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Prejudice in Schools: Promotion of an Inclusive Culture and Climate

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Abstract

Public schools represent the pluralism of American society. Unfortunately, many children experience their public school environment as unwelcoming or even violent. Prejudicial attitudes contribute to problematic intergroup relations in public school settings. Furthermore, teachers are often unprepared to work with the diversity of class, linguistic groups, sexual orientation, and other sociocultural backgrounds that make up the student body in their classrooms. This article discusses theories of prejudice and how they inform an understanding of bullying, conflict, and violence in schools. Evidence-based prejudice reduction approaches are presented that teachers and school administrators can use to improve school culture and climate.

Keywords

prejudice, school culture and climate, diversity, bullying, school violence

Introduction

Creating a welcoming culture and climate that enhances learning in public schools is critical in today's diverse and global society. This article seeks to examine the existing literature on prejudice reduction from the perspective of

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school system culture and climate, to better understand how prejudice prevention programs foster pluralistic and inclusive school cultures, and what are the barriers to this achievement. Prejudice is conceptualized as one significant factor, among others, that contributes to the problem of school harassment and bullying. Furthermore, the goals of prejudice reduction are critical for academic success (McKown, 2005). Education about the processes involved in prejudice, particularly for people from privileged groups, is key to interrupt oppressive social structures (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997; Goodman, 2001).

People of color represent nearly one-third of the U.S. population, and projections are that this number will increase to more than half of the total population by the year 2064 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002 a, 2002b). In 2001, 40% of students in U.S. schools were students of color (Banks, 2005). The most recent 2000 U.S. Census report indicates that 20% of the school-age population speaks a non-English language at home (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Teaching children of immigrants whose first language is not English is a challenge to traditional instruction methods. Regarding religion, America is one of the most religiously diverse nations in the world, and the issue of how to address the topic of religion in public schools is hotly debated (The Pew Forum on Religion in Public Life and The First Amendment Center, 2003). On the topic of sexual orientation, an estimated 4 to 10% of the U.S. population is gay or lesbian, with many forming this identity in early youth (Athanases & Larrabee, 2003). The number of children who live with gay or lesbian parents is estimated to range between 1 and 9 million (Stacey & Biblarz, 2001). Despite these significant numbers, most urban, suburban, and rural school districts are embroiled in controversy over sexual orientation issues and struggle with “how to teach the kids about that stuff” (Ciardullo, 2005; Jones, 2007, p. 1). This pluralistic composition of today’s society poses both significant opportunity and challenge for contemporary school culture.

Schools are a microcosm of this diverse society. Children spend an estimated 40-45 hours a week in public school, often more than the waking hours spent at home with family or involvement in community activities. School is where children learn the fundamentals of our educational curriculum. School is also a primary socializing force, providing an opportunity to learn about differences, conflict resolution, and peaceful coexistence. Many teachers and public school administrators, though, are increasingly overwhelmed with the burden of this responsibility. New teachers are unprepared to work with the diversity of classes, linguistic groups, and other cultural backgrounds represented in their classrooms (American Association of Colleges for Teacher

Education, 2002; Marshall, 2001). Many parents need to work long hours and may be unavailable to collaborate with Parent Teacher Associations. Poverty contributes to the challenges for many school environments. Additionally, school violence has become an issue of national concern (Dupper & Meyer-Adams, 2002; Erickson, Mattaini, & McGuire, 2004). Legislative policies require accountability measured in test scores (Heck, 2000), and administrators juggle curriculum innovations to keep up with the current educational and social challenges of running a school system.

Along with providing all children the basic foundations for academic achievement schools are responsible for creating a safe accepting environment in which learning can take place. Some indict public schools with relinquishing their original moral responsibility to infuse virtuous good habits and character development (Ryan & Kilpatrick, 1996). However, it is the transmission of principles of human rights and equity that may be the missing piece. The reality is that many students do not experience school as a welcoming or safe place (Dupper & Meyer-Adams, 2002; Graham & Juvonen, 2002; Slavin & Cooper, 1999). It is within the context of this shortcoming that the question of changing school culture and climate becomes paramount.

