

Minimizing Prejudice and Conflict  
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One of the biggest issues of modern prejudice is the us-versus-them mentality. Baron, Branscombe, and Byrne (2009) discussed a study in which two groups of boys were at a camp and the them-versus-us mentality started from the very beginning with the simple knowledge that the other group was there. We see this type of prejudice emerge with so many aspects of life: work, sports, gangs, racial tension, gender issues, the list goes on. The in-group and out-group, us-versus-them, is very widespread in various aspects of life. The following strategies can be used to lower the distinctions of groups and prejudice of several us-versus-them groups, including cultural differences within various aspects of business, education, and personal encounters. Us-versus-them can be reduced by: 1. reducing distinctions, 2. developing common goals, 3. incurring group guilt.

These in-group and out-group categorizations guide and direct perceptions of all those within and outside the groups. These groups can even be separated on very small and trivial categories; it takes only one small emotional event to set things in motion (Baron, Branscombe, & Byrne, 2009). Even without an emotional event, people in the out-group are viewed less favorably regardless of any action that has been taken; just the fact that they are not in-group creates unfavorable perceptions (Baron, Branscombe, and Byrne).

Social Identity theory suggests that we want to be able to feel positive about the group that we belong to, influencing our own self-esteem. Only when we feel secure about our own group's identity will we be tolerant of the other groups. If the in-group feels threatened in any way, or they feel insecure about the perception of their group, prejudice will continue (Baron, Branscombe, Byrne). For prejudice to be reduced, positive contact with the other group, working together toward a common goal is necessary (Baron, Branscombe, Byrne, 2009; Laureate, 2007). Helping to break down the distinctions between the groups can either create a positive or negative outcome. When the distinctions are broken down it can either provide the common ground to reduce prejudice, or supply the energy to the threat. One study found that there was greater more intense prejudice towards the subgroup that was more similar when the in-group felt threatened (Baron, Branscombe, & Byrne).

Restructuring the boundaries of the categories so that both groups fit within the same category will help reduce the distinctions, when coupled with a working common goal, this will strengthen the prejudice reduction and increase the in-group favoritism including the previous out-group. Another way to reduce prejudice bias is to utilize group guilt. If the in-group is seen as having advantages and benefiting from inequalities from the group, then group guilt can be induced reducing the prejudice. (Baron, Branscombe, & Byrne, 2009)

These ideas can also be used to understand prejudice encounters toward those with disabilities (Park, Faulkner, & Schaller, 2003). Within the school system the us-versus-them has been around for many years, and is a big theme of movies. These ideas and strategies can be utilized in various aspects of our lives, including reducing sibling rivalry. Just take a look at a situation and determine if there is an us-versus-them mentality, and you can utilize the following principles to reduce the conflict.

### References

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