

Chapter 16: Social Behavior of Groups

Social Behavior of Groups

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Social Behavior of Groups

WHAT'S THE ANSWER?

Imagine that you're walking along the sidewalk minding your own business -- all alone as far as you know. You're happy because your teacher just praised you in class for a project you'd turned in. You're headed home, by way of your best friend's house. Things are going well. In this mood you see a squirrel near the edge of the sidewalk in the grass. For no apparent reason you strike up a conversation with the squirrel. Not expecting an answer, you say, "Good afternoon, squirrel. How's your day been?"

You're just about to ask a second question when you see someone leaning against the tree beyond the squirrel. You hadn't realized anyone was there. What happens? You blush. You get nervous. You walk a little faster to get away as fast

as you can. And you avoid looking the person in the eye if you can. *What's happening here? Why?*

"I really don't understand it, Charise. How could it have happened? You know I'm the quiet type, and I don't even like football that much."

"What happened, Yvette?"

"Well, I went to Saturday's championship game with my brother and his friends, but I mean they practically had to drag me to get me to go. Then I met the kids from my movie-maker's club there, and we all sat together. Our crowd filled up a whole section of the grandstand. We were all yelling and jumping up and down every time the team made a good play."

"That sounds pretty usual to me, Yvette."

"But that's not it. When we won the game, I ran out on the field with everyone and helped tear down State's goal posts! I can't believe I did it. Something must have happened to me."

Is this an example of a group mind at work? Is there such a thing as a group mind? Does it exist, for example, when a group becomes a mob?

Social psychologists study the effects of groups on the behavior of individuals. Sociologists study group behavior, where the group itself is the unit of analysis. Three elements are important in defining a group: (a) two or more people interacting (communicating) so as to influence each other, (b) a common goal, and (c) a sense of common identity. Groups usually serve social or task functions.

Groups may be organized competitively or cooperatively, and they may exist to serve social or task functions. Group behavior is often governed by norms, patterns of behavior that are expected simply because so many people do them. Groups also define roles, a pattern of behavior expected because of position within a group. Each of us has multiple roles that may sometimes lead us into role conflict. Status involves the power of individuals relative to their position in a group. Social class involves status differences among members of a society. One of the important elements of a group that helps determine a group's effectiveness is the person selected as leader and his or her leadership style.

Communication is vital to the success of group activities. Clarity of communication in the group is influenced by group size, distance from the source of the message, feedback, and the status of the message's source. Some of these factors also influence a group's productivity. Group action tends to be more extreme than the inclinations of its individual members -- a phenomenon called the risky- or stingy-shift. Moreover, group

presence tends to increase the performance of individual members. Pressures toward conformity are found among group members because of deindividuation and group cohesiveness. Both factors create even greater pressures to conform as the size of the minority grows smaller.

Humans tend to form groups because of both inherited urges and group-related benefits. However, "groupthink" may occur if a group creates for itself illusions of invulnerability and unanimity. A group becomes a mob only if each individual member can be convinced to join the group's actions; a "group mind" does not exist. Authority is needed to enforce obeying society's rules. Delinquency -- failure to respond to societal norms and rules among juveniles -- has been related to, among other things, poor home training, possible abnormal EEG firing patterns, and local environment.

In modern industrial society the extended family has been replaced by the smaller nuclear family. Such families now serve mainly to provide a loving supportive environment in which to socialize the younger members. The family itself yields much of its influence to television and the peer group once the child enters school. The role of fathers has changed a great deal in the past 200 years. Changing roles for mothers are also now beginning to influence traditional views of families as a social unit.

The Group

Who studies groups? Social psychology -- the subject we're studying here -- is the area of study in which the techniques and topics being studied by psychologists comes closest to sociology. What are the similarities and what are the differences between the techniques of a social psychologist and a sociologist? A sociologist is interested in the study of groups, but he or she will stress the behavior of the group as a unit -- be it a mob, suburban residents, or athletes.

On the other hand, a social psychologist is interested in studying groups and group behavior as these have an impact on the individual. The impact of the groups to which we belong range from group-defined norms and roles to the awarding of status and social class. For the social psychologist the unit of analysis is still the individual human. However, the situation being studied will involve a group of individuals and the leaders and leadership styles to which they are subject. What's studied is how that individual performs in situations where a group either is present or can be interpreted as being present.

In addition to differences in the basic unit of analysis, psychologists and sociologists studying group behavior use different research techniques. A sociologist uses naturalistic observation, recording the actions of groups without directly influencing the group's behavior. While a psychologist may use this technique -- for instance when recording a shopper's behavior in a grocery store -- he or she can also use active experimental manipulations. In terms of our definitions of independent, intervening, and dependent variables, a social psychologist can actively manipulate independent variables in the social situation and observe its(their) effect(s) on the individual.

Very few people will steal anything when they see a television camera as they roam across the store. No one may be there, but the presence of someone watching a television screen is implied by the camera. Burglars are less likely to break into a home or business with "These premises protected by MISS FIRE ELECTRONIC ALARMS" signs posted on the doors and windows. Again, a group presence is implied. Individuals behave differently in group situations than when we are (or think we are) alone.

What is a Group?

At its simplest, a group exists any time we find two or more persons who communicate with and affect one another. Group members will agree that they belong to the same organization. They'll also agree that they share a number of desires, goals, or targets for common action. All group members are influenced by the group's leader and his or her leadership style.



As you look at that description, you can see that there are three critical elements that must exist to identify a group. First, its members must be doing things together. They must be interacting with each other in some common way. That means that they must be communicating with each other. Thus, with very few exceptions, groups are small.

When the United States put a man on the moon, it might be said that all of the NASA employees functioned as part of a single large, interacting group. Yet NASA could also be viewed as a collection of much smaller work forces or groups spread around the world. Some worked on training, some built the

rockets, others launched them, and still others guided the moon capsule while it was on its voyage.



Second, the members of a group must share a common identity. You're a part of your family; you're probably a member of a church, temple, or synagogue; you're a member of various classes at your college, and maybe of some clubs, varying from a computer group to a dramatic society.

