Imagine you are denied entry into a fraternity or sorority because of the color of your skin. Imagine you are not considered for a job for which you are qualified because the name on your resume is Hector Martinez. Imagine you are treated as if you are incompetent by one of your science teachers or classmates because you are a female. Imagine you are called a “terrorist” because you are Muslim. Unfortunately, these scenarios are a reality for many people and represent a social phenomenon we have come to understand as prejudice, a negative or hostile attitude towards someone because they belong to a particular group. Despite efforts like the Women’s Rights Movement and the Civil Rights Movement, our society continues to struggle with prejudice and discrimination in the workforce, the education system, the political arena, and a broad spectrum of domains in daily life. There is a vast literature that discusses how in-groups and out-groups form and how such group categories shape the way people feel about and behave towards members of different groups – a topic that exceeds the scope of this chapter. We start on the premise that prejudice entails favoring one’s in-group and excluding, demeaning, and discriminating against members of an out-group solely because of their belonging to that group. There are many negative consequences for victims of prejudice compared to individuals who do not experience prejudice including: poorer mental and physical health, higher rates of depression, higher rates of incarceration, poorer grades, lower high school graduation rates, lower college acceptance and graduation rates, fewer job offers, lesser pay, poorer job
performance, increased amounts of stress, decreased ability to focus, and a greater likelihood of overeating (Inzlicht and Kang 2010). Thus, there is a serious need to reduce prejudice, and many social psychologists have examined how people develop prejudice and how it can be reduced. In this chapter, we focus on strategies and methods used to reduce prejudice and discrimination.

We begin by providing a short background about the different ways in which these various strategies have been developed. We provide definitions for experimental and non-experimental methods and differentiate between laboratory and field settings. We then provide an overview of prejudice reduction strategies. We begin with experimental laboratory studies discussing different intergroup and individual approaches for reducing prejudice. We move on to discuss experimental field studies that use a variety of creative techniques in various settings. We end with a discussion of the current state of the prejudice reduction literature.

History

The increase in fascism and anti-Semitism after World War I and the extermination of millions of Jews during the Holocaust in the 1930s and 1940s led many social scientists to explore how individuals develop prejudice. The German thinker, Theodor Adorno and his colleagues (1950) proposed that prejudice results from having an authoritarianism personality. Such a personality type stems from “early childhood rearing practices that are harsh, disciplinarian, and emotionally manipulative,” which produces “people who are obsessed by status and authority, intolerant of ambiguity and uncertainty, and hostile and aggressive toward weaker others” (Hogg 2010, p 9). Adorno and his colleagues proposed that such individuals are those who possess prejudice towards members of other groups. In his influential work The Nature of Prejudice (1954), psychologist Gordon Allport shifted the discourse on prejudice towards social “categorization processes” that all humans employ. According to Allport, “The
human mind must think with the aid of categories… Once formed, categories are the basis for normal prejudgment. We cannot possibly avoid this process. Orderly living depends upon it” (p 20). Through such categorization processes, we simplify our social environment by grouping people into social categories such as “women,” “nerds,” “jocks”, “African Americans,” “immigrants,” etc. These categorization processes shape interpersonal judgments and consequently interpersonal behaviors. Allport’s theory set the stage for a vast amount of research on how categorization processes and categorical thinking shape our impressions of others, and our attitudes and prejudice towards them.

In the famous Robber’s Cave Experiment, Sherif and colleagues (1954/1961) separated twenty-two American boys who were attending a summer camp in Oklahoma into two groups of eleven. During the first phase of the study, the two groups were kept apart and did not know of the other group’s existence. They each came up with names for their own group (The “Rattlers” and the “Eagles”), adopted group flags, and established separate group identities. During the second phase of the study, the two groups were brought into competition with each other through a series of activities like baseball and tug-of-war games. During this phase, the two groups became increasingly more hostile, offensive, and exclusionary towards each other (e.g., The Eagles burned The Rattler’s flag and the Rattler’s ransacked the Eagles’ cabin). In the third phase, Sherif hoped to bring the boys together through different get-to-know-you activities like watching a movie together and celebrating the Fourth of July with fireworks together. Such activities proved to be unsuccessful with the boys still exhibiting negative attitudes and behaviors towards each other. Only when Sherif organized several activities in which the two groups worked towards superordinate goals did they start to show improved attitudes towards each other. The superordinate goals included working together to secure a safe water source for
everyone at the camp ground, jointly pulling a truck, carrying food for them to eat, that had
gotten stuck on a road by using the tug-of-war rope they had previously used against each other,
and by joining forces to cover the cost of watching a film together on the camp ground.

The Robber’s Cave Experiment was important because it showed how quickly groups can
form and how groups can influence social identity. Social identity is a person’s sense of who
they are or the part of their self-concept that is based on his or her membership in a specific
group (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Sherif showed that when groups are brought into competition,
one’s social identity is at stake. Thus, individuals within a group develop in-group and out-group
biases that can lead to discriminatory and hostile behaviors towards another group of individuals.
This idea will be further discussed later in the chapter. The experiment also showed that one’s
social identity could change under certain circumstances (e.g., when members of different groups
work towards a common goal that requires cooperation between them).

As researchers learned more about how prejudice forms, they also began to examine
ways in which prejudice might be reduced. This chapter thematically focuses on prejudice
reduction methods and interventions that social scientists have developed over time.

Research Methods Background

Before discussing the prejudice reduction literature, we begin with a brief discussion
about different types of research. First we draw a distinction between experimental and non-
experimental research, then we distinguish between laboratory and field research. It is important
to understand the differences between these methods of research because they affect the validity
of any study’s conclusions and what those conclusions tell us about the general population (Err-rafiy, Brauer, & Musca, 2010).
An *experimental design* is one in which we are trying to answer a scientific question about a *causal relationship* between one variable and another. There are several important elements to an experimental design including: (i) an “intervention condition” and a “control condition”, (ii) “random assignment” to either the intervention or control condition, and (iii) “pre-test” and “post-test” measurement of the outcome variables of interest (while important, this is not necessary like the other two elements). An experiment must include at least one intervention condition and at least one control condition. In an intervention condition, participants are exposed to some strategy for prejudice reduction that we are interested in. In a control condition, participants are not exposed to a prejudice reduction strategy or they are exposed to a neutral strategy or stimulus that is not related to prejudice. The different conditions allow us to identify whether there are any differences between a group that receives an intervention of interest and a group that does not. For example, if we wanted to know whether listening to pop music makes people more or less prejudiced, we would have some participants listen to a selection of pop songs (intervention condition) and others listen to a selection of classical music (control group).

Random assignment is another very important element of experimental research and entails randomly distributing participants into each of the conditions in the study. Researchers often use a random number generator on a computer to decide which participant is in which condition. They then assign participants to the randomly ordered conditions when they actually take part in the study. Randomly assigning participants to either of the conditions prevents biases in our data that might occur if people end up in a particular condition because they have certain traits or attitudes a priori. In other words, random assignment reduces the chances that there is something systematically different about the people in the conditions before the study, which in
turn increases our confidence that the observed difference is indeed due to the prejudice reduction method under consideration.

Finally, pre-test data are measurements of the outcome variable of interest that are collected before the intervention is given. While pre-test data are not required in experimental research, acquiring pre-test and post-test measurements of the outcome variables we are interested in allows us to detect changes over time. As we can see, experimental research is a powerful way of detecting differences and changes caused by a specific mechanism or intervention.