A significant number of programs have been developed to promote inclusive multicultural learning environments and reduce school bullying and violence (Anti-Defamation League, 2006; Banks, 2005; Perkins & Mebert, 2005; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2006; Stephan & Vogt, 2004; Twemlow, Fonagy, & Sacco, 2005; Whitted & Dupper, 2005). However, many interventions are not evidence-based, and there are often notable barriers to implementation (Erickson et al., 2004; Stephan, 1999). Furthermore, research on harassment, bullying, and prejudice in schools is often dichotomized into preventive and disciplinary interventions. Causal factors are rarely addressed in studies that examine behavioral and consequence-based interventions, and conversely, research that focuses on preventive conflict resolution or on multicultural education lacks important empirical validation (Bigler & Liben, 1992; Shapiro, Burgoon, Welker, & Clough, 2002; Stephan, 1999).

This article will outline the history of intergroup relations in school settings and theories of prejudice as they relate to the concepts of school culture and climate. Empirical evidence-based approaches to reducing prejudice and harassment, primarily used in urban school settings, will be reviewed to assess their preventive potential for reducing conflict in schools and fostering environments that celebrate differences and promote learning. An in-depth examination of key approaches will be provided. Finally, recommendations will be made for future research and program implementation.

Intergroup Relations in School Settings

The history of public school racial segregation and integration in the United States is beyond the scope of this article; however, the *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruling in 1954 was a seminal event in terms of desegregation designed to achieve educational equity (Zirkel & Cantor, 2004). To this day the outcomes of integrating African American students into primarily White schools are mixed. Initial studies reported "for African Americans desegregation reduced prejudice toward Whites in more cases than it increased prejudice, (38% vs. 24%). . . but for Whites' desegregation increased prejudice toward African Americans in more cases (48%) than it decreased it (16%)" (Stephan, 1999, p. 51). Other studies have indicated that integration has not increased contact and improved relationships among students of color and White children, and that in the culmination of the educational process African American students often perform better in historically all Black colleges and universities (Cokley, 2000; Dickinson, Holifield, Holifield, & Creer, 2001; Ervin, 2001). A number of studies have indicated that integration and contact alone are not enough to foster improved understanding and relationships between African American and White students, and more empirical research is needed to understand the mechanisms underlying intergroup relationships and how to improve them (Dickinson et al., 2001; Echenique & Fryer, 2007).

For other populations, research points to the significant need for prejudice reduction interventions in schools to enhance social and learning environments for children from non-dominant groups. The dropout rate for Latino students is four times as large as that of White students and twice as large as that of African American students (United States Department of Education, 2003). Perceived discrimination is a significant factor impacting ethnic minority and African American student's social and academic status (Brown & Bigler, 2005; Stone & Han, 2005). Gay and lesbian students are subjected to harassment that may lead to violence or even suicide and gay-based harassment has been implicated in school shootings and poor functioning for heterosexual students as well (Congressional Quarterly Press, 2005; Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, 2005; Kimmel & Mahler, 2003; Poteat & Espelage, 2007). Finally, ethnic differences that manifest in power imbalances have been implicated in bullying and harassment of students, which in turn contributes to poor learning, trauma, and potential violence in schools (Graham & Juvonen, 2002).

Other research has indicated that intergroup contact can have significant positive outcomes when certain conditions are met. Pettigrew and Tropp

(2006) conducted a meta-analysis of 713 independent samples from 515 studies, and concluded that intergroup contact does reduce intergroup prejudice. This research, as well as others, has found that fostering equality, cooperative learning, and interdependence between groups, as well as the friendship potential between individuals, can lead to decategorization and recategorization of out-groups, positive changes in attitudes and reduction in prejudice. (Aronson & Patnoe, 1997, Paluck, 2006; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006)

