



AT THE CROSSROAD
OF INEQUALITIES /
DISCRIMINATION

PRACTICAL
EXERCISE

Bridges between cultures

Group size:

any, at least eight participants

Duration:

45–60 min (20–30 minutes for instructions and role play, 25–30 minutes for the discussion)

Requisites for the practical exercise:

- printed roles for all four participants
- paper and pens for observers, pad (optional)
- four chairs

Type of practical exercise:

team game

Methods used:

role play, group reflection

What is the purpose of this practical exercise? What does the youth worker want to achieve? What results can they expect?

The aim of the practical exercise *Bridges Between Cultures* is to explore with the participants the transfer of prejudices in the process of socialisation and education. Participants will analyse the messages we received from our own family about people from other cultural or social backgrounds. They will analyse the values behind these messages. Based on the role-playing of roles in a traditional Slovenian family, they will learn what the role of the family is in transferring and preserving social values.

The practical exercise aims to encourage a broader view of the world, in which the participants will understand the importance of different identities we have as individuals and their intersections. They will come to understand that an individual who is discriminated against due to several personal characteristics/ circumstances or identities at the same time cannot be treated simply as a “sum of discriminations”, but through a new reality that is established at the intersection of discriminations.



Do you know?

Role-playing is like walking in someone else's shoes to better understand what that person is experiencing. When we talk about intersectional discrimination – where people face multiple types of injustice at the same time – role-playing can help reveal how these experiences intertwine and affect individuals' lives.

Role-playing allows participants to place themselves into others' shoes and experiences, which may differ greatly from their own. This can help increase empathy, understanding and awareness of the experiences and challenges faced by people from minority and marginalised groups.

- **Development of empathy:** Role-playing encourages participants to consider the perspectives, emotions and experiences of others. This can lead to a deeper understanding and greater empathy for people experiencing intersectional discrimination.
- **Raising awareness of prejudices and stereotypes:** Role-playing can reveal how prejudices and stereotypes influence the perception and treatment of others. This awareness is the first step to breaking these patterns.
- **Improving communication skills:** Participants learn how to express their thoughts and feelings and how to communicate effectively about sensitive topics. This is key to addressing and resolving conflicts related to intersectional discrimination.
- **Promoting critical thinking:** Role-playing encourages participants to critically analyse social structures and systemic inequalities that contribute to intersectional discrimination. This can lead to a better understanding of the complexity of these issues.
- **Equipping for advocacy:** Through the experience gained through role-playing, participants can better equip themselves to advocate for and support marginalised groups.
- **Building community and solidarity:** Shared role-playing experiences can create a sense of community and solidarity between participants from different backgrounds, which is key to fighting discrimination and building an inclusive society.

But it is important to approach role-playing with respect and sensitivity. This means paying attention to how others feel during the game and discussing what we learned afterwards. This ensures that the experience is positive and educational for all involved.



Practical exercise plan

- Before the practical exercise, print out the sheets with roles. Four participants each get their role.
- Explain to the participants that we are trying to use the role-play to explore the role of the family in transferring and perpetuating ideas about people who belong to other social or cultural groups.
- Explain to the participants that you need four volunteers for the role-play.
- Give each player one card with a description of their role. They have three minutes to prepare.
- While the players are getting ready, prepare the room. Place four chairs in a semicircle, which should face the observers (audience). Explain to the participants that you are in the living room where the family meeting will take place.
- Observers should write down statements that individual players use in their roles.
- The role-play can then begin. Depending on the time you have available, decide how long you will observe the scene. Allow at least 15 minutes for role-playing.
- After the role-play is finished, invite the players to share how they felt. Afterwards, each observer should read the statements that the players used to convince other players.
- This is followed by a discussion with all participants. You can guide the discussion using the questions below. Make sure that all participants who want to give their opinion have the opportunity to do so.



Questions for the discussion:

1. *Did the combination of personal characteristics/circumstances of any of the roles surprise you? Why?*
2. *Were the arguments similar to those you hear in your own family?*
3. *Would it be different if the boy and girl were Slovenian?*
4. *Would it be different if the boy brought home the girl instead of the girl bringing home the boy?*
5. *What would happen if the girl said she was having a relationship with another girl?*
6. *What would happen if the boy introduced his boyfriend?*
7. *Was any role privileged because of personal characteristics/circumstances or a combination of personal characteristics/circumstances?*
8. *Which role involved a new reality of discrimination because of the intersection of different discriminations?*
9. *Are such conflicts still common or just a thing of the past?*
10. *How could the conflicts in the story be resolved?*
11. *Has something like this ever happened to you or do you know someone who has experienced something similar?*
12. *What did you learn or realise in this practical exercise? How will you use the acquired knowledge in your everyday life?*
13. *How can this practical exercise help us better understand intersectional discrimination?*



Advice for the youth worker

- If possible, we recommend that you spend more time on this practical exercise. Allow extra time for in-depth discussion. The larger the group, the more time you should spend on the discussion. This will allow all opinions to be heard.
- The discussion questions listed are for assistance and guidance only. We encourage you to add your own, and especially to respond to participants' comments.
- The practical exercise can be carried out indoors or outdoors. When outdoors, make sure there are as few distractions as possible (noise, weather conditions, etc.).

