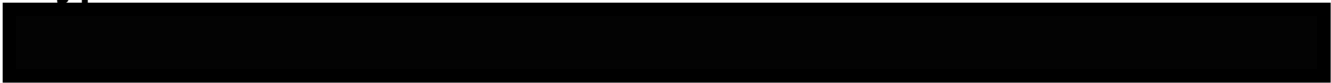


Why do we stereotype?



Project Description

Research and Teach about an Issue in Multicultural Education

We define stereotyping as a generalization about a group of people whereby we attribute a defined set of characteristics to this group based on their appearance or our assumptions. Why do we form opinions about other people based on their appearance, posture, language, and so on? We do this because different factors contribute to why people stereotype each other. We stereotype people when we are unable or unwilling to obtain all of the information we need to make a fair judgement about people or situations. In the absence of the so called 'total picture,' to stereotype people in many cases allow us to 'fill in the missing pieces of information." Our society often innocently creates and perpetuates stereotypes, but these stereotypes often lead to unfair discrimination and persecution when the person been stereotype is unfavorable. For example, if we are walking through a park late at night and encounter three senior citizens wearing fur coats and walking with canes, we may not feel as threatened as if we were met by three high school-aged boys wearing hoodies. These generalizations root from our experiences we have had ourselves, read in books, and magazines, seen in movies or television, or have had related to us by friends and family. In many cases, these stereotypical generalizations are reasonably accurate. Yet in virtually, every case we are resorting to is prejudice by ascribing characteristics about a person based on appearance, without knowledge of the total facts. By stereotyping, we assume that a person or a group of certain characteristics. quite often, we have stereotyped a person who might be a member of a group with which we have not had firsthand contact with before.

Anyone who understands or studies the social development of children and young people knows that attitudes, values, and self-esteem are well developed by the mid-teen years, or even earlier. What young people see and hear in the media helps them to figure out how the world works and who and what is valued in society. "The media has a lot of power to endorse stereotypes because they get information that we don't have, so we tend to believe them".
(*Bebrave*)

When people judge people and groups based on our prejudices and stereotypes and treat them differently, we are discriminating them based on no fact. This discrimination can take many forms. We may create subtle or overt pressures which will discourage persons of certain minority groups from living in a neighborhood. Women and minorities have been victimized by discrimination in employment, education, and social services. We may shy away from people with a history of mental illness because we are afraid they may harm us. Women and minorities are often excluded from high echelon positions in the business world. Sometimes people start discriminating against a group of people after bad experiences. For example, the 9/11 incident. If we could abandon our discriminatory judgement and learn to appraise by what they are as individuals, the world would be a much better place (*Bebrave*)

Stereotyping matters especially when problems or conflicts happen. Groups tend to define themselves according to who they are and who they are not. And "others", especially "enemies" or "opponents" are often viewed in very negative ways. The opponent is expected to be aggressive, self-serving, and deceitful, for example, while people in one's own group are seen in generally positive ways but if problems occur, blame is often placed on "the enemy" while one's own contribution to the problem is ignored. For example, problems may be attributed to the opponent's lack of cooperativeness, not one's own; or the enemy's aggressiveness, not their fear of one's own aggressive stance. Even similarities between parties can be viewed differently: one's own competitiveness may be seen in a positive light as "tough, effective, negotiating," while the opponent's competitive actions are seen as "hostile and deceptive." (*Beyond Intractability*)

There is a positive side to stereotyping. Stereotypes are basically generalizations that are made about groups. Such generalizations are necessary: in order to be able to interact effectively, we must have some idea of what people are likely to be like, which behaviors will be considered acceptable, and which not. For example, people in low-context cultures are said to be more individualistic, their communication more overt, depending less on context and shared understanding. High context cultures are more group orientated. Their communication is more contextually based, depending more on shared understanding and inferences. These generalizations are stereotypes. They allow us to put people into a category, according to the group they belong to, and make inferences about how they will behave based on that grouping. There will still be differences between individuals from one culture, and with the same individual in different situations. But the stereotype is reasonably accurate, so it is useful. Stereotypes are only a problem when they are inaccurate, especially when those inaccuracies are negative and hostile.

