

Problem Solving in Teams and Groups

CAMERON W. PIERCY, PH.D.





Problem Solving in Teams and Groups by Cameron W. Piercy, Ph.D. is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

Each chapter of this open educational resources has its own propagated Copyright License. Please follow the Copyright for each relevant chapter.

Contents

| | |
|--|---|
| <u>Introduction</u> | 1 |
| <u>Syllabus and Schedule</u> | 2 |

Section I. Groups & Teams Overview

| | |
|---|----|
| 1. <u>Defining Teams and Groups</u> | 13 |
| 2. <u>Cooperation</u> | 24 |
| 3. <u>Social Comparison</u> | 42 |
| 4. <u>The Psychology of Groups</u> | 55 |
| 5. <u>Shared Information Bias</u> | 75 |
| 6. <u>Inattentional Blindness</u> | 77 |
| 7. <u>Teams as Systems</u> | 85 |

Section II. Groups & Teams (In)Action

| | |
|--|-----|
| 8. <u>Professional Writing</u> | 97 |
| 9. <u>Persuasive Presentations</u> | 121 |
| 10. <u>Groups and meetings</u> | 138 |
| 11. <u>Gantt Chart</u> | 150 |
| 12. <u>Organizational culture</u> | 155 |
| 13. <u>Performance Evaluation</u> | 182 |

Section III. Group & Team Theory

| | |
|---|-----|
| 14. <u>Power in Teams and Groups</u> | 219 |
| 15. <u>Judgment and Decision Making</u> | 232 |
| 16. <u>Cultivating a Supportive Group Climate</u> | 244 |
| 17. <u>Structuration Theory</u> | 252 |
| 18. <u>Leadership</u> | 258 |
| 19. <u>Conformity and Obedience</u> | 291 |
| 20. <u>Working in Diverse Teams</u> | 302 |
| 21. <u>Intercultural and Plane Crashes</u> | 314 |
| 22. <u>Conflict and Negotiation</u> | 317 |

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| <u>Back Matter</u> | 327 |
|------------------------------------|-----|

This textbook covers content relevant to COMS342 Problem Solving in Teams and Groups at the University of Kansas. Content in this textbook is adapted from [The Open University](#), [OpenStax](#), [The Noba Project](#), and [Wikipedia](#). Each chapter presents the source in the top header and each chapter has its own version of the Creative Commons (CC) license, noted at the bottom of the chapter.

This book (commonly called an Open Educational Resource, OER) was made possible through a generous grant through the KU Libraries. Special thanks to Karna Younger, Josh Bollick, and William Hoffman for helping with this project. The most recent revision (2020) includes several chapters from Dr. Jasmine Linabary's OER, [Small Group Communication: Forming and Sustaining Teams](#). Special thanks to Dr. Linabary for her exceptional work and willingness to share.

This textbook is designed with several purposes:

1. The primary purpose is to save students money.
2. Additionally this book is designed to cater the class reading content to the students' needs.
3. Finally this book was created as a text that can easily change based on the needs of the course.

Please submit any revisions via comments on any chapter or email them directly to Dr. Cameron Piercy (cpiercy@ku.edu).

Sincerely,
Cameron W. Piercy, Ph.D.



Problem Solving in Teams and Groups by Cameron W. Piercy, Ph.D. is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

Syllabus and Schedule

COMS342

Problem Solving in Teams and Groups (Hybrid)

Cohort A: Monday, 12:30 – 1:45, STFL 100

Cohort B: Wednesday, 12:30 – 1:45, STFL 100

Each cohort will meet on Teams during their online day

Instructors and Office Hours: Cameron W. Piercy, Ph.D
Bailey 6C 785-864-5989

cpiercy@ku.edu

Let's Meet: <https://calendly.com/piercy/meet>

***Email is the best/fastest way to contact us.*

Required Access and Materials

- Students will need to regularly (i.e., once every 48 hours or more often) access Blackboard (courseware.ku.edu) and Teams (tinyurl.com/342fall20)
- Students will need access to a sufficiently fast Internet connection to stream videos, download course materials, and video (i.e., Teams, Zoom) with peers and the instructor.
- Students will need to regularly engage on the Microsoft Teams space for this course. Students are expected to use Teams to coordinate, meet, create and share documents, and generally collaborate. The Teams space is at: [https://tinyurl.com/342fall20](http://tinyurl.com/342fall20)
- **The book is provided for free and can be accessed at: <https://teams1.pressbooks.com/>**

Course Policies

- The Kansas Board of Regents sets expectations for course work-load. A full-time student (taking between 12 and 18 hours) should expect to spend between 36–48 hours in and out of the classroom. **That means this course will take ~9 hours per week.** Some weeks will be busier than others.
- Because this class is focused on team-based activities, students will be assessed: (1) individually, (2) as a team, and (3) by their peers. Each form of assessment parallels standard business and academic practice. **Your peers' perceptions matter.**
- **It is not possible to practice problem solving in teams and groups without being in a team or group.** The projects assigned for this class are often not meant to be completed by an individual, they require a team. When you experience difficulty or friction in your group/team, your instructor's role is to listen and provide guidance. It is the responsibility of group members to resolve conflicts and problems in order to complete the various projects throughout the semester. Instructors only act as a consultant in these matters.
- Periodically, you will be given class time to meet with your group and discuss your projects; however, the demands of the assignments also require you to meet with your group outside of face-to-face class time. **PLEASE meet virtually via Teams to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.** It is all of our responsibility to reduce the spread of this disease.
- **Please bring technology to class.** If possible, bring a phone, laptop, or tablet to class to facilitate in-class Kahoots and online interaction in your team on Teams. If you need help accessing mobile technology (i.e., a laptop) call KU-IT (785-864-8080) and ask, they have loaner technology. If you have trouble let me know.

Course Goals:

1. The purpose of this course is to overview a variety of issues in small group communication. This course will examine small groups with an emphasis on how messages, talk, symbols, and discourse contribute to effective small groups. By the end of the semester you should be able to answer questions such as:
 1. What is a small group?
 2. When should individuals or groups be used to make decisions?
 3. How do groups form and develop? What kinds of stages do they go through?
 4. What kinds of strategies promote effective group decision making?
 5. How do issues of power and social influence affect group life?
 6. What leads to effective group leadership?
 7. How can conflict within small groups be managed constructively?
2. **Learning objectives:** This course will focus on competent communication in small groups. To be a competent group communicator, you should: (a) develop an understanding of what constitutes competent communication within the small group context, and (b) be able to apply this in groups and teams. Thus, you should be able to:
 1. Execute a complex team project including idea development, project coordination, and creation of a lasting outcome.
 2. Develop social structures (often through messages) to manage common group issues and tensions effectively
 3. Identify and develop skills of leading and participating within small groups
 4. Implement appropriate conflict management techniques
 5. Construct messages to avoid common biases in groups and teams
 6. Generate constructive feedback for supervisors, peers, and subordinates
 7. Facilitate effective group discussions
3. This course is also considered an upper-level course. One of the primary goals is to sharpen your written expression of important ideas and concepts and build your capacity for making **strong critical arguments backed by evidence**.
4. **We will respect one another in this course.** You will be asked to leave discussions or the course altogether if you are disrespectful to other students or the instructor.

Other Policies

- **Online participation:** Because this is a hybrid course, you will need to log in regularly to participate in the ongoing discussions. Each cohort is expected to use Teams on their “off day.” That is, Cohort A should be on Teams/Blackboard on Wednesday from 12:30 to 1:45 and Cohort B should be on Monday’s.
- **Deadlines:** All work is due on Blackboard/Teams on Friday of each week at midnight. All written work (i.e., proposal, report, and self-reflection) must be uploaded to Blackboard. **Instructors will not accept late work. Instructors will not accept e-mailed assignments. No make-up work is allowed without written instructor permission.**
- **Class format:** Content discussed on Blackboard and Teams is NOT taken directly from the readings. These discussions are meant to extend beyond reading content. Each student is responsible for content from the readings, videos, and Teams/Blackboard. All class conversations will be used to create exams. **Please bring a phone, laptop, or tablet to class meetings whenever possible.**
- **Student accessibility and success.** Any student needing accommodations for the course should let the instructor

know. Students who need assistance obtaining accommodations may contact Student Access Services at <https://access.ku.edu>, 785-864-4064, or achieve@ku.edu

- Academic Misconduct: Academic misconduct is a serious offense. Academic misconduct is described in Article II, Section 6 of the [University Senate Rules and Regulations](#). You are responsible for knowing the standards of academic conduct. The document is available here: policy.ku.edu/governance/USRR
- **Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is a serious offense. Using the words and ideas of others is borrowing something from those individuals. It is always necessary to identify the original source of supporting information. **You must cite the source of any material, quoted or paraphrased, in both written work and oral presentations.**

Sometimes writers are uncertain about what to cite. Here are some firm guidelines:

- If you write word for word what appears in another source, put quotation marks around it and cite the source (author, year, page number).
- If you borrow and summarize ideas, arguments, data, or other information from another source, cite the source even if you put the material in your own words (author, year).
- Agreeing with the material does not make it your own. If an idea you share originated from someone else, give that person credit according to a formally recognized style. Helpful websites:
 - <http://writing.ku.edu>
 - <https://owl.purdue.edu/>
- **Illness: Please pay attention to your body and do NOT attend class if you feel ill.**
 - **Continuous online access.** The global pandemic has prompted instructors to make the course always accessible via online materials (Blackboard, Teams, Zoom) and forgo attendance requirements for face-to-face interaction. In other words, you will NOT miss essential content if you are unable to attend face-to-face classes. If you do not feel well (and/or the CVKEY app is yellow or red) please do NOT attend face-to-face class. Please do what you can to keep in touch with me, so I can help you stay caught up.
 - **To protect all of us, everyone must wear a mask in the classroom** as required by the [Protect KU Pledge](#) and by University policy. Violations of the mask policy in classrooms are treated as academic misconduct. If you come to class without a mask, I will ask you to put one on. If you do not put on a mask when asked, you will have to leave class. Violations will be reported, and consequences will follow, up to and including suspension from the course.
- **Diversity and Inclusion.** The University of Kansas supports an inclusive learning environment in which diversity and individual differences are understood, respected, and appreciated. We believe that all students benefit from training and experiences that will help them to learn, lead, and serve in an increasingly diverse society. All members of our campus community must accept the responsibility to demonstrate civility and respect for the dignity of others. Expressions or actions that disparage a person's or group's race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, gender, gender identity / expression, religion, sexual orientation, age, veteran status, or disability are contrary to the mission of the University. We expect that KU students, faculty, and staff will promote an atmosphere of respect for all members of our KU community. This is an inclusive classroom. At KU, faculty, and staff are committed to the creation and maintenance of "inclusive learning" spaces. This classroom is a place where you will be treated with respect and dignity and where all individuals are provided equitable opportunity to participate, contribute, and succeed.
- **Responsible Communication and Media Use:** As students of communication, I expect that you will communicate and use online digital media appropriately and thoughtfully.
 - Email, phone and other communications with instructor and fellow students should be *respectful and professional*. Treat these as formal relationships.
 - Include the course number and cohort in your subject line (COMS 342, Cohort B).

- Your full name should be included in the email.
- You should have a salutation, for example, “Dear Cameron” or “Dear Dr. Piercy”.
- Use correct capitalization, grammar and spelling.
- If you are in doubt about your tone, ask yourself: **If this message appeared on a website would it reflect well on me? All rules regarding academic integrity extend to electronic communication.**

COVID-19 Contingency: There is a very real possibility we may need to move online for some portion or the remainder of the semester at some point. I want you to know I am committed to your learning. I understand that access to technology is not uniform at your homes and I will do what I can to help you learn. KU does offer some essential resources (i.e., laptops and hotspots) that you can use to help continue your learning even if you must learn from home. Again, contact KU IT at 785-864-8080 and ask for the equipment you need (laptop or hotspot). If you have any trouble, let me know.

Regardless whether we are in-person or online, I will provide a weekly update announcement or, when possible, video under the “Lessons” tab on Blackboard. This video will overview our major tasks and readings for the week. Please watch this weekly video for clear guidance on expectations for assignments/homework for the week. The schedule is an abstract guide, the weekly announcements/videos are a concrete explanation of the content for the week.