An international study that examined civic education as it relates to diversity and democracy revealed a bias for White European males in textbooks and a lack of attention to diversity within ethnic groups. Although teachers do attempt to address diversity issues they still struggle with " the perpetual cycle" of how to educate students "who come to school with less social capital" (Avery & Hahn, 2004, p. 207). Bullying and harassment in schools based on ethnic or other differences are a problem of serious proportions, and creates a school culture and climate that leads to high rates of school absence, long term consequences for both the victim and perpetrator, and escalation to more serious aggression (Whitted & Dupper, 2005). A recent study indicated that homophobic bullying in schools predicts anxiety, depression, and withdrawal in heterosexual students (Poteat & Espelage, 2007). The social learning that takes place in school settings, combined with the effect of stressful social relationships on students from non-dominant groups and the need for students to learn the skills necessary to work in a pluralistic society, highlights the critical importance of enhancing positive intergroup relationships and school climate and culture (Schofield, 1991).

Applying Prejudice and Intergroup Relations Theories in Schools

Relationships between dominant and non-dominant groups in society, whether based on social identity or competition for limited resources, have long been fraught with tension (Ashmore, Jussim, Wilder, 2001; Prentice & Miller, 1999). For school systems to engage in preventive and intervention measures it is necessary for school personnel involved in policy and teaching to understand the formative processes involved in prejudice, discrimination, and oppression. Theories that explain prejudice range from ethnocentrism to orecticism, competition and social dominance orientation, and authoritarian personality and trait theory (Altemeyer, 1988; Bobo & Hutchings, 1996; Huddy, 2004; Levy, 1999; Miller, 2002; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Sue, 2004; Young-Bruehl, 1996). All these theories attempt to encompass both the psychological and sociological processes involved. Allports' (1954) formative contact theory described favorable conditions that influence interactions among different cultural groups. These 4 conditions were (a) equal status among groups, (b) common goals, (c) intergroup cooperation, and (d) authority sanction for the contact. More recent research has indicated that contact alone is not sufficient to improve intergroup relationships, and that good relationships cannot be left to chance. Individual differences and societal norms have an important influence, and people need time to develop friendships fostered through contact (Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Hence, the need for effective programs that facilitate children's cross-cultural relationships.

Research on prejudice examines the formation of attitudes, stereotypes, bias, and the potential for changing these beliefs (Gaertner, Mann, Murell, & Dovidio, 1989; Stephan, 1999). Stereotypes are defined as generalized traits attributed to a social group, and often develop out of a basic inclination to categorize and synthesize the large amounts of varied information encountered about people in daily life (Gilovich, 1991; Stephan, 1999). They are thought processes that order the world based on expectations, and contain both cognitive and affective components (Young-Bruehl, 1996). Bias, a related concept, refers to a preference for a particular point of view, and is an underlying process involved in prejudice. Researchers have distinguished between implicit and explicit constructs of bias, and some studies indicate promising results that even learned biases, which may not be conscious, could be unlearned (Olson & Fazio, 2003; Rudman, Ashmore, & Gary, 2001). Educational settings for young children are natural opportunities to intervene in the development of these processes to facilitate understanding of cultural differences and foster inclusive and cooperative social and learning environments.

As children develop they begin to cognitively organize their perceptions to make sense of their world. Cognitive developmental theory and social learning theory describe the processes of modeling, classification, reinforcement, and cognition change that contribute to an understanding of how stereotypes may develop (Bigler & Liben, 1992). Children often rely on racial and ethnic information that influence both their own identity development and their social judgments about others (Finney, Ferguson, & Tate, 1997; Houlette, Gaertner, Johnson, Banker, & Riek, 2004). They learn stereotypes and prejudice from the media, peers, and family members. (Bigler, 1999; Tatum, 2004) However, studies have also shown that racial attitudes of children may not always correlate with the attitudes of their parents and friends (Aboud & Doyle, 1996; Branch & Newcombe, 1986). Therefore, a careful examination of the processes underlying prejudice, combined with social and contextual approaches to prevention and intervention, is necessary. Towles-Schwen and Fazio (2001) found that White children who had prejudiced parents were able to overcome their discomfort interacting with African Americans through early positive experiences with this group. Providing children with the opportunity to learn in a nonjudgmental way about those who are different may be a first step toward preventing later prejudice.

