

VIRGINIA TECH CONDUCTOR

A GUIDE FOR OUR JOURNEY TOWARD EXCELLENCE, EQUITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

Diversity Summit identifies five categories of hindrance

by Barbara Pendergrass, dean of students,
and Delores Scott, associate provost

The 2000 Diversity Summit provided an opportunity for members of the campus community to prioritize a list of 47 "Stops," defined as actions and behaviors that hinder the achievement of diversity and a sense of welcome for all members of the community. This unedited list of "Stops," which was generated by the 1999 Diversity Summit participants was reduced to a list of 30 by the 130 participants on January 17, 2000. These participants, working in 15 small groups and representing a large part of the diversity within our campus community, were asked to select the five "Stops" from the list of 47 that they believed pose the greatest hindrances to the achievement of diversity. The resulting 30 "Stops" appear to fit five broad categories. A brief description of each category and the taxonomy of the items follow.

- ❖ Oppressive behavior
- ❖ Narrow perspective of diversity
- ❖ Adherence to traditional and exclusive practices
- ❖ Avoidance of responsibility for diversity
- ❖ Not holding people accountable

Oppressive Behavior. Items in this category address the disparity in the treatment of different groups and provide examples of behaviors that limit access to some groups.

Narrow perspective of diversity. The manner in which diversity is defined and discussed is challenged in these items. At its narrowest focus, it only includes Blacks and Whites. Other dimensions of differences are often overlooked when diversity as a topic is placed on the table.

Adherence to traditional and exclusive practices. The items that fit this category call attention to the tendency in the university to focus on the majority culture

in and outside the classroom. It is perceived that this adherence to the status quo hinders our progress of becoming a truly diverse community. Strategies to counter the pressure of conservative alumni and politicians and continuous awareness education are needed to break the barriers of exclusive traditions.

Avoidance of responsibility for diversity. These items speak to the tendency to assign the responsibility for diversity to the administration or minority groups. The idea that responsibility for promoting diversity belongs to the administration or some specific person or group might lessen individual commitment and effort and perhaps the development of synergy around diversity.

Not holding people accountable. These items call for clear and effective sanctions for individuals who create barriers to diversity. The practice of "letting people off the hook" and institutional silence fosters distrust in the administration and undermines diversity initiatives.

Oppressive behavior	Narrow perspective of diversity	Adherence to traditional and exclusive practices	Avoidance of responsibility for diversity	Not holding people accountable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treating staff as personal property of supervisors. Staff are treated as if they cannot manage their own time..... • Treating staff with less respect than faculty members and students. (This is a diversity issue because there is a class system.) • Excluding (overlooking) staff in faculty administrative searches. • Stereotyping. • Focusing primarily on majority culture. • Contributing to environments that are hostile to minority status people, e.g., jokes, singling out, avoiding diagnostic feedback. • Faculty bias/insensitivity. • Being oblivious to faculty power and its effects on interactions with minority status students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering political correctness a bad thing. • Assumptions 1) that everyone is heterosexual, 2) that everyone celebrates Christian holidays, and 3) that incidents of discrimination are only the problem of a particular group. Discrimination is a problem for all of society. • Making diversity a Black and White issue. • Segregation at diversity workshops. • Presenting the "dominant" mainstream point-of-view that excludes others from the curriculum. • Defending diversity as a narrow issue that relates to how we hire for staff administrators, and an issue of how we admit students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being resistant to contributions of non-western communities to U.S. culture and academia. • Relying on old recruitment methods. • Using a reactive model. • Using a conservative state government or alumni as a knee-jerk excuse for not making forward progress in the gay community and for not being the community of thinkers/innovators we are • Staying in our comfort zones. • Marginalizing differences in the classroom and community as well as diversity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Viewing diversity as an obligation. • Making excuses regarding data: our background, where we are. • Relying on underrepresented populations to bring diversity issues to light. • Making excuses and acting defensive. • Delegating responsibility for addressing diversity issues and problems to the administration (It's their problem.). • Thinking and acting like diversity is a stand-alone topic, i.e., it is the responsibility of certain offices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting those who are guilty of exclusionary practices that disadvantage women, particularly those who are protected by their position. • Institutional silence regarding comments on actions that are counter to creating a diverse community. • Letting people off the hook. • Double Standards: Stop disparity between words and actions.

