

In The Mix:
How Race, Class, Sexuality and Gender Collide

Icebreaker:

Talk about what makes you you.

Stereotypes

Activity: Ask clients to draw pictures of cultural stereotyping. When they're finished, tape the pictures together, with a heading saying 'This is what we are not'.

Discussion: Discuss cultural stereotypes and how they can apply to different groups. ('Latinos all speak Spanish and are lazy'; 'Black people are stupid and all belong to "ghetto" culture'; 'Asians are all geniuses'; 'Women should always be pretty and feminine'; 'Trans women are caricatures of women'; 'Gay men are all flamboyant sissies'; 'lesbians all have to be butches or femmes'.) Talk about how they intersect—for example, sexism and racism when a black woman is stereotyped as being 'whorish', simply because of her race and gender, or sexism, racism and transmisogyny when trans women of colour are brutalised for their gender identity.

Invisibility and erasure

Discussion:

Discuss erasure—that is, the idea that people can only belong to one minority group. Mention the 'difference' slot. Draw a diagram of how a 'difference slot' might work. 'You're black, so you can't be gay.' 'You're a woman, and that's your primary identity.' 'You can't be gender-variant because you're Latino.' 'You're poor and that's your main identity, not your being bisexual.' Talk about how erasure reduces people to stereotypes and ideas, rather than being complex people. Talk about how people ignore cues in order to create their own image of a person—like homophobes ignoring that someone is queer, and asking a lesbian things like 'do you have a boyfriend', or racists ignoring that a black or Latino person can have non-stereotypical interests, or transphobic people addressing a trans person with incorrect pronouns because they saw something that 'tipped them off' about their being trans, even though the person has given cues that they identify with a particular gender (whether it is appearance, speech patterns, names).

Exotification

Activity: Ask people to list ways that people can objectify members of other cultures. Give examples, like people with Asian-woman fetishes. Discuss people's lists.

Discussion: Discuss exotification, based on the residents' examples, as well as your own. (People emulating hip-hop artists and 'wanting to be cool and black'; Asian fetishes; Latino appropriation)

Wrapping it up:

Discuss how these ideas can come together. Pass out the evaluation form for participants.