*Non-experimental designs* allow us to answer scientific questions about a relationship between any two variables or phenomena. However, these designs do not allow for the detection of causal relations between variable. Instead, non-experimental research designs detect *correlational relationships* between variables. Non-experimental research tends to examine existing relations between variables in the world without the use of intervention and control conditions. Whereas experimental research allows us to draw conclusions about differences caused by a particular treatment, non-experimental research is limited to examining relations, as they may exist, without providing the kind of information that allows for conclusions about causal relations. For example, you might survey a group of people who vote and people who do not vote to assess how prejudiced they are. You might find that the people who vote show less prejudice than those who do not. While such a study might reveal a correlation between voting and prejudice, it would not inform us whether voting causes people to be less prejudiced. Thus, non-experimental research provides us with information about interesting relationships between different variables in the world; however, it does not provide us with information about whether one of the variables causes the other. While non-experimental research provides us with useful
information, we do not focus on non-experimental designs in this chapter; we focus on prejudice reduction methods that have been examined using experimental designs in different contexts.

The setting in which research takes place is also important for understanding the extent to which the findings and conclusions of a given study are useful. *Laboratory studies* typically take place in a highly controlled and contrived environment that the researcher sets up prior to the study. Researchers are able to control for extraneous factors that may influence the results of a study (e.g., exposure to other variables in the world that could drive a similar effect as the intervention or treatment of interest). The level of control laboratory studies offer increases the validity of conclusions drawn from a specific experimental design. However, laboratory studies are not always realistic for the real world and are therefore not easily applicable or generalized to naturalistic settings. *Field studies* take place in schools, at the workplace, and in communities. Their conclusions are more useful for real-world contexts. While field studies do not allow for the same level of control that laboratory studies do, researchers can randomize participants into conditions in a field study to test important hypotheses. Field studies typically require more attention to various elements of the study like who the participants are and how they will be reached, how the intervention is delivered, and how the outcome variable of interest will be evaluated (Paluck and Cialdini 2011).

**Experimental Laboratory Research**

If you are a sports fan for a particular team, you have likely found yourself blaming a referee or a player on the opposing team for a penalty being called on a member of the team you are rooting for. You have likely also agreed that the same penalty being called on a player from the opposing team was deserved because he or she made a mistake. In reality, the penalty was likely deserved by players on both teams, but you favored your team over the other. Social
psychologists have found that people favor members of their own group more than members from other groups. Many prejudice reduction methods are based on this premise. Intergroup approaches to reducing prejudice aim to reduce peoples’ positive bias towards members of their in-group and their negative bias towards people from the out-group.

**Intergroup Contact**

The *contact hypothesis*, sometimes called *Intergroup Contact Theory*, asserts that intergroup contact is one of the most effective ways for reducing prejudice if it occurs under a number of social conditions (Allport 1954). These conditions include that both of the groups in the interaction have equal status, they share a common superordinate goal (as in the Robber’s Cave Experiment), they work in cooperation to achieve that goal, and they receive support from an authority that they both recognize. In his research, Cook (1971, 1978) hired racially prejudiced white individuals to work a part-time job on a task for a supposed railroad company. The participants were under the impression that they were working for a real company, but Cook had artificially created a job and environment in which the optimal conditions were present. Participants were assigned to work with two confederates (one White and one Black) on the task over a month. At the end of the study, the prejudiced white hires rated their black coworker as highly competent, likeable, and attractive. In an allegedly unrelated questionnaire, the participants expressed less racial prejudice than participants in a control group made up of prejudiced white individuals who did not have the intergroup contact with the confederates.

Many people have proposed additional conditions that must be present in order for the intergroup interaction to be successful in reducing prejudice. Some research has found that the method is most effective when the shared superordinate goal is successfully achieved (Blanchard, Adelman, and Cook 1975). Some psychologists have suggested that the length and
frequency of intergroup interaction is important for the interaction to be meaningful enough to have any effect on prejudice (Cook 1978). This idea has been supported by a non-experimental survey of about 3,800 Europeans, which showed that those with more friends from minority groups showed less prejudice towards those groups and admired them and sympathized with them more (Pettigrew 1997). Thus, cross-group friendships are one form of intergroup contact that can improve intergroup relations and reduce prejudice. Research on extended contact suggests that simply knowing that members of your in-group have friends from the out-group can reduce intergroup biases and prejudice (Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, and Ropp 1997).

For some people, direct intergroup contact is not always a possibility because they may live in areas or regions that have little or no diversity among the population. Researchers have suggested that imagined contact – a mental simulation of a positive interaction with a member from an out-group – can be a useful method for creating more positive attitudes towards members of an out-group and reducing prejudice (Crisp and Turner 2009, Miles and Crisp 2014).

As we can see, the contact hypothesis and its offshoots have been important for our understanding of how to reduce prejudice. We must note that intergroup contact can increase prejudice and hostility in situations where the contact is negative (Stangor, Jonas, Stroebe, and Hewstone 1996). Furthermore, situations that establish positive intergroup contact through friendly or congenial interactions are difficult to achieve (Hewstone and Brown 1986; Hewstone 1996). In real-world settings, it is difficult to control for the conditions social psychologists have proposed as necessary for intergroup contact to be an effective strategy of prejudice reduction. While these laboratory studies shed light on ways intergroup contact can affect human attitudes and behaviors, they are limited when it comes to understanding how intergroup contact can be used in the real world. Nevertheless, the research discussed in this section shows that intergroup
contact can be a very useful way for reducing prejudice. You can probably now imagine ways you might apply this strategy in your own life. If you are a student, you might decide to talk to that foreign exchange student you have noticed studies at the same café you like to study at. If you are an employer, you might create diverse groups of employees to work on a project together. Indeed, there are many possibilities for how we might use intergroup contact strategies in our daily lives.

_Social Identity and Social Categorization_

Another intergroup approach to reducing prejudice focuses on _social identity and categorization processes_. Have you ever wondered what makes you belong or not belong to a specific group? Have you ever wondered how belonging to a certain group affects your perception of others? Imagine you are a part of a Harry Potter reading group, which you clearly differentiate from a Lord of the Rings reading group. Now imagine your next-door neighbor is a member of the Lord of the Rings reading group. You would probably categorize that person as an out-group member when it comes to your reading group, but an in-group member when it comes to the matter of your neighborhood. We engage in these kinds of categorization processes everyday. According to _Social Identity Theory_ (Tajfel and Turner 1979), one’s social identity is a source of self-esteem for the individual and is directly tied to the sense of self that is based on belonging to a particular group, as we mentioned earlier in our discussion of the Robbers Cave Experiment. Thus, people tend to favor members of their in-group over members of an out-group in such a way that can lead to serious prejudice and discrimination. Merely categorizing yourself with a group can lead to in-group/out-group biases (Tajfel and Turner 1986). Some psychologists have explored how different categorization processes might reduce the magnitude of in-group versus out-group distinctions, reduce the importance of a particular social identity that is
associated with group membership, or reduce the significance that certain group memberships have in motivating thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Shifting and influencing social identity through different categorization processes is believed to reduce prejudice and discrimination (Brewer 2000). Thus, many psychologists have studied ways in which categorization processes can be used to reduce prejudice.

The process of *decategorization* (Brewer and Miller 1984) emphasizes individual identities over the group identity. In decategorization interventions, participants are trained to think of people from different groups as individuals rather than as members of the out-group only. In one study, researchers divided participants into two groups of people (over-estimators and under-estimators; Bettencourt, Brewer, Croak, and Miller 1992). Participants were then placed on teams with both over-estimators and under-estimators to complete a cooperative task. Some teams were instructed to focus on the individuals who made up their team, other teams were instructed to focus on the quality of the work done to complete the task, and the control teams had no such instructions. Those teams that focused more on individuals were less likely to favor their own teams over other teams showing that the decategorization process can lead to less biased intergroup attitudes.