(The idea for the practical exercise arose from the activity Guess Who's Coming to Dinner? from the Education Pack "All Different – All Equal", Second edition, Council of Europe. Ljubljana, 2004. Available at: https://www.varuh-rs.si/fileadmin/user_upload/PRAVNE_PODLAGE/Mednarodne_konvencije_-_Svet_Evropa_-_DRUGO/ECRI/Izobrazevalni_prirocnik_-_Ideje-pripomocki-metode_za_medkulturno_izobrazevanje.pdf)

BRIDGES BETWEEN CULTURES – Role descriptions

DAUGHTER

Lara Novak is a young, educated woman from Slovenia who falls in love with a young man from another culture. She symbolises openness, acceptance of differences and the desire to live according to one's own choices, even if those choices contradict family expectations or traditional values. Lara faces a conflict between her own happiness and the desire to maintain good relations with her family. Her decision to live with a boy from another culture before being married challenges not only family values, but also the wider social and Catholic norms in which she was raised. Lara faces an uphill battle for her independence while trying to maintain the relationships within the family she cares about.

You start the role play. At home, you declare that you will live with your boyfriend Sam. Try to defend your decision and say that you will defy prejudices about relationships between young people, especially about relationships between young people who come from different cultures. You are very close with your brother. Your mother is loving, but your father is strict. You believe in God.

BRIDGES BETWEEN CULTURES – Role descriptions

FATHER

Marko Novak, the father of a traditional Slovenian family, finds himself in a whirlwind of worries, because he finds it hard to bear the threat of losing his job, in addition to his daughter's decision. As the head of a family that strongly adheres to Catholic and cultural traditions, Marko's opposition to his daughter's decision stems from a fear of the unknown and a desire to ensure family stability in uncertain times.

You are the head of the family and you do not approve of your daughter's relationship. You represent the moral majority and you care what people say. You love your daughter, but you are sure that such a relationship could tarnish your reputation and the reputation of your family. You believe that you could finally lose your job because of such a scandal. Otherwise, you are not a racist and you make a donation to a godfather programme for poor African children every month. You rarely talk to your son, you are worried because he dresses differently.

BRIDGES BETWEEN CULTURES – Role descriptions

MOTHER

Ana Novak, the mother of a traditional Slovenian family, tries to find a balance between supporting her daughter and preserving the family's reputation and faith. She is more open to change than her husband, but still feels the pressure of social expectations. Ana faces the challenge of how to provide support to family members in circumstances that conflict with her religious beliefs and social expectations. Especially when she is aware of her husband's worries about his job and their son who is dealing with problems of his own. Her role in the family is a bridge between tradition and change. She fears for the family's reputation in the local community and deals with possible negative reactions from relatives and neighbours.

You love your daughter very much, but you don't understand how she could do such a thing to you. What will the neighbours say! You support your husband in everything he says. You are not threatening your daughter, you are more sorry for the pain she is causing you. You are sure that Sam will leave her and that she will suffer a lot. You don't understand what you could have done wrong in the upbringing to deserve such children. You like to cook, and in the process you get to know different dishes from other cultures. You love your husband and children very much.

BRIDGES BETWEEN CULTURES – Role descriptions

SON

Jure Novak is a pupil who has not yet come out as a homosexual. He feels even more isolated in an environment where religious values and traditional expectations are strongly present. His own battle with identity and fear of rejection or discrimination in a family already burdened with other challenges reveal the inner struggle he faces. He is afraid of being rejected by the family. He wants a life where he can be accepted as he is.

In principle, you don't care if your sister dates a boy from another culture. You stand for everyone having the right to make free decisions about their own relationships. But when your mother says that Sam will definitely leave Lara, you think he might be taking advantage of her. Maybe she really is too young for something like this? You worry about Lara and want to protect her. You have an open personality. You love your family members. You go to church as a habit.

BRIDGES BETWEEN CULTURES

(an aid for a youth worker)

The Novak family, traditionally bound by their cultural and religious customs, lives in a small Slovenian town. The family consists of father Marko, mother Ana, daughter Lara and son Jure. Lara, who graduated from university, falls in love with Sam, a young man from another culture who recently came to study in Slovenia.

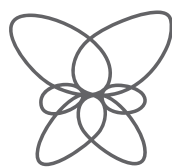
Lara's relationship with Sam quickly becomes serious, and she soon expresses her desire to move in with him and start a life together. The conflict arises when the Novak family finds out about her plans. Prejudices come to the surface, related not only to inter-cultural differences, but also to gender roles and expectations that the family has for Lara.

Father Marko is concerned about cultural differences and the effect Sam's culture might have on Lara. Mother Ana, although somewhat more open to the idea, is afraid of what relatives and neighbours will say, which reflects a concern for social opinion and the family's reputation. Brother Jure is torn between supporting his sister and adhering to family values.

Sam, Lara's partner, stands at the centre of the conflict, as his culture and his decision to live together with Lara before marriage challenge the Catholic values of the Novak family. Sam's presence and relationship with Lara serves as a catalyst for uncovering and confronting deep-seated prejudices and fears within the family.

Lara thus faces multiple layers of discrimination: as a woman, she is expected to follow traditional roles and not to "diverge" from family values by living with someone before marriage, especially someone from a different culture. The inter-cultural aspect adds an additional layer of prejudice, as the family and perhaps the wider community express scepticism towards foreign cultures and their customs.

Each member of the Novak family faces their own dilemmas and prejudices that arise from the intersection of culture, religion, gender and personal identities. Together they form a picture of a family that is being tested, as it has to face its own limitations and prejudices in order to find a way forward through understanding, acceptance and love. For Lara, this means fighting for her independence and the right to choose a partner regardless of cultural background, while the family must reflect on their own values and assumptions that guide their response to Lara's decision.



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The worksheet is part of the e-training Intersectional Discrimination in Youth Work, prepared by the Forum for Equitable Development in cooperation with project partners Zavod Global, Nosotras Onlus and Asociația Pro Democratia.

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