Research on prejudice and bias in children has focused on the cognitive and developmental stages of children and is of critical importance in developing approaches for prejudice prevention work. However, it is also important to consider this developmental framework within the environmental and systemic layers in which it is embedded when implementing programs that seek to foster multicultural sensitivity and competence (Rettig, 2002). Pettigrew notes that certain "normative climates" can "poison" attempts to improve intergroup relations (2006, p. 619). It is the application of combined knowledge about the psychology of prejudice within the context of a culture and climate model that holds the promise for improving the educational experience for all children.

School Culture and Climate

A school's culture may not only be exclusionary regarding children's individual differences of religion, race, ability, or sexual orientation, but often times it can be a hostile environment that fosters prejudice and harassment and precludes learning. Establishing an inclusive learning environment means implementing interventions that seek to change school culture and climate (Erickson et al., 2004). The terms culture and climate in the organizational literature refer to two distinct but related constructs. Glisson and James (2002) and Glisson and Green (2006) have defined culture as the norms and expectations that exist in an organization. These shared views and beliefs about behavior may result from underlying individual values and assumptions and exert a powerful influence on psychological well-being. For example, Hoy (1990) has identified three symbol systems that represent the nature of a school's organizational culture: stories, icons, and rituals. Stories are the informal communication and transmission of information that create a socially constructed knowledge of the environment. Icons are visual representations of the school culture, such as flags or logos. Rituals are the ceremonies in which school populations engage, such as school sanctioned activities and scheduled events. Taken together these systems can be targeted for implementation of prejudice reduction interventions.

Attention to the use of language in communication and curriculum can highlight how children are taught about the diversity that exists among themselves and the norms and expectations about how they should accept such differences, and can provide clues to assessing how school culture is shaped (Pearce & Pearce, 2001). Wren has pointed out that the symbolic nature of school curriculum, or the “hidden curriculum”, has a significant effect on school culture (1999, p. 593). Furthermore, the implicit curriculum of schools refers to the underlying messages transmitted in teachers’ behavior about power relationships and their beliefs about students’ ethnic and language diversity and learning styles (Stephan, 1999). Teachers’ assumptions and perceptions of their students are as important as their pedagogical knowledge (Talbert-Johnson, 2006). These underlying messages contribute to positive or negative intergroup relationships within the school environment.

The term climate in organizational literature refers to how an organization’s environment affects an individual’s sense of psychological safety, and the degree to which the environment promotes a sense of accomplishment and competence (Glisson & James, 2002). Climate is viewed as the property of an individual, and in the shared aggregate can be used to describe an organizational climate. Hoy describes school climate as “an enduring quality of school environment that is experienced by participants, affects their behavior, and is based on their collective perceptions” (1990, p. 152). Teachers’ perceptions of their school climate are of critical importance in relation to student outcomes (Khmelkov & Hallinan, 1999). For students, school climate may be viewed as the way school culture affects a child’s sense of safety and acceptance, and consequently is a critical determinant of their ability to focus on the task of learning.

Student perceptions of teachers and the quality of student-teacher interactions are critical aspects of school climate. Teacher caring has been shown to mediate the risk of suicide for lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth (Eisenberg & Resnick, 2006) and the degree to which students with bisexual attractions feel their teachers care about them and treat them fairly has been shown to predict academic and social success (Russell, Seif, & Truong, 2001). In one study 32% of African American adolescents in an urban public school reported they had been graded unfairly or discouraged from academic achievement because of their race (Fisher, Wallace, & Fenton, 2000). Data on perceptions of children of Mexican immigrants indicate a relationship between perceived discrimination by teachers and poor school functioning (Stone & Han, 2005). Teacher bullying of students is a serious issue that has received limited attention (Hyman & Perone, 1998; Whitted & Dupper, 2007). Garcia and Guerra (2004, p. 151) identify “deficit thinking” as related to prejudiced beliefs about culturally diverse communities in urban schools. However, these authors also note that larger societal influences must be acknowledged in the development of personal prejudices and that systemic changes in school culture are necessary.

