Literature Review on Prejudice Reduction

Discrimination is still one of the most chief social problems in our society. Evidences of discrimination are all over, from personal experiences to news reports, to themes of movies, video games, and many others. Whether one would like it or not, discrimination and prejudices are everywhere. It exists in any institution, whether in the workplace or in school, whether in the streets or in the community. Besides, it scopes race, gender, disease, and age. The diversity of the society might contribute to its prevalence, as it can misdirect people’s way of thinking. This attitude often leads to violence, mostly caused by racial prejudices.

Schools and universities may have huge responsibilities in combating this negative thinking pattern as chances to communicate and interact with people are prevalent within their environment. A chauvinist attitude can start at a young age, and thus, educating children early about diversity is important. Literatures have much to tell about prejudice and prejudice reduction, including the role of the school in upholding such intervention. This paper will present and review literatures about discrimination and prejudice, and prejudice reduction strategies. It will explore psychological and sociological explanations, as well as the rationale behind prejudice reduction in education. Overall, the paper’s aim is to help the readers understand the issues behind prejudice and prejudice reduction in education.
Fisk (2002) stated that stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination reflect one’s cognitive, affective, and behavioral reactions to people from other groups. The word ‘group’ itself underlines that society is full of diversity and classification. However, although people can learn and understand diversity, it is easier for them to stereotype and compare. They realize this negative thinking pattern early in childhood, as stereotyping in the media and books create the foundation for prejudiced adults (Klein, 1992). The media dictates what is beautiful and what is not; or what trend deserves praise. Popular stories depict ugliness, deformities and disabilities to being evil, reflected in the likes of Cinderella and Hansel and Gretel (Klein, 1992). This depiction creates groups or subgroups, for example, “those who are beautiful” or “those who are ugly”. Normally, a person experiences prejudice when he or she is different or belongs in a minority group. In the United States, Blacks experience prejudice for no reason at all but having their color (Sears and Henry, 2003). The documentary film ‘Bowling for Columbine’ showed this. Even without seeing the suspect, relatives of victims usually associate crimes to Blacks. Social dominance plays a part in this prejudice game, as explored by many researchers (Guimond et al, 2003). The link between social dominance and prejudice is obvious, as displayed by the how Caucasians dominate over other colors and how Christians dominate over other religion. This suggests that some stable feature of individuals, such as personality or enduring beliefs, may cause a generalized disposition to adopt
prejudiced and ethnocentric attitudes (Duckitt et al, 2002). Prejudice starts within an individual as a psychological encounter. Margo et al (2002) cited there is a widespread agreement that there is automatic activation of stereotypes and implicit (unconscious) prejudices when one meets a group member and identifies the person's skin color, facial features, gender characteristics, and the like. On activation, stereotypes apply without awareness or conscious intent (Margo et al, 2002).

According to Dovidio, Kawakami and Gaertner (2002), attitudes can either be implicit or explicit. This applies to prejudice because it is also a form of attitude. Individuals might prejudice others without intending to do so. Explicit attitudes apply traditional self-report measures. On the other hand, implicit attitudes automatically activate by the mere presence of the attitude object and commonly function without a person's full awareness or control (Dovidio, Kawakami and Gaetner, 2002). Implicit attitude on prejudice is more fatal and difficult to pinpoint because of its subtle characteristics.

While both explicit and implicit attitudes influence behavior in many ways, they are different. The latter is different in a sense that it shapes deliberative, well-considered responses for which people have the motivation and opportunity to weigh the costs and benefits of various courses of action (Dovidio, Kawakami and Gaetner, 2002). Besides, implicit attitudes such as implicit prejudice influence responses that are more difficult to oversee. They also influence control
or responses that people do not view as signals of their attitude and thus do not try to control (Dovidio, Kawakami and Gaetner, 2002).

Cognitive psychologists and many critical thinkers view prejudice as a ‘faulty generalization’ (Weinstein, 1990). It means cognitive processes that result in generalizing from nonrepresentative instances to the characteristics of a group decide prejudices and the stereotyping behaviors associated with them (Weinstein, 1990). The final analysis also shows that lack of self-esteem and sexual fears also result to prejudices (Weinstein, 1990).

