

Editorial

Make it personal

1 HAVE you ever judged a stranger by some superficial marker – their shoes, how they speak or what’s on their bookshelves? In the absence of any better information, it is only natural to resort to crude indicators like these to get some idea of what kind of person you are dealing with. If the outward signs suggest the two of you have things in common, don’t you respond more favourably to them? It is, after all, easier to interact with someone who is on your wavelength.

2 As this illustrates, humans have a deeply ingrained tendency to form groups. Now try replacing shoes or books by “race” or “ethnic group” and you will start to understand why some scientists see prejudice as a part of human nature. They argue that we see other people in terms of “us” and “them” because we have evolved to identify others with whom we can interact productively. Two researchers have even gone so far as to show that a form of colour prejudice can arise spontaneously in a virtual world full of interacting agents, and that when it does, it leads to greater cooperation.

3 At first sight the implications of this research seem shocking, but they deserve further thought. Even if it is in our nature to be prejudiced against people outside our group, and even if such discrimination evolved for a good reason, that does not mean we are stuck with it. Modern genetics tells us that we are all pretty much the same: genetic variation is generally far

greater within an ethnic group than between groups, so what we recognise as racial markers are biologically next to meaningless.

4 7, most of us realise that judgements based on these superficial markers give only crude stereotypes. This may have worked just fine for our prehistoric ancestors, living in small groups with few outside interactions, but it will not get you far in today’s global melting pot where we meet people from a huge variety of backgrounds. In any case, there is a more effective way to identify people with whom to do business – get to know them as individuals. Seeing how they behave is a far more accurate guide than crude markers.

5 The challenge facing us is to confront our true nature. Instead of denying that our tendency to prejudice exists, we would do well to understand why and when it is most likely to be triggered. This might give us the chance to set aside the urge to crudely pigeonhole people, and instead deal with them as individuals. Such behaviour is certainly more constructive and civilised, and it stands to improve our success as social, political and business animals. It would be naive to suppose that such self-knowledge will instantly resolve the deep-seated discrimination that exists around the world, but it is a start.

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Tekst 4 Make it personal

- 1p 4 What is the main point made in paragraph 1?
A First appearances are often deceptive when one meets complete strangers.
B One should be careful not to send the wrong message to others during a first meeting.
C People are inevitably attracted to others with whom they sense resemblance.
D There is a better chance of friendship when people co-operate.
- “humans have a deeply ingrained tendency to form groups” (alinea 2)
- 1p 5 Wat is volgens alinea 2 het voordeel hiervan?
- 1p 6 What is the main point made in paragraph 3?
A Advances in genetics will eventually put an end to racial discrimination.
B From a scientific point of view there is no valid basis for racial discrimination.
C Prejudice against another group is generally not a good reason to close ranks against it.
D The integration of genetically different groups would ultimately result in a more harmonious society.
- 1p 7 Which of the following fits the gap at the beginning of paragraph 4?
A For instance
B Nevertheless
C What’s more
- 1p 8 Welke combinatie van twee van de onderstaande uitspraken geeft de boodschap van het artikel weer?
1 Accept that prejudice has become a protective and vital mechanism.
2 Be aware of the circumstances that cause bias towards other people.
3 Be your own person in all situations, formal, political, business or otherwise.
4 Try to judge others on the basis of their qualities.
Noteer de nummers van de twee juiste uitspraken.

Bronvermelding

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