As there are numerous other factors that influence a child's ability to learn, such as individual differences, health, and family, addressing prejudice and harassment in schools are of critical importance in improving school culture and climate for children who are subjected to these experiences. Efforts to change school culture must be carefully designed and pursued with a participatory process involving school leadership. Glisson and Schoenwald (2005) noted that culture is notoriously difficult to modify, and Hoy (1990) recommends caution when attempting to change dominant culture systems that may represent social defenses against anxiety. It is particularly important to recognize and negotiate issues of power and privilege regarding dominant and non-dominant groups when intervening to seek change. Interventions to tackle this issue in public school settings and outcomes of these efforts will be discussed next.

Improving Intergroup Relationships in Schools

Although significant work has been conducted to change the cultures and climates of higher education institutions to create more culturally sensitive and inclusive environments (Adams et al., 1997; Finkel, Storaasli, Bandele, & Schaefer, 2003; Gurin, Nagda, & Lopez, 2004; Hurtado, 2005; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, & Allen, 1999; Le-Doux & Montalvo, 1999), much less evaluative research has been carried out in primary educational settings. A search on the conceptual and empirical research literature that examines prejudice reduction for school-age children resulted in 41 articles and three books that specifically address this issue. This next section will review best practices on prejudice reduction in schools, including two exemplary programs public schools can employ to reduce prejudice and conflict and create more welcoming environments. Best practices refer to the use of "well tested, standardized interventions," and the further " identification of essential elements in successful school-based prevention programs" (Whitted & Dupper, 2005, p. 169). Such practices require full implementation as they were designed, community support, and substantial financial resources (Whitted & Dupper, 2005).

There is a wide range of evidence-based practices in school settings that seek to reduce prejudice and intergroup conflict among students. Programs have focused on anti-bias education, multicultural education, cooperative learning, moral development, and violence reduction (Banks, 2005; Erickson et al., 2004; Paluck, 2006; Stephan, 1999; Stephan & Vogt, 2004). Interventions focus on ages ranging from elementary school through high school. Most studies address student learning rather than intervening at the teacher, administrative or systemic level, despite existing recommendations for changing organizational culture that include intervening at all levels of a system (Glisson & Schoenwald, 2005; Schorr, 1997).

Banks' (2005) most recent book on multicultural education provides insight into the history of the intergroup education movement, the movement's attempt to smooth the way for societal intercultural integration in the schools, and why the institutionalization of intercultural education has not occurred. The seeds of American democracy and social justice have long struggled to take root amidst xenophobia and nativism, and this tension is still reflected in today's schools (2005). In particular, Banks (2005) describes the fear and ambivalence about those who are different, as reflected in the 1942 decision to remove Japanese students to internment camps and the accompanying dismay of their young classmates who helplessly watched them go. Amidst the waves of immigration and World Wars the multicultural education movement sought to bridge the widening gaps among American cultures by linking schools to their communities. This movement developed social science theories regarding intercultural education and infused them into teacher education and curriculum to promote democratic principles.

Over time evidence-based research and best practices have developed for how to improve intergroup intercultural relationships. Studies on multicultural education for preschool children show that children begin to notice differences about skin color at a very early age, and implementing multicultural curricula results in a decrease in viewing out-groups as homogeneous and an increase in children's ability to see similarities between themselves and other groups (Perkins & Mebert, 2005). In one study, a random assignment design that investigated self-evaluation, group affiliation, and intergroup attitudes of children ages three through nine found that although children evidence strong ethnocentrism and in-group biases, these tendencies are not fixed (Yee & Brown, 1992). Group allegiance may therefore be manipulated to facilitate cross-cultural understanding. McGregor (1993), in a meta-analysis of 26 studies on prejudice reduction, found that role playing and antiracist teaching strategies yielded similar results with significant effect sizes in changing racial prejudice.

Co-operative learning programs engage children from mixed identity groups in tasks designed to foster collaboration and new superordinate group identification. Such programs have been found to achieve beneficial results in terms of facilitating cross-racial friendships and academic achievement (Slavin & Cooper, 1999; Stephan, 1999). Aronson and Patnoe's (1997) Jigsaw Classroom approach has resulted in participants evidencing an increase in perspective-taking and more favorable perceptions of out-groups. Houlette and colleagues (2004) described the facilitation of recategorization and inclusion in the Green Circle Program with 830 first and second grade children in a small urban public school, and reported that this intervention resulted in children being more inclusive in selecting playmates. They acknowledged the question of whether the small effect size found ($r = .37$) is important enough to justify policy and practice implementation, and illustrated how small changes can lead to larger ones.