Global Pandemic: How to be OK. We are in the midst of an ongoing global pandemic. None of us are really “OK.” If you tell me you are having trouble, I’m not going to judge you or think less of you. In fact, I hope you will extend me the same grace. Here are some ground rules:

- You never owe me personal information about your health (mental or physical), or anything else. However, you are always welcome to talk to me about things that you might be going through.
- If I can’t help you, I know about many resources on and off campus and I will do my best to direct you to resources for assistance.
- If you need extra help, please.....**just ask!** I will listen and will work with you.

Grading Philosophy:

1. **Grades are earned.** Your grade will be a reflection of what you demonstrated you have learned, not a reflection of how hard you have worked or what you report you have learned after you have received your grade. I do not give you a grade, I assign your grades based on the work you complete.
2. **24/7 rule:** If you do not understand why you have received the grade you have, please schedule a consultation with your instructor. Please wait **24 hours** after receiving an assignment grade to contact the instructor to discuss or appeal it. Further, you have **one week** from the date the assignment was returned in class to meet with the instructor. When bringing assignments in for discussion, please have thoughtful arguments including being able to point to specifics in the assignment and in your work. The book, lecture slides, and outside sources are all welcome in this conversation.
3. **Extra credit.** To earn extra credit in COMS342: 1) Participate in the Communication Studies Research Opportunities page on Blackboard. 2) Write a 1-page recommendation of what ought to be deleted, added, or modified in any chapter of the online textbook (up to 1% per submission, maximum 3%). Submit all chapter revision papers to cpiercy@ku.edu
4. **Incompletes are not given in COMS 342.** Keep in touch with me if you need to be gone for an extended period. I am here to help you succeed and will do what I can to help you finish this course this semester.

Assignments:

Exams (24%, 240 points): This class will include three (3) exams. The exams will consist of short-response, multiple choice, fill in the blank, matching, true-false questions, and/or open-ended questions. Each exam will be administered on Blackboard and due Friday at 11:59 p, as detailed on the schedule below. No make-up exams will be allowed without written permission from the instructor.

Step 1: Where and Why Proposal (7.5%, 75 points): The first group project, due early in the semester, will focus on **proposing** where your group wants to invest time, energy, and effort in your goal of doing good. The purpose of this assignment is to articulate the organization you intend to benefit (where) and why this organization is a worthy cause. In line with the systems approach, this assignment will focus on your anticipated inputs and ideal outputs.

- **Deliverables:**

- **Presentation (25 points)**
- **One-page Proposal (50 points)**
- o + **Peer evaluation (25 points)**

Step 2: When and How Proposal (7.5%, 75 points): Your second task as a team will be to formally articulate a timeline (when) and process (how) you will accomplish your goal. This short proposal will create a Gantt chart detailing major milestones for the group A. In addition, this document should specify who on the team is responsible for what outputs. Communication norms should be outlined (e.g., time for responses, preferred medium for communication) as well as any additional information about the team that might help structure work (i.e., mission, SWOT analysis, contact information). Finally, this document must clearly lay out the criteria for firing a team member. In line with the systems approach (Chapter 7), this assignment will focus on throughputs.

- **Deliverables:**

- **Written Proposal (75 points)**
- o + **Peer evaluation (25 points)**

Step Three: Feedback documentation (10%, 100 points): Successful teams listen to the benefitting organizations. This assignment is focused on listening and receiving feedback from the organization you seek to benefit.

- **Deliverables:**

- **Documentation of conversation with organization (50 points)**
- **Concept-Driven Self-reflection (individual, 50 points)**
- o + **Performance review (create form, 25 points; deliver 25 points)**

Step 4: Final Report (15%, 150 points): The goal of this report is to **report and summarize** your team process and return on investment. Please quantify the hours, items, dollars, etc. you contributed to help your partnering organization in your report assignment. Specific instructions will be posted on Blackboard. In line with the systems perspective this assignment will focus on both throughputs and outputs.

- **Deliverables:**

- **Presentation (50 points)**
- **Final Written Report (100 points)**
- o + **Peer evaluation (50 points)**

Discussion, Discussion Leadership, and Teams Participation (21%, 210 points)

Understanding team communication involves interaction with the readings and your peers.

Discussion: In COMS342 we will engage in discussion in the classroom, on the Teams platform, and in Blackboard forums. Discussion is designed to promote critical thinking about the ideas concepts and theories we are discussing. Please approach discussion with a willingness to share as you feel comfortable. The more you can apply the content of this course to your own work with others in teams and groups the more you will get out of this course.

Each discussion will have a designated discussion leadership team who are charged with generating thoughtful questions to fuel conversation in Teams.

Discussion leaders: Discussion leaders must submit one-page document including a brief one or two paragraph summary of key content in the reading and several (i.e., 4-6) strong open-ended questions which they will ask their classmates during Teams class-days (i.e., Monday for Cohort B, Wednesday for Cohort A). Each team will be responsible for two days of discussion leadership noted in the schedule below. Each leadership is worth 50 points.

Quizzes: There will also be periodic pop-quizzes via Kahoot and Blackboard tied to the class readings. These quizzes can include open-ended, multiple choice, true-false, and matching question. These quizzes are designed to help you remain accountable for the readings.

***Some points in this category may not be allocated ***

Grade Points Breakdown (~1000 points)

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| · Three Exams 24% (80 points each) | Final Grades: |
| · Where and Why Proposal 7.5% (50 for One-page Proposal, 25 for Presentation) | A 89.5 – 100% |
| · When and How Proposal 7.5% (75 points for Proposal paper) | B 79.5 – 89.5% |
| · Give and Get Feedback 10% (50 points for evidence of feedback and feedback implementation; 50 for concept-driven self-reflection) | C 69.5 – 79.5% |
| · Report 15% (100 points for paper, 50 for presentation) | D 59.5 – 69.5% |
| · Peer evaluations 15% (150 points: allocated by peers; 25 points Peer Evaluation 1, 25 points Peer Evaluation 2; 50 points for one-on-one performance evaluation; 50 points final Peer Evaluation) | F < 60% |
| · Discussion Participation 21% (210 points: across discussion boards and quizzes) | |

Research Extra Credit, up to 3% (30 points)

**Final point total may vary by section and allocated points/assignments.

Overview:

Note: Each week of class will involve several discussions/boards, required videos, essential readings, and occasional quizzes. You are expected to engage in discussion with your classmates during the scheduled class time via Teams (<https://tinyurl.com/342fall20>) each week.

Reminder: The book is available for free online at: <https://teams1.pressbooks.com>

| Week | Topic | Notes and Assignment due dates | Online/Teams Discussion Leaders |
|---|---|--|--|
| Lesson 1 8/24 – 8/28 | Defining teams and groups | | |
| Lesson 2 8/31 – 9/4 | Cooperation and Social Comparison | · 2 Chapters | 1 |
| Lesson 3 9/7 – 9/11 Note: We are meeting on Labor Day | The Psychology of Groups | | 2 |
| Lesson 4 9/14 – 9/18 | Shared Information Bias | · 2 Chapters | 3 |
| Lesson 5 9/21 – 9/25 | Inattentional Blindness | · Exam 1 (due Friday at midnight) | 4 |
| Lesson 6 9/28 – 10/2 | Teams as systems | · 2 Chapters | |
| Lesson 7 10/5 – 10/9 | Professional Writing & Persuasive Presentations | · Due: Step 1: Where and Why proposal · Due: Step 1: Where and Why presentation | WORKDAY |
| Lesson 8 10/12 – 10/16 | Groups and Meetings & Gantt Chart | · 2 Chapters | 1 |
| Lesson 9 10/19 – 10/23 | Performance Evaluation | · Due: Step 2: When and How proposal · Activity: Create a Performance Evaluation Form | WORKDAY |
| Lesson 10 10/26 – 10/30 | Power in teams | | 2 |
| Lesson 11 11/2 – 11/6 | Judgement and Decision Making | · Exam 2 (due Friday at midnight) | 3 |
| Lesson 12 11/9 – 11/13 | Cultivating a supportive group environment and Structuration theory | | 4 |
| Lesson 13 11/16 – 11/20 | Leadership | · Due: Step 3: Giving and Getting Feedback | WORKDAY |
| Lesson 14 11/23 – 11/27 | Conformity and Obedience | · Due: Step 3: Self-Assessment Paper | WORKDAY |
| Lesson 15 11/23 – 11/24 Short week | Working in Diverse Teams & Intercultural theory of Plane Crashes | · 2 Chapters | WORKDAY |
| Study week 11/30 – 12/4 | Conflict and Negotiation | · Due: Step 4: Report · Due: Step 4: Final Presentation | WORKDAY |

Exam 3

· Exam 3 (due Mon., Dec. 7 at
1:00 p.m.)

SECTION II

GROUPS & TEAMS OVERVIEW

This section introduces the basics for groups and teams.

I. Defining Teams and Groups

The content included in this chapter is adapted from two Open University chapters: [Working in Groups and Teams](#) and [Groups and Teamwork](#)

What is a group?

Our tendency to form groups is a pervasive aspect of organizational life. In addition to formal groups, committees, and teams, there are informal groups, cliques, and factions.

Formal groups are used to organize and distribute work, pool information, devise plans, coordinate activities, increase commitment, negotiate, resolve conflicts and conduct inquests. Group work allows the pooling of people's individual skills and knowledge, and helps compensate for individual deficiencies. Estimates suggest most managers spend 50 percent of their working day in one sort of group or another, and for top management of large organizations this can rise to 80 percent. Thus, formal groups are clearly an integral part of the functioning of an organization.

No less important are informal groups. These are usually structured more around the social needs of people than around the performance of tasks. **Informal groups** usually serve to satisfy needs of affiliation, and act as a forum for exploring self-concept as a means of gaining support, and so on. However, these informal groups may also have an important effect on formal work tasks, for example by exerting subtle pressures on group members to conform to a particular work rate, or as 'places' where news, gossip, etc., is exchanged.

What is a team?

Activity 1

Write your own definition of a 'team' (in 20 words or less).

Provide an example of a team working toward an achievable goals

You probably described a team as a group of some kind. However, a team is more than just a group. When you think of all the groups that you belong to, you will probably find that very few of them are really teams. Some of them will be family or friendship groups that are formed to meet a wide range of needs such as affection, security, support, esteem, belonging, or identity. Some may be committees whose members represent different interest groups and who meet to discuss their differing perspectives on issues of interest.

In this reading the term 'work group' (or 'group') is often used interchangeably with the word 'team,' although a **team** may be thought of as a particularly cohesive and purposeful type of work group. We can distinguish work groups or teams from more casual groupings of people by using the following set of criteria (Adair, 1983). A collection of people can be defined as a work group or team if it shows most, if not all, of the following characteristics:

- **A definable membership:** a collection of three or more people identifiable by name or type;
- **A group consciousness or identity:** the members think of themselves as a group;
- **A sense of shared purpose:** the members share some common task or goals or interests;
- **Interdependence:** the members need the help of one another to accomplish the purpose for which they joined the group;
- **Interaction:** the members communicate with one another, influence one another, react to one another;
- **Sustainability:** the team members periodically review the team's effectiveness;
- **An ability to act together.**

Usually, the tasks and goals set by teams cannot be achieved by individuals working alone because of constraints on time and resources, and because few individuals possess all the relevant competences and expertise. Sports teams or orchestras clearly fit these criteria.

Activity 2

*List some examples of **teams** of which you are a member – both inside and outside work – in your learning file.*

*Now list some **groups**. What strikes you as the main differences?*

Your team examples probably highlight specific jobs or projects in your workplace, or personal interests and hobbies outside work. Teamwork is usually connected with project work and this is a feature of much work. Teamwork is particularly useful when you have to address risky, uncertain, or unfamiliar problems where there is a lot of choice and discretion surrounding the decision to be made. In the area of voluntary and unpaid work, where pay is not an incentive, teamwork can help to motivate support and commitment because it can offer the opportunities to interact socially and learn from others. Furthermore, *people are more willing to support and defend work they helped create* (Stanton, 1992).

By contrast, many groups are much less explicitly focused on an external task. In some instances, the growth and development of the group itself is its primary purpose; process is more important than outcome. Many groups are reasonably fluid and less formally structured than teams. In the case of work groups, an agreed and defined outcome is often regarded as a sufficient basis for effective cooperation and the development of adequate relationships.

Importantly, groups and teams are not distinct entities. Both can be pertinent in personal development as well as organizational development and managing change. In such circumstances, when is it appropriate to embark on teambuilding rather than relying on ordinary group or solo working?