*Recategorization* is when people from different groups come to think of each other as sharing one superordinate category. This method shifts the way people think about individuals from other groups as members of their own group, leading to more positive attitudes and behaviors towards those people. Some studies induce the recategorization process by emphasizing shared group membership such as being students of the same school (Gomez, Dovidio, Huici, Gaertner, and Cuadrado 2008), by emphasizing goals or rewards that are shared by the different groups (Gaertner, Dovidio, Rust, Nier, Mottola, Banker, Ward, and Houlette
1999) or by emphasizing markers that are shared by different groups like having the same t-shirt color. For example, Gaertner, Mann, Murrell, and Dovidio (1989) assigned some groups comprised of three people to form discussion groups of six and emphasized that they all belonged to a single group. They had other groups of three form discussion groups of six, but emphasized that they belonged to two separate groups. Those participants whose single group identity was emphasized exhibited less intergroup bias than those participants who were in groups that emphasized separate group identities and a control group with individuals only. Those who integrated as one group found members of the previous out-group to be more attractive, whereas those who maintained the separate group identities found the out-group members less attractive. These recategorization studies successfully influenced people to think of themselves as members of a common in-group, which consequently led to greater cooperation with individuals previously thought to be out-group members and less favoring of in-group members with regards to rewards and evaluations (Gaertner and Dovidio 2000).

Similar to recategorization, the process of crossed categorization encourages people to think of a common in-group identity with members of an out-group based on their shared membership in some other group (Crisp and Hewstone, 1999). For example, if you observe an audience at a sporting event, you would notice some of the people are fans of one time, while some are fans of the opposing team. The audience would probably be comprised of individuals of different racial and ethnic groups, genders, ages, occupations, and so on. Now imagine that there are two women sitting next to each other rooting for opposing teams. In the midst of watching their favorite teams play, their belonging to a group of fans for opposing teams is likely to be more salient to them than their belonging to any other groups. Now imagine that they start to relate to one another because they are both women and they discover that they are both grade
school teachers in their mid-20s. Although they are fans for different teams, they begin to see each other as women from the same age group with the same occupation. By making these cross-categorizations salient, the women are less likely to feel prejudice towards each other because they recognize that they have other group memberships in common. In a study by Marcus-Newhall, Miller, Holtz, and Brewer (1993), two groups were experimentally created such that one group was cross-categorized with a pre-existing group membership and the other group was not. Those in the cross-categorized group showed less intergroup bias than those in the other group. The cross-categorized group members reported feeling more similar to their team members and allocated rewards with less bias than the other group.

The research presented in this section focused on ways in which social categories affect how we view and feel about individuals from other groups. Imagine you are a teacher or professor and you observe tensions between students from different ethnic groups in your classroom. What could you do or say to reduce these tensions? Based on some of the social categorization processes you just learned about, you might encourage your students to recategorize themselves as fans of the school’s football team. You might have them complete some decategorization exercises that help them discover information about their individual interests, hobbies, or goals. Perhaps you will make them realize that they share memberships in other groups outside of their ethnic groups through some exercise. You might ask them to raise their hands when they identify with a particular group that you will list (e.g., “Raise your hand if you like to eat pizza” or “Raise your hand if you are a female”). As we can see, research on social identity and social categorization provides us with a useful foundation for dealing with prejudice we might observe or experience in our daily lives.

Perceived Heterogeneity of the Out-group
At some point in your life you have probably heard someone talk about members of another group as if they are all one unit. People sometimes make sweeping statements—usually stereotypical—about out-groups as though the statement describes all members of that group. You may have heard something like “Black people are so lazy,” “Arabs are aggressive,” “Jews are so cheap,” “Women are bad at math,” or “Asians are good at science.” While it is highly unlikely for an entire group of people to possess a single trait in the same way, some individuals make statements that refer to groups comprised of millions of people and attribute a single characteristic to them all. You might ask yourself: How can people make such sweeping statements? In addition to judging members of their own group more favorably than out-group members, people tend to judge members of their in-group as more heterogeneous and members of the out-group as more homogenous (Jones, Wood, and Quattrone 1981). In other words, people are more likely to see members of their in-group as very different from one another and to perceive members of the out-group to be quite similar to each other. Researchers have found that people tend to organize and recall information about out-groups in terms of abstract attributes (e.g., laziness or cheapness) and in-groups in terms of individuals (e.g., name of a person) (Park and Judd 1990; Ostrom, Carpenter, Sedikides, and Li 1993). Furthermore, perceiving members of out-groups as homogenous leads to more extreme evaluations of individuals from the out-group—more extremely positive when the evaluation is positive and more extremely negative when the evaluation is negative (Linville and Jones 1980). In light of this research, psychologists have explored ways in which perceiving in-groups as heterogeneous and out-groups as homogenous influence prejudice.

On the one hand, when we view another group as homogenous, we more readily apply stereotypes to, feel prejudice toward, and discriminate against that group (Ryan, Judd, and Park
On the other hand, when we see members of another group as being rather variable, we have trouble maintaining hostile thoughts, feelings, and actions toward the group. As such, researchers have tried to increase how variable or heterogeneous people find members of an out-group to be as a way to reduce prejudice. By showing people that a group is made up of individuals with a wide variety of qualities, we can interfere with the kind of “they’re all alike” thinking and establish more nuanced views of the out-group. In a series of laboratory studies (Brauer and Er-rafiy 2011; Brauer, Er-rafiy and Kawakami 2012), researchers either attracted participants’ attention to the variability of an out-group or not (for the control group). In the studies, perceived variability was manipulated in different ways like making salient that out-group members have heterogeneous characteristics. For example, in some of the studies, participants in the intervention condition were exposed to posters that included individuals from the target out-group who varied in age, gender, names, and characteristics (i.e., some were stingy, some were funny, some were sad, etc.), while participants in the control condition were exposed to neutral posters with information about unrelated issues (e.g., the benefits of eating more fruits). Another method for changing how heterogeneous people find members of an out-group to be is by showing that members of the out-group have different views and beliefs. In one study, Brauer and Er-rafiy led participants in a heterogeneous intervention condition to believe that a group of Chinese female students all had very different answers to a series of questions, while those in a homogenous condition were led to believe that the Chinese female students had very similar answers to the same questions. In yet another approach, they had participants in a heterogeneous condition read a journal article that highlighted subgroups of Moroccans (e.g., farmers, working women, and the elderly) and participants in a homogenous condition read an article that emphasized Moroccans as a single entity (e.g. “they”, “Moroccans”).
After participants were exposed to an intervention that influenced and increased how heterogeneous they believed a particular out-group to be, the researchers assessed participants’ attitudes and behaviors towards individuals from the out-group. Prejudice and discrimination were assessed in terms of self-reported attitudes towards the out-group, the distribution of rewards between in- and out-group members, evaluations of job candidates from the out-group in simulated hiring situation, and implicit measures of prejudice, which exists outside of one’s conscious awareness. Across the studies, Brauer and Er-rafiy found that those individuals who perceived the out-group as more heterogeneous evaluated members of the out-group more positively, expressed more positive attitudes towards them, and exhibited more positive behaviors (e.g. helping) towards them. It is important to note that out-groups must be portrayed as having both positive and negative characteristics (Brauer, Er-rafiy, Kawakami, and Phillips 2012) and not just positive characteristics in order for such interventions to be effective. Communicating that the out-group has only positive characteristics is problematic because it can reinforce the idea that the group is homogeneous and it can cause reactance among viewers who may feel they are being coerced or manipulated.

