

Speaking Up

Empowering Individuals to Promote Tolerance in the Academic Library

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Abstract

Diversity issues are taking on increased significance and are being included as a part of academic libraries' strategic plans, often with the goal of improving the overall climate for diversity. Empowering employees to discuss and resolve diversity-related conflicts themselves and offering them some practical strategies to do so are activities the literature supports for improving climate. Members of the Penn State University Libraries Diversity Committee created an interactive workshop using media and discussion to address these issues based on and adapted from *Speak Up!*, a program from the Southern Poverty Law Center. Other libraries can use this program as a model for meeting diversity objectives in their strategic plans.

Introduction

Diversity has many benefits for organizations, but also includes many potential conflicts. Organizations in the 21st century, with increasingly diverse workforces and clienteles, must be willing to actively plan for diversity to effectively realize the benefits and manage any conflicts.¹ The “healthy organization” hypothesis advanced by Hanges, et al. posits that a healthy organization remains responsive to its environment—which is increasingly diverse—and has employees who feel empowered to respond flexibly to problems that arise.² With diversity being such an important issue for libraries and their associated institutions, climate assessment and strategic planning for diversity are taking on increasing significance. The importance of education for employees that offers practical strategies for coping with diversity-related conflicts may provide a way for libraries to improve their climates and flexibly respond to diversity issues.

The Penn State University Libraries has had a robust diversity initiative, with active programming, in place for more than 20 years. Great progress was made toward their diversity goals, yet some climate issues remained. The authors sought a new strategy to provide a way to prepare individuals to speak up in the face of discriminatory or derogatory remarks. A workshop was developed to address these issues, using the Southern Poverty Law Center's *Speak Up!* program as a starting point. Repeat invitations, high attendance, and assessment results indicate the program has been successful. This program can be one way that libraries can recruit their own employees in improving the work and service climate for traditionally underrepresented groups.

Defining “Diversity”

“Diversity” can be defined in many ways. When defined very narrowly, it can refer only to the inclusion of very specific groups of people, for example, people from specific races, religions, or sexual orientations. It is important to point out, for the purposes of this paper, that the term “diversity” is being defined more broadly. The authors used the Penn State University Libraries Definition of Diversity as their guide. This definition states that “access [to the libraries] is guaranteed without regard to race, ethnicity, language, age, religion or spiritual beliefs, health, gender, sexual orientation, physical capabilities, or geographic origin” and further commits to “equal access to employment and opportunity for advancement *without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance or qualifications* as determined by University policy or by state and federal authorities” (emphasis added).³

So, although there are some defined classifications prescribed in the definition (such as race and ethnicity), it is open to other, additional classifications not yet as clearly established (such as socioeconomic class).

Addressing Diversity Issues in Higher Education and Academic Libraries

The literature of psychology and workplace issues reveals interesting insights on various aspects of this topic that relate to higher education and to libraries. The literature in all of these fields was examined and four relevant themes became evident: definitions and effects of racism and discrimination; diversity issues in libraries; “professional” diversity (i.e., diversity in terms of professional level or class); and communication and conflict resolution issues among co-workers.

Effects of Racism and Discrimination

The dangers and ill effects of racism and discrimination are well documented and are worth touching on in diversity programming. Great strides were made through the civil rights struggles in the United States, and it is not uncommon to hear the attitude expressed that due to programs like Affirmative Action, racism and discrimination are no longer major problems. However, the fact is that racism and discrimination still exist, sometimes blatantly and sometimes in more subtle forms. While cross-burnings and lynchings may not be as common as they once were, the number of documented hate groups is on the rise.⁴ Discrimination continues to have painful and corrosive effects on those who are targets. The most overt comments and actions may no longer be common, but Sue, et al. describe “microaggressions,” as the “subtle snubs or dismissive looks, gestures, and tones” that are a part of the many varied shades of modern racism. They go on to note that people who have not historically been targets of discrimination often cannot recognize such microaggressions.⁵ Perhaps it can be implied from this that such microaggressions are often unintentional and due to an individual’s lack of awareness of others’ sensitivities.

Racism and discrimination have very real, physical effects. “Racial Battle Fatigue” is a theoretical framework presented by Smith, Allen, and Danley to help understand stress

responses such as frustration, anger, and resistance to racial microaggressions. Racial Battle Fatigue is a way of describing the constant stress that racism places on its targets by drawing the analogy to soldiers in a hostile wartime environment, dealing with “persistent, extreme stress or risk.” Smith, Allen, and Danley document some of the daily frustrations experienced by black males on historically white campuses and the painful psychological stress responses they produce: “anger, disgust, distress, and a diminished sense of belonging on their respective campuses.”⁶ Soto, Dawson-Andoh, and BeLue expand on the work of Smith, et al. and list some of the physiological symptoms associated with Racial Battle Fatigue, which include tension headaches, elevated heart rate and blood pressure, extreme fatigue, and loss of appetite. They go on to conclude that “day-to-day” racial discrimination results in higher levels of depression and anxiety symptoms in African Americans and that other (non-racial) forms of discrimination result in negative mental health outcomes for all groups.⁷ Clearly, such negative mental health outcomes can result in negative impacts on the workplace.

