Fall 9-1-2005

WHAT INTERGROUP RELATIONS RESEARCH CAN TELL US ABOUT COALITION BUILDING

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I. Introduction

Forming a coalition can often be the key to creating positive change within a community. Successful coalitions facilitate change by bringing together a variety of individuals and social organizations on a local level to solve a problem that is of interest to all parties. Yet some of the factors that make coalitions powerful can also impede their functioning. For example, good coalitions unite individuals from different social and organizational groups, but organizing communication and cooperation amongst these groups can be a challenge. Social psychological research on intergroup relations can provide some insight into ways that community members can successfully create a cohesive coalition.

A. Example Situation

A situation recently faced by a school board in Virginia illustrates the importance, and challenges of, coalition building.[1] In the spring of 2005, this school board was locked in conflict over racial disparities in the educational attainment of their school-aged children. Mandatory Standards Of Learning (SOL) tests revealed that in the district, African-American children were consistently achieving at rates significantly below White children. In an effort to reduce the achievement disparity, the superintendent proposed a redistribution of resources such that the schools with the lowest SOL scores would have resources that more closely matched their higher performing counterparts. The suggestion proved highly controversial. On one hand, some parents reacted to the redistribution with outrage. These parents did not want to see performing arts and sports programs cut to fund a redistribution that they did not believe was necessary or sufficient. In addition, many teachers were offended by what they thought were implications that they were not doing their job. On the other hand, some parents approved of the redistribution and believed that it was time to take action to remedy unequal access to education. The key to solving the school district's racial disparity in educational attainment and improving intergroup relations more broadly rested in building a coalition of concerned parents, teachers, staff, and administrators who could effectively work together to create an intervention that would solve the problem. However, interested

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[1]   Although our example addresses barriers to coalition building faced by Whites and African-Americans in a school district, conceptually the ideas discussed could pertain to coalition building involving a number of different groups (e.g., different ethnic groups, religions, sexual orientations) across a variety of situations (e.g., churches, corporations).

parties were unable to achieve such a coalition; the superintendent was fired and the racial disparities, as well as the intergroup animosity, continued.

Although everyone involved in the conflict had the same goal— creating an educational system that offered the best possible schooling for the children—the parties involved were divided by racial group membership. The teachers and administrators were predominately White, and the parents were both White and African-American. What went wrong on the way to building the coalition? According to research in social psychology, both parties involved might have faced barriers to their full participation in the coalition. For Whites, the barriers may have included stereotypes, and prejudice in explicit, subtle, and implicit forms. For African-Americans, the barriers may have been the same, along with awareness of stereotypes and sensitivity to race-based rejection. In order to understand why these barriers exist for each group and impede coalition building in an intergroup context, we must first understand what stereotypes and prejudice are, how they operate, and their consequences.

B. Stereotyping Generally

When navigating our complex social world, we automatically categorize people based on gender, race, age, and size and then link that social category with a group stereotype.[2] Stereotypes are a set of beliefs or expectations that we have about people based solely on their group membership.[3] For example, stereotypes of African-Americans are that they are lazy, unintelligent, and aggressive, whereas stereotypes of Whites are that they are ambitious, intelligent, and racist.[4] The current consensus among social psychological researchers is that because the social world is very complex, we often rely on stereotypes to reduce the amount of information we have to consider when making a decision.[5] The world would be virtually impossible to navigate if we had to carefully analyze each individual that we met, or passed on the street, and determine whether that person was friend or foe, intelligent or unintelligent, industrious or lazy, and so forth. Instead, we make assumptions about others based on our stereotypes about their category membership. At times, these assumptions may be correct, but often they are incorrect and the use of stereotypes can produce devastating consequences.

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[2]   C. Neil Macrae & Galen V. Bodenhausen, *Social Cognition: Thinking Categorically About Others*, 51 ANN. REV. PSYCHOL. 93–120 (2000).

[3]   *Id.*

[4]   Patricia G. Devine & Andrew J. Elliot, *Are Racial Stereotypes Really Fading? The Princeton Trilogy Revisited*, 21 PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. BULL. 1139–50 (1995).

