



# The Psychology of Groups

## Instructor Manual

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The purpose of this module is to give students a basic understanding the psychology of groups. It emphasizes the importance that groups play in individuals' lives, including our need to belong and how the groups we belong to impact our identity. Forming groups is discussed as well as the effects that groups have on our motivation, performance, and decision-making. Instructors are provided with discussion questions and activities to help lead a successful class.

## Learning Objectives

### Relevant APA Learning Objectives (Version 2.0)

1. Students will use scientific reasoning to interpret psychological phenomena (2.1).
2. Students will demonstrate psychology information literacy (2.2).
3. Students will engage in innovative and integrative thinking and problem solving (2.3).
4. Students will build and enhance interpersonal relationships (3.2).
5. Students will adopt values that build community at local, national, and global levels (3.3).
6. Students will interact effectively with others (4.3).
7. Students will enhance teamwork capacity (5.4).

### Content Specific Learning Objectives

1. Review the evidence that suggests humans have a fundamental need to belong to groups.

2. Compare the sociometer model of self-esteem to a more traditional view of self-esteem.
3. Use theories of social facilitation to predict when a group will perform tasks slowly or quickly (e.g., students eating a meal as a group, workers on an assembly line, or in a study group).
4. Summarize the methods used by Latané, Williams, and Harkins to identify the relative impact of social loafing and coordination problems on group performance.
5. Describe how groups change over time.
6. Apply the theory of groupthink to a well-known decision-making group, such as the group of advisors responsible for planning the Space Shuttle Challenger operation.
7. List and discuss the factors that facilitate or impede group performance and decision-making.
8. Develop a list of recommendations that, if followed, would minimize the possibility of groupthink developing in a group.

## Abstract

This module assumes that a thorough understanding of people requires a thorough understanding of groups. Each of us is an autonomous individual seeking our own objectives, yet we are also members of groups—groups that constrain us, guide us, and sustain us. Just as each of us influences the group and the people in the group, so, too, do groups change each one of us. Joining groups satisfies our need to belong, gain information and understanding through social comparison, define our sense of self and social identity, and achieve goals that might elude us if we worked alone. Groups are also practically significant, for much of the world's work is done by groups rather than by individuals. Success sometimes eludes our groups, but when group members learn to work together as a cohesive team their success becomes more certain. People also turn to groups when important decisions must be made, and this choice is justified as long as groups avoid such problems as group polarization and groupthink.

## Class Design Recommendations

This module can be taught in one 90-minute class, or two shorter class periods (45 to 60 minutes). If it is taught in two class periods, we suggest stopping day one after completing the Motivation and Performance class discussion. Please also refer to the Noba PowerPoint

slides that accompany this outline and the lecture framework.

## Overview

- Introduction
- The Psychological Significance of Groups
  - The need to belong
  - Affiliation in groups
  - Identity and membership
  - Evolutionary advantages of group living
- Motivation and Performance
  - Social facilitation in groups
  - Social loafing
  - Teamwork
- Group Development
  - Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing, and Adjourning phases
- Making decisions in groups
  - Group polarization
  - Common knowledge effect
  - Groupthink
- You and your groups

## Module Outline

Introduction: Social psychologists study groups, organizations, communities, and even entire

cultures. People are most often in groups, which has a profound impact on them. The basic question of this module asks: What is the psychological significance of groups?

## Psychological Significance of Groups

- *The need to belong*: Humans have a need to belong, and to satisfy this need they join groups, live with other people, or interact socially. People respond negatively when the need to belong is not fulfilled.
  - *Ostracism*: when one or more individuals is excluded from a group by reducing or eliminating contact with others—usually by ignoring, shunning, or explicitly banishing the individual from the group.
- *Affiliation in groups*: Groups provide members with social information, assistance, and social support.
  - *Theory of social comparison* (Festinger, 1950; 1954): People join with others to evaluate the accuracy of their personal beliefs and attitudes.
  - *Downward social comparison*: To maintain a sense of self-worth, people seek out and compare themselves to the less fortunate.
- *Identity and membership*: People define who they are according to inherent qualities as well as their memberships in groups. We identify with the groups we belong to and we allow those groups to enhance our sense of self-worth. In fact, a dip in self-esteem might indicate a forthcoming exclusion from a group.
  - *Social identity theory*: a theoretical analysis of group processes and intergroup relations that assumes groups influence their members' self-concepts and self-esteem, particularly when individuals categorize themselves as group members and identify with the group.
  - *Collective self esteem*: feelings of self worth that are based on evaluations of relationships with others and membership in social groups.
  - *Sociometer model*: a conceptual analysis of self-evaluation processes theorizing that self-esteem functions to psychologically monitor one's degree of inclusion and exclusion in social groups.
- *Evolutionary advantages of group living*: Groups are so advantageous for individuals, we might be biologically prepared to seek membership and avoid isolation. Natural selection

has led to humans being prone to group membership.