You respond in a particular way to the other members of each group to which you belong. You kiss members of your family, and you share prayer rituals with members of your religious groups. You may share new software with fellow microcomputer operators, or an ambition to act in plays with other drama society members.

Third, for a group to gain and retain its identity, the members must share certain common desires as to its purpose. If you have ever gone to a church or synagogue service of a faith different from your own, you know how important agreement on common goals is to the members of a group. Not sharing in that group's religious training may have made you feel quite uncomfortable during their service -- because you are not a member. The benefits of group membership provide an answer to the Think About It challenge.

Think About It

The question: We open this chapter with a skit describing what might happen to you if you did something when you thought you were alone. When you found you were being watched, your behavior changed. *Why?*

The answer: People may do crazy things when they think they are alone. Why is a "conversation" with a squirrel important? The real point about the incident that was described is that everything involved group behavior. You were pleased because of public praise for your work. You were going to visit a friend, and later you would head back to your dorm and friends. Your embarrassment at being caught talking to the squirrel resulted only because you were behaving as if you were alone when you were actually part of an implied group.

Most groups form and operate for one of two purposes. Task-oriented groups are formed to accomplish a job. A sailing club may build or maintain a fleet of boats for its members. A

college math club may form to acquaint members with good graduate programs in colleges and universities around the country for math majors.

On the other hand, some groups serve a social function. They are formed to provide their members with a good time. The "rules" by which social groups operate may be quite specific. How the social functions are performed, what age (or sex) members must be, and many other limits are often set. If a group stops meeting your needs, you are very likely to drop out. Were you a Brownie or a Cub Scout as a child? At some age the games and activities of those groups became too young for you, and you moved on to Boy- or Girl Scouts, or some other activity. So common goals are important, but we should note that both task and social functions can (though rarely) be served by the same group. Scouts are a good example. They are service-oriented part of the time, but at other times, such as at camp-outs or meetings, they serve a social function. Within such mixed groups, the task leaders are unlikely to be the social leaders. In a work environment, it is rarely the company's boss who organizes holiday or retirement parties. More often, an informal "social" leader assumes that task.



How are Groups Organized?

There are two factors that are important in describing group structure. One concerns the operation of the group itself. The other concerns the purpose for which the group has formed, as we discuss in What is a

Group?. Now, let's look at the operation of a group. Two general types of operation can be identified. One is competitive, the other is cooperative. This is a problem often faced in industry. Workers can be pitted against one another, with each person competing for a set amount of pay. Or groups can be rewarded in terms of the total productivity of the group as a whole.

Think about typical college classes. Within most classes the organization is competitive -- the student who does the best work usually receives the highest grade. Yet, your professor may decide to hold a contest among various classes, with the winning class to be awarded a field trip, or a day off. Now your class will work together. It will choose the best idea from those suggested by individual class members, and then

everyone will pull together to achieve the common goal -- competition on the one hand and cooperation on the other.

In mastering course materials in a learning program -- such as this material is being presented -- tends to encourage more cooperative learning because grades are awarded based on individually demonstrated mastery. The grades are not typically awarded based on competitively assessed individual mastery. On an assembly line where a large product such as a car is produced, the operation is cooperative. In a factory where each worker is assembling a complete product -- a dress, an electrical relay, or a transistor -- the operation is usually competitive, to urge each worker to produce as much as possible. In such assembly lines production norms are typical, and specific roles are assumed by individual workers. In complex social organizations in the work environment even status and social class assignments may be based on the job someone is performing. Both task- and social-oriented groups can be either competitively or cooperatively organized, as suggested by the examples in Table 16.1.

Table 16.1

Types of Groups

Form of Operation	Purpose of Group	
	Task-Oriented	Social-Oriented
Competition	Professional sports Olympics Industry	Bingo group Bowling teams
Cooperation	Farmers' cooperative Charity organizations	Fraternities and sororities Country clubs

Social Norms

Our lives must be run according to some kind of rules about which all members of our society are in general agreement. If you're not living in a dormitory, and thus must commute to school each day, think of the confusion you'd face in getting to

school each day if you didn't know when you left home each morning whether cars would pass you on the left or the right! What if you didn't know whether pedestrians should walk on the strip of concrete beside the wider paved surface or on the dotted line running down the middle of the street? The rules about such matters put order in our lives, and they're called norms. A norm is a standard of behavior established and maintained by the manner in which people actually behave. In this sense "normal" means average or typical.



There are a million examples. Think about elevators. There are two things you always do when you get on an elevator. What are they? Let's suppose you're on the upper floor of a department store waiting for an elevator to take you down to the ground floor. What would you do if the doors of the elevator opened and the five people inside were facing the back? Table 16.2 shows the results of one study of the responses of 400 people faced with this dilemma.

Table 16.2

Participant Responses when an Opening Elevator Door Revealed Occupants Facing the Back

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Faced the front	18
Faced sideways	63
Faced the back	6
Refused to get on	13
Total	100

There were four types of responses recorded. The astounding thing is that 82 percent of the people who entered the elevator changed their normal behavior. What do you usually do when you get on an elevator? More than likely you (1) turn around to ride facing the door you entered and (2) press a floor button. Eighty-two percent didn't do that. Here the violation of a norm by only five people changed the behavior of 82 percent of the people who witnessed the violation! The tabulated data indicates how responsive we are to such norms. Norms make our environment predictable. They allow us to make correct responses for which people will reinforce us. These are group-defined standards. Heeding them is one of the first things we must do in order to be accepted into a new group.

Roles

In addition to norms, another factor related to groups and our individual behavior in groups -- whether public or private, large or small -- is the creation of roles. A role is a pattern of behavior that is expected of any of us because of our membership and position in a group. With very few exceptions, groups have a leader -- a president, a minister, a teacher -- somebody who decides what the group is going to do. Or certain members may conduct a meeting so that the group itself can decide. In many groups someone takes care of finances. Someone else takes care of writing letters and keeping track of what happens in each group meeting. Each is a role, many are leadership roles.

