

Lesson 4

A matrix of power

Minorities and majorities in our country

Learning objectives	In a plenary discussion, the students understand that there are several minorities as well as majorities present in their country. They understand that a sense of exclusion can be the result of not only the way other members of society see you, but also of the way members of your own group see you.
Student tasks	The students are presented with various cards showing groups within a society – with some groups belonging to a minority, and some to a majority. They sort the cards according to whether they think the groups belong to a minority or a majority. They assign power cards (low power or high power) to the groups. In a plenary session, they discuss what effect belonging to a majority or a minority can have.
Resources	Word cards, power cards.
Methods	Plenary discussion.

Lesson description

The students sit in a circle. There should be enough space in the middle for everybody to be able to see.

The teacher places the set of word cards bearing the names of different groups within society on the floor in the middle of the circle. Some of the groups should belong to minorities and some to majorities. Note: it is important to bear in mind that not all minority groups have little power in society!

Examples:

- children;
- people with disabilities;
- politicians;
- people with a different skin colour;
- punks;
- skaters;
- very religious people who show their religion by dressing differently;
- priests and nuns;
- people who are elderly;
- country-specific minorities such as Roma, Sinti, Ashkali, etc.;
- managers;
- workers;
- housewives;
- doctors;
- men;
- women.

The students should look at the different cards. Then they should each take a card and, without saying anything, sort it according to whether they think the group named on the card is a minority or a majority. This should be the first step in starting a “matrix of power”. Only one student at a time should stand up and take a card.

As a second step, the matrix will be continued by assigning power cards to the different minorities and majorities. It will be interesting for the students to discover that minorities, too, can be very powerful in a society.

Example of the matrix:

Power	Minorities	Majorities
Very high power		
High power		
Middle power		
Little power		
No power		

Once the matrix has been completed, the students discuss the effects that different levels of power can have. It will be the teacher’s task to steer the discussion and to take into account prior attitudes or fixed opinions in a very sensitive way.