

integrity of different cultures represented in the classroom is respected and given legitimacy within the framework of the superordinate group that is created. Superordinate groups that only reflect the norms and values of dominant and powerful groups within the school are not likely to improve intergroup relations among different groups in the school. If they are not carefully structured and monitored, cross-cutting groups can reproduce the dominant power relationships that exist within the school and the larger society.

The Effects of Cooperation Learning on Academic Achievement and Racial Attitudes. Within the last three decades a number of researchers have studied the effects of cooperative learning on the academic achievement and racial attitudes of students from different racial and ethnic groups (Aronson & Gonzalez, 1988; Cohen, 1972; Cohen & Lotan, 2004; Slavin, 1979, 2001). This research has been heavily influenced by the theory developed by Allport (1954). Allport hypothesized that prejudice would be reduced if interracial contact situations have the following characteristics:

1. They are cooperative rather than competitive.
2. The individuals experience equal status.
3. The individuals have shared goals.
4. The contact is sanctioned by authorities such as parents, the principal, and the teacher.

The research on cooperative learning activities indicates that African American, Mexican American, and White students develop more positive racial attitudes and choose more friends from outside racial groups when they participate in group activities that have the conditions identified by Allport. Cooperative learning activities also have a positive effect on the academic achievement of students of color (Slavin, 2001).

Equity Pedagogy

An equity pedagogy exists when teachers modify their teaching in ways that will facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse

racial, cultural, ethnic, language, and gender groups (Banks, 2004b). Research indicates that teachers can increase the classroom participation and academic achievement of students from different ethnic and cultural groups by modifying their instruction so that it draws on their cultural and language strengths. In a study by Philips (1993), American Indian students participated more actively in class discussions when teachers used group-oriented participation structures that were consistent with their community cultures. Au (1980) and Tharp (1989), working in the Kamehameha Early Education Program (KEEP), found that both student participation and standardized achievement test scores increased when they incorporated teaching strategies consistent with the cultures of Native Hawaiian students and used the children's experiences in reading instruction.

Studies summarized by Darling-Hammond (1995) indicate that the academic achievement of students of color and low-income students increases when they have high-quality teachers who are experts in their content specialization, pedagogy, and child development. She reports a significant study by Dreeben and Gamoran (1986), who found that, when African American students received high-quality instruction, their reading achievement was as high as that of White students. The quality of instruction, not the race of the students, was the significant variable.

Research and theories developed by Ladson-Billings (1994), Delpit (1995), and Heath (1983) indicate that teachers can improve the school success of students if they are knowledgeable about the cultures, values, language, and learning characteristics of their students. Research indicates that cooperative—rather than competitive—teaching strategies help African American and Mexican American students to increase their academic achievement as well as help all students, including White mainstream students, to develop more positive racial attitudes and values (Aronson & Gonzalez, 1988).