In general, the greater the task uncertainty the more important teamwork is, especially if it is necessary to represent the differing perspectives of concerned parties. In such situations, the facts themselves do not always point to an obvious policy or strategy for innovation, support, and development: decisions are partially based on the opinions and the personal visions of those involved.

There are risks associated with working in teams as well. Under some conditions, teams may produce more conventional, rather than more innovative, responses to problems. The reason for this is that team decisions may regress towards the average, with group pressures to conform cancelling out more innovative decision options (Makin, Cooper, & Cox, 1989). It depends on how innovative the team is, in terms of its membership, its norms, and its values.

Teamwork may also be inappropriate when you want a fast decision. Team decision making is usually slower than individual decision making because of the need for communication and consensus about the decision taken. Despite the business successes of Japanese companies, it is now recognized that promoting a collective organizational identity and

responsibility for decisions can sometimes slow down operations significantly, in ways that are not always compensated for by better decision making.

Is a team or group really needed?

There may be times when group working – or simply working alone – is more appropriate and more effective. For example, decision-making in groups and teams is usually slower than individual decision-making because of the need for communication and consensus. In addition, groups and teams may produce conventional rather than innovative responses to problems, because decisions may regress towards the average, with the more innovative decision options being rejected (Makin et al., 1989).

In general, the greater the ‘task uncertainty’, that is to say the less obvious and more complex the task to be addressed, the more important it will be to work in a group or team rather than individually. This is because there will be a greater need for different skills and perspectives, especially if it is necessary to represent the different perspectives of the different stakeholders involved.

Table 2 lists some occasions when it will be appropriate to work in teams, in groups or alone.

Table 2 When to work alone, in groups or in teams

| When to work alone or in groups | When to build teams |
|--|--|
| For simple tasks or problems | For highly-complex tasks or problems |
| When cooperation is sufficient | When decisions by consensus are essential |
| When minimum discretion is required | When there is a high level of choice and uncertainty |
| When fast decisions are needed | When high commitment is needed |
| When few competences are required | When a broad range of competences and different skills are required |
| When members' interests are different or in conflict | When members' objectives can be brought together towards a common purpose |
| When an organization credits individuals for operational outputs | When an organization rewards team results for strategy and vision building |
| When innovative responses are sought | When balanced views are sought |

Types of teams

Different organizations or organizational settings lead to different types of team. The type of team affects how that team is managed, what the communication needs of the team are and, where appropriate, what aspects of the project the project manager needs to emphasize. A work group or team may be permanent, forming part of the organization's structure, such as a top management team, or temporary, such as a task force assembled to see through a particular project. Members may work as a group continuously or meet only intermittently. The more direct contact and communication team members have with each other, the more likely they are to function well as a team. Thus, getting a group to function well is a valuable management aim.

The following section defines common types of team. Many teams may not fall clearly into one type, but may combine elements of different types. Many organizations have traditionally been managed through a hierarchical structure. This general structure is illustrated in **Figure 1**, and consists of:

- **staff performing similar tasks** – grouped together reporting to a single supervisor;

- **junior managers** – responsible for a number of supervisors and their groups;
- **groups of junior managers** – reporting to departmental heads;
- **departmental heads** – reporting to senior managers, who are responsible for wide-ranging functions such as manufacturing, finance, human resources and marketing;
- **senior managers** – reporting to the managing director, who may then report to the Board.

The number of levels clearly depends upon the size and to some extent on the type of the organization. Typically, the 'span of control' (the number of people each manager or supervisor is directly responsible for) averages about five people, but this can vary widely. **As a general rule it is bad practice for any single manager to supervise more than 7-10 people.**

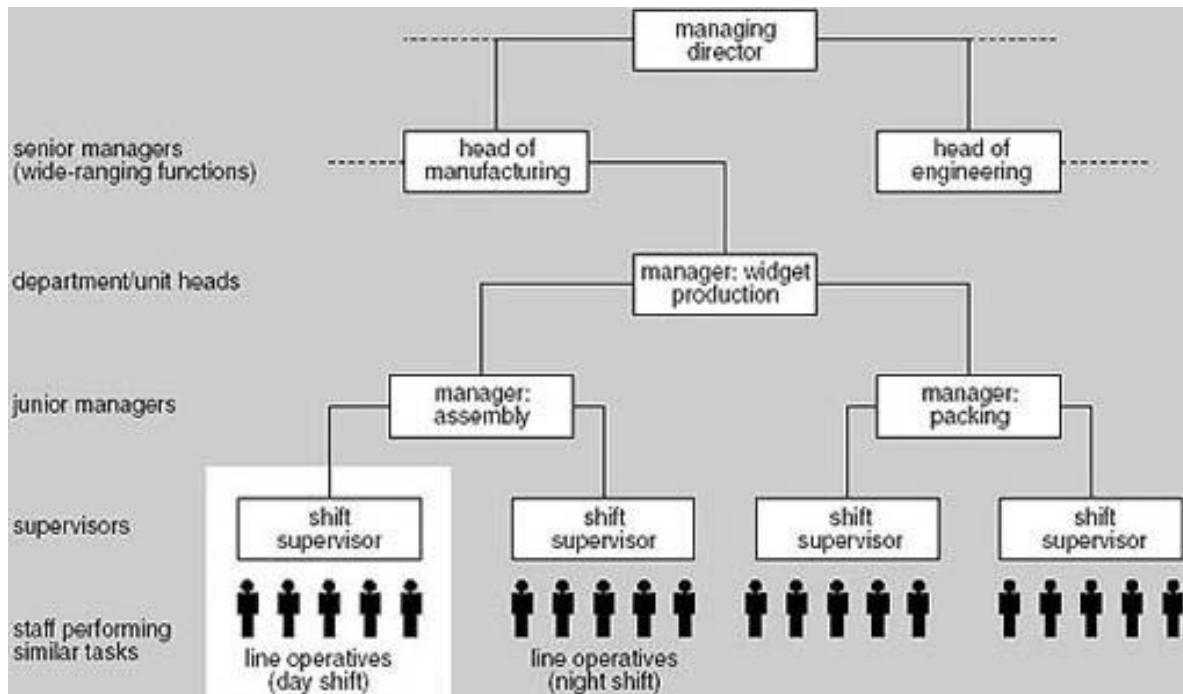


Figure 1 The traditional hierarchical structure. Note: The highlighted area shows one supervisor's span of control: the people who work for that supervisor

While the hierarchy is designed to provide a stable 'backbone' to the organization, projects are primarily concerned with change, and so tend to be organized quite differently. Their structure needs to be more fluid than that of conventional management structures. There are four commonly used types of project team: the functional team, the project (single) team, the matrix team and the contract team.

Activity 3

Why is it problematic for a manager to supervise too many people? How does this relate to groups, is there an ideal group size or configuration?

THE FUNCTIONAL TEAM

The hierarchical structure described above divides groups of people along largely functional lines: people working together carry out the same or similar functions. A **functional team** is a team in which work is carried out within such a functionally organized group. This can be project work. In organizations in which the functional divisions are relatively rigid, project work can be handed from one functional team to another in order to complete the work. For example, work on a new product can pass from marketing, which has the idea, to research and development, which sees whether it is technically feasible, thence to design and finally manufacturing. This is sometimes known as 'baton passing' – or, less flatteringly, as 'throwing it over the wall'!

The project (single) team

The project, or single, team consists of a group of people who come together as a distinct organizational unit in order to work on a project or projects. The team is often led by a project manager, though self-managing and self-organizing arrangements are also found. Quite often, a team that has been successful on one project will stay together to work on subsequent projects. This is particularly common where an organization engages repeatedly in projects of a broadly similar nature – for example developing software, or in construction. Perhaps the most important issue in this instance is to develop the collective capability of the team, since this is the currency for continued success. People issues are often crucial in achieving this.

The closeness of the dedicated project team normally reduces communication problems within the team. However, care should be taken to ensure that communications with other stakeholders (senior management, line managers and other members of staff in the departments affected, and so on) are not neglected, as it is easy for 'us and them' distinctions to develop.

The matrix team

In a matrix team, staff report to different managers for different aspects of their work. Matrix structures are often, but not exclusively, found in projects. Matrix structures are more common in large and multi-national organizations. In this structure, staff are responsible to the project manager for their work on the project while their functional line manager may be responsible for other aspects of their work such as appraisal, training, and career development, and 'routine' tasks. This matrix project structure is represented in Figure 2. Notice how the traditional hierarchy is cross-cut by the 'automated widget manufacturing configuration.'

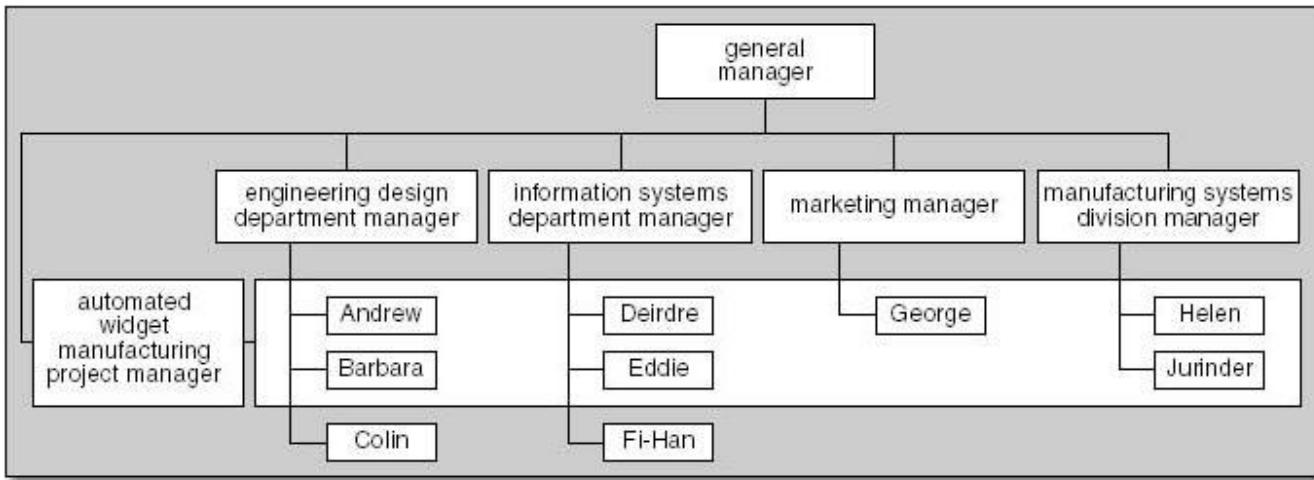


Figure 2 A matrix project structure

In this form of organization, staff from various functional areas (such as design, software development, manufacturing or marketing) are loaned or seconded to work on a particular project. Such staff may work full or part time on the project. The project manager thus has a recognizable team and is responsible for controlling and monitoring its work on the project.

However, many of the project staff will still have other duties to perform in their normal functional departments. The functional line managers they report to will retain responsibility for this work and for the professional standards of their work on the project, as well as for their training and career development. It is important to overcome the problems staff might have with the dual reporting lines (the ‘two-boss’ problem). This requires building good interpersonal relationships with the team members and regular, effective communication.

The contract team

The contract team is brought in from outside in order to do the project work. Here, the responsibility to deliver the project rests very firmly with the project manager. The client will find such a team harder to control directly. On the other hand, it is the client who will judge the success of the project, so the project manager has to keep an eye constantly on the physical outcomes of the project. A variant of this is the so-called ‘outsourced supply team’, which simply means that the team is physically situated remotely from the project manager, who then encounters the additional problem of ‘managing at a distance’.

Mixed structures

Teams often have mixed structures:

- Some members may be employed to work full time on the project and be fully responsible to the project manager. Project managers themselves are usually employed full time.
- Others may work part time, and be responsible to the project manager only during their time on the project. For example, internal staff may well work on several projects at the same time. Alternatively, an external consultant

working on a given project may also be involved in a wider portfolio of activities.

- Some may be part of a matrix arrangement, whereby their work on the project is overseen by the project manager and they report to their line manager for other matters. Project administrators often function in this way, serving the project for its duration, but having a career path within a wider administrative service.
- Still others may be part of a functional hierarchy, undertaking work on the project under their line manager's supervision by negotiation with their project manager. For instance, someone who works in an organization's legal department may provide the project team with access to legal advice when needed.

In relatively small projects the last two arrangements are a very common way of accessing specialist services that will only be needed from time to time.

Activity 4

What are some of the relative benefits and drawbacks to some of these team configurations?

Which one is best for a large and complex problem? Which is normal for a straightforward task?

