

## 1.DISCRIMINATION AND IDENTITY

The Aim of this first unit is to introduce students to the project itself. This unit offers them the possibility to learn what constitutes their own identity. At the same time they will learn that some people are discriminated against precisely because of that: the way they are. They will also be exposed to different ways people stereotype and different forms of prejudice.

Right at the beginning, the teacher should point out that while each of us is a unique individual it is essential that we learn to live with one another. The activities in this unit help young people see that they have things in common with many of their peers, including those who they may think of as being very different from themselves in terms of gender, race, ethnicity and social class.

Encourage students throughout the unit to share any personal experiences they may have had with discrimination. If students are not quite comfortable when it comes to speaking about their individual experiences, permit them to talk about the prejudices of their friends, or about prejudicial attitudes they have seen on television or in movies.

- **Brainstorm.** Students' own answers but expect such vocabulary as gender, nationality, race, sex, age, religion among others.

### STEREOTYPE

Ask students if they have heard this word. Talk briefly about what a stereotype is and how it is formed. For instance, a stereotype may result when someone meets only one person from a culture or grouping, does not get to know them very well and then assumes that all people from that group have the same characteristics. Sometimes stereotypes are formed by listening to or reading what other people have to say about members of a group, without actually ever knowing those persons or questioning the truth of their statements.

- **Task activity**

Students should reflect upon these two scenarios. Allow some time for them to consider some possible reasons why they feel threatened on one occasion and not on the other. Obviously, we may not feel as threatened if we meet three senior citizens all dressed up as if we were met by three high school-aged boys wearing leather jackets.

**Why is this so?** We have made a generalization in each case. These generalizations have their roots in experiences we have had ourselves, read about in books and magazines, seen in movies or television, or have had related to us by friends and family. In many cases, these stereotypical generalizations are reasonably accurate. Yet, in virtually every case, we are resorting to prejudice by assuming an idea of a person based on a

stereotype, without knowledge of the total facts. By stereotyping, we take for granted that a person or group has certain characteristics. Quite often, we have stereotypes about persons who are members of groups with which we have not had first-hand contact.

Television, books, comic strips, and movies are all abundant sources of stereotyped characters. A digitally-clear example of that is racism in the Hollywood industry: for much of its history, the movie industry portrayed African-Americans as being unintelligent, lazy, or violence-prone. As a result of viewing these stereotyped pictures of African-Americans, for example, prejudice against African-Americans has been boosted. In the same way, physically attractive women have been and continue to be portrayed as unintelligent or unintellectual and sexually promiscuous.

Stereotypes also evolve out of fear of persons from minority groups. For example, many people have the view of a person with mental illness as someone who is violence-prone. This is an exaggeration as statistical data indicate that persons with mental illness tend to be no more prone to violence than the general population. Perhaps the few, but well-publicized, isolated cases of mentally ill persons going on rampages have planted the seed of this myth about these persons. This may explain how some stereotypes developed in the beginning; a series of isolated events carried out by a member of a group which was unfairly generalized to be viewed as a character of all members of that group.

### **OPTIONAL ACTIVITY – VIDEOCONFERENCE**

The activity proposed at this stage is a videoconference with a school abroad to talk about **“Stereotypes - The typical...”**

Decide with the teacher at the other end on number of students as well as time allocation. Prior to that have your students talk about the typical American or Japanese (depending on the videoconference partner one has). Have them list cliches and or ideas they have about a typical person from that territory. When given the chance, have them go over these cliches with their counterpart and discuss whether they truly so.

### **MATCHING CARDS (in the *Additional Materials* section)**

Ask students to group up. Next distribute a set of cards in each one of the groups. Hand them the first half of the sentences first. Tell them to read them through. Next hand them the second half and ask them to pair them. Once they have done so ask them to answer the questions immediately afterwards; in particular, they should consider if there was an unexpected outcome. Students themselves should try to come up with a plausible explanation for that. This is again an example of stereotype and prejudice.

## PREJUDICE

The word **prejudice** refers to prejudgement: making a decision before becoming aware of the relevant facts of a case or event. Prejudice can be spread by the use of propaganda and sparked by demagogues.

At times the terms prejudice and stereotype are confusing:

- Prejudices are abstract-general preconceptions or abstract-general attitudes towards any type of situation object or person.
- Stereotypes are generalizations of existing characteristics.

### Sentence completion

Have students independently complete the following sentences, then form groups to compare their answers and discuss if there is any prejudice in their answers or in those of their classmates, as well as what factors (television, newspapers, friendships, attitudes of their parents) may have contributed to such prejudice.

- **Answers – students' own answers**

### Drawing activity

Ask students to draw the pictures. Tell them they can annotate their images or further illustrate them to explain particulars details .This could be prepared for the lesson as homework. Display the posters or ask students to get together in groups of four to discuss their drawings. Bring the class together to discuss the following questions:

- Are there any similarities amongst the drawings?
- Why were these aspects chosen as typical?
- What importance do clothes have?
- Are they a good guide to what a young person is like?
- Why is everyone able to draw pictures of a 'typical' young person?

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

Tell students to read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and make sure every one understands its meaning and its spirit. Next, ask them whether (and why or why not) there would still be cases of stereotyping and prejudice if everyone fully respected the spirit of the declaration. Then students should go over the section that aims at finding a logical explanation for such phenomena. Students should then contribute to finding further

possible explanations and ways of putting an end to these discriminatory practices.

