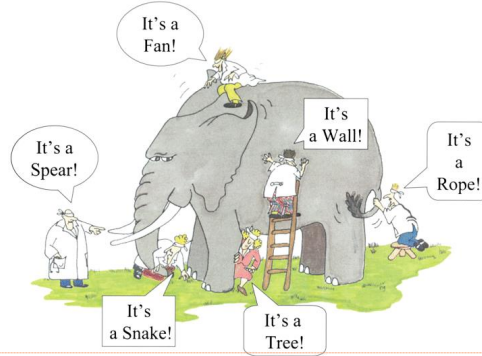


## “The Danger of a Single Story”

My understanding of the danger of a single story is that if people are exposed to only one perspective (even if it may be grossly inaccurate) of perhaps a certain culture or a community identity, then that is what their understanding of that culture or community will be limited to. As Ms. Adichie said herself, the idea closely embodies the notion of a stereotype where an entire culture or community gets labeled as a certain characteristic without ever being properly explored or understood. This actually reminds me of a cartoon (right) of several blind-folded scientists trying to figure out what an elephant is. However, each of them only feels a certain part of the elephant (i.e. a single story) and thus without exploring the rest of the elephant collectively (i.e. the countless other stories of a culture or community) they will never be able to correctly interpret what an elephant is.



Commented [KT1]: Excellent example!

I have been on the receiving end of the danger associated with a single story personally. Although I was born and raised just outside Chicago, both my parents are originally from Iran. Thus, growing up as a second-generation immigrant was a bit challenging at times not only because I had to become comfortable with my bicultural identity but also because the post-9/11 sentiment often subjected me to the “single story” view that was developing of middle easterners in the U.S. In elementary and middle school, I would sometimes get asked by classmates “Why do your people hate us so much” and I was always confused by this question because that was never a notion that was apparent, or I was even familiar with in my house. My dad left his whole family behind in Iran at the age of 18 to come to the U.S. (and actually also studied at UW-Madison) because he believed in the incredible opportunities and freedoms the U.S provided. I never saw or experienced “hate” in that sentiment or in any other stories with my family. Thus, going through this experience firsthand taught me to never assume anything about an individual regardless of where they come from or how they may identify. This is a notion I apply extensively to my House Fellow position especially in regard to the Interpersonal Communication competency. For instance, I had an international student from Taiwan on my floor that had never seen a bubbler before and I caught the individual trying to wash their face with it. I understood that although a water fountain’s/bubbler’s use may be incredibly obvious to people who have lived in the U.S, to the foreign exchange student it was a foreign entity that the person might have perhaps had their own “single story” understanding about. Thus, with great care and tact to not make the person feel alienated by their mistake, I explained to the person the purpose of the bubbler as well as demoing it for them and they were very grateful that I was able to ease their transition into the new culture/environment they were now a part of.

Commented [KT2]: Great example, and use of a leadership competency.

4/15/18 (Revised)

## “Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Action”

Sinek’s Golden Circle essentially is a paradigm for how certain innovators, recognized individuals, and market leaders achieved the level of success that they did. The idea is that those individuals who can sell their idea or belief based on the notion of “Why” they believe what they do will be able to inspire more people to follow in their movement or invest in their product than those people that express their ideas in terms of simply “What” they are or “How” they or their product will help. In other words, those that sell their idea or product in terms of first “Why”, then “How”, then “What” (moving from the inside of the circle outward) are more successful at garnering people’s support and investment than those that start with just the outside of the Golden Circle (the “What”). As a side note, I feel obligated to mention this as a Neurobiology major that Sinek’s representation of the Golden Circle to different regions of the brain and their functions was massively oversimplified and borderline almost inaccurate.... but I enjoyed the rest of his talk though.

Commented [KT3]: Haha, noted.

That being said, I overall agree with the quote listed in the prompt. There are people who are leaders simply through a title like a boss or supervisor and then there are people who become leaders through the recognition of their peers and their ability to inspire their peers. For example, having been a middle school tutor I have worked with kids who continuously ignore the teacher’s instructions to open their books, take notes, pay attention, etc. Often when I talk to these students, they tell me that they are bored or do not want to learn about History or Physics or whatever class they may be in then. Thus, what I try to do is engage them in the material (i.e. inspire them) by relating what they are learning that day to something they are passionate about in their lives. For instance, Joe was one of my regular students that I worked with and I would often utilize his devotion to the *Fast and Furious* movies to generate his interest in learning about how forces in Physics allow cars to move. Although the teacher might be viewed as the person in the official leader position, I am able to lead the attention of several students in this way by inspiring them in what they are learning. I believe there are two factors at play that allow me to facilitate this outcome. One of these factors is that because my age is closer to the students compared to the teacher, the students likely view me as more able to understand and be able to relate to (as part of a younger culture/generation) their “why” for learning. For instance, in the example with Joe above the teacher might not be familiar with or interested in the *Fast and Furious* films and as a result would not have the same ability to garner Joe’s attention and “why” for learning as much as I in that specific instance. Another factor potentially at play is that the students may be more inclined to listen and learn from me simply because I am an outsider in their classroom. The students may have grown accustomed to the practices and techniques the teacher uses to motivate their learning. Thus, hearing a new voice in the classroom potentially allowed me to seek out the students’ “why” for learning in new ways that kept their attention. This experience as a whole clearly reflects the Supporting Learning and Development of Others Competency because I am working to assess the aspirations/passions of other students and using that to help them understand the material and to take an active, interested role in their own learning/development.

Commented [KT4]: What are some of the factors in play that allow for you to do that, and not the teacher in this circumstance?

4/15/18 (Revised)

## “The Difference Between Winning and Succeeding”

I understood Wooden’s explanation of success as the following: as long as you tried your absolute best in whatever task you set yourself out to do then you had succeeded. This is different from winning because winning suggests that you beat someone else or that someone else lost in order for you to win, and Wooden explains that you should never try to set out to be “better” than someone else. Doing your best with the capabilities and skills that you have in your possession, he asserts, is what is actually considered succeeding regardless of if you did better than someone else or if they did better than you.

I full-heartedly agree with Wooden’s definition of success because I embody it on a daily basis. If you go through life trying to be better than everyone else (i.e. only trying to “win” all the time), then you will never be truly happy with yourself because there will always be someone who will be better than you at something. For instance, despite my strong academic record I actually struggled significantly in one of my chemistry courses during my undergraduate career. I was in danger of getting a low C or high D, so I spent a straight week putting my absolute best effort and time into studying for the final exam. Consequently, I received a B as my final grade for the course and I was extremely happy and thought of myself as successful, despite the fact that many students in the class received a higher grade than me in the course. My happiness and success here was derived from the fact that I put forth my absolute best effort to change a bad situation I was in, given my capabilities and comfort with the course material, and I subsequently saw the fruits of my labor rewarded regardless of the fact that other people did better than me. That being said, I think this reflects the Self-Awareness Competency the best because you have to be comfortable and accepting of your *own* limitations and strengths (regardless of other people) in order to meet Wooden’s sound definition of success.