



# **PRINCIPLES FOR INTERGROUP PROJECTS: A FIRST LOOK**

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ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY AND DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY

## **PREFACE**

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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This document describes ten principles for effective efforts to strengthen intergroup relations. Supporting evidence for the principles was derived from a review of the social science research literature on intergroup relations and management research on diversity training, review of reports by organizations and foundations supporting intergroup initiatives, and from the evaluation of the Initiative to Strengthen Neighborhood Intergroup Assets (sponsored by Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation and other foundations in the Washington, DC region). The literature reviewed was selected through electronic searches of databases such as PsychInfo. Representatives of foundations, other non-profit organizations, government agencies, and social science leaders were contacted to recommend any additional research on successful efforts. Recommendations were also sought from participants in relevant listserves such as the Society for Community Research and Action. The literature review focused on research that demonstrated effective approaches to improving intergroup relations and systematic review of the experiences of practitioners.

Principles were derived following an adaptation of the methods used by Rothman (1974) to derive action principles based on the strength of the evidence in the literature. In this report, both research and reports on the systematic examinations of the experience of practitioners were used to develop the principles. Following the description of the principles, a brief discussion of the successes and challenges inherent in applying the principles is presented. These principles are presented as a work in progress.

## 2 PRINCIPLES

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### 1. Groups must identify an important common issue and work towards common goals to address the issue

Intergroup relations can be improved if there is a goal that has a compelling appeal for members of each group involved, but that neither group can achieve without participation of the other. Each group must have a distinct and clear role that reflects its unique strength. The identification of the common goal must be demonstrated by each group and not assumed. The goal must also be challenging, but achievable.

The importance of this principle in intergroup relations has been examined extensively in several areas of research (e.g., social psychology and diversity training) which suggested that:

- Intergroup relations can be improved if there is contact and cooperative interdependence between groups in the pursuit of common and *superordinate* goals (Brewer, 1996; Brown & Wade, 1987; Cook, 1985 cited in Brewer, 1996; Deschamps & Brown, 1983 cited in Winborne & Cohen, 1998; Maruyama et al., 1992; Sherif et al., 1961 cited in Deschamps & Brown, 1983; Sherif & Sherif, 1969 cited in Tyerman & Spencer, 1983);
- *Superordinate* goals, which are goals that have a compelling appeal for members of each group cannot be achieved by neither group without participation of the other (Sherif, 1966 cited in Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994, p. 41);
- As members of two groups work together, old group boundaries fade and the members see themselves as belonging to one group (Worchel & Norvell, 1980);
- The superordinate goal is an effective strategy for bringing groups together and strengthening intergroup relations in several community initiatives (Association for the Study and Development of Community, 1998; Bach, 1993; Join Together, 1998; Quiroz, 1995);
- In order to be effective, diversity training must be connected to larger organizational needs and business objectives. For instance, effective diversity training programs include the training as part of the organizational strategic plan (Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 1998). Likewise, top managers of 16 'best practice' firms in diversity management had decided to push diversity, not only as a matter of fairness, but also as a perceived source of competitive advantage (Rynes & Rosen, 1995).

Further, the effectiveness of this principle in building successful intergroup relations was first identified in Allport's Contact Theory (Allport, 1954 cited in Lacy, Mason, & Middleton, 1983 and Winborne & Cohen, 1998). The effectiveness of this principle has since been supported by empirical evidence (Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Kahn & Ryen, 1972; Rabbie & de Brey, 1971; Rabbie et al., 1974; Sharan, 1980; Worchel, Andreoli, & Folger, 1977 cited in Winborne & Cohen, 1998; Worchel et al., 1977 cited in Deschamps & Brown, 1983).

However, other studies of real-life or pre-existing groups suggested that the introduction of superordinate goals does not always reduce conflict and/or in-group favoritism (Blake et al., 1964; Brown, 1978; Skevington, 1980 cited in Deschamps & Brown, 1983). Certain conditions must exist in order to facilitate the use of superordinate goals to promote intergroup relations, including:

- Groups must have distinct and clear roles when collaborating in a joint effort to achieve a superordinate goal. The roles should reflect each group's unique strengths. The importance of retaining distinct roles was first identified by the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979 cited in Deschamps & Brown, 1983) which states that "people's social identities are derived from their group memberships and are sustained by making comparisons with other groups" (Deschamps & Brown, 1983, p. 190);
- The superordinate goals must also be important to all participating groups. Therefore, their identification must be demonstrated and not assumed. These findings were supported by studies in controlled and natural settings (Deschamps & Brown, 1983; Tyerman & Spencer, 1983);
- The more important a shared event is to those members involved, the greater the bond among the members, particularly among those who experience a crisis together (Myers, 1962; Wilson & Miller, 1961; Wright, 1943); and
- The common goal must also be challenging, yet achievable (Miller & Harrington, 1992).