In this issue:

- Page 2, A Multicultural/Diversity Glossary.
- Page 2, Making the case for the return of 'Fresh Air'.
- Page 3, It's a puzzle.
- Page 3, Three role model behaviors for involvement suggested.
- Page 4, Unpack your assumptions about who abuses drugs.

What would you do?

Responses on Training, Call for Campus Child Care

by Richard Conners, associate professor of electrical and computer engineering, rconners@vt.edu

There were three responses to my last Conductor column, which asked for comments on the call for diversity training ("Is training the solution to insensitivity?", Feb. 4, 2000). I received one call, one e-mail, and one response at the web site (www.diversity.vt.edu/forum.html). All of the respondents were very much in favor of diversity training. Training, the respondents said, could make Tech a better place to work and could help prepare the nation for the upcoming population trends.

I invite you to visit our web site to see some of what has been said. Perhaps you might want to put your two cents worth in as well. To do so, just go to the above address and click on "Join the discussion now."

However, if there is one thing that my column taught me it is that I need to provide more communication channels. Putting comments on the web site makes your

thoughts public. I think it is a good idea to provide a sounding board that is not so public. Consequently, if you want to express your ideas but not within the context of an open forum, you can either e-mail me at rconners@vt.edu or call me at 231-6896. If you use either of these communications methods, I will keep what you want quiet and talk about what you do not mind being shared. That is, I reserve the right to discuss your ideas but I will not mention your name in the discussion.

The topic for this week's column is the seeming need for some type of campus child care. The topic of child care came up during one of this semester's meetings of the University Commission on Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action (EOAA). Perhaps I should have known about it sooner but my wife and I have no children; hence, we have not personally had to face the problem. Some of the concerns expressed included the difficulty of finding child care providers in the Blacksburg area, the

length of time that must be spent on a waiting list to actually get your child enrolled in a program, and the fact that child care is needed during nonstandard hours, e.g., after 6 p.m. on week days, and on Saturday and Sunday. The EOAA commission discussion clearly indicated that child care is a problem for not only faculty and staff but also for students.

What I would like the reader to do is to comment on the child care problem at Virginia Tech. Is this a real problem? What types of child care are needed the most? Normal workday child care? Child care during nonstandard hours? Is affordability an issue?

While I believe I know the answers to some of these questions based on the discussion that occurred at the EOAA meeting, I would still like to hear from the reader. Why? Well there are two reasons. First, the university at various times has thought about the child care issue but nothing has been done about it. A good response might

Please see Child Care on Page 2

Diversity Definitions

by David Winston, Extension dairy scientist, dwinston@vt.edu

The following was developed by Virginia Tech's Advisory Council on Diversity and Multicultural Affairs' Communications Committee.

Within the VT Community

Diversity refers to the fact that the community is composed of many individuals each of whom has unique attributes based on a variety of social, physical, and cultural characteristics.

Included among these attributes are race, class, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, political affiliation, veteran status, and national origin.

The existence of diversity in our community challenges to us to find ways to integrate all individuals and groups into the larger community in a manner that respects and values the uniqueness of each individual or group and to manage that diversity in the context of the mission of the university.

Multiculturalism is a philosophy that recognizes, accepts, and integrates the contributions and achievements by all people into the social fabric of the community in which they exist.

Multiculturalism requires an understanding of and respect for the historical bases of the belief systems and traditions of various groups to develop their members socially, emotionally, spiritually, intellectually, and physically.

Equal opportunity means that each individual is judged on his or her individual merit.

