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PRE-PREJUDICE, PREJUDICE, BIGOTRY, & RACISM

Definitions and Differences

(partially derived from terminology and definitions from "The Anti-Bias Curriculum," Derman-Sparks, National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1989)

Define the following four terms: PRE-PREJUDICE, PREJUDICE, BIGOTRY, & RACISM by adding one at a time (denial of input, power/action, judgment) to the basic definition of Pre-Prejudice. Specifically, which of the three phrases when added to the definition of Pre-Prejudice turns it into Prejudice? What do you add to the definition of Prejudice that makes it Bigotry? What do you add to Bigotry that makes it Racism?

Pre-Prejudice = ignorance and guesses

Prejudice = ignorance and guesses, add ?

Bigotry = ignorance and guesses, add ?, add ?

Racism = ignorance and guesses, add ?, add ?, add ?

DEFINITIONS & EXAMPLES

Pre-Prejudice = ignorance and guesses.

Beginning ideas and feelings in very young children that may develop into real prejudice through reinforcement by prevailing societal biases. Pre-prejudice may be misconceptions based on young children's limited experience and developmental level, or it may consist of imitations of adult behavior. More serious forms are behaviors that indicate discomfort, fear, or rejection of differences.

A non-black child who has never met African-Americans before may think a black person's skin is dirty; a child may become fearful of someone with a physical disability because his/her parents act nervous around people with disabilities.

Pre-prejudice is normal for young children with limited experiences.

Prejudice = ignorance and guesses, add judgment.

An attitude, opinion, or feeling formed without prior knowledge, thought, or reason. Prejudice can be prejudgment for or against any person, group, or sex.

A person without experience (but possibly with exposure to media images) with Asian females may expect submissive behavior and attitudes. He/she may merely believe this, but more likely judges it as positive or negative.

Prejudice is a normal process for people. People constantly use teachings, expectations, and experiences to assess probability and predictability of safety or benefit. Evaluation of each and every situation, each and every time they are encountered whether or not there is a pattern or not is not efficient. Prejudgment (but not necessarily, prejudice) streamlines the assessment process. Piaget describes the development of schema in young children- conceptions of how things work and are. When faced with another set of data, Piaget says the first instinct is to use the previously



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established schemas to understand it. Assimilation into prior schema is a form of prejudice.

Bigotry = ignorance and guesses, judgment, add denial of input.

Bigotry occurs when an individual maintains prejudicial attitudes, opinions, or feelings whether or not the other person or people behaves in ways that are consistent or inconsistent with those prejudices. Bigots' perception are defined by their prejudices rather than the information or data that exists in their present experience.

A bigot who believes Latino are lazy and dumb will not acknowledge experiencing an articulate, intelligent, and hard working Latino. He/she cannot accept the input that disproves his/her prejudice.

Bigotry can be perceived as the failure or inability to complete Piaget's process of adaptation. While assimilation (incorporating newly presented situations into old judgments or understandings) is the first instinct for young children, when the information does not fit into an old schema, then the young child makes an accommodation to the previous schema- in other words, develops a new schema to fit the new data. Bigots appear to fail to accommodate for new data! While bigots appear flawed in terms of logic and may be morally reprehensible to many people, as long as they do not engage in activity affecting others based on their prejudices, they are not necessarily harmful. They may not be harmful to others (they may harm themselves at some level), because their bigotry is kept within their own thought and emotional processes. There is not necessarily any action that affects others.

Racism = ignorance and guesses, judgment, denial of input, add power/action.

Any attitude, action, or practice backed by power that subordinates people because of their color. This includes imposition of one ethnic group's culture in such a way as to withhold respect for, to demean, or to destroy the cultures of other races. Actions that cause loss of power or control, access, or self-esteem because of one's skin color. In some situations, it is the lack of action that can cause or perpetuate loss of power or self-esteem.

A person or institution who refuses to hire a qualified Puerto Rican candidate because he/she has a negative prejudice regarding Puerto Ricans has committed a racist act- power and esteem has been taken away from the Puerto Rican; harm has been done due to the color of the individual.

Racism harms individuals, groups of people, communities, and society at large by underutilization of human potential. There are other "-isms" based on class, gender/sex, age, and so forth that cause harm.

ANTI-BIAS: Anti-racism, anti-sexism, anti-handicappism, homophobia, ageism, etc.

An active/activist approach to challenging prejudice, stereotyping, bias, and the "-isms." In a society in which institutional structures create and maintain sexism, racism, and handicappism, it is not sufficient to be non-biased (and also highly unlikely), nor is it sufficient to be an observer. It is necessary for each individual to actively intervene, to challenge and counter the personal and institutional behaviors that perpetuate oppression.

Since racism, as with all the "isms" involves power and action, the opposition (anti-bias) also requires action to empower individuals, people, and communities.

Do you have a good heart?

If the answer is "yes," but you are not a participant in a process of equality and justice for all



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people... if you are not an activist in promoting a more equalitarian society with equal opportunity, access, power and control, and esteem, then despite your good heart, you are just as useless to the process of equality and justice as the bigot. With a good heart or with a heart full of hate, neither contributes to a better, safer, healthier multi-cultural, and democratic society.

Add the action and behavior to that good heart. Be an activist.

Biography

Ronald Mah, therapist and educator, combines concepts, principles, and philosophy with practical techniques and guidelines for effective and productive results. He uses humor and stories from his many experiences to illustrate important points in a stimulating and highly motivating and engaging style.

A Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist, his experiences include: Asian-American community mental health, Severely Emotionally Disturbed mental health & school partnership programs, vocational programs for at risk youth, welfare to work programs, clinical consulting & cross and multi-cultural training for Head Start, other early childhood education programs, social services organizations, & mental health agencies, supervising a high school mental health clinic, training and supervising therapists, private practice in Castro Valley, author of the Asian Pacific Islander Parent Education Support curriculum.

Professional Education experiences include: 16 years in ECE, including owning and running a child development center for 11 years, Kindergarten, elementary, & secondary teaching credentials and experience, ethnic studies curriculum writer, community college instructor, Masters of Psychology instructor, and former member Board of Directors of the California Kindergarten Association and of the California Association of Marriage & Family Therapists.