

5 WHAT ABOUT ME?

Aim

To explore how our perceptions of minority groups affect our behaviour towards them and to examine how it impacts on young people's individual identities.

Time

50 minutes

Materials

Set of role cards for each group.

What to do

- Divide participants into six groups and give each group one set of role cards – disability, asylum-seekers/refugees, gay, Travellers, ethnic minorities and majority ethnic group. Ensure that each person in the group has a card.
- Participants have five minutes to get into their role and explain their role to others in their group.
- Tell three groups that they are hosts and the other three groups that they are visitors and pair up the groups. Give the groups a further five minutes to prepare for the visits. Ask them to think about the group they are going to meet, where the meeting will take place and whether the group they are going to meet will have any special needs.
- Ask the groups to act out the visits, then ask each group to discuss what happened on the visit, how they were treated by the other group, how they responded to that treatment and how it made them feel.
- If you have time, repeat the visits.
- Bring all the groups together and ask participants to share their experiences.

It is important to ensure participants de-role before discussing the activity. Explain that the role play is over and ask them to shake out their legs and arms or change places

Discussion Questions

- Does this happen in real life?
- Is it particular to Ireland or does it happen elsewhere in the world?
- How are our actions affected by these attitudes?
- What effect does it have on the people we meet?
- Where do we learn these attitudes?

Activity taken from Lifestories (NYCI, 2004)

ROLE CARDS

Group with Disabilities

Ellen

I am fifteen and have been deaf since birth. I am fluent in sign language. I am active in my local youth club and enjoy reading and watching videos.

Dave

I am eighteen and have just completed the Leaving Cert. I have cerebral palsy and have difficulty controlling my limbs. In school I got special support from a teacher. I used to play a lot of sports and I still swim. I have a motorised wheelchair.

John

I have acute schizophrenia. Before I started taking medicine, I used to hear voices in my head telling me people want to hurt me, but I'm much better now. I get extra help from the teachers at school to ensure that I don't fall behind. My friends have been really supportive. I really like films, but I don't like the way people with mental illnesses are portrayed. I'd like to be a film director one day.

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Group

Tara

I am 20 years old. I love music and have won some singing competitions. I recently came out to my best friend but haven't told my parents yet. I get uncomfortable when sexuality comes up in conversation. At school and college, I hear other students make openly homophobic comments. It makes me sad.

Dermot

I'm gay but I'm not out about it. I've used a wheelchair since I was ten. I don't know whether insults towards gay people or patronising attitudes to people with disabilities are worse.

Tony

I am proud of who I am. I have loads of gay and straight friends. I want to be a doctor when I leave school. My parents have been really supportive of me.

Asylum Seeker/Refugee Group

Pierre

I am from Kinshasa in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). That's in central Africa. I came to Ireland on my own two years ago after my parents were killed. I joined a soccer club near the hostel where I live and I've made lots of friends there. You meet idiots all the time who say nasty things, but I've learned to look the other way. It's not always easy though. I miss having my family there to help me through the tough times.

Mary

I am from Kabul in Afghanistan. I came to Ireland in 2001 to escape from life under the Taliban. I had a long journey to get here. First my family had to leave everything behind and flee to a refugee camp in Pakistan. Then we were part of a group that came to Ireland. It's nice that I can go to school here but I miss my friends and want to go home.

Eva

I came to Ireland four years ago. I'd like to make friends my own age, but Irish people aren't very friendly. At home we speak Romanian. I don't see myself staying in Ireland for too long. My English is not so good so I have to be put in a lower class at school.

ROLE CARDS

Ethnic Minority Group

Sunny

I was born in Galway and I'm in fourth year at school. I want to be an engineer. I like all outdoor pursuits, particularly water sports. In my youth group we go on hikes and do canoeing. My mother is from Sierra Leone and I am black.

Cais

I have lived in Dublin all my life. I'm 15 years old. My parents came to Ireland in the 1970s to build a new life for themselves. Later my grandmother joined us. I have Irish friends and English is my first language but my parents speak Vietnamese. I enjoy listening to my grandmother talking about Vietnam. I've never been there but someday I'll visit.

Majda

I'm nineteen and come from Saudi Arabia. I'm a student here in Ireland. I get some funny looks because I wear a hijab or headscarf. I've Muslim friends who don't wear it. It's just my choice. I have given a few talks about my life and where I'm from. I really enjoy that.

Traveller Group

Martina

I currently live on a halting site in Cork. I left school at thirteen. I look after my younger brothers and sisters when my Mum and Dad aren't there. I don't have any friends who aren't Travellers. People who live in houses call us 'knackers' but I don't remember any of them coming down here to talk to us.

Samantha

I'm seventeen and live on a halting site. I'm studying for my Leaving Certificate at the moment and if I get my exams I'd like to study further. I volunteer as a leader with a youth group. I really enjoy it.

Owen

I live on an estate in west Dublin. Our house is like all the hundreds of other. It's brutal being young here. There's nothing to do. I think I'd prefer to still be travelling. At least you'd see new places all the time.

Majority Ethnic Group

Eileen

I am fourteen. My school has lots of after-school activities but as I live 20 miles away, I don't get to participate. My friends and I have formed a band but there's nowhere locally to play gigs.

Rory

I live with my Mum in a small flat in Waterford. I like school but I sometimes feel bad when others talk about their holidays or their new Nikes. I can't afford to wear labels and have to work part time to help Mum pay the bills. I'd like to join a youth club, but I don't have much spare time.

Mary

I was brought up in a Catholic family. In school I began to question religion and by the time I started college, I was a confirmed non-believer. It amuses me that religion is mixed up with so many conflicts around the world, some closer than others. I get annoyed when people assume that I'm a Catholic.