As you read this you are part of a large number of groups, and you have multiple roles. You're a child in one group, a student in another, perhaps an athlete in a third, a treasurer or secretary in yet another group. Because we have multiple roles, we sometimes find ourselves in what is called role conflict. This occurs when our role demands in one group seem to oppose our role demands in another. Suppose an assignment from your psychology professor is due tomorrow morning. This requires that you stay in and do homework tonight. However, your best friend wants you to come over and help her with her algebra. You will experience role conflict: Will you act as student or as friend?

A sex role is a behavior pattern expected of persons because of their sex. Sandra Bem's Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) measures psychological androgyny, or the extent to which a person's behavior is determined by the situation the person is

in, rather than by his or her sex. According to Bem, you need not be masculine or feminine in your behavior; you can be both. The BSRI has two columns of twenty adjectives: Column A includes "Acts as a leader" and "Self-sufficient"; Column B includes "Affectionate" and "Yielding." As you might expect, Column A identifies "male" characteristics and Column B identifies "female" ones. Those who score high on both scales tend to perform well on both traditionally male and traditionally female tasks.



Sex-roles today are an area of controversy. People can become very comfortable with their notions of what is a "correct" role for males or for females. Society has some long-established norms that tend to die hard. Even so, more and more women are entering the job market.

Their opportunities are actually and legally increasing, but lack of seniority and a concentration in low-paying fields often keeps them from earning salaries comparable to those of men. Table 16.3 and the graph present some recent figures that show the extent of change.

Table 16.3

*Women in the Labor Force
(approximately 46 million)*

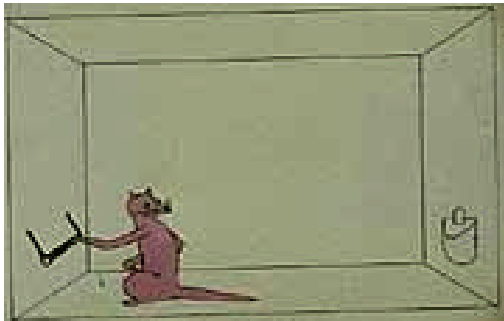
<u>MARITAL STATUS</u>	<u>PERCENT DISTRIBUTION</u>
Never married	25.0
Married	59.3
Widowed or divorced	15.6
<u>WORKING MOTHERS</u>	<u>PARTICIPATION RATE</u>
With children under 6	47.8
With children 6-17 only	62.5

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Status and Social Class

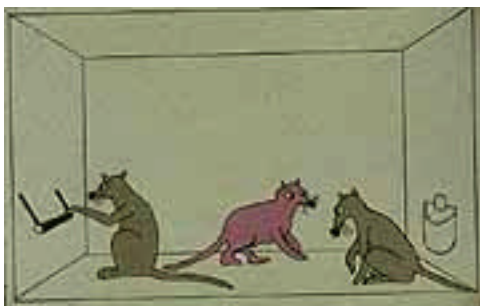
As we see groups operating -- paying attention to norms and encouraging each person into a role -- we find that some roles are more valued than others. Status refers to a role or position identifying differences that are important to the group. One of the best examples of this comes from the social hierarchy that develops among animals that live in groups. Apes have a status hierarchy, as do barnyard chickens. In fact the phrase "pecking order" derives from observations of the manner in which chickens organize themselves. Some chickens have highest priority in access to food, sleeping position, and so forth. In the animal world the status-system is usually based on physical strength, but it exists nonetheless.

For humans, of course, the motives for high status are infinitely more complicated, as are the rewards. There is a much greater desire to be President of the United States than there is to be Vice-President -- a lower-status office. In your own college or university, there is likely to be much more competition for the office of President of the Student Association -- or whatever it's called -- than for almost any other club or leadership position because of the status of the office.



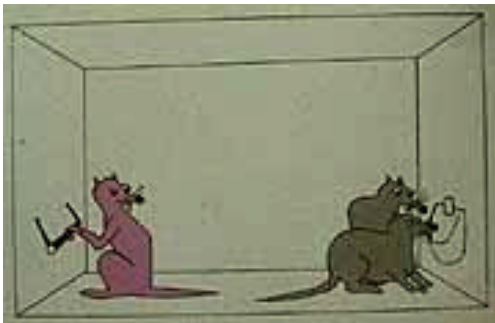
the food-delivery cup was at the far end of the box. To perform successfully, each rat had to learn to press the bar at one end and then move to the other end to eat its reinforcement. Each rat, trained alone, learned quite easily to do the task.

An interesting phenomenon in social psychology was demonstrated in a movie a number of years ago. It involved training three rats in a Skinner box (see the Learning Chapter). The thing that was unusual about this box was that the bar was at one end, while



Then all three rats were put in the box together. As you might expect, each rat continued to behave as it had been trained. It looked as if they were "cooperating" with each other. Each of them would press the bar, walk to the

other end, eat the reinforcer, and then turn to go back to press the bar.



And then "tragedy" struck! One of the rats pressed the bar several times, causing a number of pellets to be delivered at the far end of the box. It was as if that rat had "learned" or "guessed" that by pressing the bar multiple times, the rat could increase the amount of

food waiting for it at the other end of the Skinner box.

But what did two other rats learn at exactly the same time? That they didn't have to do any work at all! If they simply waited, the "worker rat" would press the bar to deliver enough food for all three rats. Immediately what was created was a "working-class" rat and "leisure class" rats composed of the other two rats! Though no conclusions can be drawn from this experiment, it provides an intriguing sidelight on the development of "class."

For humans, social class seems to be based largely on economic purchasing power. Yet, while money is part of the power base of upper-class people, it isn't all. Factors such as the social position of our parents and the level of their education and that of our own are major determinants of social class. Since higher education can often be achieved in our society, it is possible to move up the social ladder and improve one's status, income, and class.

Another interesting point is the way in which each of us identifies another person's social class. Think about those living in your own hometown neighborhood. Your pre-college neighborhood probably fits in one of three social classes -- lower, middle, or upper. Yet, on your street, can't you think of someone who is much better off than the others who live there? Most of us can. We are much more accurate in perceiving real differences among others close to our own social class than we are in finding differences between two people in social classes very different from our own.