Moral education programs, such as character education, are based in social learning theory and seek to promote social responsibility and democratic principles. These programs have been shown to produce reductions in disciplinary and behavioral problems, and may achieve improvements regarding intergroup and social relationships as well (Character Counts, 2007).

Three studies on prejudice reduction interventions in a large urban school tested teacher-led discussions about internal attributes, the effects of peer socialization on racial attitudes, and training for students to intervene as bystanders in response to prejudicial racial remarks (Aboud & Fenwick, 1999). Results indicated that adult discussions with children about race that were explicit and developmentally appropriate, as well as peer influences, both reduced levels of prejudice. Another approach also used peer modeling, termed “behavioral journalism,” in a cross-sectional pretest/posttest design with a group of 363 urban high school students (McAlister, Ama, Barroso, Peters, & Kelder, 2000, p. 364). Results of this study indicated the intervention achieved positive changes such as increased tolerance and moral engagement and decreased intended hostile behavior and reports of verbal aggression.

Recent interventions have included educating about racism, oppression, and social justice issues. A project that taught about historical racism resulted in reduced negative attitudes toward African Americans in a sample of 48 elementary school European American children (Hughes, Bigler, & Levy, 2007). Similarly, a multicultural education program on the Holocaust provided to random sample of German and Israeli adolescents produced positive outcomes of significant correlations between knowledge and desire to socialize (Shamai, Yardeni, & Klages, 2004). Spencer and colleagues (2008) implemented an intergroup dialogue and conflict mediation approach with 178 eleventh graders in two multicultural Midwestern high schools. These authors and others note the history of testing intergroup dialogue as a method for prejudice reduction. This project also used an action research approach to engage research, school personnel, and students in implementation and evaluation of the process. Results included increased critical social awareness and new friendships with students with different social identities, students’ belief in the importance of building relationships before stereotyping, increased knowledge of different social identity groups, and increased awareness of prejudice and decreased prejudice. All these outcomes are critical for the creation of inclusive learning environments.

Twemlow and colleagues (2001, 2005) have applied an approach that combines psychodynamic and social systems theory to create peaceful school environments. This method, called "mentalization", is based on attachment theory and attends to power dynamics within relationships (2005, p. 293). The theory posits that an environment that fosters healthy attached relationships is incompatible with one that might allow for interpersonal aggression. In a 2 year randomized controlled study involving 3,600 K-5 students they utilized a systems perspective that included not only the victims and aggressors but bystanders as well. The intervention method included positive climate campaigns, classroom management plans, peer and adult mentorship, physical education, and reflection time, and was compared with traditional school psychiatric consultation and standard school interventions. Results indicated that the experimental condition showed a decrease in peer-reported victimization, aggression, and aggressive bystanding (2005).

Two Highlighted Programs

Two exemplary best practice approaches to prejudice reduction in school settings are cooperative learning programs (Slavin & Cooper, 1999) and character development programs (Schultz, Barr, & Selman, 2001). Slavin and Cooper (1999) provide an extensive analysis of the benefits of cooperative learning programs. These methods address prejudice reduction through the implementation of "small teams of students of varying academic achievement levels employing a variety of learning activities that promote academic success for each team member" (Slavin & Cooper, 1999, p. 648). Heterogeneous groups of students are involved in solving problems and completing tasks together. The promotion of interdependence in these learning activities is assumed to create an environment where students begin to view each other more realistically rather than through stereotypes, recognize and value each other, and work together toward mutually rewarding goals.

