A LESSON IN
DISCRIMINATION
10 YEARS LATER

TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE
SECONDARY
Guide for Discussion Workshops:  
Secondary School Level  

A Lesson in Discrimination – 10 Years Later

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PREFACE

In 2006, Pasquale Turbide and Lucie Payeur of Radio-Canada’s Enjeux team produced a documentary entitled “La leçon de discrimination” conducted at the French École Saint-Pierre in Saint-Valérien-de-Milton, a village located 50 kilometres from Montreal. With the consent of her school principal and all of the parents, teacher Annie Leblanc organized a classroom activity for her Grade 3 pupils in which they experienced the harsh reality of people who suffer discrimination. She divided her class in two groups based on height: tall pupils and short pupils. On the first day, the teacher treated the group of shorter children as valued pupils while the taller pupils were devalued. On the second day, she treated the group of taller children as the valued pupils. In both cases, the pupils in the valued group discriminated against those in the devalued group. As a result, a climate of discrimination – of “us versus them” – took root, pitting the pupils against each other. Teacher Annie Leblanc conducted her experiment in the most favourable circumstances: she already knew her pupils well and, most importantly, had nurtured a strong bond of trust with each of her pupils.

From 2006 to 2016, the documentary “La Leçon de Discrimination” was seen and appreciated around the world, demonstrating that discrimination is a universal problem. In schools, universities, workplaces and community settings, the documentary remains an ideal tool to help promote a more open and inclusive society that is accepting of diversity. In 2007, the documentary won the Japan Grand Prize for best TV educational program in the world, a Gemini Award for best French TV documentary in Canada, and the Grand Prix Judith Jasmin in Montreal for best journalistic documentary across all French media in Quebec.

So what happened to those young pupils who took part in the documentary ten years later? In 2016, Pasquale Turbide of Radio-Canada’s Enjeux team reached out to them. The pupils, who were now young adults, came back to their Grade 3 classroom and met with their teacher Annie Leblanc to share their impressions and memories. What is noteworthy about this experiment and the reactions of the participants 10 years later? What can we learn from them? Did this lesson on discrimination yield a positive outcome? The 2016 documentary “A Lesson in Discrimination – 10 Years Later” gives us some answers and raises new questions.
You can use this guide to lead discussions, exchange ideas and share experiences with your groups after viewing the 2006 and 2016 documentaries. Before holding an activity based on these documentaries, it is important to create a safe viewing environment that fosters dialogue where viewers are encouraged to talk candidly about their good and bad experiences with instances of prejudice and discrimination in their everyday life. Given research on the negative psychological and physical effects of discrimination, you need to be sensitive to the emotional reactions of viewers who watch the documentaries. Viewers who developed strategies to cope with prejudice and discrimination will perhaps react more philosophically than others whose experiences with exclusion are more recent and vivid. Likewise, be attentive to vulnerable minorities who may appreciate viewing the documentaries but feel that they themselves never experienced prejudice and discrimination. Be sensitive to viewers whose group membership shielded them from being the victim of prejudice and who need more time to come to grips with the implications of the documentaries. Some racialized or stigmatized individuals may provide moving and informative accounts of their personal experiences as victims of prejudice and discrimination. Such accounts help audiences appreciate the depth of personal experiences while being respectful of the sometimes shocking stories that may be told. Creating a trusting, safe environment where each individual feels secure in voicing their personal experience enhances the relevance of the issues raised in the documentaries.

It is also important to consider the category memberships of the viewers. We know that prejudice and discrimination may be more or less intense depending on many cross-cutting category memberships such as gender, age, physical and mental disability, mother tongue, ethnicity, race, social class, sexual orientation and religious affiliation. Some viewers may have been subjected to discrimination because of personal stigmatizing attributes or because they belong to numerous cross-cutting devalued social categories. Do pay close attention to the emotional, cognitive and behavioural reactions of your viewers as they watch the documentaries. In public or private, be receptive to individual reactions, be prepared to provide emotional support, to express empathy by noting that no one is immune from the pain of stigmatization and discrimination.
The following are **FIVE ACTIVITIES** that you can adapt to the characteristics of your groups depending on your objectives, your viewer’s personal and category characteristics, or current events that make some topics more relevant than others.

We suggest dividing each activity into **THREE PARTS**:

1) A pre-screening discussion.
2) A post-screening activity and/or discussion.
3) Multidisciplinary activities suggested by the teacher.

