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# Social Psychology

## CLASSIC STUDY 1: ORIGIN OF PREJUDICE

### Realistic Conflict Theory (Sherif, 1954)

#### Design:

- 11-year old boys (N = 22) taken to summer camp at Robber's Cave State Park (Oklahoma)
  - A large 200 acre park
- Boys were picked up by two buses - 11 boys in each
- None of the boys knew each other
- Researchers pretended to be janitors

#### Week 1:

- Boys kept apart in the two 11-person groups and enjoyed typical camp life
- E.g. camping out, canoeing, swimming & games

#### End of Week 1:

- Group members had grown familiar/fond of each other & group identities had emerged
- The 'Rattlers' and the 'Eagles'
- Boys were then told about the other group
- At the boys request, tournaments were arranged (e.g. football, baseball, tug of war)

#### Tournaments:

- The winning team would be rewarded a trophy - competing for a resource
- The tournament was initially sportsmanlike but became increasingly hostile
- Boys called their rivals *stinkers*, *sneaks* and *cheats*

#### End of Camp:

- Both groups expressed a preference to terminate contact with the other group

#### Significant findings:

- This study was a turning point in what we believed about prejudice
- Prior to this study, the dominant view was that prejudice arises from 'prejudiced personality'
  - Aka some people just are prejudiced and others aren't
  - Prejudice was seen as a trait disposition
- This study demonstrated that prejudice could arise through competition for resources
  - Therefore it is not a trait disposition, but rather that prejudicial behaviour is situational
  - e.g. sports teams competing for trophies, countries competing for oil
- When groups compete for resources that only one group will "win" (zero-sum game), intergroup hostility is likely

## **CLASSIC STUDY 2: IS CONFLICT NECESSARY FOR INTERGROUP HOSTILITY?**

### **Minimal Groups Experiments (Tajfel et al., 1971)**

- They investigated what were the minimal conditions necessary for group discrimination/prejudice to occur
  - How little does it take? How trivial can it be?

#### **Laboratory study design:**

- 14-15-year old school boys that knew each other well
- Came to the lab in groups of 8
- **Task 1:**
  - Estimate the number of dots that flashed up on the screen
  - This task is benign/trivial
  - Were then told they will participate in a second task (experiment)
- **Task 2:**
  - Groups of 8 were divided into two groups of 4
  - This was done at random but participants were told it was based on their preference for paintings by Klee or Kandinsky
  - They were asked to assign/distribute monetary reward to other individuals
  - Result: They gave more money to members of their own group
    - Economic prejudice

#### **Significant findings:**

- Conflict is NOT essential to intergroup discrimination
- Mere separation into groups was sufficient for discrimination
  - Even though the separation was random and their grouping was actually meaningless
- This effect would happen even if they were divided based on a coin flip (random)

#### **Examples of prejudice occurring for trivial reasons:**

1. Nazi Germany only accepting people with blond hair and blue eyes
2. People discriminating against refugees that arrived via boat
3. People discriminating based on different religious views
4. Racism