

The TV programme **The School That Tried To End Racism** was in two episodes.

It took place in a large multi-racial secondary school with 24 volunteers from Year 7. The pupils were part of a programme to look at unconscious racial bias. The idea being that it would break down barriers and increase mutual understanding. They were articulate and interested. At first they took part in a test to show racial bias. The test showed 18/24 preferred white people, 2 with a black preference and 4 were neutral.

At times the group separated into affinity groups so they could be frank and honest. They were asked to line up by the colour of their skin and white children were taken into one group, non-whites to another. One girl of Sri Lankan/white heritage was not sure which group she belonged in and was welcomed by a boy in the non-white group. After a while the Asian and Chinese children decided they would like their own group. I thought that at times when the pupils returned to the full group there was some defensive arm crossing.

A number of the white children said they were concerned that what they said could be misinterpreted and it 'would go around the school that they were racist'. They were very aware of what they said and they might feel as if they had 'done something wrong'. One remarked that 'it's always the white person being racist' and 'If we say anything we can be called racist'. The black group seemed to be having a better time and laughed a lot. This worried some children in the white group who wondered if they were enjoying themselves because 'we aren't there'. The white group was said to be 'like a funeral' and the black group 'like a carnival'. I thought that a few white pupils ended up feeling guilty and were uncomfortable in the affinity groups.

They discussed what it's like to be white, black etc and this led to various comments such as 'it doesn't mean anything to be white', one girl not wanting to be described by race and one black girl saying she was 'milk chocolate' colour. A white girl said she was sad that she could only show flags and a book not the interesting things the non-white children brought to the 'show and tell' session. The presenter said 'if they didn't understand their own identity they wouldn't be able to understand others'. It seems white people don't celebrate their own identity, I query this with my Welsh, Scottish and Irish friends being very confident in who they are.

One boy described a racist incident he had not told his mother about. A friend had been shouting in a shop and the shopkeeper sent him out along with his shouty friend. He felt this was unfair. He assumed it was because of his race. It upset him a great deal.

The privilege game involved a few children, randomly chosen being given gifts. There was also a race game where children were asked to take steps back or forward in answer to some questions. White boys were in front and the Sri Lankan/white girl was right at the back. The idea being to show that we aren't equal.

On a visit to the National Portrait Gallery they saw a lot of portraits of white males. At the time these were considered to be the people important to the Nation. I felt that the pupils were not being given enough information regarding the 'bigger' historical picture. The same with the slavery issue they talked about, it appeared as if the only slavery was from 1563 – 1830 with the slave trade, nothing about the bigger picture.

At the end when the test was repeated they were all neutral for unconscious bias.

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