Taken together, these activities can be adapted to local community needs, to various government and private employment settings, and official program requirements for school and college subjects throughout the academic year.
ACTIVITY 1

“US VERSUS THEM”
SOCIAL CATEGORIZATION
ACTIVITY 1: “US VERSUS THEM” SOCIAL CATEGORIZATION

“[Translation] Usually at the end of recess my pupils line-up in a single line on a first come basis. During the experiment I did not give my students any instructions in that regard. When I stood in front of them at recess, two line-ups spontaneously formed: one line with the short pupils on one side, and another line with the taller pupils on the other side” (Annie Leblanc, 2006)

“[Translation] What you’re saying isn’t quite right, because not all of the short children are creative; they don’t all learn quickly.” (David reacting to Annie Leblanc’s “short versus tall” categorization, 2006)

Part 1: A pre-screening discussion
We all belong to a number of groups based on age, gender, ethnic background, mother tongue or nationality. These social categories are imposed by the accidents of birth, and people who belong to them may have difficulty denying that they belong to them and cannot easily change that fact. However, we can join a leisure or political group, choose to be part of a sports team or take training to become computer experts, nurses, welders, teachers, engineers -or pharmacists.

Whether our belonging to a social category is imposed or chosen, we tend to say “we”1 when we want to talk about the members of our own group, i.e., our ingroup.2 Moreover, the members of a group other than our own and with which we do not identify are considered to be members of the “them” group, i.e., they belong to an outgroup. The “us versus them” categorization is the result of basic cognitive processes in humans. We divide up, classify and organize our physical and social environment by grouping together objects and persons that are similar or different, thereby simplifying our perception of an often complex and changing environment.

1 To learn more, consult the Petit guide pédagogique pour La leçon de discrimination on the curio.ca website, pp. 9–10; pp. 13–15.
2 To learn more, consult the Petit guide pédagogique pour La leçon de discrimination on the curio.ca website, Glossary, pp. 27–36.
When the categorization process is applied to people, we are talking about social categorization. Two tendencies have been identified in the findings of “us versus them” categorization studies:

1) A tendency to accentuate perceived similarities between members of the same category; and
2) A tendency to accentuate perceived differences between members belonging to different categories.

We therefore tend to say that “we” are all similar, that “they” are all the same, while “we” are really not like “them”.

When we categorize people as members of a specific group, we attribute to them the characteristics of being a coherent and homogeneous group in which members are linked together by their similarities, their common beliefs and actions, and their shared destiny. This process is known as entitativity. This entitativity ascription can apply to either an in-group or an out-group, depending on the degree of identification one has with the in-group and the feeling of mistrust or threat one feels in the presence of out-groups.

**Part 2: A post-screening activity and/or discussion**

Ask members of your classroom, work group or association to answer the following questions:

- Can you name the social categories with which you currently identify?
- Are these categories the same as those with which you have identified in the past?
- What other social categories do you expect to belong in the future?
- Is it possible for you to belong to more than one social category at the same time?
- Can you identify with multiple categories depending on circumstances and settings?
- Name the social categories that you consider to be the most valued in your city and country.
- To which other social categories would you like to belong?
- Name social categories that you think are the least valued in your city and country?
- What can we do to change social categories?
In your opinion, what are the essential characteristics for someone to be considered: A true Canadian? A true American? A true Indigenous person? A true English Canadian? A true African American? A true French Canadian? A true Métis?

Part 3: Multidisciplinary activities suggested by the teacher

Many school and academic disciplines can be used to highlight the recognition of cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity in your class. This recognition of diversity may accentuate perceived similarities shared by members of the same social category or highlight differences between members of contrasting groups.

Interaction

• Take time to observe interactions between individuals of different social backgrounds as they meet in your classroom, at work, on the street and during sports and leisure activities?

Groupings

• How do people form into groups? What characteristics do you use as the basis for forming your groups? What common interests do you use to form your own groups? With whom do you identify? With which groups do you feel most attracted? From which groups do you feel you are most different?

