

identifying racism

Playing the game

 Suggested time: 39 minutes

Preparation

Discerning whether specific behaviours or incidents are indicators of racism or whether there are other motivations for observed behaviours is one of the major concerns that can arise when educational communities implement strategies to counter racism.

The discussions stimulated by *Playing the game* can help to clarify issues and to answer the question so often asked, What is racism?

If necessary, view or review the *Playing the game* video and read the notes.

Copy the handout for each participant.

Whole group activity

Introduction (2 minutes)

- Use the Purpose and Overview from *Playing the game* reproduced on page 3 to explain the purpose of this session.

Before the video (12 minutes)

- Divide the participants into small groups and ask each individual to:
 - identify 'incidents', 'behaviours' or 'characteristics' that they consider would clearly reveal to them that an individual or school/college was racist
 - list their reasons for saying that the 'incidents', 'behaviours' or 'characteristics' clearly demonstrate a racist or racist organisation
 - discuss their examples with other members of their group.
- Invite a representative of each group to outline the most discussed example in their group..

Preparation for watching the video (8 minutes)

- Distribute a copy of the discussion question handout for *Playing the game* to each participant.
- Ask participants to collect evidence while viewing the video that supports or does not support the idea that the boys are racist.
- View *Playing the game* (5 minutes)

After viewing the video (17 minutes)

- Divide participants into small groups and ask them to discuss the four questions.
- Invite each group to provide a response/comment to each of the discussion questions.

Conclusion (1 minute)

The Department's *Anti-Discrimination Policy* rejects all forms of racism.

Playing the game highlights the need for common sense and discernment in the ways schools and colleges tackle racism, as well as in the ways they go about eliminating racial discrimination from their culture, curriculum and their learning and working environments.

From *Playing the game*

Purpose

The purpose of *Playing the game* is to promote discussion about:

- what constitutes 'racism' and 'racist behaviours' in educational settings
- possible motivations that can lead to racist behaviours in schools and colleges
- whether using a racist insult, or other inappropriate racist behaviour, indicates that a person is racist
- promoting alternatives to racism and violence for dealing with frustration and conflict.

Overview

Playing the game shows aggressive behaviour and race-based insults on the basketball court between two students, Arturo and Glen. Their inappropriate behaviour prompts their coach/teacher Stan to take action.

The video shows Stan trying to 'sort things out' by first talking to Arturo and then to Glen, but is it the most effective action for the situation?

A girls' netball match gives an opportunity for Arturo and Glen to observe and acknowledge different reactions to racism.

Before the video

This discussion is aimed at bringing to the surface the often unexpressed ideas about 'real racism' against which individuals measure whether or not other individuals or institutions or communities are 'racist.'

Many people find it difficult or confronting to identify and discuss 'incidents', 'behaviours' or 'characteristics' that clearly demonstrate to them that an individual or school or college is racist.

A common reaction is diverting discussion to the question, 'What do you mean by being racist?'

An effective reply to this question is, 'That is exactly what we are trying to establish.'

The important question at this stage is not what I think, but for us all to determine, (sometimes imagine), what we would need to see, experience or hear to make us believe an individual or institution is 'clearly racist'.

The amount and scope of evidence required by individuals before they will label an individual or institution as 'racist' varies widely. The range includes:

- observing a racist behaviour such as hearing a race-based joke or insult
- observing a number of racist behaviours
- a verified complaint about the individual or institution
- a number of verified complaints about the individual or institution
- a serious attack on others or act of discrimination against others
- a consistent negative reaction and range of discriminatory actions against individuals or groups from particular cultural or linguistic backgrounds
- an incident that is so serious it necessitates intervention or participation of external agencies such as the Police, Anti-Discrimination Board or Ombudsman.

Handout discussion

Question 1: Consider Arturo's behaviour in the video. What could have been motivating his behaviour?

Racism could motivate Arturo's behaviour, but there are also other possible motivations. For example, the desire to be 'in' with other students, jealousy that Glen is more popular with the other students in general or with the girls, annoyance that Glen is on the basketball team and he isn't, or the 'sledging' tactic that attempts to distract and gain advantage over sporting opponents.

Racist behaviours are responses to internal and external motivations. For this reason, getting people talking about and exposing motivations for behaviours is essential to them understanding the impact of racism in their own lives and the lives of others in their local communities.

Racist behaviours, whatever their provocation or motivation, are inappropriate in schools and colleges.

Question 2: From what you see and hear in the video, do you think that Arturo is racist? (What evidence supports your claim?)

This question can stimulate a range of possible responses from participants:

- that Arturo's racist insults and provocations of Glen definitely indicate he is racist
- that there is not enough evidence in the video to confidently establish whether Arturo is racist or not
- Arturo used racist insults, but that doesn't mean he is racist
- Arturo's behaviour is definitely not racist.

From the presenter's perspective, the purpose of this question is to promote discussion and to clarify the meanings of 'racist behaviours', 'racism', 'being racist' and 'being a racist' in educational settings. For those participants concerned about definitions, presenters can say that one way of looking at it is to say that individuals who use racist behaviours, (racist insults, telling racist jokes and the like), are, in essence, committing acts of racism, and that they are being racist.

However, being guilty of racist behaviours and being racist on occasions does not automatically indicate that an individual is a racist.

Establishing whether Arturo and Glen are, or are not, racists is not the real issue for schools and colleges. The racist taunts and insults of both boys are examples of racist behaviours.

The policies of the Department of Education and Training state that the organisation is committed to the eradication of racial discrimination in all its forms — direct racism, indirect racism, racial vilification and harassment. That means that examples of racist behaviours, acts of racism, being racist or being a racist within schools and colleges must be challenged.

Question 3: Stan, the teacher, is obviously concerned about the racist behaviours he witnessed. Do you think he made an effective response to the situation?

Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• concerned about the racist behaviours demonstrated• intervened between the two boys• attempted to counsel each boy about their behaviours• tried to point out that racism is not on in schools• offered discussions with ARCO.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• over reacted, 'you're a racist'• a bit heavy handed in approach, 'soon the whole country is involved'• didn't get to the bottom of what was happening, 'told' boys what he saw rather than 'listen' to what they perceived was happening• immediately focused on racism• didn't mention the violence and aggressive behaviours — in fact used intimidation himself• did not promote any alternatives other than a formal complaint.

Question 4: What other responses could Stan have made to more effectively deal with the situation?

- Speak with the boys about what they believe was happening first, then reflect back to them what he saw and heard.
- Remind them of the school rules against using violence, aggression and racist behaviours to resolve frustrations and conflicts.
- Assist Arturo to acknowledge his disappointments and frustrations.
- Discuss alternative ways for both boys to deal with the situation.
- Provide support for the boy receiving racist insults.
- Promote discussion amongst individuals who observed the racist behaviours and did not speak out.

Playing the game discussion questions

Question 1: Consider Arturo's behaviour in the video. What could have been motivating his behaviour?

Question 2: From what you see and hear in the video, do you think that Arturo is racist? (What evidence supports your claim?)

Question 3: Stan, the teacher, is obviously concerned about the racist behaviours he witnessed. Do you think he made an effective response to the situation?

Question 4: What other responses could Stan have made to more effectively deal with the situation?
