

# 1.DISCRIMINATION AND IDENTITY

**Unit overview:** in this unit you are going to discover your basic identity features. You will also learn about *stereotypes and prejudice: what they stand for* and how they can ultimately lead to *discrimination*. You will reflect upon the effects as well as the unhappy consequences that such a moral stance usually has as well as possible ways of combating it.

**Vocabulary:** identity-shaping vocabulary as well as discrimination-related words or expressions.

In general, **discrimination** is the discernment of qualities and recognition of the differences between things. There are two different types of discrimination:

## positive

## negative

Discrimination between people on the grounds of merit or achievement, for example, would be an example of positive discrimination. This unit focuses on the **negative** type of discrimination, however; that is to say, discrimination amongst people or the prejudicial treatment of different groups of people based on certain characteristics.

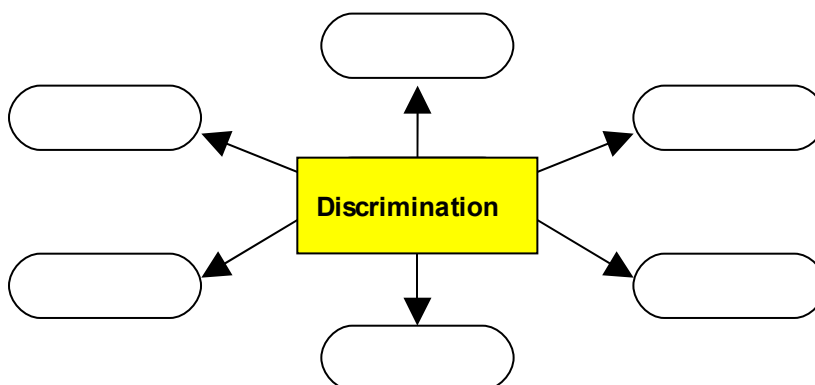
Negative discrimination means treating certain people differently to everyone else in an unfair way. Racism would be the most common example of discrimination. We will explicitly tackle this phenomenon in unit number 3, however.

When a person has unfair ideas about certain people this is called **stereotyping**.

When a person has unfair feelings or opinions about certain people this is called **prejudice**.

If a person can keep these feelings and ideas to themselves they will hurt no one but themselves. However, if a person decides to act based upon these unfair thoughts and feelings this is called **discrimination**.

- **Brainstorm.** Give examples of discriminatory practices.



**DISCRIMINATION CAN HAPPEN TO ANYONE IT CAN HAPPEN TO YOU**  
Race.Nationality.Colour.Religion.Belief.  
Gender.Age.Sexuality.Disability.



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## STEREOTYPES



A "stereotype" is a general idea (usually "wrong") about a person or group of persons. We develop stereotypes when we do not (nor do we want to) have all the information we need to make a fair judgement about certain people. In the absence of this information, stereotypes help us "figure out." Our society often innocently creates and perpetuates stereotypes, but these stereotypes often lead to unfair discrimination, stigmatization and persecution when the stereotype is unfavourable.

### TASK

In pairs, consider the following. You are walking through a park late at night and...

- Encounter **three senior citizens** wearing fur coats and walking with canes.
- Encounter **three high school-aged boys** wearing leather jackets.
- On which occasion would you feel more threatened?
- Why do you think that is so?
- This is called **stereotyping**. How do you think stereotypes are created?
- **GAME: MATCHING CARDS**

In pairs match the cards your teacher will give you to make complete sentences. Once you have finished answer the following questions:

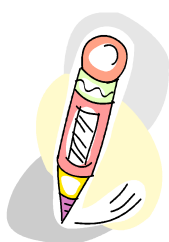
- What is easy or difficult?
- Why?
- Was there anything unexpected about the completed sentences?
- What does the activity tell you regarding the way we think about a particular group of people?

## PREJUDICE

Coming from the word *prejudgement*, prejudice means taking a decision without knowing the real facts about an event or a group of people.

- Complete the following sentences and follow your teacher's instructions:

- All athletes are .....
- All drug users are .....
- All homosexuals are .....
- All politicians are .....
- People from Morocco are .....
- All people with AIDS are .....
- Blond girls are .....
- Japanese .....
- Obese people .....
- Teachers.....



### Drawing

Draw pictures of the 'typical' young man and woman of today. Write notes on the images to explain particular details of dress and lifestyle, for example the music that would be playing on their Walkman.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO? HOW TO DEAL WITH DISCRIMINATION

**The Universal Declaration of Human Rights:  
"all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights"**

Understanding the nature of discrimination and how this practice appears is relevant to fighting it. All of us have prejudices about members of groups different from ourselves. We should, however, recognize that we are not acting fairly if we treat people differently because of stereotypes and prejudices. Each one of us deserves to be considered a unique individual of intrinsic worth. If you want to be respected you have to learn to respect and help the others be respected.

There are times when we all face peer pressure, when we are within a group, confronted with jokes or comments which put down a person or a group of people. It takes courage to raise objections to these jokes and pejorative comments and to actively fight the prejudice which they feed. It takes courage to stand up against injustice, and fight the discrimination, stereotypes and prejudice that emanate from a considerable number of comments people say and attitudes people have. Remember, however, that you earn respect for yourself by giving respect.

