

CHAPTER EIGHT – GROUP INFLUENCE

Intellectuals hang out with other intellectuals, and they strengthen one another's intellectual interests.

WHAT IS A GROUP?

Group - Two or more people who, for longer than a few moments, interact with and influence one another and perceive one another as 'us'.

- Marvin Shaw (1981) all groups have one thing in common: they interact.
- Different groups help us meet different human needs - to *affiliate* (to belong), to *achieve* and to *gain a social identity*.

SOCIAL FACILITATION: HOW ARE WE AFFECTED BY THE PRESENCE OF OTHERS?

Co-actors - Co-participants working individually on a non-competitive activity.

THE MERE PRESENCE OF OTHERS

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 responses in the presence of others.

- Also occurs with animals. Ants excavate more sand in the presence of others, chickens eat more grain, and sexually active rat pairs mate more often.

Social facilitation may also hinder the performance. Others' presence diminishes efficiency at learning nonsense syllables, completing a maze and performing complex multiplication problems.

Social arousal facilitates dominant responses, whether right or wrong.

CROWDING: THE PRESENCE OF MANY OTHERS

With others present, people perspire more, breathe faster, tense their muscles more, and have higher blood pressure and faster heart rate. Even a supportive audience may elicit poorer performance on challenging tasks.

WHY ARE WE AROUSED IN THE PRESENCE OF OTHERS?

Evidence supports three possible factors: evaluation apprehension, distraction and mere presence.

Evaluation Apprehension - Concern for how others are evaluating us.

- Cottrell surmised that observers make us apprehensive because we wonder how they are evaluating us. The enhancement of dominant responses is strongest when people think they are being evaluated.
- The self-consciousness we feel when being evaluated can also interfere with behaviours that we perform best automatically.

Driven by Distraction - Sanders, Baron and Moore (1978) carried evaluation apprehension further.

Theorised that when we wonder how co-actors are doing or how an audience is reacting, we become distracted.

Mere Presence - Zajonc believed that the mere presence of others produces some arousal even without evaluation apprehension or arousing distraction.

SOCIAL LOAFING: DO INDIVIDUALS EXERT LESS EFFORT IN A GROUP?

Group members may actually be less motivated when performing additive tasks.

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 - People who benefit from the group but give little in return.

- University of Texas 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 (John Sweeney, 1973).

In social loafing experiments group situations decrease evaluative apprehension. When people are not accountable and cannot evaluate their own efforts, responsibility is diffused across all group members.

In social facilitation experiments increases evaluation concerns, social facilitation occurs; when being lost in a crowd decreases evaluation concerns, social loafing occurs.

- To motivate group members, one strategy is to make individual performance identifiable.
- Studies show that people in collectivist cultures do exhibit less social loafing than do individualist cultures.
- People may be less motivated to assist when their efforts are not individually monitored and rewarded. "A paradise for parasites".
- People in groups loaf less when the task is challenging, appealing or involving.
 - o Challenging - People perceive their efforts as indispensable.

- Groups also loaf less when their members are friends or they feel identified with or indispensable to their group. Even just expecting to interact with someone again serves to increase effort on team projects.

DEINDIVIDUATION: WHEN DO PEOPLE LOSE THEIR SENSE OF SELF IN GROUPS?

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 – people may commit acts that range from a mild lessening of restraint, to impulsive self-gratification to destructive social explosions.

Deindividuation – Loss of self-awareness and evaluation apprehension; occurs in group situations that foster responsiveness to group norms, good or bad.

Mullen (1986) – The bigger the mob, the more its members lose self-awareness and become willing to commit atrocities.

Increased perceived anonymity, increases the willingness to cheat or behave selfishly. Anonymity feeds incivility.

Postmes and Spears (1998) – concluded that being anonymous makes one less self-conscious, more group-conscious, and more responsive to cues present in the situation, whether negative or positive.

There is a self-reinforcing pleasure in acting impulsively while observing others doing like-wise.

Research by Ed Diener (1980) and Steven Prentice-Dunn and Ronald Rogers (1980, 1989) revealed that unself-conscious, deindividuated people are less restrained, less self-regulated, more likely to act without thinking about their own values, and more responsive to the situation.

