

Ideas bank – deepening ideas

Session exploring prejudice, discrimination

In the first phase of the project called “ideas bank” dedicated to the identification and exploration of the issues relevant for the participants, some of the themes that came up regularly concerned prejudice, discrimination and even racism, and in particular representations that French people may have of “Africa” and “Africans”. We decided to dedicate a session to explore these questions in a deeper way, so that we do not stop at a superficial level. The description below is based on a session that took almost three hours, with 11 participants.

| Exploring prejudice | |
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| Duration | 2h45 minutes |
| Number of the participants (from-till, ideal) | 8-16 people (it is important to be in a relatively „intimate” circle, preferably with people who already know each other. |
| Material | Flipchart papers Markers Blue-tech Sentences related to stereotypes / prejudice / discrimination printed on different coloured paper and cut out. |
| Aims | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have a common understanding of the concepts of “stereotypes” “prejudice” “racism” “discrimination” ▪ Being able to connect the theoretical concepts to real life situations people may experience ▪ Explore the origins / reasons behind such phenomena, connect it to general human motives |
| Steps/Instructions | We propose below a series of 4 activities that build on each other, but according to the needs of your group you can change the order or the activities. |
| 1. Mapping stereotypes through „cultionary” | |
| | This activity taken from The Compass Human Rights Education Manual aims at introducing the notion of stereotype in a playful way. |





We create groups of 4-6, then invite each group to find a space in the room, then we gave each group couple of blank papers.

We ask each group appoint a volunteer, who comes forward so we can tell them silently a word describing a social / cultural group that they will have to draw on the paper without speaking or writing.

They go back to their groups, they start drawing and the drawing goes on until the first group guesses the word.

The winner of the round is the group who identifies first the social / cultural group.

You can repeat for several rounds, proposing different social / cultural groups to draw e.g. GAY – TOURIST – EGYPTIAN – HUNGARIAN

Once all the rounds done, collect and display the drawings next to each other (the four versions of “gay” and “tourist” etc..)

Invite participants to compare the drawings and think of where the similarities come from. We can introduce the concept of “stereotypes” (see annex), using the drawings to illustrate the fact that we apply them automatically, without conscious effort or will.

2. Optical illusions



Use optical illusions to illustrate how our perception works, how easily it is tricked, how schemes guide our perception and thinking. Once we explored the concept of stereotypes, we also explained three connected notions: prejudice, discrimination and racism. We pinned the concepts and their definition to the wall, and invited participants for another activity.

3. The circles of prejudice



This activity is a thematic adaptation of the original “fruit salad” activity used to learn about each other.

Make a circle and ask participants as a **1st step** to share with the others any stereotypes / prejudices that others may have held about groups they belong to, but they do not apply to them.

Some examples:

I’m African and I’m not good dancer.

I’m a girl and I hate cooking.

I’m religious and I’m not naive.

I’m a man and I hate manual work.



In a **2nd step** invite people to unveil stereotypes / prejudices that they held at one point about other groups, or that they are aware of. Some examples you may get:

The German people are like machines, good workers.

The Arabs are terrorists.

The French are the most romantic.

The Jewish are stingy.

The Europeans are soft.

Then discuss with the participants some conclusions from this activity,

- Anyone can become the target / victim of stereotypes and prejudices, and anyone can become their perpetrator also..
- Sometimes with use some words like “most of..... are.....” – “the majority of....” – “many of.....” etc, to justify our judgment against group of people without being accused of using the generalization.
- Sometimes the prejudice takes negative form or positive and even funny form, nevertheless it is still simplification with negative effects.

4. The Automatic categorizing mechanism



Use the circle shape to introduce another activity, diving a bit deeper into the mechanisms behind stereotyping and prejudice. This activity starts by (asking permission and) sticking small coloured stickers on the forehead of everyone. Have different colours, to be able to create different groups of 4-6 people. There are two instructions: “you cannot speak”, and without speaking “find your group”.

In few minutes participants usually help each other to get arranged into homogeneous groups according to the stickers: a group of green stickers, a group of red, and a group of yellow and blue stickers.

Once done, tell people they can speak again and ask whether they found their group, and then, whether they were sure they were “in their group”. They usually confirm that the homogeneous groups are indeed their group. At this point you can ask whether this was the only way to create groups and why they think homogeneous groups were the first result.



