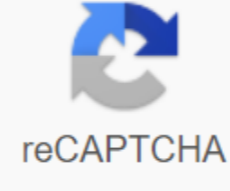


## Groupthink vs group polarization



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Learning goals Illustrate when the presence of others is likely to lead to groupthink, social facilitation or social loaf When in group settings, we are often influenced by the thoughts, feelings and behaviors of the people around us. Whether it's due to regulatory or informational social impact, groups have the power to influence individuals. Another phenomenon of group matching is groupthink. Groupthink is a change of opinion by group members to align with what they believe is the group's consensus (Yanis, 1972). In group situations, a group often takes steps that people won't perform outside the group's setting because groups make more extreme decisions than individuals. What's more, groupthink can discourage opposing trains of thought. This elimination of various opinions contributes to a faulty decision on the part of the group. There have been several cases of groupthink in the U.S. government. One example occurred when the U.S. led a small coalition of countries to invade Iraq in March 2003. This invasion occurred because a small group of advisers and former President George W. Bush were convinced that Iraq represented a significant threat to terrorism with a large stockpile of weapons of mass destruction at its disposal. While some of these individuals may have had some doubts about the authenticity of the information available to them at the time, in the end the group arrived to consensus that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction and represented a significant threat to national security. It later came to light that Iraq did not have weapons of mass destruction, but not until the invasion was well underway. As a result, 6,000 U.S. soldiers were killed and many more civilians were killed. How did the Bush administration come to its conclusions? Here's a video colin Powell discusses the information he had, 16 years after his famous United Nations speech in which he talked about how Iraq certainly had materials to build weapons of mass destruction (Colin Powell says the U.N. presentation on Iraq Fell on Me, 2017). Do you see evidence of groupthink? Why is groupthink happening? There are several reasons for groupthink that makes it warned. When a group is very cohesive or has a strong sense of connection, maintaining group harmony can become more important to the group than making obg strong decisions. If the group's leader is a directive and makes his opinion known, it could prevent panel members from disagreeing with the leader. If a group is isolated from hearing alternative or new perspectives, groupthink may be more likely. How do you know when groupthink happens? There are several symptoms of groupthink, including the following: perceiving the group as invulnerable or invincible—believing that it cannot do wrong, believing that the group is morally correct self-censorship on the part of the group members, how to withhold information to avoid violating the group consensus on the suppression of the opinions of dissenting members of the group to protect the leader of the group from dissenting views that perceive the illusion of unanimity among members of the group who have stereotypes or negative attitudes towards the out-of-group or others views (Yanis, 1972) Given the causes and symptoms of groupthink, how can it be avoided? There are several strategies that can improve group decision-making, including finding outside opinions, voting privately, withholding the leader's positional statements until all members of the group express their views, conducting research from all perspectives, weighing the costs and benefits of all options, and developing a contingency plan (Yanis, 1972; Mitchell and Eckstein, 2009). Another phenomenon that occurs within group settings is group polarization. Group polarization (Teger &amp; Pruitt, 1967) is enhancing the original group attitude after discussing views in the group. That is, if the group initially favors the view, then after the discussion, the group consensus is likely a stronger endorsement of the viewpoint. Conversely, if the group were initially opposed to the point of view, a group discussion would most likely have led to increased opposition. Group polarization explains many of the actions taken by groups that will not be carried out by individuals. Group polarization can be observed at political conventions when party platforms support individuals who, when not in the group, refuse to support them. In recent years, some theorists have argued that group polarization may be partly responsible for extreme political partisanship that seems ubiquitous in today's society. Given that people can independently choose the media that best fit their own political views, they are less likely to face opposing viewpoints. Over time, this leads to strengthening one's own point of view and hostile attitudes and behavior towards those with different political ideals. Notably, political polarization leads to open levels of discrimination that par with or perhaps exceed racial discrimination (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015). A more everyday example is the group's discussion of how attractive someone is. Does your opinion change if you find someone attractive, but your friends disagree? If your friends digitize, can you then find this person even more attractive? Social traps refer to situations that arise when individuals or groups of people behave in ways that are not in their best interests and that can have negative, long-term consequences. However, once established, the social trap is very difficult to escape. After World War II, for example, the United States and the former