Social categories

• What are the most valued social categories in your region or country? What are the least valued social categories? To which social categories would you like to belong? What can you do to change from one social category to another?
Have students do a teamwork activity as described below:

1) Form a three-person team.
2) Students choose people with whom they have never worked with as a team.
3) Team members interview ten people in their school or work environment and ask them some of the questions suggested in Part 3 of the activity.
4) Team members compile the verbal or written answers they obtained from their interviewees
5) Members prepare a team presentation to be given in class for discussion.
ACTIVITY 2

PREJUDICES
ACTIVITY 2: PREJUDICES

“[Translation] Why should we differentiate ourselves from each other? What is the good of that when we know that we all have qualities? We have our faults and they have their faults. So what purpose does differentiation serve?” (Sabrina, 2006)

“[Translation] There are bosses who do not care about discrimination in their work units. Such bosses may have deeply rooted prejudices. It is understandable; such bosses were never trained to behave differently.” (Pascal Tisserant, France, 2016)

Part 1: A pre-screening discussion

Prejudices are a painful reality for many minorities in Canada, the US, UK and many parts of the world. In A Lesson in Discrimination, Annie Leblanc notes that prejudices are learned at a very young age. Prejudices are instilled in children in the family, at school, through television, friends and social media. During her class discussion with her 8-9 year old pupils, one student says “Black people are poor . . . poor, poor, poor.” Alexandra adds that “black people steal things; they are more likely to be mean to us and they are more abrupt.” Prejudices are not always consensual. Sabrina says, “A black person can be as intelligent as a white person; there’s no difference.” -And David says, “My aunt is black. She’s really smart and she’s a black person too.”

A prejudice is an a priori judgment, a bias, a preconceived negative opinion about all the members of a group category regardless of their real life individual differences. Prejudice is a negative attitude and a predisposition to engage in negative behaviour towards members of a devalued outgroup. Prejudices are wrongful because they are negative attitudes towards all members of a group, regardless of individual differences. Prejudices stem from a fundamental psychological process called ingroup favouritism. This bias is the tendency to evaluate and treat members of one’s own group more favourably than members of outgroups.

Members of the same group often share the prejudices they have towards outgroups in their region or country. For example, many Canadians may believe that “all Indigenous people have

3 To learn more, consult the Petit guide pédagogique pour La leçon de discrimination on the curio.ca website, pp. 11–12.
alcohol or drug addiction problems.” A majority of women may share the belief that “most men are male chauvinists” or that “all Muslims oppress women.” People who share these preconceptions, who prejudge, are relying on mistaken, inflexible generalizations while not taking individual differences into account. The feelings most often associated with prejudices can range from discomfort in the presence of outgroup members, to distrust, fear, disgust, rejection and hostility.

We can have prejudices towards members of a socio-economic class (for example, poor people), a religious affiliation (Muslims), an ethnic group (Indigenous people) or a cultural community (Latinos). Prejudices are sometimes identified by a particular label specifying the social category concerned. Thus, sexism denotes prejudice based on gender; ageism is prejudice based on age; racism is prejudice against Blacks or Asians; linguicism is prejudice towards individual based on their accent or language; Islamophobia denotes prejudice towards Muslims; antisemitism is prejudice against Jews and homophobia denotes prejudice against homosexuals.

Essentialism is the belief that the members of a group have a set of characteristics that make them what they are and that determine their “true nature.” Biological essentialism,⁴ has served as the ideological basis for highlighting the “natural” differences and inequalities between humans of different colour and physiognomic features. This biological essentialism has been used to justify the superiority of some groups and the inferiority of “others,” which throughout history has resulted in segregation, slavery and other forms of exploitation. Psychological essentialism⁵ is the belief that certain categories, such as gender and ethnicity, reflect “natural characters” that reveal the true, unchanging and immutable behaviours of such groups. Psychological essentialism is often used by those who adhere to racist, sexist and nationalist ideologies in order to legitimize the superiority of their own group and exaggerate the negative traits of outgroups, which are devalued because of their “fundamental” differences.

Prejudices are persistent because they are often expressed and enshrined by people in authority. In A Lesson in Discrimination, Annie Leblanc instilled prejudices by saying, “I see tall pupils who are very undisciplined and noisy. It doesn’t surprise me, because the fact is they

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⁴ To learn more, consult the Petit guide pédagogique pour La leçon de discrimination on the curio.ca website, pp. 16–17.
⁵ To learn more, consult the Petit guide pédagogique pour La leçon de discrimination on the curio.ca website, p. 10.
usually cause more trouble.” Later she said, “Because the short kids are superior, they will get special privileges today.” Benjamin, who is in the short group, endorses these prejudices when he says that the writing on the blackboard of his best friend in the tall group is indeed sloppy.