Individual merit should be determined without bias toward traits that only resemble those of the persons making the judgements.

Equal opportunity requires that characteristics like race, class, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, political affiliation, veteran status, and national origin not be used to restrict opportunities.

These statements apply equally to admission and enrollment for students and to employment and advancement for those who work in the university.

Affirmative action refers to actions intended to correct the effects of past discrimination, to eliminate present discrimination, or to prevent discrimination in the future.

Discrimination means the unequal treatment of people based on some characteristic other than individual merit.

The purpose of affirmative action is to facilitate equal opportunity.

Time for A Breath of Fresh Air

Golde Holtzman, associate professor of statistics, and Danny Axsom, associate professor of psychology

In 1995, public radio station WVTF cancelled "Fresh Air," the popular and Peabody Award-winning weekday magazine of contemporary arts and issues. The announcement proved controversial because, according to the *Roanoke Times* (Oct. 12, 1995), one factor in the station's decision was complaints by some listeners who thought the program had too many homosexual guests, and that it promoted a homosexual agenda.

Though the validity of that perception can be questioned, there is little doubt that "Fresh Air" interviewed cutting edge artists and occasionally tackled contentious topics. The show could push buttons (more by its substance than its tone – we're not talking here about AM talk radio or "shock jocks"). The quality of the program's interviews (conducted by Terry Gross) was almost universally acknowledged, even by Steve Mills, station manager of WVTF at the time.

In short, "Fresh Air" was just the sort of thoughtful, alternative programming that one would expect to hear on a public (i.e., noncommercial) radio station owned by a university

... in 1995 the university was less attuned to diversity and to the importance of minority viewpoints. Much has changed at Virginia Tech since 1995.

(WVTF is owned by the Virginia Tech Foundation). In response to the controversy, university spokesperson Larry Hincker stated that "the university administration does not get involved in programming decisions ... our operating policy ensures that programming decisions remain with the people most capable of making such decisions - the station staff."

In light of recent events at WVTF, however, it appears Virginia Tech officials can indeed become involved in programming decisions. Late last year, citing a dwindling listener base, WVTF announced it was canceling live Saturday afternoon broadcasts of the Metropolitan Opera. Some opera lovers complained to Virginia Tech, and the administration interceded, ordering the station to reinstate the opera program. According to the *Roanoke Times* (Dec. 24, 1999), "Steve Mills, longtime manager of ... WVTF, said the traditional, hands-off relationship between the station and its owner, the Virginia Tech Foundation, fell apart last week when Tech officials directed him to reinstate Saturday broadcasts from the Metropolitan Opera. 'I think I speak for the staff when I say we do not know how to function,' Mills said Thursday. 'What decision-making authority do I have? I don't think I have any.'" (Note: On March 3, after nearly 25 years with the station, Steve Mills was removed from his job by the Virginia Tech Foundation.)

If Virginia Tech officials would intercede on behalf of opera, why would they, in 1995, do nothing, in the face of homophobic attacks, to save "Fresh Air"?

Though the issue is no doubt complex, we suspect that part of the answer is that in 1995 the university was less attuned to diversity and to the importance of minority viewpoints. Much has

Child Care...

Continued from Page 1

start the right people thinking about the issue again. Second, to move the issue along a bit, it is important for the university, as our employer, to understand the benefits it might gain from addressing the child care issue. For example, if the university had some type of child care program, it would be easier to recruit not only women faculty members, but men faculty members as well. Any thoughts on the list of benefit to the university would be appreciated.

One last point, I am a teaching faculty. If you call or e-mail me, it may take a bit of time before I get back to you; BUT I will get back with you for sure.

changed at Virginia Tech since 1995. In 1997, a series of events culminated in a call by President Torgersen for a campus-wide forum, which was announced as follows: "A recent cluster of incidents on campus includes a racially offensive e-mail, expressions of homophobia in campus media, racial slurs against individuals, disregard for Jewish holy days, and offensive graffiti in university facilities. As President Paul Torgersen has stated, 'I reject and resent these indefensible actions, and I am deeply concerned about the damage and hurt they inflict. Clearly, we must take action, and I want to listen to students and faculty members about their experiences and about directions for change.'"

