

CHAPTER 7

Group Influence



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CHAPTER OUTLINE

What Is a Group?

Social Facilitation: How Are We Affected by the Presence of Others?

Social Loafing: Do Individuals Exert Less Effort in a Group?

Deindividuation: When Do People Lose Their Sense of Self in Groups?

Group Polarization: Do Groups Intensify Our Opinions?

Groupthink: Do Groups Hinder or Assist Good Decisions?

Leadership: How Do Leaders Shape the Group's Actions?

The Influence of the Minority: How Do Individuals Influence the Group?

One of your authors (Steven) is a runner. He had always wanted to run a “10k” (10 km distance) in less than an hour, but he had never been able to. Five years ago he signed up for a 10k charity race. He trained for three months but never got close to beating his one-hour goal. The day of the race, he completed the 10k in 55 minutes and 56 seconds. How did he manage it? Is it important that during the race he was competing against 100 others while when training he was always alone?

Imagine yourself in front of a crowd. You are preparing to give a speech to a class of 150 students. How do you feel? Is your heart beating fast? Are your palms sweating? Do you feel ill? You might well be suffering from some performance anxiety—you might be afraid of performing badly. Do you think you would feel differently if you were speaking in front of only three friends instead of 150 strangers? Would your performance anxiety go away? When do you think you would perform your best? Do you perform best on your own or when there are other people around you?

At almost every turn, we are involved in groups. Our world contains not only more than 7 billion individuals but almost 200 nation-states, 4 million local communities, 20 million economic organizations, and hundreds of millions of other formal and informal groups—couples having dinner, housemates hanging out, clubs planning activities. How do these groups influence us?

Group interactions often have more dramatic effects. Intellectual university students hang out with other intellectuals, accentuating one another's interests. Deviant youth hang out with other deviant youth, amplifying one another's antisocial tendencies. But how do groups affect attitudes? And what influences lead groups to smart or to foolish decisions?

Individuals influence their groups. As the movie *Twelve Angry Men* opens, 12 wary murder trial jurors file into a jury room. It is a hot day. The tired jurors are close to agreement and eager for a quick verdict convicting a teenage boy of knifing his father. But one maverick refuses to vote for a guilty verdict. As the heated deliberation proceeds, the jurors one by one change their verdict until consensus is reached: “Not guilty.” In real trials, a lone individual seldom sways the entire group. Yet, minorities that sway majorities make history. What helps make a minority—or an effective leader—persuasive?

We will examine these intriguing phenomena of group influence one at a time. But, first things first: What is a group and why do groups exist?

What Is a Group?

We all belong to groups: friends, clubs, teams, etc. But what defines a group? Do we have to know we are in a group to be part of one? These are the types of questions social psychologists ask.

The answer to this question seems self-evident—until several people compare their definitions. Are jogging partners a group? Are airplane passengers a group? Is a group a set of people who identify with one another, who sense they belong together? Is a group those who share common goals and rely on one another? Does a group form when individuals become organized? When their relationships with one another continue over time? These are among the social psychological definitions of a group (McGrath, 1984).

Group dynamics expert Marvin Shaw (1981) argued that all groups have one thing in common: Their members interact. He, therefore, defined a **group** as two or more people who interact with and influence one another. Moreover, suggested Australian National University social psychologist John Turner (1987), groups perceive themselves as “us” in contrast to “them.” A pair of joggers, then, would indeed constitute a group, if they were jogging together. Different groups help us meet different human needs: to affiliate (to belong to and connect with others), to achieve, and to gain a social identity (Johnson et al., 2006).

By Shaw’s definition, students working individually in a computer lab would not be a group. Although physically together, they are more a collection of individuals than an interacting group (though each may be part of a group with dispersed others in an online forum). The distinction between collections of unrelated individuals in a computer lab and the more influential group behaviour among interacting individuals sometimes blurs. People who are merely in one another’s presence do sometimes influence one another. At a hockey game, they may perceive themselves as “us” fans in contrast with “them” (people who root for the other team).

In this chapter, we consider three examples of such collective influence: social facilitation, social loafing, and deindividuation. These three phenomena can occur with minimal interaction (in what we call “minimal group situations”), but they also influence people’s behaviour while interacting. Then we will consider four examples of social influence in interacting groups: group polarization, groupthink, leadership, and minority influence.

Social Facilitation: How Are We Affected by the Presence of Others?

Are we affected by the mere presence of another person? Would the mere presence of others affect a person’s jogging, eating, ice skating, or exam performance?

The Mere Presence of Others

“Mere presence” means that the people are not competing, do not reward or punish, and in fact do nothing except be present as a passive audience or as **co-actors**. More than a century ago, Norman Triplett (1898), a psychologist interested in bicycle racing, noticed that cyclists’ times were faster when racing together than when racing alone against the clock (maybe that’s why Steve performed best in his 10k race?). Triplett conducted one of social psychology’s early laboratory experiments. Children told to wind string on a fishing reel as rapidly as possible wound faster when they worked with co-actors than when they worked alone.

A modern reanalysis of Triplett’s data revealed that the difference did not reach statistical significance (Stroebe, 2012; Strube, 2005). But ensuing experiments found that the presence of others improves the speed with which people do simple multiplication problems and cross out designated letters. It also improves the accuracy with which people perform simple motor tasks, such as keeping a metal stick in contact with a dime-sized disc on a moving turntable (F. H. Allport, 1920; Dashiell, 1930; Travis, 1925). This **social facilitation** effect also occurs with animals. In the presence of others of their species, ants excavate more sand, chickens eat more grain, and sexually active rat pairs mate more often (Bayer, 1929; Chen, 1937; Larsson, 1956).

More recently, researchers have found the presence of others even makes us better at recognizing faces (e.g., Garcia-Marques et al., 2015). And people do not even need to be physically

group Two or more people who, for longer than a few moments, interact with and influence one another and perceive one another as “us.”

co-actors A group of people working simultaneously and individually on a noncompetitive task.

social facilitation (1) *Original meaning*: the tendency of people to perform simple or well-learned tasks better when others are present. (2) *Current meaning*: the strengthening of dominant (prevalent, likely) responses owing to the presence of others.

Activity: How Does the Presence of Others Affect You?

On a scale of 1 to 10, **where 1 is poor and 10 is excellent**, how good are you at:

Playing an instrument _____ Driving a car _____

Skateboarding _____ Snowboarding _____

Public speaking _____ Running _____

Now, *imagine you have an audience* (e.g., speaking in front of a group of strangers, driving with your mother, running in a race). On the same rating scale, **where 1 is poor and 10 is excellent**, how good are you at:

Playing an instrument _____ Driving a car _____

Skateboarding _____ Snowboarding _____

Public speaking _____ Running _____

Did your ratings change? If you are like most people, the presence of an audience should improve your performance on tasks you are good at (e.g., driving, running) but hinder your performance when the task is difficult (e.g., public speaking, playing a musical instrument). How does this match with your own experience?

present for the facilitation to occur; simply knowing you are in an online “group” enhances performance on simple tasks (e.g., Liu & Yu, 2018).

But wait: Other studies revealed that on some tasks the presence of others hinders performance. In the presence of others, cockroaches, parakeets, and green finches learn mazes more slowly (Allee & Masure, 1936; Gates & Allee, 1933; Klopfer, 1958). This disruptive effect also occurs with people. The presence of others diminishes efficiency at learning nonsense syllables, completing a maze, and performing complex multiplication problems (Dashiehl, 1930; Pessin, 1933; Pessin & Husband, 1933). We can even be worse at learning new faces (Hills et al., 2019).

Saying that the presence of others sometimes facilitates performance and sometimes hinders it is about as satisfying as a Nova Scotia weather forecast—



Social facilitation: The motivating presence of a co-actor or audience strengthens well-learned responses.

Source: ©Ryan McVay/Getty Images.

“It might be sunny but then again it might rain.” By 1940, research activity in this area had ground to a halt. It lay dormant for 25 years until awakened by the touch of a new idea.

Social psychologist Robert Zajonc (pronounced *Zyence*; rhymes with *science*) wondered whether these seemingly contradictory findings could be reconciled. As often happens at creative moments in science, Zajonc (1965) used one field of research to illuminate another. The illumination came from a well-established principle in experimental psychology: Arousal enhances whatever response tendency is dominant. Increased arousal enhances performance on easy tasks for which the most likely—“dominant”—response is correct. People solve easy anagrams, such as *akec*, fastest when they are anxious. On complex tasks, for which the correct answer is not dominant, increased arousal promotes incorrect responding. On harder anagrams, such as *theloacco*, people do worse when anxious.

Could this principle solve the mystery of social facilitation? It seemed reasonable to assume that others’ presence will arouse or energize people (Mullen, Bryant, & Driskell, 1997); most of us can recall feeling more tense or excited before an audience. If social arousal facilitates dominant responses, it should boost performance on easy tasks and hurt performance on difficult tasks.

*“Mere social contact
begets . . . a stimulation of the
animal spirits that heightens
the efficiency of each individual
workman.”*

Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*, 1867

With that explanation, confusing results made sense. Winding fishing reels, doing simple multiplication problems, and eating were all easy tasks for which the responses were well-learned or naturally dominant. Sure enough, having others around boosted performance. Learning new material, doing a maze, and solving complex math problems were more difficult tasks for which the correct responses were initially less probable. In these cases, the presence of others increased the number of incorrect responses on these tasks. The same general rule—arousal facilitates dominant responses—worked in both cases (see Figure 7–1). Suddenly, what had looked like contradictory results no longer seemed contradictory.

Zajonc’s solution, so simple and elegant, left other social psychologists thinking what Thomas H. Huxley thought after first reading Darwin’s *Origin of the Species*: “How extremely stupid not to have thought of that!” (Huxley, 1900, p. 189). It seemed obvious—once Zajonc had pointed it out. Perhaps, however, the pieces appeared to merge so neatly only because we viewed them through the spectacles of hindsight. Would the solution survive direct experimental tests?

After almost 300 studies, conducted with the help of more than 25 000 volunteers, the solution has indeed survived (Bond & Titus, 1983; Guerin, 1993, 1999). Social arousal facilitates dominant responses, whether right or wrong. For example, Peter Hunt and Joseph Hillery (1973) found that in the presence of others, students took less time to learn a simple maze and more time to learn a complex one (just as the cockroaches do!). And James Michaels and his collaborators (1982) found that good pool players (who had

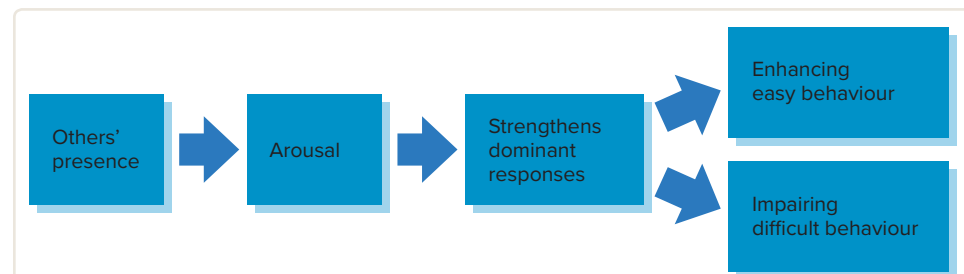


FIGURE 7–1 THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL AROUSAL.

Robert Zajonc reconciled apparently conflicting findings by proposing that arousal from others’ presence strengthens dominant responses (the correct responses only on easy or well-learned tasks).

TABLE 7-1 Home Advantage in Major Team Sports.		
Sport	Games Studied	Winning Percentage
Baseball	135 665	54.3%
Football	2 592	57.3
Hockey	4 322	61.1
Basketball	13 596	64.4
Soccer	37 202	69.0

made 71 percent of their shots while being unobtrusively observed) did even better (80 percent) when four observers came up to watch them play. Poor shooters (who had previously averaged 36 percent) did even worse (25 percent) when closely observed. Likewise, novice drivers more often fail driving tests when tested with another to-be-tested person in the car rather than alone (Rosenbloom et al., 2007).

Athletes, actors, and musicians perform well-practised skills, which helps explain why they often perform best when energized by the responses of a supportive audience. Studies of more than 80 000 university and professional athletic events in Canada, the United States, and Great Britain revealed that home teams win about six in 10 games (somewhat fewer for baseball and football, somewhat more for basketball and soccer) (see Table 7-1).

In the last several Olympic games, home teams did much better than they typically have in previous games. The Chinese dominance at Beijing's 2008 Summer Olympics was a frequent topic of discussion; Canada won more gold medals at the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver than any Canadian team has ever won. In 2012, the British in London did the best they had in an Olympics since 1920. The Russians won the most medals during the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics. In 2016, host country Brazil won the most medals (and gold medals) it had ever won at an Olympics; and South Korea did the same in Seoul in 2018. At the time of this writing, the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo have been postponed to 2021 due to COVID-19. It is unclear what impact this will have on the games, or on individual country performance.

Yet some research by Stephen Bray and his colleagues at the University of Lethbridge (see Bray et al., 2003) suggests that home-field advantage is not always an advantage. In this research the authors found that home field was more of an advantage for good teams than for poorly performing teams. More specifically, they found that British professional soccer teams were more likely to tie their home games if they were poorly performing teams. Higher-quality teams were less likely to tie home games. The home advantage may, however, also stem from the players' familiarity with their home environment, less travel fatigue, feelings of dominance derived from territorial control, or increased team identity when cheered by fans (Zillmann & Paulus, 1993; Allen & Jones, 2014; van de Ven, 2011; Unkelbach & Memmert, 2010).

“Discovery consists of seeing what everybody has seen and thinking what nobody has thought.”

Albert von Szent-Györgyi,
The Scientist Speculates, 1962

Crowding: The Presence of Many Others

So people do respond to the mere presence of others. But does the presence of observers always arouse people? In times of stress, a comrade can be comforting. Nevertheless, with others present, people perspire more, breathe faster, tense their muscles more, and have higher blood pressure and a faster heart rate (Geen & Gange, 1983; Moore & Baron, 1983). Even a supportive audience may elicit poorer performance on challenging tasks (Butler & Baumeister, 1998). Having your family at your first piano recital likely won't boost your performance.



A good house is a full house, as James Maas's Cornell University introductory psychology students experienced in this 2000-seat auditorium. If the class had 100 students meeting in this large space, it would feel much less energized.

Source: ©Mike Okoniewski.

"Heightened arousal in crowded homes also tends to increase stress. Crowding produces less distress in homes divided into many spaces, however, enabling people to withdraw in privacy."

Evans, Lepore, & Schroeder (1996)

The effect of others' presence increases with their number (Jackson & Latané, 1981; Knowles, 1983). Sometimes, the arousal and self-conscious attention created by a large audience interferes even with well-learned, automatic behaviours, such as speaking. Given extreme pressure, we're vulnerable to "choking." Stutterers tend to stutter more in front of larger audiences than when speaking to just one or two people (Mullen, 1986b). Even professional golfers feel the effects—scores on the final day of four-day tournaments tend to be worse than those on the previous day (Wells & Skowronski, 2012).

Being in a crowd also intensifies positive or negative reactions. When they sit

close together, friendly people are liked even more, and unfriendly people are disliked even more (Schiffenbauer & Schiavo, 1976; Storms & Thomas, 1977). In experiments with Columbia University students and with Ontario Science Centre visitors, Jonathan Freedman and his co-workers (1979, 1980) had an accomplice listen to a humorous tape or watch a movie with other participants. When they all sat close together, the accomplice could more readily induce them to laugh and clap. As theatre directors and sports fans know, and as researchers have confirmed, a "good house" is a full house (Agnew & Carron, 1994; Aiello, Thompson, & Brodzinsky, 1983; Worchel & Brown, 1984).

Perhaps you've noticed that a class of 35 students feels warmer and livelier in a room that seats just 35 than when spread around a room that seats 100. When others are close by, we are more likely to notice and join in their laughter or clapping. But crowding also enhances arousal, as Gary Evans (1979) found. He tested 10-person groups in two rooms: with dimensions of 7 metres by 10 metres or 3 metres by 4 metres. Compared to those in the large room, those who were densely packed had higher pulse rates and blood pressure (indicating arousal). On difficult tasks, they made more errors, an effect of crowding replicated by Dinesh Nagar and Janak Pandey (1987) with university students in India. Crowding, then, has a similar effect to being observed by a crowd: It enhances arousal, which facilitates dominant responses.

Why Are We Aroused in the Presence of Others?

What you do well, you will be energized to do best in front of others (unless you become hyper-aroused and self-conscious). What you find difficult may seem impossible in the same circumstances. What is it about other people that creates arousal? There is evidence to support three possible factors (Aiello & Douthitt, 2001; Feinberg & Aiello, 2006): evaluation apprehension, distraction, and mere presence.

Evaluation apprehension

Nickolas Cottrell surmised that observers make us apprehensive because we wonder how they are evaluating us. To test whether **evaluation apprehension** exists, Cottrell and his associates (1968) examined social facilitation for the pronunciation of nonsense syllables and well-learned, easy-to-pronounce syllables. In this "mere presence" condition, they blindfolded observers, supposedly in preparation for a perception experiment. In contrast to the effect of the watching audience, the mere presence of these blindfolded people did not boost well-practised responses.

evaluation apprehension Concern for how others are evaluating us.

Other experiments confirmed Cottrell's conclusion: The enhancement of dominant responses is strongest when people think they are being evaluated. In one experiment, joggers on a jogging path sped up as they came upon a woman seated on the grass—if she was facing them rather than sitting with her back turned (Worringham & Messick, 1983).

The self-consciousness we feel when being evaluated can also interfere with behaviours that we perform best automatically (Mullen & Baumeister, 1987). If self-conscious basketball players analyze their body movements while shooting critical free throws, they are more likely to miss.

Driven by distraction

Glenn Sanders, Robert Baron, and Danny Moore (1978; Baron, 1986) carried evaluation apprehension a step further. They theorized that when people wonder how co-actors are doing or how an audience is reacting, they get distracted. This *conflict* between paying attention to others and paying attention to the task overloads our cognitive system, causing arousal. We are “driven by distraction.” This arousal comes not just from the presence of another person but even from a non-human distraction, such as bursts of light (Sanders, 1981a, 1981b).

Mere presence

Zajonc, however, believed that the mere presence of others produces some arousal even without evaluation apprehension or arousing distraction. Recall that facilitation effects also occur with non-human creatures, such as cockroaches. This finding hints at an innate social arousal mechanism common to much of the zoological world. (Animals probably are not consciously worrying about how other animals are evaluating them.) At the human level, most runners are energized when running with someone else, even one who neither competes nor evaluates. And university rowing team members, perhaps aided by an endorphin boost from the communal activity, tolerate twice as much pain after rowing together rather than solo (E. Cohen et al., 2009).

This is a good time to remind ourselves that a good theory is scientific shorthand: It simplifies and summarizes a variety of observations. Social facilitation theory does this well. It is a simple summary of many research findings. A good theory also offers clear predictions that (1) help confirm or modify the theory, (2) guide new exploration, and (3) suggest practical application. Social facilitation theory has definitely generated the first two types of prediction: (1) The basics of the theory (that the presence of others is arousing and that this social arousal enhances dominant responses) have been confirmed, and (2) the theory has brought new life to a long-dormant field of research. Are there (3) some practical applications? We can make some educated guesses. Many new office buildings have replaced private offices with large, open areas divided by low partitions. Might the resulting awareness of others' presence help boost the performance of well-learned tasks but disrupt creative thinking on complex tasks? Can you think of other possible applications?

Social Loafing: Do Individuals Exert Less Effort in a Group?

In a team tug of war, will eight people on a side exert as much force as the sum of their best efforts in individual tugs of war? If not, why not? What level of individual effort can we expect from members of work groups?

Think about the last time you worked on a group project. (Many of you may be doing one right now!) Have you ever been in a group where one person was not pulling their weight? Have you ever been that person, slacking off a bit because you know you can get away with it? We all do it, under certain conditions. This can be particularly frustrating when a person

who has done little or no work will get the same credit as those who did more work. What can you do in these situations to make that person work harder? Does the culture you come from make a difference?

Social facilitation usually occurs when people work toward individual goals and when their efforts, whether winding fishing reels or solving math problems, can be individually evaluated. These situations parallel some everyday work situations—not those where people cooperatively pool their efforts toward a common goal but those where individuals are not accountable for their efforts. A team tug of war provides one such example. Organizational fundraising—pooling candy-sale proceeds to pay for the class trip—provides another. So does a class project where all get the same grade. On such “additive tasks”—tasks where the group’s achievement depends on the sum of the individual efforts—will team spirit boost productivity? Will bricklayers lay bricks faster when working as a team than when working alone? One way to attack such questions is with laboratory simulations.

Many Hands Make Light Work

Nearly a century ago, French engineer Max Ringelmann (reported by Kravitz & Martin, 1986) found that the collective effort of tug-of-war teams was but half the sum of the individual efforts. Contrary to the common notion that “in unity there is strength,” this suggested that group members may actually be less motivated when performing additive tasks. Maybe, though, poor performance stemmed from poor coordination—people pulling a rope in slightly different directions at slightly different times. A group of researchers led by Alan Ingham (1974) cleverly eliminated this problem by making individuals think others were pulling with them, when in fact they were pulling alone. Blindfolded participants who were assigned the first position in the apparatus shown in Figure 7–2 and told to “pull as hard as you can” pulled 18 percent harder when they knew they were pulling alone than when they believed that behind them two to five people were also pulling. While completing his PhD at Carleton University, Frederick Lichacz replicated the original Ringelmann study and added a couple of other twists (see Lichacz & Partington, 1996).

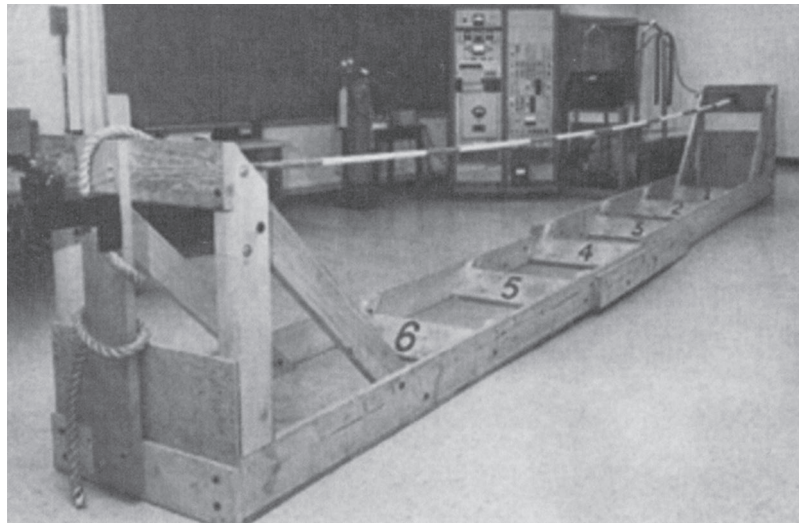


FIGURE 7–2 THE ROPE-PULLING APPARATUS.

People in the first position pulled less hard when they thought people behind them were also pulling.

Source: Alan G. Ingham.

He found that giving feedback to the participants on their performance was effective at increasing their individual efforts. In addition, he found that if people had experience with the task, they exerted a greater effort than if the task was a novel one for them.

Researchers Bibb Latané, Kipling Williams, and Stephen Harkins (1979; Harkins, Latané, & Williams, 1980) kept their ears open for other ways to investigate this phenomenon, which they labelled **social loafing**. They observed that the noise produced by six people shouting or clapping “as loud as you can” was less than three times that produced by one person alone. Like the tug-of-war task, however, noisemaking is vulnerable to group inefficiency. So Latané and his associates followed Ingham’s example by leading their participants to believe that others were shouting or clapping with them, when in fact they were doing so alone.

Their method was to blindfold six people, seat them in a semicircle, and have them put on headphones, over which they were blasted with the sound of people shouting or clapping. People could not hear their own shouting or clapping, much less that of others. On various trials, they were instructed to shout or clap either alone or along with the group. People who were told about this experiment guessed that the participants would shout louder when with others because they would be less inhibited (Harkins, 1981). The actual result? Social loafing. When the participants believed five others were also either shouting or clapping, they produced one-third less noise than when they thought they were alone. Social loafing occurred even when the participants were high school cheerleaders who believed themselves to be cheering together rather than alone (Hardy & Latané, 1986).

social loafing The tendency for people to exert less effort when they pool their efforts toward a common goal than when they are individually accountable.

free-ride Benefiting from the group, but giving little in return.

Curiously, those who clapped both alone and in groups did not view themselves as loafing; they perceived themselves as clapping the same in both situations. This parallels what happens when students work on group projects for a shared grade. Williams reports that all agree that loafing occurs—but no one admits to doing the loafing.

John Sweeney (1973), a political scientist interested in the policy implications of social loafing, obtained similar results. Students pumped exercise bicycles more energetically (as measured by electrical output) when they knew they were being individually monitored than when they thought their output was being pooled with that of other riders. In the group condition, people were tempted to **free-ride** on the group effort.

In this and some 160 other studies (Karau & Williams, 1993, 1997; Figure 7–3), we see a twist on one psychological force that makes for social facilitation: evaluation apprehension. In the social loafing experiments, individuals believe they are evaluated only when they act alone. The group situation (rope pulling, shouting, and so forth) decreases evaluation apprehension. When people are not accountable and cannot evaluate their own efforts, responsibility is diffused across all group members (Harkins & Jackson, 1985; Kerr & Bruun, 1981). By contrast, the social facilitation experiments increased exposure to evaluation. When made the centre of attention, people self-consciously monitor their behaviour (Mullen & Baumeister, 1987). So, when being observed increases evaluation concerns, social facilitation occurs; when being lost in a crowd decreases evaluation concerns, social loafing occurs (Figure 7–4).

To motivate group members, one strategy is to make individual performance identifiable. Some football coaches do this by filming and evaluating each player individually. Whether in a group or not, people exert more effort when their outputs are individually identifiable: University swim team members swim faster in intrasquad relay races when someone monitors and announces their individual times (Williams et al., 1989).

Social Loafing in Everyday Life

How widespread is social loafing? In the laboratory, the phenomenon occurs not only among people who are pulling ropes, cycling, shouting, and clapping but also among those

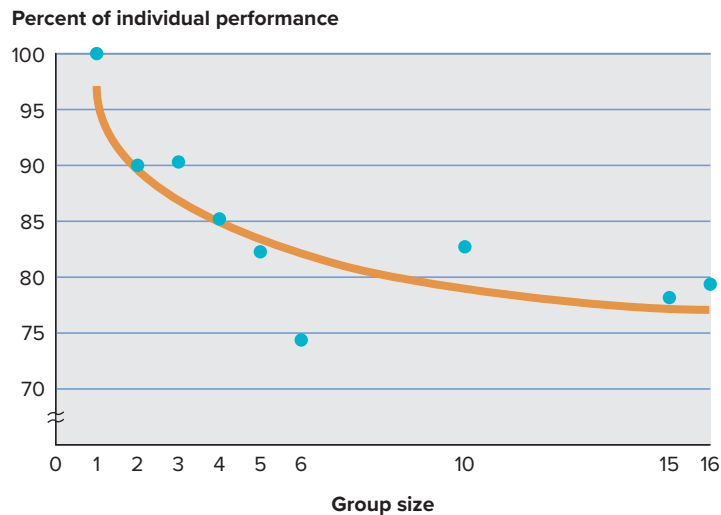


FIGURE 7-3 EFFORT DECREASES AS GROUP SIZE INCREASES.

A statistical digest of 49 studies, involving more than 4000 participants, revealed that effort decreases (loafing increases) as the size of the group increases. Each dot represents the aggregate data from one of these studies.

who are pumping water or air, evaluating poems or editorials, producing ideas, typing, and detecting signals. Do these results generalize to everyday worker productivity?

In one small experiment, assembly-line workers produced 16 percent more product when their individual output was identified, even though they knew their pay would not be affected (Faulkner & Williams, 1996). And consider: A key job in a pickle factory is picking the right-size dill-pickle halves off the conveyor belt and stuffing them in jars.

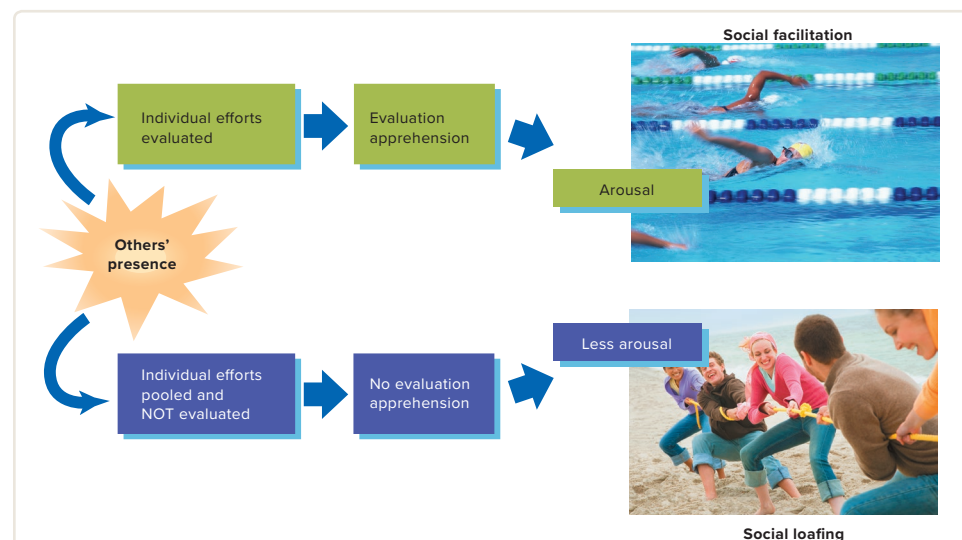


FIGURE 7-4 SOCIAL FACILITATION OR SOCIAL LOAFING?

When individuals cannot be evaluated or held accountable, loafing becomes more likely. An individual swimmer is evaluated on ability to win the race. In tug of war, no single person on the team is held accountable, so any one member might relax or loaf.

Photo source: (top): ©imagenavi/Getty Images; (bottom): ©Thinkstock Images/Getty Images.

Unfortunately, workers are tempted to stuff any size pickle in because their output is not identifiable. (The jars go into a common hopper before reaching the quality-control section.) Williams, Harkins, and Latané (1981, p. 311) noted that research on social loafing suggests “making individual production identifiable, and raises the question: ‘How many pickles could a pickle packer pack if pickle packers were only paid for properly packed pickles?’”

Researchers have also found evidence of social loafing in varied cultures, particularly by assessing agricultural output in formerly communist countries. On their collective farms under communism, Russian peasants worked one field one day, another field the next, with little direct responsibility for any given plot. For their own use, they were given small private plots. One analysis found that the private plots occupied 1 percent of the agricultural land yet produced 27 percent of the Soviet farm output (H. Smith, 1976). In communist Hungary, private plots accounted for 13 percent of the farmland but produced one-third of the output (Spivak, 1979). When China began allowing farmers to sell food grown in excess of that owed to the state, food production jumped 8 percent per year—2.5 times the annual increase in the preceding 26 years (Church, 1986). In an effort to tie rewards to productive effort, today’s Russia has “decollectivized” many of its farms (Kramer, 2008).

What about collectivist cultures under non-communist regimes? Latané and his co-researchers (Gabrenya et al., 1985) repeated their sound-production experiments in Japan, Thailand, Taiwan, India, and Malaysia. Their findings? Social loafing was evident in all of those countries, too. Seventeen later studies in Asia revealed that people in collectivist cultures do, however, exhibit less social loafing than do people in individualist cultures (Karau & Williams, 1993; Kugihara, 1999). As we noted in Chapter 2, loyalty to family and work groups is strong in collectivist cultures. Likewise, women tend to be less individualistic than men—and to exhibit less social loafing.

In North America, workers who do not pay dues or volunteer time to their unions or professional associations nevertheless are usually happy to accept the benefits those organizations provide. So, too, are public television viewers who don’t respond to their station’s fund drives. This hints at another possible explanation of social loafing: When rewards are divided equally, regardless of how much one contributes to the group, any individual gets more reward per unit of effort by free-riding on the group. So people may be motivated to slack off when their efforts are not individually monitored and rewarded. Situations that welcome free-riders can, therefore, be, in the words of one commune member, a “paradise for parasites.”

But surely collective effort does not always lead to slacking off. Sometimes, the goal is so compelling and maximum output from everyone is so essential that team spirit maintains or intensifies effort. In an Olympic crew race, will the individual rowers in a four-person crew pull their oars with less effort than those in a one- or two-person crew?

The evidence assures us they will not. People in groups loaf less when the task is challenging, appealing, or involving (Karau & Williams, 1993). On challenging tasks, people may perceive their efforts as indispensable (Harkins & Petty, 1982; Kerr, 1983; Kerr & Bruun, 1983). When people see others in their group as unreliable or as unable to contribute much, they work harder (Plaks & Higgins, 2000; Williams & Karau, 1991). But in many situations, so do less capable individuals as they strive to keep up with others’ greater productivity (Weber & Hertel, 2007). Adding incentives or challenging a group to strive for



People usually give reduced effort when working in a group; but when group members are highly committed to one another and to the success of the group—like these rowers for the Canadian national team—such social loafing may not occur.

Source: The Canadian Press/Dave Chidley.

certain standards also promotes collective effort (Harkins & Szymanski, 1989; Shepperd & Wright, 1989). Group members will work hard when convinced that high effort will bring rewards (Shepperd & Taylor, 1999), particularly for those who are high in achievement motivation (Hilkenmeier, 2018). Swimmers perform their best when swimming the final legs of relay races (Hüffmeier et al., 2012). Mihelič and Culiberg (2019) found that business students who engaged in mindfulness were less likely to social loaf.

Groups also loaf less when their members are friends or are identified with or indispensable to their group (Davis & Greenlees, 1992; Gockel et al., 2008; Karau & Williams, 1997; Worchel, Jenner, & Hebl, 1998). Even just expecting to interact with someone again serves to increase efforts on team projects (Groenenboom, Wilke, & Wit, 2001). Students who are more similar are also less likely to social loaf when working on a project together (Harding, 2018). Collaborate on a class project with others whom you will be seeing often, and you will probably feel more motivated than you would if you never expected to see them again. Cohesiveness intensifies effort.

These findings parallel those from studies of everyday work groups. When groups are given challenging objectives, when they are rewarded for group success, and when there is a spirit of commitment to the “team,” group members work hard (Hackman, 1986). Keeping work groups small can also help members believe that their contributions are indispensable (Comer, 1995). Social loafing is common when group members work without individual accountability; so it would seem that many hands need not always make light work.

Deindividuation: When Do People Lose Their Sense of Self in Groups?

Group situations may cause people to lose self-awareness, with resulting loss of individuality and self-restraint. What circumstances trigger such “deindividuation”?

The suicide attempt and subsequent death of Cole Harbour District High School student Rehtaeh Parsons led national and international news in the spring of 2013. In November of 2011, Rehtaeh, then 15, was drinking at a party and while intoxicated was gang-raped by four other teenagers. The assault was photographed, and photos of the event were widely distributed on Facebook. Rehtaeh was bullied and teased and was repeatedly sent messages online asking for sex. Though the rape was reported to police, no charges were laid until after her death 17 months later. Ultimately, two of the teenagers who posted photos of the rape were charged with creating and distributing child pornography. Sadly, this is only one of many stories like this that have unfolded across Canada and the world over the last 20 years. A question that people asked themselves was this: “How could these kids have done this?” Would they have committed the same crime if they had been on their own, or did being in the group influence their behaviour? In this case, was distributing the photos easier because it could be done essentially anonymously, online?

Doing Together What We Would Not Do Alone

Social facilitation experiments show that groups can arouse people, and social loafing experiments show that groups can diffuse responsibility. When arousal and diffused responsibility combine and normal inhibitions diminish, the results may be startling. Acts may range from a mild lessening of restraint (throwing food in the dining hall, snarling at a referee, screaming during a rock concert) to impulsive self-gratification (group vandalism, orgies, thefts) to destructive social explosions (police brutality, riots, mass suicide).

These unrestrained behaviours have something in common: They are somehow provoked by the power of a group. Groups can generate a sense of excitement, of being caught up in something bigger than one's self. It is hard to imagine a single rock fan screaming deliriously at a private rock concert or a single sports fan setting multiple cars on fire after a championship win. In certain kinds of group situations, people are more likely to abandon normal restraints, to lose their sense of individual responsibility—a state that Leon Festinger, Albert Pepitone, and Theodore Newcomb (1952) labelled **deindividuation**. What circumstances elicit this psychological state?



Prompted by group influence, an anarchist vandalized a police cruiser on Bay Street in Toronto before setting it on fire, Saturday, June 26, 2010.

Source: The Globe and Mail-Kevin Van Paassen/The Canadian Press.

Group size

A group has the power not only to arouse its members but also to render them unidentifiable. The snarling crowd hides the snarling hockey fan. A mob enables its members to believe they will not be prosecuted; they perceive the action as the group's. Rioters, made faceless by the mob, are freed to loot. Why does this happen? Perfectly normal and respectable people can find themselves involved in and participating in rioting. Indeed, one of the authors' friends—now a tenured full professor at a Canadian university—actually participated in a Toronto riot that occurred after the Blue Jays won the World Series.

Interestingly, this seems to occur even when people are identifiable and will be prosecuted. In the riots that ensued after the Vancouver Canucks lost the Stanley Cup in 2011, people acted as though they would not be identified and prosecuted even though several people were. In an analysis of 21 instances in which crowds were present as someone threatened to jump from a building or bridge, Leon Mann (1981) found that when the crowd was small and exposed by daylight, people usually did not try to bait the person. But when a large crowd or the cover of night gave people anonymity, the crowd usually baited and jeered.

From sports crowds to rioters, evaluation apprehension plummets. And because “everyone is doing it,” all can attribute their behaviour to the situation rather than to their own choices.

Physical anonymity

How can we be sure that the effect of crowds means greater anonymity? We can't. But we can experiment with anonymity to see if it actually lessens inhibitions. Philip Zimbardo (1970, 2002) got the idea for such an experiment from his undergraduate students, who questioned how good boys in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* could so suddenly become monsters after painting their faces. To experiment with such anonymity, he dressed women in identical white coats and hoods, rather like Ku Klux Klan members (Figure 7–5). Asked to deliver electric shocks to a woman, anonymous hooded women pressed the shock button twice as long as did women who were visible and wearing large name tags.

The Internet offers similar anonymity. Indeed, the anonymity offered by social media has been observed to foster higher levels of hostile, uninhibited “flaming” behaviour than observed in face-to-face conversations (Douglas & McGarty, 2001; Bae, 2016). Internet

deindividuation Loss of self-awareness and evaluation apprehension; occurs in group situations that foster anonymity and draw attention away from the individual.

“A mob is a society of bodies voluntarily bereaving themselves of reason.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson,
“Compensation,” *Essays*:
First Series, 1841



FIGURE 7-5 EFFECT OF PHYSICAL ANONYMITY.

Anonymous women delivered longer electric shocks to helpless victims than did identifiable women.

Source: ©Philip Zimbardo.

bullies who would never to someone's face say "Why don't you just go die" will hide behind their anonymity, particularly if they have high self-esteem (Christie & Dill, 2016). Facebook, to its credit, requires people to use their real names, which may constrain the bullying, hate-filled, and inflammatory comments. When people are deindividuated online, they are no longer influenced by the same norms as when they can be identified individually (Perfumi et al., 2019).

On several occasions, anonymous online bystanders have egged on people who are threatening suicide, sometimes with live video feeding the scene to scores of people. Online communities "are like the crowd outside the building with the guy on the ledge," noted one analyst of technology's social effects (quoted by Stelter, 2008). Sometimes, a caring person has tried to talk the person down, while others, in effect, have chanted, "Jump, jump": "The anonymous nature of these communities only emboldens the meanness or callousness of the people on these sites."

Testing deindividuation on the streets, Patricia Ellison, John Govern, and their colleagues (1995) had a confederate driver stop at a red light and wait for 12 seconds whenever she was followed by a convertible or a Jeep. While enduring the wait, she recorded any horn-honking (a mildly aggressive act) by the car behind. Compared to drivers of convertibles and Jeeps with the top down, those with the top up, who were relatively anonymous, honked one-third sooner, twice as often, and for nearly twice as long.

A research team led by Ed Diener (1976) cleverly demonstrated both the effect of being in a group and the effect of being physically anonymous. At Halloween, they observed 1352 children trick-or-treating. As the children, either alone or in groups, approached one of 27 homes scattered throughout the city, an experimenter greeted them warmly, invited them to "take *one* of the candies," and then left the room. Hidden observers noted that, compared to solo children, those in groups were more than twice as likely to take extra candy. Also, compared to children who had been asked their names and where they lived, those left anonymous were also more than twice as likely to transgress. As Figure 7-6 shows, the transgression rate thus varied dramatically with the situation. When deindividuated by group immersion combined with anonymity, most children stole extra candy.

"The use of self-control is like the use of brakes on a train. It is useful when you find yourself going in the wrong direction, but merely harmful when the direction is right."

Bertrand Russell,
Marriage and Morals, 1929

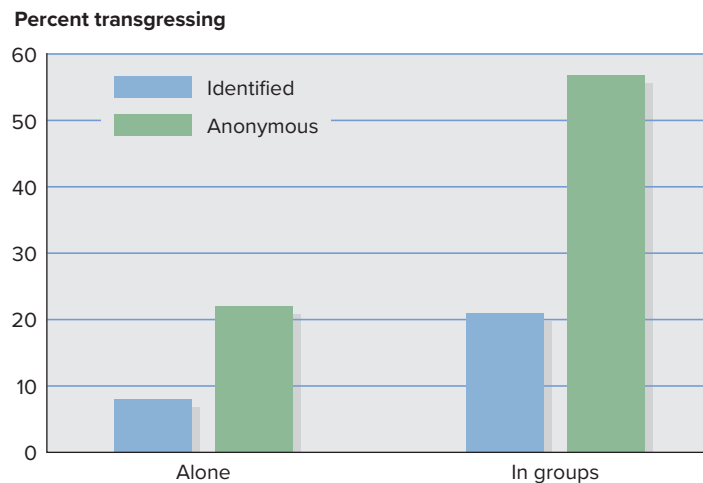


FIGURE 7-6 EFFECT OF GROUP IMMERSION AND ANONYMITY.

Children were more likely to transgress by taking extra Halloween candy when in a group, when anonymous, and, especially, when deindividuated by the combination of group immersion and anonymity.

These experiments make us wonder about the effect of wearing uniforms. Preparing for battle, warriors in some tribal cultures (much like rabid fans of some sports teams) depersonalize themselves with body and face paints or special masks. After the battle, some cultures kill, torture, or mutilate any remaining enemies; other cultures take prisoners alive. Robert Watson (1973) scrutinized anthropological files and discovered that the cultures with depersonalized warriors were also the cultures that brutalized the enemy. The uniformed Canadian soldiers who tortured and killed Shidane Arone in Somalia in 1993 were reportedly angered and aroused by their frustrating mission and the brutal desert heat; enjoying one another's camaraderie, they were unaware that outsiders would view their actions. Thus, forgetting their normal standards, they were swept away by the situation. During the 2010 G20 summit in Toronto, many of the police officers violated explicit regulations and did not wear their name tags or other identification.

Similarly, during the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests in the United States many law enforcement officials also did not wear nametags or insignia, and refused to identify themselves when asked (CNN, 2020). This may be one of the factors that led to the excessive violence used by these officers, who regularly fired on peaceful protesters, and seemed to target journalists covering the protests (CBC, 2020d).

Does becoming physically anonymous always unleash our worst impulses? Fortunately, no. For one thing, the situations in which some of these experiments took place had clear antisocial cues. Robert Johnson and Leslie Downing (1979) pointed out that the Klan-like outfits worn by Zimbardo's subjects may have encouraged hostility. In an experiment, they had women put on nurses' uniforms before deciding how much shock someone should receive. When those wearing the nurses' uniforms were made anonymous, they became *less* aggressive in administering shocks than when their names and personal identities were stressed. From their analysis of 60 deindividuation studies, Tom Postmes and Russell Spears (1998; Reicher, Spears, & Postmes, 1995) concluded that being anonymous makes one less self-conscious and more responsive to cues present in the situation, whether negative (Klan uniforms) or positive (nurses' uniforms).

This helps explain why wearing black uniforms—which are traditionally associated with evil and death—has an effect opposite to that of wearing nurses' uniforms. Mark Frank and Thomas Gilovich (1988) report that, led by the Los Angeles Raiders and the Philadelphia

Flyers, black-uniformed teams consistently ranked near the top of the National Football and Hockey Leagues in penalties assessed between 1970 and 1986. Follow-up laboratory research suggests that just putting on black jerseys can trigger wearers to behave more aggressively.

Being part of a team can have other effects as well. Sports teams frequently use tactics designed to increase group cohesion among their members (many of these approaches can be observed by watching an episode or two of *Last Chance U* on Netflix). Though formally discouraged or even outright banned, one tactic sports team members use at times is the “hazing” of new players. New players are picked on, degraded, and even physically and sexually assaulted. Presumably, if it is difficult to become a member of the team, you will like it more once you become a member. The more effort we put into something, the more we appreciate it. (Think back to cognitive dissonance theory—if it was this hard to get in, it must be great!)

However, sometimes hazing rituals go too far. There have been a number of well-publicized hazing incidents inside and outside sports. For example, in the fall of 2005, the McGill Redmen football team had its season cancelled after a number of rookies were gagged, forced into degrading positions, and sexually assaulted with a broomstick. As we noted in Chapter 5, the Dalhousie women’s hockey team was suspended for the whole season for its undisclosed hazing behaviour. In 2013, furthermore, 11 high school students in Saskatchewan were charged after a hazing incident involving Grade 9 and 10 students. In another incident, in 2008, three Yukon soccer players were suspended for binding their under-14 teammates with athletic tape and plastic wrap and beating them with wet towels. And in June of 2010, two Mississauga transportation and works department supervisors were suspended for hazing other employees, including videotaping them while they were bound and having water balloons thrown at them. Although these behaviours are widely condemned, they are still disturbingly frequent.

“Attending a service in the Gothic cathedral, we have the sensation of being enclosed and steeped in an integral universe, and of losing a prickly sense of self in the community of worshippers.”

Yi-Fu Tuan, *Escapism*, 1982

Arousing and distracting activities

Aggressive outbursts by large crowds are often preceded by minor actions that arouse and divert people’s attention. Group shouting, chanting, clapping, or dancing serve to both hype people up and reduce self-consciousness.

Deindividuation, such as is seen in a riot, can lead to expressions of affection as well as violence.

Source: ©Rich Lam/ Stringer/Getty Images.



Ed Diener's experiments (1976, 1979) showed that such activities as throwing rocks and group singing can set the stage for more uninhibited behaviour. There is a self-reinforcing pleasure in doing an impulsive act while observing others doing it also. When we see others act as we are acting, we think they feel as we do, which reinforces our own feelings (Orive, 1984). Moreover, impulsive group action absorbs our attention. When we yell at the referee, we are not thinking about our values; we are reacting to the immediate situation. Later, when we stop to think about what we have done or said, we sometimes feel chagrined—sometimes. At other times, we seek deindividuating group experiences—dances, worship experiences, group encounters—where we can enjoy intense positive feelings and feel close to others.

Diminished Self-Awareness

Group experiences that diminish self-consciousness tend to disconnect behaviour from attitudes. Experiments by Ed Diener (1980) and Steven Prentice-Dunn and Ronald Rogers (1980, 1989) revealed that unselfconscious, deindividuated people are less restrained, less self-regulated, more likely to act without thinking about their own values, and more responsive to the situation. These findings complement and reinforce the experiments on self-awareness considered in Chapter 3.

Self-awareness is the opposite of deindividuation. Those made self-aware—say, by acting in front of a mirror or TV camera—exhibit increased self-control; their actions more clearly reflect their attitudes. In front of a mirror, people taste-testing cream cheese varieties eat less of the high-fat alternative (Sentryz & Bushman, 1997).

People made self-aware are also less likely to cheat (Beaman et al., 1979; Diener & Wallbom, 1976). So are those who generally have a strong sense of themselves as distinct and independent (Nadler, Goldberg, & Jaffe, 1982). In Japan, where (mirror or no mirror) people more often imagine how they might look to others, people are no more likely to cheat when not in front of a mirror (Heine et al., 2008). The principle: People who are self-aware, or who are temporarily made so, exhibit greater consistency between their words outside a situation and their deeds in it.

We can apply those findings to many situations in everyday life. Circumstances that decrease self-awareness, as alcohol consumption does, increase deindividuation (Hull & Young, 1983). And deindividuation decreases in circumstances that increase self-awareness: in front of mirrors and cameras, in small towns, under bright lights, wearing large name tags, in undistracted quiet, wearing individual clothes, and living in houses (Ickes, Layden, & Barnes, 1978). When a teenager leaves for a party, a parent's parting advice should perhaps be this: "Have fun, and remember who you are." In other words, enjoy being with the group, but be self-aware; maintain your personal identity; and be wary of being deindividuated.

Group Polarization: Do Groups Intensify Our Opinions?

Many conflicts grow as people on both sides talk mostly with like-minded others. Does such interaction amplify pre-existing attitudes? If so, why?

Have you ever sat on a committee that had to make a decision? Have you ever been part of a student group or a group of friends trying to plan an event? Have you ever seen this turn into an absolute disaster? Typically, when groups get together to make decisions, this is a good thing. Group members can share the effort, as well as provide multiple cognitive resources and different ways of thinking about the problem and solutions. However,

group decision-making must be done carefully. Because of the social influences working within them, groups can make poor decisions—decisions that sometimes have devastating consequences.

For example, in 2013, a scandal erupted in the Canadian Senate. Senator Mike Duffy had been forced to pay back travel expense reimbursements that were, allegedly, fraudulent. Later, it was revealed that Prime Minister Stephen Harper's chief of staff had personally reimbursed Duffy \$90 000 after he paid back the money. This was apparently a deal made involving members of the Prime Minister's Office. Debate raged about "who knew what when" and whether or not the prime minister had been involved. Clearly, some very poor decisions had been made. Ultimately, Duffy was found not guilty on 31 criminal charges and (at the time of this writing) he is suing the government for \$7.8 million over how he was treated (CTV, 2020; Globe and Mail, 2017).

Which effects—good or bad—does group interaction more often have? Police brutality and mob violence demonstrate its destructive potential. Yet support-group leaders, management consultants, and educational theorists proclaim its benefits, and social and religious movements urge their members to strengthen their identities by fellowship with like-minded others.

Studies of people in small groups have produced a principle that helps explain both bad and good outcomes: Group discussion often strengthens members' initial inclinations. The unfolding of this research on group polarization illustrates the process of inquiry—how an interesting discovery often leads researchers to hasty and erroneous conclusions, which ultimately are replaced with more accurate conclusions. This is a scientific mystery we can discuss first-hand, one of your authors (David) having been one of the detectives.

The Case of the "Risky Shift"

Among the more than 300 studies of risk-taking behaviour was a study by James Stoner (1961), a study that led to a surprising result. For his master's thesis in industrial management, Stoner compared risk-taking by individuals and groups. To test the commonly held belief that groups are more cautious than individuals, Stoner posed decision dilemmas faced by fictional characters. The participant's task was to advise the imagined character how much risk to take. How do you think the group decisions compared to the average decision before the discussions? Would the groups be likely to take greater risks? To be more cautious? Or would the decisions stay the same?

To everyone's amazement, the group decisions were usually riskier. Dubbed the "risky shift phenomenon," this finding set off a wave of investigation into group risk taking. The studies revealed that this effect occurs not only when a group decides by consensus; after a brief discussion, individuals, too, will alter their decisions. What is more, researchers successfully repeated Stoner's finding with people of varying ages and occupations in a dozen different nations.

During discussion, opinions converged. Curiously, however, the point toward which they converged was usually a lower (riskier) number than their initial average. Here was a delightful puzzle: The small risky shift effect was reliable, unexpected, and without any immediately obvious explanation. What group influences produce such an effect? And how widespread is it? Do discussions in juries, business committees, and military organizations also promote risk taking? Does this explain why teenage reckless driving, as measured by death rates, nearly doubles when a 16- or 17-year-old driver has two teenage passengers rather than none (Chen et al., 2000)? Does it explain stock bubbles, as people discuss why stocks are rising, thus creating an informational cascade that drives stocks even higher (Sunstein, 2009)?

Impact of Group Discussion on Individuals' Opinions

Later research showed that this group phenomenon was not a consistent shift to risk but, rather, a tendency for group discussion to enhance the individuals' initial leanings. This idea led investigators to propose what Serge Moscovici and Marisa Zavalloni (1969) called a **group polarization** phenomenon: Discussion typically strengthens the average inclination of group members.

Group polarization experiments

This new view of the changes induced by group discussion prompted experimenters to have people discuss statements that most of them favoured or most of them opposed. Would talking in groups enhance their initial inclinations as it did with the decision dilemmas? That's what the group polarization hypothesis predicts (Figure 7-7).

Dozens of studies confirm group polarization. Moscovici and Zavalloni (1969) observed that discussion enhanced French students' initially positive attitude toward their president and negative attitude toward Americans. Mitotshi Isozaki (1984) found that Japanese university students gave more pronounced "guilty" judgments after discussing a traffic case. Markus Brauer and his co-workers (2001) found that French students' dislike for certain other people was exacerbated after discussing their shared negative impressions. And Glen Whyte (1993) reported that groups exacerbate the "too much invested to quit" phenomenon (also called the "sunk cost fallacy" or "gamblers' fallacy") that has cost many businesses (and gamblers) huge sums of money. Canadian business students imagined themselves having to decide whether to invest more money in the hope of preventing losses in various failing projects (for example, whether to make a high-risk loan to protect an earlier investment). They exhibited the typical effect: 72 percent reinvested money they would seldom have invested if they were considering it as a new investment on its own merits. When making the same decision in groups, 94 percent opted for reinvestment. Importantly, as noted in Chapter 5, in our discussion of cults, these connections do not need to be physical—high-risk gamblers who connect with other high-risk gamblers online tend to engage in riskier behaviour (Russell, Langham, & Hing, 2018).

Another research strategy has been to pick issues on which opinions are divided and then isolate people who hold the same view. Does discussion with like-minded people strengthen shared views? Does it magnify the attitude gap that separates the two sides? George Bishop and David Myers wondered. So they set up groups of relatively prejudiced and unprejudiced high school students and asked them to respond—before and after discussion—to issues involving racial attitudes, such as property rights versus open housing (Myers & Bishop, 1970). They found that the discussions among like-minded students did, indeed, increase the initial gap between the two groups (Figure 7-8). This has been replicated many times—for example, Trump supporters get more extreme after talking with other Trump supporters (Bekafigo et al., 2019).

Group polarization in everyday life

In everyday life, people associate mostly with others whose attitudes are similar to their own (see Chapter 10—or just look at your own circle of friends). Does everyday group interaction with like-minded friends intensify shared attitudes?

Group polarization in schools

One real-life parallel to the laboratory phenomenon is what education researchers have called the "accentuation phenomenon": Over time, initial differences among groups of university

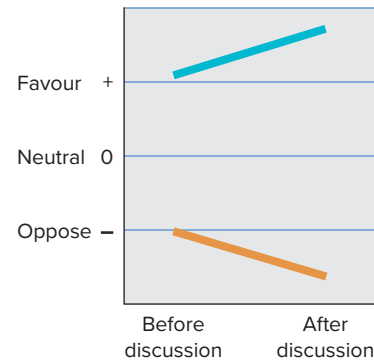


FIGURE 7-7 GROUP POLARIZATION.

The group-polarization hypothesis predicts that discussion will strengthen an attitude shared by group members. If people initially tend to favour something (say, taking a risk), they tend to favour it even more after discussion, and vice versa.

group polarization Group-produced enhancement of members' pre-existing tendencies; a strengthening of the members' *average* tendency, not a split within the group.

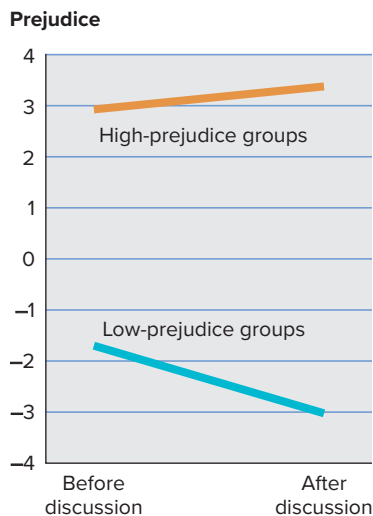


FIGURE 7-8 DISCUSSION AND GROUP POLARIZATION.

Discussion increased polarization between homogeneous groups of high- and low-prejudice high school students. Talking over racial issues increased prejudice in a high-prejudice group and decreased it in a low-prejudice group.

students become accentuated. If the students at university X are initially more intellectual than the students at university Y, that gap is likely to grow during university. Likewise, compared to fraternity and sorority members, independents tend to have more liberal political attitudes, a difference that grows with time in university (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Researchers believe that this results partly from group members reinforcing shared inclinations.

Group polarization in communities

Polarization also occurs in communities. During community conflicts, like-minded people associate increasingly with one another, amplifying their shared tendencies. Gang hostility emerges from a process of mutual reinforcement within neighbourhood gangs, whose members share attributes and hostilities (Cartwright, 1975). If, on your block, “a second out-of-control 15-year-old moves in,” surmised David Lykken (1997, p. 263), “the mischief they get into as a team is likely to be more than merely double what the first would do on his own. ... A gang is more dangerous than the sum of its individual parts.” Indeed, unsupervised peer groups are the strongest predictor of a neighbourhood’s crime victimization rate, reported Bonita Veysey and Steven Messner (1999). Moreover, experimental interventions that group young offenders with other young offenders actually—no surprise to any group polarization researcher—increase the rate of problem behaviour (Dishion, McCord, & Poulin, 1999).

Group polarization on the Internet

Email, social media, blogs, and forums offer an easy medium for group interaction. By 2019, 94 percent of Canadians had Internet access, and 91 percent of people over 15 used the Internet. The largest growth in use comes from seniors (Statistics Canada, 2020; 71 percent versus 48 percent in 2012). Almost half of Canadians use the Internet more than 10 hours per week. Almost 70 percent use video streaming services, and 49 percent use music streaming services. Facebook hit 2.7 billion monthly users in 2020 (Statista, 2020). On average, Canadians are online more than 41 hours per month (Canadian Press, 2013; and this has probably increased significantly since COVID-19 hit and many people are working remotely and online).

The Internet’s countless virtual groups enable peacemakers and neo-Nazis, geeks and goths, vegans and vampires, conspiracy theorists and cancer survivors to isolate themselves with one another and find support for their shared concerns, interests, and suspicions (Gerstenfeld, Grant, & Chiang, 2003; McKenna & Bargh, 1998, 2000; Sunstein, 2001, 2007, 2009). Even terrorist groups, such as Al Qaeda and ISIS, are using the Internet to recruit new members (CBS, 2009). Indeed, a study in the early 2000s noted that terrorist websites grew from about a dozen in 1997 to 4700 in 2005, a rate of increase that is four times faster than the total number of websites (Ariza, 2006).

Will such discussions produce group polarization? Will socially networked birds of a feather find support for their shared beliefs, values, and suspicions? Evidence suggests yes. Email, Google, and social media “make it much easier for small groups to rally like-minded people, crystallize diffuse hatreds, and mobilize lethal force,” observes Robert Wright (2003). Like-minded people share like-minded views, leading to increased extremity and avoidance of counter-attitudinal information (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; Chen, 2012). We also tend to frame arguments within our groups as related to ourselves and our emotions: we are caring and trustworthy; they are deceptive and irrational (Stevens, Aarts, & Dewulf, 2020).

Group polarization in terrorist organizations

From their analysis of terrorist organizations throughout the world, Clark McCauley and Mary Segal (1987; McCauley, 2002) note that terrorism does not erupt suddenly. Rather, it arises among people whose shared grievances bring them together and fan their fire. As they interact in isolation from moderating influences, they become progressively more extreme. The social amplifier brings the signal in more strongly. The result is violent acts that the individuals, apart from the group, would never have committed.

According to one analysis of terrorists who were members of the Salafi-Jihad, 70 percent had joined while living as expatriates. After moving to foreign places in search of jobs or education, they became keenly mindful of their Muslim identity and often gravitated to mosques and moved in with other expatriate Muslims, who sometimes recruited them into cell groups that provided “mutual emotional and social support” and “development of a common identity” (Sageman, 2004).

But there are many “home grown” terrorists as well. Timothy McVeigh bombed a United States federal building in Oklahoma City in 1994 as revenge against what he viewed as a tyrannical federal government (CNN, 2001). He killed 168 people and injured over 600 more. Reportedly inspired by McVeigh, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris killed 13 people at Columbine High School. Closer to home, James Gamble, Randall Shepherd, and Lindsay Souvanarath plotted a mass shooting at the Halifax Shopping Centre in February 2015 after meeting and plotting the attack online. A tip to Crime Stoppers foiled the attack (CBC, 2015b).

Massacres, similarly, have been found to be group phenomena. The violence is enabled and escalated by the killers egging one another on, noted Robert Zajonc (2000), who knew violence as a survivor of a Second World War Warsaw air raid that killed both his parents (Burnstein, 2009). It is difficult to influence someone once “in the pressure cooker of the terrorist group,” notes Jerrold Post (2005, p. 634) after interviewing many accused terrorists. “In the long run, the most effective anti-terrorist policy is one that inhibits potential recruits from joining in the first place.”

Explaining Polarization

Why do groups adopt stances that are more exaggerated than the average opinions of their individual members? Researchers hoped that solving the mystery of group polarization might provide some insights. Solving small puzzles sometimes provides clues for solving larger ones.

Among several proposed theories of group polarization, two have survived scientific scrutiny. One deals with the arguments presented during a discussion, the other with how members of a group view themselves in relation to the other members. The first idea is an example of what Chapter 6 called informational influence (influence that results from accepting evidence about reality). The second is an example of normative influence (influence based on a person’s desire to be accepted or admired by others).

Informational influence and group polarization

According to the best-supported explanation, group discussion elicits a pooling of ideas, most of which favour the dominant viewpoint. Ideas that were common knowledge to group members will often be brought up in discussion or, even if unmentioned, will jointly influence their discussion (Gigone & Hastie, 1993; Larson, Foster-Fishman, & Keys, 1994; Stasser, 1991). Other ideas mentioned in discussion may include persuasive arguments that some group members had not previously considered. But when people hear relevant arguments without learning the specific stands that other people assume, they still shift their positions (Burnstein & Vinokur, 1977; Hinsz, Tindale, & Vollrath, 1997). Arguments, in and of themselves, matter.

But there’s more to attitude change than merely hearing someone else’s arguments. Active participation in discussion produces more attitude change than does passive listening.

In two trials, South African courts reduced sentences after learning how social-psychological phenomena, including deindividuation and group polarization, led crowd members to commit murderous acts (Colman, 1991). Would you agree that courts should consider social-psychological phenomena as possible extenuating circumstances?

Participants and observers hear the same ideas, but when participants put them into their own words, the verbal commitment magnifies the impact. The more group members repeat one another's ideas, the more they rehearse and validate them (Brauer, Judd, & Gliner, 1995).

This illustrates a point made in Chapter 5: People's minds are not just blank tablets for persuaders to write on. In the central route to persuasion, what people think in response to a message is crucial; in fact, just thinking about an issue for a couple of minutes can strengthen opinions (Tesser, Martin, & Mendolia, 1995). (Perhaps you can recall your feelings becoming polarized as you merely ruminated about someone you disliked or liked.) Even expecting to discuss an issue with an equally expert person holding an opposing view can motivate people to marshal their arguments and thus adopt a more extreme position (Fitzpatrick & Eagly, 1981). But, fascinatingly, we can change our attitudes without hearing an argument at all (e.g., Levitan & Verhulst, 2016). Simply knowing that people in a group have an opinion influences ours.

But, as we learned in Chapter 5, the source of the information we get is important as well. People also make assumptions about the quality of the information based on where it comes from. For example, one study (Hanel et al., 2018) found that we are more likely to believe information that comes from a group we are affiliated with than one we are not. They found that Christians are more likely to accept an aphorism (a short observation assumed to be truthful, such as, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it") than atheists are, if both are told that the aphorism comes from a Bible verse. They found the same pattern for Democrats and Republicans in the United States. Interestingly, we assume our chosen groups are more similar to us and out groups are more dissimilar than they typically are. For example, evangelicals in the United States believe that the Republican party has more evangelicals than it does, and that the Democratic party has more atheists than is in fact the case (Claassen et al., 2019).

Normative influence and group polarization

As Leon Festinger (1954) argued in his influential theory of social comparison, and as already discussed in Chapter 2, it is human nature to want to evaluate our abilities and opinions, something we can do by comparing our views with those of others. We are most persuaded by people in our "reference groups"—that is, groups we identify with (Abrams et al., 1990; Hogg, Turner, & Davidson, 1990). Moreover, because we want people to like us, we may express stronger opinions after discovering that others share our views.

Animal gangs: The pack is more than the sum of the wolves in it.

Source: ©Raimund Linke/Getty Images.



When we ask people (as we asked you earlier in the Rehtaeh Parsons case) to predict how others would respond to social dilemmas, they typically exhibit **pluralistic ignorance**: They don't realize how strongly others support the socially preferred tendency. Typically, people will say that they would never act the way those teenagers did. (This finding is reminiscent of the self-serving bias: People tend to view themselves as a better-than-average embodiment of socially desirable traits and attitudes.)

pluralistic ignorance A false impression of how other people are thinking, feeling, or responding.

Perhaps you have been in the situation where you have wanted to go out with someone, but you were afraid to make the first move. You wait and watch, but the other person doesn't seem to be expressing any interest in you, so you think that they would probably reject you. Have you ever stopped to think that the other person might be doing the same thing you are? University of Manitoba researchers Jacquie Vorauer and Rebecca Ratner (1996) have shown that such reactions make it difficult for people to start up relationships.

Dale Miller and Cathy McFarland (1987) created a similar phenomenon in a laboratory experiment. They asked people to read an article and to seek help if they ran into “any really serious problems in understanding the paper.” Although the article was incomprehensible, none of the subjects sought help, but they presumed other subjects would not be similarly restrained by fear of embarrassment. They wrongly inferred that people who didn't seek help didn't need any. To overcome such pluralistic ignorance, someone must break the ice and enable others to reveal and reinforce their shared reactions.

Social comparison theory prompted experiments that exposed people to others' positions but not to their arguments. This is roughly the experience we have when reading the results of an opinion poll. When people learn others' positions—without discussion—will they adjust their responses to maintain a socially favourable position? When people have made no prior commitment to a particular response, seeing others' responses does stimulate a small polarization (Goethals & Zanna, 1979; Sanders & Baron, 1977). (See Figure 7–9 for an example.) This polarization from mere social comparison is usually

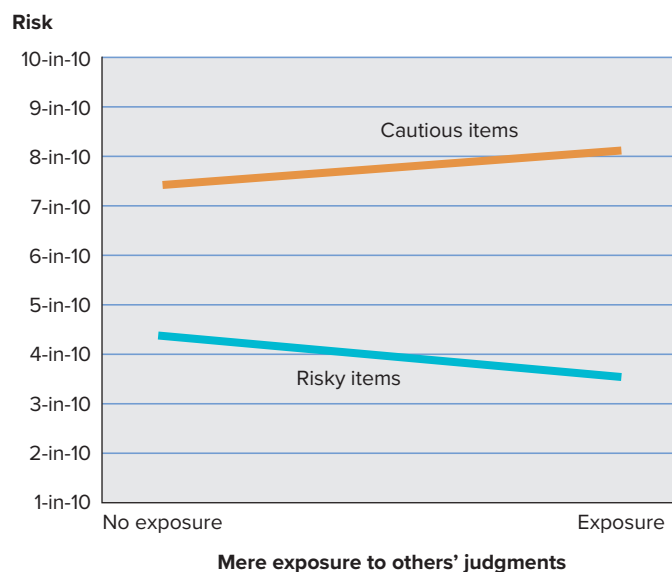


FIGURE 7–9 RISK OR CAUTION?

On “risky” dilemma items, mere exposure to others' judgments enhanced individuals' risk-prone tendencies. On “cautious” dilemma items, exposure to others' judgments enhanced their cautiousness.

less than that produced by a lively discussion. Still, it's surprising that, instead of simply conforming to the group average, people often go it one better.

Merely learning others' choices also contributes to the bandwagon effect that creates blockbuster songs, books, and movies. Sociologist Matthew Salganik and colleagues (2006) experimented with the phenomenon by engaging 14 341 Internet participants in listening to and, if they wished, downloading previously unknown songs. The researchers randomly assigned some participants to a condition that disclosed previous participants' download choices. Among those given that information, popular songs became more popular and unpopular songs became less popular.

Group polarization research illustrates the complexity of social-psychological inquiry. As much as we like our explanations of a phenomenon to be simple, one explanation seldom accounts for all the data. Because people are complex, more than one factor frequently influences an outcome. In group discussions, persuasive arguments predominate on issues that have a factual element ("Is she guilty of the crime?"). Social comparison sways responses on value-laden judgments ("How long a sentence should she serve?") (Kaplan, 1989). On the many issues that have both factual and value-laden aspects, the two factors work together. Discovering that others share one's feelings (social comparison) unleashes arguments (informational influence) supporting what everyone secretly favours.

Groupthink: Do Groups Hinder or Assist Good Decisions?

When do group influences hinder smart decisions? When do groups promote good decisions, and how can we lead groups to make optimal decisions?

Do the social-psychological phenomena we have been considering in these first seven chapters occur in sophisticated groups, such as corporate boards, or in senior government positions, where people are professionals and know each other well? Is there likely to be self-justification? Self-serving bias? A cohesive "we feeling" provoking conformity and rejection of dissent? Public commitment producing resistance to change? Group polarization? Social psychologist Irving Janis (1971, 1982) wondered whether such phenomena might help explain good and bad decisions made by a number of leaders and their advisers.

Most of you have probably seen the movie *Titanic*, written and directed by Canadian James Cameron, but there are many accounts of the ship's sinking, and it is often hard to sort out the truth. Nevertheless, here are some of the basic facts that are not in dispute.

On April 10, 1912, the *Titanic* left Southampton, England, on her maiden voyage across the Atlantic Ocean. At the time, the *Titanic* was the largest and most fabulous ship in the world. It was as tall as an 11-storey building, was as long as eight football fields, and weighed 1000 tonnes more than any other ship. It had a double hull system that made many believe the ship was unsinkable and was the pride of the White Star Line. The ship was cruising briskly across the Atlantic when, on Sunday, April 12, it received several messages that a group of icebergs was ahead. At least four of these messages reached the captain; at least one of them reached the president of the cruise line, who was aboard the ship. Despite these warnings, the ship did not slow down. At about 11:40 p.m., one of the lookouts saw an iceberg straight ahead and sounded the warning. The first officer, who was at the helm, swung the ship to port but only fast enough to avoid hitting the iceberg head-on. The ice tore a huge gash in the side of the ship. It didn't take crew members a great deal of time to know the extent of the damage—by 12:15 a.m., they knew the ship was going to sink. The *Titanic* had only 20 lifeboats, which was not even enough for half of the passengers. These lifeboats were lowered and



Groupthink on a titanic scale. Despite four messages of possible icebergs ahead, Captain Edward Smith—a directive and respected leader—kept his ship sailing at full speed into the night. There was an illusion of invulnerability (many believed the ship to be unsinkable). There was conformity pressure (crew mates chided the lookout for not being able to use his naked eye and dismissed his misgivings). And there was mindguarding (a *Titanic* telegraph operator failed to pass the last and most complete iceberg warning to Captain Smith).

Source: ©Everett Historical/Shutterstock.

filled—or only partially filled—with passengers, and distress calls were sent out to other ships. The ship finally went under at 2:20 a.m. Only 705 people survived the shipwreck; at least twice that many died. The exact number is one of the facts that is in dispute: Estimates range from 1490 to 1635.

Janis believed that such tragedies could be traced to the tendency of decision-making groups to suppress dissent in the interests of group harmony, a phenomenon he called **groupthink**. In work groups, camaraderie boosts productivity (Mullen & Copper, 1994; Mellers et al., 2014). Moreover, team spirit is good for morale, and a shared group identity motivates people to persist (Haslam et al., 2014). But when making decisions, close-knit groups may pay a price. Janis believed that the soil from which groupthink sprouts includes an amiable, cohesive group; relative isolation of the group from dissenting viewpoints; and a directive leader who signals what decision is favoured. When deciding what to do with the threat of the icebergs ahead, there is little doubt that Captain Edward J. Smith, the senior captain of the cruise line, who had served for 38 years, was a respected and directive leader. He and his crew enjoyed a strong *esprit de corps*. As one source (Lord, 1955) put it, Smith was “worshiped by crew and passenger alike. ... They loved everything about him.” It is also clear that in the middle of the Atlantic, they were isolated from other points of view. It is quite possible that groupthink may have influenced their decision making. Let’s see if they displayed the symptoms of groupthink.

groupthink The tendency for groups, in the process of decision making, to suppress dissenting cognitions in the interest of ensuring harmony within the group.

Symptoms of Groupthink

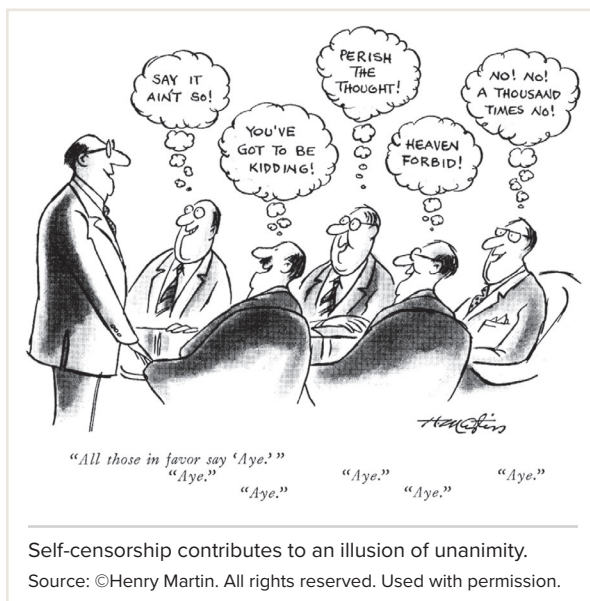
From historical records and the memoirs of participants and observers, Janis identified eight groupthink symptoms. These symptoms are a collective form of dissonance reduction that surfaces as group members try to maintain the positive group feeling when facing a threat (Turner et al., 1992; Turner & Pratkanis, 1994, 1997).

The first two groupthink symptoms lead group members to overestimate their group's might and right:

- *An illusion of invulnerability:* There is little question that Captain Smith and his crew had developed an illusion that nothing bad could happen to them or their ship. Five years before the crash, it was clear that Smith believed a disaster with loss of life could not happen to one of his ships. He was quoted as saying, "I cannot conceive of any vital disaster happening ... Modern shipbuilding has gone beyond that" (Marshall, 1912). As the ship departed from Southampton, one of the crew members expressed a view that seemed to be widespread. When asked if the *Titanic* was really unsinkable, he replied, "God Himself could not sink this ship" (Lord, 1955).
- *Unquestioned belief in the group's morality:* Group members assume the inherent morality of their group and ignore ethical and moral issues. Looking back on the tragedy of the *Titanic*, it is clear that there should have been more lifeboats aboard the vessel, and, sadly, this would not have been difficult. But the builders of the ship and especially the president of the cruise line decided they were not needed.

Group members also become closed-minded:

- *Rationalization:* The group discounts challenges by collectively justifying its decisions. The officers on the *Titanic* knew they were in the vicinity of icebergs, but they continued on at full speed. In one critical conversation at 9:00 p.m., the second officer and Captain Smith discussed how they should handle the ship. Both knew that they were in the vicinity of icebergs, but Smith remarked that it was an exceptionally clear night and, therefore, they did not need to slow down (Davie, 1986).
- *Stereotyped view of opponent:* One of the most controversial stories surrounding the *Titanic* is whether the ship was trying to break a speed record in crossing the Atlantic. You may recall that the movie *Titanic* portrayed the president of the cruise line as pressuring the captain to do so. This story has been suggested several times and many believe it—even though the president of the cruise line, who survived, vehemently denied it. One reason the story is believable to some is that the shipping business was intensely competitive in the early 1900s; cruise lines had very derogatory views of other cruise lines. These stereotyped views of their opponents might well have led Smith and his crew to ignore the warnings from other ships.



Finally, the group suffers from pressures toward uniformity:

- *Conformity pressure:* Group members rebuff those who raise doubts about the group's assumptions and plans, at times not by argument but by ridicule. When Frederick Fleet—the lookout who eventually saw the iceberg—complained that the crew did not have binoculars, he was chided by his colleagues for not being able to use his naked eye.
- *Self-censorship:* Since disagreements are often uncomfortable and the group seems to be in consensus, members often withhold or discount their misgivings (Hampton et al., 2014). Despite Fleet's belief that he needed a pair of binoculars for his task as a lookout, he did not suggest that they pick up a new pair at the next port. He was at a loss to describe his failure to do so. He maintained until his dying day that if he had had a pair of binoculars, he would have seen the iceberg soon enough to avoid hitting it.

- *Illusion of unanimity*: Self-censorship and pressure not to puncture the consensus create an illusion of unanimity. What is more, the apparent consensus confirms the group's decision. Did none of the experienced crew on the *Titanic* think they should slow down? It seems likely that the apparent unanimity about the decision to go full speed ahead was merely an illusion. This sort of illusion has been seen in other groups as well. Albert Speer (1971), an adviser to Hitler, described the atmosphere around Hitler as one where pressure to conform suppressed all deviance. The absence of dissent created the illusion of unanimity.
- *Mindguards*: Some members protect the group from information that would call into question the effectiveness or the morality of its decisions. The telegraph operator on the *Titanic* provided a compelling example of this symptom. After receiving several warning messages about icebergs, he failed to take down the final and most complete message about the iceberg that was struck and he failed to pass this message to the captain. Thus the operator deprived Captain Smith of the latest information that would have challenged Smith's decision to go full steam ahead.

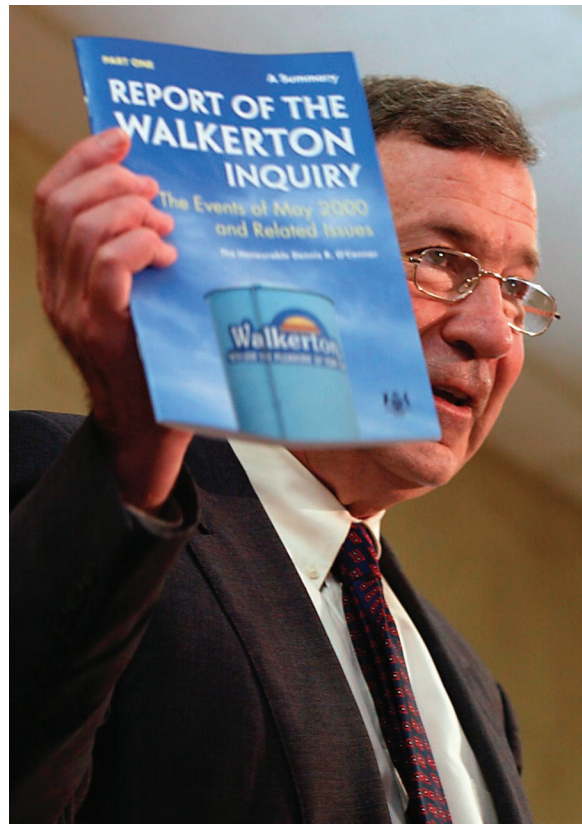
People “are never so likely to settle a question rightly as when they discuss it freely.”

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, 1859

Groupthink symptoms can produce a failure to seek and discuss contrary information and alternative possibilities. When a leader promotes an idea and when a group insulates itself from dissenting views, groupthink may produce defective decisions (McCauley, 1989).

The management of the Walkerton, Ontario, water crisis in May 2000 by Stan Koebel, who ran the water treatment plant, shows many of the symptoms of groupthink. Koebel and his employees certainly showed an illusion of invulnerability. They believed that the water in Walkerton had always been safe and that little needed to be done to ensure its safety. They viewed the new chlorinator that they had never installed as unnecessary. Koebel even continued to drink tap water long after people began getting sick and he knew that the water had tested positive for *E. coli*. The men at the water plant also engaged in massive rationalization. Even though they, too, knew that the water had tested positive for contaminants, they continued to believe for days that the water was not what was making people sick. Self-censorship was also an important part of the group's response. Frank Koebel (Stan's brother) testified in the inquiry into the crisis that he knew the failure to chlorinate the water and to take proper samples could lead to problems, but he never raised his objections to his brother. Finally, the group clearly employed mindguards by failing to report the results of the tainted water to the Ministry of the Environment and the chief medical officer of health.

How the COVID-19 pandemic is handled worldwide will undoubtedly induce significant discussion around the role of groupthink in decision making across the globe. While some countries and regions (e.g., New Zealand, South Korea, Taiwan, Alberta, the Maritime provinces) are being lauded for their rapid and effective response, others (e.g., Iran, the United Kingdom, the United States and Florida in particular) are being sharply criticized for their perceived lack of action in the face of “clear” warnings. For example, public health officials in Alberta saw the risks far



The contaminated water tragedy in Walkerton, Ontario, demonstrated the negative aspects of groupthink in action.
Source: The Canadian Press/Frank Gunn.

enough ahead of the pandemic to order more supplies than they needed (and in fact shared with the rest of Canada; CBC, 2020b), whereas the U.S. federal government has been lambasted for failing to prepare and downplaying the severity of the crisis until it was too late.

Critiquing Groupthink

Although Janis's ideas and observations have received enormous attention, some researchers are skeptical (Fuller & Aldag, 1998; Hart, 1998). The evidence being retrospective, Janis could pick supporting cases.

Some follow-up experiments have supported aspects of Janis's theory:

- Directive leadership is indeed associated with poorer decisions because subordinates sometimes feel too weak or insecure to speak up (Granstrom & Stiwnie, 1998; McCauley, 1998).
- Groups that make smart decisions have widely distributed conversation, with socially attuned members who take turns speaking (Woolley et al., 2010).
- Groups do prefer supporting over challenging information (Schulz-Hardt et al., 2000).
- When members look to a group for acceptance, approval, and social identity, they may suppress disagreeable thoughts (Hogg & Hains, 1998; Turner & Pratkanis, 1997).
- Groups that have broad discussions, and take turns speaking, make better decisions (Woolley et al., 2010). Group success depends on what the group members know and how effective they are at sharing that information (Bonner & Baumann, 2012).
- Groups with diverse perspectives outperform groups of like-minded experts (Nemeth & Ormiston, 2007; Page, 2007). Engaging people who think differently from you can make you feel uncomfortable; but compared with comfortably homogeneous groups, diverse groups tend to produce more ideas and greater creativity.
- In discussion, information that is shared by group members does tend to dominate and crowd out unshared information, meaning that groups often do not benefit from all that their members know (Sunstein & Hastie, 2008).

Yet, friendships need not breed groupthink (Esser, 1998; Mullen et al., 1994). In a secure, highly cohesive group (say, a family), committed members will often care enough to voice disagreement (Packer, 2009). The norms of a cohesive group can favour either consensus, which can lead to groupthink, or critical analysis, which prevents it (Postmes, Spears, & Cihangir, 2001). When Philip Tetlock and his colleagues (1992) looked at a broader sample of historical episodes, it became clear that even good group procedures sometimes yield ill-fated decisions.

Preventing Groupthink

Flawed group dynamics help explain many failed decisions; sometimes too many cooks spoil the broth. But, given open leadership, a cohesive team spirit can improve decisions. Sometimes two (or more) heads are better than one.

In search of conditions that breed good decisions, Janis also analyzed successful ventures. Janis's (1982) recommendations for preventing groupthink incorporate many of the following effective group procedures:

- Be impartial; do not endorse any position. Don't start group discussions by having people state their positions; doing so suppresses information sharing and degrades the quality of decisions (Mojzisch & Schulz-Hardt, 2010).
- Encourage critical evaluation; assign a "devil's advocate." Better yet, welcome the input of a genuine critic, which does even more to stimulate original thinking and to open a group to opposing views, report Charlan Nemeth and her colleagues (Nemeth, Brown, & Rogers, 2001; Nemeth, Connell, et al., 2001).

- Occasionally subdivide the group, and then reunite to air differences.
- Welcome critiques from outside experts and associates.
- Before implementing a decision, call a “second-chance” meeting to air any lingering doubts.

Some of these practical principles for improved group dynamics are now being taught to airline flight crews. Training programs called crew resource management developed from the realization that flight crew mistakes contribute to more than two-thirds of plane accidents. Having two or three people in the cockpit should increase the odds that someone will notice a problem or see its solution—if the information is shared. Sometimes, however, groupthink pressures lead to conformity or self-censorship.

On the night of September 2, 1998, Swissair Flight 111 crashed just off of Peggy’s Cove, Nova Scotia, killing all 229 people on board. The crash appears to have occurred because faulty wiring led to a fire in the cockpit. Several stories in the media reported that the two pilots were at odds over how to respond to the fire. These reports suggested that the co-pilot wanted to forget about procedure and land the plane immediately. The pilot, on the other hand, was allegedly firm in his insistence that they follow the standard procedure and was so busy with a checklist that he was not able to discuss a plan of action with the co-pilot. Could these faulty group dynamics have played a role in the crash? We do not even know if the media reports are accurate, but faulty group dynamics have been linked to other crashes (Helmrich, 1997).

But not always. In 1989, a three-person crew facing a similar problem responded as a model team to imminent disaster. The crew, which had been trained in crew resource management, faced the disintegration of the centre engine, severing lines to the rudder and ailerons needed to manoeuvre the plane. In the 34 minutes before crash-landing just short of the airport runway, the crew had to devise a strategy for bringing the plane under control, assessing damage, choosing a landing site, and preparing the crew and passengers for the crash. Minute-by-minute analysis of the cockpit conversation revealed intense interaction—31 communications per minute (one per second at the incident’s peak). In those minutes, the crew members recruited a fourth pilot, who was flying as a passenger, prioritized their work, and kept one another aware of unfolding events and decisions. Junior crew members freely suggested alternatives, and the captain responded with appropriate commands. Bursts of social conversation provided emotional support, enabling the crew to cope with the extreme stress and to save the lives of 185 of the 296 people on board.

Group Problem Solving

Not every group decision is flawed by groupthink. Under some conditions, two or more heads *are* better than one. Patrick Laughlin and his colleagues (Laughlin, 1996; Laughlin & Adamopoulos, 1980; Laughlin et al., 2003) have shown this with various intellectual tasks. Consider one of their analogy problems:



Effective group dynamics enabled the crew of a disabled Denver-to-Chicago United Airlines flight to devise a technique for steering by adjusting relative power from its two remaining engines, enabling the survival of most passengers. Recognizing the importance of cockpit group dynamics, airlines now provide crew management training and seek pilots who are capable of functioning as team members.

Source: ©Bettmann/Getty Images.

Assertion is to disproved as action is to

1. *hindered*
2. *opposed*
3. *illegal*
4. *precipitate*
5. *thwarted*

Most university students miss this question when answering alone but choose the correct answer (*thwarted*) after discussion. Moreover, Laughlin finds that if two members of a six-person group are initially correct, two-thirds of the time they convince all the others. (If only one person is correct, on the other hand, this “minority of one” almost three-fourths of the time fails to convince the group.) And when given tricky logic problems, three, four, or five heads are better than two (Laughlin et al., 2006).

Several heads critiquing each other can also allow the group to avoid some forms of cognitive bias and produce some higher-quality ideas (McGlynn, Tubbs, & Holzhausen, 1995; Wright, Lüüs, & Christie, 1990). In science, the benefits of diverse minds collaborating have led to more and more “team science”—to an increasing proportion of scientific publication, especially highly cited publication, by multi-author teams (Cacioppo, 2007). However, this diversity can backfire if there is interpersonal relationship conflict between the members. Culturally diverse groups make better decisions, as long as the members of the group can get along (Manata, 2019; Maznevski, 1994). We will discuss more on this topic in Chapter 12.

But, contrary to the popular idea that face-to-face brainstorming generates more creative ideas than do the same people working alone, researchers agree it isn’t so (Paulus, Dzindolet, & Kohn, 2011; Paulus, Larey, & Ortega, 1995; Paulus & Yang, 2000; Stroebe & Diehl, 1994). People feel more productive when generating ideas in groups, but, time and again, researchers have found that people working alone generate more good ideas (Nijstad, Stroebe, & Lodewijkx, 2006; Rietzschel, Nijstad, & Stroebe, 2006).

Large brainstorming groups are especially inefficient. In accordance with social loafing theory, large groups cause some individuals to free-ride on others’ efforts. In accordance with normative influence theory, they cause others to feel apprehensive about voicing oddball ideas. Large groups can cause “production blocking”—losing one’s ideas while awaiting a turn to speak (Nijstad & Stroebe, 2006). And contrary to the popular idea that brainstorming is most productive when the brainstormers are admonished “not to criticize,” encouraging people to debate ideas appears to stimulate ideas and to extend creative thinking beyond the brainstorming session (Nemeth et al., 2004).

Creative work teams tend to be small and to alternate working alone, working in pairs, and meeting as a circle (Paulus & Coskun, 2012). Moreover, when leaders urge people to generate lots of ideas (rather than just good ideas), they generate both more ideas *and* more good ideas (Paulus et al., 2011). Finally, writing down ideas, and sharing ideas via electronic means, may enhance the positive effects of brainstorming (Brown & Paulus, 2002; Heslin, 2009; Kohn, Paulus, & Choi, 2011).

As James Watson and Francis Crick demonstrated in discovering DNA, challenging two-person conversations can more effectively engage creative thinking. Watson later recalled that he and Crick benefited from *not* being the most brilliant people seeking to crack the genetic code. The most brilliant researcher, Rosalind Franklin, “was so intelligent that she rarely sought advice” (quoted by Cialdini, 2005). If you are (and regard yourself as) the most gifted person, why seek others’ input? Like Watson and Crick, psychologists Daniel Kahneman and the late Amos Tversky similarly collaborated in their exploration of intuition and its influence on economic decision making. (See “The Inside Story” shown next.)

THE INSIDE STORY

In the spring of 1969, Amos Tversky, my younger colleague at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and I met over lunch and shared our own recurrent errors of judgment. From there were born our studies of human intuition.

I had enjoyed collaboration before, but this was magical. Amos was very smart, and also very funny. We could spend hours of solid work in continuous mirth. His work was always characterized by confidence and by a crisp elegance, and it was a joy to find those characteristics now attached to my ideas as well. As we were writing our first paper, I was conscious of how much better it was than the more hesitant piece I would have written by myself.

All our ideas were jointly owned. We did almost all the work on our joint projects while physically together, including the drafting of questionnaires and papers. Our principle was to discuss every disagreement until it had been resolved to our mutual satisfaction.

Some of the greatest joys of our collaboration—and probably much of its success—came from our ability to elaborate on each other's nascent thoughts: If I expressed a half-formed idea, I knew that Amos would

be there to understand it, probably more clearly than I did, and that if it had merit, he would see it.

Amos and I shared the wonder of together owning a goose that could lay golden eggs—a joint mind that was better than our separate minds. We were a team, and we remained in that mode for well over a decade. The Nobel Prize was awarded for work that we produced during that period of intense collaboration.

Daniel Kahneman *Princeton University,
Nobel Laureate, 2002*



Source: Skypixel/Dreamstime .com/GetStock.com.

The wisdom of groups is evident in everyday life as well as in the laboratory:

- *Weather forecasting.* “Two forecasters will come up with a forecast that is more accurate than either would have come up with working alone,” reported Joel Myers (1997), president of the largest private forecasting service.
- *Google.* Google has become the dominant search engine by harnessing what James Surowiecki (2004) called “the wisdom of crowds.” Google interprets a link to Page X as a vote for Page X, and weights most heavily links from pages that are themselves highly ranked. Harnessing the democratic character of the web, Google often takes less than one-tenth of a second to lead you right to what you want. Unfortunately, the data that tech companies collect can be used in more nefarious ways as well, using our data to target us with ads and political messages.
- *Game shows.* For a befuddled contestant on *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?*, a valuable lifeline was to “ask the audience,” which usually offered wisdom superior to the contestant’s intuition. This is because the average judgment from a crowd of people typically errs less than does the average judgment by an individual.
- *The “crowd within.”* Likewise, the average of different guesses from the same person tends to surpass the person’s individual guesses (Herzog & Hertwig, 2009). Edward Vul and Harold Pashler (2008) discovered this when asking people to guess the correct answers to factual questions, such as “What percentage of the world’s airports are in the United States?” Then the researchers asked their participants to make a second guess, either immediately or three weeks later. The result? “You can gain about one-tenth as much from asking yourself the same question twice as you can from getting a second opinion from someone else, but if you wait three weeks, the benefit of re-asking yourself the same question rises to one-third the value of a second opinion.”

- *Prediction markets.* In U.S. presidential elections since 1988, the final public opinion polls have provided a good gauge to the election result (with the exception of the 2016 race, which heavily favoured Hillary Clinton but which Donald Trump won in a landslide). An even better predictor, however, has been the Iowa Election Market. Taking everything (including polls) into account, people buy and sell shares in candidates. Other prediction markets have harnessed collective wisdom in gauging the likelihood of other events, such as an avian flu epidemic (Arrow et al., 2008; Stix, 2008).

Thus, we can conclude that when information from many diverse people is combined, all of us together can become smarter than almost any of us alone. We're in some ways like a flock of geese, no one of which has a perfect navigational sense. Nevertheless, by staying close to one another, a group of geese can navigate accurately. The flock is smarter than the bird.

Leadership: How Do Leaders Shape the Group's Actions?

What is leadership, and what roles do effective leaders perform in groups?

In 1910, the Norwegians and the English engaged in an epic race to the South Pole. The Norwegians, effectively led by Roald Amundsen, made it. The English, ineptly led by Robert Falcon Scott, did not; Scott and three team members died. Some coaches of sports teams move from team to team, transforming losers into winners each time; for example, Scotty Bowman led three different teams to Stanley Cup championships. What makes one leader effective and another a failure? This is something social psychologists have been investigating for some time.

Task Leadership and Social Leadership

Some leaders are formally appointed or elected; others emerge informally as the group interacts. What makes for good **leadership** often depends on the situation; the best person to lead an engineering team may not make the best leader of a sales force. Some people excel at *task leadership*: organizing work, setting standards, and focusing on goal attainment. Others excel at *social leadership*: building teamwork, mediating conflicts, and being supportive.

Task leaders often have a directive style—one that can work well if the leader is bright enough to give good orders (Fiedler, 1987). Being goal oriented, such leaders also keep the group's attention and effort focused on its mission. Experiments show that the combination of specific, challenging goals and periodic progress reports helps motivate high achievement (Locke & Latham, 1990, 2002, 2009). Men that exhibit “masculine” traits—e.g., height, fitness, wide faces—tend to be perceived as dominant leaders and to be successful CEOs (Blaker et al., 2013; Wong et al., 2011).

Social leaders often have a democratic style: one that delegates authority, welcomes input from team members, and, as we have seen, helps prevent groupthink. Women, in general, are more egalitarian than men and are more likely to oppose hierarchies (Lee et al., 2011). Many experiments reveal that such leadership is good for morale. Group members usually feel more satisfied when they participate in making decisions (Spector, 1986; Vanderslice, Rice, & Julian, 1987). Given control over their tasks, workers also become more motivated to achieve (Burger, 1987). People who value good group feeling and take pride in achievement, therefore, thrive under democratic leadership (Lortie-Lussier, Lemieux, & Godbout, 1989).

leadership The process by which certain group members motivate and guide the group.

Women more often than men have a democratic leadership style.

Eagly & Johnson, 1990



Participative management, illustrated in this “quality circle,” requires democratic rather than autocratic leaders.

Source: ©Stockbroker/MBI /Alamy Stock Photo.

Democratic leadership can be seen in the move by many businesses toward participative management, a management style common in Sweden and Japan (Naylor, 1990; Sundstrom, De Meuse, & Futrell, 1990). Ironically, a major influence on this “Japanese-style” management was social psychologist Kurt Lewin. In laboratory and factory experiments, Lewin and his students demonstrated the benefits of inviting workers to participate in decision making. Shortly before the Second World War, Lewin visited Japan and explained his findings to industrial and academic leaders (Nisbett & Ross, 1991). Japan’s collectivist culture provided a receptive audience for Lewin’s ideas about teamwork. Eventually, his influence circled back to North America.

Transactional Leadership

The once-popular “great person” theory of leadership—that all great leaders share certain traits—has fallen into disrepute. Effective leadership styles, we now know, vary with the situation. People who know what they are doing may resent task leadership, while those who don’t may welcome it. Recently, however, social psychologists have again wondered if there might be qualities that mark a good leader in many situations (Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994). British social psychologists Peter Smith and Monir Tayeb (1989) reported that studies done in India, Taiwan, and Iran found that the most effective supervisors in coal mines, banks, and government offices score high on tests of both task and social leadership. They are actively concerned with how work is progressing and sensitive to the needs of their subordinates.

These transactional leaders (Hollander, 1958) focus on getting to know their subordinates and listening carefully. They seek to fulfill the subordinates’ needs but maintain high expectations for how subordinates will perform. Such leaders, who allow people to express their opinions, both learn from others and receive strong support from their followers (Tyler, Rasinski, & Spodick, 1985).

Transformational Leadership

Studies also reveal that many effective leaders of laboratory groups, work teams, and large corporations exhibit behaviours that help make a minority view persuasive. Such leaders engender trust by consistently sticking to their goals. And they often exude a

self-confident charisma that kindles the allegiance of their followers (Bennis, 1984; House & Singh, 1987; Tintoré, 2019). Charismatic leaders typically have a compelling vision of some desired state of affairs, an ability to communicate this to others in clear and simple language, and enough optimism and faith in their group to inspire others to follow.

In one analysis of 50 Dutch companies, the highest morale was at firms with chief executives who most inspired their colleagues “to transcend their own self-interests for the sake of the collective” (de Hoogh et al., 2004). Leadership of this kind—transformational leadership—motivates others to identify with and commit themselves to the group’s mission. Transformational leaders—many of whom are charismatic, energetic, self-confident extroverts—articulate high standards, inspire people to share their vision, and offer personal attention (Bono & Judge, 2004). The frequent result of such leadership in organizations is a more engaged, trusting, and effective workforce (Turner et al., 2002).

To be sure, groups also influence their leaders. Sometimes, those at the front of the herd have simply sensed where it is already heading. Political candidates know how to read the opinion polls. A leader who deviates too radically from the group’s standards may be rejected. Smart leaders usually remain with the majority and spend their influence prudently. Nevertheless, effective individual leaders can sometimes exhibit a type of minority influence by mobilizing and guiding their group’s energy.

When an apt combination of intelligence, skill, determination, self-confidence, and social charisma meets a rare opportunity, the result is sometimes a new government, a Nobel Prize, or a social revolution.

The Influence of the Minority: How Do Individuals Influence the Group?

Groups influence individuals, but when—and how—do individuals influence their groups?

Each chapter in this social influence unit concludes with a reminder of our power as individuals. We have seen these phenomena:

- Persuasive forces are powerful, but we can resist persuasion by making public commitments and by anticipating persuasive appeals.
- Pressures to conform sometimes overwhelm our better judgment, but blatant pressure can motivate us to assert our individuality and freedom.
- The groups we create and belong to influence our behaviour; but if we act consistently, we can sometimes influence the group.

This chapter has emphasized group influences on the individual, so we conclude by seeing how individuals and minorities can influence their groups. (Note that in this context, “minority influence” refers to minority opinions, not to ethnic minorities.)

At the beginning of most social movements, a small minority will sometimes sway, and then even become, the majority. “All history,” wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson, “is a record of the power of minorities, and of minorities of one.” For good or bad, minorities of one often have a huge impact. Innovative minorities also make technological history—think Steve Jobs, Elon Musk, and Mark Zuckerberg.

What makes a minority persuasive? What might the crew of the *Titanic* have done to convince Captain Smith that the ship needed to slow down? Experiments initiated by Serge Moscovici in Paris have identified several determinants of minority influence: consistency, self-confidence, and defection.

Consistency

More influential than a minority that wavers is a minority that sticks to its position. Moscovici and his associates (Moscovici, 1985; Moscovici, Lage, & Naffrechoux, 1969) found that if a minority consistently judges blue slides as green, members of the majority will occasionally agree. But if the minority wavers, saying “blue” to one-third of the blue slides and “green” to the rest, virtually no one in the majority will ever agree with “green.”

Experiments show—and experience confirms—that nonconformity, especially persistent nonconformity, is often painful (Levine, 1989; Lüken & Simon, 2005). That helps explain a *minority slowness effect*—a tendency for people with minority views to express them less quickly than people in the majority (Bassili, 2003). If you set out to be Emerson’s minority of one, prepare yourself for ridicule—especially when you argue an issue that’s personally relevant to the majority and when the group wants to settle an issue by reaching consensus (Kameda & Sugimori, 1993; Kruglanski & Webster, 1991; Trost, Maass, & Kenrick, 1992). Even when people in the majority know that the disagreeing person is factually or morally right, they may still, unless they change their position, dislike the person (Chan, Louis, & Jetten, 2010).

People may attribute your dissent to psychological peculiarities (Papastamou & Mugny, 1990). When Charlan Nemeth (1979, 2011) planted a minority of two within a simulated jury and had them oppose the majority’s opinions, the two were inevitably disliked. Nevertheless, the majority acknowledged that the persistence of the two did more than anything else to make them rethink their positions. Compared to majority influence that often triggers unthinking agreement, minority influence stimulates a deeper processing of arguments, often with increased creativity (Kenworthy et al., 2008; Martin, Hewstone, & Martin, 2007; Martin et al., 2008).

On the other hand, a minority may stimulate creative thinking (Martin, 1996; Mucchifaina, Maass, & Volpato, 1991; Peterson & Nemeth, 1996). With dissent from within one’s own group, people take in more information, think about the issue in new ways, and often make better decisions (Page, 2007). Believing that one need not win friends to influence people, Nemeth quotes Oscar Wilde: “We dislike arguments of any kind; they are always vulgar, and often convincing.”

A persistent minority is influential, even if not popular, partly because it soon becomes the focus of debate (Schachter, 1951). Being the centre of conversation allows one to contribute a disproportionate number of arguments. And Nemeth reported that in experiments on minority influence, as in the studies dealing with group polarization, the position supported by the most arguments usually wins. Talkative group members are usually influential (Mullen, Salas, & Driskell, 1989).

“If the single man plant himself indomitably on his instincts, and there abide, the huge world will come round to him.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature, Address, and Lectures: The American Scholar*, 1849

Self-Confidence

Consistency and persistence convey self-confidence. Furthermore, Nemeth and Joel Wachtler (1974) reported that any behaviour by a minority that conveys self-confidence—for example, taking the head seat at the table—tends to raise self-doubts among the majority. By being firm and forceful, the minority’s apparent self-assurance may prompt the majority to reconsider its position. This is especially so on matters of opinion rather than fact. In research at Italy’s University of Padova, Anne Maass and her colleagues (1996) reported that minorities are less persuasive regarding fact (“From which country does Italy import most of its raw oil?”) than regarding attitude (“From which country should Italy import most of its raw oil?”).

Defections From the Majority

A persistent minority punctures any illusion of unanimity. When a minority consistently doubts the majority wisdom, majority members become freer to express their own doubts and may even switch to the minority position. John Levine (1989) found that a minority person who had defected from the majority was more persuasive than a consistent minority voice. In her jury-simulation experiments, Nemeth found that once defections begin, others often soon follow, initiating a snowball effect.

Are these factors that strengthen minority influence unique to minorities? Sharon Wolf and Bibb Latané (1985; Wolf, 1987) and Russell Clark (1995) believed not. They argued that the same social forces work for both majorities and minorities. Informational and normative influence fuels both group polarization and minority influence. And if consistency, self-confidence, and defections from the other side strengthen the minority, such variables also strengthen a majority. The social impact of any position depends on the strength, immediacy, and number of those who support it. Minorities have less influence than majorities simply because they are smaller.

Anne Maass and Russell Clark (1984, 1986) agreed with Moscovici, however, that minorities are more likely to convert people to accepting their views. And from their analyses of how groups evolve over time, John Levine and Richard Moreland (1985) concluded that new recruits to a group exert a different type of minority influence than do longtime members. Newcomers exert influence through the attention they receive and the group awareness they trigger in the old-timers. Established members feel freer to dissent and to exert leadership.

There is a delightful irony in this emphasis on how individuals can influence the group. Until this research was done, the idea that the minority could sway the majority was itself a minority view in social psychology. Nevertheless, by arguing consistently and forcefully, Moscovici, Nemeth, Maass, Clark, and others have convinced the majority of group influence researchers that minority influence is a phenomenon worthy of study.

And the way that several of these minority influence researchers came by their interests should, perhaps, not surprise us. Anne Maass (1998) became interested in how minorities could effect social change after growing up in post-war Germany and hearing her grandmother's personal accounts of fascism. Charlan Nemeth (1999) developed her interest while she was a visiting professor in Europe "working with Henri Tajfel and Serge Moscovici. The three of us were 'outsiders'—I am an American Roman Catholic female in Europe, they having survived World War II as Eastern European Jews. Sensitivity to the value and the struggles of the minority perspective came to dominate our work."

Group Influences in Juries

Imagine a jury that, having finished a trial, has entered the jury room to begin its deliberations. Researchers Harry Kalven and Hans Zeisel (1966) reported that chances are about two in three that the jurors will initially *not* agree on a verdict. Yet, after discussion, 95 percent emerge with a consensus. Obviously, group influence has occurred.

Thousands of times a year, small groups sampled from the people called for jury duty convene to seek a group decision (Kagehiro, 1990). Are they subject to the social influences that mould other decision groups—to patterns of majority and minority influence, to group polarization, to groupthink? Let's start with a simple question: If we knew the jurors' initial leanings, could we predict their verdict?

The law prohibits observation of actual juries. So researchers simulate the jury process by presenting a case to mock juries and having them deliberate as a real jury would. In a series of such studies, James Davis, Robert Holt, Norbert Kerr, and Garold Stasser tested various mathematical schemes for predicting group decisions, including decisions by mock juries (Davis et al., 1975, 1977, 1989; Kerr et al., 1976). Will some mathematical combination of initial decisions predict the final group decision? Davis and his colleagues found that the scheme that predicts best varies according to the nature of the case. But in

several experiments, a “two-thirds-majority” scheme fared best: The group verdict was usually the alternative favoured by at least two-thirds of the jurors at the outset. Without such a majority, a hung jury was likely.

Likewise, in Kalven and Zeisel’s survey of juries, nine in 10 reached the verdict favoured by the majority on the first ballot. Although you might fantasize about someday being the courageous lone juror who sways the majority, as Henry Fonda’s character did in the famous play and movie *Twelve Angry Men*, the fact is that it seldom happens.

Minority influence

Sometimes, however, what was initially a minority prevails. A typical 12-person jury is like a typical small university class: The three quietest people rarely talk and the three most vocal people contribute more than half of the talking (Hastie, Penrod, & Pennington, 1983). If jurors who favour a particular verdict are vocal and persist in their views, they are more likely to eventually prevail. From the research on minority influence, we know that jurors in the minority will be most persuasive when they are consistent, persistent, and self-confident. This is especially so if they can begin to trigger some defections from the majority (Gordijn, De Vries, & De Dreu, 2002).

Group polarization

Confirmation that group polarization can occur in juries comes from an ambitious study in which Reid Hastie, Steven Penrod, and Nancy Pennington (1983) put together 69 twelve-person juries, made up of Massachusetts citizens, on jury duty. Each jury was shown a re-enactment of an actual murder case, with roles played by an experienced judge and actual attorneys. Then they were given unlimited time to deliberate the case in a jury room. As Figure 7–10 shows, the evidence was incriminating: Four out of five jurors voted guilty before deliberation but felt unsure enough that a weak verdict of manslaughter was their most popular preference. After deliberation, nearly all agreed that the accused was guilty, and most now preferred a stronger verdict—second-degree murder. Through deliberation, their initial leanings had grown stronger.

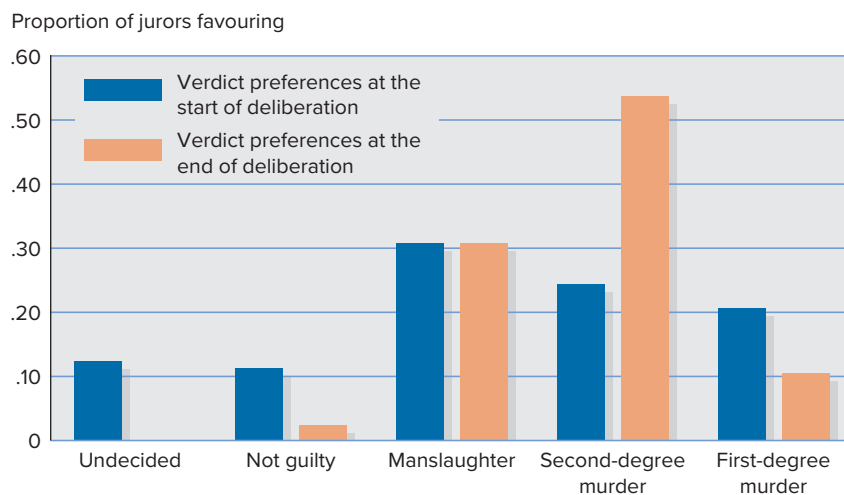


FIGURE 7–10 GROUP POLARIZATION IN JURIES.

In highly realistic simulations of a murder trial, 828 Massachusetts jurors stated their initial verdict preferences, and then deliberated the case for periods ranging from three hours to five days. Deliberation strengthened initial tendencies, which favoured the prosecution.

Leniency

In many experiments, one other curious effect of deliberation has surfaced: Especially when the evidence is not highly incriminating, as in the experiment just described, deliberating jurors often become more lenient (MacCoun & Kerr, 1988). This qualifies the “two-thirds-majority-rules” finding, for if even a bare majority initially favours acquittal, it usually will prevail (Stasser, Kerr, & Bray, 1981). Moreover, a minority that favours acquittal stands a better chance of prevailing than one that favours conviction (Tindale et al., 1990).

“It is better that ten guilty persons escape than one innocent suffer.”

William Blackstone, 1769

Once again, a survey of actual juries confirms the laboratory results. Kalven and Zeisel (1966) reported that in those cases where the majority does not prevail, it usually shifts to acquittal. When a judge disagrees with the jury’s decision, it is usually because the jury acquits someone the judge would have convicted.

Might “informational influence” (stemming from others’ persuasive arguments) account for the increased leniency? The “innocent-unless-proven-guilty” and “proof-beyond-a-reasonable-doubt” rules put the burden of proof on those who favour conviction. Perhaps this makes evidence of the defendant’s innocence more persuasive. Or perhaps “normative influence” creates the leniency effect, as jurors who view themselves as fair-minded confront other jurors who are even more concerned with protecting a possibly innocent defendant.

SUMMING UP

What Is a Group?

- A group exists when two or more people interact for more than a few moments, affect one another in some way, and think of themselves as “us.”

Social Facilitation: How Are We Affected by the Presence of Others?

- The presence of others is arousing and helps our performance on easy tasks but hurts our performance on difficult tasks.
- Being in a crowd, or in crowded conditions, is similarly arousing and has the same types of effects on performance.
- But why are we aroused by others’ presence? This occurs partly because we worry about how we are evaluated by others. The presence of others is also distracting, and that accounts for some of the effects as well. Still, the mere presence of others seems to be arousing throughout the animal kingdom and may be a part of our evolutionary heritage.

Social Loafing: Do Individuals Exert Less Effort in a Group?

- When people’s efforts are pooled and individual effort is not evaluated, people generally exert less effort in groups than individually.
- Such social loafing is common in everyday life, but when the task is challenging, the group is cohesive, and people are committed to the group, social loafing is less evident.

Deindividuation: When Do People Lose Their Sense of Self in Groups?

- Deindividuation occurs when people are in a large group, are physically anonymous, and are aroused and distracted.
- The resulting diminished self-awareness and self-restraint tend to increase people's responsiveness to the immediate situation, be it negative or positive.

Group Polarization: Do Groups Intensify Our Opinions?

- When researchers originally studied the ways that groups make decisions differently from individuals, they found that groups make riskier decisions; but as they examined more types of decisions, they found that groups make more polarized decisions. If individuals would tend to be risky, then groups would make riskier decisions, but if individuals would tend to play it safe, then groups would make less risky decisions.
- Groups intensify decisions through group discussions.
- Group discussions intensify decisions by exposing us to new arguments and through our comparisons with others in the group.

Groupthink: Do Groups Hinder or Assist Good Decisions?

- Analysis of several international fiascos indicates that group cohesion can override realistic appraisal of a situation, leading to bad decisions. This is especially true when group members strongly desire unity, when they are isolated from opposing ideas, and when the leader signals what he or she wants from the group.
- Symptomatic of this overriding concern for harmony, labelled groupthink, are (1) an illusion of invulnerability, (2) rationalization, (3) unquestioned belief in the group's morality, (4) stereotyped views of the opposition, (5) pressure to conform, (6) self-censorship of misgivings, (7) an illusion of unanimity, and (8) "mindguards" who protect the group from unpleasant information.
- Critics have noted that some aspects of Janis's groupthink model (such as directive leadership) seem more implicated in flawed decisions than others (such as cohesiveness).
- Both in experiments and in actual history, groups sometimes decide wisely. These cases suggest ways to prevent groupthink: upholding impartiality, encouraging "devil's advocate" positions, subdividing and then reuniting to discuss a decision, seeking outside input, and having a "second-chance" meeting before implementing a decision.
- Research on group problem solving suggests that groups can be more accurate than individuals; groups also generate more and better ideas if the group is small or if, in a large group, individual brainstorming follows the group session.

Leadership: How Do Leaders Shape the Group's Actions?

- Some leaders focus more on tasks and other leaders focus more on the social functioning of the group. Leaders who focus on tasks are often most effective for very high- and very low-functioning groups.

- Some leaders, however, combine social and task leadership by listening to followers and seeking to meet their needs but, at the same time, holding them to high standards for performance. These transactional leaders are often very effective.
- Other leaders gain a following through their charisma and by offering personal attention. These transformational leaders inspire people to make self-sacrifices for the sake of the group and can lead others to be committed and engaged in the task at hand.

The Influence of the Minority: How Do Individuals Influence the Group?

- When minority group members are consistent, they are more likely to influence the group.
- When minority group members have self-confidence, they are more likely to influence the group.
- When minority group members are consistent and self-confident, they create an atmosphere in which defection from the majority viewpoint can occur.

Key Terms

co-actors
deindividuation
evaluation apprehension
free-ride
group
group polarization

groupthink
leadership
pluralistic ignorance
social facilitation
social loafing