

Prejudice Log Assignment

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Purpose of the Assignment

We will soon be discussing the topic of prejudice in this course. Prejudice is a preconceived negative judgment of a group and its members. In other words, it's a negative evaluation of people simply because they belong to a particular group. The purpose of this log is to give us material to discuss in class when we cover the topic of prejudice.

Description of the Assignment

For the next week, I'd like to you to keep a daily prejudice log in which you record prejudiced comments you've heard from others **in person** (not in a TV show, song, or music video). You should note (a) the context in which you heard the comments (include enough detail to allow me to understand the comments), (b) the speaker who stated them (do not use the speaker's name, just provide a general description such as "White female" or "Asian male student"), (c) the responder to whom the comments were made (it might be you or someone else nearby), (d) the prejudiced comments, (e) the responder's response, and (e) how **you** responded (if you were not the responder). For example, one entry might read as follows:

Monday:

- Speaker: My middle-aged uncle
- Responder: My 17-year-old sister
- Context: A dinner conversation about run-down areas of Cincinnati
- The prejudiced comment: "A large number of Blacks moved into that neighborhood and ruined it."
- Responder's response: She ignored it and changed the subject
- My Response: I remained silent

Record each prejudiced comment you hear each day for one week. **Your log is due on March 22; no late logs will be accepted.** You should have an entry for each day. If you do not hear any prejudiced comments one day, simply write down "None" for that day. If you happen to go through the whole week without hearing any prejudiced comments, write down at least one comment that you recall hearing in the past.

Grading

This assignment is worth 3% of your final grade. You will be graded on the extent to which you followed the directions for the assignment and on your participation in the in-class discussion on **March 29**. In-class participation will be worth 20% of the log assignment grade.

Prejudice Log Assignment: Part II

Purpose of the Assignment

We just finished practicing ways of responding to prejudiced comments, and we discussed some techniques for responding in a manner that does not make the speaker defensive, dismissive, or hostile. The purpose of this portion of the assignment is to give you some real-life practice with responding to prejudiced comments.

Description of the Assignment

For the next week, I'd like to you to keep a daily prejudice log in which you record prejudiced comments you've heard from others **in person** (not in a TV show, song, or music video) **to which you were able to give a response that is consistent with the suggestions we've discussed**. You should note (a) the context in which you heard the comments (include enough detail to allow me to understand the comments), (b) the speaker who stated them (do not use the speaker's name, just provide a general description such as "White female" or "Asian male student"), (c) the responder to whom the comments were made (it might be you or someone else nearby), (d) the prejudiced comments, and (e) how **you** responded. For example, one entry might read as follows:

Monday:

- Speaker: My middle-aged uncle
- Responder: My 17-year-old sister
- Context: A dinner conversation about run-down areas of Cincinnati
- The prejudiced comment: "A large number of Blacks moved into that neighborhood and ruined it."
- My Response: "Why do you believe that the neighborhood was ruined because Blacks moved in?"

Record at least one or two prejudiced comments to which you were able to respond in the manner we've discussed. If you happen to go through the week without hearing any prejudiced comments, write down at least one comment that you recall hearing in the past (perhaps from your last prejudice log) and indicate how you would respond if you were in that situation again.

Prejudice Reduction Exercise

(adapted from Scott Plous, Wesleyan College)

The scenarios in this exercise contain prejudiced comments that were overheard by Social Psychology students during a week-long period of social observation (although the comments are real, some of the background information may have been changed in order to protect the identity of all concerned). In most cases, the comments in this packet were met with smiling, laughter or silence. Responders did not typically express disagreement with what was said.

The purpose of the present exercise is to practice responding to prejudice in a way that will ultimately lead to its reduction rather than its reinforcement. This is extremely challenging, because it is hard to respond honestly without leading other people to become defensive, dismissive, or hostile.

For the exercise, you will get into small groups of 4 students and you will role play one of three roles. All group members should have at least one opportunity to play each role. The three roles are *Speaker*, *Responder*, and *Coach*, and their corresponding tasks are as follows:

- **Speaker** -- Choose a scenario (or make one up) and say the prejudiced remark
- **Responder** -- Respond in a way that is likely to reduce future prejudice and does not lead the speaker to become defensive, dismissive, or hostile
- **Coach** -- Provide candid feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the response

To get the most out of this exercise, it is important to spend as much time as possible actually *practicing*, rather than simply discussing prejudice reduction, and the Coaches should be as honest as possible in their feedback.

- To begin the exercise, one person should play the role of Speaker, the person next to the Speaker should play the role of Responder, and the remaining group members should be Coaches.
- The Speaker should silently choose one of the scenarios listed on his or her sheet.
- The Speaker should read aloud the information about the speaker, the responder, and the context, then start the conversation and let it build for a minute or so before making the prejudiced remark.
- The Responder should respond to the comment, then let the discussion continue for a brief time so that the Speaker can reply.
- Once the Speaker and Responder are finished, the Coaches should critique the response.
- The roles should be rotated for another practice round with a new Speaker and Responder.
- Do not worry about getting through all the scenarios or adhering precisely to the scripted comments; the scenarios were designed to facilitate the exercise.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

If you prefer not to participate as Speaker or Responder, you may elect to serve as Coach. It is worth noting, however, that aside from today's class, few of us will ever have the opportunity to practice methods of prejudice reduction in front of supportive "coaches" who are willing to give us feedback about how we did. Please consider how rare this opportunity is and use the time to your advantage.