## Motivation and Performance

- *Social facilitation in groups*: Triplett (1898) studied children's performance in a game when alone or with a partner and found that children perform better when paired up.
  - *Social facilitation*: improvement in task performance that occurs when people work in the presence of other people.
  - *Social facilitation depends on the task*: Zajonc (1965) discovered that people only perform better in groups when the task is well-learned or instinctive. Task difficulty, evaluation apprehension, and distractions all play a role in how people perform around or with others.
- *Social loafing*: While groups tend to outperform individuals, they also tend to be underachievers. People working in groups need to coordinate their activities and contributions, although this often doesn't occur. Social loafing is the reduction of individuals' efforts when working in groups compared to when they work alone.
- *Teamwork*: There are many examples of social loafing, from sales to schoolwork. Groups can overcome this with teamwork—the process by which members of the team combine their knowledge, skills, abilities, and other resources through a coordinated series of actions to produce an outcome. There are two key ingredients to effective teamwork: a shared mental representation of the task and group unity.
  - *Shared mental model*: knowledge, expectations, conceptualizations and other cognitive representations that members of a group have in common pertaining to the group and its members, tasks, procedures and resources.
  - *Group cohesion*: the solidarity or unity of a group resulting from the development of strong and mutual interpersonal bonds among members and group-level forces that unify the group, such as a shared commitment to group goals. Cohesion improves teamwork. Performance quality influences cohesion more than cohesion influences performance.

Group Development: Tuckman's (1965) theory of group development states that groups go through 5 stages of development when becoming an effective team.

- *Forming* phase: members become oriented toward one another.

- *Storming* phase: members find themselves in conflict, and some solution is sought to improve the group environment.
- *Norming* phase: standards for behavior and roles develop that regulate behavior.
- *Performing* phase: the group has reached a point where it can work as a unit to achieve desired goals.
- *Adjourning* phase: the group disbands.
- Moreland and Levine's (1982) model of group socialization states that people gradually become a part of the group, beginning with investigation, followed by acceptance and socialization into a full-fledged member with commitments.

Making Decisions in Groups: Most often a group decision is superior to an individual's because more viewpoints, knowledge, and a consensus contribute to it. However, decisions in groups are not always superior.

- *Group polarization*: the tendency for members of a deliberating group to move to a more extreme position, with the direction of the shift determined by the majority or average of the members' predeliberation preferences.
- *Common knowledge effect*: the tendency for groups to spend more time discussing information most of the members know (shared information) and less time examining information that only a few members know.
- *Groupthink*: a set of negative group-level processes—including illusions of invulnerability, self-censorship, and pressure to conform—that occur when highly cohesive groups seek concurrence when making a decision. Four group-level factors combine to cause groupthink:
  - *Cohesion*: pressure and conformity rise within cohesive groups
  - *Isolation*: working as a group alone or confidentially
  - *Biased leadership*: asserts authority and determines the agenda
  - *Decisional stress*: groups work to minimize stress, resulting in poor decisions

You and Your Groups: Groups should strive to emphasize open discussion among members while admitting the possibility of failure. Groups should review goals, teamwork, and decision-making strategies as well as remember the friendships that keep the group enjoyable. Groups provide the base for well-being.

## Difficult Terms

Collective self-esteem

Common knowledge effect

Downward social comparison

Group cohesion

Group development phases (forming, storming, norming, performing, adjourning)

Group polarization

Groupthink

Ostracism

Shared mental model

Social comparison

Social facilitation

Social identity theory

Social loafing

Sociometer model

## Lecture Frameworks

Overview: Begin the class period with a warmup discussion wherein students create a list of the groups they belong to. Follow this with direct instruction and discussion of the psychological significance of groups. Next, have students complete an activity on group problem-solving and reflect on their group's ability to work together. The Challenger disaster is covered via an online video clip and students work to apply the concept of groupthink to explain it. Conclude the module with direct instruction on "you and your groups."