[5]   Susan T. Fiske, *Stereotyping, Prejudice and Discrimination, in* 2 THE HANDBOOK OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY 357–414 (Daniel T. Gilbert et al. eds., 4th ed. 1998).

Although we possess stereotypes about virtually every social group, we are especially likely to use stereotypes when we interact with strangers rather than with friends, when our interaction partner is easily distinguishable as a member of a particular social group,[6] and when our interaction partner behaves ambiguously.[7] The likelihood of stereotyping is further enhanced when we experience cognitive load.[8] Cognitive load exists when our mind is busy thinking about other things, such as remembering a phone number or concentrating on solving a difficult problem.

When individuals have adequate cognitive resources, they are able to control the use of stereotypes.   When resources are limited, however, stereotypes are often used to guide decisions. Returning to the example of coalition building, cognitive load might occur when the parties involved are asked to listen to a speaker present the results of a dense audit report that details the exact nature of the racial disparity in education. Efforts to attend to and process the information being presented by the speaker will take resources away from members of the audience. As a consequence, audience members will rely on their stereotypes of social groups to process comments or questions raised by other members of the audience. Thus if one is under cognitive load, ambiguous comments stated by unknown members of a different social group are especially likely to be interpreted through the bias of a stereotype.

II. The Effects of Stereotyping

Although categorizing individuals helps us manage our complex social world, relying on the stereotypes associated with that category can have numerous negative consequences. Once we associate a set of beliefs and expectations with a particular category, several additional processes occur. First, research shows that stereotypes lead to biased information processing and biased information retrieval.[9] For example, if a White parent relied on her stereotype that African-Americans are aggressive, she might expect an African-American parent to be aggressive during discussions. Because of her expectation, she might pay attention to, and remember, behaviors that could be interpreted as aggressive more so than behaviors that could be interpreted as non-aggressive. Additionally, when she returned home from the PTA meeting and her partner asked about the meeting, she

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[6]   Macrae & Bodenhausen, *supra* note 2.
[7]   John M. Darley & Paget H. Gross, *A Hypothesis-Confirming Bias in Labeling Effects*, 44 J. PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. 20–33 (1983).
[8]   C. Neil Macrae et al., *Stereotypes as Energy-Saving Devices: A Peek Inside the Cognitive Toolbox*, 66 J. PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. 37–47 (1994).
[9]   Fiske, *supra* note 5; Macrae & Bodenhausen, *supra* note 2.

might retrieve information that was in line with her biased expectation, therefore reinforcing the idea that African-American parents are aggressive.

Second, stereotypic expectations can actually elicit unintended stereotypic responses from a person, a phenomenon known as behavioral confirmation.[10] As mentioned above, perceivers, particularly those under cognitive load, may interpret another person's behavior through the bias of a stereotypic expectation. If we return to the example of the PTA meeting, we can see how the White mother's expectation that African-Americans are aggressive can actually become true, even if to begin with it was false. If the White mother begins to act according to her biased perception that African-Americans are aggressive, then she might increase her social distance from an African-American parent, adopt an aggressive posture by squaring her shoulders and raising her chin, and speak in a defensive tone. The African-American parent would see the White parent acting aggressively and respond in kind to those social cues. In this way, even though the African-American parent would not have initially been aggressive, the White parent's behavior elicited an aggressive response and confirmed the stereotype.

Consider an additional example, where an African-American parent holds the stereotype that Whites are racist. If that is the case, he might expect a White teacher to be hostile and reserved toward African-Americans, and look for evidence of that behavior. Perhaps he would interpret a hesitant or frustrated response as racism rather than uncertainty over the issue under discussion. In response to what he perceives to be racist behavior, the African-American parent might then unintentionally change his behavior toward the teacher so that he elicits behavioral confirmation in the form of apparently racist behavior from the teacher. Whereas the African-American parent might usually offer examples to accompany a question or smile while asking the question, if he expects the teacher to be racist, he might pose a question with no example and with no smile. After some time, the African-American parent's behavior may cause the White teacher to behave in line with the initial expectation of reservation and hostility.