Change is indeed in progress, on many fronts, as *The Conductor* has documented in this and previous issues. One could argue that issues of diversity are receiving unprecedented attention at Virginia Tech. In this changing climate, and as one of many signs that the university is indeed becoming more tolerant of diverse voices, it is time to bring back "Fresh Air." What better use of the public airwaves could there be than programming that challenges us, delights us, extends us?

We see at least two avenues by which "Fresh Air" could be returned. If university officials continue to intercede directly

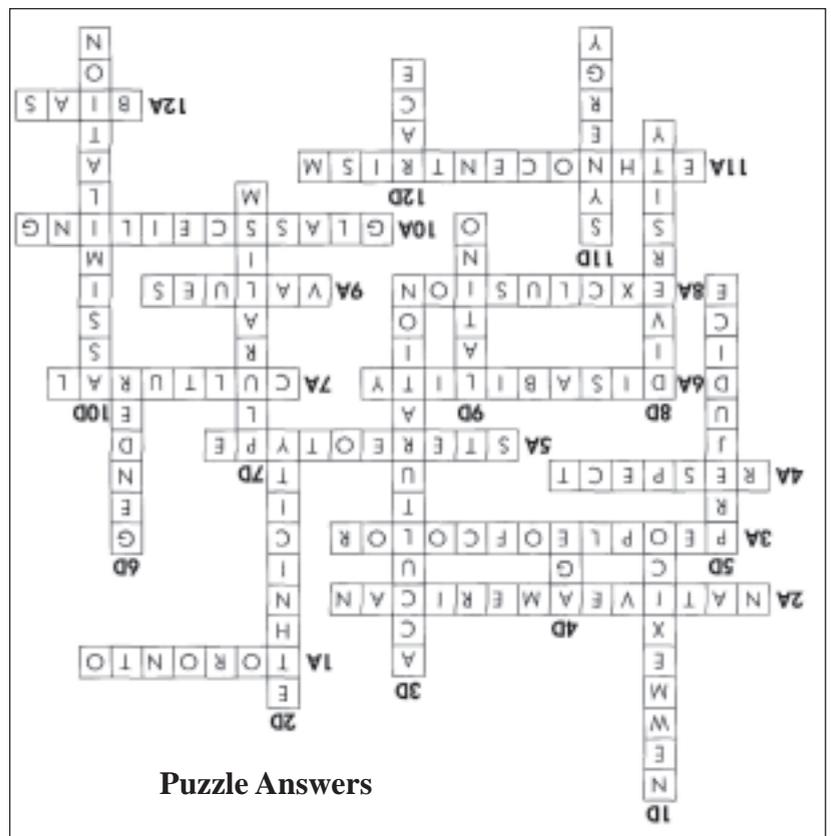
in programming decisions, as they have done recently with opera, they could simply direct WVTF to

reinstate "Fresh Air." If the university returns to a more "hands off" stance, preferring to set general policy rather than to manage, it should issue a statement endorsing the value of presenting diverse viewpoints and alternative programming, and of resisting the market-driven temptation to avoid controversy. In either case, interested members of the university community (as well as the broader listening area) should express their support for bringing back "Fresh Air." As PBS is fond of saying, if we don't do it, who will?

To contact WVTF: Grand Pavilion, 4235 Electric Road, S.W., Suite 105, Roanoke, Virginia 24014-4145. Ph - 540-989-8900; Blacksburg, 540-387-5000; VA-NC-WV, 800-856-8900.

To contact Larry Hincker: University Relations, 315 Burruss Hall, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061-0229. Ph - 540-231-5396. Email: hincker@vt.edu.