The illustration shows the kind of rigidly determined social class structure that exists on a circus train. Have you ever worked in a restaurant? If so, you know that within that society of waiters, people who set and clear the tables, dishwashers, and cooks there is a very rigid difference in status.

USING PSYCHOLOGY: Leaders and Leadership

Throughout this chapter we speak of ways in which groups are led to believe in certain things or to perform certain actions. Who accomplishes this leading? Are there ways to identify who will make a good leader? Is it an inherited trait or a learned skill?

Leadership is a process in which one individual exerts influence or control over others. This influence is called power. There are five different bases of power. Three involve power that comes from the organization of which both the leader and the group are a part -- powers to reward, punish, and control. The last two types of power involve the leader alone -- powers to attract loyalty and to influence through knowledge.

What can you conclude from this? Mainly that there are no clear-cut, always-present and guaranteed-to-make-you-a-leader traits. However, there are some characteristics that are more likely to be found in leaders than followers. Leaders tend to be taller, more physically attractive, and more likely to have steady, commanding voices. These are obviously inherited characteristics, yet many skills of leaders are learned.

USING PSYCHOLOGY: Points in Leadership

There are a number of simple ground rules and conditions that influence how successful any leader will be in getting a group to achieve its goals. For instance, members of a group will tend to support group activities and work for the common good as long as they feel a sense of "ownership" in the total project, something that is identifiably theirs.

The ideas or suggestions of one person in a group may stimulate the thinking of another. A group that encourages free discussion is likely to increase the total knowledge and range of ideas proposed by each of its members. This is synergism, the multiplying, enriching effect on individual ideas challenged and examined by others.

You probably belong to groups that are trying to recruit new members, or sell a product, or do something that will please people beyond the group. It might be an editorial committee managing the student newspaper, or a group charged with running the "Homecoming Ball." To achieve the groups' goals, members should remember the lessons for preventing "groupthink." Make sure that the minority viewpoints are heard in the group. A "democracy" runs on the basis of majority will. But any group must assure that the "loyal opposition" -- often a minority point of view -- is heard. To have the widest impact with a

group, select members from a balanced cross-section of the total population that you hope to influence.

In leading a group it's necessary to listen carefully to the discussion. Enough discussion should be permitted to insure that the major points of view have been aired. However, as arguments start being repeated (often louder!) there must be a means by which to move the group toward a decision. Compromise is, of course, often valuable, but ultimately a decision must be made.

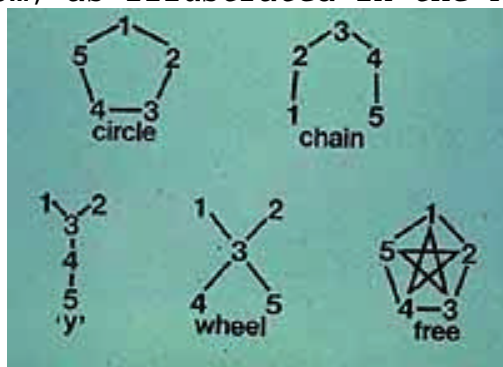
There's an old saying about the importance of never volunteering. The thought is that you end up doing too much work if you volunteer. However, as a leader it is important to realize that ideas raised in discussion have usually been thought through before they're brought up. Persons bringing up an idea are the logical ones for the group to assign to do any work resulting from the suggestion. Why? Because these are the persons most likely to be interested in insuring that it's done correctly. As leader, take advantage of people who volunteer. They may have a great deal to contribute and will be motivated to do their best. This will assure you and your group that your project will be successfully completed.

Social Communication

Put two or more humans in a room and whatever else may happen, they are almost certainly going to start talking to each other. A number of studies have been done concerning the nature of communication in groups. The analysis usually focuses on (1) who's speaking, (2) to whom they're talking, (3) the nature of what's being said, and (4) the conditions under which the communication is occurring. In task-oriented communications a person is either seeking or providing information, opinions, or suggestions. Social-oriented communications involve some degree of friendliness, joking, or laughing, and some area of agreement or disagreement. Of even greater importance to the function of a group, however, is the manner in which the communication is permitted to occur -- the "channels" for communicating that are available.

The limits that channels of communication place upon a group's development were first studied at mid-century. In one experiment five-person groups of college students, out of sight of one another, were given a card with five out of six possible symbols on it. The task was to find the common element on all five cards as rapidly as possible. Obviously, the best strategy here would be to get all five cards to one member of the group.

However, there were certain limits on who could communicate with whom, as illustrated in the Figure. Five different types of



communication systems were used -- the circle, chain, "Y", wheel and free forms. In terms of performing a task, the wheel arrangement led to the quickest solution. Those in the circle group took the longest, but they were happiest with social aspects of their group and performance.

In analyzing this situation, two factors turn out to be important: centrality and satisfaction. Centrality refers to the number of communication links from any one position to another one. Thus in the wheel group, position three is highest on centrality. Satisfaction was negatively related to centrality. That is, the further people were from a central position, the less happy they were with their group.

A college or university administration is usually set up in the form of a modified "wheel" -- in which each "spoke" (numbers 1, 2, 4, and 5 in the Figure) also serve as the hub for people reporting to them. The bigger the college, the more spokes and hubs there will be. Such organizations are set up for the convenience of higher level administrators and to facilitate the organization of communications within the school. Information from individuals is fed upward "through channels" to the boss of each person. Thus a professor -- a generally independent sort of role -- normally "reports" in a very informal sense to a department chair who probably makes requests to a dean, who reports to a provost, who reports to the president. The vice-presidents of a college or university report to the president -- the senior administrative person at the institution. Yet the president must report to a supervising body such as a Board of Regents (or Supervisors). At a state university, the Regents report to the governor who is elected by you and your parents -- so if you're dissatisfied with a grade. . .go talk to your parents! More seriously, in a large university, a professor may be five or six levels of administration removed from the school's Board.