There are times, however, when discrimination derives from a misunderstanding. Read the following newspaper article, which describes a clear case of discrimination, and do the activity below:



**Creative writing.** Fortunately, Katie's complaint was positively dealt with and this discrimination practice was addressed and sorted. Write the letter as you think Katie herself might have written it.

**PAIR WORK - ABOUT DIFFERENCES....**

- Name some groups of people that you think are discriminated against in our society. Write a list of these groups and read it out loud to the class.
- Discuss the ways in which these groups face discrimination.
- Think how their rights are being violated.
- Design a **poster** for one of the groups that experience discrimination. The objective is to persuade the public of the
  1. positive aspects of that group and their way of life
  2. that group's claim for equal rights
- Present your poster to the rest of the class

Think about it



Look at the following sign and think of reasons why such signs could possibly ever have existed. Think also about the public places where these signs or advertisements were put up or published and what kind of people could do so.



W. COLE, No. 8 Ann-st.  
**G**ROCERY CART AND HARNESS FOR SALE—In good order, and one chestnut horse, 3 years old excellent saddle horse; can be ridden by a lady. Also, young man wanted, from 16 to 18 years of age, able to work. No Irish need apply. CLUFF & TUNIS, No. 270 W. ington-st., corner of Myrtle-av., Brooklyn.  
**B**ILLIARD TABLE FOR SALE—Of Leona manufacture; been used about nine months. Also, tures of a Bar-room. Inquire on the premises. No.

Can you find such signs or advertisements nowadays?

Think of possible ways of dealing with such attitudes.



### Group work

In groups, say how you feel around people who are different from you. Imagine how you would feel and how you would react if you were subject to any stereotype or any pejorative remarks or comments. Discuss the effects that might have on your self-image.

## MY IDENTITY

As you grow up you raise vital questions about your identity (this is to say, about who you are). You start asking yourself simple questions such as choice over how tidy you keep your room, what books to read or much more complicated questions, such as sexual orientation. This process can be complex and disorienting at times, specially if you find yourself questioned by people surrounding you. Before attempting to explore the identity issue any further read articles 7 & 8 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child:

**Article 7 (Registration, name, nationality, care):** All children have the right to a legally registered name, officially recognised by the government. Children have the right to a nationality (to belong to a country). Children also have the right to know and, as far as possible, to be cared for by their parents.

**Article 8 (Preservation of identity):** Children have the right to an identity – an official record of who they are. Governments should respect children's right to a name, a nationality and family ties.

Under the above articles each person is to be valued as a unique individual with potential for spiritual, moral, intellectual and physical development and change.

- What kinds of rights do children have?
- Are all these rights granted to you?
- Do you know of anybody whose rights are not granted?
- Can you think of people who do not have such basic rights recognised?

On the basis of these values, we as individuals should:



### GROUP WORK

In groups, look at any one of the principles above and find out exactly what it stands for. Subsequently list ideas that you think might help you fulfil this principle.

### ● GAME: Who's in your group?

You will play a game called “who's in your group?”. Follow the teacher's instructions.

# TASK

**ME BAG:** bring a number of objects or items you consider important or meaningful in your life (example, a postcard, a CD, etc.). Place them in a bag (the 'Me Bag') and show them to the rest of the group. Explain why they are important.

## WHAT CONSTITUTES IDENTITY?

There are a number of elements, personal traits, features or characteristics, that each one of us have and which make of us unique individuals. All these elements make up our identity. In time we grow and our identity is developed and forged at the same time as our personality is deployed. Identity is an issue, specially in the growing stages of our life. We consolidate our identity all the time, asking ourselves such questions as clothing, appearance, relations, beliefs and occupations.

- **Identity list**

Write a list of all the things that you consider constitute your identity. Start with your name and family and expand out into your friends, pastimes, interests, hobbies, likes/dislikes, personality traits, etc. all these things that make of you a unique person.

Our **Identity** is therefore formed by a countless number of elements that, combined all together, make us different from everybody else. What is more, we are constantly shaping our identity amidst a barrage of influences. We are constantly interacting with people of different backgrounds and we should consider this fact a highly positive one. We learn from others while others learn from ourselves and we should see ourselves in a positive way because that is the only way we have to accept ourselves and, only by recognizing or accepting himself or herself will somebody acknowledge and learn from others.

15. EVERY INDIVIDUAL IS  
EQUAL BEFORE AND UNDER THE  
LAW AND HAS THE RIGHT TO THE  
EQUAL PROTECTION AND EQUAL  
BENEFIT OF THE LAW WITHOUT  
DISCRIMINATION AND, IN  
PARTICULAR, WITHOUT  
DISCRIMINATION BASED ON  
RACE, NATIONAL OR ETHNIC  
ORIGIN, COLOUR, RELIGION,  
SEX, AGE OR MENTAL OR  
PHYSICAL DISABILITY.

- **KNOWLEDGE QUEST**

Complete the summing report your teacher will give you.