GROUP POLARISATION: DO GROUPS INTENSIFY OUR OPINIONS?

Group discussion often strengthens members' initial inclinations.

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

Group decisions are usually riskier – “risky shift phenomenon”. Occurs not only when a group decides by consensus; after a brief discussion, individuals too, will alter their decisions.

Risky shift is not universal.

Moscovici and Zavalloni (1969) – Theorised that discussion typically strengthens the average inclination of group members.

“**Accentuation**” effect – Over time, initial differences among groups of college students become accentuated. (In education settings).

Informational Influence – Group discussion elicits a pooling of ideas, most of which favour the dominant viewpoint. Ideas may include persuasive arguments that some group members had not previously considered.

- Active participation in discussion produces more attitude change than does passive listening.

Normative Influence – We want to evaluate our opinions and abilities by comparing our views with others'.

- **Social comparison** – Evaluating one's opinions and abilities by comparing oneself with others.
- **Pluralistic ignorance** – A false impression of what most other people are thinking or feeling, or how they are responding.
- We are most persuaded by people in our “reference groups” – groups we identify with.

GROUP THINK: DO GROUPS HINDER OR ASSIST GOOD DECISIONS?

Group Think – The mode of thinking that persons engage in when concurrence-seeking becomes so dominant in a cohesive in-group that it tends to override realistic appraisal of alternative courses of action.

- Janis believe that the soil from which groupthink sprouts includes:
 - o An amiable, cohesive group,
 - o Relative isolation of the group from dissenting viewpoints,
 - o A directive leader who signals what decision they favour.
- Eight symptoms: Are a collective form of dissonance reduction as group members try to maintain their positive group feeling when facing a threat.
 - 1) An illusion of invulnerability – Excessive optimism that blinded them to warnings of danger.
 - 2) Unquestioned belief in the group's morality – Group members assume the inherent morality of their group and ignore ethical and moral issues.
 - 3) Rationalisation – They discount challenge by collectively justifying their decisions.

- 4) Stereotyped view of opponent - Consider their enemies too evil to negotiate with or too weak and unintelligent to defend themselves against the planned initiative.
 - 5) Conformity pressure - Group members rebuffed those who raised doubts about the group's assumptions and plans, at times not by argument but by personal sarcasm.
 - 6) Self-censorship - To avoid uncomfortable disagreements, members withheld or discounted their misgivings.
 - 7) Illusion of unanimity - Self-censorship and pressure not to puncture the consensus create an illusion of unanimity.
 - 8) Mindguards - Some members protect the group from information that would call into question the effectiveness or morality of its decision.
- 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.
 - Several heads critiquing one another can also allow the group to avoid some forms of cognitive bias and produce some higher quality ideas.
 - Encouraging people to debate ideas appears to simulate ideas and to extend creative thinking beyond the brainstorming session.
 - Three ways to enhance group brainstorming: Combine group and solitary brainstorming, have group members interact by writing, incorporate electronic brainstorming.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE MINORITY: HOW DO INDIVIDUALS INFLUENCE THE GROUP?

More influential than a minority that wavers is a minority that sticks to its position (consistency).

Experiments show that non-conformity, especially persistent nonconformity, is often painful and that being a minority in a group can be unpleasant.

Minority slowness effect - A tendency for people with minority views to express them less quickly than do people in the majority.

Compared to majority influence that often triggers unthinking agreement, minority influence stimulates a deeper processing of arguments, often with increased creativity (Kenworthy & others, 2008; Martin & others, 2007, 2008).

Any behaviour by a minority that conveys self-confidence 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.

Task leadership - Leadership that organises work, sets standards and focuses on goals.

Social leadership - Leadership that builds teamwork, mediates conflict, and offers support.

People tend to respond more positively to a decision if they are given a chance to voice their opinions during the decision-making process.

Effective leaders represent, enhance and champion a groups identity.

Transformational leadership - Leadership that, enabled by a leader's vision and inspiration, exerts significant influence.

- Articulate high standards, inspire people to share their vision, and offer personal attention.