Quality of Communication

Many things influence how well a group communicates. (1) The size of the group is critical. With more members it takes more

messages to reach each person. (2) Distance from the source of a message is also a factor in clear communication. Written memos are more effective than word of mouth. (3) Receiving feedback on one's messages also helps the accuracy of information. If you don't understand something or didn't hear what was said in class, a very effective means of communication is to say, "What?" It tells the speaker you didn't hear or understand. The effect is that the message is repeated, and the source usually speaks louder or more clearly. Other sources interfering with communication (were others talking?) may be reduced. (4) Finally, the status of the speaker also influences whether the message will be heard and what impact it may have. Shortly after President Jimmy Carter was inaugurated President, he held a nation-wide talkathon with any citizen who wanted to call in. President Bill Clinton held "Town Meetings" on selected topics during his years as President. For both men, people were listening for the Presidents' answers, much more so than for the questions of the average citizens who reached either President with their questions or comments.

Some of these same factors also influence a group's productivity:

(1) Size may help in doing some tasks and hinder in others. When a single task must be performed, smaller groups tend to be more effective. Larger tasks, such as putting a person on the moon, can usually be divided into a series of smaller tasks that can be performed in parallel. Such tasks will benefit from involving larger numbers of people and dividing the work load.

(2) Groups typically are not as efficient as individuals, and that may surprise you. But think about it in terms of a simple example. If one person can solve a math problem in an hour, it's unlikely two will be able to solve it in half an hour. Yet they must do so if they are to be as efficient as the single person working the full hour. Could three people solve it 20 minutes? Could 60 solve it in a minute? The obvious problem is the decreasing efficiency of larger groups.

(3) The nature of the task itself is a big factor in finding out what kind of group and what sort of organization within the group will be most effective. Larger problems are inherently divisible into smaller tasks which can be ordered into assignable units and coordinated to contribute to the final solution; other tasks simply cannot be so divided.

(4) Finally, identifying group members and being exclusive about who is allowed to join the group may have an unexpected effect, as suggested in the Figure. Although the group as a whole operates internally in a cooperative manner, an urgency can be created by attaching some extra value to group membership. The Atomic Cities -- Hanford, Washington; Oak

Ridge, Tennessee; Los Alamos, New Mexico -- all benefited from this feature. During the frantic rush to develop the war-ending atomic bomb in World War II, the exclusivity of being part of a secret project probably stimulated everyone to work just that much harder.

Groups Impact Behavior

What impact does a group have on its individual members? We can identify several. First, we find that groups may undergo what is called the risky-shift phenomenon. Individual members may be very conservative in setting a policy for the group. However, when such decisions are made by the group itself, it will tend to endorse a more risky policy. That is, a group will set a more risky goal than would any of the individuals making up the group.

Why does this risky-shift happen? There are several possible answers. Maybe since no one person can be identified as responsible for the group's policy, each individual member feels less restrained. On the other hand, maybe those who want the more risky policy are just more persuasive. Either of these answers may be true, but they don't really explain anything.

Another possibility is that North American societies tend to be competitive; competing with other group members increases our own performance. We tend to reward the successful, and many people would endorse the idea of "nothing ventured, nothing gained." Just listening to a group discussion may cause people to realize that some of their fears, which hold them back from riskier positions, are wrong.

But what happens in situations where group members are already inclined toward a more conservative decision? The group decision tends to be even more conservative -- manifesting a "stingy" shift as one group of psychologists has called it! How do we explain this? Well, think a moment. When each member is leaning toward taking a risk, the group takes an even riskier position. When members are leaning toward caution, the group takes an even more conservative position. A group tends to take a more extreme position than its members would acting alone, but in the same direction as the members' biases; members tend to conform with groups consistent with the individual members' inclinations.

Better Performance in Groups

In the presence of others our individual productivity often increases. In short, we do more when doing it as part of a group. On skates, bikes, or track shoes, we achieve our best racing times not in racing against "the clock," but with another competitor by our side. Why is this so? Does the sound of the other person's breathing as strained as our own, and the sight of his or her efforts somehow increase our own motivation? It's possible that having others around simply arouses us more -- our desire to win is greater in a tough competitive situation. Yet, that can't be all that's involved. How could we then explain the "home court advantage" of which so many basketball coaches speak? The environment is more comfortable, but the home crowd also seems to inspire the local team more.

A third possibility is that the presence of others doesn't simply arouse us, but arouses anxieties within us as to how we'll be evaluated. That would explain the home-court advantage. Clearly basketball players from your college or university are not going to expect to be evaluated as well by the home-court crowd at your cross-state rivals' field house!

Finally, in some situations we may be able to explain the group effects because the group itself depends on the contributions of all its members. Each member senses the need to "do a little extra" to keep the group active since the group offers satisfactions that each member would not get without the group. It is feared that without these activities, the group would cease to exist. Despite the variety of explanations, the existence of group facilitation effects is not to be denied.

Groups and Conformity

Conformity is another behavior found in groups. Its effects can be frightening, as seen in Feature 16.1. Take a few minutes and read it now.

FEATURE 16.1

THE STARS OF STRIPES

Philip G. Zimbardo, at Stanford University in California, set up in the early 1970s what has come to be called the "Prison Study." Eighteen male college students responded to a newspaper advertisement describing a 24-hour-a-day study of prison life. The students were offered 15 dollars per day to be either a "prisoner" or a "guard" for two weeks' time. Before the

experiment was started, each student was tested and interviewed. Given their choice, all 18 stated that they preferred to be a prisoner rather than a guard. The two groups of nine "prisoners" and nine "guards" were selected at random and showed no apparent differences at the start.

The experiment was begun abruptly when the students designated "prisoners" were "arrested" by city police and brought to the place where the study was to be run. From the time of arrest on, the "prisoners" lost all their personal freedoms, just as real prisoners do. They were all dressed the same in white robes and forced to wear stocking caps over their hair. It was hard to tell them apart. The guards wore uniforms including boots, khaki pants and shirt, hat, and sunglasses. All the normal "tools of the trade" were also available, including whistle and Billy club. The guards were told to use no physical force on the "prisoners." Aside from that, the "guards" had almost complete control over each prisoner's life.

And what happened? Even though all 18—nine guards and nine prisoners—knew they were simply playing a role in the interest of studying prison life, things rapidly got out of hand. The guards, who worked in shifts, quickly became increasingly harsh in their behavior toward the prisoners. Soon the prisoners lost their spirit. Before the end of the first week they were beginning to show signs of depression, fits of crying, and even physical sickness. Their condition declined so fast that the experiment had to be stopped after only six days. This experiment demonstrates how role and environment can change human behavior.

What caused otherwise normal college students to lose hope so rapidly when they became "prisoners"? What caused the student "guards" to become so dominating and unreasonable? Other research has identified several possible explanations. One factor involved was deindividuation, or loss of identity. During the student riots in the United States during the late 1960s police tended to use harsher methods acting as a group than they likely would have used as individuals. A more extreme example of loss of individual identity is provided by the Ku Klux Klan, whose members hide their faces under hoods. In losing our ability to identify one another, we seem to lose some pressures to conform.

Another factor related to conformity is the cohesiveness of a group. What if your group seems to be 100 percent in favor of or opposed to a particular activity? It is less likely any one

member will speak out in opposition, as demonstrated by the classic experiment discussed in the Figure.

Finally, as the issue being debated gains importance to the functioning of a group, pressures to conform also increase. Members of a religious group may be very concerned about whether or not prayer is to be allowed in public schools. However, this group is not likely to get involved in whether the nation's boundary is 12 or 100 miles offshore.

Benefits of Groups



To how many groups do you belong? You can probably name at least ten, and you can probably name several more that you'd like to join. Everywhere you look you see humans in groups -- a baseball team, a group of bridge players, a family. We humans seem to be just naturally socially- or group-oriented organisms. Are we? Obviously the answer is

yes, though groups can occasionally cause problems. There are several answers as to why we form groups, no one of which provides all the important information.

Inherited (biological) urges play a large part in the formation of family groups. These urges continue to support the existence of a family unit once children arrive, for both social and sexual reasons. Until the conveniences and social assistance of the modern age were developed, for instance, it 'would have been difficult to raise children by oneself. It was unlikely that a single parent could have done that and also met the regular demands for food, clothing, and shelter. A family constituted an efficient unit for survival.



Without doubt, there's safety in numbers. As a young teenager, remember how much safer you felt when a friend stayed with you while you were babysitting? Being with friends is a good defense. Says one ethologist, "As far as I know, there is not a single (group-oriented) animal species

whose individuals do not press together when alarmed, that is, whenever there is suspicion that a predator is close at hand."

In former times a group of humans was safer than a single person against such common threats as extreme weather conditions or dangerous animal life. In modern times people may still join together against threats from other groups of humans such as happens when communities form citizen patrols to combat criminals operating in their neighborhoods. Protection from common dangers is clearly a benefit of groups.

Our definition of groups referred to achieving "common goals." Many goals can be achieved only through group effort -- a realization that probably occurred to humans very early in their existence. Whether it requires joint physical strength or the intellectual strength of pooled ideas, the common good is clearly enhanced by what can be achieved in groups.

Why are you still in school? While community laws and pressure from your parents may have kept you in high school, what's keeping you in college? Getting a diploma proving that you've graduated from college is crucial to gaining entry into any form of advanced education. In modern society you're lost without a college if you aspire to any but the most menial, repetitive, low-paying jobs. As a member of a college, one of the things that "group" offers you is the reward of a diploma for successful performance. That diploma is a reward -- one of the benefits of group membership.



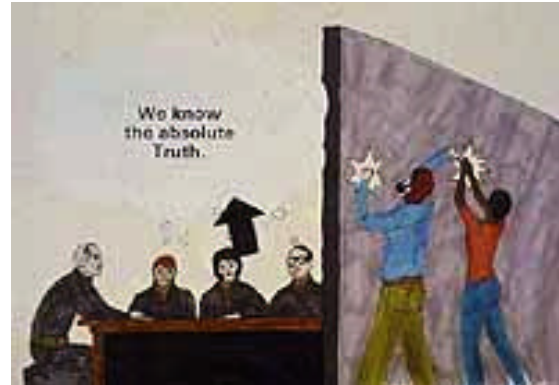
Do you have a job now? Praise from the boss is always rewarding. Are you competing in an athletic group of some sort? Team championships, as well as trophies for exceptional individual performance, are forms of reward that a group may give. These are rewards that are

meaningful and desirable to you precisely because you are a member of that group. All of these factors -- some more, some less tangible -- are part of the many attractions of group membership.

Problems with Groups

You've probably noticed that there are many situations in which groups are quite advantageous, even while we acknowledge that in some situations groups don't work well. Are there

common elements present when group action is not the best approach? Yes, for example, in cases of groupthink and mob action.



In groupthink, two types of illusions can lead to a situation in which groups make incorrect decisions. One is the false impression, or illusion of invulnerability. This means that the group convinces itself that nothing can interfere with the group's ability to achieve its goals.

Second is the illusion of unanimity. This leads each individual in a group to think that everyone in the group is entirely in favor of the group's activities. These two illusions then create pressures for social conformity. The pressures apply to all members of the group, and the result can be groupthink. This is a group-based process of making decisions where the final outcome is a decision or group opinion that is unrealistic. Such decisions can often be quite firmly held and unresponsive to pressures for change.



Other factors also increase the likelihood of creating a groupthink situation: One is having the group isolated from outside forces. Another is having the group faced with making an important decision, especially under time pressure. A third factor is the presence of a

strong and assertive leader who is effective in making his or her views known to the group. Can such processes be prevented in a group? Most definitely they can, as summarized in Table 16.4.

Table 16.4

The Prevention of "Groupthink"

DO THIS:	TO GAIN THIS:
Get reactions of people by outside the group	Lends balance to the group's decisions allowing input from neutral people -- those with nothing to gain or lose from the group
Avoid having the leader state his or her position too early	Avoids causing group members to speak only in support of the leader; also removes a major source of internal pressure to conform.
Don't criticize critics avoiding	Encourages members to think of other possible courses of action, thus the closing out of possible options too early.
Assign a "devil's advocate"	Encourages the group to consider many different courses of action; also gives members practice in thinking critically about group's goals.
Divide into smaller groups for debate	Encourages more participation in group decision making; also permits those afraid to speak in a large group to express their opinions
Have a second meeting "second	Allows for any afterthoughts (or thoughts") to be introduced.

