

UNIT 4: Assignment 2

Understanding Discrimination

1 Understand the meaning of discrimination

1.1 Explain ways in which people experience discrimination

1.2 Evaluate own experiences or observations of possible discrimination

Students should complete an essay explaining the ways in which people experience discrimination, and evaluating their own experiences or observations of possible discrimination. Word count: 600 minimum.

1.1

Discrimination manifests itself in different ways, and is defined as being a 'prejudiced or prejudicial outlook' by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Discriminatory thoughts and acts arise as a response to differences; they can be experienced through many avenues, including: racism, sexism, agism, homophobia, islamophobia, antisemitism and discrimination against disabilities. These modes of discrimination could be experienced indirectly or directly. Direct discrimination may be evident through harassment, bullying and violence. Indirect discrimination may be less difficult to recognise by those whom it does not affect. For instance, a school which does not facilitate wheel-chair users through the installation of ramps or lifts would exclude those staff or students who require additional assistance with mobility.

The Equality Act 2010 in the UK outlines 'protected characteristics': a list of factors which aim to protect those with differences from experiencing 'less favourable treatment' than someone else. This list includes: age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Unlawful discrimination is that which manifests as a response to these legally protected characteristics.

As a counsellor, it is important to refine the skill of self-evaluation and to be aware of any potential prejudices that one may have which may lead to a client accessing a lesser quality service as a result. As a counsellor - viewing clients in a humanistic way - it is important to embrace diversity and to perceive the client's issue through their own frame of reference. Having an awareness of different ways discrimination operates can also help the counsellor to perceive the client's experience through their idiosyncratic frame of reference, as a client who has previously experienced discrimination may appear to be guarded or distrustful.

1.2

During my employment at a secondary school in Greater Manchester, the terrorist attacks at an Ariana Grande concert shook Manchester and the nation. The school - diverse in pupils and staff - were quick to offer support to all students to ensure their understanding, safety and happiness. During briefing, staff were informed of the things to be vigilant about that day - predominantly islamophobia as a result of misunderstanding and intolerant rhetoric. The headteacher delivered assemblies to separate year groups throughout the morning - contextualising the attack away from discussions around Islam, promoting sisterhood and support, celebrating diversity and making it explicitly clear that extremism in the form of islamophobia would not be tolerated. This clear message was further exemplified when four

students were suspended for islamophobic behaviour. Whilst I was not witness to this behaviour, it was the concern of one student - a practicing muslim - that compelled me to pursue a career supporting vulnerable people. That morning, her parents and grandparents had pleaded with her not to go to school. They told her that getting the bus would be dangerous. A conscientious, vocal and infectiously happy student was now quiet, introspective and scared.

During my same term of employment at an all girls school, there was an appeal from a year 7 transgender female student who wanted to join the school but who was denied a place based on her biological sex. Her only other option would be to attend the boys school within her catchment area. Following her appeal, she was successful in securing her place at the school. This case in particular is demonstrative of how issues such as transgender discrimination may operate indirectly through institutional policies (such as gendered schools). Whilst the transgender community have been striving to give voice to the challenges they face, I think this highlights the changing political and social climate surrounding gender and the implications for discrimination.

References

Citizens Advice (No Date) Accessed on: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/law-and-courts/discrimination/what-are-the-different-types-of-discrimination/direct-discrimination/> Accessed at: 04/07/18