III. Variations in Prejudice: Explicit, Subtle, and Implicit Forms

Whereas stereotypes are beliefs or expectations, prejudice is a positive or negative attitude directed toward people simply because they happen to be members of a specific group.[11] Research reveals that prejudice

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[10] Olivier Klein & Mark Snyder, *Stereotypes and Behavioral Confirmation: From Interpersonal to Intergroup Perspectives*, 35 ADVANCED EXPERIMENTAL SOC. PSYCHOL. 153–234 (2003).

[11] Fiske, *supra* note 5.

can take several forms, including explicit, subtle, and implicit prejudice.[12] Explicit prejudice is an attitude that we are aware we hold, that we can consciously examine, and that we can control with effort.[13] For instance, if a White administrator described how he felt about African-Americans or Whites, he would be reporting his level of explicit prejudice. Expression of this form of prejudice is controllable; if an individual discovers that his or her attitude is generally negative and is motivated to reduce the negativity, he or she can consciously try to alter the attitude or strategically attempt to hide it.

Research shows that expressions of explicit prejudice vary on a continuum from blatant to more subtle forms. Individuals who are not afraid to be identified as racist and openly endorse traditional and hostile views toward people from different social groups are expressing blatant prejudice. An individual expressing explicit, blatant racism might strongly agree with the statement "Blacks are criminal by nature." In much of the United States, however, it is no longer acceptable to openly endorse racist attitudes. Consequently, the number of individuals who openly extol blatant explicit prejudice is dwindling.[14]

In contrast, individuals who do not think of themselves as racist and see themselves as open-minded may express a more subtle form of prejudice. For example, an individual expressing subtle prejudice might agree with the statement that: "Discrimination against blacks is no longer a problem in the United States."[15] A common form of subtle prejudice is known as aversive racism. Many Americans believe in the principle of equality and therefore try to maintain positive explicit attitudes toward most groups, yet psychological research reveals that even the most well-intentioned Whites can still possess unacknowledged negative feelings and beliefs about African-Americans that they learn from society.[16] Aversive racists simultaneously hold positive explicit attitudes and negative feelings and beliefs.

Finally, implicit prejudice is an attitude that we are often unaware that we hold, we cannot consciously examine, and that is largely out of our

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[12]   Patricia G. Devine et al., *Classic and Contemporary Analyses of Prejudice, in* 4 THE BLACKWELL HANDBOOK IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY: INTERGROUP PROCESSES 198–217 (Rupert Brown & Samuel L. Gaertner eds., 2001).

[13]   John F. Dovidio et al., *Implicit and Explicit Prejudice and Interracial Interaction,* 82 J. PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. 62–68 (2002).

[14]   John F. Dovidio & Samuel Gaertner, *On the Nature of Contemporary Prejudice: The Causes, Consequences, and Challenges of Aversive Racism, in* CONFRONTING RACISM: THE PROBLEM AND THE RESPONSE 3–32 (Jennifer Eberhardt & Susan T. Fiske eds., 1998).

[15]   John B. McConahay, *Modern Racism, Ambivalence, and the Modern Racism Scale, in* PREJUDICE, DISCRIMINATION, AND RACISM 91–126 (John F. Dovidio & Samuel Gaertner eds., 1986).

[16]   Dovidio & Gaertner, *supra* note 14.

conscious control.[17]   Returning to the same White administrator, regardless of whether he has explicit prejudice toward African-Americans, he might be unaware that he has an unconscious association between "African-American" and negative feelings.   In fact, he might have no explicit prejudice that he could consciously detect, but he could still have prejudice on the implicit level.   Moreover, he has little ability to consciously alter that negative association.

IV.   The Effects of Prejudice

Explicit, subtle, and implicit prejudice can all affect our behavior, and each type of prejudice does so in a unique way.   Research shows that explicit prejudice influences behaviors that we have some conscious control over.   One study showed that explicit prejudice was related to the content of what individuals say.[18]   For example, a White person who endorsed racist statements would be more likely to express negative race-based sentiments to an African-American than a White person who did not endorse racist statements.   Expression of blatantly racist statements would certainly impede coalition building, as doing so devalues the targeted social group.