- **Warmup Discussion:** Have students generate a list of all the groups they belong to. Come together as a class and discuss their lists. Many students will see they belong to more groups than they originally might have thought. Use this discussion to introduce the module and, subsequently, the overview of the topics.
- **Direct Instruction and Discussion—Psychological Significance of Groups:** Refer to the PowerPoint slides to introduce the psychological significance of groups. The discussion questions will lead the class through each of the major significances: the need to belong, affiliation in groups, identity and membership, and the evolutionary advantages of group living.
- **Activity—Group Problem Solving:** For this activity, divide the class into teams to solve a candle-mounting problem. After solving the problem, each student evaluates how well the

team worked together using the CAT “Group Work Evaluations.”

- **Complete the Group Work Evaluations CAT:** This CAT gives students a chance to reflect on group work. It is a simple questionnaire used to collect feedback about their experience with cooperative learning. Use the group evaluation form in the PowerPoint slides to administer this CAT.
- **Direct Instruction and Discussion—Motivation and Performance:** Have a class-wide discussion that reflects on motivation and performance in groups, including social facilitation, social loafing, and teamwork. Direct instruction supplements the class discussion (Refer to the PowerPoint slides). Refer back to the group work completed in the candle-mounting exercise and the CAT to discuss these concepts. Follow-up discussion questions include:
  - Did you observe social facilitation in your group problem-solving?
  - Did you observe social loafing in your group problem-solving?
    - Preface this discussion with a disclaimer that group behavior concepts, such as social loafing, are in fact normal. Try and buffer any negative feelings surrounding students' individual performance by reiterating that social loafing is within the realm of normal human behavior. Ask students who self-identified social loafing in their own performance to explain what factors contributed to this, and what factors encouraged them to be more engaged in group work.
  - Did you have a shared mental model or group cohesion in your group problem-solving team? What effect did these have?
- **Direct Instruction—Group Development:** Present the smart graphic as a visual aid representing the phases of group development (forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning).
- **Direct Instruction—Making Decisions in Groups:** Refer to the PowerPoint slides to introduce the topic of making decisions in groups. Explain to students how decision-making in groups is not always superior to decisions made individually. Cover the topics of group polarization and the common knowledge effect.
- **Activity—Groupthink:** For this activity, show students a short YouTube video on the space shuttle Challenger disaster. The video shows a real-life example of how powerful and devastating groupthink can be. Have students apply the concept of groupthink to explain how the disaster took place.



- **Wrap-up:** Refer to the PowerPoint slides to conclude the module and cover the topic of “you and your groups.” Describe how groups should strive to emphasize open discussion among members while admitting the possibility of failure. Tie this discussion back to the groups students listed being a part of and explain how they can make their groups stronger and more successful.
- **Conclusion CAT:** Student-generated Test Questions: In this CAT, have students prepare two or three potential test questions as well as the correct responses for those questions. This should help to find out what was most memorable for students, and can be used to clarify misunderstandings.

## Activities & Demonstrations

Activity—Group Problem Solving: For this activity, divide the class into teams to solve the candle-mounting problem. After solving the problem, each student evaluates how well the team worked together using the CAT “Group Work Evaluations” described below. Follow up with a class-wide discussion that reflects on motivation and performance in groups, including social facilitation, social loafing, and teamwork. Supplement the class discussion with direct instruction (refer to the PowerPoint slides).

- Time: 20 minutes
- Materials: matchbox with matches, thumb tacks, birthday candle
- Directions:
  1. Divide the class into teams of 6 or 7. You want larger groups (to facilitate possible social loafing).
  2. Using the materials provided (matchbox with matches, thumb tacks, birthday candle) mount the candle on a bulletin board. Allow teams 5 to 10 minutes to solve the problem. Have them work with the actual materials then mount their solution to a wall.
  3. Continue on to the CAT described below.

Complete the Group Work Evaluations CAT: This CAT gives students a chance to reflect on group work. It is a simple questionnaire used to collect feedback about their experience with cooperative learning. Use the group evaluation form in the PowerPoint slides to run this CAT.

