**Prejudice and Discrimination**

*Prejudice* refers to a person’s beliefs, thoughts, feelings, and attitudes directed at a group. Prejudice is not based on personal experience. It is so much a part of a person's unconscious that the person can be blind to their own beliefs.

Prejudice often begins in the form of a stereotype, which is an assumption about a group regardless of the characteristics of individuals. Prejudice is commonly directed against people who are members of an unfamiliar cultural group. Exposure to individual members of different cultural groups can reduce the tendency toward prejudice.

**The Sources of Prejudice**

Prejudice arises from subconscious attitudes directed at a target group. Blaming a group with less power can ease some feelings of anxiety or uncertainty. Social research has shown that prejudice is related to low self‐esteem. By directing hate at certain groups, people are temporarily able to enhance their sense of self‐worth and importance.

A *culture of prejudice* refers to the theory that prejudice is ingrained in our culture. Because we grow up exposed to the stereotypes, thoughts, and casual expressions of racism and prejudice, it isn’t possible to know how much they influence our thought processes.

**Stereotypes**

A stereotype is an exaggerated or distorted generalization about a person or an entire category of people. Stereotypes can be based on race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, or almost any difference from the dominant group. Stereotypes are beliefs, and may or may not lead to discrimination.

While sometimes stereotypes can be positive, mostly they are negative, and they get recycled. For example, stereotypes that are currently used to characterize undocumented immigrants were used earlier in American history to describe Irish immigrants, and later, used against Italian immigrants and others.

**Discrimination**

Prejudice reflects thoughts and attitudes while discrimination involves behaviors and actions. Discrimination has a basis in prejudice and stereotypes. Discrimination is unfair treatment of people simply because they are different, and it can be based on race, age, religion, health, and many other differences. The US has a long history of discriminating against groups, including Native Americans and African Americans.

**Scapegoat Theory**

*Scapegoat theory* refers to blaming someone else for one's own problems to maintain a positive self-image. The scapegoated group has less social power and tends to pose a perceived threat to the in-group. Adolf Hitler blamed the Jewish population for all of Germany’s social and economic problems. In the United States, recent immigrants, and particularly undocumented immigrants, have frequently been the scapegoat for national issues like crime and job shortages.

**Persecution**

Persecution is the long-term, cruel, and harmful treatment of a group because of their race, religion, or political beliefs. Many groups around the world face persecution. The Rohingya people of Myanmar are one of the most persecuted people in the world, facing ethnic cleansing in a country where they have resided for more than a thousand years.

**Violence and Hate Crimes**

Hate crimes are an extreme form of prejudice, though offenders may be more motivated by fear, ignorance, or anger. Hate crimes are more likely in an environment of social and political uncertainty.

Answer the following questions:

* Describe the difference between discrimination and stereotyping.
* What is mean by the term “Scapegoat Theory”?