Now that you have learned that perceiving members of an out-group as being rather different from one another reduces prejudice towards that group, you might imagine ways you could respond to someone who makes a sweeping statement about a particular group of people as those in the examples at the beginning of the chapter. You might respond by saying, “Sure, maybe some Arabs are aggressive, but some are really passive. Many Arabs are neither passive nor aggressive. Some are really sensitive, while others are kind of rude. Some are really kind and some are kind of mean.” The idea is to emphasize how variable members of a group can be to
make it difficult for someone to hold a view that all members are the same, which in turn leads to less prejudiced and discriminatory attitudes and behaviors towards said group.

Belief in Group Malleability

As we have learned, intergroup contact can be an effective way of reducing prejudice if certain conditions are fulfilled. Researchers have found that a major barrier to engage in positive intergroup interactions that can reduce prejudice and improve intergroup relations is a lack of motivation to do so (Crisp, Husnu, Meleady, Stathi, and Turner 2010). In other words, while intergroup contact can be an effective way of reducing prejudice, many people deliberately avoid such contact. Unfortunately, the groups that tend to need it the most are also those most likely to avoid engaging in intergroup contact. Research suggests that intergroup anxiety – this entails fear, discomfort, or unease caused by the presence of or interaction with members of an out-group – is an underlying cause for avoiding intergroup contact (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). Some social psychologists have proposed that changing beliefs and emotions regarding an out-group can increase motivation to engage in intergroup contact and reduce prejudiced attitudes towards an out-group. However, obvious and direct attempts at such changes can fail or backfire, especially in situations where there is strong intergroup conflict (Bar-Tal and Rosen 2009). Thus, some social psychologists suggest using more latent, implicit methods to produce changes in beliefs and attitudes (Dweck and Leggett, 1988).

In situations of intergroup conflict, believing that people have characteristics that are malleable (i.e., not fixed) reduces one’s likelihood of attributing some kind of wrongful or negative behavior to another person’s fixed qualities, reduces the likelihood of recommending punishment for the behavior, and increases one’s likelihood to recommend negotiation with the other person or group (Chiu, Hong, and Dweck, 1997; Chiu, Dweck, Tong, and Fu, 1997).
Research also shows that believing a group’s characteristics are fixed rather than malleable leads to more stereotyping of the group (Rydell, Hugenberg, Ray, and Mackie 2007). In a series of four lab and field studies, Halperin, Trzesniewski, Gross, and Dweck (2011) demonstrated that believing that groups have a malleable nature rather than a fixed one influenced people’s attitudes and openness to intergroup cooperation for peace in the context of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In the first study, five hundred Israeli Jews were asked whether they believed groups were fixed or malleable followed by questions about their attitudes toward Palestinians and their willingness to compromise with Palestinians for peace. Individuals who believed groups had a malleable nature expressed more positive attitudes toward Palestinians and a greater willingness to negotiate for peace. The following three studies took place with Israeli Jews, Palestinian citizens of Israel, and Palestinian citizens from the West Bank. Participants were randomly assigned to either read an article that simply stated groups are malleable or not to read anything. Those who read the article about groups being malleable were again more positive towards the other group and more willing to engage in peace negotiations.

Similar research took place in Cyprus where Greek and Turkish Cypriots are involved in an ongoing conflict. Sixty-one Turkish Cypriots were randomly assigned to either read an article stating that groups have malleable characteristics and behaviors or an article that stated groups are fixed (Halperin, Crisp, Husnu, Trzesniewski, Dweck, and Gross, 2012). Those participants who read the article stating that groups are malleable showed less intergroup anxiety about Greek Cypriots and were more willing to engage in peace discussions than those who read the article stating that groups have a fixed nature. As the findings from these studies show us, believing groups have a malleable nature can produce more positive attitudes toward and a willingness to cooperate with members of an out-group in contexts of major conflicts. Interestingly, one does
not need to believe that a specific group is malleable in order to have more positive attitudes
towards an out-group and be more willing to engage in contact with the group; one simply has to
believe that groups, in general, can change. Altering beliefs about group malleability seems to be
a powerful way of improving intergroup relations in regions of conflict and may be a key
strategy for improving relations and reducing prejudice between different groups across a variety
of contexts.

*Consciousness Raising and Self-Regulation*

Let us begin this section by imagining the following scenario: There is a young White
woman walking along an empty street at dusk. Half a block ahead, she sees a young Black man
turn the corner and now he is walking towards her. While she has no concrete reason to suspect
any threat from the man, she feels anxious and crosses the street. She sees the man pull out his
keys as he walks up to a house. He opens the door and walks in. The young woman begins to ask
herself why she felt threatened by the young man. She asks herself whether she would have felt
equally threatened if the man had been White. You might be able to imagine a time you felt
something negative towards a member of an out-group for no clear reason. Or you might be able
to imagine a time you saw someone else treat a racial or ethnic minority differentially for no
clear reason. Indeed, these experiences are often related to prejudices individuals hold. Unlike
intergroup approaches that aim to reduce intergroup biases through subtler or naturally occurring
scenarios, the approaches discussed in this section depend on a more active involvement from
the target of the prejudice reduction intervention.

While overt, direct forms of prejudice have declined over the past few decades after the
passing of many Civil Rights Laws in the 1960s, a number of experimental studies have found
that subtle, automatic forms of prejudice are still pervasive among many people (Devine, Plant,
and Buswell 2000). Even those who are not aware of it and openly endorse egalitarian views can have prejudiced attitudes and beliefs (Devine 1989) – a form of prejudice known as *aversive racism* (Gaertner and Dovidio 1986). Aversive racism is defined as a negative evaluation of a racial or ethnic minority that manifests itself in the real world through avoidance of interactions with people from minority groups. This kind of racism is widespread and leads to many negative outcomes for its targets. As an example, let us imagine how aversive racism manifests in the education system. You might observe that students from a dominant group leave out and alienate a minority student. As a result that student is likely to have less confidence, self-esteem, and a sense of belonging – all of which lead him or her to perform worse academically. To be sure, this kind of racism is pervasive in and outside of the education system. Thus, many researchers have explored how people are affected when they are made aware of their own prejudice.

In light of the discrepancy between overt and covert prejudice, and research on people’s awareness and motivations for behaving in prejudiced or non-prejudiced ways, psychologists have explored how *self-regulation* or *consciousness-raising* might help reduce prejudice. We will describe each of these processes more concretely in the coming paragraphs. It is important to note that such processes rely on the individual making a conscious effort to control his or her behavior and achieve a specific goal (Mischel 1996). Furthermore, these approaches require a high level of attention, intention, and conscious awareness of one’s own biases (Monteith, Arthur, and McQueary Flynn 2010).

Research shows that when people are made aware of discrepancies between how they believe they should act towards a minority and how they would actually act towards that minority, they experience higher levels of guilt than those with small or no discrepancies (Monteith, Devine, and Zuwerink 1993). This is important because guilt is widely recognized as
an important factor for self-regulation processes and a motivator for pro-social changes (Amodio, Devine, and Harmon-Jones 2007). What is self-regulation? Self-regulation is one’s capacity to be able to change his or her behavior in accordance with some sort of internal or societal norm or expectation (Baumeister and Vohs 2007). Indeed, scientists have found that internal and external motivations to control one’s own prejudice play an important role in how an individual self-regulates and behaves in private and public settings (Plant, Devine, and Brazy 2003). Some people can be internally motivated to respond to social situations and interactions without prejudice and are thus driven by their desire to be consistent with their own standards and egalitarian beliefs. They may also be externally motivated to behave without prejudice and be driven by their desire to avoid being negatively evaluated by others for responding to others and to situations in prejudiced ways (Plant and Devine 1998).

