

- to help us evaluate our own cultures
- to evaluate other cultures and ways of life
- to govern the pattern of relationships our culture maintains with other cultures
- to justify the treatment and discrimination of people from other cultures.

Ethnocentrism

Our judgements, evaluations and justifications are influenced strongly by our ethnocentrism. This means that we believe our response to the world - our culture - is the right one, others are somehow not normal. We feel that our values and ways of living are universal, the correct ones for all people, the "others" are just too stupid to understand this obvious fact. Mere contact with people from other cultures can actually reinforce our prejudices, our ethnocentric spectacles blinding us to anything but that which we expect to see. Other cultures may seem attractive or exotic for us but usually our view is coloured by negative prejudices and stereotypes and so we reject them.

Linking The Images And Their Effects

This reaction of rejection takes the form of closely related phenomena: Discrimination, Xenophobia, Intolerance, Anti-Semitism and Racism. Power is a very important component in the relations between cultures (and sub-cultures) and these reactions get worse whenever majorities are faced with minorities. Over time, definitions and their use change and you will find it interesting to compare this section to the valuable chapter on ***Discrimination and Xenophobia*** in Compass where more recent examples are given.

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Discrimination

Discrimination is prejudice in action. Groups are labelled as different and discriminated against. They may be isolated, made criminals by laws that make their ways of life illegal, left to live in unhealthy conditions, deprived of any political voice, given the worst jobs or no jobs at all, denied entry to discos, subjected to random police checks.



Can you think of other examples of discrimination?

Within minority groups there are those who have fought against such negative discrimination, sometimes with support from members of the majority. They argue that in order to bring about equality it is necessary to promote measures of positive discrimination.



These measures are also referred to as "positive action". Can you suggest positive action necessary to combat the negative forms of discrimination listed above? (One example could be to provide suitable stopping sites, in consultation with Roma (Gypsy) or Sinti people, to ensure that they meet the needs expressed).

Xenophobia

Xenophobia comes from a Greek word meaning “fear of the foreigner”. We have here a clear example of a vicious circle: I fear those who are different because I don't know them and I don't know them because I fear them. Similar to discrimination and racism, xenophobia feeds on stereotypes and prejudices, though it has its origin in the insecurity and the fear projected onto “the other”. This fear of the other is often translated into rejection, hostility or violence against people from other countries or belonging to minorities.

Xenophobia has been used by powerful elites to “protect” their countries from outside influence as we can see from ex-President Ceausescu, the toppled dictator of Romania, who liked to quote the poet Mihai Eminescu:

*“He who takes strangers to heart
May the dogs eat his parts
May the waste eat his home
May ill-fame eat his name!”*



Xenophilia is the love of foreigners. Can you change the poem to reflect such a spirit?

Intolerance

Intolerance is a lack of respect for practices or beliefs other than ones own. This is shown when someone is not willing to let other people act in a different way or hold different opinions from themselves. Intolerance can mean that people are excluded or rejected because of their religious beliefs, their sexuality, or even their clothes and hairstyle.



When do you think that it is right to be intolerant?

Anti-Semitism

The combination of power, prejudice, xenophobia and intolerance against Jewish people is known as anti-semitism. This form of religious intolerance leads to discrimination against individuals as well as the persecution of Jews as a group. The most horrific manifestation of anti-semitism came with Hitler's rise to power and the Nazi ideology of racial purity. Six million Jewish people died in concentration camps during the Holocaust or Shoah. Frighteningly, some “historians” like David Irving have attempted to “prove” that concentration camps did not exist or were not as bad as they have been portrayed.



What did you learn about the Shoah at school? What forms of anti-semitism exist nowadays?

Racism



When have you used or heard someone use the term "Racist!"?

The consequences of racism are terrifying, even the word racism is frightening. Defining "racism" is not easy. Defining it to the point where it would be possible to determine - across Europe - whether any particular action, thought or process could be labelled racist would appear to be verging on the impossible.

Racism is based on the linked beliefs that distinctive human characteristics, abilities, etc are determined by race **and** that there are superior and inferior races. Logically, to accept this argument you have to believe that there are different human races.

Racism changes shape over time and may even be called by other names in different places. It is the concept of superiority that is so dangerous - superiority of one group of humans over another. If we start to believe such things then, depending on the time and place, we can lend our tacit or active support to:

- the killing of 400,000 Roma or Gypsy people during the period of the Nazi regime
- the massacres and destructions of entire communities in former Yugoslavia in the name of "ethnic cleansing"
- the reservation of jobs and services to certain groups in society "Europe for the Europeans", "France for the French", "Russia for the Russians", etc
- "Algeria is there for the Algerians - so why don't they all go back there", "Turkey is there for the Turks - so why don't they all go back there", etc
- development aid which entraps more than it helps
- sending letter bombs to asylum organisations

This education pack is based on the complete rejection of such theories or beliefs. The species is human. There is only one race: the human race. Full stop.



Would you label as racist all those examples of the consequences of a belief in superiority? If not, what would you say?

What follows are several ideas and explanations that look at concepts of racism in different ways:

Racism is a myth

"For all practical social purposes "race" is not so much a biological phenomenon as a social myth. The myth of "race" has created an enormous amount of human and social damage. In recent years it has taken a heavy toll in human lives and caused untold suffering. It still prevents the normal development of millions of human beings and deprives civilization of the effective co-operation of productive minds."