Co-operative learning programs have been extensively evaluated and produce well-documented positive effects over time (Slavin & Cooper, 1999). There are a plethora of such methods used in the classroom to create opportunities for students from diverse groups to come together on academic learning tasks and to benefit by developing prosocial attitudes. This approach to fostering cooperative classroom climates builds on Allports' contact theory. Although co-operative learning strategies are not always explicitly implemented to reduce prejudice and may not always measure prejudicial attitude change, results indicate that students who are exposed to this type of learning are more likely to evidence improvement in cross-racial evaluations and to develop cross-racial/ethnic friendships (p. 653).

The *Facing History and Ourselves* curriculum is a character development program implemented across the United States and internationally as well (http://www.facinghistory.org/). This program focuses on educating about social justice issues and improving intergroup relations. The approach combines traditional moral reasoning education with a critical examination of racism, prejudice, anti-semitism and oppression. Goals include "treating other people well, interacting with respect by incorporating others' perspectives in one's relationships" (Schultz et al., 2001, p.4). Using this approach, prejudice reduction is achieved through a social development model that combines individual cognitive processes with social perspective-taking of self and other, which culminates in the development of psychosocial competence and maturity in intergroup relationships (Schultz et al., 2001).

Quantitative and qualitative data analysis outcomes for sample of 346 eighth grade students indicated that girls in the program decreased their racist attitudes and boys decreased their self-reported fighting behavior (Schultz et al., 2001). Additionally, boys in the program evidenced greater relationship maturity, defined as their interpersonal understanding and capacity to reflect on personal meanings of relationships. In particular, this effect was found for boys who had higher reports of fighting behavior. Facing History and Ourselves are being evaluated by a number of different researchers including Dr. Dennis Barr and Dr. Robert Selman at Harvard University. Researchers affiliated with the evaluation of this project employ an important translational research approach that links research to practice.

Discussion and Recommendations

Three primary conclusions and recommendations can be drawn from this review that inform future practice and research in public school settings. First, increased attention must be paid to the constructs of public school culture and climate. Second, changing school culture and climate specifically involves teacher education. Third, future research must improve upon the methodologies used to empirically validate effective prejudice reduction interventions and explore the barriers to implementing such programs (Paluck, 2006). The following section will elaborate on these findings and how schools may reduce prejudice given these findings.

With regard to school culture and climate, there is a wide variety of information available to address religious, racial and culturally based prejudice, harassment and bullying in schools. Therefore, it is critical to consider why effective practices are not more fully utilized in school systems. Institutional resistance to change may reflect the general conservative nature of the dominant American culture and its desire to maintain the status quo. Groups who represent mainstream culture set the norms, are often unaware or in denial of their privilege, and are reluctant to relinquish power (Goodman, 2001). Individual values and traits are entrenched and may be protective mechanisms that have developed over a lifetime. The standards and expectations set by dominant groups, which in the United States are most often White, Christian, middle class and/or heterosexual norms, define school culture and therefore create a sense of invisibility for those who are different, setting the stage for inequality and conflict (2001). Furthermore, as Bennett (2001) notes, textbooks are replete with biases and transformation in curricula is slow to occur.

As previously stated, organizational culture is notoriously difficult to change. Cushner (2004) highlights the barriers to organizational change that school systems face. Factors include failure of past change efforts, lack of funding for even traditional educational needs, and an absence of leadership in the area of cultural competence. Social change may be viewed as a process of punctuated equilibrium in which systems strive to maintain stasis even in the face of provocative student behavior. Community calls for action, skilled leadership and community organizing are necessary (Pyser, 2005).

Creating an inclusive culture requires an inclusive leader, a vision of shared language and values, and a participatory community approach to change (Banks, 2005; Stephan & Vogt, 2004; Zollers, Ramanathan, & Yu, 1999). Multiple ecological approaches must be implemented at all levels of systems to effect changes in culture and climate (Glisson & Schoenwald 2005; McKown, 2005). It is critical that researchers and school staff work collaboratively to transmit knowledge and provide feedback on effectiveness of evidence based practices. Consultants can provide assistance to educators in the areas of community organizing around school inclusion, negotiating relationships among key stakeholders, making changes in staffing and curriculum, individualizing approaches to specific existing school cultures, and program evaluation of outcomes (Roberts, Bell, & Salend, 1991; Stephan & Vogt, 2004). Finally, interveners "must provide adequate psychological safety to insure the organization that the problem indicated by the change agent can be solved without causing a major loss in identity or functioning" (Bargal & Garvin, 2008, p. 105).

