

Prejudices: challenging level prejudice assignment

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“ We are each burdened with prejudice; against the poor or the rich, the smart or the slow, the gaunt or the obese. It is natural to develop prejudices. It is noble to rise above them,” Author Unknown. Unfortunately, throughout history our society has become victim to the upbringing and menacing of prejudices within. The prejudices that our fellow neighbors endure range from scowling facial expressions to violent hate crimes. As far back as the decades go, prejudice has been an ongoing problem in society, our children and our future are affected immensely; it is our job to make a drastic change.

Prejudice is a word that means judging someone or having an idea about them before you actually know anything about them, the word can also mean having an opinion about something without knowing anything about it. (Kids Health) On a more challenging level prejudice can refer to a positive or negative attitude or belief directed toward certain people based on their membership in a particular group. The root of the word is “ pre-judge,” it is a set of attitudes which causes, supports, or justifies discrimination.

There are three general theories for prejudice; personality needs, social learning and conformity, and social structure and economic position. Based on a study done by the Delmar University the three general theories were shown to be the most common reasons for prejudice within a person. These three theories lead to the forms and explanations of prejudice. The first form of prejudice being cognitive prejudice which refers to what people believe is true. Next is affective prejudice which points to peoples likes and dislikes.

And finally, conative prejudice which refers to how people are inclined to behave. Playing a part in the causes of prejudice is also; family, school, peer groups, work, and the media. Unfortunately, all too often a person will create a prejudice based off of something that they learned from another person or another area. It is society's job to recreate the environment that we set for our youth and humanity. We have to show our communities that not everyone or everything can be judged from lack of experience or another's belief.

Our country has been facing prejudice since as early as slavery and the Holocaust. Slaves consisted of "colored," people known as Negro's and now referred to as African Americans. These groups of people were pre-judge based on the color of their skin. Since they did not have a pale complexion they were treated poorly and forced to serve societies "white" race. Later on in history a prejudice dictator, Adolph Hitler, created a German based army that slaughtered the Jewish community.

Hitler pre-judged any and all who did not fit the description that he followed. Unfortunately, because of his prejudices many humans died from the ignorance of color barriers. Still to this day prejudice is a problem, where our children of color or bi-racial background experience the emotion of not feeling good enough because of what another thinks or believes. In Toledo Ohio where I live, my community experienced first-hand prejudice when a group of Neo-Nazis were given permission to have a demonstration walk through one of our neighborhoods.

The decision that our Mayor made to allow such a demonstration was one that jeopardized people's lives and disrespected the integrity of different cultures. The problem with prejudice is that society does not give one another a chance at being themselves. Some of our society is quick to judge another person for their color, their culture, or their religion. By pre-judging before knowing anything about a person or thing we are allowing something or someone else to influence our opinions.

Prejudice is seen in all kinds of situations such as; the cheerleading squad not wanting to be friends with a certain girl because she does not come from a wealthy family, a Caucasian family thinking that the African American family that moved in down the street will break into their home cause they watched a show on television where a family did that or even for instance some of society not wanting to vote for Barack Obama because they think that he looks like he could be a terrorist. Our youth have learned the ignorance that we have instilled in them and in return have lashed out in outrageous actions.

We have youth forming gangs and cliques that do harm to other youth because of what they have or do not have, or because of the way they look, who their parents are, where they live. It is unfortunate that instead of teaching our youth to appreciate everyone for who they are, we teach them what we do not like about another person or group. " Prejudice and discrimination are negative manifestations of integrative power. Instead of bringing or holding people together, prejudice and discrimination push them apart. Ironically, even prejudice and discrimination imply some sort of relationship.

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However, if there is no relationship people would be completely unaware of another person's or group's existence. When there is any relationship at all—even a negative one—there is some integration. Kenneth Boulding referred to this as “disintegrative power”—“the integration that is achieved through hatred, fear, and the threat of a common enemy.” (Boulding, 1989). There are ways that we can show our youth to bypass prejudice. If we start now and work together then the future of our children could be brighter and less hateful. Some of our schools have begun practicing exercises to fight prejudice and “bullying. At Crissey Elementary School the teachers began an exercise where each grade and classroom came up with ways of helping another student and being nice daily. The school worked together and colored their own posters that read, “Stop Bullying!” or “We all love each other at Crissey.” Not only did they join together to make these posters but they hung the posters all over the school for students, faculty and visitors to see everyday. Their idea is a great one that could be carried nationwide; to help show children that everyone is equal.

Another exercise that Crissey students participated in was one where each student took a family picture into their class. The students then wrote about their families, such as; how many family members there were, what their favorite foods were, what they liked to do together and so on. Once each student had written about their family the class filled out a poster that took a tally of each answer that was the same. By the end of the exercise the students were able to see that even though they may not look similar in appearance or come from the same origin, their families liked the same activities, foods, and vacation spots.