Diversity Issues in Libraries

Diversity issues are also reflected in the library literature and profession. Taking an historical approach, Welburn covers forty years of the gradual changes that have taken place in higher education to better accommodate students of color and the corresponding changes that took place in academic libraries. He draws an interesting parallel between the movement toward diversity and the broader movement in higher education toward being more student-centered. Welburn also discusses the benefits experienced by academic institutions once they implemented some form of understanding of cultural dimensions and frameworks in their policies. He notes that the very process of working to understand new populations and ethnic groups opens up new areas of academic inquiry, and improves decision-making processes. He argues that the movement to improve and develop library instruction was a result of libraries examining their overall role and services in light of working with new and traditionally underserved student communities in the 1960s.⁸

Also relevant to the discussion of diversity in libraries is the subject of outreach and initiatives to diverse students. Switzer discusses the importance of diversity initiatives to the academic library in light of the increasingly diverse student population and goes on to discuss the many different categories that libraries need to be mindful of, such as International Students, Distance Learners, At-Risk Students, and the LGBT community, and some creative programming for reaching out to them.⁹

Library use by people from diverse backgrounds is another area that has been examined. Whitmire studied results of the 1996 College Student Experiences Questionnaire and found some very compelling data on the use of libraries by different ethnic groups. She found that “students of color are using the academic library at higher rates than White undergraduates.”¹⁰ Whether or not this is the case on a broader scale, libraries should be sure their staff and faculty are comfortable working with a diverse population—making diversity initiatives tailored to faculty and staff an important issue.

Library faculty recruitment is another aspect of this issue discussed in the library literature. Winston compared demographic data from the American Library Association with U.S. Census data and found that people who identify as Black/African American or Hispanic/Latino are underrepresented in librarianship, compared to the U.S. population as a whole. He concludes, “[W]hile diversity has been identified as a priority in the profession for some time, the progress in achieving diversity goals has been limited.”¹¹

“Professional” Diversity

Kaufman provides an analysis of “professional diversity” in libraries, meaning the diversity of different job functions within the libraries, and the tensions and conflicts that can result between them. Kaufman separates library workers into two groups: “library professionals,” who are primarily librarians; and “nonlibrary professionals,” who are defined as professionals in other disciplines who provide necessary services for libraries, such as accountants, technical specialists, and development officers. She does not include in her definition other library staff who provide necessary and important services in libraries including technical, access, and public services staff, special collections staff and many others. Kaufman recognizes the potential for conflict between professional cultures and discusses some strategies for resolving such conflicts.¹²

In academia, generally speaking, there are conflicts and issues of classism or “rankism” between those classified as “faculty” and those classified as “staff.” Krebs writes about some of the benefits faculty receive but that staff generally do not, and some of the resentments that can result.¹³ There are also cases of staff being treated with disrespect by their faculty co-workers, presumably due to their lower status in the academic hierarchy.¹⁴

Lockhart and Borland broaden the discussion of diversity programming, noting that diversity is not a topic to be dealt with separately from others, but rather one that should be incorporated as a facet of all faculty/staff development programs. They offer an instrument to help designers of development programs make sure that the diverse needs of a demographically diverse staff and faculty are met. Considerations included are the diversity of demographics, work (skill sets and experience), learning (educational level), and power (rank).¹⁵

Communication and Conflict Resolution

A number of articles in the literature deal with communication and conflict resolution issues in the workplace, and the enabling of individuals to resolve conflicts. Combs and Griffith apply Allport’s Contact Theory, which advances the idea that the frequency and nature of encounters between minority and majority group members lead to reduction of stereotyping and minimize prejudicial perceptions and behaviors.^{16,17} Combs and Griffith combine this theory with a theory of “cross-race interpersonal efficacy,” defined as “a person’s beliefs about his/her capacity to mobilize capabilities, courses of action, and cognitive resources to achieve valued outcomes in cross-race interpersonal interactions.”¹⁸ Combs and Griffith conclude that, “the ability of

employees to work collaboratively requires individual ability to initiate, cultivate, and nurture positive cross-racial (and cross-cultural) interpersonal interactions and relationships.”¹⁹