Part 2: A post-screening activity and/or discussion

✓ Have you or someone close to you ever been a victim of prejudice? If so, what physical or psychological characteristics were the causes of the prejudice? What were the circumstances? What were the reasons?
✓ If you have been the victim of prejudice, what emotions did you feel? Can you provide some examples of types of prejudices you suffered?
✓ Should a teacher stop everything when prejudice is expressed by a pupil in his class? Should the teacher discuss immediately with the possible perpetrators and victims of prejudice? In what circumstances should prejudice be discussed and dealt with in the classroom?
✓ What would you suggest as ways to uncover subtle and explicit forms of prejudice in everyday life?

Part 3: Multidisciplinary activities suggested by the teacher

✓ Have you ever noticed underlying prejudices in your school textbooks? If so, what are the prejudices conveyed in such textbooks?
✓ Identify the ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious background of the novelists, artists and scientists mentioned in some of your school textbooks. Does the presence or absence of minority groups in such textbooks have an impact on how you view science and literature?
✓ What is the percentage of scientists and novelists who are women and men in some of your school textbooks? Do you identify with famous novelists and scientists in your textbooks?
✓ If you do not find many minority novelists and scientists mentioned in your textbooks, what suggestions could you make to improve the presence of minorities in such fields and in your textbooks?
TEAM DISCUSSIONS

Organize team discussions by giving the following instructions to participants:

1) Form three or four-person teams.

2) Choose people for your teams who do not necessarily have the same background or opinions as you do.

3) Choose a textbook in a subject taught in your class (English, math, history).

4) Using the questions listed in part 3 as a model, look for biases that authors of the textbook may have.

5) You can analyze the illustrations, famous individuals, and key topics covered in the textbook for possible biases and prejudices.

6) For each prejudice that you identify, suggest corrections that could reduce biases from the school textbook.

7) Share what you found with the other teams in the class.
ACTIVITY 3

DISCRIMINATION:
A PERSISTENT PHENOMENON
Part 1: A pre-screening discussion

**Discrimination** is the differential treatment of people because of the social groups to which they belong. Differential treatment refers to observable positive or negative acts toward people who belong to different groups. Of most concern for social harmony is discrimination expressed as negative behaviours directed against individuals based on their belonging to a devalued or disparaged outgroup. Members of dominant majorities have the power to discriminate by awarding more rewards (jobs, salaries, status) to members of their own group than to members of vulnerable or devalued minorities.

In the United States in 1970, Jane Elliott, in the documentary entitled *The Eye of the Storm*, divided her class of white Grade 3 pupils in Iowa in two groups: those with blue eyes and those with brown eyes. During the first day, the blue-eyed children were valued by the teacher (more intelligent, better behaved) while the brown eyes were devalued. The next day, it was the brown-eyed children who were valued by the teacher. Results showed that pupils in the valued group discriminated against their classmates in the devalued group.

In 2006, *A Lesson in Discrimination* showed that pupils in the valued group also discriminated against their classmates in the devalued group. In Quebec as in Iowa, pupils who were discriminated against on the first day of the experiment ended-up discriminating on the second day against their classmates who were now in the devalued group. White francophone Quebec pupils in 2006 behaved just like the white anglophone pupils in the United States in 1970. These results obtained in two different cultural settings and in different time periods illustrate the
universal nature of discrimination. Viewing *A Lesson in Discrimination* in class is an effective teaching tool because it helps schoolchildren understand that an absurd categorization such as “tall kids versus short kids” and the valuing of one group of children at the expense of the other group by the teacher is sufficient to trigger prejudice and discrimination between the two groups of schoolchildren.

In the documentary *A Lesson in Discrimination – 10 Years Later*, some of the former pupils in grade 3 who were interviewed a decade later revealed they had been victim of discrimination or witnessed discrimination up to the end of their high school. Three types of discrimination were described: **individual, institutional** and **systemic**.

**Individual discrimination** is negative behaviour towards a particular person based on that person’s belonging to a devalued outgroup, often a minority group. Individual discrimination can occur in private situations, such as a discussion during a meal, during a party with friends, or during a family get-together. This discrimination can also occur between pupils in a classroom or in the schoolyard, between employees in an office, in stores, in restaurants and on the street.

