

Jordy Voss

ENGL 1010: Introduction to Writing

Andrew Adams

June 14, 2017

America's Prejudice

Children are moldable creatures. We learn most of our essential skills before and in the beginnings of schooling. How to eat, how to walk, how to talk, how to read, etc. After, we learn how to learn. Knowledge is given to us in ways that we are educationally fed. But one topic in particular is not focused on in elementary academia. Sociology. Now, I'm not speaking of complex research hypotheses on the functioning of society itself. I'm talking about the basics of social groups. Why groups of people are groups of people, whether that be by gender, race, political belief, ethnicity, income, and so on. Through different approaches on teaching this principle, one important question for our society can possibly be answered: "How can educational learning reduce prejudice in American culture?"

One possible way, is by showing thorough and detailed examples of the *equalities* between different social groups to students. They can learn *why* all people are equal, instead of just being told that people are equal. Classwork can involve learning about the basic human rights we all have received, but the options of this approach are limitless. Because children have minds that are hungry to learn, they often respond to hands-on learning. However, many children have preconized notions from guardians and peers regarding different social groups. They might come into a classroom already thinking that some people are unequal to others, whether it be true or not. Also, many examples of equality given to students might not be specifically relevant to an individual. If problems are un-relatable to students, they could be less likely to care or

understand the situation. Another problem with this approach is some guardians of students might not agree with the notion of equality between certain social groups, sparking disagreement and possible outrage against an education board.

Another possible way to answer is by showing students the *inequalities* between different social groups by examples. Students might learn the problems of American society between different types of people. Classwork might involve identifying the struggles some have compared to others. This allows children to understand why people from different social groups might carry prejudices against a more privileged group or vice versa. This approach allows students to understand how prejudice affects people and how to think of others that are different in society. However, examples might evoke emotions that aren't beneficial to academic learning, such as anger or guilt. Examples might also enable students to learn and have prejudices themselves about groups of people. Also, classwork might provide too much negativity in an academic environment that is supposed to be uplifting and curious.

A third way to answer the question to reduce prejudice through education is by teaching students why people find themselves in different social groups. This approach is more neutral compared to the other options, and allows for more open discussion. Classwork might be more about how social groups are formed, leading to more of an understanding of the backgrounds of many groups. This way shows students why it's okay to be different. Interest in sociology and social work might increase if this subject is brought to children's attention. However, the opposite can also be true if the learning process includes a negative experience for a student. They might become distant from the idea of sociology and push the study of society out of their mind. Again, this approach might lead students to adopt their own prejudices through learning of other groups or bringing their preconceived ideas from home with them to school.

Using education, there are very reasonable ways to reduce overall prejudice in our country. If we start at the “root” of a problem (the root being early students), then the rest of the “plant” (American society itself) might become healthier. We can’t change people as a whole, but we can try to teach those with brains yearning for direction. With reduced prejudices, come improvements in our society that can be beneficial to everyone. Children are always the bright future of each era. Maybe we could live in an era that thinks before judging.