In comparison, subtler aversive racists alternate between positive and negative behaviors toward African-Americans depending on the normative structure within a situation and the potential for creating a nonracial justification for a prejudiced response.   Negative attitudes come out when norms are weak or ambiguous and when a justification other than race is readily available.[19]   Because this type of discrimination is often ambiguous, it is difficult to detect, and might contribute to a feeling of uncertainty as to whether members of the targeted group can trust other members of the coalition.

Finally, implicit prejudice influences behaviors that we have less conscious control over, such as nonverbal behaviors.[20]   Someone who is high in implicit prejudice will be more likely than someone who is low in implicit prejudice to avert eye gaze, use a more halting speech pattern, and fidget during an interaction with a target of this prejudice.   Although perceivers high in implicit prejudice are unaware that they are behaving unusually, targets of prejudice can detect that the person's non-verbal behaviors seem uneasy or unfriendly and often can correctly infer their interaction partner's

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[17]   Bernd Wittenbrick et al., *Evidence for Racial Prejudice at the Implicit Level and its Relationship with Questionnaire Measures*, 72 J. PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. 262–74 (1997).
[18]   John F. Dovidio et al., *Implicit and Explicit*, supra note 13.
[19]   *Id.*
[20]   *Id.*

level of implicit prejudice. [21]   Therefore, even though the implicitly prejudiced individual does not perceive a barrier to coalition building, the target of implicit prejudice could be wary of interacting with that outgroup member.

When one acts on prejudicial feelings, those actions are known as discrimination.   Explicit, subtle, and implicit prejudice could produce discriminatory behavior that might impede coalition building. Expressions of explicit racism would take the form of blatantly racist comments during discussion.   In our school board example, such statements could include references to the idea that African-Americans are unintelligent and therefore money should not be wasted trying to bring them up to the level of Whites. In comparison, if White parents involved in the conflict were aversive racists, their racism should only come out when rules for how to behave in a situation are unclear and when they can find an excuse other than race to justify their behavior. We see evidence of what could be aversive racism in the case of the school board conflict. A new superintendent of the school district implemented a series of budget cuts to re-allocate resources between schools. For the first time, parents came out in large numbers to voice their opposition to a budget.

There were minimal rules regulating their contributions, and parents voiced their opposition to cuts in extra-curricular activities rather than to the re-allocation of resources in general. Finally, implicit prejudice could affect the interpersonal exchanges of African-American and White constituents. Specifically, it could cause Whites to appear less comfortable when talking to African-Americans. Whites might fail to maintain eye contact, stutter, or use halting speech during their interaction with African-American parents, and thus impede the development of trust and rapport between members of these ethnic groups.

In summary, explicit, subtle, and implicit prejudice create barriers to Whites' and African-Americans' full participation in coalition building. Each form of prejudice finds expression in different ways. Explicit prejudice is blatant and visible, often expressed in the form of negative race-based sentiments and comments. Subtle prejudice is often expressed when norms for appropriate behavior are weak or unknown and a person can construct a seemingly non-prejudiced reason for his or her behavior. Implicit prejudice influences those non-verbal behaviors that we do not have conscious control over or those behaviors that we do not actively attempt to control when we interact with others.

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[21]   *Id.*

V. Additional Barriers to Full Participation in a Coalition

When attempting to build a coalition, both majority and minority group members can be influenced by stereotypes and prejudice. For minority group members, however, awareness of stereotypes and prejudice place an additional limit on the extent to which they feel comfortable interacting with majority group members when forming a coalition. Two additional factors that uniquely affect minority group members are attributional ambiguity and sensitivity to rejection. Both of these factors could lead minority group members to withdraw from the coalition because of fear that other coalition members will reject them.