Modern teams

In addition to the traditional types of teams or groups outlined above, recent years have seen the growth of interest in three other important types of team: 'self-managed teams', 'self-organizing teams', and 'dispersed virtual teams.'

A typical self-managed team may be permanent or temporary. It operates in an informal and non-hierarchical manner, and has considerable responsibility for the way it carries out its tasks. It is often found in organizations that are developing total quality management and quality assurance approaches. The Industrial Society Survey observed that: "Better customer service, more motivated staff, and better quality of output are the three top motives for moving to [self-managed teams], managers report."

In contrast, organizations that deliberately encourage the formation of self-organizing teams are comparatively rare. Teams of this type can be found in highly flexible, innovative organizations that thrive on creativity and informality. These are modern organizations that recognize the importance of learning and adaptability in ensuring their success and continued survival. However, self-organizing teams exist, unrecognized, in many organizations. For instance, in traditional, bureaucratic organizations, people who need to circumvent the red tape may get together in order to make something happen and, in so doing, spontaneously create a self-organizing team. The team will work together, operating outside the formal structures, until its task is done and then it will disband.

Table 2 shows some typical features of self-managed and self-organizing teams.

Table 2: Comparing Self-managed and Self-Organizing Teams

| Self-managed team | Self-organizing team |
|--|--|
| Usually part of the formal reporting structure | Usually outside the formal reporting structure |
| Members usually selected by management | Members usually self-selected volunteers |
| Informal style of working | Informal style of working |
| Indirectly controlled by senior management | Senior management influences only the team's boundaries |
| Usually a permanent leader, but may change | Leadership variable – perhaps one, perhaps changing, perhaps shared |
| Empowered by senior management | Empowered by the team members and a supportive culture and environment |

Many organizations set up self-managed or empowered teams as an important way of improving performance and they are often used as a way of introducing a continuous improvement approach. These teams tend to meet regularly to discuss and put forward ideas for improved methods of working or customer service in their areas. Some manufacturers have used multi-skilled self-managed teams to improve manufacturing processes, to enhance worker participation and improve morale. Self-managed teams give employees an opportunity to take a more active role in their working lives and to develop new skills and abilities. This may result in reduced staff turnover and less absenteeism.

Self-organizing teams are usually formed spontaneously in response to an issue, idea or challenge. This may be the challenge of creating a radically new product, or solving a tough production problem. In Japan, the encouragement of self-organizing teams has been used as a way of stimulating discussion and debate about strategic issues so that radical and innovative new strategies emerge. By using a self-organizing team approach companies were able to tap into the collective wisdom and energy of interested and motivated employees.

Increasingly, virtual team are also common. A **virtual team** is one whose primary means of communicating is electronic, with only occasional phone and face-to-face communication, if at all. However, there is no single point at which a team 'becomes' a virtual team (Zigurs, 2003). Table 3 contains a summary of benefits virtual groups provide to organizations and individuals, as well as the potential challenges and disadvantages virtual groups present.

Table 3. Teams have organizational and individual benefits, as well as possible challenges and disadvantages

| The Organization Benefits | The Individual Benefits | Possible Challenges and Disadvantages |
|---|---|--|
| People can be hired with the skills and competences needed regardless of location | People can work from anywhere at any time | Communicating effectively across distances |
| In some cases, working across different time zones can extend the working day | Physical location is not a recruitment issue; relocation is unnecessary | Management lacks the planning necessary for a virtual group |
| It can enable products to be developed more quickly | Travelling expenses and commuting time are cut | Technology is complicated and/or unfamiliar to some or all members |
| Expenses associated with travel and relocation can be cut; Carbon emissions can be reduced. | People can work from anywhere at any time | Difficult to coordinate times and hard to squeeze all the information into a more narrow time slot |

Why do (only some) teams succeed?

Clearly, there are no hard-and-fast rules which lead to team effectiveness. The determinants of a successful team are complex and not equivalent to following a set of prescriptions. However, the results of poor teamwork can be expensive, so it is useful to draw on research, experience and case studies to explore some general guidelines. What do I mean by ‘team effectiveness’? – the achievement of goals alone? Where do the achievements of individual members fit in? and How does team member satisfaction contribute to team effectiveness?

Borrowing from Adair’s 1983 leadership model, the left-hand side of Figure 3 shows the main constituents of team effectiveness: the satisfaction of individual membership needs, successful team interaction and the achievement of team tasks. These elements are not discrete, so Figure 3 shows them as overlapping. For example, team member satisfaction will be derived not only from the achievement of tasks but also from the quality of team relationships and the more social aspects of teamworking: people who work almost entirely on their own, such as teleworkers and self-employed business owner-managers, often miss the opportunity to bounce ideas off colleagues in team situations. The experience of solitude in their work can, over time, create a sense of isolation, and impair their performance. The effectiveness of a team should also relate to the next step, to what happens after the achievement of team goals.

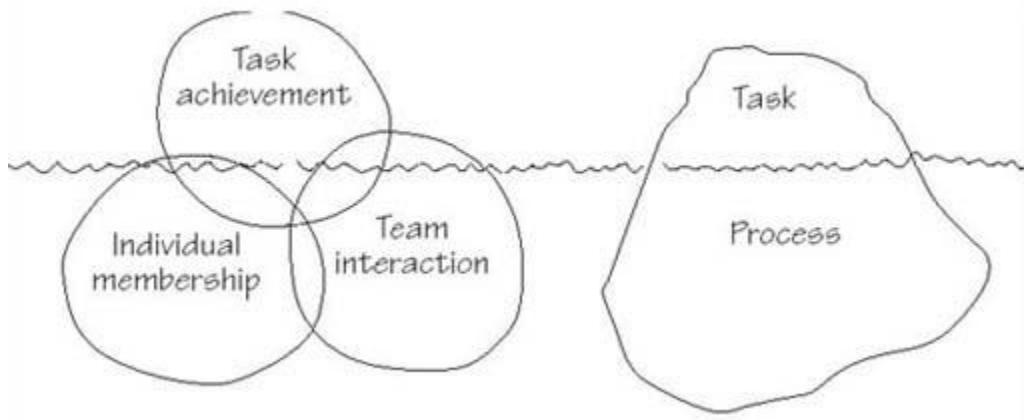


Figure 3 The internal elements of team effectiveness

The three elements could be reconfigured as an iceberg, most of which is below the water’s surface (the right-hand side of [Figure 3](#)). Superficial observation of teams in organizations might suggest that most, if not all, energy is devoted to the explicit task (what is to be achieved, by when, with what budget and what resources). Naturally, this is important. But too often the concealed part of the iceberg (how the team will work together) is neglected. As with real icebergs, shipwrecks can ensue.

For instance, if working in a particular team leaves its members antagonistic towards each other and disenchanted with the organization to the point of looking for new jobs, then it can hardly be regarded as fully effective, even if it achieves its goals. The measure of team effectiveness could be how well the team has prepared its members for the transition to new projects, and whether the members would relish the thought of working with each other again.

In addition to what happens inside a team there are external influences that impact upon team operations. The factors shown in Figure 4 interact with each other in ways that affect the team and its development. We don’t fully understand the complexity of these interactions and combinations. The best that we can do is discuss each factor in turn and consider some of the interactions between them and how they relate to team effectiveness. For instance, discussions about whether the wider culture of an organization supports and rewards teamworking, whether a team’s internal and/or external customers clearly specify their requirements and whether the expectations of a team match those of its sponsor will all either help or hinder a team’s ongoing vitality.

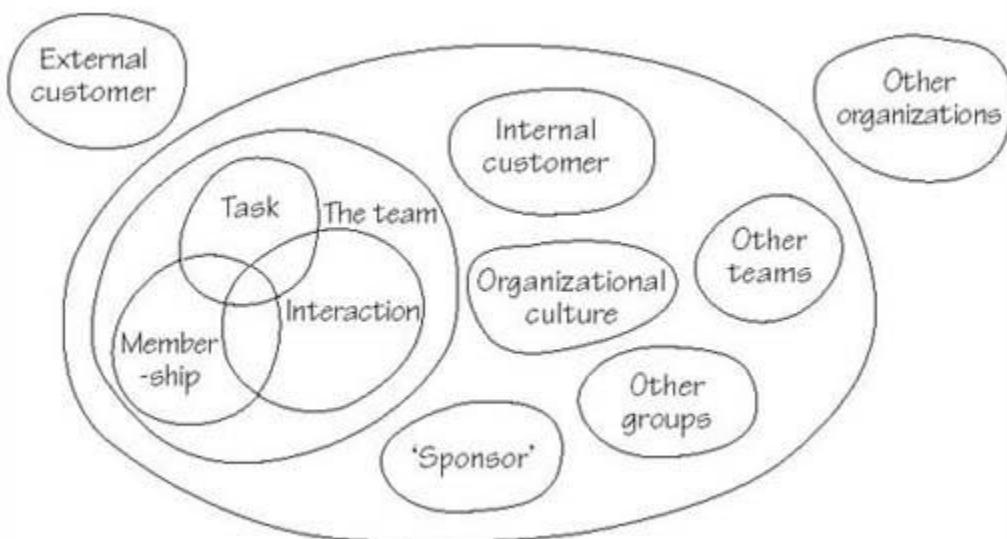


Figure 4 Systems map showing components influencing team effectiveness

Conclusion

This reading has addressed four questions: what characterizes a group, what characterizes a team, how project teams are organized, and what can make teams ineffective. Groups can be formal or informal depending on the circumstances. Work groups or teams are generally more focused on particular tasks and outcomes, and use processes that aim to achieve a unity of purpose, communication and action. I looked at six major types of team: functional, project, matrix, contract, self-managing, self-organizing, and virtual teams. Each form has strengths and weaknesses that suit particular types of project within particular organizational cultures, and teams often involve a mixture of different forms. Team effectiveness is shaped by internal influences – task achievement, individual membership and team interaction – as well as external influences, such as customers, sponsors, other teams, and organizational culture.

References

- Adair, J. (1983) *Effective Leadership*, Gower.
- Industrial Society (1995) *Managing Best Practice: Self Managed Teams*. Publication no. 11, May 1995, London, Industrial Society.
- Makin, P., Cooper, C. and Cox, C. (1989) *Managing People at Work*, The British Psychological Society and Routledge.
- Stanton, A. (1992) 'Learning from experience of collective teamwork', in Paton R., Cornforth C, and Batsleer, J. (eds) *Issues in Voluntary and Non-profit Management*, pp. 95–103, Addison-Wesley in association with the Open University.



Defining Teams and Groups by Cameron W. Piercy, Ph.D. is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/), except where otherwise noted.