<p><b>2. People and organizations representing different groups need to be brought together as equals in terms of power, respect, and importance</b></p>
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Intergroup relations can be strengthened by equal status contact between majority and minority groups in pursuit of common goals (Allport, 1954 cited in Winborne & Cohen, 1998). Successful community efforts have recognized the importance of involving local grassroots leaders and representatives of formal institutions as equals. Grassroots leaders provide important knowledge about their community's needs, while leaders of formal institutions provide linkages to resources. Validation for the importance of this principle include:

- Increasing empirical support indicating that people and organizations must be brought together as equals in order to resolve intergroup conflict (Billig, 1976 cited in Winborne & Cohen, 1998; Cohen, 1972; Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Norvell & Worchel, 1981; Riordan & Ruggiero, 1980; Watson, 1950 cited in Winborne & Cohen, 1998); and
- Successful community efforts that have recognized the importance of involving local grassroots leaders and representatives of formal institutions as equals (Association for the Study and Development of Community, 1998; Join Together, 1998; Quiroz, 1995).

### **3. There needs to be an opportunity for members of groups to get to know one another as individuals**

Research findings have supported the importance of interaction that provides an opportunity for people to get to know one another (Brewer & Miller, 1984; Cook, 1962; Miller, Brewer, & Edwards, 1985 cited in Winborne & Cohen, 1998). By getting to know someone on the individual level, there is less tendency to perceive another group as monolithic and homogenous and allows members of groups to recognize that even though they differ on one social category, they may share a common identity on another dimension. Dialogues that allow for a certain extent of self-disclosure can help create an atmosphere that will be viewed as more trusting, friendly, and warm.

Allowing time and opportunity for people to get to know one another as individuals helps:

- Minimize the salience of social categories. Strategies for reducing the salience of social categories include avoiding situations where only one out-group member is on a team, assigning persons whose social category memberships cross (i.e., members differ on one category yet share a common identity on another dimension), and reducing visual cues or status differences (Miller & Harrington, 1992; Brewer, 1996);
- Permit participants from different backgrounds to interact and begin to work towards common goals, as indicated in several national efforts on intergroup relations that used dialogue as an initial strategy (Du Bois & Hutson, 1997; Flavin-McDonald & McCoy, 1997; President's Initiative on Race, 1998);
- Promote trust, friendliness, and warmth through personalized interaction and self-disclosure, which in turn provides a process for discovering similarities across groups (Dalto, Ajzen, & Kaplan, 1979 cited in Miller & Harrington, 1992; Miller & Harrington, 1992).

### **4. There should be an opportunity to identify similarities between groups**

Research studies have shown that similarity (e.g., customs, beliefs, practices, history, etc.) leads to attraction and helps de-emphasize differences that are related to increased bias. Such research included:

- The similarity-attraction hypothesis, which proposes that perceived similarity leads to attraction. This was supported by a study that asked respondents to rate other groups as similar to or different from their own group on a number of characteristics and then rate representatives of these groups on a measure of social distance. As perceived similarity increased, respondents indicated a greater willingness to associate with other groups (Osbeck, L. M., Moghaddam, F. M., & Perreault, S., 1997). This is especially true when the target group consists of minority group members. This draws into question the “celebration of differences” and other facets of multiculturalism that emphasize the dissimilarity of outgroups;

- The work of Miller and Harrington (1990) (cited in Miller & Harrington, 1992) who found that perceived group differences are related to increased bias or ingroup favoritism and increased similarity between self and outgroup other is related to decreased bias; and
- The work of Stephan, 1987 (cited in Paulus & Nagar, 1987), which demonstrated that positive reactions to contact are facilitated if group members share similar characteristics. Increased contact itself may increase the presumption of similarity, and this presumption may account in part for the positive relationship between attraction and frequency of contact (Paulus & Nagar, 1987).

