

# It's all in a name!

This Stage 5/6 learning sequence explores ethnic stereotyping through focusing on a 2009 Australian National University (ANU) study about names and employer discrimination.

## ACTIVITY ONE – MY NAME

Ask your students to focus on their own names by working with a partner to answer the following questions.

- Is there a story behind your name?
- Do you like your name? Why or why not?
- What do you think people who do not know you might assume about you based only on your name? [Think about gender and ethnicity.]

## ACTIVITY TWO – A STUDY IN DISCRIMINATION

Begin this activity by writing the following names on the board. They are actually examples of ethnically distinctive names used in the ANU study about names and discrimination:

Jennifer Robinson, Ahmed Kassir, Winnie Tjungarrayi, Peng Lin, and Maria Ferrari

Ask your students what ethnic backgrounds they think these people might have. [The names are Anglo, West Asian, Aboriginal, Chinese, and Italian.]

For more details see:

*Does Racial and Ethnic Discrimination Vary Across Minority Groups? Evidence from Three Experiments*

via

<http://econrsss.anu.edu.au/~aleigh/>

Conclude this activity with a class debate:

'Discrimination is a feature of any multicultural society'



# WORKSHEET: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

A recent study by researchers from the Australian National University (ANU) showed that job applicants find it easier to get an interview if they have an Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Celtic name.

The study, completed in June 2009, involved sending more than 4000 fake CVs in response to job advertisements in Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney. Several types of CV were created under different names. The advertised positions were in hospitality, data entry, customer service and sales.

'By varying the names on the CVs, we were able to estimate precisely the extent of hiring discrimination' explained one of the researchers, Professor Alison Booth. 'Because all other characteristics are held constant, we can be sure that we are really measuring discrimination.'

The study used a selection of distinctive names reflecting Anglo-Saxon, West Asian (Middle Eastern), Indigenous, Chinese and Italian ethnicity. These included names such as Adam Mitchell, Lala Hariri, Ronnie Japanangka, Ping Chang, and Giuseppe Romano.

The findings showed that to get the same number of interviews as an applicant with an Anglo-Saxon name, an applicant

- with a Chinese name must submit 68% more applications;
- with a Middle Eastern name must submit 64% more applications;
- with an Indigenous name must submit 35% more applications; and
- with an Italian name must submit 12% more applications.

The fake CVs all made it clear that the applicants had completed high school in Australia, so it is unlikely that employers thought the applicants did not speak English.

One interesting statistic to emerge was that in Melbourne, Italian-named applicants were not disadvantaged. In fact Italian-named applicants could submit 7% fewer applications than Anglo-named applicants to get an interview.

## DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

- What are the stereotypes that employers may have associated with each of the ethnically-distinctive names?
- Where do these stereotypes come from?
- Do you think the employers made conscious or unconscious decisions not to interview people with certain names? Why?
- Why do you think the results varied between different ethnic groups?
- Can this discrimination be overcome? If so, how?