As mentioned earlier, people see one another as members of groups. Groups can be in-groups or groups where an individual identifies; and out-groups, where the individual have no direct or indirect identification (Weinstein, 1990). There are five important factors in cognitive literatures that affect out-group and in-group differentiation. Robarth et al (1984) identified the five and refer the first two with the in-groups: their characteristic traits are more desirable and more natural; they have more trait varieties that characterize them. On the other hand, the last three refers to the out-groups. Higher abstraction characterizes them, and their characteristics in description and explanations are less specific than those on in-group members. Out-group members are also more extreme, both in their differences from in-group members and characteristics branding or familiarizing them. Further, people encode out-group behaviors differently and in a manner that reflects stereotypes and prior
expectations (Robarth et al, 1984). As told, out-groups subject to prejudices and stereotypes, because logically, the in-groups favor the characteristics and behavior of their group more than out-groups.

Compared with out-groups, in-group differentiation is an evolutionary phenomenon. It involves differentiation of social landscape into those within the group and those that fall outside the boundary (Brewer, 1999). Its boundaries can shift from person to person, or context to context to be more or less inclusive, dictated by local conditions and individual needs (Brewer, 1999). The relationship between in-group and out-group creates a cycle, or at least their distinctions shape opportunities and social interaction for cooperation, imitation and interdependence (Brewer, 1999). The root of this phenomenon of classification is that humans adopt the characteristic of compulsory interdependence, or in other words, to rely on others for survival (Brewer, 1997, 1999). This leads to develop in-groups where mutual trusts and cooperation must exist, as well as contingent altruism. However, trusts and loyalty to one's in-group might lead to the biasness of defending their in-group characteristics from out-groups. Brewer (1999, p.434) stated that "discrimination between in-groups and out-groups is a matter of relative favoritism toward the in-group and the absence of equivalent favoritism toward the out-group". He stated that prejudice can emerge from the in-groups by: moral superiority; perceived threat; common values and social comparison, and; power politics. When the moral rule is absolute and the out-groups do not subscribe with it, denigration and contempt replace indifference (Brewer, 1999). Further, perceived threat can also be a basis when the in-groups compete over
physical resources and political power with the out-groups (Brewer, 1999). This can take place in the early education setting where children compete for attention and recognition with other students. On the other hand, the differences between common goals of the in-groups and out-groups can also create tension as it threatens differentiation. Common values and social comparison also applies with their differences, as relatively advantaged in-groups seek to keep or exaggerate the positive comparison in favor of their group. On the other hand, disadvantaged in-groups seek to minimize relative differences or gain resentment from the out-group (Brewer, 1999).

Earlier discussions in this paper stated that prejudice starts early in childhood. Without guidance, factors that characterize intergroup relations may influence children. They may also develop a biased attitude as they grow. Thus, it is in such human stage that antiprejudice intervention best fit. Research shows that children suppress their prejudices especially when in-front of an in-group member (Rutland et al, 2005). They may engage in self-presentation behavior when high in social concern or in the presence of an in-group member (Rutland et al, 2005). Also, children do not favor racial discrimination. Rutland et al (2005) cited from Piaget that “the child’s moral reasoning is heteronomous; namely, they understand moral norms as one-sided and originating from external authority”. However, when they reach the age of ten, children’s reasoning becomes autonomous as they internalize fundamental moral norms and begin to regulate internally their own moral behavior. Children give efforts such as development of
empathy, logical and counterfactual reasoning. This suggests that children’s levels of prejudice relates with gaining specific social cognitive skills (Rutland et al, 2005).

As evidence shows, prejudice can also exist among children, but they lack the negative attitude that most adults and adolescents have. Yee and Brown (1992) showed that 3- to 9-year-old children were more favorable towards their own group than to the other group. However, they did not express negative attitudes towards the other group. Similarly, Rutland (1999) found that in-group favoritism limits to children of 10 years and older. On the other hand, out-group derogation was only from 12 years old and with only one national group - the Germans. This shows the potential of preventing prejudice attitude early in childhood through means of educational intervention and prejudice reduction strategies.

**Interventions**

Pate (1995) listed and discussed certain types of approaches in reducing prejudices in the classroom setting. The approaches include: cognitive approaches; direct approaches; shared-coping approaches; variety of classroom approaches; and audiovisual approaches (Pate, 1995).