Because targets of prejudice (e.g., African-Americans) are aware of the negative stereotypes about their group and constantly face the possibility of being viewed according to these stereotypes, they have the potential to experience attributional ambiguity.[22] Attributional ambiguity refers to the difficulty one has in determining the correct explanation for a particular behavior. At times, targets of prejudice might accept the blame for negative treatment rather than appropriately blaming the prejudice of their interaction partner. For example, if an African-American's opinions are not considered when the coalition is attempting to decide what issues should be at the forefront of its agenda, then the African-American might assume that happened because her suggestions were not relevant or important rather than because her fellow coalition members were prejudiced.

If the African-American woman blamed herself rather than her peers for the exclusion, she might feel as if her input was not valuable and leave the coalition. If, instead, she blamed prejudice for the exclusion, she would have to carefully consider whether she should confront the prejudice or leave the coalition. Because it is often difficult to tell whether another person's behavior is due to prejudice or some other factor, members of minority groups are forced to decide the extent to which they should interpret the situation in racialized terms.

Investigations into how members of minority groups explain their outgroup behavior reveal that individual African-Americans vary to the extent in which they are sensitive to race-based rejection.[23] Some African-Americans are quite sensitive to the possibility that they might be rejected; whereas other African-Americans are resistant to the idea that any interpersonal rejection is race-based. It is difficult to determine the optimal level of sensitivity, but most researchers agree that striving for a moderate

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[22]   Jennifer Crocker et al., *Social Stigma, in* 2 THE HANDBOOK OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY 504–53 (Daniel T. Gilbert et al. eds., 4th ed. 1998).

[23]   Rodolfo Mendoza-Denton et al., *Sensitivity to Status-Based Rejection: Implications for African-American Students' College Experience*, 83 J. PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. 896 (2002).

level of sensitivity works best for most situations.[24] With a moderate level of sensitivity, one is able to detect most instances of racism and make fewer mistakes placing behavior in the category of racist. A high level of race-based rejection sensitivity can detract from African-American's willingness to become truly engaged members of a multi-ethnic coalition. For example, in one study researchers followed the experiences of African-American first year students at a multi-ethnic university and found that individuals who were high in sensitivity to race-based rejection felt less supported and happy, less positively about their peers and professors, and felt they belonged less than individuals low in this sensitivity.[25] In another study, women who feared being viewed according to stereotypes of women avoided participation in a stereotypically male domain for fear that they would unintentionally confirm stereotypes about their group.[26] This research suggests that race-based sensitivity to rejection, a tendency that emerges from continuously having to decide whether events are due to prejudice or not, can cause minority coalition members to feel uncomfortable, excluded and unwilling to risk confirming relevant stereotypes when interacting with other members of the coalition.

It is also troublesome for the prospect of coalition building that even when minority group members accurately note, and complain about, prejudice or discrimination, they may be subject to negative repercussions. Research has shown that when members of stigmatized groups publicly state they believe they have been subject to discriminatory treatment observers view them as complainers and develop negative views of the person.[27] Such negative reactions only tend to exacerbate any tensions already present in the situation, make the minority group member feel even more negatively treated, and further divide members of the potential coalition along racial or ethnic lines.

VI. Overcoming Barriers to Coalition Building

Clearly, barriers based on stereotypes and prejudices exist for all potential coalition members, and those barriers can impede coalition building. Intergroup relations research suggests several ways that members of both groups can overcome those barriers.[28] First, individuals must desire to have

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[24]   *Id.*
[25]   *Id.*
[26]   Elizabeth C. Pinel, *Stigma Consciousness in Intergroup Contexts: The Power of Conviction*, 38 J. EXPERIMENTAL SOC. PYSCHOL. 178 (2002).
[27]   Cheryl R. Kaiser & Carol T. Miller, *Stop Complaining! The Social Costs of Making Attributions to Discrimination*, 27 PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. BULL. 254 (2001).
[28]   John F. Dovidio et al., *Intergroup Contact: The Past, Present, and the Future*, 6 GROUP PROCESSES & INTERGROUP REL. 5 (2003); Thomas F. Pettigrew, *Intergroup Contact Theory*, 49 ANN.

contact with members of the other group. Second, individuals must make an effort to foster positive relations between groups. Third, individuals must actively attempt to structure the situation to reduce the likelihood of stereotyping and increase the likelihood of positive contact. If all of these aims are met, then barriers to coalition building may be substantially reduced.

