

Offenses Against the Other

1. **DEMONIZE THE OTHER.** *To regard the "Other" as the evil one.* We tend to do this to Others in at least three ways: they are not clean; they are physically violent or dangerous; and they are unable to maintain emotional or sexual control. Whoever is the outsider or the "dangerous stranger" is perceived to be demonic.
2. **ROMANTICIZE THE OTHER.** *To hold the other in unusually high regard because he or she is famous, smart, old, young, talented, etc.* Whenever we think about a person or category of persons as untainted or purer or as the innocent child or noble savage or presume THEM to be automatically superior, we romanticize them. This makes it difficult to hear or see the person as he or she actually is.
3. **COLONIZE THE OTHER.** *To assimilate the other into MY world or to transform the other into MY perspective.* The assumption behind this patronizing attitude is that they (the Others) cannot take care of themselves or manage their own affairs. The conviction is that there is so much we need to teach them so they can be like us.
4. **GENERALIZE THE OTHER.** *To categorize or classify a person in a way that treats the person like a member of a group rather than an individual.* Whenever we say "women are like that" or "we need to do something about the foreigners" or "all black people look alike" we make sweeping assumptions that overlook the uniqueness of each individual Other in favor of some generalized category.
5. **TRIVIALIZE THE OTHER.** *To make light of a problem or suggest that differences are not important or to joke inappropriately about a particular situation.* When we make a joke about uniqueness or when we tell jokes that stereotype a culture or race, we seek to trivialize. Sometimes, when we tease or tantalize someone, our aim is to make them feel smaller or less important.
6. **HOMOGENIZE THE OTHER.** *To blend by fiat all of the aspects of an individual's story together into one common blend.* It is a way of "ironing out" differences, which has the consequence that we do not see or hear the distinctiveness of the Other. The presumption that America is a "great melting pot" in which all particularity is subsumed under being American is a form of homogenization. We are really all the same—really. And differences would be eliminated if we knew one another.
7. **VAPORIZE THE OTHER.** *To ignore the person's contribution or overlook their presence or discount the other in some way.* The aim is to make someone invisible because of who they are or what they represent or what they say that is frightening. Children vaporize whomever they wish to eliminate with an imaginary ray gun. Women are keenly aware of being vaporized regularly. In a way, it is the most viscous offense against the Other because they are regarded as not-being.
8. **INFANTILIZE THE OTHER.** *To treat the other as a child or as childish.* Behind this offense against the Other is the conviction that people who are different are not inferior but underdeveloped. If we think of difference developmentally according to the Enlightenment standards of western cultures, it is easy to conclude that the Other simply needs time to develop and then he or she will be just like me.

Prepared and modified by Herbert Anderson from material presented by Robert Schreiter, CPPS.

Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry