

This study shows how groups and individual's attitude and behavior can be modified and controlled.

Study Conducted in 1954 at the University of Oklahoma

Experiment Details: This experiment, which studied group conflict, is considered by most to be outside the lines of what is considered ethically sound.

In 1954 researchers at the University of Oklahoma assigned 22 eleven- and twelve-year-old boys from similar backgrounds into two groups. The two groups were taken to separate areas of a summer camp facility where they were able to bond as social units. The groups were housed in separate cabins and neither group knew of the other's existence for an entire week. The boys bonded with their cabin mates during that time. Once the two groups were allowed to have contact, they showed definite signs of prejudice and hostility toward each other even though they had only been given a very short time to develop their social group. To increase the conflict between the groups, the experimenters had them compete against each other in a series of activities. This created even more hostility and eventually the groups refused to eat in the same room. The final phase of the experiment involved turning the rival groups into friends. The fun activities the experimenters had planned like shooting firecrackers and watching movies did not initially work, so they created teamwork exercises where the two groups were forced to collaborate. At the end of the experiment, the boys decided to ride the same bus home, demonstrating that conflict can be resolved and prejudice overcome through cooperation.

Many critics have compared this study to Golding's *Lord of the Flies* novel as a classic example of prejudice and conflict resolution.

Study Conducted in 1967 at the University of Pennsylvania

Experiment Details: In 1965, Martin Seligman and his colleagues were conducting research on classical conditioning, the process by which an animal or human associates one thing with another. Seligman's experiment involved the ringing of a bell and then the administration of a light shock to a dog. After a number of pairings, the dog reacted to the shock even before it happened: as soon as the dog heard the bell, he reacted as though he'd already been shocked. During the course of this study something unexpected happened. Each dog was placed in a large crate that was divided down the middle with a low fence and the dog could see and jump over the fence easily. The floor on one side of the fence was electrified, but not on the other side of the fence. Seligman placed each dog on the electrified side and administered a light shock. He expected the dog to jump to the non-shocking side of the fence. In an unexpected turn, the dogs simply laid down. The hypothesis was that as the dogs learned from the first part of the experiment that there was nothing they could do to avoid the shocks, they gave up in the second part of the experiment. To prove this hypothesis the experimenters brought in a new set of animals and found that dogs with no history in the experiment would jump over the fence.

This condition was described as **learned helplessness**, where a human or animal does not attempt to get out of a negative situation because the past has **taught them that they are helpless**.