Teacher education is the second component of changing school culture and climate. As previously discussed, teachers significantly shape school culture.

A national conference on teacher education resulted in numerous recommendations including increasing the number of teachers of color and providing professional development opportunities that address the cultural and linguistic knowledge necessary to teach in diverse classrooms (Dilworth & Ardila-Rey, 2004). Providing new teachers with mentors who can support their learning about equity and diversity will also further their cultural competence (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005). Professional teacher education about multicultural learning and competence needs to move beyond time limited didactic classes to incorporate a level of critical inquiry, dialogic reflection, and action that ultimately may transform teaching practices and school culture (Bennett, 2001; Jennings & Smith, 2002). Interdisciplinary knowledge of key school culture and climate theories, intergroup relations theories, and best practices in prejudice reduction are necessary components of contemporary teacher education (Table 1).

Future research is the third critical component necessary for change. Such research must improve upon the methodologies used to empirically validate effective prejudice reduction interventions and explore the barriers to implementing such programs (Paluck, 2006). As Bigler (1999) points out, research on prejudice reduction has been limited by significant problems with measurement and design, such as social desirability bias in measurement of attitudes, overly simplistic models, lack of longitudinal studies to establish sustainable effects, and some studies even reporting “troubling effects . . . of increased racial bias among children” (p. 693). Additionally, culturally competent measures of attitudes toward out-groups are not evident in much of the literature. Improved research methods when evaluating interventions in school settings will further explore the fields of both prejudice reduction work and multicultural education.

Despite the problems of prejudice, discrimination and violence that plague society, and by extension school culture and climate, every child represents a renewed opportunity to put into practice what has been learned about promoting positive and productive social relationships. Providing systemic interventions that incorporate principles of equity and human rights at student, teacher and administrative levels may have long-range significant outcomes for curriculum, pedagogy, and students’ safety and learning. The goal of all children succeeding academically may only be reached when each child is respected, supported, and included in the educational process. As Zirkel and Cantor (2004) state, in 1954 people were not asking whether schools would welcome and nurture African American children and adapt the curriculum to be inclusive, but were only starting to open the doors. Today, the doors must not only swing wide open, but all children must be welcomed with acceptance, celebration of differences and acknowledgment of the contributions of diversity, for the benefit of everyone.

Table 1. Reducing Prejudice and Improving Intergroup Relations in Schools

Key Theories	School Culture and Climate Factors	Best Practice Interventions
1. Equal status among groups 2. Cooperation among participants 3. Common goals for participants 4. Intergroup contact sanctioned by authorities 5. Friendship potential 6. Intergroup learning 7. Egalitarian values 8. Multicultural sensitivity and competence	1. Knowledge of organizational culture and climate 2. Change requires provision of adequate psychological safety for organizational members 3. Recognition of the hidden curriculum 4. Importance of teacher/student relationship 5. Inclusive leaders 6. Shared values 7. Participatory community approach	1. Intergroup dialogue (Spencer, Brown, Griffin, & Abdullah, 2008): increased social awareness, conflict reduction skills, and intergroup relations attitudes. 2. Facing History and Ourselves (Schultz, Barr, & Selman, 2001): increase in relationship maturity, decreased racist attitudes, and self reported fighting behavior. 3. Behavioral journalism (McAlister, Ama, Barroso, Peters, & Kelder, 2000): increase in tolerance and moral engagement, reduced hostile behavioral intentions and reports of verbal aggression. 4. Teaching about racism (Aboud & Fenwick, 1999; Hughes, Bigler, & Levy, 2007): reduced racism for whites. 5. Cooperative learning (Aronson & Patnoe, 1997; Houlette et al., 2004; Slavin & Cooper, 1999): more inclusive behavior, increased school performance, empathy, and perspective-taking. 6. Mentalization (Twemlow et al., 2001, 2005): decrease in peer reported victimization, aggression, and aggressive bystanding.

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