What leads a group of people to become a mob? How does an active meeting change into a riot? We've already reviewed enough psychology for you to be able to answer those questions. You've seen that in groups individual humans may say and do things that they wouldn't do alone or in a small group. Pressures for conformity, the illusions of invulnerability and

unanimity, and the loss of individual identity may all contribute to change a group into a mob.

However, unless the leaders of groups or mobs can use their powers of influence to get social pressures operating, no mob action will take place. A leader must convince each individual in a mob to do whatever is required -- the key information needed to respond to the Think About It.

Think About It

The question: What is a group mind? Does it exist, for instance, when a group becomes a mob?

The answer: A group mind does not exist. A group is always composed of individual organisms. In a group we sometimes seem to lose our identity. Especially if we're listening to a powerful speaker, we may get the impression that everyone agrees with the speaker. We then may begin to feel as if we're under pressure to conform. Social pressures increase, and we may do something as part of a mob that we'd never have done alone. However, a mob is still only a collection of individuals. The group or mob will only do what one or more individual members can be convinced to do.

There are many examples of mob action: (1) Ku Klux Klan activities usually occur at night. Since white sheets cover the participants, the impression of consensus is created. (2) Fraternity and sorority hazing incidents are another example. Active members acting as a group may cause pledges or other persons desiring to join the group to perform unusual -- sometimes socially disapproved -- acts. As long as they think they can "get away with it," those active members will show little restraint. (3) Jim Jones and his commune in Guyana were an example of an isolated group with a very strong leader. Jones wielded great control over the members of his cult. He isolated them from outside influences, and he used his personal skills to reshape the members' understanding of social norms. Over 900 people poisoned their children and committed suicide at his command -- the Jonestown Massacre. Jones, too, died by his own hand, after convincing his followers that death was the best course of action open to them. Though controversial, there is evidence suggesting the same kind of group-wielded power led to the loss of more than 70 worshippers in the Branch Davidian Compound disaster in Waco, TX.

Authority

Authority figures can take many different forms as seen in the Figure. In society as a whole the authority may be a policeman who enforces public laws. In professions such as medicine or psychology the authority may be a legislatively appointed ethics committee. That committee has the power to license a person to practice his or her profession. In a college or university the authority may be a president or a dean of students who is in charge of the institution's student-discipline code. On a job site it may simply be "the boss" who insures that the work gets done in exchange for the money being paid. And in the family, the "authority" is usually the parents.

In this sense the role of authorities is to insure that norms, rules, and customs are followed. As the norms become more burdensome or more limiting of individual freedom, the need for authority to aid in maintaining and encouraging group performance may well increase.

A delinquent is someone who is legally a juvenile but is convicted of behaviors that are criminal for adults. There are many different theories as to the cause of delinquency. Research suggests that juvenile delinquents show EEG abnormalities (see the Physiological Processes Chapter) much more often than the average citizen. However, the abnormal EEG patterns seem most related to aggressiveness, which we discuss in the You and Groups Chapter. Such patterns may be related to neuronal firing patterns, or they might reflect a lower threshold that leads to greater excitability. Or, they may be associated with a pattern of behavior that simply relies too much on aggression as a typical response.

A multi-year study of British children and teenagers by John Bowlby found that most delinquents had experienced little mothering. An emotional bond was not formed at home, or delinquents had spent their first years in an institution, or they had been rotated through many foster homes during childhood. The fathers of delinquent sons were often found to be punitive or aggressive toward their sons, offering them little guidance. When the son sees aggression as a "successful" role model at home, he may adopt that as his life style.

Higher levels of moral development as children grow into adolescents and then adults (see the Emotions Chapter) are associated with less frequency of delinquent behavior. The parents of non-delinquents teach moral behavior and tend to be consistent and firm in disciplining their children. Sometimes, the environment simply offers more reinforcers for delinquency than for honesty.

The Family as a Group

What is a family? First of all it is a group. It has members who identify themselves as belonging to it, who work toward common goals, and who often live close together. The family is a group-based unit of society which facilitates socialization of its children in the mores and norms of the broader society. These functions are aided by influences from beyond the family unit itself -- such as television and peer groups. As a group it also has some unusual features. The link between you and your mother is a direct biological one; you left her body to enter this environment. The link between you and your father is also biological. Genetically it is just as direct.

But what are the family roles of your father and mother? Mothers, as we discuss elsewhere, nurture their children, as yours in all likelihood nurtured you. Yet in modern societies that role is expanding. For the first time in the non-wartime history of North American societies, more than half of the women who could work outside the home do so. By contrast, the role of fathers has tended in the past to be less well-defined, except as that of the traditional bread-winner. Many fathers are now expanding their role in the home, just as women are expanding their role outside it.

While this description applies to many families in North American societies today, it certainly doesn't describe the typical family of a hundred or more years ago. At a time when we depended on agriculture, families tended to be much bigger. Two parents, yes, and even grandparents were often included. And there were many more children, who were necessary to help on the farm -- an arrangement called the extended family.

In modern industrial societies, the family now is smaller. It consists of a man, a woman, and (on average) a fraction less than two children -- called the nuclear family. In the early agricultural economy, the family provided its own food, water, and clothes. It cared for its sick and elderly, and supplied much of its secular and religious education. Many of these functions and roles for the family have now been taken over by other institutions in society.

Socialization

The family is the first training unit of society. It is here that the general values of the society and the specific

beliefs or biases of the family are passed on. Within the family we learn how to love.

Family support during childhood is important for other reasons, too. One theorist suggested the importance of the "looking-glass self." To be confident in social interactions as an adolescent and adult, it is best to have grown up in a supportive environment. Seeing others react positively to us, we are encouraged to develop a positive self-concept.

This analysis is, of course, too simplistic. We know that Freud offered thoughts about the importance of our superego, which develops in mid-childhood. We also know that social-learning theorists stress the importance of imitation. All theories seem to agree that a successful family life helps to predict a successful adulthood.