**Institutional discrimination** refers to the regulations of a government, private firm or public-sector organization that does institutionalize the unfair treatment of some devalued groups (e.g., refusal to hire people from visible minorities for senior positions), compared with the treatment given to advantaged groups (men more easily promoted than women).

**Systemic discrimination** arises when – although the institutional practices of a government or company affect all individuals equally – the system produces unintentional consequences that can adversely affect some people because they belong to disadvantaged groups (women, visible minorities). Not so long ago, employers would authorize the same number of paid leave days for all their employees, both men and women. Female employees who were pregnant had to take extra leave days before and after childbirth at their own expense. As a consequence, these women often missed out on professional training opportunities or promotions, resulting in lower income relative to male employees who had taken fewer unpaid leave and received better training opportunities. Although men and women were treated equally, the results were not equal because women suffered systemic disadvantages.

Many countries adopted constitutions, charters of rights and freedoms, as well as laws to prohibit institutional, systemic and individual discrimination. In practice, the legal measures
against systemic and institutional discrimination can be more readily enforced legally than those against individual discrimination which can be more difficult to prove in the legal system.

In the 2006 *Lesson in Discrimination* experiment Annie Leblanc created institutional discrimination by dividing her class in two on the basis of a flimsy height criteria while systematically valuing one group as being superior to the other and giving more advantages to the valued than to the devalued group. As expected, many pupils in the valued group endorsed the legitimizing rhetoric of their teacher which ultimately justified prejudice and discrimination against pupils in the devalued group.

However, the 2006 documentary revealed that three pupils did challenge the justification of institutional discrimination that Annie Leblanc established in her class. We witness Sabrina who said, “I don’t need these privileges; I’m fine without them.” For his part, Jérémie planned to report his teacher to the school principal for having established the ‘us vs them’ categorisation pitting tall pupils against short pupils in her class. David asserted his continued commitment to values of equality, respect and fairness while avoiding endorsement of his teacher’s valued vs devalued ascriptions. As seen in the 2016 documentary, David, who moved to Sherbrooke, deplored discrimination in his high school based on his fellow student’s regional accents and religious affiliations.

QUESTION: Do you think that Sabrina, Jérémie and David are champions for challenging prejudice and discrimination where they find it?

**Part 2: A post-screening activity and/or discussion**

- Have you or someone close to you ever been the victim of discrimination? If so, what were the reasons? What were the circumstances? Was it individual, institutional or systemic discrimination?
- If you were the victim of discrimination, what emotions did you feel?
- Can you provide examples of discrimination in your every day life?
- Should a teacher stop everything when someone engages in discriminatory behaviours in class? Should the teacher discuss issues of discrimination and hate speech in your
classroom? In what circumstances should hate speech and discriminatory acts in school be sanctioned by teachers?

✓ Provide examples of individual, institutional and systemic discrimination that you, people close to you, or your parents have experienced.

✓ Do some groups discriminate more than others?

✓ Are some groups more victim of hate speech and discrimination?

✓ Have you ever behaved in a discriminatory way towards other people as a member of your sports team? Or as a student who is part of a work team in your classroom in school, college or university? Or as an employee who is part of a work unit? Or as a male or female group member?

✓ Why is it so difficult to admit that we may have discriminated against an outgroup member?

Part 3: Multidisciplinary activities suggested by the teacher

**CASE STUDY**

Do a search on the Internet or as a team or work group. Look for case studies that describe situations of individual discrimination. Explain the circumstances. Look for case studies that describe situations of institutional and systemic discrimination in this country or elsewhere in the world. Can you explain the harmful effects that these practices cause to devalued employees? Look for case studies that describe situations of systemic discrimination. Can you explain the harmful effects of discrimination for vulnerable minorities?
ACTIVITY 4

PREVENTING BULLYING AND VIOLENCE
Stigma highlights a person’s difference from others based on some distinguishing features or special marks. Individuals can be stigmatized\(^6\) and devalued because they happen to belong to an “unloved” social category during a particular time period or in a particular cultural setting. Visible stigma may include gender, race, obesity and physical disabilities. Prejudice is expressed against stigmatized individuals because of their personal characteristics, often perceived as unchanging – such as having an unattractive physical appearance (lookism), a behaviour disorder (attention deficit), a distinctive physical traits (having red hair, being fat). Pierre-Luc recalls he was stigmatized since kindergarten because he was seen as ‘the fat one’. In 2006, he said, “They call me the fat kid and I find it so annoying. It’s discrimination.”