The most often used approach among those is the cognitive approach. Cognitive approach’s principle is that people can reduce prejudice if they know more about other groups and think more clearly (Pate, 1995). We can link this
with the psychological explanation of prejudice discussed earlier – that faulty thinking and lack of clear knowledge on the out-group result in prejudice. Cognitive approach tactics can either be informational or integrated. Pate (1995) stated that approaches must incorporate both those two tactics to be effective. For instance, to be informational, the teacher might consider lectures, filmstrips and discussion; while to be integrated, the instructor might consider inviting people who are the target of the prejudice reduction program. Pate (1995) stated that intervention efforts which include empathy as well as increased knowledge and understanding of other groups are effective.

On the other hand, the direct approach in reducing prejudice is an approach where in the instructor or teacher directs or literally orders the students to take part on an antiprejudice program. Examples of these include assigning them to read books, integrating a weekly class about prejudice, and many others (Pate, 1995). However, Pate (1995) stated that this is the least effective approach as students may resent the instructions, which might hold or increase their prejudice level. Delayed measures are the only solution to create attitude change with direct approach in the long-run.

Meanwhile, another means of reducing prejudice is the shared-coping approach. Learning teams or the cooperative learning idea is another term for it. Here, implementers build learning teams comprised of different races and ethnicity. General approach involves engaging the teams into games and tournaments, and the team should win or experience success for the technique.
to work. However, cooperative experience that does not involve competition is more effective in the long-run (Pate, 1995).

Other classroom approaches might also work in reducing prejudice. Some examples of this alternative are semantics, counter-stereotype approach, cultural immersion, the study of cultural anthropology, developing instructional materials and value clarification (Pate, 1995). Semantics can lead to improve cognitive functioning which might lessen prejudice. Counter-stereotype, or an approach where a teacher use examples of a popular ethnic group that counters a popular but misleading stereotype can also be effective. On the other hand, cultural immersion is a technique that immerses students in experiences that are typical with the studied culture, also shows promising results. The key here is to enable the students to identify with the target culture (Pate, 1995).

Finally, the audiovisual approach is simply an approach of showing films that have antiprejudice themes. However, to become effective, implementers should consider certain factors. First, realistic dramatic presentation which induces empathy and identification are more effective at reducing prejudice than direct message films. Another, they should racially integrate the cast and should model attitude change in the film. In addition, positive acceptance of one’s ethnic group may also influence positive acceptance on the viewers (Pate, 1995).

Related to the audiovisual approach, Graves (1999) explored the potential of the television in reducing prejudice. Graves (1999) argued that because
almost all children have access to television and 74% have access to cable or satellite television, we can use it to promote acceptance of other races. Children can learn racial and nonracial information from television, which can influence their racial attitude. However, positive learning on other race depends on the portrayals of the races in the shows. But then, this approach can be helpful in creating or combating prejudices to develop among children. One example is Sesame Street, which teaches moral lessons such as: resisting peer pressures; looking beyond stereotypes; including others; reaching out to helpful adults; expressing feelings; honoring differences and likenesses; and taking action. Themes include: name-calling; being excluded from group; speaking a different language; stereotyping; standing up against prejudice; interracial friendships; cultural identity; definition of being American; and hate-crimes. This suggests that television or video can positively influence children’s racial knowledge, attitudes and preferences (Graves, 1999).

According to Devine (1989), prejudice reduction is a multistep process; whereas the first step is to decide consciously that responding in bias is inappropriate and then adopt nonprejudiced standards. The second step is to internalize and integrate the standard into one’s self-concept. Finally, the final step in the prejudice reduction process, is to bring these less easily controllable responses in line with the nonprejudiced personal standards. This is the self-regulatory process of prejudice reduction. However, self-determination should equip this approach to become effective. Research shows that behavior
motivated out of more self-determined (identified) reasons leads to more effective strategies for goal attainment and greater long-term efficacy of self-regulatory efforts (Devine et al, 2002). In addition, critical thinking can enhance self-regulatory approach, or moreover, the success of a particular prejudice reduction approach needs critical thinking as a basic ingredient for success. Klein (1992) stated that critical thinking is the reverse of prejudice thinking. The ten dispositions in developing a critical thinking skill include: intellectual curiosity; objectivity; open-mindedness; flexibility; intellectual skepticism; intellectual honesty; being systematic; persistent; decisiveness, and; respect for other viewpoint (Walsh, 1988).

Another approach worth noting is the conflict resolution approach, which reduces bias by focusing on teaching conflict resolution and mediation skills – the same way they settle other conflicts (Schwartz, 1995). In this approach, they treat prejudice as just one cause of conflict among many (Schwartz, 1995).

