*Crossing the Line Exercise*  
(Modified for APPD Diversity Workshop)

**Instructions**

**To the facilitators:** The purpose of this exercise is for the participants to explore their own identities and the identities of those around them. It is very important that you create a safe space in which the participants feel comfortable expressing themselves. It is up to you to make sure that participants are being respectful to others and it may be helpful to establish ground rules before beginning.

Make sure that you give participants enough time to think about each item. On average, each item will take about 10 seconds. Remind participants every so often that they should be noticing who has and has not crossed the line and also that this is a silent exercise.

Example: “I went to college in California.”

- Give the participants a few moments to think about the statement and cross the line if they wish to.
- “Thank you. Please return back over the line.”
- Go to the next question, repeating the format.

During the exercise itself, take note to which questions the participants react most and make sure to include those items in the discussion. It may work best for one instructor to read the questions while another watches the participants to see which items spark the most interest.

For the discussion following the exercise, remember that as facilitators, the participants should never feel that you are judging them. Your role is to facilitate discussion, not take sides in a discussion. Make sure that the participants are not interrupting or attacking each other.

**Read aloud to the group:** The next exercise we will do is something called a forced choice exercise. As you can see, there is a line across the room. Everyone is to line up on one side of this line. I will read an item and if that statement describes you, than you are to cross the line and turn and face your colleagues. There is no straddling the line- you must decide if the statement describes you or does not. For example, if I read, “I went to college in California,” everyone who went to college in California would cross the line and then turn and face their colleagues. We will give you a few moments to notice who has and has not crossed the line. We will then ask you to return to your places on the original side of the line. This is a silent exercise, so once we begin the statements, there will be no talking. I will only read the statement and will not clarify the question. Your response should be based on your personal interpretation of the statement.

We would like to remind you to respect your peers. We want this to be a safe space in which you can all express yourselves. Some of these questions will cause you to pause and think, and some may even make you uncomfortable. We challenge you to have the courage to answer these items truthfully, and we also challenge you to create a safe environment for your peers so that they too can answer these items truthfully.

We will be able to discuss the statements after the exercise is complete. At that time you may have questions directed at one of your peers, but please be respectful in how you speak to them. However, at no point will any participant be forced to explain why they chose to cross or not cross the line. It is up to the individual to decide how much they would like to disclose about him/her. Are there any questions?
Crossing the Line Exercise

Statements

1. I have 5 or more siblings
2. I spent more than 5 years of my childhood outside of the United States
3. I have spent more than 1 year of my adult life outside of the United States
4. I am the first in my family to attain a college degree
5. I finished college before I was 21 years
6. I am multiracial
7. English is my only language
8. I am not a good reflection of the type of faculty at my institution
9. I serve patients who are mainly of my race
10. I worry about balancing my career and my family
11. I expect to make more money than either of my parents
12. I have a different religious belief system than most of my peers
13. I have felt threatened because of my race
14. I have felt threatened because of my gender
15. I have felt threatened because of my religious beliefs
16. I have felt threatened because of my sexual orientation
17. I have felt threatened because of my nationally
18. I have felt threatened because of my political views
19. I have felt alone, unwelcomed, or afraid.
20. I know that at least one of my residents has felt threatened in the last year because of his/her race, sexual orientation, or nationality.
21. I have done a good job in supporting my residents who have felt threatened because of his/her race, sexual orientation, or nationality.
22. I value diversity in my residency program.
23. The residents in my program are representative of the patient population that we serve.
24. My department values diversity in my residency program.
25. I have been uncomfortable at some point in this exercise
26. I have not crossed the line when I should have at some point in this exercise

Read to participants: That’s the end of the statements. Thank you for your participation.

Note: The statements can be modified to suit your particular learning objectives.

Discussion

Please have the group discuss what was learned, what personal buttons were pushed, and how this relates to personal and professional growth. It is important to acknowledge the diversity represented in the group and how each participant contributes to this diversity. In creating a community it is important to recognize the misconceptions that may be held about peers.

Have the participants think about how they felt when one of them crossed the line and how they felt when they did not. Acknowledge that it may have been difficult to decide when to move based on the interpretation of the statement and their life experience.

Discussion Questions:

- How did you feel while you were participating in the activity?
- How did you feel when you crossed the “line”? 
- How did you feel when you didn’t cross the “line”?
- How are you feeling now?
- Did you learn anything new about yourself or your peers?
- Which question made you the most uncomfortable and why?
- Did you surprise yourself with any of your answers?
- What did you think about the statement “I feel I am culturally competent”?

If you were to design a crossing the line exercise for patients what questions would you include?