It is exercises like these that help teach our youth to be, “ one” and not divide between each other. The future of our society depends on people who have open minds and see past prejudice. These kinds of people can help mediate between conflicts of other people with prejudice. According to the web-site, Beyond Prejudice, the victims of prejudicial thinking or prejudicial actions are already devalued in the eyes of prejudicial individuals and any action taken by these people is seen as less valid because of their devaluation.

In addition to this person being devalued, his or her action also brings an oppositional force into the situation; this often creates more heat than light. Oppositional positions, while they may be completely “ correct,” often trigger resistance within observers, as well as within the individual who perceives himself or herself as the target of that force. This is partly why we need people to intervene between those with conflict. The only way to completely intervene without causing more conflict is to continue to teach against prejudice. Illustration A:

Illustration B: The first illustration here simply shows the prejudice person (person who feels a certain way about another person or group) and the other side shows the targeted side (person or group being prejudged). The prejudicial action force is where the prejudice feelings reside between the two. The second illustration shows both groups and the prejudicial action force but it also includes another section that shows a non-targeted person or group. This added section illustrates a neutral party that can intervene to help detour the prejudice feelings.

Our society can practice similar exercises to those of the Crissey students on a day-to-day basis. If we wake up every morning and decide to do one or two kind things for someone of another race, sex, religion, or culture we are slowly helping the fight. If you open the door for the Native American walking out, allow the elderly ladies to cut in front of you at the store, or even offer the homeless gentlemen a cold water you are showing another person that prejudice does not have to overtake our society. Theresa D.

McClellan cited that, " It is the subtle forces and faces of racism which are the most frustrating and, often, the most difficult to combat," by Woodrick in the 1996 issue of The Grand Rapids Press. The whispers under the breaths of Caucasians who were raised to hate African American's, or the impolite nudges of the men who were taught they are inferior to women are the hardest feelings of prejudice to look past. According to the Conflict Research Consortium at the University of Colorado, these kinds of prejudice feelings can be worked through with counseling and exercises like mirror imaging.

Mirror imaging is a strategy which parties can use to assess the reasonableness of their behavior. It asks the parties to look at themselves the way others see them and make appropriate changes if they do not like what they see. Often if disputants will look at themselves honestly, they will sometimes notice that they are doing the same kinds of things-name calling, deception, and rumor spreading, for example-that they fault their opponents for doing.

Once this is understood, parties can change their behavior to appear more reasonable, without altering or undermining their true interests at all.

Another exercise that the Conflict Research Consortium suggests is power sharing. This is a strategy for resolving disputes over who should have the most powerful position in the social hierarchy. Instead of fighting over who should have power over whom, power sharing relies upon the joint exercise of power. If conflicts can be reframed to focus on how such power sharing might take place, they can become much more constructive.

With all of the given suggestions for fighting against prejudice, our society and communities should follow through with simple exercises to teach youth and adults ways to work through feelings we were taught or have on our own. We have to continue to educate about different cultures, religions, races, and sexes. We can educate everyone through our schools, media and peers. The next time you feel that you do not like the person sitting next to you because of the color of their skin, the texture of their hair, the odor they give off or their size think about what kinds of aspects of life you may have in common with them.

Would it make you feel better to know that they get their hair cut at the same beauty salon you do? Would it make you like them if you knew that the reason they are obese is from the same disease that your mother suffers from? We need to try to remember when we feel hate and prejudice in our heart that “ we” are not perfect either and there may be aspects of us that the person sitting next to us does not like. How would we feel knowing someone did not like us, and they do not even know us? “ Prejudices are the chains forged by ignorance to keep men apart. This is a quote by the Countess of Blessington that enlightens us to understanding that when we carry these prejudices inside ourselves we create the barrier between our

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fellow neighbors. Looking back at the history of prejudice and the pain we inflict on our children, our society and our future; we have to make the choice to learn the uniqueness of one another. It is our duty to the human race to stop prejudging another for what they are or are not. Reference Page Blessington, Countess. (2007) Welcome to the Quote Garden. Retrieved June 16, 2008, from <http://www.uotegarden.com/prejudice.html> Cole, Dr. Jim. (2003). Beyond Prejudice. Retrieved June 16, 2008, from <http://www.beyondprejudice.com/index.html>. Conflict Research Consortium. (1998). Prejudice and Discrimination. Retrieved June 16, 2008, from <http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/problem/prejdisc.htm>. Kids Health. (2000). Prejudice-not giving a 'fair go'. Retrieved June 16, 2008, from <http://www.cyh.com/SubDefault.aspx?p=255>. Lunny-Brady, Edith (2008, April 10). Subtle kind of racism still around. Pantagraph, A. 3.

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