Visible stigmas can be more damaging because individuals with such stigmas cannot hide their difference to avoid the prejudice, harassment and discrimination engendered by their stigma.

\(^6\) To learn more, consult the *Petit guide pédagogique pour La leçon de discrimination* on the curio.ca website, p. 10.
Stigmatized individuals rarely succeed in defending themselves collectively as group members because the stigma isolates individuals who are often seen as the minority of one within a classroom, a work unit, a leisure, sport or religious group. This isolation makes stigmatised individuals more vulnerable to the pain of prejudice and discrimination. Invisible or concealable stigmas include closet sexual orientation, psychiatric disorders, drug abuse. Persons with concealable stigmas may become consumed by efforts to keep their difference hidden, while foregoing on the group support they need to fight for their rights and be accepted and treated with fairness.

Social interaction can be stabilizing or destructive for young people, particularly if they are stigmatized and under emotional stress. Young people tend to excel when they feel that their teachers care about them, have encouraging expectations of what they can learn, and provide the support they need to do well in school regardless of their individual stigma or vulnerable category membership. However, bullying and harassment, which frequently occur in schools, can affect the academic achievement of vulnerable students. Bullying implies a power imbalance – a situation where an abuser mocks or attacks a clearly weaker stigmatised victim or vulnerable minority group member.

Violence is a problem because it compromises the physical, moral, psychological and material integrity of targeted individuals. Violence is the result of conflict that involves not only two individuals, but also other contextual factors that may exacerbate the violence experienced by people. Some examples of these contextual factors are family, peers, siblings, living conditions, authority figures, and street gangs. There are three types of violence: physical, psychological and instrumental.

An example of physical violence is the scuffles that break out between students at school. Physical violence can occur on the way to or from school, and it can erupt in the activities that students do together, and in the more private relationships of couples. The seriousness of the physical assault varies, depending on the means used by the aggressor, such as the intensity of the physical force or the use of weapons or objects to harm the integrity of the other person. Sexual violence is both physical and psychological.

Psychological violence involves the use of insults, threats, deceptions or attempts to exert control in order to shatter and harm the well-being of the other person. Other forms of psychological violence are mockery, lies and teasing, as well as any communication by a person or
group seeking to inform others that they are bad or not valued. Psychological violence is not only verbal; it can also be inflicted through behaviour intended to ignore, avoid, exclude, reject or banish a person from a group or a particular social space, including physical, social, defensive or unknowing ostracism. Gossip and malicious remarks are other forms of psychological violence experienced interpersonally or through social media.

**Instrumental violence** is a deliberate act where the aggressor damages or destroys another person’s work or property, or takes away the other person’s property, work or space, and this without physical contact between the aggressor and the victim. In schools, any type of theft is instrumental violence, but it is also any type of act intended to take possession of and control physical, human or knowledge-related resources.

What is the link between these forms of violence and bullying? **Bullying** is a specific type of violence. It is proactive violence, because it is an act that is not provoked by another person and that is initiated by the aggressor. It is an intentional act whereby one or more individuals inflict negative actions on the same person repeatedly over a long period. The act of bullying can be physical, instrumental and more often psychological. In schools, bullying is mostly associated with taxing and rackets, i.e., extortion to obtain goods or rights through the use of force or threats. In legal terms, taxing is robbery; in other words, instrumental violence. The harm caused by bullying is becoming more widely understood and remains widely perpetrated through social networks at school, at work and at home.

According to recent analyses, bullies, victims and bystanders all have to be taken into consideration in order to combat discrimination. The role of bullies was highlighted in *A Lesson in Discrimination – 10 Years Later*. In 2016, Benjamin says the following about bullies: “It was the first time I got picked on. I had never been picked on before [. . .] Today, I feel stupid. I didn’t want to hurt anybody.” On the bullying he perpetrated in 2006, Jimmy added: “It wasn’t to be mean . . . The three of us were a little gang. We picked on everybody . . . it was a bit like a gang effect.” Michaël admits, “In high school, I got cockier . . . It’s too easy. It’s a reflex . . . young kids end up telling you that you’re being a real pain and they make you realize you’ve gone too far.” According to Alexandra, “The guys [Benjamin, Michael and Jimmy] were always cocky. They were good at sports, they were at the top of the class; it was always like that.”
On the victim side, Pierre-Luc said in 2016 that he recalled mostly negative moments during primary school. Although he liked to learn in school, he did not want “to go to school, did not want to get on the bus.” The discrimination experiment was a relief for him because he said, “There was finally someone in the class who had the same feeling as me; they finally understood.” For Pierre-Luc, the months following the experiment emerged as a grace period, a break, because the students in the class stopped insulting him. Sabrina said in 2016 that it was normal for Pierre-Luc to want to take advantage of the privileges he gained in the valued tall group during the experiment in 2006. While pupils in the experiment suffered discrimination for a day while they were in the devalued group, for Pierre-Luc, discrimination was his daily reality.