**5. Groups need to identify each other's assets (e.g., culture, language, history, relations, etc.) and use and exchange them as part of the intergroup process**

Making use of each group's assets in a way that preserves its distinctiveness and strengths, in the context of working with other groups towards a common goal, is effective for bringing groups together (Deschamps & Brown, 1983). Groups must recognize, acknowledge, and appreciate each other's unique and specific cultures, traditions, languages, and history as part of the process to bridge differences and maximize each other's strengths when working together (Join Together, 1998; Quiroz, 1995).

**6. Conflicts need to be identified, respected, and transformed into improved capacity and relations**

Conflict is not managed or resolved, but seen as an opportunity to improve the ability to achieve common goals. An environment that fosters constructive norms for how error, risk, and disagreement are to be handled should be established so that conflicts can be transformed and not merely ignored.

Research about groups, communities, and sustainable reconciliation support the importance of this principle in intergroup relations:

- Conflict transformation and negotiation have improved relations and goal attainment (Mizrahi & Rosenthal, 1993; Quiroz, 1995; Thompson, 1993);
- In effective cooperative learning teams, past mistakes are forgiven and the focus is on how to do it better. People who take risks and fail are encouraged to try again and disagreements are encouraged and worked out rather than avoided or ignored (Miller & Harrington, 1992, p. 209); and
- Conflict transformation addresses the development of a sustainable, constructive, just, and equitable relationship among groups (Lederach, 1997; Fisher, 1994).

## **7. Successfully completed collective action not only improves the communities that groups live in, but also strengthens their relations**

The more positive the experience in relationships, the greater the bond. Successful cooperation increases intergroup attraction because the feelings of satisfaction get generalized to the individuals associated with the positive experience (generalization of affect hypothesis) (Worchel & Norvel, 1980). There also needs to be a sense of completeness to events and activities.

Success facilitates cohesion (Blanchard, Adelman, & Cook, 1975) and any disruptions, such as failure, motivate members to seek an explanation for the failure. Consequently, members of the out-group may serve as a source of blame for the failure and scapegoating is likely to occur (Worchel & Norvel, 1980). If the interaction is ambiguous and the intergroup program tasks are left unresolved, group cohesiveness will be inhibited.

## **8. Relationships must be sustainable to support the process for strengthening intergroup relations**

Frequent contact and cooperation among groups with equal status are critical for fostering and sustaining intergroup relations. Sufficient time must be provided for groups to overcome their initial feelings of anger and prejudice towards one another and develop trust. Relationships must be ongoing in order to effect long term change.

Several research studies have found that:

- The more people interact, the more likely they are to become close (Allan & Allan, 1971; Festinger, 1950; Sherif, White, & Harvey, 1955; Wilson & Miller, 1961);
- *Frequent* contact and cooperation among groups with equal status are critical for fostering intergroup relations (Brewer & Miller, 1984; Cohen, 1972; Cook, 1962; Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Miller, Brewer, & Edwards, 1985; Norvell & Worchel, 1981; Riordan & Ruggiero, 1980; Sherif et al 1961; Watson, 1950);
- It is unlikely that substantive changes can be accomplished through very short, one-shot diversity training programs (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Noe & Ford, 1992) cited in Rynes & Rosen, 1995). Short program may result in more negative outcomes than no training at all (Morrison, 1992 cited in Rynes & Rosen, 1995); and
- Because of its emphasis on bringing socially undesirable opinions or long-held resentments out into the open, diversity training often produces initial feelings of anger and defensiveness (Murray, 1993) that can be very destructive unless sufficient time and counseling are provided to reach some sort of resolution (cited in Rynes & Rosen, 1995).

## **9. There must be institutional support for promoting intergroup relations**

Support from institutions (e.g., local governments, funders, the media, federal government agencies, and intermediary organizations) is instrumental in promoting and facilitating constructive efforts to strengthen intergroup relations. They sanction the effort and can reinforce relationships or divisions among groups. The coordination of such institutions also creates a system that can provide resources, incentives, and education to promote intergroup relations (Chavis, Florin, & Felix, 1992).

These institutions sanction the effort and can reinforce the relationships or divisions among groups. The coordination of such institutions creates an enabling system that can provide resources, incentives, and education to promote and strengthen intergroup relations.