2. Cooperation

From the Noba Project

By [Jake P. Moskowitz](#) and [Paul K. Piff](#)

University of California, Irvine

- [PDF Download](#)
- [Altruism](#)
- [competition](#)
- [cooperation](#)
- [prisoner's dilemma](#)

Learning Objectives

- Define “cooperation”
- Distinguish between different social value orientations
- List 2 influences on cooperation
- Explain 2 methods psychologists use to research cooperation

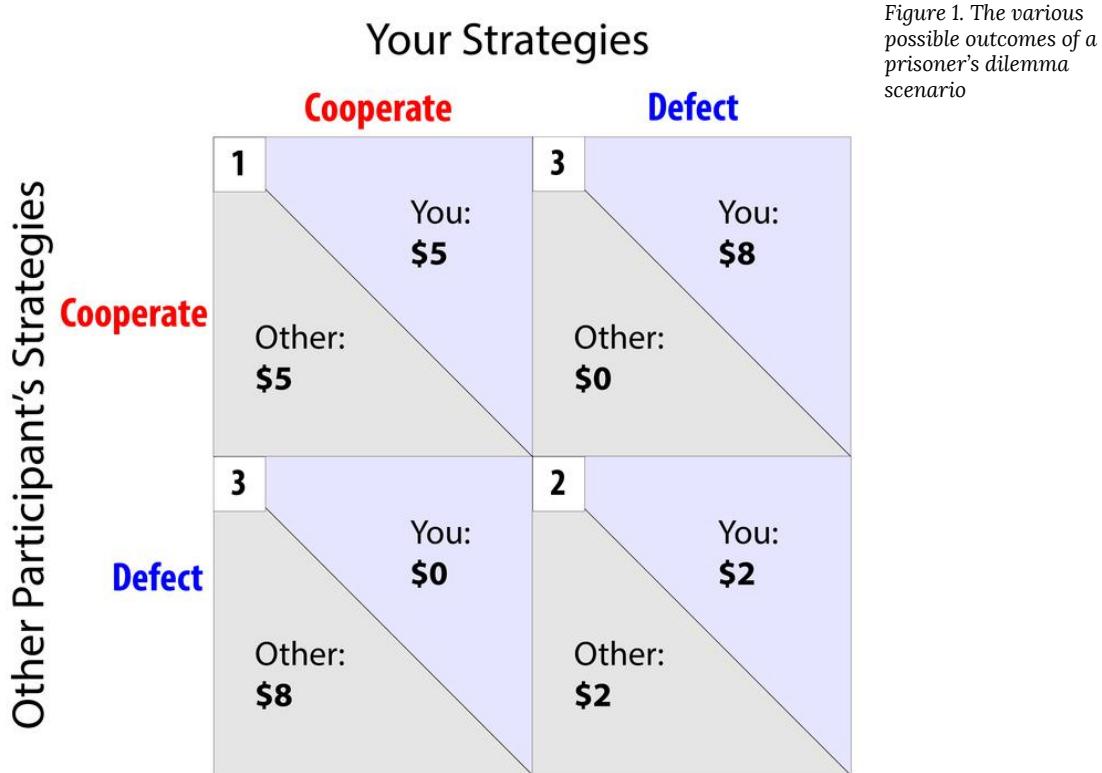
Introduction

People cooperate with others throughout their life. Whether on the playground with friends, at home with family, or at work with colleagues, cooperation is a natural instinct ([Keltner, Kogan, Piff, & Saturn, 2014](#)). Children as young as 14 months cooperate with others on joint tasks ([Warneken, Chen, & Tomasello 2006](#); [Warneken & Tomasello, 2007](#)). Humans' closest evolutionary relatives, chimpanzees and bonobos, maintain long-term cooperative relationships as well, sharing resources and caring for each other's young ([de Waal & Lanting, 1997](#); [Langergraber, Mitani, & Vigilant, 2007](#)). Ancient animal remains found near early human settlements suggest that our ancestors hunted in cooperative groups ([Mithen, 1996](#)). Cooperation, it seems, is embedded in our evolutionary heritage.

Yet, cooperation can also be difficult to achieve; there are often breakdowns in people's ability to work effectively in teams, or in their willingness to collaborate with others. Even with issues that can only be solved through large-scale cooperation, such as climate change and world hunger, people can have difficulties joining forces with others to take collective action. Psychologists have identified numerous individual and situational factors that influence the effectiveness of cooperation across many areas of life. From the trust that people place in others to the lines they draw between “us” and “them,” many different processes shape cooperation. This module will explore these individual, situational, and cultural influences on cooperation.

The Prisoner's Dilemma

Imagine that you are a participant in a social experiment. As you sit down, you are told that you will be playing a game with another person in a separate room. The other participant is also part of the experiment but the two of you will never meet. In the experiment, there is the possibility that you will be awarded some money. Both you and your unknown partner are required to make a choice: either choose to “cooperate,” maximizing your combined reward, or “defect,” (not cooperate) and thereby maximize your individual reward. The choice you make, along with that of the other participant, will result in one of three unique outcomes to this task, illustrated below in Figure 1. If you and your partner both cooperate (1), you will each receive \$5. If you and your partner both defect (2), you will each receive \$2. However, if one partner defects and the other partner cooperates (3), the defector will receive \$8, while the cooperator will receive nothing. Remember, you and your partner cannot discuss your strategy. Which would you choose? Striking out on your own promises big rewards but you could also lose everything. Cooperating, on the other hand, offers the best benefit for the most people but requires a high level of trust.



This scenario, in which two people independently choose between cooperation and defection, is known as the [prisoner's dilemma](#). It gets its name from the situation in which two prisoners who have committed a crime are given the opportunity to either (A) both confess their crime (and get a moderate sentence), (B) rat out their accomplice (and get a lesser sentence), or (C) both remain silent (and avoid punishment altogether). Psychologists use various forms of the prisoner's dilemma scenario to study self-interest and cooperation. Whether framed as a monetary game or a prison game, the prisoner's dilemma illuminates a conflict at the core of many decisions to cooperate: it pits the motivation to maximize personal reward against the motivation to maximize gains for the group (you and your partner combined).

For someone trying to maximize his or her own personal reward, the most “rational” choice is to defect (not cooperate), because defecting always results in a larger personal reward, regardless of the partner’s choice. However, when the two participants view their partnership as a joint effort (such as a friendly relationship), cooperating is the

best strategy of all, since it provides the largest combined sum of money (\$10—which they share), as opposed to partial cooperation (\$8), or mutual defection (\$4). In other words, although defecting represents the “best” choice from an individual perspective, it is also the worst choice to make for the group as a whole.

This divide between personal and collective interests is a key obstacle that prevents people from cooperating. Think back to our earlier definition of **cooperation**: cooperation is when multiple partners work together toward a common goal that will benefit everyone. As is frequent in these types of scenarios, even though cooperation may benefit the whole group, individuals are often able to earn even larger, personal rewards by defecting—as demonstrated in the prisoner’s dilemma example above.

You can see a small, real-world example of the prisoner’s dilemma phenomenon at live music concerts. At venues with seating, many audience members will choose to stand, hoping to get a better view of the musicians onstage. As a result, the people sitting directly behind those now-standing people are also forced to stand to see the action onstage. This creates a chain reaction in which the entire audience now has to stand, just to see over the heads of the crowd in front of them. While choosing to stand may improve one’s own concert experience, it creates a literal barrier for the rest of the audience, hurting the overall experience of the group.

Simple models of [rational self-interest](#) predict 100% defection in cooperative tasks. That is, if people were only interested in benefiting themselves, we would always expect to see selfish behavior. Instead, there is a surprising tendency to cooperate in the prisoner’s dilemma and similar tasks ([Batson & Moran, 1999](#); [Oosterbeek, Sloof, Van De Kuilen, 2004](#)). Given the clear benefits to defect, why then do some people choose to cooperate, whereas others choose to defect?

Individual Differences in Cooperation

Social Value Orientation

One key factor related to individual differences in cooperation is the extent to which people value not only their own outcomes, but also the outcomes of others. [Social value orientation](#) (SVO) describes people’s preferences when dividing important resources between themselves and others ([Messick & McClintock, 1968](#)). A person might, for example, generally be competitive with others, or cooperative, or self-sacrificing. People with different social values differ in the importance they place on their own positive outcomes relative to the outcomes of others. For example, you might give your friend gas money because she drives you to school, even though that means you will have less spending money for the weekend. In this example, you are demonstrating a cooperative orientation.

People generally fall into one of three categories of SVO: cooperative, individualistic, or competitive. While most people want to bring about positive outcomes for all (cooperative orientation), certain types of people are less concerned about the outcomes of others (individualistic), or even seek to undermine others in order to get ahead (competitive orientation).

Are you curious about your own orientation? One technique psychologists use to sort people into one of these categories is to have them play a series of [decomposed games](#)—short laboratory exercises that involve making a choice from various distributions of resources between oneself and an “other.” Consider the example shown in Figure 2, which offers three different ways to distribute a valuable resource (such as money). People with competitive SVOs, who try to maximize their relative advantage over others, are most likely to pick option A. People with cooperative SVOs, who try to maximize joint gain for both themselves and others, are more likely to split the resource evenly, picking option B. People with individualistic SVOs, who always maximize gains to the self, regardless of how it affects others, will most likely pick option C.

| <i>SVO decomposed game</i> | A | B | C |
|----------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| You get | 500 | 500 | 550 |
| Other gets | 100 | 500 | 300 |

Figure 2. Example of an SVO decomposed game used to determine how competitive or cooperative a person is

Researchers have found that a person's SVO predicts how cooperative he or she is in both laboratory experiments and the outside world. For example, in one laboratory experiment, groups of participants were asked to play a [commons dilemma game](#). In this game, participants each took turns drawing from a central collection of points to be exchanged for real money at the end of the experiment. These points represented a [common-pool resource](#) for the group, like valuable goods or services in society (such as farm land, ground water, and air quality) that are freely accessible to everyone but prone to overuse and degradation. Participants were told that, while the common-pool resource would gradually replenish after the end of every turn, taking too much of the resource too quickly would eventually deplete it. The researchers found that participants with cooperative SVOs withdrew fewer resources from the common-pool than those with competitive and individualistic SVOs, indicating a greater willingness to cooperate with others and act in a way that is sustainable for the group ([Kramer, McClintock, & Messick, 1986](#); [Roch & Samuelson, 1997](#)).

Research has also shown that people with cooperative SVOs are more likely to commute to work using public transportation—an act of cooperation that can help reduce carbon emissions—rather than drive themselves, compared to people with competitive and individualistic SVOs ([Van Vugt, Meertens, & Van Lange, 1995](#); [Van Vugt, Van Lange, & Meertens, 1996](#)). People with cooperative SVOs also more frequently engage in behavior intended to help others, such as volunteering and giving money to charity ([McClintock & Allison, 1989](#); [Van Lange, Bekkers, Schuyt, Van Vugt, 2007](#)). Taken together, these findings show that people with cooperative SVOs act with greater consideration for the overall well-being of others and the group as a whole, using resources in moderation and taking more effortful measures (like using public transportation to protect the environment) to benefit the group.

Empathic Ability

Empathy is the ability to feel and understand another's emotional experience. When we empathize with someone else, we take on that person's perspective, imagining the world from his or her point of view and vicariously experiencing his or her emotions (Davis, 1994; Goetz, Keltner, & Simon-Thomas, 2010). Research has shown that when people empathize with their partner, they act with greater cooperation and overall altruism—the desire to help the partner, even at a potential cost to the self. People that can experience and understand the emotions of others are better able to work with others in groups, earning higher job performance ratings on average from their supervisors, even after adjusting for different types of work and other aspects of personality (Côté & Miners, 2006).

When empathizing with a person in distress, the natural desire to help is often expressed as a desire to cooperate. In one study, just before playing an economic game with a partner in another room, participants were given a note revealing that their partner had just gone through a rough breakup and needed some cheering up. While half of the subjects were urged by the experimenters to “remain objective and detached,” the other half were told to “try and imagine how the other person feels.” Though both groups received the same information about their partner, those who were encouraged to engage in empathy—by actively experiencing their partner’s emotions—acted with greater cooperation in the economic game (Batson & Moran, 1999). The researchers also found that people who empathized with their partners were more likely to act cooperatively, even after being told that their partner had already made a choice to not cooperate (Batson & Ahmad, 2001)! Evidence of the link between empathy and cooperation has even been found in studies of preschool children (Marcus, Telleen, & Roke, 1979). From a very early age, emotional understanding can foster cooperation.

Although empathizing with a partner can lead to more cooperation between two people, it can also undercut cooperation within larger groups. In groups, empathizing with a single person can lead people to abandon broader cooperation in favor of helping only the target individual. In one study, participants were asked to play a cooperative game with three partners. In the game, participants were asked to (A) donate resources to a central pool, (B) donate resources to a specific group member, or (C) keep the resources for themselves. According to the rules, all donations to the central pool would be increased by 50% then distributed evenly, resulting in a net gain to the entire group. Objectively, this might seem to be the best option. However, when participants were encouraged to imagine the feelings of one of their partners said to be in distress, they were more likely to donate their tickets to that partner and not engage in cooperation with the group—rather than remaining detached and objective (Batson et al., 1995). Though empathy can create strong cooperative bonds between individuals, it can sometimes lead to actions that, despite being well-intentioned, end up undermining the group’s best interests.



Feelings of empathy lead to greater levels of cooperation. Research shows that even young children cooperate more when experiencing feelings of empathy. [Image: US Army, <https://goo.gl/psWXOe>, CC BY 2.0, <https://goo.gl/BRvSA7>]

Situational Influences of Cooperation

Communication and Commitment

Open communication between people is one of the best ways to promote cooperation ([Dawes, McTavish, & Shaklee, 1977](#); [Dawes, 1988](#)). This is because communication provides an opportunity to size up the trustworthiness of others. It also affords us a chance to prove our own trustworthiness, by verbally committing to cooperate with others. Since cooperation requires people to enter a [state of vulnerability](#) and trust with partners, we are very sensitive to the social cues and interactions of potential partners before deciding to cooperate with them.