On the bystanders’ side, there was a mild rebellion in 2006. Naomie had written a protest letter, which almost got sent to the school principal. Jérémie recalled in 2016 that the pupils loved their teacher and that one morning they did not recognize Annie Leblanc as she was setting-up the experiment: “they arrived in class and things were completely different. You can’t let that [behaviour] go and say it’s not serious, that it will go away. This has to stop.” He wondered whether their protest letter would have had an impact if they had sent it to the school administration. For his part, David could not accept Pierre-Luc, his best friend, being “picked on.” He often went to see the students who bullied Pierre-Luc; he stood up for him and asked classmates to stop. Pierre-Luc said, “It was David who helped me get through that.” In 2016, Benjamin as the former gang member also admitted that “if the rest of the class had said, ‘It’s dumb when you pick on Pierre-Luc,’ it would have been different, because I would have felt isolated doing it”.

Annie Leblanc said, “They met again 10 years later and the roles were practically the same. Her former students each assumed the role they had held 10 years ago . . . The ones who engaged in discriminatory behaviour are candid and honest about it, even a little hard on themselves at times. They haven’t realized the long-term impact; they trivialized what happened back then” She said that they “kind of downplayed their responsibility, as if they had never put themselves in Pierre-Luc’s position.” She believes that during the 2016 classroom reunion, Pierre-Luc would have needed “some sincere apologies”. It did not happen. Benjamin admitted finally realizing and being struck by the fact that, 10 years later, Pierre-Luc was still affected by it all from the classroom days in 2006.
This prompted Annie Leblanc to say, “You have to intervene not only with the victims and the bullies, but also with the bystanders . . . As an educator, you have to use every possible means to change the situation when a child is belittled, made vulnerable and made to feel bad inside. Taking action can make a difference in children’s lives.” (Annie Leblanc, 2016)

Part 2: A post-screening activity and discussion

✓ Have you or someone close to you ever been the victim of physical violence? Of instrumental violence? Or of psychological violence? If yes, what were the reasons? What were the circumstances? What is the link between these forms of violence and bullying?
✓ Have you or someone close to you ever been the victim of bullying? Of physical bullying? Of instrumental bullying? Of psychological bullying?
✓ What suggestions would you make to help bullies realize the impact of their actions?
✓ What suggestions would you make to help victims regain their self-esteem and learn how to defend themselves?
✓ What suggestions would you make to help bystanders get involved to defend victims and thus contribute to social cohesion in classrooms, families and workplaces?
✓ In 2006, did Pierre-Luc suffer discrimination because of his group membership or because he was stigmatized for being fat? Explain why. In the 2016 documentary, do you feel that Pierre-Luc still suffered the harmful effects of what he experienced in 2006?

Part 3: Multidisciplinary activities suggested by the teacher

**OBSERVATIONS**

Write an essay or make entries in a logbook to record your day-to-day observations of bullying and violence that you witnessed at school, at work or elsewhere over a period of a week or so. Record your observations, comments and thoughts in writing. You can submit your logbook to a teacher running a debating club, share it with friends for discussion, or edit it to submit to your student newspaper.
ACTIVITY 5

HARM CAUSED BY DISCRIMINATION
**ACTIVITY 5: HARM CAUSED BY DISCRIMINATION**

- **Part 1: A pre-screening discussion**

  Research in North America and Europe has shown that individuals who are stigmatized and discriminated against on a regular basis undergo a significant loss of well-being. They suffer psychological distress, anxiety, recurring negative emotions and depression. These victims feel they are losing control of their lives, develop low self-esteem, and find less and less satisfaction in their lives. This psychological distress is felt more intensely by children than by adults, who have learned through experience how to better shield themselves against the harm caused by stigmatization and discrimination. Generally, the harmful effects of discrimination are more serious for members of disadvantaged minorities than for members of advantaged groups who are able to better protect themselves because they have the necessary financial resources to obtain psychological and physical support services to alleviate the harmful effects.