A. Increase the Desire for Contact

Considering the desire to have outgroup contact, research suggests that members of both groups experience pluralistic ignorance.[29] Pluralistic ignorance occurs when individuals make systematic errors in their perceptions of the other members of a collective and their relationship to those individuals.[30] In the case of intergroup contact, both Whites and African-Americans say that they want to interact more with the other group; however, they believe members of the other group do not desire contact with them.[31]

Research has established two reasons for pluralistic ignorance in an intergroup context.[32] One reason is that both Whites and African-Americans fear rejection from members of the other group. Another reason is that both Whites and African-Americans believe the other group is not interested in having more contact. Simply educating members of both groups that the members of the other group do want more contact and that the likelihood of rejection is low could potentially overcome this initial barrier. In the context of coalition building, it might be helpful to begin initial meetings by asking constituents to state their desire to be involved with the coalition and their interest in getting to know the other individuals involved in the coalition.

B. Foster Positive Relations

Once individuals are willing to engage in intergroup contact, they can make such interaction proceed more smoothly by developing a motivation to control prejudice. Individuals can be motivated to control

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REV. PSYCHOL. 65 (1998); Thomas F. Pettigrew & Linda R. Tropp, *Does Intergroup Contact Reduce Prejudice? Recent Meta-Analytic Findings, in* REDUCING PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION 93 (Stuart Oskamp ed., 2000).

[29] J. Nicole Shelton, *Interpersonal Concerns in Social Encounters Between Majority and Minority Group Members*, 6 GROUP PROCESSES & INTERGROUP REL. 171 (2003); J. Nicole Shelton & Jennifer A. Richeson, *Intergroup Contact and Pluralistic Ignorance*, 88 J. PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. 91 (2005).

[30] Deborah A. Prentice & Dale T. Miller, *Pluralistic Ignorance and the Perpetuation of Social Norms by Unwitting Actors*, 28 ADVANCED EXPERIMENTAL SOC. PSYCHOL. 161 (1996).

[31] Shelton & Richeson, *supra* note 29.

[32] *Id.*

prejudice for external or internal reasons.[33] External motivation to control prejudice stems from a desire to avoid negative reactions from others and to adhere to an externally imposed standard for expression of prejudice. In comparison, an internal motivation to control prejudice stems from a desire to avoid negative self-reactions such as guilt, and to adhere to an internally imposed standard for expression of prejudice. Thus a White teacher might be partially motivated to control prejudice because she knows that society does not approve of such attitudes, but she might also be motivated because she personally values acting in a non-prejudiced manner. Research finds that individuals who have a high internal motivation and low external motivation to control prejudice show the least bias, even on implicit measures of prejudice.[34]

Providing individuals with more information, either in the form of consensus information or perspective taking can also foster positive relations between groups.   Social norms often exert a powerful influence on an individual's behavior. Research shows that when an individual is provided with information showing that a large proportion of his or her group holds favorable attitudes toward members of a different social group, that individual will become more favorable toward the other group as well.[35]   In other words, information about the attitudes of one's group can influence change within an individual. Coalition building might benefit if leaders of a particular group within the coalition remind individual group members that most people in the community and, in particular, members of one's group have positive attitudes toward, and value the contributions of, members of the other group.

Another means of gaining additional information that can smooth interactions between groups is perspective taking. Research suggests that if an individual is able to take the perspective of someone who is in a different social group, perspective taking can reduce stereotyping and prejudice.[36] For example, if a White parent were to take the perspective of an African-American parent, she might see how stereotypes and prejudice limit the educational attainment of African-American children. In doing so, she might develop more positive attitudes toward African-Americans because she now