- Time: 15 minutes
- Materials: PowerPoint slide or hard copy of evaluation form
- Directions:
  1. Have students complete the group evaluation form about their experience working on the candle-mounting problem.
  2. Facilitate a class-wide discussion and review the content regarding motivation and performance in groups. (Refer to the PowerPoint slides).

Angelo, T. A., & Cross, P. K. (1993). *Classroom assessment techniques: A handbook for college teachers*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Activity—Groupthink: For this activity, have students watch a short YouTube video on the space shuttle Challenger disaster. The video shows a real-life example of how powerful and devastating groupthink can be. Students work to apply the concept of groupthink to explain how the disaster took place.

- Time: 30 minutes
- Materials: Internet connection
- Directions
  1. Show students the YouTube video “Space Shuttle Challenger Disaster- Short documentary HD” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYX35Z\\_L-dw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYX35Z_L-dw). (The PowerPoint slide also contains a link to the video.)
  2. Break the class into teams of three students. Distribute to each team a copy of the online article “The Space Shuttle Challenger Disaster: A Study in Organizational Ethics” (<http://pirate.shu.edu/~mckenndo/pdfs/The Space Shuttle Challenger Disaster.pdf>) as well as a copy of the “Report of the Presidential Commission on the Space Shuttle Challenger Accident” (<http://science.ksc.nasa.gov/shuttle/missions/51-l/docs/rogers-commission/table-of-contents.html>). Hard copies are optional, or you can send the documents via links and have students open them on computers or smart devices. Have the teams read the article, view sections of the report, and answer the questions located here: <http://pirate.shu.edu/~mckenndo/ethics-Groupthink examples.htm>
  3. Gather the class together to review the teams’ answers to the questions. Cover the 4 group-level factors that combine to cause groupthink (cohesion, isolation, biased leadership, and decisional stress) using the PowerPoint slide.

**Activity—Student Generated Test Questions CAT:** Student-generated Test Questions: In this CAT, have students prepare two or three potential test questions, including the correct responses to those questions. This is helpful to find out what was most memorable for students, and can help clarify misunderstandings.

- Time: 10-15 minutes
- Materials: paper and pen for students
- Directions:
  1. Break class into teams of 3 or 4 people.
  2. Have students write 3 test questions about the information from the module. Students should also write complete and accurate answers to the questions they have written.
  3. Collect the questions and review them, either with the whole class or at home. Make note of the topics that are asked about, as these are likely the most memorable for students. Also make note of any misconceptions students have. You can address these at the end of class, during discussion, or in the next class period.

## Additional Activities

Forsyth, D. (2011). Group Dynamics. In R. Miller, Emily Balcetis, S. Burns, D. Daniel, B. Saville, & W. Woody (Eds.), *Promoting Student Engagement: Volume 2: Activities, Exercises and Demonstrations for Psychology Courses*. (pp. 79-82) Washington DC, Society for the Teaching of Psychology, American Psychological Association.

- This activity can be completed in class. “The Task Challenge Activity” helps students recognize how tasks require groups to combine their inputs in different ways based on the task itself. The process involves groups of students working on puzzles and problems together. Seven other additional activities are summarized in this eBook chapter that also work on group dynamics.
- Link: <http://teachpsych.org/Resources/Documents/ebooks/p...>

Zadro, L., & Williams, K. (2006). The “O” train: Teaching the power of ostracism.

- In this activity students create a makeshift train using desks in the classroom. Students

who are the targets of ostracism occupy the center seat of each row, and are flanked by students who play the sources of ostracism. Overall, the activity requires about 20 minutes and concludes with class discussion.

- Link: <http://www.socialpsychology.org/action/2006honor1....>

## Discussions Points

1. List all the groups you belong to. Think about groups that involve your family, friends, and peers (school and/or work).
  - The discussion here is aimed to get students warmed up thinking about groups. Their lists may be long; however, it is expected that they will add to their lists during the class-wide discussion. Use this discussion to introduce the module and the subsequent overview of topics.
2. Can you think of a time you were ostracized from a group? What happened and how did you feel?
  - Students can discuss any experiences they have had. Many will talk about adolescence and peer groups, and some might talk about work situations. They may have strong feelings, so be ready to listen but keep the conversation on track.
3. Look at your list of groups. Choose one of your favorites. What support does this group give you? How does the group affirm your personal beliefs and attitudes?
  - Try to probe students to think deeply about their group memberships and the good and bad they might provide. For example, you could ask some students to talk about fraternity or sorority membership, or you could ask student athletes to talk about their role on their team.
4. Who are you? How would you describe yourself to a stranger? Looking at your group list, does membership in a particular group make you feel proud or ashamed?
  - Give students time to first explore the question, "Who are you?" Many students will include groups as part of their answer ("I am a wife, student, teammate"). Highlight those responses first. Did anyone list a group that made him or her feel ashamed? Ask them why or why not.
5. What are some of the evolutionary advantages to being in a group? What advantage did it

give us in the past (early on) and what advantage does it give us in modern times?

- Start this discussion by talking about the past. From an evolutionary perspective, why were groups of people safer (i.e., how did groups promote survival?) than individual people? Challenge students to think about why we still prefer groups today. What dangers do we face that are negated by group membership?
6. Think of an example of social loafing that you have experienced (maybe at school or work). Share your example with a neighboring student. What might you do to combat social loafing in your groups in the future?
- Many students will talk about group work in school. Try to get them to think beyond this example, as it is the most common. Focus the conversation on ways they can combat social loafing, for example, dividing tasks up so each group member takes on personal responsibility and accountability.

## Outside Resources

**Audio: This American Life. Episode 109 deals with the motivation and excitement of joining with others at summer camp.**

<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/109/notes-on-camp>

**Audio: This American Life. Episode 158 examines how people act when they are immersed in a large crowd.**

<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/158/mob-mentality>

**Audio: This American Life. Episode 61 deals with fiascos, many of which are perpetrated by groups.**

<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/61/fiasco>

**Audio: This American Life. Episode 74 examines how individuals act at conventions, when they join with hundreds or thousands of other people who are similar in terms of their avocations or employment.**

<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/74/conventions>

**Forsyth, D. (2011). Group Dynamics. In R. Miller, E. Balci, S. Burns, D. Daniel, B. Saville,**

**& W. Woody (Eds.), Promoting student engagement: Volume 2: Activities, exercises and demonstrations for psychology courses. (pp. 28-32) Washington, DC: Society for the Teaching of Psychology, American Psychological Association.**

<http://teachpsych.org/ebooks/pse2011/vol2/index.php>

**Forsyth, D.R. (n.d.) Group Dynamics: Instructional Resources.**

<https://facultystaff.richmond.edu/~dforsyth/gd/GDResources2014.pdf>

**Journal Article: The Dynamogenic Factors in Pacemaking and Competition presents Norman Triplett's original paper on what would eventually be known as social facilitation.**

<http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Triplett/>

**Resources for the Teaching of Social Psychology.**

<http://jfmueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/crow/group.htm>

**Social Psychology Network Student Activities**

<http://www.socialpsychology.org/teaching.htm#student-activities>

**Society for Social and Personality Psychology**

<http://www.spsp.org>

**Tablante, C. B., & Fiske, S. T. (2015). Teaching social class. *Teaching of Psychology*, 42, 184-190. doi:10.1177/0098628315573148** The abstract to the article can be found at the following link, however your library will likely provide you access to the full text version.

<http://top.sagepub.com/content/42/2/184.abstract>

**Video: Flash mobs illustrate the capacity of groups to organize quickly and complete complex tasks. One well-known example of a pseudo-flash mob is the rendition of "Do Re Mi" from the Sound of Music in the Central Station of Antwerp in 2009.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7EYAUazLI9k>

**Web: Group Development - This is a website developed by James Atherton that provides detailed information about group development, with application to the lifecycle of a typical college course.**

[http://www.learningandteaching.info/teaching/group\\_development.htm](http://www.learningandteaching.info/teaching/group_development.htm)

**Web: Group Dynamics- A general repository of links, short articles, and discussions examining groups and group processes, including such topics as crowd behavior, leadership, group structure, and influence.**

<http://donforsythgroups.wordpress.com/>

**Web: Stanford Crowd Project** - This is a rich resource of information about all things related to crowds, with a particular emphasis on crowds and collective behavior in literature and the arts.

<http://press-media.stanford.edu/crowds/main.html>

**Working Paper: Law of Group Polarization**, by Cass Sunstein, is a wide-ranging application of the concept of polarization to a variety of legal and political decisions.