On the other hand, prejudice reduction schemes should not only approach students, but teachers as well to promote a prejudice free school. Thabede (1996) stated that in order for teachers to become competent in teaching a multicultural class, the school should incorporate and develop content integration, knowledge construction and prejudice reduction dimensions. Gorham (2001) cited from an interorganizational report of the American Association of College for Teachers Education, the American Federation of Teachers, and the National Education Association four essential skills that teachers must have
before engaging in instruction. The first one is that teachers should understand students’ cultural background, interests, skills, and abilities as they apply across a range of learning domains and/or subject areas. Second, they must also understand students’ motivations and their interests in specific class content. Third, they must know how to clarify and explain the performance outcomes expected by pupils. Finally, they must also know how to plan instructions for individuals or groups of students.

**Research Studies**

Monteit et al (2002) looked into how control can exert over (automatic) prejudiced responses. With reference on a model that settles and handles cues for control, their study sought to increase understanding of how to control and change prejudice responses automatically. The study consists of four experiments. The first two experiments test whether events are necessary for developing cues for control. They used false physiological feedback procedure to make sure that participants did believe they had engaged in prejudiced responses. In experiment 1, they used manipulation checks. On the other hand, they conducted experiment 2 using a thought-listing task to find out the extent to which inability to control negative arousal preoccupies participants. Participants for experiment 1 consist of forty White participants, surveyed with ‘Attitude Toward Black Scale’. On the other hand, experiment 2 consists of 38 White participants surveyed with Modern Racism Scale. They also used picture viewing where racial pictures included Blacks. They also showed nonracial pictures. The
respondents revealed that low-prejudice individuals showed evidence of 
behavioral reserve following prejudiced responses. They also showed a brief 
interruption in continuing behavior when presented with feedback that they had 
negative reactions to pictures of Blacks.

On the other hand, experiments 3 and 4 examined the established cues’ 
operation and effects for control. Experiment 3 found that when they present 
Blacks in stereotypic contents to low-prejudice individuals, the latter experiences 
a brief interruption of continuing behavior. Finally, in experiment 4, they provide 
participants with experiences which they can set up cues. Presenting those cues 
in a different task showed behavioral inhibition and less racially biased responses 
(Monteit et al, 2002).

Dovidio, Kawakami and Gaertner (2002) explored how implicit racial 
associations and explicit racial attitudes of Whites relate with behaviors and 
impressions in interracial interactions. The respondents were fifteen male and 25 
female White undergraduates. The researchers examined their racial implicit 
attitudes, and the impressions of Whites and Blacks on their interracial attitude. 
In measuring the problem, they used a decision task in which they first presented 
the participants with priming stimuli and then asked them to decide about a word 
that followed. Their findings showed that White participants and their partners 
relied on different information and formed different impressions of their 
interaction. They also found that Whites’ explicit racial attitudes reflects in the
bias of their verbal behaviors toward Black about White confederates and their view of their own friendliness toward White in comparison with Black partners.

In another study, Klein (1992) explored the attitude changes on prejudice and racism. Respondents were college-bound high school seniors, pretested with 60 item Likert style opinion questionnaire. They also received instructions about tolerance of differences or diversity, which included reading and viewing multicultural material and performing several exercises in esteem, critical thinking and personal reflection. The results showed increased awareness and tolerance. For instance, on the statement ‘There is only one superior race’, 13% of the respondents agreed on the pretest, while none agreed on the post-test. Another example is on the statement ‘Caucasians are more intelligent than African-Americans’, where 10% agree on the pretest but decreased into 4% on the post-test.

Weston (1990) explored the effectiveness of a custom-designed prejudice reduction program on average 9th grade world history class that has a high-level of prejudice. They selected lessons based on the sensibilities and abilities of the target group, and integrated lessons from regular world history curriculums into the practicum topic. The findings showed there was decrease in prejudice, based on the pretest and post-test. The study showed that carefully selected prejudice reduction tactics and attention to opportunities within the regular curriculum can reduce prejudice.
Hogan and Mallot (2005) assessed the impact of education and personality variables on college students’ hostile attitudes toward African-Americans, with the use of the Modern Racism Scale. Their respondents totaled 250, which consist of 238 Caucasians (95.2%), 9 Asian-Americans (3.6%), and 3 “other and unspecified” ethnicity (1.2%). Apart from the MDS, they also used the Need for Cognition Scale in the study to find out how much the participants felt the statement was characteristic of them. They also used the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale to determine their tendency to engage in socially desirable behaviors that are not commonly practiced and to engage in socially undesirable behaviors that are commonly practiced. In summary, the study found that completing a course in race and gender issues can increase students’ awareness that racism is still a social problem. Hogan and Mallot (2005) underscore the importance of implementing teaching practices in diversity courses that produce durable changes in all facets of modern racial prejudice.