In one line of research, groups of participants were allowed to chat for five minutes before playing a multi-round “public goods” game. During the chats, the players were allowed to discuss game strategies and make verbal commitments about their in-game actions. While some groups were able to reach a consensus on a strategy (e.g., “always cooperate”), other groups failed to reach a consensus within their allotted five minutes or even picked strategies that ensured noncooperation (e.g., “every person for themselves”). The researchers found that when group members made explicit commitments to each other to cooperate, they ended up honoring those commitments and acting with greater cooperation. Interestingly, the effect of face-to-face verbal commitments persisted even when the cooperation game itself was completely anonymous ([Kerr and Kaufman-Gilliland, 1994](#); [Kerr, Garst, Lewandowski, & Harris, 1997](#)). This suggests that those who explicitly commit to cooperate are driven not by the fear of external punishment by group members, but by their own personal desire to honor such commitments. In other words, once people make a specific promise to cooperate, they are driven by “that still, small voice”—the voice of their own inner conscience—to fulfill that commitment ([Kerr et al., 1997](#)).

Trust



Trust is essential for cooperation, people are much more motivated to cooperate if they know others in the group will support one another.
[Image: Wesley Fryer, <https://goo.gl/LKNLWp>, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://goo.gl/rxiUsF>]

When it comes to cooperation, trust is key (Pruitt & Kimmel, 1977; Parks, Henager, & Scamahorn, 1996; Chaudhuri, Sopher, & Strand, 2002). Working with others toward a common goal requires a level of faith that our partners will repay our hard work and generosity, and not take advantage of us for their own selfish gains. Social trust, or the belief that another person's actions will be beneficial to one's own interests (Kramer, 1999), enables people to work together as a

single unit, pooling their resources to accomplish more than they could individually. Trusting others, however, depends on their actions and reputation.

One common example of the difficulties in trusting others that you might recognize from being a student occurs when you are assigned a group project. Many students dislike group projects because they worry about “social loafing”—the way that one person expends less effort but still benefits from the efforts of the group. Imagine, for example, that you and five other students are assigned to work together on a difficult class project. At first, you and your group members split the work up evenly. As the project continues, however, you notice that one member of your team isn’t doing his “fair share.” He fails to show up to meetings, his work is sloppy, and he seems generally uninterested in contributing to the project. After a while, you might begin to suspect that this student is trying to get by with minimal effort, perhaps assuming others will pick up the slack. Your group now faces a difficult choice: either join the slacker and abandon all work on the project, causing it to collapse, or keep cooperating and allow for the possibility that the uncooperative student may receive a decent grade for others’ work.

If this scenario sounds familiar to you, you’re not alone. Economists call this situation the [free rider problem](#)—when individuals benefit from the cooperation of others without contributing anything in return ([Grossman & Hart, 1980](#)). Although these sorts of actions may benefit the free rider in the short-term, free riding can have a negative impact on a person’s social reputation over time. In the above example, for instance, the “free riding” student may develop a reputation as lazy or untrustworthy, leading others to be less willing to work with him or her in the future.

Indeed, research has shown that a poor reputation for cooperation can serve as a warning sign for others not to cooperate with the person in disrepute. For example, in one experiment involving a group economic game, participants seen as being uncooperative were punished harshly by their fellow participants. According to the rules of the game, individuals took turns being either a “donor” or a “receiver” over the course of multiple rounds. If donors chose to give up a small sum of actual money, receivers would receive a slightly larger sum, resulting in an overall net gain. However, unbeknownst to the group, one participant was secretly instructed never to donate. After just a few rounds of play, this individual was effectively shunned by the rest of the group, receiving almost zero donations from the other members ([Milinski, Semmann, Bakker, & Krambeck, 2001](#)). When someone is seen being consistently uncooperative, other people have no incentive to trust him/her, resulting in a collapse of cooperation.

On the other hand, people are more likely to cooperate with others who have a good reputation for cooperation and are therefore deemed trustworthy. In one study, people played a group economic game similar to the one described above: over multiple rounds, they took turns choosing whether to donate to other group members. Over the course of the game, donations were more frequently given to individuals who had been generous in earlier rounds of the game ([Wedekind & Milinski, 2000](#)). In other words, individuals seen cooperating with others were afforded a reputational advantage, earning them more partners willing to cooperate and a larger overall monetary reward.

Group Identification



Sometimes the groups with which we identify can be formed based on preferences. Are you a dog person or a cat person? Just knowing that someone else shares your preference can affect the cooperation between you. [Image: Doris Meta F, <https://goo.gl/k8Zi6N>, CC BY-NC 2.0, <https://goo.gl/tgFydH>]

Another factor that can impact cooperation is a person's [social identity](#), or the extent to which he or she identifies as a member of a particular social group ([Tajfel & Turner, 1979/1986](#)). People can identify with groups of all shapes and sizes: a group might be relatively small, such as a local high school class, or very large, such as a national citizenship or a political party. While these groups are often bound together by shared goals and values, they can also form according to seemingly arbitrary qualities, such as musical taste, hometown, or even completely randomized assignment, such as a coin toss ([Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971](#); [Bigler, Brown, & Markell, 2001](#); [Locksley, Ortiz, & Hepburn, 1980](#)). When members of a group place a high value on their group membership, their identity (the way they view themselves) can be shaped in part by the goals and values of that group.

Research shows that when people's group identity is emphasized (for example, when laboratory participants are referred to as "group members" rather than "individuals"), they are less likely to act selfishly in a commons dilemma game. In such experiments, so-called "group members" withdraw fewer resources, with the outcome of promoting the sustainability of the group ([Brewer & Kramer, 1986](#)). In one study, students who strongly identified with their university were less likely to leave a cooperative group of fellow students when given an attractive option to exit ([Van Vugt & Hart, 2004](#)). In addition, the strength of a person's identification with a group or organization is a key driver behind participation in large-scale cooperative efforts, such as collective action in political and workers' groups ([Klandersman, 2002](#)), and engaging in organizational citizenship behaviors ([Cropanzano & Byrne, 2000](#)).

Emphasizing group identity is not without its costs: although it can increase cooperation *within* groups, it can also undermine cooperation *between* groups. Researchers have found that groups interacting with other groups are

more competitive and less cooperative than individuals interacting with other individuals, a phenomenon known as [interindividual-intergroup discontinuity](#) ([Schopler & Insko, 1999](#); [Wildschut, Pinter, Vevea, Insko, & Schopler, 2003](#)). For example, groups interacting with other groups displayed greater self-interest and reduced cooperation in a prisoner's dilemma game than did individuals completing the same tasks with other individuals ([Insко et al., 1987](#)). Such problems with trust and cooperation are largely due to people's general reluctance to cooperate with members of an outgroup, or those outside the boundaries of one's own social group ([Allport, 1954](#); [Van Vugt, Biel, Snyder, & Tyler, 2000](#)). [Outgroups](#) do not have to be explicit rivals for this effect to take place. Indeed, in one study, simply telling groups of participants that other groups preferred a different style of painting led them to behave less cooperatively than pairs of individuals completing the same task ([Insko, Kirchner, Pinter, Efaw, & Wildschut, 2005](#)). Though a strong group identity can bind individuals within the group together, it can also drive divisions between different groups, reducing overall trust and cooperation on a larger scope.

Under the right circumstances, however, even rival groups can be turned into cooperative partners in the presence of superordinate goals. In a classic demonstration of this phenomenon, Muzafer Sherif and colleagues observed the cooperative and competing behaviors of two groups of twelve-year-old boys at a summer camp in Robber's Cave State Park, in Oklahoma ([Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961](#)). The twenty-two boys in the study were all carefully interviewed to determine that none of them knew each other beforehand. Importantly, Sherif and colleagues kept both groups unaware of each other's existence, arranging for them to arrive at separate times and occupy different areas of the camp. Within each group, the participants quickly bonded and established their own group identity—"The Eagles" and "The Rattlers"—identifying leaders and creating flags decorated with their own group's name and symbols.

For the next phase of the experiment, the researchers revealed the existence of each group to the other, leading to reactions of anger, territorialism, and verbal abuse between the two. This behavior was further compounded by a series of competitive group activities, such as baseball and tug-of-war, leading the two groups to engage in even more spiteful behavior: The Eagles set fire to The Rattlers' flag, and The Rattlers retaliated by ransacking The Eagles' cabin, overturning beds and stealing their belongings. Eventually, the two groups refused to eat together in the same dining hall, and they had to be physically separated to avoid further conflict.

However, in the final phase of the experiment, Sherif and colleagues introduced a dilemma to both groups that could only be solved through mutual cooperation. The researchers told both groups that there was a shortage of drinking water in the camp, supposedly due to "vandals" damaging the water supply. As both groups gathered around the water supply, attempting to find a solution, members from each group offered suggestions and worked together to fix the problem. Since the lack of drinking water affected both groups equally, both were highly motivated to try and resolve the issue. Finally, after 45 minutes, the two groups managed to clear a stuck pipe, allowing fresh water to flow. The researchers concluded that when conflicting groups share a superordinate goal, they are capable of shifting their attitudes and bridging group differences to become cooperative partners. The insights from this study have important implications for group-level cooperation. Since many problems facing the world today, such as climate change and nuclear proliferation, affect individuals of all nations, and are best dealt with through the coordinated efforts of different groups and countries, emphasizing the shared nature of these dilemmas may enable otherwise competing groups to engage in cooperative and collective action.

Culture



There are cultural differences in how and how much people cooperate. Some societies require more cooperation to ensure survival.
[Image: Cindy Cornett Seigle, <http://goo.gl/u0kE9Z>, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0, <http://goo.gl/iF4hmM>]

Culture can have a powerful effect on people's beliefs about and ways they interact with others. Might culture also affect a person's tendency toward cooperation? To answer this question, Joseph Henrich and his colleagues surveyed people from 15 small-scale societies around the world, located in places such as Zimbabwe, Bolivia, and Indonesia. These groups varied widely in the ways they traditionally interacted with their environments: some practiced small-scale agriculture, others foraged for food, and still others were nomadic herders of animals ([Henrich et al., 2001](#)).

To measure their tendency toward cooperation, individuals of each society were asked to play the [ultimatum game](#), a task similar in nature to the prisoner's dilemma. The game has two players: Player A (the "allocator") is given a sum of money (equal to two days' wages) and allowed to donate any amount of it to Player B (the "responder"). Player B can

then either accept or reject Player A's offer. If Player B accepts the offer, both players keep their agreed-upon amounts. However, if Player B rejects the offer, then neither player receives anything. In this scenario, the responder can use his/her authority to punish unfair offers, even though it requires giving up his or her own reward. In turn, Player A must be careful to propose an acceptable offer to Player B, while still trying to maximize his/her own outcome in the game.

According to a model of rational economics, a self-interested Player B should always choose to accept any offer, no matter how small or unfair. As a result, Player A should always try to offer the minimum possible amount to Player B, in order to maximize his/her own reward. Instead, the researchers found that people in these 15 societies donated on average 39% of the sum to their partner ([Henrich et al., 2001](#)). This number is almost identical to the amount that people of Western cultures donate when playing the ultimatum game ([Oosterbeek et al., 2004](#)). These findings suggest that allocators in the game, instead of offering the least possible amount, try to maintain a sense of fairness and "shared rewards" in the game, in part so that their offers will not be rejected by the responder.

Henrich and colleagues ([2001](#)) also observed significant variation between cultures in terms of their level of cooperation. Specifically, the researchers found that the extent to which individuals in a culture needed to collaborate with each other to gather resources to survive predicted how likely they were to be cooperative. For example, among the people of the Lamelara in Indonesia, who survive by hunting whales in groups of a dozen or more individuals, donations in the ultimatum game were extremely high—approximately 58% of the total sum. In contrast, the Machiguenga people of Peru, who are generally economically independent at the family level, donated much less on average—about 26% of the total sum. The interdependence of people for survival, therefore, seems to be a key component of why people decide to cooperate with others.

Though the various survival strategies of small-scale societies might seem quite remote from your own experiences, take a moment to think about how your life is dependent on collaboration with others. Very few of us in industrialized societies live in houses we build ourselves, wear clothes we make ourselves, or eat food we grow ourselves. Instead, we depend on others to provide specialized resources and products, such as food, clothing, and shelter that are essential to our survival. Studies show that Americans give about 40% of their sum in the ultimatum game—less than the Lamelara give, but on par with most of the small-scale societies sampled by Henrich and colleagues ([Oosterbeek et al., 2004](#)). While living in an industrialized society might not require us to hunt in groups like the Lamelara do, we still depend on others to supply the resources we need to survive.