Scenarios: Set #1

Scenario 1

Speaker: The student's sister Responder: A female college student

Background: These two women were hanging out after school and went to get coffee. They were discussing various topics, and the discussion turned to a sibling who is gay.

Comment: "I don't know if I can hang out with Kate in public anymore, because I don't want people to think that I am gay too."

Scenario 2

Speaker: The responder's friend Responder: A male college student

Background: Comment was made while watching Nascar on television.

Comment: "That is such a hillbilly sport."

Scenario 3

Speaker: A male friend Responder: A female college student

Background: Conversation during a dinner date

Comment: "I just want a wife who will cook me dinner and do my laundry."

Scenario 4

Speaker: A middle aged female store manager Responder: An employee

Background: They were discussing who should be hired for a job opening.

Comment: "I don't want to hire anyone who is Goth or wears too much black."

Scenario 5

Speaker: White male teenager Responder: White male teenager

Background: Conversation in the car while driving down the road behind an older driver.

Comment: "Old people are the worst drivers in the world! They need to have their license taken away."

Scenarios: Set #2

Scenario 1

Speaker: Male coworker Responder: A female college student

Background: While working at an ice cream store, the coworker commented when a heavier customer entered the store.

Comment: "Geez! Like they need any more food, especially ice cream!"

Scenario 2

Speaker: The responder's friend Responder: A female college student

Background: They are driving home from the mall, and a car filled with Black people pulled up next to them at a red light. They start discussing the funny appearance of the car.

Comment: "Quiet, they may have heard us. I don't want to get shot."

Scenario 3

Speaker: Male classmate in his 50's Responder: College student

Background: Class discussion about gays

Comment: "I hate gays. They're all sinners and will rot in hell for their choices."

Scenario 4

Speaker: Male in his early 20s Responder: Teenage female

Background: While driving down the road, they hear the sound of brakes screeching

Comment: "Must have been a woman driving"

Scenario 5

Speaker: Female Filipino coworker Responder: White female

Background: Several coworkers ordered Chinese food delivered to their workplace. A Chinese coworker's meal is not what she ordered, so they are trying to determine whether to call the restaurant back and tell them it is incorrect.

Comment: "She'll eat it. She's Chinese and she likes to eat all Chinese food."

Scenarios: Set #3

Scenario 1

Speaker: The student's grandmother Responder: A female college student

Background: Driving to the grocery store through a part of town where some gays live.

Comment: "I can't believe how the gays have just taken over this part of town. They ruined a perfectly good area."

Scenario 2

Speaker: A White female 19 years old Responder: A White female 19 years old

Background: Walking through the mall, they see a group of Arabian men

Comment: "Be careful, one them probably has a bomb."

Scenario 3

Speaker: 16-year-old girl at a dance competition Responder: A 15-year-old dance teammate

Background: They are discussing another girl on the dance team

Comment: "She shouldn't dance anyway, she's too fat. She makes the rest of us look bad."

Scenario 4

Speaker: A female server at a restaurant Responder: A female server

Background: She is discussing how she hates waiting on old people.

Comment: "Waiting on old people is a waste of time! You sit there and talk to them for 15 minutes, and they leave you a 5% tip!"

Scenario 5

Speaker: A female friend Responder: White female college student

Background: The college student is suggesting to her friend that they go shopping at a store that sells stylish clothes in an area of the city that has a high percentage of Black people.

Comment: "I'm not going there! I'll get shot!"

Post-Exercise Discussion

1. What were your reactions to the exercise? Was it easy or difficult to object to the prejudiced comment?
2. Were you able to avoid conflict?
3. What techniques did you find most effective? Did you find a way to respond that did not make the speaker defensive, dismissive, or hostile?
4. Would you be able to do this in actual situations with friends, family members, and strangers?
5. [Optional] Is the most effective response an immediate one or is it better to wait? Are public responses more effective than private responses? Are there situations in which it is best not to respond?

Suggestions for Responding to Prejudiced Comments

The following are suggestions discussed by Scott Plous (2000):

1. Use Questions: “Why did you say that?” “Do you feel that way about every person in the group?” As Fisher and Ury (1983) wrote, “Statements generate resistance, whereas questions generate answers....Questions offer...no target to strike at, no position to attack.”
2. On at least some level, many people are egalitarians (i.e., they believe in the equality of all people). Arouse cognitive dissonance in them by pointing out the discrepancy between their prejudiced comments and their egalitarian self-image. For example, you might say, “I’m surprised to hear you say that, because I’ve always thought of you as someone who is very open-minded.”
3. Explain how the prejudiced comments make you feel (e.g., “It makes me uncomfortable to hear that”) rather than telling the speaker how to behave (e.g., “You shouldn’t say that”). The speaker cannot dispute how you feel, but can dispute suggestions for behavior.
4. Be respectful to the speaker rather than expressing self-righteous anger. The speaker might not be well informed about a particular group or might have made the comments in a misguided attempt at humor.