Roper focuses on the issue of interpersonal communications between employees and how to manage them from a human resources viewpoint. He states, “The accelerated growth of diversity in the workforce over the past 20 years has spawned new developments in managing employee relations, making it one of the biggest challenges facing managers.” In light of this, he states that the most important skills for managing employee relations are interpersonal communications and conflict management.²⁰

Ashburn-Nardo, Morris, and Goodwin discuss their Confronting Prejudiced Responses (CPR) Model, which is a framework that helps describe the many mental steps a person faces in deciding whether and how to respond to prejudiced comments. Ashburn-Nardo, et al. use an example of a “male manager suggesting to a female colleague that she bake cookies for their next meeting because ‘women are good at that sort of thing.’” The mental steps they outline include:

- Detecting discrimination: Did he just make a sexist remark?;
- Deeming the discriminatory incident an “Emergency:” Did he intend harm with that remark?;
- Taking responsibility to confront discrimination: Is anybody else going to respond to this?;
- Deciding how to confront discrimination: What should I say? How should I say it?; and
- Taking action to confront discrimination: *Should* I say something? Will I be called a “whiner” or “complainer” if I do? Would confronting my manager negatively affect my career? ²¹

Desired Elements for Diversity Programming

Based on the aforementioned literature, there are a number of desirable elements in diversity programming. Considering Switzer’s point that reaching out to diverse groups is increasingly important,²² in addition to Kaufman’s observations on the potential for conflict between different classes of library employees,²³ intolerant comments or behaviors need to be dealt with swiftly, even when it occurs between library co-workers. Therefore, programming and initiatives to promote tolerance among library workers in a timely fashion will undoubtedly help to increase understanding and better serve library patrons.

Diversity programming can help people feel empowered to deal with uncomfortable situations and conflict themselves on a personal level and at the moment it is happening, rather than requiring a top-down managerial process to deal with conflict at a later time. Individual empowerment to resolve conflict is a position supported in the literature.^{24,25} Since people who have not historically been targets of discrimination have difficulty recognizing microaggressions

when they occur, it is important that individuals both name and draw attention to these microaggressions so that everyone is aware of their significance and impact.

In addition to the goal of individual empowerment in conflict resolution, there are specific methods and strategies supported in the literature as well. Roper²⁶ recommends response strategies such as “Speak your mind and heart;” “Express strong feeling appropriately;” and “Avoid all harmful statements.” People should target the words and behavior rather than the person, and avoid both “lashing out” and using harmful statements such as “You are a racist!” The literature emphasizes the importance of striving to remain calm and rational, and questioning the person about what they said, rather than provoking anger and defensiveness by verbally attacking them.

Ashburn-Nardo, et al. support the overall strategy of confronting bias and discrimination because ignoring it or remaining silent can imply agreement. They also advocate practicing responses and behaviors to prepare for such confrontations.²⁷ Ashburn-Nardo, et al. also support the idea of getting participants to acknowledge potential obstacles to responding, as well as helping people to understand the consequences of discrimination.²⁸

One goal of any diversity program should be to create an awareness of diversity issues and experiences in its participants. This is very valuable for librarians teaching classes, people providing technology training, or anybody working at a public service desk. Improving sensitivity to others can positively affect all aspects of library work. The experience the authors had in offering a program that met this goal provides a good example of the desirable elements discussed in the literature.

Diversity and Climate in the University Libraries

The Penn State University Libraries has had an active Diversity Committee since 1988. The Committee, working with Library Administration, employed a variety of strategies over the years to assess the workplace climate, educate employees, and tackle diversity issues. Some of these activities included:

- Working closely with an Association of Research Libraries (ARL) Consultant to identify a strategy of action to increase awareness and acceptance of diversity in the University Libraries. This led to Penn State University Libraries developing and sponsoring the first National Diversity in Libraries Conference in 1998.
- Conducting regular Climate Surveys on a five-year cycle (completed third one in 2007).
- Holding numerous social events centered on celebrations of diversity or key diversity-related dates and commemorations.
- Encouraging employees to attend Penn State Human Resources Development (HRD) classes about various topics.
- Active participation in Penn State’s Framework to Foster Diversity.²⁹

Surveys were conducted as a way to assess the climate for diversity, determine the understanding of diversity, identify areas of strength, and improve on any weaknesses. The longitudinal analysis of the 1998, 2001, and 2007 climate surveys showed a continuous improvement in the climate over time, and that in 2007 a substantial majority of responders:

- were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate in the University Libraries;
- believed they shared a common understanding of diversity;
- believed employees were knowledgeable about diversity resources; and
- believed that the administration supported diversity.

Rather than be satisfied with these results and continue on without change, it was decided to delve deeper into the findings to identify areas for improvement. Looking further into the 2007 results, a potential area of improvement was identified that also existed in previous surveys. This area involved the following survey question: “Within the past year...Have you personally experienced any offensive, hostile, or intimidating conduct in the University Libraries that has interfered with your ability to work or learn?”