[http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=199668](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=199668)

## Evidence-Based Teaching

Riggio, H. R., & Garcia, A. L. (2009) The power of situations: Jonestown and the fundamental attribution error. *Teaching of Psychology*, 36, 108-112. Doi: 10.1080/00986280902739636

- This article describes an activity where students view a documentary on Jonestown and then apply the concept of fundamental attribution error to the events. While this is not a topic in the module, it is related, and Jonestown has also been explained by groupthink.

Meyers, S. A., (1997). Increasing student participation and productivity in small-group activities for psychology classes. *Teaching of Psychology*, 24, 105-115.

- This paper provides tips for increasing productivity when you utilize small group work during class. This can help you with your teaching or can be used when talking about social loafing to the class.

Sandstrom, G. M., & Rawn, C. D. (2015). Embrace chattering students: They may be building community and interest in your class. *Teaching of Psychology*, 42, 227-233. doi:10.1177/0098628315587620

- This article gives empirical evidence that shows the benefits of students talking to one another in class. This relates to the need to belong, a concept discussed in this module.

Johnson, S. D., & Weaver, R. L., (1992). Groupthink and the classroom: Changing familiar patterns to encourage critical thought. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 19(2), 99-106.

- This article challenges groupthink in our psychology classrooms. The information can support your teaching or supplement your groupthink lesson by giving students examples of when and how this can happen to them during school.

## **Links to ToPIX Materials**

### **Activities, Demonstrations, or Handouts:**

<http://topix.teachpsych.org/w/page/19981041/Social%20in%20the%20Classroom>

### **Books and Films:**

<http://topix.teachpsych.org/w/page/39236320/Social-Psychology>

### **In the News:**

<http://topix.teachpsych.org/w/page/23142325/Social%20in%20the%20News>

### **Videos/Audio:**

<http://topix.teachpsych.org/w/page/19981040/Social%20Video>

## **Teaching Topics**

Teaching The Most Important Course

[https://nobaproject.com/documents/1\\_Teaching\\_The\\_Most\\_Important\\_Course.pdf](https://nobaproject.com/documents/1_Teaching_The_Most_Important_Course.pdf)

Content Coverage

[https://nobaproject.com/documents/2\\_Content\\_Coverage.pdf](https://nobaproject.com/documents/2_Content_Coverage.pdf)

Motivating Students

[https://nobaproject.com/documents/3\\_Motivating\\_Students\\_Tips.pdf](https://nobaproject.com/documents/3_Motivating_Students_Tips.pdf)

Engaging Large Classes

[https://nobaproject.com/documents/4\\_Engaging\\_Large\\_Classes.pdf](https://nobaproject.com/documents/4_Engaging_Large_Classes.pdf)

Assessment Learning



[https://nobaproject.com/documents/5\\_Assessment\\_Learning.pdf](https://nobaproject.com/documents/5_Assessment_Learning.pdf)

Teaching Biological Psychology

[https://nobaproject.com/documents/6\\_Teaching\\_Bio\\_Psych.pdf](https://nobaproject.com/documents/6_Teaching_Bio_Psych.pdf)

## **PowerPoint Presentation**

This module has an associated PowerPoint presentation. Download it at [https://nobaproject.com//images/shared/supplement\\_editions/000/000/313/The%20Psychology%20of%20Groups.ppt?1572892479](https://nobaproject.com//images/shared/supplement_editions/000/000/313/The%20Psychology%20of%20Groups.ppt?1572892479).

## About Noba

The Diener Education Fund (DEF) is a non-profit organization founded with the mission of re-inventing higher education to serve the changing needs of students and professors. The initial focus of the DEF is on making information, especially of the type found in textbooks, widely available to people of all backgrounds. This mission is embodied in the Noba project.

Noba is an open and free online platform that provides high-quality, flexibly structured textbooks and educational materials. The goals of Noba are three-fold:

- To reduce financial burden on students by providing access to free educational content
- To provide instructors with a platform to customize educational content to better suit their curriculum
- To present material written by a collection of experts and authorities in the field

The Diener Education Fund is co-founded by Drs. Ed and Carol Diener. Ed is the Joseph Smiley Distinguished Professor of Psychology (Emeritus) at the University of Illinois. Carol Diener is the former director of the Mental Health Worker and the Juvenile Justice Programs at the University of Illinois. Both Ed and Carol are award-winning university teachers.

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