An important construct in developing useful prejudice interventions that target the discrepancy between a person’s overt and covert prejudices is cognitive consistency, which is based on the person’s need to be consistent in their more prominent thoughts, beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors to maintain their self-worth. Inconsistencies among these factors lead to dissonance and disharmony within the person (Festinger 1957). Research suggests that making prejudiced people aware that their egalitarian values and their prejudices are highly inconsistent (Rokeach 1973) could lead them to change their attitudes or behaviors to be more consistent. One strategy that hinges on the idea of cognitive consistency is awareness-raising, a method that entails encouraging individuals to be aware of beliefs, attitudes, or memories they have that relate to prejudice. The underlying idea with this strategy is that when people become aware of certain beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and memories that are prejudiced, they can develop the motivation to reduce it (Fazio 1990), whether the motivation is external or internal. In order to
reduce one’s prejudice, an individual must first be aware of that prejudice. In one study, researchers asked participants to use different word fragments to describe Asians (Son Hing, Li, and Zanna 2002). Those with higher levels of the kind of aversive, implicit prejudice described above used more negative stereotypical words to describe Asians (e.g., “short” or “sly”). Participants were then randomly assigned to a hypocrisy condition in which they wrote about a time when they had treated an Asian person in a prejudiced way or a control condition in which they did not have any writing exercise. Those in the hypocrisy condition showed more guilt than those in the control condition. Furthermore, among participants in the hypocrisy condition, those who had greater levels of implicit prejudice, as gauged by the word-fragment task, showed more guilt than those with lower levels of implicit prejudice. Consequently, they behaved more favorably towards Asians by supporting more funding for Asian student groups in a follow-up questionnaire. Among those with low implicit prejudice, funding recommendations were not affected by the hypocrisy manipulation. This study suggests that raising someone’s awareness of their prejudiced attitudes and behaviors can help reduce prejudice.

Furthermore, Monteith and Walters (1998) found that people who openly held and endorsed egalitarian values exhibited some level of prejudice; despite their egalitarian values, people in their study displayed low, intermediate or high levels of prejudice. On the one hand, those who were less prejudiced in the study associated egalitarianism with equal opportunity. On the other hand, those who were more prejudiced associated egalitarianism more with the Protestant Work Ethic (Weber 1958) of you get what you work for. When those high in prejudice were retrained to associate egalitarianism with equal opportunity instead of the Protestant Work Ethic, they felt more morally obligated to respond positively towards Blacks. The study suggests that highlighting inconsistency between a particular understanding of egalitarianism and
prejudice towards Blacks can lead to more positive attitudes towards Blacks. In another study with college students, researchers found that students who agreed to write public statements expressing their support for pro-Black social policies showed a reduction in their support for anti-Black policies that they had previously agreed with (Eisenstadt, Leippe, Rivers, and Stambush 2003).

Further aligned with these findings are *self-affirmation approaches* that reinforce people’s sense of personal value and increase their self-worth. Self-Affirmation Theory poses that when people’s self-worth is affirmed they will not behave in derogatory and demeaning ways towards others (Steele 1988). Some research shows that when people wrote about things they value as a way of affirming their self-worth or received positive feedback about their intelligence as an affirmation of their self-worth, they were more likely to evaluate Jewish job candidates’ personalities and suitability for the job in positive ways (Fein and Spencer 1997). In another study, participants who received positive feedback from a Black laboratory manager during an experiment decreased in the number of negative stereotypes about Black people they expressed in a word completion task (Sinclair and Kunda 1999).

Another self-regulation method that has been explored is *thought suppression* or *stereotype suppression*. In one study, participants were asked to write a descriptive passage about someone in a photograph who looked like a “skinhead.” Those who were randomly assigned to receive instructions to avoid stereotypic thoughts described the target with using less stereotypic terms than those who received no instructions (Macrae, Bodenhausen, Milne, and Jetten 1994). However, when participants were asked to write another passage about a skinhead without any instructions, those who had previously been asked to avoid stereotypic thinking wrote more stereotypically than those who previously received no instructions. Such stereotype suppression
methods seem to have the opposite of the desired effect by increasing one’s access to stereotypic thoughts (Galinsky and Moskowitz 2000). In one study, business students who had been instructed to suppress negative thoughts about elderly people while watching a diversity training video rated older job candidates more negatively than people who received no instructions while watching the video (Kulik, Perry, and Bourhis 2000). Although some research suggests that suppression does not inevitably lead to more stereotyping (Monteith, Sherman, and Devine 1998), especially when coupled with mental retraining strategies (Kawakami, Dovidio, Moll, Hermsen, and Russin 2000), most research indicates that it is not an effective way to reduce prejudice.

In recent research (Devine, Forscher, Austin, and Cox 2012), students underwent a 12-week intervention in a laboratory consisting of a series of self-regulatory processes to reduce implicit biases. The strategies included: replacing stereotypical information about the out-group with non-stereotypical information and reflecting on why the stereotype creates a bias (Monteith 1993); imagining famous (e.g., Barack Obama) or non-famous (e.g., a friend) counter-stereotypic figures (Blair, Ma, and Lenton 2001); individuating members of the out-group (Brewer 1988) as done in the decategorization strategies previously described; taking the perspective of out-group members as one’s own perspective (Galinsky and Moskowitz 2000); and providing opportunities to meet with members of the out-group (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). For participants in the study, those who showed higher levels of concern with discrimination in the world were most positively affected by the multi-faceted intervention.

As we can see, self-regulation and consciousness-raising approaches offer some promising ways to reduce prejudice. You might now be able to imagine scenarios in your own life where your egalitarian and non-prejudiced values and beliefs do not align with your attitudes
or behaviors towards members of an out-group. To be sure, some researchers would argue that this mere awareness would lead you to feel and behave more consistently with your values. This awareness might just be enough to motivate you to behave in more non-prejudiced ways moving forward. However, not all people will be motivated internally or externally enough to change their discrepant attitudes and behaviors to be more consistent with their values. Thus, there is a need to further understand how motivations, situational factors, and emotions affect people’s ability to engage in self-regulation. Furthermore, a serious limitation of prejudice reduction methods that rely on self-regulation processes as in the studies described above is that they require a lot of attention, intention, awareness of one’s biases, and a concern with discrimination. While it is possible to expect people to engage in such high-level thinking, feeling, and acting in controlled, laboratory studies, such approaches may not have as much practical value.

**Social Norms**

Imagine you and a group of friends are out for your friend’s birthday at her favorite Ethiopian restaurant. You order your food and when it arrives, you realize, there are no utensils. Suddenly, your friend tears off a piece of bread and dips it into her dish. You look around at others in the restaurant and observe that many people are dipping bread in their dishes. You tear off a piece of the bread that came with your dish and dip it like your friend. You found yourself in a new situation and searched for social cues that informed you how to behave appropriately in the situation. Your concern with how to behave and your search for social cues from others for how to behave are a result of social norms. Social norms are customary standards for behavior, attitudes, and beliefs that are shared by members of a group. See chapter 18 of this book for an in-depth discussion of social norms. Social norms play a powerful role in influencing and determining human behavior (Cialdini, Reno, and Kallgren 1990). Gordon Allport (1954)
proposed that prejudice results from societal norms. Although social norms increasingly renounce and condemn prejudice and discrimination towards members of minority groups, prejudice persists towards minority and stigmatized groups like gay men and Iraqis (Crandall, Eshleman, and O’Brien 2002).