Further information, including the full, unedited references from which quotes were drawn above, is accessible via the Web at <http://fbox.vt.edu:10021/H/holtzman/WVTF/>.



Puzzle Answers

What does being a Multicultural Fellow role model mean?

by Charlotte M. Waggoner, safety engineer

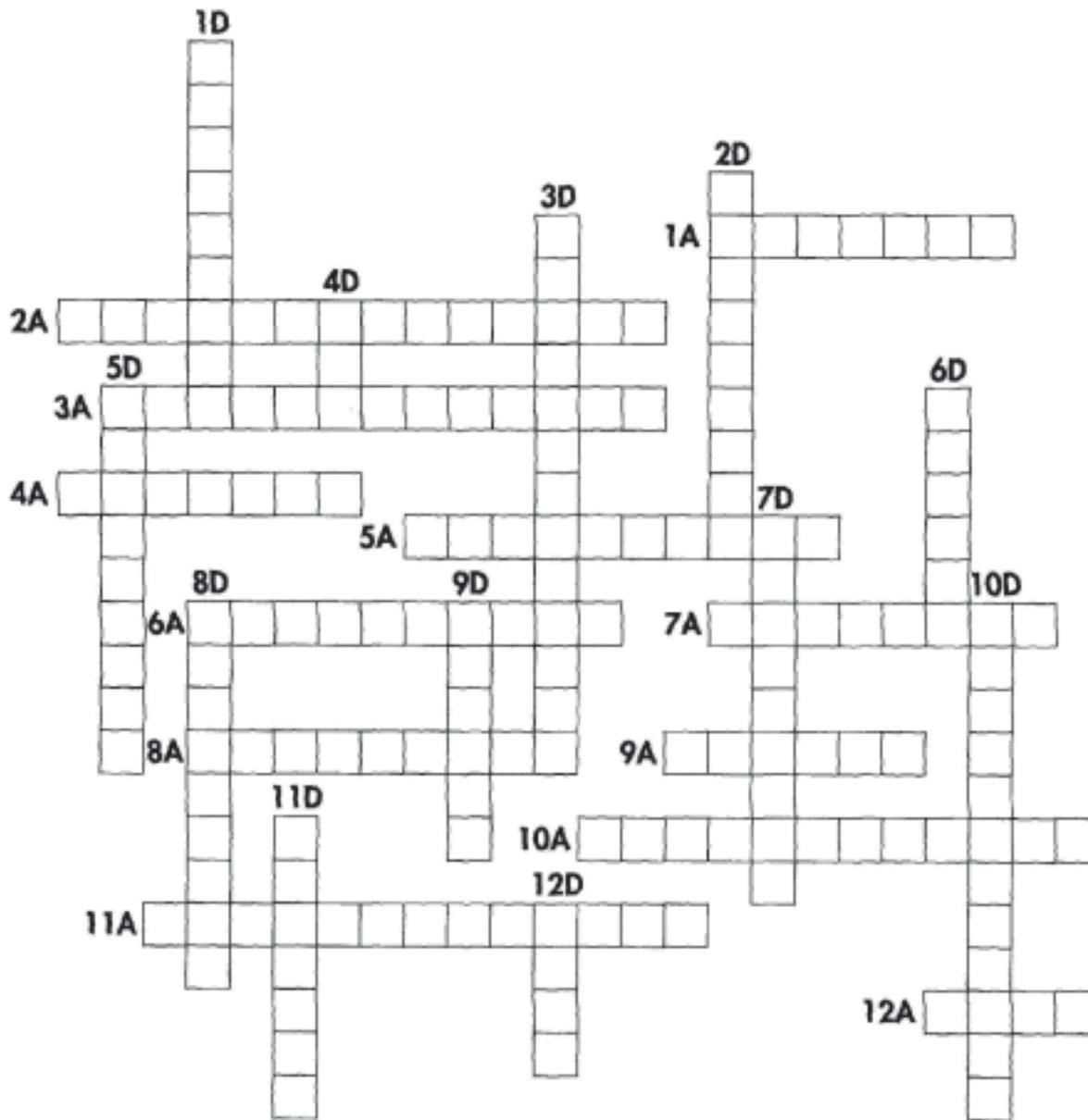
When I first volunteered to write an article depicting what being a Multicultural Fellow role model means, I was very enthusiastic. I'm a big advocate for continued personal and professional growth and role modeling is something I like to promote. I was given plenty of time to complete the assignment, but found myself procrastinating over the next month. I figured I was just putting it off because I had other work to do. But then I realized I wasn't sure if I was worthy of writing such an article. Sure, I could expand on the theoretical aspects of role modeling, such as being respectful and open-minded, but most people know the theory. And, who am I to write such an article when there are plenty of other people who have been more actively involved in promoting multicultural issues. Apprehension crept into my mind and I was....frozen. So, what follows are the top three characteristics that I personally feel a role model needs to exhibit in order to promote multiculturalism in this world.