"Statement on Race", UNESCO, Paris, July 1950

Quoting Julian Huxley in "We Europeans", 1935, in reply to Nazi racist propaganda:

"Racism is a myth, and a dangerous myth. It is a cloak for selfish economic aims which in their uncloaked nakedness would look ugly enough."

"It was agreed that racism could be described as discrimination against one group of people by another, based on prejudices which were attributed to physical characteristics. It was stressed that racism was an attempt to create false divisions within the human race, and had no valid scientific basis. "There was only one race on Earth: the HUMAN RACE, and even by using such terminology as 'racial discrimination' or 'race relations', one risked legitimising part of the false premises used by racist theorists and groups."

[International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations, "Multiracial coexistence in Europe", Study Session, EYC, 1983]

Racism is an ideology

"In public debates the terms 'Auslanderfeindlichkeit' or 'Fremdenfeindlichkeit' [meaning hostility towards foreigners] are the ones which are mostly used when intellectual or active rejection of foreigners is being talked about - only rarely will the term 'Rassismus' [racism] be used. We want to use the term 'racism' not because it conveys the character of sharper moral and political accusation, but rather because it is the clearer historical and analytical category - in contrast to the other terms - and because it asserts something about the contexts and causes of rejection and hatred of foreigners.

Racism is a purely ideological construction, an ideology because there are no 'races'. There are no provable links between peoples' physical or cultural characteristics and their basic qualities or possibilities. The acceptance of the term 'races' is ideologically motivated and culturally deep-rooted – it fulfils important functions for safeguarding existing ruling structures:

- *Racism allows social inequalities, exclusion and contradictions of class to appear natural, rather than dependent upon social factors. Social inequality and oppression are thereby politically and culturally legitimised and even thought of as fate by those affected.*
- *Those groups who are defined through 'racial characteristics' can then be tagged as being the supposed cause of economic and social crises. They are put in the role of scapegoats, distracting attention from the real causes of a crisis and thereby attracting the annoyance of society.*

'Neo-Racism' is no longer based primarily on physical characteristics, rather it takes cultural differences as its starting point. Statements about superiority are partly forgotten and, instead, it is 'merely' pointed out that the culture of a people ('Volk') or of nations is necessary for their identity and would be endangered by cultural or social mixing."

[Jusos in der SPD, "Asyl statt Abschreckung", Argumente 5, Bonn, 1992]

Racism is deeply rooted in history

“It is important to differentiate between the various manifestations of racism in the respective countries. Countries such as the United Kingdom, France and Belgium, i.e. imperialist nations with a history of colonialism, subscribe to racist ideologies which are evidently bound up with the exploitation and subjugation of black people in the cause of the advancement of Western Capitalism. Anthropologists and biologists, later followed by socio-biologists, suggested scientific reasons and explanations for treating black people as a sub-human species. It was suggested and believed that people of a particular skin-colour had genetic and social characteristics that were fixed and immutable, and that were not subject to the influence of nurturing or of environment. This led to the widespread belief that the peoples of Africa were inferior to the white “Caucasian” race, morally, socially and intellectually, and that therefore one need not apply the same human values in dealing with them. They could be treated as slaves, as chattels, as units of property such as you treat cattle or horses, and used as labour power to produce wealth.”

[European Confederation of Youth Clubs, “Racism in Europe – the Challenge for Youth Work”, Study Session, EYC, October 1989]

Racism can change

“Racism is different from racial prejudice, hatred or discrimination. RACISM involves having the power to carry out systematic discriminatory practices through major institutions of our society, whereas prejudice is the unfavourable opinion or feeling formed beforehand without knowledge, thought or reason.

Racism = Power + Prejudice

RACISM is both overt and covert. It takes two closely related forms: individual RACISM and institutional RACISM. The first consists of overt acts by individuals, which can cause death, injury or the violent destruction of property. The second form is less evident. Some of the most conspicuous examples are in housing patterns, segregated schools and churches, discriminatory employment and promotion policies and textbooks which ignore the role of many ethnic minorities.

RACISM must also be looked upon from a cultural aspect. Cultural RACISM is when we use power to perpetuate our cultural heritage and impose it on others, while at the same time destroying the culture of others, which brings us to ethnocentrism. The tendency to view alien cultures with disfavour, which results in an inherent sense of superiority, is ETHNOCENTRISM.

Cultural Racism = ‘Power + Ethnocentrism’ ”

[International Federation of Liberal and Radical Youth, “Put the Hands Together: IFLRY Against Racism and Xenophobia”, 1986]



What do you think now?

Where do we go from here?

If we are to begin creating intercultural realities we have much to do in challenging:

- our personal attitudes and
- the systems of control and power which result in inequality

Dialogue between cultures requires a great deal of time and experience. The development of intercultural approaches will depend not only on people's openness, but also on politicians, who have to implement a whole series of measures to facilitate the process.

Without being too strict and taking the following list as a set model for our behaviour, we can nevertheless see that it is necessary to pass through certain stages, namely:

1. Accepting that everyone is on the same level; accepting equality of rights, values and abilities; prosecuting racism and discrimination.
2. Getting to know each other better; engaging in discussion, knowing about other people's cultures, moving towards them, seeing what they do.
3. Doing things together; co-organising, collaborating, helping each other.
4. Comparing and exchanging; exchanging viewpoints, experiencing each other's cultures and ideas, accepting mutual criticism, reaching agreements and taking decisions together.

What roles can intercultural education play in all of this? Turn to the next chapter for some ideas...

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