The data from this and several follow-up questions showed that about 30% of people who responded to this question reported experiencing or observing derogatory or inappropriate remarks or “jokes.” These were usually focused on status by position (rankism), educational level, age, religion, gender, or race and ethnicity. When asked how they responded to derogatory or inappropriate remarks, most respondents reported that they did not make a report or complaint but instead told a friend, felt embarrassed, avoided the source of the remark, or ignored it. Negative responses in this area indicated to the investigators that there were issues at the grassroots interpersonal level that needed to be addressed in order to better create a climate of respect among colleagues.

Some years ago, the authors, who were members of the Libraries’ Diversity Committee, were discussing plans for diversity programs and workshops for the coming year. The authors all shared experiences where insensitive or bigoted comments had been made, and they had said nothing. Additionally, as Diversity Committee members, they all had been asked by colleagues for advice on how they should respond in similar situations. The authors wished they had known how to respond themselves and were also at a loss as to what to recommend. Problematic remarks could be readily identified, but knowing how to address them were still a challenge. What should have been said to address the issue but not cause tension or animosity in the workplace? Someone mentioned an experience where a manager (with power and authority) made a derogatory comment, which made finding an appropriate response even more complicated. All agreed that such situations deserved a response and that resources should be readily available so that an appropriate response could be made in the moment, rather than after it passes. How could people in the library prepare themselves to deal with these situations and know how to respond appropriately? One of the authors suggested a program that offers “a bag of tricks” that can help people respond appropriately in these situations.

As part of the ongoing analysis, the authors, along with the Diversity Committee, studied past programming efforts at raising awareness of diversity and civility. Over the course of the past 10 or more years, the Libraries showed a rich background of training opportunities and good attendance numbers. It was clear that offering programming for self-improvement and awareness was helping the Libraries move forward, but it was not solving all of their problems. Observations showed that over time, attendees at programs and workshops tended to be many of the same people. Furthermore, the people perceived as being most in need of attending usually did not. The Diversity Committee and administration struggled with the question of how to get these “non-attendees” to hear the message. Even if people attend an event or workshop, they may not participate fully and there is no guarantee that it will elicit any change in behavior. The phrase “preaching to the choir” became a catchphrase in planning diversity initiatives.

Motivation for *Speak Up!*

The authors proposed working on a grassroots movement against intolerance to give the “Choir” (those who are most sympathetic to standing up against racism and intolerance) the tools to use on the spot in order to respond to derogatory or offensive comments. The “Choir” could then take action, establish a critical mass of allies, and use the power of peer pressure on those who made the remarks to make real cultural change. The goal is to create a climate where people feel free to speak up and make those who would make the remarks feel uncomfortable. This idea of coaching members of the “Choir” directly addresses Combs and Griffith’s “cross-race interpersonal efficacy” in that it hopes to encourage courses of action and cognitive resources to achieve valued outcomes.³⁰

It was agreed that the “Bag of Tricks” idea was a way to empower the “Choir” to speak up against offensive remarks on the spot, but how it could be accomplished was not clear. Some research was conducted to see what programming was already developed and available. Several options were found, and one in particular stood out as promising.

The Southern Poverty Law Center’s (SPLC) program on responding to everyday bigotry, called *Speak Up!*, seemed very well developed and relevant to the Libraries’ needs.³¹ The program was specifically designed to help individuals respond to bigotry. The SPLC offers the program materials for free online along with its many other guides and lesson plans for teaching tolerance and combatting bigotry. The authors embraced *Speak Up!* as the core for their program, adding multimedia content, customized scenarios, and group discussion to adapt it to the Libraries’ needs.

One particularly appealing aspect of *Speak Up!* was the personal stories used to develop the project. Individuals from the SPLC spoke with people from across the country and recorded their stories. These individuals also commented on how they reacted, and sometimes on how they wished the encounter would have gone. This personal and very real approach can help individuals in the workplace, who may not think they are saying anything offensive, to realize how their words can be taken. With regard to how the stories were collected and presented, the

SPLC states:

All stories presented in *Speak Up!* are real; due to personal preference and privacy concerns, we present them anonymously. In situations where people shared similar stories, we developed an amalgam, drawing from more than one person. Quoted material is drawn from personal interviews, roundtable discussions, email, letters and some news accounts. Racial, ethnic and other descriptors are those used by the people telling their own stories.³²

These stories about how individuals experienced bigotry are assembled into five chapters on “What Can I Do...” among family, among friends and neighbors, at work, at school, and in public. Each is further divided topically. These are followed by the most critical section to this program, which provides strategies that can be used: “Six Steps to Speaking Up Against Everyday Bigotry.”