  Although members of ethnic minorities suffer loss of well-being because of discrimination, the harmful effects of being personally stigmatized can be more serious for people with physical and mental disability, obese people and closet homosexuals. The victims of this type of stigmatization often feel isolated and vulnerable as individuals without the help of a support network made up of minority group members sharing the same ethnic, linguistic, racial or religious identity. The harmful effects of discrimination and stigmatization are more long-term for members of minorities who are systematically discriminated against than they are for individuals who rarely suffer discrimination.

  Epidemiological research has found that the harmful consequences of discrimination also include deteriorating physical health. Recent studies show that victims of stigmatization and discrimination develop a feeling of powerlessness and chronic stress that makes them more susceptible to high blood pressure, high cholesterol rates, heart disease and obesity. These findings were obtained from African-Americans in the United States and from Muslim Pakistani...
immigrants in Great Britain who had been subjected to Islamophobia and discrimination following the terrorist attacks in New York (2001) and London (2005).

At the start of the 2006 documentary, Annie Leblanc makes the following observation: “Nearly every year, in almost every group, there’s a kid who is discriminated against in a class. Sometimes, it’s for physical reasons, but at other times, it’s for other reasons. It can be because a pupil is effeminate, or a child is poor. It is rare for a class not to have a child that everyone picks on.”

Annie Leblanc is clearly aware of the discomfort that her pupils suffered during the experiment in 2006. Ideally, she considers that the discomforts felt by her pupils in the experiment were offset either by gains in new scientific knowledge, or by the new awareness that thousands of students and adults learned when they viewed the documentary in the last decade around the world. Annie Leblanc hopes that each student who took part in the 2006 experiment did learn something meaningful that did equip them for life. Her enduring love for her pupils in the last decade could be seen a “tough love” commitment.

Testimonials made by Annie’s pupils in 2016 suggest that in the end the discomfort they suffered during the experiment were relative. Maude said, “It lasted two days; it was very short; we had forgotten by the following weekend.” Sarah said, “If I didn’t have the video to remind me of the experiment, I would not have been affected by it.” Alexandra admits that, “Personally, I did not remember the experiment.” Naomie, who had cried a lot during the experiment, considers that “… it was a worthwhile experience. I was affected by it in a good way. Usually discrimination and bullying happen in the shadows because all this is taboo. But in the experiment it all came out in the open for all to see. There was no better way for me to learn all this than through the experiment. It makes me want to change the world.”
Part 2: A post-screening activity and/or discussion

✓ In your classroom organize a workshop to talk about various issues raised in one or both documentaries.

✓ What are some of the personal characteristics of your students? Can you identify students who are leaders, bullies, followers, bystanders, stigmatised?

✓ In your class, are there students who are immigrants and refugees? What country of origin do they come from? Ask some of these students to talk about the circumstances which lead their family to settle in this country.

✓ Do you have students who are members of ethnic and visible minorities? How relevant are the two documentaries for them?

✓ What part of town do some of your students come from? Do students in your class come from different social class background? What language(s) do your students speak at home and in the school yard? What religion do they practice? Do some students wear religious signs (hijab, turban) in school or when they go home?

✓ Do you feel group tensions in your class? Do you feel tensions between ethnic, religious or linguistic subgroups within your classroom?

✓ Have you noticed whether there are one or more students that everyone picks on in class and at recess?

✓ Did you notice students who do not feel valued, feel rejected by classmates or by rival factions in class?

✓ Are there students with a physical or mental disability in your class? Is obesity and sexual orientation a cause of stigma for some of your students?

✓ Can you discuss issues of stigma, prejudice, bullying and discrimination in your class?

✓ Discuss ways to foster harmonious relations between students of all backgrounds in your class.
Part 3: Multidisciplinary activities suggested by the teacher

**THINKING EXERCISE**

Find potential solutions to identify, address, reduce the negative effects of discrimination in your classroom and school. Interaction amongst teachers and students influence the quality of personal and school life for students. Creating a classroom environment that is safe, friendly and disciplined helps to establish harmony and social cohesion for the students, while promoting academic achievement.