Spend some time talking about the automatic categorisation process, whereby we categorise ourselves and the others into groups. What the groups actually are depends on the context, but they are usually created based on visual markers, exaggerating the difference between different groups and neglecting it inside the group. This automatism of categorising ourselves and the others into groups is behind the phenomenon of prejudices and discrimination.

Wrapping up the concepts, discussion



To help the integration of these new concepts, you can go back to the labels pinned on the wall and look again at what differentiates stereotype from prejudice and discrimination and racism. To add a touch of concrete playful learning, bring some stereotypes and prejudices printed out on separate papers and invite participants to identify them (whether they are an example of stereotype, prejudice, racism, discrimination etc.) also tell us whether this representation exists in their own culture. We may find out that (naturally) that “blonds are stupid” only in Europe. We also explored the consequences of seemingly positive statements such as “the blacks are good dancers” – how even these statements can serve to reinforce a hierarchy and put the other into reductive simplistic cases, whoever the other really is.

Hints/tips for facilitators



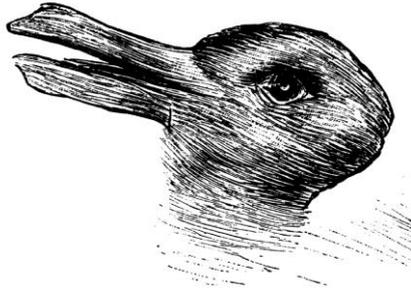
1. Mapping stereotypes through “cultionary”

Propose different types of social / cultural groups, include groups of which participants may be members, include the majority society, include social groups that the participants may have less knowledge of.

2. Optical illusions are powerful illustrations of the failure of our system of perception. You can use images that have several readings in one, or images that give you different meanings depending on the angle you look at them.

5. Wrapping up the concepts, discussion





Print sentences that exemplify stereotypes / prejudice / discrimination which may be more or less familiar to participants. Don't hesitate to include sentences about the social groups represented amongst your participants, but make sure that these sentences are not negative, and won't make your participants feel uncomfortable, and that with some humour we can handle the issue.

In our session for instance we include "Blacks are good dancers". Of course amongst the 15 black participants some (a minority) identified themselves as "good dancers" but a big majority did not.

Evaluation method (if applicable)

Observation: does everyone participate in an active way? Do they ask relevant questions?

Final round: ask people whether they have learnt something, whether they were surprised by something?

Possible variations

Feel free to use only part of the activities, but make sure that before starting an activity digging deeper in specific concepts, the definitions have been shared and discussed.

ANNEX: definitions

Categorisation: consists in separating people into different groups according to social / demographic criteria related to physical appearance, origin, sexe, or belonging to any particular social group. According to researcher automatic categorisation happens in less then a second based on age, gender and ethnicity. Categorisation is linked to our need to belong to social groups and to put our ingroups into positive light relative to the other groups.

Stereotypes: refer to the application of one's own **ideas**, associations, and expectations towards a group or an individual member of that group. There is a judgment on the person based on his/her group membership, which can be either positive or negative. Stereotypes are a form of scheme, naïve theory which make the complexity of the world easier to cope with.

Fiske (2010)

Prejudice: is present when our **emotional reaction** to a person is solely based on our feelings towards the social / cultural group of that person. An individual behaves in a prejudicial manner when he or she has an emotional reaction to another individual or group of individuals based on **preconceived** ideas about the individual or group (Fiske, 2010).

"Racism"¹ is a form of intergroup reaction (including thoughts, feelings and behaviours) that systematically advantages one's own group and/or disadvantages another group defined by racial difference. (Dovidio et al 2013). The **ideology** underlying racist practices often includes the thought that humans can be subdivided into distinct groups that are different in their social behavior or skills, capacities and that these differences can be traced back to genetics (they are inherited characteristics). Based on these differentiations the groups can then be ranked as inferior or superior.



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Discrimination: Discrimination is the denial of equal rights based on prejudices and stereotypes (Fiske, 2010). Discrimination differs from prejudice and stereotyping, in that it is not a belief, but rather the application of beliefs (Fiske, 2010), an unequal distribution of rights and privileges.
Fiske, S.T. (2010). Social beings: Core motives in Social Psychology (2nd ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

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