**CHAPTER 3**

**Prejudice and Discrimination**

**Classroom Activities and Suggestions for Discussion**

1. Often students may generalize when talking about minority group members. For example, a student might say, “All the Mexicans in my town drive low riders and whistle at girls.” Open a discussion about such statements. How do the students know the people they observed are Mexican American? Which Mexican Americans act this way? Do Mexican American women whistle at girls? Do gay Mexican Americans whistle at girls? Which Mexican American men supposedly engage in this behavior—old men, gay men, upper class men, lower class men, etc.? In what particular context do they supposedly drive low riders and whistle at girls—at church, at the grocery store, at school? While it is not unreasonable to think that *some* Mexican Americans might drive low riders and whistle at girls, what is incorrect about such sweeping generalizations? How else might students explain what these other students seem to have observed? For example, what students may have attributed to race may indeed reflect other issues such as gender, class, situation, etc. How might what they “saw” have been altered by their preconceived notions of certain minority groups?
2. Ask your students to write a five minute reflection on how they would adjust to moving permanently to a foreign country. What values would be in conflict with their new homeland? How would they address these conflicts? How would they get employment? With whom would they gather (people from their new homeland, or from the old one)? How would they find the clothes and foods they like? How would they deal with the prejudice of those around them? After writing this reflection, have them break into small groups, discuss their thoughts, and then ask them as an entire class to apply what they have discussed to the situations of those who have immigrated to this country.
3. Discuss or debate which theoretical approaches best explain prejudice:

personality-centered approaches, culture-based approaches, or power-culture theories. What reasons do students have for their decisions? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each theory? How might understanding these theories help guide policy makers dealing with issues of prejudice and discrimination? Or, how might they use what they know to create social change on campus or in their communities in regards to prejudice and discrimination?

1. Ask your students, “Are human beings always aware of the prejudice they project?” Then ask them to consider how policies might be “hidden” means of discrimination. How can people learn to be more tolerant? Are there specific strategies that can teach people to abandon these sorts of behaviors? Does a person’s mind (prejudice) have to necessarily change first?
2. Discuss a recent event from the perspective of prejudice and discrimination. For example, the Sean Bell shooting and the acquittal of the police involved will allow discussion of the prejudice and discrimination of various groups.
3. Ask students to identify the different forms of prejudice and to discuss its different dimensions. Have them identify the main theories of prejudice and explain the relevant research concerning each form.
4. Ask students to identify how race intersects with both gender and class. How do these intersections critically influence how different groups, both dominant and minority, experience racial and ethnic marginalization?
5. Have students identify the two dominant theoretical perspectives on group competition and prejudice. Then, have them identify the strengths and weaknesses of each perspective, and to discuss how the questions asked about race and other kinds of inequality determine which theoretical perspective is most effective. Lastly, is there a way to reconcile the differences and utilize both approaches to address the same questions?
6. Talk about what the author calls the “vicious cycle” of prejudice in the United States. How does culture work to encourage the persistence of prejudicial attitudes?
7. What are social distance scales? Ask students to think about ways this concept can be seen at work in their own lives. What situational influences increase social distance or lessen it?
8. Ask students to discuss the key differences between “traditional” racism and “modern” racism. Why has “traditional” racism declined? Which appears to be less difficult to confront and eliminate, “traditional” or “modern” prejudice? Why?
9. Ask students to discuss what the legal limitations on discrimination are. What kinds of discrimination are against the law? What kinds are legal? Has the law got it right? Should more elements be considered when deciding policy on discrimination or should some of these elements be taken out of the law?
10. Ask students to think about a time when they have disliked another person on sight. Can they think of why they had such a strong reaction? Do they consider their reaction to be prejudicial? Are some of their reasons disguising possible prejudices? How can they overcome those instant reactions?