Conclusion

Cooperation is an important part of our everyday lives. Practically every feature of modern social life, from the taxes we pay to the street signs we follow, involves multiple parties working together toward shared goals. There are many factors that help determine whether people will successfully cooperate, from their culture of origin and the trust they place in their partners, to the degree to which they empathize with others. Although cooperation can sometimes be difficult to achieve, certain diplomatic practices, such as emphasizing shared goals and engaging in open communication, can promote teamwork and even break down rivalries. Though choosing not to cooperate can sometimes achieve a larger reward for an individual in the short term, cooperation is often necessary to ensure that the group as a whole—including all members of that group—achieves the optimal outcome.

Take a Quiz

An optional quiz is available to accompany this chapter here: <https://nobaproject.com/modules/cooperation>

Discussion Questions

1. Which groups do you identify with? Consider sports teams, home towns, and universities. How does your identification with these groups make you feel about other members of these groups? What about members of competing groups?
2. Thinking of all the accomplishments of humanity throughout history which do you believe required the greatest amounts of cooperation? Why?
3. In your experience working on group projects—such as group projects for a class—what have you noticed regarding the themes presented in this module (eg. Competition, free riding, cooperation, trust)? How could you use the material you have just learned to make group projects more effective?

Vocabulary

Altruism

A desire to improve the welfare of another person, at a potential cost to the self and without any expectation of reward.

Common-pool resource

A collective product or service that is freely available to all individuals of a society, but is vulnerable to overuse and degradation.

Commons dilemma game

A game in which members of a group must balance their desire for personal gain against the deterioration and possible collapse of a resource.

Cooperation

The coordination of multiple partners toward a common goal that will benefit everyone involved.

Decomposed games

A task in which an individual chooses from multiple allocations of resources to distribute between him- or herself and another person.

Empathy

The ability to vicariously experience the emotions of another person.

Free rider problem

A situation in which one or more individuals benefit from a common-pool resource without paying their share of the cost.

Interindividual-intergroup discontinuity

The tendency for relations between groups to be less cooperative than relations between individuals.

Outgroup

A social category or group with which an individual does not identify.

Prisoner's dilemma

A classic paradox in which two individuals must independently choose between defection (maximizing reward to the self) and cooperation (maximizing reward to the group).

Rational self-interest

The principle that people will make logical decisions based on maximizing their own gains and benefits.

Social identity

A person's sense of who they are, based on their group membership(s).

Social value orientation (SVO)

An assessment of how an individual prefers to allocate resources between him- or herself and another person.

State of vulnerability

When a person places him or herself in a position in which he or she might be exploited or harmed. This is often done out of trust that others will not exploit the vulnerability.

Ultimatum game

An economic game in which a proposer (Player A) can offer a subset of resources to a responder (Player B), who can then either accept or reject the given proposal.

Outside Resources

Article: Weber, J. M., Kopelman, S., & Messick, D. M. (2004). A conceptual review of decision making in social dilemmas: Applying a logic of appropriateness. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 8(3), 281-307.

<http://psr.sagepub.com/content/8/3/281.abstract>

Book: Harvey, O. J., White, B. J., Hood, W. R., & Sherif, C. W. (1961). *Intergroup conflict and cooperation: The Robbers Cave experiment*. Norman, OK: University Book Exchange.

<http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Sherif/index.htm>

Experiment: Intergroup Conflict and Cooperation: The Robbers Cave Experiment – An online version of Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, and Sherif's (1954/1961) study, which includes photos.

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

Video: A clip from a reality TV show, “Golden Balls”, that pits players against each other in a high-stakes Prisoners' Dilemma situation.

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=p3Uos2fzIJ0%3Fcolor%3Dred%26amp%3Bmodestbranding%3D1%26amp%3Bshowinfo%3D0%26amp%3Borigin%3Dhttps%3A>

Video: Describes recent research showing how chimpanzees naturally cooperate with each other to accomplish tasks.

https://youtube.com/watch?v=fME0_RsEXiI%3Fcolor%3Dred%26modestbranding%3D1%26showinfo%3D0%26origin%3Dhttps%3A

Video: The Empathic Civilization – A 10 minute, 39 second animated talk that explores the topics of empathy.

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=xjarMIXA2q8%3Fcolor%3Dred%26modestbranding%3D1%26showinfo%3D0%26origin%3Dhttps%3A>

Video: Tragedy of the Commons, Part 1 – What happens when many people seek to share the same, limited

resource?

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=KZDjPnzoge0>%3Fcolor%3Dred%26modestbranding%3D1%26showinfo%3D0%26origin%3Dhttps%3A

Video: Tragedy of the Commons, Part 2 – This video (which is 1 minute, 27 seconds) discusses how cooperation can be a solution to the commons dilemma.

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=IVwk6VIxBXg>%3Fcolor%3Dred%26modestbranding%3D1%26showinfo%3D0%26origin%3Dhttps%3A

Video: Understanding the Prisoners' Dilemma.

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=t9Lo2fgxWHw>%3Fcolor%3Dred%26modestbranding%3D1%26showinfo%3D0%26origin%3Dhttps%3A

Video: Why Some People are More Altruistic Than Others – A 12 minute, 21 second TED talk about altruism. A psychologist, Abigail Marsh, discusses the research about altruism.

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=m4KbUSRfnR4>%3Fcolor%3Dred%26modestbranding%3D1%26showinfo%3D0%26origin%3Dhttps%3A

Web: Take an online test to determine your Social Values Orientation (SVO).

<http://vlab.ethz.ch/svo/index-normal.html>

Web: What is Social Identity? – A brief explanation of social identity, which includes specific examples.

<http://people.howstuffworks.com/what-is-social-identity.htm>

References

- Allport, G.W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Batson, C. D., & Ahmad, N. (2001). Empathy-induced altruism in a prisoner's dilemma II: What if the target of empathy has defected? *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 31(1), 25-36.
- Batson, C. D., & Moran, T. (1999). Empathy-induced altruism in a prisoner's dilemma. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 29(7), 909-924.
- Batson, C. D., Batson, J. G., Todd, R. M., Brummett, B. H., Shaw, L. L., & Aldeguer, C. M. (1995). Empathy and the collective good: Caring for one of the others in a social dilemma. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 68(4), 619.
- Bigler R.S., Brown C.S., Markell M. (2001). When groups are not created equal: Effects of group status on the formation of intergroup attitudes in children. *Child Development*, 72(4), 1151-1162.
- Brewer, M. B., & Kramer, R. M. (1986). Choice behavior in social dilemmas: Effects of social identity, group size, and decision framing. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 50(3), 543-549.
- Chaudhuri, A., Sopher, B., & Strand, P. (2002). Cooperation in social dilemmas, trust and reciprocity. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 23(2), 231-249.
- Cote, S., & Miners, C. T. (2006). Emotional intelligence, cognitive intelligence, and job performance. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 51(1), 1-28.
- Cropanzano R., & Byrne Z.S. (2000). Workplace justice and the dilemma of organizational citizenship. In M. Van Vugt, M. Snyder, T. Tyler, & A. Biel (Eds.), *Cooperation in Modern Society: Promoting the Welfare of Communities, States and Organizations* (pp. 142-161). London: Routledge.

- Davis, M. H. (1994). *Empathy: A social psychological approach*. Westview Press.
- Dawes, R. M., & Kagan, J. (1988). *Rational choice in an uncertain world*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Dawes, R. M., McTavish, J., & Shaklee, H. (1977). Behavior, communication, and assumptions about other people's behavior in a commons dilemma situation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 35(1), 1.
- De Waal, F.B.M., & Lanting, F. (1997). *Bonobo: The forgotten ape*. University of California Press.
- Goetz, J. L., Keltner, D., & Simon-Thomas, E. (2010). Compassion: An evolutionary analysis and empirical review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 136(3), 351-374.
- Grossman, S. J., & Hart, O. D. (1980). Takeover bids, the free-rider problem, and the theory of the corporation. *The Bell Journal of Economics*, 42-64.
- Henrich, J., Boyd, R., Bowles, S., Camerer, C., Fehr, E., Gintis, H., & McElreath, R. (2001). In search of homo economicus: Behavioral experiments in 15 small-scale societies. *The American Economic Review*, 91(2), 73-78.
- Insko, C. A., Kirchner, J. L., Pinter, B., Efaw, J., & Wildschut, T. (2005). Interindividual-intergroup discontinuity as a function of trust and categorization: The paradox of expected cooperation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 88(2), 365-385.
- Insko, C. A., Pinkley, R. L., Hoyle, R. H., Dalton, B., Hong, G., Slim, R. M., ... & Thibaut, J. (1987). Individual versus group discontinuity: The role of intergroup contact. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 23(3), 250-267.
- Keltner, D., Kogan, A., Piff, P. K., & Saturn, S. R. (2014). The sociocultural appraisals, values, and emotions (SAVE) framework of prosociality: Core processes from gene to meme. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 65, 425-460.
- Kerr, N. L., & Kaufman-Gilliland, C. M. (1994). Communication, commitment, and cooperation in social dilemma. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 66(3), 513-529.
- Kerr, N. L., Garst, J., Lewandowski, D. A., & Harris, S. E. (1997). That still, small voice: Commitment to cooperate as an internalized versus a social norm. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 23(12), 1300-1311.
- Klandermans, B. (2002). How group identification helps to overcome the dilemma of collective action. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 45(5), 887-900.
- Kramer, R. M. (1999). Trust and distrust in organizations: Emerging perspectives, enduring questions. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 50(1), 569-598.
- Kramer, R. M., McClintock, C. G., & Messick, D. M. (1986). Social values and cooperative response to a simulated resource conservation crisis. *Journal of Personality*, 54(3), 576-582.
- Langergraber, K. E., Mitani, J. C., & Vigilant, L. (2007). The limited impact of kinship on cooperation in wild chimpanzees. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 104(19), 7786-7790.
- Locksley, A., Ortiz, V., & Hepburn, C. (1980). Social categorization and discriminatory behavior: Extinguishing the minimal intergroup discrimination effect. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 39(5), 773-783.
- Marcus, R. F., Telleen, S., & Roke, E. J. (1979). Relation between cooperation and empathy in young children. *Developmental Psychology*, 15(3), 346.
- McClintock, C. G., & Allison, S. T. (1989). Social value orientation and helping behavior. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 19(4), 353-362.
- Messick, D. M., & McClintock, C. G. (1968). Motivational bases of choice in experimental games. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 4(1), 1-25.
- Milinski, M., Semmann, D., Bakker, T. C., & Krambeck, H. J. (2001). Cooperation through indirect reciprocity: Image scoring or standing strategy? *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London B: Biological Sciences*, 268(1484), 2495-2501.
- Mithen, S. (1999). *The prehistory of the mind: The cognitive origins of art, religion and science*. Thames & Hudson Publishers.
- Oosterbeek, H., Sloof, R., & Van De Kuilen, G. (2004). Cultural differences in ultimatum game experiments: Evidence from a meta-analysis. *Experimental Economics*, 7(2), 171-188.
- Parks, C. D., Henager, R. F., & Scamahorn, S. D. (1996). Trust and reactions to messages of intent in social dilemmas. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 40(1), 134-151.
- Pruitt, D. G., & Kimmel, M. J. (1977). Twenty years of experimental gaming: Critique, synthesis, and suggestions for the future. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 28, 363-392.