Other Programs

There are a number of other programs available that cover similar material as *Speak Up!*, i.e., encouraging individuals to speak up when confronted with bigotry or intolerance, but none that match all of its features. The main features of *Speak Up!* that made it the best fit for the University Libraries were the fact that it is: 1) high quality, and well developed; 2) designed to be “do it yourself” (and therefore can be tailored to fit a specific audience); 3) broadly applicable enough to meet the University Libraries’ needs, and 4) free to use.

The program that most resembles *Speak Up!* in terms of content is the *OUCH! That Stereotype Hurts* training program. Offered by International Training and Development, LLC, viewers of this video program “will experience the impact of stereotypical comments, explore why people don't speak up against stereotypes and other biased behaviors, and learn six techniques for speaking up without blame or guilt.”³³ For \$595, *OUCH!* offers VHS or DVD, along with various printed materials to help with leading sessions. This program has been used successfully by the Ocean County (NJ) Library System.³⁴

There are other programs available that are somewhat relevant to the topic of coaching individuals to speak up in the presence of bigotry, and they are usually marketed under the description of “anti-bullying” programs. These include *Stand Up/Speak Up Assembly* from Community Matters,³⁵ *The Deadly Truth about Bullying* by the Diversity Council,³⁶ and *Step Up, Speak Up: Building a Respectful Workplace* by Ideas and Training.³⁷ While these programs offer some of the same content as *Speak Up!*, they include a price tag for access and/or involve having the vendor’s own staff present the program, potentially making it more difficult to customize and more expensive.

The *Speak Up!* Program has been used, or at least linked to, by other colleges and universities. Towson University³⁸ and Century College (MN)³⁹ promote the program on their web sites.

Approach to the Program

The authors have usually allowed at least 1½ hours for the workshop to help ensure adequate time to get through the entire program. Attendance was also limited to 25 participants or fewer so that group discussions with five participants to a table could be productive. Response to the workshop was overwhelming. Having to initially turn people away, the workshop was offered until everyone who was interested had the opportunity to attend. More recently, it has been offered once or twice per year to accommodate new staff, and for specific audiences upon request. Participants must sign up in advance. They receive a brief online questionnaire to return as well as a link to a page of bookmarks at delicious.com with links to supporting and related materials.

The presenters begin the workshop by explaining that they do not claim to be “experts” on this topic, and that every situation is as unique as the people involved in them. They explain that the project began out of their desire to find answers themselves, and that they do not feel they have any final answers on these challenging and difficult issues. The participants are then invited to share the journey in exploring ways of responding.

Several elements were added to the introduction to help set the stage. First, the climate surveys and the impetus for providing a “bag of tricks” program are mentioned. The introduction often includes a personal anecdote about well-meaning comments that have an undertone that reveal assumptions and profiling. Next, a humorous video with a serious message, Jay Smooth’s “How to Tell People They Sound Racist,” is shown that demonstrates a strategy for responding to a racially charged comment.⁴⁰ This very brief video is specifically focused on responding to racist comments, which is one, but not the only issue the workshop addresses. It is used to introduce the idea of responding to the words and issues, rather than the person, and avoiding accusatory name-calling. The next element used is an audio clip from National Public Radio, “How Should You Respond to a Racist Comment,” that recounts the experience of Cecille, an African American woman, receiving a well-intentioned comment from a party guest that implied a racist mindset: “Oh, Cecille, I don’t think of you as black.” Cecille responds with “What’s wrong with being black?” Cecille later felt that had she responded differently, it might have encouraged a better understanding by her guest. She feels regretful that her initial response, while heartfelt and immediate, cut off further discussion. She felt that next time she might be able to respond more openly, to help the other person understand why their comment was offensive and to encourage them to see her perspective, without antagonizing them.⁴¹ Interestingly, a very similar story, followed by a different approach, and resulting in a very positive outcome, is shared in the *Speak Up!* booklet.⁴²

After the introduction, the presenters frame the problem of bigoted comments for participants by providing some statistics from the SPLC. These statistics include:

- 30% of workers report hearing colleagues use racial or ethnic slurs, or make sexist comments in the last 12 months.
- 21% of workers report age-related ridicule, and 20% report hearing jabs at sexual orientation.

- One in ten students report being called a derogatory word related to race, religion, ethnicity, disability, gender, or sexual orientation in the past six months.⁴³

These statistics are included to help participants understand that the issues being addressed in the workshop are not something that happens only rarely, nor are they merely issues of mildly injured pride or hurt feelings—often decried as “political correctness.” As discussed in Soto, et al.,⁴⁴ Smith, et al.,⁴⁵ and Sue, et al.,⁴⁶ facing microaggressions every day can have very real, detrimental effects on people’s attitude and productivity.

