Hand-Slap

An Exercise to examine the Intent vs. Impact model

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Summary

Hand-Slap is an experiential activity that allows participants to observe a series of interactions an individual from a traditionally marginalized community may have within a cultural context that is different from their own. Each interaction focuses on one aspect of the person’s identity in a way that fosters a feeling of marginalization, creating a succession of stressful events for the individual to the point where, by the last interaction, they are lashing out or reacting angrily. Processing this activity focuses on skill-building in creating more inclusive environments and developing intercultural sensitivity.

Background

The “Intent vs. Impact” model is one that defines a large portion of the misunderstandings and conflicts in the area of diversity and multiculturalism. Functioning on the premise that “others want what I want,” assumes sameness in situations where differences not only need to be recognized, but taken into account in a way that facilitates a different interaction. Assuming everyone likes a good firm handshake can possibly lead to insulting someone or making someone feel uncomfortable.

What we should hope to do is to put our impact in line with our intent, and there are many ways to assist that process. One is to state the intent. To explain, clearly, what we are trying to accomplish with our subsequent actions. To alleviate any fear or concerns someone may have of our behavior, it is very beneficial to articulate what we intend by that behavior.

This is not a guarantee that this will circumvent any misunderstandings. However, it does go a long way to minimize that possibility.

Procedure

Identify 5 characters that will represent the various interactions the “subject” will have. There should be a script prepared beforehand that a partner can read with the subject. Select 5 participants to sit in the front of the audience to hold the signs representing the 5 characters. The first four characters should be as random and general as possible. However, the 5th (last) interaction the subject will have should be one which the participating group can readily identify with. For example, if working with a group of staff members of a particular department, the 5th interaction should represent a staff member from that particular department.

The script should reflect a series of conversations/interactions where the subject is stereotyped and interacted with based on that stereotype. A sample script is attached to this handout.

Process Questions

1. What happened to (Subject’s name) in each of these interactions? What did they do?

2. What parallels can you make to your current work? Do you see any similarities?

3. What could be been done differently to make these interactions, if not positive, at least not a “negative” interaction?

4. How did you see the application of the Intent vs. Impact model?

5. What other models could you use to help frame this activity?
**Processing Points**

- Often our intention to create an inclusive environment is limited to our own cultural framework. Thus, what may seem “natural” and “no big deal” to us, can be disrespectful and offensive to others.

- Our interactions with others are not isolated incidents, but are part of a larger series of interactions each impacting the next. We must take into account that sometimes we are at the end of the line in a series of marginal and stressful situations and thus may end up on the receiving end of that frustration.

- The concept of “universal design” is one that has far reaching positive effects on creating an inclusive environment. Skills must be developed and awareness must be raised so that efforts that contribute to greater inclusivity are supported and carried out.
“Hand Slap”

New Student Orientation
Facilitator: John Williams? Okay…Nancy Peterson? Alright…Ummmmm…..Ummmm…NNNN…euh…

Nehrwr: That’s Nehrwr…Nehrwrordbote—Nehrwr for short.

Facilitator: Abb….Abb….

Nehrwr: Abdul-Wahid

F: Wow…..that’s…..wow….Where you from?

N: Chicago

F: Hmm…Where are you from originally?

N: Ummm…..Washington D.C.

F: Huh…uh…What about your Parents?

N: Uhhh…New York and Virginia

F: Oh…Okay…Hmmm….Interesting….well….welcome. Okay…umm, William Brady…

In Elevator
Co-Worker: OH NO…KIRBY PUCKET!!! OH MY GOD!!!

Nehrwr: Hey…whoa…no no…I’m a student here…

Co-Worker: Huh…Wait…OH yeah…you play for the Gophers right! Whoa…the running back right?

Nehrwr: No…I’m a student, I’m not on the football team…

Co-Worker: Wrestling?…

Nehrwr: Nope…no sports…

Co-Workert: oh…my fault…you just look really familiar…sorry.

(*)BING(*) - Elevator opens…
**Bookstore**

**Nehrwr:** Yes, I'm here to pick up my books - last name is Abdul-Wahid…

**Receptionist:** Okay…let me check…(goes away for a moment…comes back…) sorry, what sport did you say you played…

**Nehrwr:** None…it's actually the college of biological sciences…school of Agriculture maybe…

**Receptionist:** Oh…*PAUSE – Look confused*…Oh….I’m sorry I thought you…sorry about that…you look just like …you see how I could make that mistake right…I'm really sorry about that…

**Nehrwr:** No prob…it's cool…thanks…

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**In cafeteria**

**Food Service worker:** Gooooooood evening. Take your pick. Movin right along

**Nehrwr:** Ummm….any vegetarian? I was told there would be a veggie option

**FSW:** Nope…you have to pre-order that. We have salad over there.

**Nehrwr:** I did…and…

**FSW:** Oh…wait…you’re that Izlaam guy right…they told me about you…okay okay…next week, we’ll have your meal set aside over there.

**Nehrwr:** Way over there…?

**FSW:** Yeah, right over there…That gonna be okay? (the tone of this is important - it should be said very nicely, very helpful.)

**N:** Oh….okay.

**FSW:** NEEEEEEEXT!

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**Staff**

**Staff:** So, Nehrwr…how are you doing? How’s your first day?

**N:** No! NO! This is one of the most racist places I’ve been in all of Minnesota…and I’ve been to some pretty bad places. This whole diversity program is a joke…you know what…just forget it!

**Staff:** What a waste of time, why do we keep going through all this trouble just to make these people happy!
New Student Orientation
In Elevator
Bookstore

Staff
Cafeteria
Staff Member