Studies about community and diversity training have demonstrated that:

- Larger institutions play a critical role in supporting activities to build bridges across groups of different ethnicity and socioeconomic status by providing resources and incentives and implementing supportive policies (Join Together, 1998; Keating, 1994; Quiroz, 1995; Scheie et al., 1997; Winborne & Cohen, 1998); and
- Top management must be committed to and supportive of fostering an environment to promote diversity in order for diversity training programs to be effective (Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 1998). For instance, mandatory attendance, especially for top managers, may be particularly, in that it increases the likelihood that top managers will model the desired training outcomes and reinforce them when exhibited by others (Goldstein, 1991; Wiggenhorn, 1990 cited in Rynes & Rosen, 1995; Worchel & Norvel, 1980). This is crucial, since the diversity training literature suggests that the potential benefits of training will not be realized unless trainees return to a supportive environment for applying what they have learned (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Goldstein, 1991; Morrison, 1992).

## **10. To be effective, intergroup strategies need to operate at multiple levels including the individual, relational, and institutional levels.**

This overarching principle explicitly recognizes that effective efforts to strengthen intergroup relations, as described in the principles above, span multiple, mutually compatible levels. For instance, principles 2 and 3 emphasize the importance of bringing together group members as equals, while allowing them to get to know one another as individuals. Principles 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, and 8 describe conditions that promote positive relations between groups. Finally, Principle 9 stresses the importance of the larger institutional context in which individuals and the groups they comprise are embedded.

### 3 APPLYING THE PRINCIPLES

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One source for examples of successful intergroup interventions can be drawn from the diversity training literature. Evidence for the usefulness of training interventions includes the following findings:

- Adler (1990) found that people who were exposed to a ‘rudimentary’ version of cultural diversity training were more likely to recognize the impact of cultural diversity on work behavior and to identify the potential advantages of diversity (cited in Hanover & Cellar, 1998);
- Katz & Ivey (1977) reported that a workshop designed to help white people examine the implications of their own racism significantly changed attitudes and behavior in a positive direction diversity (cited in Hanover & Cellar, 1998);
- Cox (1991) suggested that the Race Relations Competence Workshop (Alderfer & Tucker) resulted in more positive attitudes toward blacks and improved relations among participants of different races (cited in Hanover & Cellar, 1998); and
- Participants who attended a diversity training workshop rated management practices related to diversity as more important and perceived themselves as engaging in such practices more than did a control group (Hanover & Cellar, 1998).

Diversity training is especially likely to be successful when there is a more diverse top management team, high priority for diversity relative to other business issues, top management support, perceived top management beliefs, managerial rewards for supporting diversity, number of other diversity-supportive policies, presence of a diversity manager, conduct of long term post-training evaluations, and mandatory managerial attendance (Rynes & Rosen, 1995).

On the other hand, less favorable outcomes may indicate inadequate attention to factors related to training transfer such as visible top management support for diversity and explicit managerial rewards for improving diversity outcomes. For instance, in a study of 785 human resource professionals, respondents gave very favorable responses to questions about short-term, immediate reactions to diversity training. In contrast, they gave very negative responses to a number of variables that have been suggested as important to training transfer (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Goldstein, 1991; Morrison, 1992; Noe & Ford cited in Rynes & Rosen, 1995).

Unfortunately, much remains unknown about the conditions under which diversity training interventions are maximally effective, due to major limitations in the research base. Furthermore, while the following points refer specifically to diversity training, similar limitations exist with regards to other interventions aimed at improving intergroup relations as well.

The paucity of diversity training evaluation was evident through:

- A review of the EAP literature, 1970-1990, which contains no references to diversity training under the evaluation heading (Lubin, Shanklin, & Sailors, 1992);
- Noe & Ford’s (1992) report which stated that although “training for diversity has increased in popularity, no systematic empirical research regarding the effectiveness of diversity programs has been published” (p. 358 cited in Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 1998);

- A survey by Rynes and Rosen (1995) which found that most reports on diversity training have been conceptual and anecdotal rather than empirical; and
- Abundant evidence that long-term training evaluations are rarely conducted despite longstanding admonitions regarding the importance of evaluation (Burke & Day, 1986; Ralphs & Stephan, 1986; Saari et al., 1988).

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**The Association for the Study and Development of Community** is committed to building the capacity of organizations and institutions to develop the health, economic equity, and social justice of communities. We intend to advance the research, practice, and knowledge of community development, community building, comprehensive community prevention, and collaboration through an integrated approach to providing research and evaluation support, technical assistance, and training.

**Association for the Study and Development of Community**  
**312 S. Frederick Avenue**  
**Gaithersburg, MD 20877**  
**Tel: 301.519.0722**  
**Fax: 301.519.0724**  
**[www.capablecommunity.com](http://www.capablecommunity.com)**  
**[ASDC@capablecommunity.com](mailto:ASDC@capablecommunity.com)**