Research examining the effect of social norms on individuals’ attitudes and prejudice towards other groups has found that social norms strongly influence and shape attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. Blanchard, Crandall, Brigham, and Vaughn (1994) found that White students at an American university who had heard another student condemning racism expressed more anti-racist opinions – publicly and privately – than students in a control group that did not hear another student expressing any condemnation of racism. In a series of three experiments, Stangor, Sechrist, and Jost (2001) found that views and beliefs of one’s in-group play an important role in determining an individual’s beliefs and behaviors. In the first experiment, White American students indicated their beliefs about positive and negative stereotypes of Black people. They then estimated what they thought other students at their university would believe about those same stereotypes. Each student was then randomly assigned to either receive feedback that students at their university had more favorable evaluations of Black people than they had estimated or less favorable evaluations. Those students who had received feedback stating other university students had more favorable attitudes than they had estimated evaluated Blacks more positively when they were asked to complete evaluations of the same stereotypes a second time. Those students who had received feedback stating other university students had less favorable attitudes than they had estimated evaluated Blacks less positively when asked to complete the evaluation a second time. In their second experiment, Stangor and colleagues found that this effect was greater when participants received feedback from an in-group versus an out-
group. Finally, in their third experiment, they found that participants who received feedback that confirmed their beliefs about stereotypes of Blacks were more resistant to changing their beliefs. These experiments attest to the powerful role social norms play in determining attitudes and beliefs about members of out-groups.

While it might seem intuitive that social norms could be a powerful tool in reducing prejudice by establishing normative attitudes and behaviors for people to adhere to, social norms approaches to prejudice reduction have not been given much theoretical or empirical focus by social psychologists (Sechrist and Stangor 2007). As we can see, there are several promising laboratory studies that suggest social norms affect one’s attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors towards other groups, the topic must further be explored to better understand how we might come to apply it in the real world. Imagine you are a student at a high school that is predominately comprised of White students with only about 10% of the student population being minority students. What kinds of social norms would you want to establish at your school? You would probably want the social norm to be that minority students are accepted and included by the rest of the student body. You would probably try to establish a social norm that discourages discriminatory and prejudiced behaviors. There are many possibilities for how we might establish such norms. Now that we know social norms can powerfully affect prejudice, it is important that we take the next step in trying to develop ways to use social norms for affecting positive change in the world.

**Emotions**

Emotions play an important role in determining how we react to, interact with, and behave towards each other. Some psychologists argue that emotions influence expressions of prejudice towards individuals from an out-group (Smith 1993). Emotions can influence cognitive
processes that are associated with prejudice such as people’s tendency to stereotype out-group members (Smith and Mackie 2010). For example, some research finds that happy and angry individuals stereotype more than individuals who are sad (Bodenhausen 1993). Sometimes, emotions like anxiety can arise when individuals encounter people from an out-group making interactions uncomfortable, unpleasant, and awkward (Stephan and Stephan 1985). In light of research that demonstrates the different relationships between emotions and prejudice, some researchers have explored how emotions can be used to reduce prejudice.

You have probably heard the expression “walk a mile in my shoes.” One method that has been examined by this idiom in the context of prejudice is perspective taking. *Perspective-taking* interventions encourage perceivers to imagine and experience the emotions a target of prejudice might have (Batson 2009). The approach aims to induce feelings of similarity, liking, and closeness with an individual who might typically be the target of prejudice and discrimination to create more positive attitudes towards a target out-group (Vescio, Sechrist, and Paulucci 2003). For example, Galinsky and Moskowitz (2000) found that having participants write essays from the perspective of an elderly individual reduces stereotyping of the elderly. Additionally, writing an essay from the perspective of an individual from an out-group can lead to more positive evaluations of that group. Try to imagine applying perspective taking in your own life. Maybe you have a classmate or co-worker who you do not talk to very much because he is from some out-group that you do not know much about. Imagine what that person is like with his family, what that person does while shopping at a grocery store, or what that person is like when he is playing a sport that you also like. You might find yourself feeling more similar to that person or that it becomes easier to relate to him. In turn, you might become more positive toward that person, reach out to him, and maybe even become friends.
A similar emotional approach for reducing prejudice that has been studied uses *empathy* as its means for change. Empathy is the ability to recognize, understand, and share feelings that are being experienced by another person. Empathy is said to play an important role in reducing prejudice among those who can experience the feelings of out-group members. While this may be true for people who naturally have high levels of empathy, researchers aim to strengthen empathic responses in experimental studies. Researchers have found that inducing empathy through instruction can improve attitudes towards a target out-group (Batson, Polycarpou, Harmon-Jones, Imhoff, Mitchener, Bednar, Klein, and Hightberger 1997). For example, some researchers have found that simply asking Whites to be more empathic when reading about Blacks’ experiences with discrimination on a daily basis removes the difference between how they evaluate White and Black Americans (Stephan and Finlay 1999). Similar research found that participants who read instructions that said to “focus on your feelings” rather than thoughts while watching a video that depicted discrimination towards Blacks showed a greater desire to interact with Blacks (Esses and Dovidio 2002). The experimenters attributed this effect to a change in the participants’ emotions towards Blacks.

Researchers have also examined other ways of inducing and strengthening empathy like *role-playing*. In a study that used a game to simulate a situation that called for an expression of empathy, third graders were separated into two groups (Weiner and Wright 1973). One group was assigned to wear orange armbands and the other group was assigned to wear green armbands. The students in the orange bands then experienced an entire day of being discriminated against, negatively stereotyped and not receiving any praise from the teacher. The next day, the roles were reversed and the students in the green bands experienced the same things those in orange bands had experienced the day before. The study found that groups of students
who shared the negative experience were less prejudiced than students who were divided into the same groupings, but did not both share the negative experience. In other words, this experiment created a situation to induce empathy among third-grade students and successfully lead them to exhibit less prejudice towards members of the other group up to two weeks later.

As we can see, emotions can be an effective way of reducing prejudice in the real world as they allow one to relate to and empathize with members of an out-group. Take a moment now to imagine that you are currently a camp counselor for a group of youth at a summer camp. The summer camp program divides the campers into two groups for logistical and organizational purposes. You notice that the campers from both groups begin to express hostility towards members from the other group. How would you try to influence the campers’ emotions towards the other group? Would you encourage people to engage in perspective taking or try to strengthen their empathy levels? What kinds of activities or exercises would you ask the campers to complete? Based on what you have read in this section, what might you expect to occur?

**Instruction**

Prejudice is often blamed on ignorance (Stephan and Stephan 1985) and one method, targeting individuals, that has been explored is instruction. *Instruction* entails teaching individuals about the out-group towards which they might have prejudice. For example, researchers have developed materials to educate the U.S. military and corporations that send employees to foreign countries on how people speak and behave in different places across the world (Landis, Day, McGrew, Thomas, and Miller 1976). Such instruction is intended to increase cultural awareness and understanding of the out-group to reduce prejudice. Other instructional techniques include training people to think in more complex ways based on statistical logic to avoid making false generalizations about the out-group. In a study that trained
participants to think in such complex ways and then asked them to write a story about a picture that showed an interracial interaction, researchers found that trained individuals wrote more positive stories and reported more friendly attitudes towards racial and ethnic out-groups (Gardiner 1972). Individuals who undergo such training also express fewer stereotypes about characters presented in a vignette (Schaller, Asp, Rossell, and Heim 1996). While instruction can be a useful way of increasing our knowledge of others and reducing stereotypic thinking, there is little research on instruction as a strategy for large and sustainable prejudice reduction.