In addition to the personal stories of those who have experienced bigotry, the *Speak Up!* program has a multi-step process for assisting in presenting the program to others. The next element in the program is defining the barriers that prevent people from speaking up. In order to stimulate discussion of these barriers, a variety of approaches have been tried. The one that has been most successful and is still used is having participants complete an anonymous online survey the day before the actual session. In the survey, participants are presented with a series of scenarios where insensitive or bigoted remarks are made (see Appendix A). They are then asked to identify on a Likert scale how comfortable they would feel “speaking up” in each situation. The overall results of the survey are then used as a basis of discussion with participants about understanding the barriers to speaking up that everyone faces. This has an immediacy for the audience since the results are the collation of their own responses and not generic responses from other groups, and it also has an anonymity that avoids the potential discomfort some individuals may feel when admitting to their barriers in front of co-workers.

The next part of the program is to describe and discuss the “Six Steps to Speaking Up Against Everyday Bigotry,” which have been a core component in the workshops. These are essentially what prepare each individual to have a “bag of tricks” from which to draw when faced with everyday bigotry. Briefly, the six steps are:

- **Be Ready:** You know you will be in a situation at some point where someone makes a derogatory or biased statement. Be prepared and ready to speak up.
- **Identify the Behavior:** Begin by speaking up clearly about the behavior or statement that you are uncomfortable with.
- **Appeal to Principles:** Especially if it is someone you know, suggest to the person that you expect more from them and think they have higher principles than their statement implies.
- **Set Limits:** Express that statements such as those will not be allowed in your home, office, or workplace.
- **Find an Ally/Be an Ally:** If someone else speaks up first, support him or her verbally in the moment to let everyone know that the support for tolerance comes from more than one person. Seek support from others as well.
- **Be Vigilant:** Remaining silent can be understood by others as agreement with the statement or behavior, so be alert and speak up!⁴⁷

These six steps are discussed, and examples are shared from the *Speak Up!* booklet and the

presenters' own experiences to illustrate possible situations as well as potential ways of responding.

One thing the program does not do is give pat answers. There are no prescribed responses for specific situations. Instead, the program provides strategies. This is appropriate because each situation is unique, and it takes practice to analyze the comment and to find the right words to use when speaking up. Also, everyone has his or her own style and comfort zone, so what one person might say may be very different from what someone else might say. So the last component of the workshop has been to provide opportunities to try it out—to actually find the words that might be appropriate in a particular situation, for a particular person.

To do this, the participants are moved into groups (usually five groups with five people in each, but three or four to a group is ideal) and each group is given a different set of six scenarios (see Appendix B). Each person gets a handout with their group's six scenarios, each of which is followed by a space for the participants to write their ideas and comments. Each scenario sets up a situation and relates a comment or scene. Some of these have come from the *Speak Up!* booklet, while others are personal examples shared previously by library colleagues. Before the earlier workshops, a message was sent to the registered participants asking them to share situations they had been part of or comments they had heard. Some of these were selected, concentrating on workplace issues, but a few from home or social situations were included as well. Some have also been made up, to address a particular situation or need (for example, at least one situation including rankism was created, since that had been reported in the climate surveys). This gives a wide range of situations that address issues of concern across the nation and in the local area and workplace, allowing participants to practice a variety of responses to situations that may be familiar or unfamiliar to them.

Participants are then asked to discuss each scenario with the group at their table and to come up with one or several responses that might be given. Although “group activities” and “role playing” types of activities are often not popular among some participants, this has not been a problem in these workshops. The groups are quickly engrossed in active discussions as the situations are analyzed and participants share their ideas for responding. The presenters circulate and listen in, commenting occasionally to bring out a point, but mostly just listen to the discussions, which are often very insightful. In nearly every workshop, time ran out before all groups had discussed each of their scenarios.

Finally, the entire workshop group is brought back together and each group is asked to share one of their scenarios along with examples of what they consider to be the best of their “replies.” The attempt is made to get around the room at least twice, depending on the amount of time available.

Some of the responses the groups come up with employ humor to diffuse the situation, while others are more direct. Here are some of the responses to one of the scenarios discussed:

Scenario:

“A man at a party said, ‘Well look at that Muslim congressman they elected. We keep

letting people in that aren't like us and pretty soon our government won't be run by normal Americans anymore.”

Responses:

- “Oh, you mean the Iroquois?”
- “What is your conception of [a] normal American?”
- “Maybe you should run for office if you think you can do a better job.”
- “Our differences make us strong as a country.”
- “Our country is founded on the basis of separation of church and state. Why do you think his religion will prevent him from conducting his congressional responsibilities?”