Araya et al (2002) explored and examined the effect of incidentally presented constructs that imply self-control on activated stereotypes associated with immigrants. Participants in the experiment consist of forty-six voluntary students with a mean age of 28 years. The results of their study showed that participants prepared with the control-related words made a less negative impression of the target behavior than the participants primed with the neutral words. The study also showed that people can stop from using the activated
stereotypes in their judgments even when such a cue is presented surreptitiously.

Other studies also show the effectiveness of the cognitive approach in prejudice reduction. For instance, Katz and Zalk (1978) found the ability to perceive differences among member groups might promote prejudice reduction. In their study, they taught White children to distinguish among photographs of Blacks or out-group children. The experiment showed that those who were in the experiment condition gave less prejudice responses than those children in the controlled condition.

Similarly, Schaller et al (1996) tested a complex reasoning intervention on college students, with the use of scenarios computed with analysis of variance. The study found that participants who receive training were less likely than those who did not receive training to form mistaken stereotypes of the novel groups. This suggests that stereotype-attenuating information processes can be induced among perceivers whose cognitive system are still developing in erudition and amid socially mature perceivers who may more employ stereotype enhancing information processes.

Galinsky and Ku (2004) looked into the potential moderating role of self-esteem on the effects of perspective-taking on prejudice. The study has two experiments. In experiment 1, they examined the role of self-esteem and perspective-taking on decreasing prejudice by measuring participant’s chronic
self-esteem. Then in experiment 2, they manipulated self-evaluations by presenting self-esteem enhancing (positive) or self-esteem threatening (negative) feedback on a juror judgment prediction task. Their findings showed that taking the perspective of one target can affect evaluations of the target’s group. Also, they found that perspective-taking of an individual target improves overall attitudes and evaluations of that target’s group. Finally, they found that out-group members may inadvertently benefit from an individual’s high self-esteem. Feeling good to self, can lead into feeling good about others, even stereotyped and stigmatized out-groups.

Conclusion

The literature review found that prejudice can start early in childhood because of how the culture and different types of media portray differences and diversity to children. Because of cultural beliefs and the media, children adopt early the idea that groups and subgroups have differences, just like how beautiful is different from ugliness, and how being tall is different from being small. Prejudice starts as a psychological encounter, identifying and interpreting the other person's skin color, facial features, gender characteristics, and others.

The review also found that prejudice is a cognitive process, which involves generalization. Nonrepresentative instances to the characteristics of a group decide prejudices and the stereotyping behaviors associated with them. This may involve lack of self-esteem or sexual fears.
How people brand in-groups and out-groups is also a problem. Out-groups experience more prejudices simply because they do not belong inside the in-group circle. In-groups compete with out-groups in many ways, which creates conflict and develops prejudice views.

Because prejudice starts early in childhood, literatures suggested that prejudice reduction should start in that stage. Children still know how to suppress their prejudices. However, by the age of 10, they can rapidly develop prejudice attitudes because they start to become autonomous. They internalize fundamental moral norms and begin to regulate internally their own moral behavior. Thus, there is a potential of preventing prejudice attitude early in childhood through means of educational intervention and prejudice reduction strategies. However, it may be difficult to support this since there are not too many studies that specifically focus on prejudice among children. The studies of Yee and Brown (1992), Rutland (1999), and Rutland et al (2005) support such claim. But to make the claim valid, researchers should conduct more study about the subject, with special focus on age differences and demographic background of the children. Using qualitative research contrary to quantitative investigations may also produce different results.

The review also found many prejudice reduction tactics. However, most of them are poorly supported by studies. Most of them are suggestions that are not backed up by research. On the other hand, actual studies on prejudice reduction are vague since they lack specific demographic focus, specifically on the age and
gender. But most of the notable strategies include education, self-control, and the improvement of self-esteem. Future studies should focus more on those strategies and should specifically address different types of races and ethnicities, their views with each other.
References:


