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generates awareness of their shared interests and common humanity; and their contact is supported by law or local custom (social norms). Note that in the housing study, as with the Army recruits, the two groups were of equal status and no obvious conflict existed between them. Decades of research have substantiated Allport's early claim that these conditions must be met before contact will lead to a decrease in prejudice between groups, but in the intervening years, researchers have identified three more (Aronson & Bridgeman, 1979; Cook, 1985; Dovidio, Gaertner, & Validzic, 1998). Let's now turn to a discussion of these conditions. 

When Contact Reduces Prejudice: Six Conditions

Remember Sherif and colleagues' (1961) study at the boys' camp, involving the Eagles and the Rattlers? When conflict and competition were instigated, stereotyping and prejudice resulted. As part of the study, the researchers also staged several events at the camp to reduce the prejudice they had created. Their findings tell us a great deal about what contact can and cannot do.

First, once hostility and distrust had been established, removing the conflict and the competition did not restore harmony. In fact, bringing the two groups together in neutral situations actually *increased* their hostility and distrust. The children in these groups quarreled with each other even when they were watching a movie together.

How did Sherif succeed in reducing their hostility? He placed the two groups of boys in situations where they experienced **mutual interdependence**, the need to depend on one another to accomplish a goal that is important to both sides. One time, the investigators set up an emergency situation by damaging the water supply system; the only way the system could be repaired was if all the Rattlers and Eagles cooperated immediately.

On another occasion, the camp truck broke down while the boys were on a camping trip. To get the truck going again, it was necessary to pull it up a rather steep hill. This could be accomplished only if all the youngsters pulled together, regardless of whether they were Eagles or Rattlers. Eventually, these situations brought about a diminution of hostile feelings and negative stereotyping between the two sets of campers. In fact, after these cooperative situations were introduced, the number of boys who said their closest friend was in the other group increased (see Figure 13.7). Thus, the first two of the key factors in the success of contact proved to be *mutual interdependence* and *having a common goal* (Amir, 1969, 1976).

The third condition, as Allport predicted, is *equal status*. At the boys' camp (Sherif et al., 1961) and in the public housing project (Deutsch & Collins, 1951), the group members were very much the same in terms of status and power. No one was the boss, and no one was the less-powerful employee. When status is unequal, interactions can easily follow stereotypical patterns. The whole point of contact is to allow people to learn that their stereotypes are inaccurate; contact and interaction should lead to disconfirmation

of negative, stereotyped beliefs. If status is unequal between the groups, their interactions will be shaped by that status difference—the bosses will act like stereotypical bosses, the employees like stereotypical subordinates—and no one will learn new, disconfirming information about the other group (Pettigrew, 1969; Wilder, 1984).

The fourth condition is that contact must occur in a *friendly, informal setting* where in-group members can interact with out-group members on a one-to-one basis (Brewer & Miller, 1984; Cook, 1984; Wilder, 1986). Simply placing two groups in contact in a room where they can remain segregated will do little to promote their understanding or knowledge of each other.

The fifth condition is that the individual learns that the out-group members he or she comes to know in that informal setting are *typical of their group*. So there must

Mutual Interdependence

The situation that exists when two or more groups need to depend on one another to accomplish a goal that is important to each of them

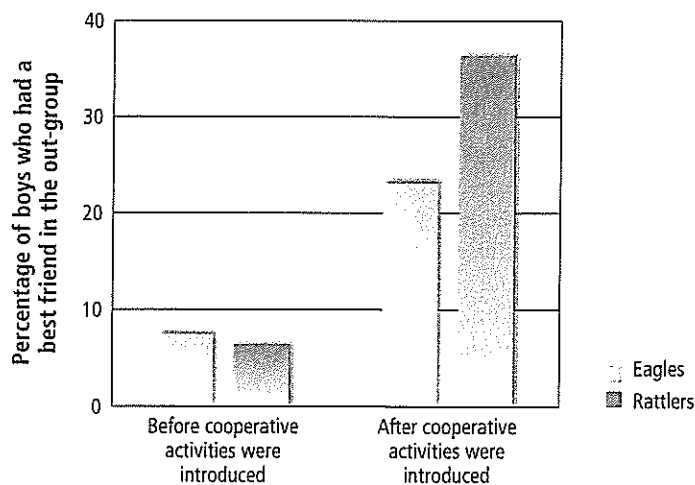


FIGURE 13.7

How Cooperation Fosters Intergroup Relations

When the Eagles and the Rattlers were in competition, very few of the boys in each group had friends from the other side. Intergroup tensions were eased only after the boys had to cooperate to get shared privileges and the boys began to make friends across "enemy lines."

(Based on data in Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961)

be *multiple members* of the out-group present; otherwise, the stereotype can be maintained by labeling one out-group member as the outstanding exception (Wilder, 1984). For example, when discrimination against women in the workforce became illegal, it was common for a single (brave!) woman to be hired in a field that was otherwise almost entirely male. An early study of male police officers assigned female partners in Washington, DC, found that although the men were satisfied with their female partners' performance, they still opposed hiring women police officers. Their stereotypes about women's ability to do police work hadn't changed; in fact, the stereotypes they held matched those of male officers with male partners (Milton, 1971). Why? The men assigned a female partner simply perceived her as an exception.

The sixth condition under which contact reduces prejudice occurs when *social norms that promote and support equality among groups* are operating in the situation (Allport, 1954; Amir, 1969; Wilder, 1984). Social norms wield great power; here they can be harnessed to motivate people to reach out to members of the out-group. For example, if the boss or the professor creates and reinforces a norm of acceptance and tolerance at work or in the classroom, group members will change their behavior to fit the norm.

To sum up, two groups are more likely to reduce their reciprocal stereotyping, prejudice, and discriminatory behavior when these six conditions of contact are met: Both sides are mutually interdependent; they share a common goal; they have equal status; they have opportunities for informal contact with one another; there are multiple members of each group; and the larger social norms promote equality.



When women first began to work as peers with male police officers, they were often seen as the exception to the existing stereotype of women. Under what conditions will contact in the workplace reduce prejudice?

Cooperation and Interdependence: The Jigsaw Classroom

Knowing now what conditions must exist for contact to work, we can better understand the problems that occurred when schools were first desegregated. Imagine a typical scenario. Carlos, a Mexican American sixth grader, has been attending schools in an underprivileged neighborhood his entire life. Because the schools in his neighborhood were not well equipped or well staffed, his first 5 years of education were somewhat deficient. Suddenly, without much warning or preparation, he is bused to a school in a predominantly white, middle-class neighborhood.

As you know from experience, the traditional classroom is a highly competitive environment. The typical scene involves the teacher asking a question; immediately, several hands go into the air as the children strive to show the teacher that they know the answer. When a teacher calls on one child, several others groan because they've missed an opportunity to show the teacher how smart they are. If the child who is called on hesitates or comes up with the wrong answer, there is a renewed and intensified flurry of hands in the air, perhaps even accompanied by whispered, derisive comments directed at the student who failed. Carlos finds he must compete against white, middle-class students who have had better preparation than he and who have been reared to hold white, middle-class values, which include working hard in pursuit of good grades, raising one's hand enthusiastically whenever the teacher asks a question, and so on. In effect, Carlos has been thrust into a highly competitive situation for which he is unprepared and in which payoffs are made for abilities he has not yet developed. He is virtually guaranteed to lose. After a few failures, Carlos, feeling defeated, humiliated, and dispirited, stops raising his hand and can hardly wait for the bell to ring to signal the end of the school day.

In the typical desegregated classroom, the students were not of equal status and were not pursuing common goals. Indeed, one might say that they were in a tug-of-war on an uneven playing field. When one examines the situation closely, it is easy to see why the self-esteem of minority children plummeted following desegregation (Stephan, 1978). Moreover, given the competitive atmosphere of the classroom, it is likely that