What can be done to deal with negative stereotypes: the key to reversing negative stereotypes is to contradict them, in direct interactions between people, in the media, and through education. Between the individuals: once people get to know a person from "the other side," they are often will determine that the other is not nearly as bad as they originally had assumed. Even when people learn that they share fear or sadness, they can begin to understand each other more. When they come to understand that the other is afraid of being hurt, or losing a loved one in war, just as they are, that brings people together. Depending on the context and other interactions, the image of the group as a whole may become more positive as well. In the media: the media also plays an important role in both perpetuating and in breaking down stereotypes. If they characterize particular groups of people in certain ways, their viewers (or readers) are likely to do the same. So if a movie, or the motion picture industry in general, characterizes a group of people negatively, they are likely to be perpetuating negative stereotypes and making conflicts worse. If they emphasize the positive aspects of groups that contradict prevalent stereotypes, they can have a significant role in building mutual understanding. In Education: Educational institutions and teaching materials also have the opportunity to affect stereotypes, and hence influence inter-group relations. Efforts to teach about different cultures, and the history of different racial and ethnic groups can help build inter-group understanding if it is done in an effective and sympathetic way (*Beyond Intractability*)

What can you do to breakdown negative stereotypes? Changing stereotypes is largely the job of individuals. Each of us should examine the assumptions that we make about others and ask ourselves where those assumptions come from. These assumptions are could be based on personal experiences.

Stereotyping of Native Americans have long been the subject of educators, particularly at Thanksgiving. Unfortunately, the study of Native Americans has been stereotypical and has contributed to children not understanding about diverse cultures. Many children hear the words "Indian" or "Native American" and picture stereotypical images such as: Someone wearing feathers, someone living in a tipi, someone who makes a "whooping" sound, or someone to associate with Thanksgiving and the pilgrims. These images do not present children with an accurate portrayal of Native people. Their diversity would take years to study and, even then would not be covered entirely. For this reason, it is important that teachers study about Native Americans in a way that allows children to see the diversity and uniqueness of the individual tribes. (*Native American Classroom*)

Research and Planning

Research and Planning

Bebrave. Stereotyping. November 27, 2007. <http://bebrave.org.uk/Stereotyping.html>

Burgess, Heidi. Stereotypes/Characterization Frames. Beyond Intractability. October 2003. November 27, 2007.

www.beyondintractability.org/essay/stereotypes/

Native Nevada Classroom. Stereotyping of Native Americans. May 7, 2007. November 2007.

www.unr.edu/nnap/NT/i-8_9.htm

Lesson Plan - Must be submitted one week prior to presentation with references and article (10 points)

(1) Context

Goals and Objectives

Assessment

Strategies

(1) Materials - Must include references

Reflection

Presentation on Issue in Multicultural Education

I chose this issue because it seems to be a big problem in classrooms and in life in general. I think that many people learn stereotyping when they are children. They see the way the adults around them respond to those who are of a different race, religions, or sexual orientation, and they grow up never questioning those judgements. I was a little uncomfortable with this issue and I think that is part why I chose the issue. I feel that even today me as a person gets stereotyped. I was in a sorority my first two years of college and many of my friends now don't know that I was in one and they will start to talk bad about a sorority and I will be like I was in a sorority and they will be like you were, I didn't know that. Sometimes people get ideas from other people and then when they find out what the group or people are really like they seem to change their mind which isn't a bad idea but they shouldn't have formed that opinion in the first place if they didn't know the facts. I think the fact that not knowing what to expect in the classroom is very uncomfortable to me, some children can have a formed opinion about something before I can even teach them what I think. I have been a person who would stereotype other people for instance, when in a place by myself like my apartment and a black guy or bigger guy are behind me or walk past me I get the feeling they are going to attack me or something. I shouldn't really think this because most of them are very friendly and wouldn't hurt a fly but those few people who do things to other people and I know about it I feel like that is going to happen to me.

After presenting my case study I learned that having a difficult topic to discuss in the classroom can be uncomfortable for people to talk about. After presenting our case study none of the students seem to ask questions or have any interest in the study. Our study was about a lesbian girl publicly showing that she has a girlfriend whether it is at school or in public. I felt a little uncomfortable talking about the case study so I can about imagine what others were thinking and was probably why they didn't want to say anything in front of the other classmates. I know I wouldn't have said anything.

I can further my development and understanding of stereotyping by researching more information about this topic and talking with others about what can be done to inform others about this problem and give people a better understanding. My strategies for teaching this topic won't be directly learned children will over the course of time understand and begin to reflect upon others and not stereotype people. I plan to use these strategies indirectly so the children aren't forced to believe one thing over another but to understand that everyone has their own beliefs and ways of doing things.

After researching this topic and all the information I obtained from this course I feel like I can go into a classroom and know exactly how to handle a situation concerning this topic. Other topics in multicultural or cultures other than Native

Americans and White people because I don't have as much understanding of where they come from and what they believe. I can use this as a lesson plan or a topic to discuss in my classroom. I can use it to help others to not think this way.

I believe that the world would be a better place if people didn't discriminate and stereotype others.

Rubric

9-10	specific and detailed response; critical and reflective engagement is obvious
7-8.5	specific and detailed response; critical and reflective engagement is present
6-6.5	specific and detailed response; reflective engagement is present

Reflection Document