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[33]   E. Ashby Plant & Patricia G. Devine, *Internal and External Motivation to Respond Without Prejudice*, 75 J. PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. 811 (1998).
[34]   Patricia G. Devine et al., *The Regulation of Explicit and Implicit Race Bias: The Role of Motivations to Respond Without Prejudice*, 82 J. PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. 835 (2002).
[35]   Charles Stangor et al., *Changing Racial Beliefs by Providing Consensus Information*, 27 PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. BULL. 486 (2001).
[36]   Adam D. Galinsky & Gordon B. Moskowitz, *Perspective-Taking: Decreasing Stereotype Expression, Stereotype Accessibility, and In-Group Favoritism* 78 J. PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. 708 (2000); Theresa K. Vescio et al., *Perspective Taking and Prejudice Reduction: The Mediational Role of Empathy Arousal and Situational Attributions*, 33 EUR. J. SOC. PSYCHOL. 455 (2003).

understands the barriers that they face. She may even develop more positive attitudes toward policies that would effectively remove barriers faced by members of that group.

C. Carefully Structure the Situation

Structuring the situation the correct way can reduce reliance on stereotypes and actually lead to more positive views of other groups as a function of the contact.[37] There are a number of ways to reduce the likelihood of using stereotypes in coalition building, including placing emphasis on certain goals. For example, research has demonstrated that if a person has the goal to be accurate, or to form an accurate impression of another person, this can reduce the likelihood that stereotypes will influence judgments about, and responses to, other people within a particular interaction.[38] Other goals, like the motive to get along with one's interaction partner, can also decrease the likelihood that stereotypes will cloud one's impression of another person.[39] Furthermore, to reduce the likelihood that stereotypes will inform judgments and behavior, it is important that individuals have enough cognitive resources to properly process incoming information; when cognitive resources are taxed (e.g., a person is hurried, contemplating too many things at once), people are more apt to rely on their pre-existing expectations and stereotypes.[40] Therefore, it is important to structure interactions such that they minimize cognitive load. For example, when members of the coalition are discussing how to solve a particular problem, they should be given enough time to take in new information about potential options or solutions and they should not feel rushed when attempting to come to a conclusion about which option or solution they deem to be the best.

Extensive research also suggests that contact between different groups in general, and coalition building in particular, can actually reduce prejudice.[41] Of course, simply having any kind of intergroup contact does not reduce prejudice. In fact, if contact makes one feel uncomfortable or

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[37]   Fiske, *supra* note 5.

[38]   Steven L. Neuberg & Susan T. Fiske, *Motivational Influences on Impression Formation: Outcome Dependency, Accuracy-Driven Attention, and Individuating Processes*, 53 J. PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. 431–44 (1987).

[39]   Susan T. Fiske et al., *The Continuum Model: Ten Years Later, in* DUAL-PROCESS THEORIES IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY 231–54 (Shelley Chaiken & Yaacov Trope eds., 1999).

[40]   C. Neil Macrae et al., *supra* note 8.

[41]   John F. Dovidio et al., *Intergroup Contact, supra* note 28, at 5–20; T. F. Pettigrew, *Intergroup Contact Theory*, 49 ANN. REV. PSYCHOL. 65–85 (1998).

anxious, it can actually increase intergroup hostility.[42] Intergroup contact is most effective at reducing prejudice when it meets several conditions.

First, contact should have social and institutional support. Individuals in positions of authority, such as administrators, must sanction the contact and communicate through their behavior and expenditure of effort that intergroup relations are important. Doing so can change social norms surrounding contact and provide resources that communicate intergroup contact is a valued component of the work environment or a coalition. Therefore members of the administration should devote time to the coalition and advocate for the active participation of all constituents.

Second, groups must have equal status in the contact situation. In the school board example, Whites tended to occupy positions of high status such as administrators and teachers, whereas African-Americans tended to occupy positions of relatively low status, such as staff or parents. The contact situation should ensure that the opinions of both groups are given equal weight in decision making in order to achieve this key element in the contact situation. One way to ensure this happens is to give each individual a single vote on an issue, and to weight each vote equally. Alternatively, a coalition might ensure that each member who is present has a chance to speak on an issue before a decision is made.