**Experimental Field Research**

In the last section we focused on prejudice reduction methods that have primarily been studied in the laboratory; this section focuses on field research. Whereas laboratory research allows us to exercise a high level of control to increase the validity of our conclusions, field research allows us to generalize our findings to the real world. After all, we are studying prejudice—a social phenomenon that exists in the real world! If we want to see any reduction in prejudice and discrimination in real world, psychologists and other social scientists must extend their laboratory research on prejudice reduction methods to applied settings. Unfortunately, field studies on prejudice reduction are a huge undertaking and this deters some scientists from doing such research.

As of 2009, Paluck and Green identified only one hundred and seven randomized field experiments examining methods of prejudice reduction, thirty-six of which focused on one method alone (cooperative learning, see below). They identified nearly four times as many experimental laboratory studies and nearly five times as many non-experimental field studies. The ratio of randomized field experiments to laboratory experiments and non-experimental field studies illustrates a stark discrepancy between what we have learned in the laboratory and what
we know truly affects prejudice in the real world. In this section, we focus on describing the three most studied paradigms of prejudice reduction in the field including: cooperative learning, literature, and media. These three methods alone make up approximately 62% of field research on reducing prejudice. It is important to note that there are other methods of prejudice reduction that have been studied to a lesser degree that will not be discussed in this section. The goal of this section is to provide you with a general knowledge of the most studied and representative prejudice reduction methods in the field.

Cooperative Learning

Think back to a time when you worked with a group of peers on a “group project” during your elementary or high school education. Your teacher likely put you in a group with some people you did not know, but at the end of the project, you probably felt you had become friends with everyone in your group. You likely learned what each member of the group was good at and learned that if each person contributed what they were good at to the group project, you would perform well as a group. Indeed, you may have even learned to depend on different people for specific things overtime; whereas you may have taken notes for the group because you were organized and wrote neatly, someone else may have done all the drawing for the group because he was a very good artist, and another person may have been the group’s spokesperson because she was a good public speaker. Over time, you learned about each other’s strengths, weaknesses, interests, hobbies, passions, personal histories, and how to work with one another. You were able to predict how specific group member’s would respond to certain situations, felt insulted when they felt insulted, understood when they were sad or happy and shared in that experience, understood how to approach them regarding different issues, and so on. It may surprise you that this kind of group work may have resulted from a conscious effort on behalf of your teacher to
pair you with a variety of students so that you maybe come to know one another and learn to work with each other. Indeed, this kind of group work is based on a process called cooperative learning.

Cooperative learning is an interdependence approach that aims to reduce racial prejudice in schools and involves bringing students from different racial and ethnic groups to work together, or “cooperatively,” to achieve different academic goals. In 1954, the United States Supreme Court ruled in the famous Brown v. Board of Education case that segregation was unlawful in public schools because it made them unequal. This ruling resulted in the desegregation of American public schools – a process that created prejudice, hostility, and discrimination between different racial and ethnic groups. In 1971, the city of Austin, Texas faced so many racial problems in their schools that they hired psychologists Elliot Aronson to help them devise a solution for the Austin school system. Based on Morton Deutsch’s theory of interdependence (1949) – which contends that when two groups are more likely to work in cooperation with each other when they recognize that they have a common goal that can only be achieved by pooling their unique skills and resources together – Aronson developed the jigsaw classroom.

In a jigsaw classroom (Aronson, Blaney, Stephan, Sikes, and Snapp 1978) students are divided into small groups of five or six people each. The teacher then typically gives each student in the group different pieces of information that make up the overarching group assignment. Each person is responsible for relaying the piece of information they received to the other members of the group. When the group gets together, the students have to work with each other to put together the pieces of the “puzzle” and achieve their goal. This method creates interdependence between the members of the jigsaw group such that there is a need for
everyone’s participation, contribution, and cooperation. The jigsaw classroom and other variations of it (Slavin, Madden, and Leavey 1984) have been found to reduce prejudice among schoolchildren, with students in cooperative learning or jigsaw groups showing more interpersonal liking, attraction, and social support, engaging more in perspective taking and helping behaviors, and managing conflict more constructively.

Aronson and Bridgeman (1979) argue that improvements in prejudice and intergroup relations that occur in jigsaw classrooms are partly due to empathy. In one eight-week study, Bridgeman (1981) found that students in jigsaw classrooms showed an increase in empathy scores over the span of the study, but those students in control classrooms showed no change in empathy over time. As we learned in previous sections, empathy can play an important role in reducing prejudice. Overall, meta-analyses that examine the effects of different cooperative processes in the context of classrooms and schools – including both experimental and non-experimental studies – have found that cooperative processes have had a consistent positive impact on ethnic and racial relations and cooperation (Johnson and Johnson 1989; Roseth, Johnson, and Johnson 2008). However, some researchers have investigated how these cooperative learning methods affect students’ cross-group friendships outside of the classroom and have found weaker effects (Warring, Johnson, Maruyama, and Johnson 1985). Furthermore, little is known about how cooperative learning affects evaluations and prejudice towards the entire racial or ethnic group (beyond the realm of the cooperative learning group) or about the long-term effects of cooperative learning on schoolchildren and its general effect on adults (Paluck and Green 2009). Nevertheless, the cooperative learning paradigm has been shown to reduce prejudice in the immediate classroom context and approximately 79% of elementary schools in the United States used cooperative learning (Puma 1993) by the early 1990s. To be
sure, cooperative learning has been the most widely studied, experimentally and non-experimentally, methods of prejudice reduction in the real world. Its results are promising and have had an important effect on intergroup relations in the U.S. over the past few decades.

Reading

Whether it is E.B. White’s *Charlotte’s Web* or Lois Lowry’s *The Giver*, we all have a favorite story from our childhood or adolescence. Take a minute to think of your favorite childhood or adolescent story. Think about why you enjoyed the story so much? Maybe you felt similar and related to one or some of the characters in the story. Maybe you liked the narrative so much that you got lost in the story when you read it or heard it. Indeed, narratives play an important role in shaping people’s attitudes and behaviors on a wide spectrum of topics. Recognizing this, psychologists have explored how reading interventions affect prejudice and if they can be used to reduce prejudice among schoolchildren.

All of the field experiments that examine the effects of reading on prejudice, seventeen in all, were conducted with schoolchildren only and took place over an average of five weeks (Paluck and Green 2009). Typical reading interventions entail randomly assigning students to read a story about a person or people from another culture group from that which is dominant in the school or classroom (Wham, Barnhart, and Cook 1996). Stories are also about contact between children from different groups (Cameron and Rutland 2006; Liebkind and McAlister 1999) or about some marginalized minority group like African or Native Americans and disabled or elderly people (Hughes, Bigler, and Levy 2007; Yawkey 1973). For example, in a six-week intervention Cameron and Rutland (2006) randomly assigned non-disabled children between five and ten years of age to read stories about disabled and non-disabled children in friendship contexts. The characters in the story were similar in age to the children participating in the study.
The stories described different adventures that the disabled and non-disabled characters went on. Those children who read about a cross-group friendship had more positive attitudes towards disabled people than children who read a neutral story in which there were no disabled children.

As we can see, reading narratives about cross-group interactions can be an effective way of reducing prejudice among school children. Indeed, most of the studies examining the effects of literature on prejudice find that attitudes towards target out-groups improve when the narratives involved a cross-group contact. Results are more mixed when it comes to narratives that simply depict people from a typical out-group. The mixed outcomes from reading interventions create a need for further examination of the effects of literature and narratives on prejudice. Furthermore, the seventeen studies on prejudice and literature only included schoolchildren and did not test long-term effects. Thus, more research is needed to understand the role literature can play in reducing prejudice.