Assessment and Feedback

One measure of success was the popularity of the program. The authors expected to offer it once, or maybe twice, as most of the Libraries' diversity programs have been offered over the years. It was not expected that the workshop would be oversubscribed and that it would need to be repeated simply to meet the demand. Since the sessions were limited to 25 participants to encourage discussion, and since the University Libraries employ approximately 550 individuals at the University Park campus alone (both full- and part-time), the sessions had to be held multiple times in order to accommodate everyone who wanted to attend. The authors were also asked to conduct it during the annual campus retreat so that staff from across the state could participate. It was also requested for the Libraries' annual in-service staff development day, and to be offered at various times so that evening employees could attend. Specific departments within the library also invited the authors to give the workshops to their group. Penn State's Information Technologies Services (ITS) Department used the authors' format, outline, PowerPoint presentation, and teaching materials to offer two sessions themselves. They commented on the teaching materials: “seeing it again reminds me of what a great job you all did with the graphics and content.” Another campus also asked for the teaching materials so they could offer it themselves on their campus, which they did. In total, it was offered seven times to 147 participants at University Park, twice by the ITS Department to a total of 40 employees and managers, and once at another Penn State campus. In addition, the University's Human Resources office has expressed interest in providing the workshop for the whole University. To assist in getting it off the ground, the authors have offered to pilot it by teaching a few sessions and sharing their materials.

Workshop assessments were also conducted, in the form of an online survey of participants. The results of the survey were very positive. The survey showed that all respondents found the session informative and helpful, with a selection of individual representative comments stating, “It was a great session” and “very informative” and “a good program,” adding that “It made you stop and think before you say something,” and “It certainly made me think, especially about the subtler forms of discrimination.” Nearly all respondents felt that “this information will be useful as pertains to your position responsibilities” with comments including “It should have very broad

applications, both on the job and in private life.” And “The information pertains to my position, but also to my everyday living.” One attendee stated, “I plan on sharing with others in my work unit.” The presenters were also pleased that not only did attendees respond positively that the “scope of the information shared in this session” met their expectations, but commented that it “far exceeded expectations” and “It was much better than I expected. I expected a politically correct and dogmatic approach.” And “I was pleasantly surprised.” Attendees unanimously agreed that there was “ample time for questions during and/or after the presentation” with one stating “This was a rare exception in training sessions where there was a flow of discussion throughout.” Other comments included that the session was “well communicated to the participants” and that the “presenters were prepared and organized,” and others suggested the workshop be offered again.

Implementing Your Own Program

A few simple steps can be used to implement a program in your library.

1. Identify a group or create a group of individuals interested in working on developing a program. This could be a subgroup of a diversity committee, a training or staff development committee, or other compatible group.
2. Once the group is set, define the goals for your program according to the needs of your particular library.
3. Examine the possibilities that exist and determine your budget. Since we began, a number of commercial options have become available. A program such as *Speak Up!* provides a framework and materials, but requires individuals at the home institution to develop them into a program. Other options as discussed above, are very similar in content and require little of the institution other than funding.
4. Set dates and times – allowing at least an hour and a half if planning a discussion-based format. Reserve a room that has tables and chairs to ensure group discussion. Groups are best limited to 4 or 5 individuals so that everyone has an opportunity to share their ideas.
5. Identify your presenters and workshop leaders, outline the flow of your workshop.
6. Advertise the session(s) throughout the library.
7. Other possible items that might be used include:
 - a. Prepare a pre-survey (one example is in appendix A). Participants must pre-register if a pre-survey is used.
 - b. Prepare a PowerPoint presentation to use during the beginning of the session to introduce the topic, provide statistics, guide any video and audio components, and guide the discussion of the Six Steps.
 - c. For the workshop discussion, each group will need a set of 4 or 5 scenarios to discuss. Prepare at least 20 different scenarios gathered from your institution, from the *Speak Up!* examples, or from other materials. Prepare a set of these scenarios, with 4 or 5 scenarios on a page (allow space between each scenario for note taking) for each group. If you plan to have 5 groups, you would need five

such master sheets, with copies for each person in the group.

8. Develop an evaluation to assess your workshop. Allow time at the end for a paper survey or follow up later by email with an electronic survey.

Conclusion

Penn State has been a leader for many years in implementing diversity programming, initiating the National Diversity in Libraries Conference, and developing diversity related strategic planning. The Libraries' third climate survey found that the Libraries may have come a long way in some areas, but it also found that employees still occasionally faced situations where insensitive remarks were made. The authors sought to find a way to give individuals the tools to respond on the spot. The literature review supports the idea and need for such a program. An exploration for existing programming uncovered the Southern Poverty Law Center's program called: "Speak Up! Responding to Everyday Bigotry." Several members of the Libraries' Diversity Committee worked together to adapt this program into a workshop for library employees. It has been so successful that it has been offered multiple times within the library and has even been requested by others outside of the University Libraries and at other locations. This model can easily be adapted by any library or workplace wishing to provide tools to employees for directly addressing issues that may arise relating to racism, classism, or other insensitive remarks. Libraries whose strategic plans and/or diversity plans include the goal of making progress on diversity and/or climate issues, may want to consider implementing this, or a similar, insightful and educational program.