My first realization that people were treated differently based upon their skin tone was in third grade. I use to read a lot of biographies because I've always been interested in what a person's motivations are in life. I was slowly working my way through all the biographies in my school when I happened to read one about Martin Luther King, Jr. I remember in the first chapter there was a description of him playing with a White kid. One day, he wasn't allowed to play with his friend and he was questioning why this was so. It turned out to be because he was Black. I remember the feeling of innocence and sadness the story imparted to me and I too questioned the reasoning as a child of nine might. My best friend in third grade was Black and I couldn't imagine not being able to play with her. I knew she looked different, but what the Hell did that have to do with anything? This experience stuck with me throughout life and it lends itself to an aspect of role modeling I feel is important: striving to look at someone as a child might -- as another human being. As I went through the public school system, I practiced doing this by training myself to see the person first, then their gender, then their color. Today, I am able to look at the varying skin tones in life and see the beauty in the variations.

The second aspect of role modeling I feel is important is being able to care enough to ask another person about their perspective and then being able to listen to the person as they relate it to you. Listen... really listen. Too many times I see people ask someone a question and then just nod their head politely as the other person answers. Active listening takes practice and concentration. I am constantly amazed at how many people will dominate a conversation, expounding upon their own philosophies, without the slightest inkling or self-awareness that they have been talking non-stop for 10 minutes. "Conversation" implies more than one voice. I struggle with active listening every day. It's hard to not form a response as another is speaking. I expect I will struggle with this until I die.

Beginning with the end in mind is the third most important aspect a role model should be able to exhibit. You need the ability to visualize the future and how you want to be in the world, and then work towards this end. I have found that many people don't think about this. They don't spend enough time reflecting on their

Please see 'Role Model' on page 4



Crossword Puzzle Clues

Down

- In 1991, there was a 60 percent chance that two people randomly meeting in this state would be different racially or ethnically.
- Refers to affiliation with an ethnic group and retaining its customs, language, or social view, e.g., Hispanic.
- The process by which one cultural group takes on or incorporates one or more cultural traits of another group, resulting in new or blended cultural patterns.
- The dictionary defines this as to grow old; to ripen or become mature.
- Suspicion, intolerance, or irrational hatred of other races, creeds, religions, occupations, etc.
- Masculine and feminine.
- View that the most healthy and productive way to work and live is more analogous to a salad than a melting pot.
- Term used to describe a broad range of cultural differences.
- The dictionary defines this as Latin American.

- The process by which an individual or group completely takes on the traits of another culture, leaving behind the original cultural traditions.

- This can occur when cultural differences are viewed as an asset to a team.
- Any of the different varieties of humankind.