Nevertheless, there are positive attitudinal changes achieved through reading interventions. Such results are largely attributed to different theories of narrative persuasion. One proposition is that the stories in the reading interventions allow readers to experience vicarious friendships with people from out-groups through the characters in the story – a form of extended contact (Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, and Ropp 1997). Other theories propose that narratives encourage greater perspective taking (Strange 2002) and increase the reader’s empathy (Zillmann 1991). Furthermore, narratives can lead readers to be transported into the storyline (Green and Brock 2002) and to increase in the degree to which they relate to and care for certain characters (Murphy, Frank, Moran, and Patnoe-Woodley 2011). Indeed, the power of narratives cannot be attributed to one of these mechanisms alone, but is likely to be effective due to a combination of all these factors.
Media

Every single day, people across the world gain exposure to media through their television sets, radios, computers, and other devices. Media is a powerful tool for influencing and shaping peoples’ attitudes and behaviors (Bandura, 2004; Adorno, 1991). Recently, some psychologists have been exploring how media affects prejudice through the scope of Entertainment Education. Entertainment Education “is a communication strategy to bring about behavioral and social change” as it is a “process of purposely designing and implementing a media message to both entertain and educate, in order to increase audience members’ knowledge about an educational issue, create favorable attitudes, shift social norms, and change over behavior” (Singhal and Rogers 2004, p. 5). Entertainment Education has been used in all kinds of health interventions including awareness campaigns about the adverse effects of smoking to breast cancer screening interventions that have increased screening rates among target communities. In fact, the Center for Disease Control has an Entertainment Education Program, which has a mission is to provide “expert consultation, education, and resources for writers and producers who develop scripts with health storylines and information” as seen in popular programming like NBC’s Parenthood and ABC’s Desperate Housewives.

While psychologists have not extensively examined the role of media in reducing prejudice, it is a promising avenue for changing prejudice. Media programming exposes audiences to characters they may not always come across and this can be for an extended period of time. Media programming also involves narrative persuasion, which transports people into storylines and increases their ability to take on the perspectives of the characters and feel empathy towards them. You can probably imagine ways that portraying characters from a typical minority group can influence how someone feels or behaves towards members of that group in
real life. Expectedly, the way those characters are portrayed and the narrative they are part of is very important in determining how an audience receives certain characters and relates to the storyline – a topic that must be further studied by psychologists. Can you imagine a TV show or movie that exposed you to members of an out-group? Do you think the portrayal of those out-group characters made you more positive or hostile towards those out-groups? Why or why not?

In a series of studies, Murrar and Brauer (2014) randomly assigned participants between the ages of eighteen and sixty to watch a TV show that depicted a target minority group or a TV show that depicted a dominant group. Participants who watched the TV show about members of a minority group had more positive evaluations of them and showed less prejudice towards them across a series of measures. Studies showing such effects have important implications for the real world as they provide us with an understanding of how we might use media to reduce prejudice on a broad scale.

Another one of the few studies examining the role media can play in reducing prejudice through an intergroup conflict framework took place in post-conflict Rwanda (Paluck 2009). In 1994, the ethnic majority tribe in Rwanda, the Hutus, was responsible for the mass murder of approximately 800,000 people – mostly comprised of people from the minority Tutsi tribe. The study, which took place a decade and a half after the conflict had ended, looked at the effects of two radio soap operas on intergroup prejudice and conflict. In the study, eight different communities of Rwandans were randomly assigned to listen to one of two radio programs: a reconciliation radio soap opera, which was the interventions condition and a health soap opera, which was the control condition. The reconciliation radio soap opera included characters that were similar to most Rwandans – most Rwandans live in rural and underdeveloped communities— and storylines that resembled everyday life. The communities gathered in a
communal area and listened collectively to the soap operas over a span of one year. After a year of listening to the soap opera, they completed a series of questionnaires, interviews, and group discussions. While the study found that the reconciliation soap opera did not significantly change people’s beliefs, it affected perceptions of and behaviors toward some of the most critical issues for Rwanda’s post conflict society, such as intermarriage, open dissent, trust, and talking about personal trauma” (p. 3). In a related study (Bilali and Vollhardt 2013), researchers found that those Rwandans who listened to the reconciliation radio soap opera were more likely to consider the historical perspective of the out-group tribe, showed less competitive attitudes when it came to the degree of victimization their tribe experienced, and expressed less mistrust toward the out-group tribe than Rwandans who heard the control group soap opera. As these studies show us, media can be a powerful resource for shaping pro-social behaviors and reducing prejudiced attitudes and behaviors.

As we can see from these studies, media plays an important role in influencing and shaping our attitudes and behaviors towards target out-groups. So the next time you choose a radio program to listen to or TV show to watch, you might be more conscious about the content of the storyline and how out-group characters are portrayed. Perhaps you will find that you dislike some characters a lot and relate to others. Perhaps you find the storyline at some part very interesting and completely boring at others. As you make these considerations, think about ways they may positively or negative affect your perceptions of others and your behavior towards them.

**Current State and Recommendation for the Future**

At this point, you have read about a wide spectrum of social psychological research exploring ways to reduce prejudice. We see that psychologists have come a long way in
understanding prejudice reduction from a theoretical standpoint. It is also evident that body of research on the topic is dominated by laboratory research. Most of this research focuses heavily on one method or mechanism to reduce prejudice. While this helps us understand the role each of those methods or mechanism plays on its own, substantial prejudice reduction will likely require several methods or mechanisms in combination. As such, one recommendation for future research is to explore different theoretically driven methods in combination with each other to find the most effective amalgam of processes for reducing prejudice.

Another important point to consider is that participants in a majority of the studies performed in the laboratory are conducted with WEIRD participants, i.e., they are Western, Educated, from Industrialized, Rich, Democratic counties (Henrich, Heine, and Norenzayan 2010). In many ways, such participants are not representative of the people on this planet. Thus, future research should extend its participant pool beyond university students in order to ensure a representative sample. Another issue with our current understanding of prejudice interventions is that most studies assess prejudice immediately after an intervention, which leaves the question of the long-term efficacy of these interventions unanswered. To address this issue and gauge the long-term efficacy of prejudice interventions, researchers should measure prejudice immediately after an intervention and at later time points.

Finally, while laboratory studies inform of us about what ought to happen in the real world (Mook 1983), we do not actually know whether or not they would work in real-world contexts. As we have learned, there is a large discrepancy between the number of laboratory and field studies examining prejudice reduction. In line with Moss-Racusin, van der Toorn, Dovidio, Brescoll, and Handelsman (2014) who called for more randomized controlled trials that evaluate the impact of diversity interventions, we encourage researchers to conduct theoretically driven
randomized controlled field experiments that will help us understand what is and what is not effective in real-world contexts. Furthermore, we suggest using *randomized rollout designs* (Paluck and Cialdini 2011), which entails carrying the study out in phases. In such a design, participants are randomly assigned into conditions, but do not all participate at the same time. Instead, some people participate during the first phase and the rest during the subsequent phase(s). Such designs allow scientists to test interventions in real-world settings in phases to ensure an intervention is effective before mass application and to allow for intervention maintenance from one phase to the next.

In this chapter, we provided an overview of the history and research of prejudice reductions. As you have seen, there are many methods that have been examined and many people tackling the issue of prejudice through a scientific lens. While our understanding of prejudice and ways of reducing it has come a long way, there is still much work that needs to be done to build a society that provides everyone of a secure and just space in which they can live and thrive. We hope that this overview has provided you with some tools to implement changes in your own life and the lives of those around you to reduce prejudice in your home, community, country, and world.
Citations