Influences Beyond the Family

A major source of influence on us beyond the family as a child is our peer group -- the other children with whom we play (see the Early Development Chapter). Modern society limits the other children with whom a child will have most contact. It's the first point at which the importance of others' needs is really felt. It's the time at which the importance of cooperation and mutual respect is registered. The importance of social rules and the rights of others is learned early.

As you read in the Development unit, social influences upon children today include both school and, increasingly, television. In the early 1970s it was estimated that the average American child watches television 33 hours a week. By the age of 18 that youngster, now a young adult, will have spent more time in the home -- but watching television -- than in school!

During the school years the family quickly gives way to the peer group, composed in the main of same-age, same-sex friends, as the major source of influence. Acceptance by that peer group is very important to the ultimate social adjustment of the child. By the teen-age years, peer groups may assume "control" over such things as dating and clothing. But the peer group still has little impact on such matters as political and religious views, which continue to reflect family views closely through high school. Once in college, however, the now young adults start thinking for themselves; a survey of college students doesn't predict the results of U.S. Presidential elections with the accuracy that a simultaneous survey of high school students will do.

The Role of Changing Roles

As the nature of our industrial society changes, so does the nature of the family as an institution. The industrial revolution changed the role of fathers. Even today, many fathers are away from home 8 to 14 hours a day. Recently the need for two parents to work has increased, and as a result the modern role of "working mother" has evolved. In many families with working mothers, men have begun to share in domestic chores.

Day care centers are playing a greater role in raising children. In some parts of the country, hotlines serve "latch-key children" -- the offspring of working parents. During the hours between the end of school and the first parent's return home, these centers offer advice and comfort to any child feeling the need to call.

Financial stresses, the ideal of equal opportunities, and changes in attitudes about roles have helped to bring about another change: a decline in the birth rate. The final result may be more changes in society's view of a "normal" family.

REVIEW

THE GROUP

1. What are the concerns of social psychologists? How do they differ from the interests of sociologists?
2. Describe three essential characteristics of a group.
3. What social functions do groups serve? Provide an example for each function you name.
4. What are the two general types of group operation?
5. Define "norms," and explain how they are related to group and individual behavior.
6. Define "role" and "role conflict" and give examples of each.
7. What is "status" and how is it determined in North American societies?

SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

1. Why is communication important in groups?
2. What is "centrality" and how does it relate to satisfaction within the group?
3. Name some factors in group organization that may affect the clarity of communication within the group.
4. Which of the factors affecting communication in a group may also influence the group's productivity?

GROUPS IMPACT BEHAVIOR

1. Compare and contrast risky-shifts and stingy-shifts.
2. How does being in a group influence individual performance?
3. Describe some of the pressures for conformity that exist within groups. When are these pressures most intense?

BENEFITS OF GROUPS

1. Why do people form groups? List as many reasons as you can and provide an example of how each type of group answers the listed need.
2. What are some of the conditions that lead to "groupthink"? How can you avoid groupthink?
3. Why is authority needed? Under what circumstances is it especially needed?
4. What is delinquency? What are some of its possible causes?

THE FAMILY AS A GROUP

1. What changes have occurred in the family as a functioning unit in society?
2. What functions does the family fulfill for children?
3. What influences other than family affect a person's socialization and values?

ACTIVITIES

1. Watch a litter of puppies at feeding time at a pet store or dog breeder's. You should be able to observe the social hierarchy of the dogs. Try to draw a diagram of the puppies' behavior, indicating which dog is "top dog," which ones fall in the middle, and which is the lowest dog in the hierarchy. You might judge this by observing which dog gets to the food first, and which dogs "bump" other dogs from favored eating spots. Another possibility would be to make the same type of observations at a farm at the time when the chickens are being fed.

2. As a bigger project, develop an organizational chart for your college or university. You should interview various people of authority in the school. Determine to whom these officials report, and construct a diagram according to the answers. If your college/university is a small one, you might consider doing such a chart for your city's school administration. You might also ask your respondents to whom they would turn for advice if

they had serious difficulties with a student. The responses to this question would identify the "informal" leaders in the organization. Does your organizational chart indicate any "trouble spots" where someone is too far removed from the decision-makers?

3. Get two friends to perform a simple motor task, such as stacking ten pennies by picking up each of them one at a time. Have your friends perform the task at different times, and measure how long it takes each of them to do the task ten times from start to finish. Stress how important it is that they do the task as rapidly as possible. Once you have collected these data, bring your friends together and challenge them to race each other. Time them as they do the same task. Now compare the time of each friend when he or she did the task alone with his or her time when competing directly against the other friend. When was each friend faster? Did a group situation influence how your friends performed? What sources of bias might have influenced your friends' performances?

4. Construct a list of as many different groups as you can think of in which the group rewards members in a way that would be meaningless to someone not belonging to the group. For example, a letter grade of "A," while meaningful to a student, would be relatively meaningless to someone who has already finished formal schooling.

5. Identify from your local newspaper or one of the national news magazines a recent situation in which a riot or some sort of mob action occurred. From whatever information you can gather, reconstruct the events that led up to the riotous actions. In terms of our discussion of mobs, can you identify factors tending to make group (mob) members anonymous? What actions sparked the mob's formation? Does the situation fit the factors identified in this text?

6. Take an issue that's bothering you -- a "bone of contention." Diagram the issue from your own point of view, and then do a separate analysis from the point of view of the "other party" -- be it a friend, a brother or sister, or someone else. Considering the social elements involved in what is going on, propose a compromise solution that serves the needs of both sides.

7. Camps or Scouts often offer courses in leadership training. If you have ever attended such a leadership conference or activity, in a follow-up session, analyze the

style(s) of leadership which were described in terms of the points you read in this chapter.

8. Pick a group of which you are a member that has a leader who impresses you positively. Analyze his or her style of leadership in terms of the points about leadership that you have now read about. Pick another group of which you are also a member but one that has a leader with whom you are not very impressed. Also analyze his or her style of leadership. Now compare the analyses you've made. What similarities are there in the two styles of leadership? What differences? What changes in the style of a poor leader would be necessary to make him or her a more effective leader?

INTERESTED IN MORE?

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