## Reading

Ask students to read the article and have them look the vocabulary words up in the dictionary and then ask them the following questions:

- What kind of discriminatory case is the article portraying?  
(*answer: a case of gender discrimination*)
- Is there any stereotype implied?  
(*answer: Yes, only boys and men like football*)
- Was the problem sorted? How?  
(*answer: Yes, the person who had been discriminated against wrote a letter to the club management to ask for the problem to be addressed. She received a letter, in turn, stating that the problem would be addressed*)



## Creative writing (students' own answers)

### ABOUT DIFFERENCES...

This section aims at helping students learn that difference in people is a wealth we can all benefit from. Difference is, by no means, a negative aspect. The teacher should point out that we are all unique and, despite sharing some traits, each one of us is a different individual. That, however, should be no cause of concern to them as we can learn from one another and we can all contribute to help shape ourselves.

## Pair-work activity

(students' own answers)

## Think about it

### No Irish Need Apply (NINA)

**Historical approach:** The Irish American community has a deeply rooted belief that it was the victim of systematic job discrimination in nineteenth-century America. They claim that the discrimination was done publicly in a highly humiliating fashion through signs that

announced "Help Wanted: No Irish Need Apply." The Irish insist that such "NINA" signs really existed and prove the existence of widespread discrimination and prejudice. Similarly, other nationalities or groups, such as hippies, tramps or gypsies, usually had to face this dehumanizing treatment by means of discriminatory signs.

Tell students to read the signs and answer the questions. Ask them whether they know of any such discriminatory practices in their community. Ask them, too, what reaction such signs would produce in them. Elicit ideas from them about how to eradicate them.

Answers: students' own answers

### **GROUP WORK** (students' own answers)

MY IDENTITY
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This section will help students become more self-aware and sensitive toward certain issues regarding their own and their peers' identity.

Identity is a number of traits or meanings people hold for themselves that define them as persons or as members of a group. These meanings constitute an individual identity that serves as a reference for oneself and for other persons when trying to compare different perceptions they have of life.

A better understanding of their own identity will help students accept themselves and their peers, thus smoothing the terrain to non-discriminatory behaviour.

### **The Convention on the Rights of the Child**

Tell students that a *Convention* is a set of rules which the participants at a political gathering are expected to follow. They will work on this topic in another section of this project. At this stage, tell them to read articles 7 and 8 within that convention. Make sure they all understand the two articles. Next, ask them to answer the questions immediately below (answers: students' own). For more information on the Convention, please visit the following site:

<http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm>

### **Objective bubbles**

Go over the information (“objectives” or “principles”) contained within the bubbles and ask them to read the different pieces completely through, always establishing that the information is understood.

## **GROUP WORK**

Students' own answers

### **● Who's in your group?**

While each of us is a unique individual it is essential that we learn to live with one another. This activity helps young people see that they have things in common with many of their peers, including those who they may think of as being very different from themselves in terms of gender, race, ethnicity and social class.

### **Procedure**

1. The teacher calls out a series of characteristics, one at a time. After each one pupils move around the room to form small groups with others who have the same characteristic. For example, if the characteristic is ‘favourite colour’, the pupils walk round quietly saying their favourite colour. When two students with the same favourite colour find each other, they then move around looking for others with the same response, until small groups are formed.

2. They spend a minute in this group discussing the characteristic they have in common, and then move on to group themselves according to the next characteristic.

Characteristics that might be used are:

- favourite TV show
- number of siblings
- favourite school subjects
- house chores done
- favourite season of the year
- favourite food
- favourite pop group
- ideal future occupation
- characteristic you think is most desirable in a young person

### **Warning**

Avoid using characteristics that will cause pupils to group themselves along lines of race, ethnicity, class e.g. Neighbourhood you live in, religion, favourite place to go on holiday, eye and hair colour if this could prove divisive.

3. Students discuss their feelings about the activity. Ask the following questions:

- Did anyone find themselves in a group with someone they did not expect to have anything in common with? Why was this a surprise?
- What new things did they learn about their peers?
- How did it feel to be part of a large group? How did you feel about other smaller groups?
- How did it feel to be in a very small group or alone? How did you feel about bigger groups?

### **TASK: ME BAG**

This activity encourages students to open up towards others. It also helps bring mutual understanding. They are required to bring a bag (any bag will do, although experience shows that they tend to elaborate the container, too) with objects they feel attached to or they consider important in their life. They are to provide a brief explanation on each one of the objects. The rest of the students may ask them questions about these objects.

<h3>WHAT CONSTITUTES IDENTITY?</h3>
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Explain that the objects in their “me bags” are some of the elements that constitute their identity. Clarify that we all build our identity in a progressive fashion and we use some “units of measurement” to do so: beauty, intellect, wealth, etc. A wrong use of these measurements may bring about a confused or troubled identity. An example of this point is that if we build our identity on beauty and worth, we will never be able to love those who are not physically beautiful. Point out that, by erecting one's identity around such values as humility or honesty, for example, we will be able to understand our peers better.

### **KNOWLEDGE QUEST (in the *Additional Materials* section)**

Students have the chance to reflect upon the items learnt all through the unit and find whether objectives have been achieved.