

First impressions often result from snap inferences that we make based on the first things we see or hear about others. Often observable cues to people's gender and ethnicity provide the basis for making sweeping inferences that can influence whether we will or will not engage in interactions with others, and how we engage in interactions with them. This video demonstrates that, if people just get beyond stereotypes in their minds and their internal conversations to interact with others, they can discover commonalities and move beyond their biases.

- Why do we instinctively stereotype people when we walk into a room?
- Can you think of instances in which your internal thoughts have kept you from interacting with others?
- Why did the international student feel she should accommodate to others?
- Why did Ella immediately sit by Sebastian (rather than by someone else)? Do you think Ella realized she did this?
- People often have worries, anxieties, or defensive thoughts that keep them from interacting with others who are different from them. What suggestions do you have for getting people to be less concerned about themselves and more concerned about and interested in reaching out to others?

Our perceived similarities with others influence who we are drawn to and who we stay away from, often in very subtle ways that we may not even consciously recognize. Examine your own experiences and how you do this in everyday life. These small acts snowball to have major implications. For example, if we sit by someone in a class who shares some surface similarity with us, that proximity will drive conversation and may lead to working together on class assignments, which may lead to friendships, and so on. Thus, seemingly innocuous and unimportant acts can snowball to create highly segregated environments.

- What concrete things can you do in your life to bring you into greater contact with people who may be different from you in certain ways?