Across

- Named by the United Nations as the world's most diverse city, more than 100 languages are spoken here.
- Indigenous peoples of the Americas.
- Positive inclusionary way to describe all nonwhites.
- _____ for others is important in valuing diversity.
- A fixed notion or concept that is held by a number of people and allows no individuality or critical judgment.
- Legal definition: A condition from which a person has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; or has a record of such impairment; or is regarded as having such an impairment.
- Pertaining to the ideas, habits, attitudes, customs, and traditions of a group of people.
- The actions of refusing to admit, consider, or include an individual or group.
- The social principles, goals, or standards held or accepted by an individual, class, society, etc.
- An invisible, though frequently experienced, barrier found in the workplace.
- Random House Dictionary* defines this as a tendency to view other groups or cultures in terms of one's own.
- A mental preference or inclination.

The Conductor

Publisher: Office of Multicultural Affairs

Staff: Multicultural Fellows and anyone who is interested.

Contact : Benjamin Dixon,
Vice President for Multicultural Affairs
332 Burruss Hall - 0176
Blacksburg, VA 24061
540-231-1820

Reprinted with permission from M.J. International.
For more information, please call (858) 689-7328.

Unpack your assumptions

The Stereotype and the Reality: Substance Problems and African Americans

by Michael Hughes, professor of sociology, mdh@vt.edu
and Tannisha Bell, graduate student in sociology,
tbell@vt.edu

The news and entertainment media in the United States have helped to create a seriously distorted stereotype: that one of the main characteristics of the African American community is a pathological pattern of heavy drug and alcohol use, abuse, and dependence. We see pictures of African American men in prison for drug offenses, drug addicted African American single mothers, and young African American "Gangsta" rap musicians who seem to extol the virtues of living the fast life of drugs, alcohol, sex, and violence. Though some African Americans do have drug and alcohol problems, as do some Whites, the stereotype that substance use and abuse are key features of the Black community in the United States is simply not true.

This stereotype is contradicted by the fact that African Americans are less likely to use alcohol and illegal drugs than Whites. This is a consistent finding in all major studies of drug and alcohol use utilizing national samples in the United States, including the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, the Monitoring the Future study (of high school seniors), the National Comorbidity Survey (NCS), and the National College Health Risk Behavior Survey. What this means is that, compared to Whites, the Black community is much closer to being a community of abstainers than it is to being a community of users and abusers of drugs and alcohol. In addition, according to the NCS, African Americans are less likely than Whites to experience substance disorders, such as alcoholism and drug addiction. And, among college students, African Americans are only about a third as likely to be binge drinkers as Whites are, according to the Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study.

So, is it irrational to pay special attention to the drug and alcohol problems of African Americans? Should we just not worry about this issue among African Americans? Not exactly, though we think it is clear that the news outlets should be much more careful about how they report on the life circumstances of African Americans and on the findings of alcohol and drug studies.

There is a drug and alcohol problem among African Americans that has gone largely unaddressed in the media and has escaped the consciousness of most of us. The problem is laid out nicely in Denise Kandel's chapter, "The Social Demography of Drug Use," (in *Confronting Drug Policy*, Bayer and Oppenheimer [eds.], Cambridge University Press, 1993). As with most forms of deviant behavior, drug and alcohol use and abuse are most common among those between 17 and 25. As they age, most deviants "age out" of deviance. They give up norm violations as they enter mainstream society and take on adult roles in the economy and family. From their teenage years through their 20s, African Americans are less likely to use and have problems with drugs and alcohol than Whites. However, African Americans age out of drug abuse more slowly than Whites, and by their 30s, African Americans have higher rates of drug problems than Whites, though nowhere near the level that would justify the twisted stereotypes in the media and some popular culture.

We have been able to confirm this in some as yet unpublished findings that we have generated from the

NCS data. African Americans are less likely to have had an alcohol or drug disorder in their lifetimes, but among those who have ever had one, African Americans are more likely to have an active disorder, that is, to have had recent symptoms. In psychiatric parlance, this means that the course of a drug or alcohol disorder is worse for African Americans than for Whites. What we do not know is why.