Soviet Union engaged in a nuclear arms race. Although the presence of nuclear weapons is not the best for either party Once the arms race began, each country felt the need to continue producing nuclear weapons to protect itself from the other. Imagine having just been assigned a group project with other students you barely know. Everyone in your group will get the same class. Are you the type that will do most of the work even if the final class is shared? Or are you more likely to do less work because you know others will pick up the slas? Social loaf involves reducing individual output to tasks where contributions were combined. Because each person's efforts are not evaluated, people may become less motivated to perform well. Carau and Williams (1993) and Simms and Nichols (2014) reviewed research on the social loaf and discerned when it was the least likely to happen. The researchers noted that a social loaf could be enslaved if, among other situations, people knew that their work would be evaluated by a manager (in workplace) or an instructor (in class), or if a manager or instructor required team members to complete self-esteem. The likelihood of a social loaf in student working groups increases as the size of the group increases (Shepperd & Taylor, 1999). According to Kamau and Williams (1993), college students were the population most likely to engage in a social loaf. Their study also found that women and participants in collectivistic cultures are less likely to engage in a social loaf, explaining that their group orientation can lead to this. College students could bypass social loaf or free skating by suggesting their professors use the flocking method to form groups. Harding (2018) compared groups of students who selected to groups for lessons on their own, with those who were formed by flocking, which involves assigning students to groups that have similar schedules and motivations. Not only did she find that students reported less free riding, but that they were also better able to perform group tasks compared to those whose groups were independently selected. Interestingly, the opposite of a social loaf occurs when the task is complex and complex (Bond & Titus, 1983; Geen, 1989). In a group setting, for example, a student working group, if your individual performance cannot be assessed, there is less pressure for you to do well, and therefore less anxiety or physiological arousal (LATANE, Williams, & Harkens, 1979). This puts you in a relaxed state in which you can perform your best if you choose (Zajonc, 1965). If the task is difficult, many people feel motivated and believe that their group needs their input to do well on a complex project (Jackson & Williams, 1985). Deindividuation Another way that being part of a group can affect behavior is found in cases where deindividuating. Deindividuation refers to situations in which a person may feel a sense of feeling and therefore reduced accountability and a sense of self-ownership when among others. Deindividuation often indicates cases where mobs or rebellious behaviors occur (Zimbardo, 1969), but research on the subject and the role that deindividuation plays in such behavior led to inconsistent results (as discussed in Granström, Guvå, Hylander, & Rosander, 2009). The following table shows the types of social impact you learned about in this module. Table 1. Types of Social Impact Type match description social impact Change your behavior to go along with the group, even if you disagree with the Compliance Group Occurs along with the request or requirement of regulatory social impact Compliance group rule, to match, feel good, and be taken by the Information Social Impact Group Compliance Group Rule group rule, driven by the belief that the group is competent and has the correct information Obedience Changing your behavior to please the authorities or avoid the aversive effects of Groupthink The tendency to prioritize group cohesion over critical thinking can lead to poor decision-making; more likely to occur when unanimity is perceived among the group Group Polarization Strengthening original group attitudes after discussing views in the social assistance group Improved Performance, when the audience is looking against when a person performs behavior alone Social lopherization Loads of lesser human effort, which works in a group because individual performance cannot be evaluated separately from the group, thus causing decreased performance on easy tasks Consider examples of social impact and groupthink and review the concepts you learned earlier about conformity and obedience in the following CrashCourse video: You can view the transcript for Social Impact: Psychology crash course #38 here (opens in a new window). The Ash effect: the group majority influences a person's judgment, even when this judgment is an inaccurate group polarization: strengthening the original group attitude after discussing views in a group: group members changing their minds to match what they believe is the informational social impact of group consensus: compliance with the group rule caused by the belief that the group is competent and has the right informational regulatory social impact: compliance with the group norm, that meets the group norm, feel good, and be taken by a group of obedience: changing behaviors to please a power figure or avoid the aversive effects of social assistance: improving productivity when an audience is watching versus when a person performs behavior alone social loaf: loads less effort by a person working in a group because individual performance cannot be assessed group, which leads to poor performance on easy tasks Have you had an idea to improve this content? 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