead to and help perpetuate stereotypical thinking about people who belong to these ‘negative’ groups.
- Stereotypes are exaggerated generalizations. Based on our beliefs regarding the characteristics, attributes and behaviors of members of a particular group. Groups can include those of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and sexual orientation etc.
- Stereotypical perceptions which can be long lasting (Hilton and von Hippel 1996)
- Evidence suggests that people seek to maintain and hold on to stereotypical notions about different groups especially minority groups in society (Allport 1954, Kunda and Oleson, 1995).
- Stereotypes can be either positive or negative.
- Where negative stereotypes have been shown to lead to prejudicial and subsequently to discriminatory behavior being exhibited against such groups (Aguirre and Turner 2001).
Cross-Cultural Communication

- Addressing this issue is especially important for individuals involved or likely to be involved in cross-cultural interaction
  - e.g. business executives, managers, students, travelers, and other sojourners - actually all of us
- Negatives perceptions of people seen as ‘undesirable’ act as barriers to effective cross-cultural communication (Gudykunst and Kim 1997).
Classroom Activity

- Try to get students to understand that when communicating with individuals from minority groups or out-groups we need to move beyond the stereotype.
- We need to be aware of our own biases and seek to manage these biases when we communicate with others (Gudykunst and Kim 1997).
- As suggested by Matsumoto and Juang “recognizing stereotypic attitudes in one’s own thinking helps individuals understand the falability of stereotypes” (2004:86).
Hierocles – Circles of Identity

- Issue of self preservation – aware of ourselves in relation to others.
- Individuals inhabit the – oikos – (Household)
- Familiarity develops over long time among those who inhabit the oikos (physical space)
- Hierocles - individuals consist of a series of circles:
  - first circle is the human mind,
  - immediate family,
  - extended family,
  - local community.
  - community of neighbouring towns,
  - your country,
  - entire human race.
• Human affection strongest at the centre weakens as it radiates out

• Hierocles - social relations will be improved if we treat each group closer to us than what it really is.

• Goal is to reduce the distance of each group of people to ourselves
  - i.e. draw the circles in towards the centre, transferring people to the inner circles

• Our task, according to Hierocles is to make all human beings part of our concern. Seeing ourselves as world citizens (Cosmopolitan Identity)
Debriefing the Activity

- Did you have groups in both the positive and negative realm?
- Why were group considered positive or negative?
- What was it about the groups that elicited positive or negative feelings.
- How well do you know these groups?
- Personal experience, have heard of them, socialised about this group through family, school society, media.
- Do you think it is fair to have these attitudes?
- Provide feedback to students on the class attitudes.
Link between stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination

- Negative Stereotype:
  - Members of Group A are dirty, hostile and lazy

- Prejudiced Attitude:
  - I don’t like As

- Discrimination:
  - I prefer to avoid As, as an employer I will not employ As in my company  
    (Smith, 1994)
How to avoid Stereotypes

- Move beyond the stereotype to consider the individual. Not all members of the group fit the stereotype. Only 28-37% of people in a culture exhibit traits attributed to them (Wallace, 1952).

- Increase the complexity of our stereotype - continually readjusting ones conceptual map of the other culture in the light of new evidence (Sebenius 2002)

- Experience helps modify the explanatory categories. Categories should only be used as a guideline not as a hard and fast rule.

- Try to avoid pre-conceived attitudes to individuals and groups of people which you have developed over time.
WARNING!!
Caveat for Cross-Cultural Communication and Negotiation

- Over-reliance on the stereotype
  (Sebenius 2002)