There are several possibilities. One is that African Americans may be less likely to have medical insurance that includes adequate benefits for treatment of substance disorders. In addition, drug and alcohol treatment programs that are available may be more effective for White clients than for African American clients. Whites

African Americans are less likely to use alcohol and illegal drugs than Whites ... (but) the course of a drug or alcohol disorder is worse for African Americans...

are more likely to get into private treatment, and drug counselors, many of whom are White, may have trouble connecting with African American clients. Second, as Denise Kandel suggested in her article, though less likely to use drugs, African American users of illegal drugs appear to become more deeply involved in drug use than Whites. For example, for many Whites, drug and alcohol use may be more of a life style choice -- one of the ways the young White middle class entertains itself. But among African Americans, such use may be more of a response to social structural pressures, including the stress associated with lower socioeconomic status. If so, it is easy to see how aging out would be more likely among Whites. Third, if we consider that none of this is happening in a vacuum, but is situated in a society with a history and a structure of racial inequality, we have a third possibility.

Role Model...

Continued from Page 3



Charlotte Waggoner

experiences and how they relate to the existence of mankind. They are content to take each day as it comes and never bat an eye towards the future. My vision of myself in the future has changed over the years, but my current one has been with me for a while. In this vision, I am about 67 years old sitting on a front porch and smoking a pipe. I'm dressed in my favorite overalls and my gray hair is shoulder length. It's a beautiful, clear day with wispy clouds floating by every so often. The vision of grandchildren running in the field comes and goes (I have no children yet and am not married) and I am reflecting upon my life. I feel peaceful. I have been able to inspire others to improve upon their character and I am known as an odd older woman. This makes me smile because I value the commonalities and differences in people. I am also known as a person willing to help others and am known

We would argue that racial inequality may be the primary reason African Americans are less likely to age out of substance abuse than Whites. The main reason people age out of deviance is because they become integrated into mainstream institutions, mostly through the mechanisms of job and career. The history of racism in the United States, including continuing patterns of prejudice and discrimination in education and employment, means that full inclusion in mainstream society is far less possible for African Americans than for Whites. As they are becoming young adults, African American youth must deal with the growing realization that racial inequality is not just a fact of history, but a fact of life in the present, and many must deal with the frustration that

comes with rejection and alienation. Whatever factors have kept the rates of substance problems low for African American youth may become less potent in the face

of systems of exclusion that deprive African Americans of the same opportunities enjoyed by Whites.

To paraphrase Jesse Jackson's famous statement about race and poverty, most African Americans do not have problems with drugs or alcohol, and most drug and alcohol abusers are not African Americans. Not only that, but African Americans are less likely to be involved with substances and to have problems with them than are Whites. Space does not permit it, but an analogous statement could be made for many of the "pathologies" that we find in common stereotypes of African Americans. In negating these stereotypes, we must not turn our attention away from the real problems that do exist. Clearly, more research is needed to clarify which, if any, of the processes noted above are involved, so that appropriate action can be taken.

for my contributions in the community. I was an informal leader in my career and able to help others reach their full potential. I have always surrounded myself with different people and am known to have eclectic taste. From this point, I visualize past my physical life and look at the world through my soul's journey. I see how I want things to be in the world: respectful, creative, challenging, and wondrous. I see that the whole point of existence is to learn and to learn that we are of the same essence. I know the mortal coil is just a vehicle and that the uniqueness of individuals inspires thought and action. With my visions of the future in mind, I try and focus my daily energy towards becoming "complete". And, if there is one thing I've learned, it's that the road to self-actualization can be full of detours.

There they are -- the three facets of role modeling I think a person should possess:

1. Being able to see others as humans first,
2. Being able to really listen as another speaks, and
3. Being able to visualize yourself and the world in the future and work towards that realization.

All of these abilities, I believe, strive towards recognition and inclusion of individuals with varying backgrounds in this diverse universe. Of course, there are many other aspects to being a role model, but for me, these are the most challenging and universal.