Third, the contact situation must involve cooperative interaction. When members of different groups engage in a cooperative activity, cooperation leads to more friendliness and less preference for one's own group than situations that do not promote cooperative interaction. One way to achieve cooperation is through the use of the jigsaw puzzle technique. The jigsaw technique was first used when school districts in Austin, Texas were struggling with school integration.[43] When using the jigsaw technique in a classroom, a teacher divides all of the students into groups of experts who meet and design a strategy for disseminating information on a given topic to their peers. Next, the class is reorganized so that each group contains a single expert on every topic. Since each group member is an expert on only one topic, the group members must depend on each other to gain the all of the information that they need to complete the full assignment. This technique ensures that the voice of each student is heard and that all classmates cooperate with each other to reach the desired goal. In coalitions, there are naturally occurring expert groups. Coalition leaders should take advantage of this and strategically mix up coalition members so that experts from different groups interact with each other to create successful strategies aimed at achieving the coalition's goals.

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[42]   John F. Dovidio et al., *Intergroup Contact, supra* note 28, at 5–20.
[43]   ELLIOT ARONSON ET AL., THE JIGSAW CLASSROOM 23 (1978).

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, the contact situation must have acquaintance potential. The potential for friendship itself is rewarding. Also, if individuals make friends from a different social group, their positive affect associated with that friendship can generalize to other outgroup members. Using the jigsaw strategy within a coalition can ensure that coalition members get to know each other under optimal circumstances and at the same time, maximize the potential that the interaction will go smoothly. In addition, it might be useful to have several icebreakers, coffee breaks or other activities where individuals can get to know coalition members from different social groups in a more casual fashion.

Once conditions for optimal contact are in place, encouraging members from various groups to engage in recategorization can also be beneficial.[44] Recategorization involves structuring the definition of a group at a higher level of inclusiveness. For example, rather than identifying as parents, teachers or administrators, or instead of identifying as Whites and African-Americans, individuals should recategorize themselves as members of a coalition who are all striving for the same goal. In doing so, intergroup bias and conflict can be reduced. Whereas before the recategorization, individuals saw themselves as "us" versus "them," after recategorization, individuals see themselves as "we." In the context of a coalition, one of the first tasks could be to come up with a name for the group. Doing so would help coalition members recategorize themselves as part of the new, broader group, rather than as members of separate groups. Of course, this would only be one of many necessary steps.

VII. Conclusion

Let us revisit the story of the school district controversy, but this time we will assume that the constituents followed the advice of social psychologists in order to form a successful coalition. In the spring of 2005, the school board was locked in conflict over racial disparities in the educational attainment of their school-aged children. In an effort to reduce the achievement disparity, the superintendent called a meeting with the heads of the parties involved in the district. She explained the problem to the head administrators, officers in the teachers' union, and presidents of the PTAs from each school in the district. She announced that they must form a task force or coalition to solve the problem, and one of the first tasks is to vote on a name for their new group.

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[44]   John F. Dovidio et al., *Intergroup Contact, supra* note 28, at 5–20.

Constituents were then asked to break into groups and investigate the problem from the perspective of their own group. Once these groups reviewed the relevant information, experts from the administrators, teachers, and PTAs split from their initial groups and mingled with the experts from the other groups. These mixed groups met over the weekend so they had more time to carefully consider the information related to the problem. The members took turns hosting the meetings at their homes or other social locations, and in addition to discussing the business at hand, coalition members also took time to get to know each other. In their mixed groups, experts generated potential solutions to the problem. During this process, the experts also frequently consulted with their own constituents to inform their decisions.

Once the mixed groups generated solutions, the full coalition evaluated the solutions and narrowed them down to a range of acceptable options. Though the entire group allowed the superintendent to make the final decision from among their agreed upon options, the selected solution would almost certainly receive a more positive reception from the community because the community had been a part of creating the solution. Although this technique may be more laborious and time-consuming than simply having the superintendent propose a solution at the outset, it is more likely to be accepted by all parties involved.

We do not intend to minimize the difficulties of forming a coalition or of making a coalition successful. Rather, we hope that our discourse on the findings from intergroup relations research will elucidate strategies to facilitate coalition building. If our recommendations are followed, the extent to which group membership impedes problem solving should be reduced.