Appendix A. Pre-survey Sent to Participants as Discussion Tool

Barriers to Interrupting Everyday Bigotry

Our comfort levels in responding to bias incidents often vary by location and by the people involved. For each of the following situations, select the number that represents your comfort level in speaking out against bias when you encounter it, with 1 meaning “extremely uncomfortable responding” and 5 meaning “extremely comfortable responding.”

1. You are in the break room with a group of coworkers when one of them says, "Did you hear that Angelina Jolie adopted another kid, this time from Vietnam? The poor kid probably doesn't even know he's Asian yet. He certainly doesn't know he's going to be a horrible driver. Or that he's going to be amazing at doing nails. He has no idea!" The speaker, and a few others laugh heartily.
1= extremely uncomfortable responding / 5 = extremely comfortable responding
1 2 3 4 5
2. You are a staff person working with a manager from another unit. While viewing a list of new students registered for a class, the manager points to the last names and says, "Well it looks like we have six engineers, three math majors, this one is in education..." (In other words, neither of you have ever met these students or have any knowledge of them; the manager is making an assumption based on last names/ethnicity.)
1= extremely uncomfortable responding / 5 = extremely comfortable responding
1 2 3 4 5
3. You overhear a coworker saying about other younger coworkers, "Oh these youngsters need so much praise and are so impatient. We need someone more mature to work with that department."
1= extremely uncomfortable responding / 5 = extremely comfortable responding
1 2 3 4 5
4. Following a search committee meeting, you (a white male) and one of the committee members (also a white male) offers to take you out to lunch. The coworker confides in you that he knows how to "play the game" and keep his mouth shut at work but "now that we're out of there ..." He then goes on against affirmative action hiring and how he thinks that minority candidates are getting extra advantages and that this is unfair.
1= extremely uncomfortable responding / 5 = extremely comfortable responding
1 2 3 4 5
5. You stop by a colleague's office and her door is open. She exclaims loudly, "This department is a joke; the work is just glorified staff assistant work." Her office is within

earshot of the department's staff assistant.
1= extremely uncomfortable responding / 5 = extremely comfortable responding
1 2 3 4 5

6. You notice that your supervisor always assigns tasks like taking meeting notes and event planning to your female colleagues.
1= extremely uncomfortable responding / 5 = extremely comfortable responding
1 2 3 4 5

Appendix B. Scenario Samples

1. A Chinese American woman often finds herself asked by friends, "What do Chinese people think about that?"*
2. "One of my employees constantly makes 'jokes' about people being 'bipolar' or 'going postal' or being 'off their meds.' I happen to know that one of our other employees — within earshot of these comments — is on medication for depression."*
3. "My father says he has nothing against homosexuals, but they shouldn't allow them to lead in a church."*
4. "The supervisor took me aside to deliver what he must have thought was a compliment. He told me, 'You're a good worker. You're not like the other Mexicans.' I just nodded and went back to work because I wanted to keep my job."*
5. You have relatives over for a family gathering. They begin discussing current events. One of your older relatives repeatedly uses the term "towel heads."
6. A supervisor from another department confuses the names of two of your African American colleagues. You know when he's been confronted before he's said things like, "Well they all pick such bizarre names for their children anyway."
7. "One of my employees constantly makes 'jokes' about people being 'bipolar' or 'going postal' or being 'off their meds.' I happen to know that one of our other employees — within earshot of these comments — is on medication for depression."*
8. "My father says he has nothing against homosexuals, but they shouldn't allow them to lead in a church."*
9. "The supervisor took me aside to deliver what he must have thought was a compliment. He told me, 'You're a good worker. You're not like the other Mexicans.' I just nodded and went back to work because I wanted to keep my job."*
10. You have relatives over for a family gathering. They begin discussing current events. One of your older relatives repeatedly uses the term "towel heads."
11. A supervisor from another department confuses the names of two of your African American colleagues. You know when he's been confronted before he's said things like, "Well they all pick such bizarre names for their children anyway."

*These scenarios were taken from *Speak Up!: Responding to Everyday Bigotry* by Brian Willoughby (Montgomery, Ala.: Southern Poverty Law Center, 2005), http://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/downloads/publication/SPLCspeak_up_handbook_0.pdf.

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