- Roch, S. G., & Samuelson, C. D. (1997). Effects of environmental uncertainty and social value orientation in resource dilemmas. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 70(3), 221-235.
- Schopler, J., & Insko, C. A. (1999). The reduction of the interindividual-intergroup discontinuity effect: The role of future consequences. In M. Foddy, M. Smithson, S. Schneider, & M. Hogg (Eds.), *Resolving social dilemmas: Dynamic, structural, and intergroup aspects* (pp. 281-294). Philadelphia: Psychology Press.
- Sherif, M., Harvey, O. J., White, B. J., Hood, W. R., & Sherif, C. W. (1961). *Intergroup conflict and cooperation: The Robbers Cave experiment*. Norman, OK: University Book Exchange.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behaviour. In S. Worchel & W. G. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 7-24). Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33-47). Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Tajfel, H., Billig, M. G., Bundy, R. P., & Flament, C. (1971). Social categorization and intergroup behaviour. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 1(2), 149-178.
- Van Lange, P. A., Bekkers, R., Schuyt, T. N., & Vugt, M. V. (2007). From games to giving: Social value orientation predicts donations to noble causes. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 29(4), 375-384.
- Van Vugt M., Biel A., Snyder M., & Tyler T. (2000). Perspectives on cooperation in modern society: Helping the self, the community, and society. In M. Van Vugt, M. Snyder, T. Tyler, & A. Biel (Eds.), *Cooperation in Modern Society: Promoting the Welfare of Communities, States and Organizations* (pp. 3-24). London: Routledge.
- Van Vugt, M., & Hart, C. M. (2004). Social identity as social glue: The origins of group loyalty. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 86(4), 585-598.
- Van Vugt, M., Meertens, R. M., & Lange, P. A. (1995). Car versus public transportation? The role of social value orientations in a real-life social dilemma. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 25(3), 258-278.
- Van Vugt, M., Van Lange, P. A., & Meertens, R. M. (1996). Commuting by car or public transportation? A social dilemma analysis of travel mode judgements. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 26(3), 373-395.
- Warneken, F., & Tomasello, M. (2007). Helping and cooperation at 14 months of age. *Infancy*, 11(3), 271-294.
- Warneken, F., Chen, F., & Tomasello, M. (2006). Cooperative activities in young children and chimpanzees. *Child Development*, 77(3), 640-663.
- Wedekind, C., & Milinski, M. (2000). Cooperation through image scoring in humans. *Science*, 288(5467), 850-852.
- Wildschut, T., Pinter, B., Vevea, J. L., Insko, C. A., & Schopler, J. (2003). Beyond the group mind: A quantitative review of the interindividual-intergroup discontinuity effect. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129(5), 698-722.

Authors



Jake P. Moskowitz

Jake P. Moskowitz is a current doctoral student in the Psychology & Social Behavior program at the University of California, Irvine. His research focuses on the nature of prosocial behavior, and how factors such as identity, ideology, and morality impact human prosocial tendencies.



• Paul K. Piff

Paul K. Piff, Ph.D. (UC Berkeley), is an Assistant Professor of Psychology and Social Behavior at the University of California, Irvine, where he also directs the Social Inequality and Cohesion Lab. Dr. Piff's research examines the origins of human kindness and cooperation, and the social consequences of economic inequality.



Cooperation by Cameron W. Piercy, Ph.D. is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

3. Social Comparison

From the Noba Project

By [Stephen Garcia](#) and [Arnor Halldorsson](#)

University of Michigan

When athletes compete in a race, they are able to observe and compare their performance against those of their competitors. In the same way, all people naturally engage in mental comparisons with the people around them during the course of daily life. These evaluations can impact our motivation and feelings. In this module, you will learn about the process of social comparison: its definition, consequences, and the factors that affect it.

- [PDF Download](#)
- [downward comparison](#)
- [Dunning-Kruger Effect](#)
- [Frog Pond Effect](#)
- [N-Effect](#)
- [Self-esteem](#)
- [Self-evaluation](#)
- [upward comparison](#)

Learning Objectives

- Understand the reasons people make social comparisons.
- Identify consequences of social comparison.
- Understand the Self-Evaluation Maintenance Model.
- Explain situational factors that can affect social comparison.

Introduction: Social Comparison

One pleasant Saturday afternoon, Mr. Jones arrives home from the car dealership in a brand-new Mercedes-Benz C-Class, the entry-level sedan in the Mercedes family of cars. Although Mercedes-Benzes are common in Europe, they are often viewed as status symbols in Mr. Jones' neighborhood in North America. This new car is a huge upgrade from his previous car. Excited, Mr. Jones immediately drives around the block and into town to show it off. He is thrilled with his purchase for a full week—that is, until he sees his neighbor across the street, Mr. Smith, driving a brand-new Mercedes S-Class, the highest tier of Mercedes sedans. Mr. Smith notices Mr. Jones from a distance and waves to him with a big smile. Climbing into his C-Class, Mr. Jones suddenly feels disappointed with his purchase and even feels envious of Mr. Smith. Now his C-Class feels just as uncool as his old car.

Mr. Smith is experiencing the effects of [social comparison](#). Occurring frequently in our lives, social comparison shapes our perceptions, memory, and behavior—even regarding the most trivial of issues. In this module, we will take a closer look at the reasons we make social comparisons and the consequences of the social comparison process.

Social Comparison: Basics

In 1954, psychologist Leon Festinger hypothesized that people compare themselves to others in order to fulfill a basic human desire: the need for self-evaluation. He called this process *social comparison theory*. At the core of his theory is the idea that people come to know about themselves—their own abilities, successes, and personality—by comparing themselves with others. These comparisons can be divided into two basic categories.

In one category, we consider social norms and the opinions of others. Specifically, we compare our own opinions and values to those of others when our own self-evaluation is unclear. For example, you might not be certain about your position on a hotly contested issue, such as the legality of abortion. Or, you might not be certain about which fork to use first in a multi-course place setting. In these types of instances people are prone to look toward others—to make social comparisons—to help fill in the gaps.

Imagine an American exchange student arriving in India for the first time, a country where the culture is drastically different from his own. He notices quickly through observing others—i.e., social comparison—that when greeting a person, it is normal to place his own palms together rather than shaking the other person's hand. This comparison informs him of how he should behave in the surrounding social context.



When comparing, similarity is important. A professional athlete is far more likely to compare his or her own performance against that of other professional athletes than that of an amateur. [Image: Doma-w, <https://goo.gl/2NM9li>, CC BY 3.0, <https://goo.gl/b58TcB>]



Social comparison is a well-known concept to advertisers. They create idealized images that influence consumers' self-perceptions as well as the things they feel they must buy in order to be satisfied. [Image: SenseiAlan, <http://goo.gl/XOwjq5>, CC BY 2.0, <http://goo.gl/T4qgSp>]

The second category of social comparison pertains to our abilities and performance. In these cases, the need for self-evaluation is driven by another fundamental desire: to perform better and better—as Festinger (1954) put it, “a unidirectional drive upward.” In essence, we compare our performance not only to evaluate ourselves but also to benchmark our performance related to another person. If we observe or even anticipate that a specific person is doing better than us at some ability then we may be motivated to boost our performance level. Take, for example, a realistic scenario where Olivia uses social comparison to gauge her abilities: Olivia is a high school student who often spends a few hours in her backyard shooting a soccer ball at her homemade goal. A friend of hers suggests she try out for the school's soccer team. Olivia accepts her friend's suggestion, although nervously, doubting she's good enough to make the team. On the day of tryouts, Olivia gets her gear ready and starts walking towards the soccer field. As she approaches, she feels butterflies in her stomach and her legs get wobbly. But, glancing towards the other candidates who have arrived early to take a few practice shots at the goal, she notices

that their aim is inconsistent and they frequently miss the goal. Seeing this, Olivia feels more relaxed, and she confidently marches onto the field, ready to show everyone her skills.

Relevance and Similarity

There are important factors, however, that determine whether people will engage in social comparison. First, the performance dimension has to be relevant to the self ([Festinger, 1954](#)). For example, if excelling in academics is more important to you than excelling in sports, you are more likely to compare yourself with others in terms of academic rather than athletic performance. Relevance is also important when assessing opinions. If the issue at hand is relevant to you, you will compare your opinion to others; if not, you most likely won't even bother. Relevance is thus a *necessary precondition* for social comparison.

A secondary question is, "to whom do people compare themselves?" Generally speaking, people compare themselves to those who are similar ([Festinger, 1954](#); [Goethals & Darley, 1977](#)), whether similar in personal characteristics (e.g., gender, ethnic background, hair color, etc.) or in terms of performance (e.g., both being of comparable ability or both being neck-and-neck in a race). For example, a casual tennis player will not compare her performance to that of a professional, but rather to that of another casual tennis player. The same is true of opinions. People will cross-reference their own opinions on an issue with others who are similar to them rather than dissimilar (e.g., ethnic background or economic status).

Direction of Comparison

Social comparison is a bi-directional phenomenon where we can compare ourselves to people who are better than us—"upward comparisons"—or worse than us—"downward comparisons." Engaging in either of these two comparisons on a performance dimension can affect our self-evaluation. On one hand, upward comparisons on relevant dimensions can threaten our self-evaluation and jeopardize [self-esteem](#) ([Tesser, 1988](#)). On the other hand, they can also lead to joy and admiration for others' accomplishments on dimensions that are not relevant to the self, where one's self-evaluation is not under threat. For example, an academic overachiever who distinguishes himself by having two advanced degrees, both a PhD and a law degree, may not enjoy meeting another individual with a PhD, a law degree, and an MBA, but may well enjoy meeting a fellow overachiever in a domain that is not self-relevant, such as a famous NASCAR racer or professional hockey player.

Downward comparisons may boost our self-evaluation on relevant dimensions, leading to a [self-enhancement effect](#) ([Wills, 1981](#)), such as when an individual suffering from an illness makes downward comparisons with those suffering even more. A person enduring treatment for cancer, for instance, might feel better about his own side effects if he learns that an acquaintance suffered worse side effects from the same treatment. More recent findings have also shown that downward comparisons can also lead to feelings of scorn ([Fiske, 2011](#)), such as when those of a younger generation look down upon the elderly. In these cases, the boost to self-evaluation is so strong that it leads to an exaggerated sense of pride.

Interestingly, the direction of comparison and a person's emotional response can also depend on the [counterfactual](#)—"what might have been"—that comes most easily to mind. For example, one might think that an Olympic silver medalist would feel happier than a bronze medalist. After all, placing second is more prestigious than placing third. However, a classic study by Victoria Medvec, Scott Madey, and Thomas Gilovich ([1995](#)) found the opposite effect: bronze medalists were actually happier than silver medalists. The reason for this effect is that silver medalist's focus on having fallen short of achieving the gold (so close!), essentially turning a possible downward comparison into

an upward comparison; whereas the bronze medalists recognize they came close to not winning any medal, essentially turning a possible upward comparison (to another medalist) into a downward comparison to those who did not even receive a medal.

| | Upward Comparison | Downward Comparison |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Positive Effects | Hope, Inspiration | Gratitude |
| Negative Effects | Dissatisfaction, Envy | Scorn |

Table 1: The effects of social comparison.

Consequences of Social Comparison

The social comparison process has been associated with numerous consequences. For one, social comparison can impact self-esteem ([Tesser, 1988](#)), especially when doing well relative to others. For example, having the best final score in a class can increase your self-esteem quite a bit. Social comparison can also lead to feelings of regret ([White, Langer, Yariv, & Welch, 2006](#)), as when comparing the negative outcome of one's investment strategy to the positive outcome of a different strategy taken by a neighbor. Social comparison can also lead to feelings of envy ([Fiske, 2011](#); [Salovey & Rodin, 1984](#)), as when someone with thinning hair envies the thick hair of a colleague.



Comparing your behavior to that of other people might make you jealous, regretful or more motivated. Lapel stickers and online badges that proclaim "I voted" or "I gave blood" are common examples of leveraging social comparison to achieve positive social outcomes. [Image: CAVE CANEM, <http://goo.gl/ijfKSiE>, CC BY 2.0, <http://goo.gl/v4Y0Zv>]

Social comparison can also have interesting behavioral consequences. If you were to observe a discrepancy in performance between yourself and another person, then you might behave more competitively ([Garcia, Tor, & Schiff, 2013](#)), as you attempt to minimize the discrepancy. If, for example, you are among the top 10% on your class mid-term you might feel competitive with the other top students. Although competition can raise performance it can also take more problematic forms, from inflicting actual harm to making a comment to another person. These kinds of behaviors are likely to arise when the situation following the social comparison does not provide the opportunity to self-repair, such as another chance to compete in a race or retake a test ([Johnson, 2012](#)). However, when later opportunities to self-repair do exist, a more positive form of competitive motivation arises, whether that means running harder in a race or striving to earn a higher test score.

Self-Evaluation Maintenance Model

The [self-evaluation maintenance](#) (SEM; [Tesser, 1988](#)) model builds on social comparison theory. SEM points to a range of psychological forces that help and maintain our self-evaluation and self-esteem. In addition to relevance and similarity, SEM reveals the importance of relationship closeness. It turns out that relationship closeness—where two people stand on the continuum from being complete strangers to being intimate friends—affects self-evaluations.

For example, in one study, Tesser and Smith ([1980](#)) asked people to play a verbal game in which they were given the opportunity to receive clues from a partner. These clues could be used to help them guess the correct word in a word game. Half the participants were told the game was related to intelligence whereas the other half were not. Additionally, half the participants were paired with a close friend but the other half played with a stranger. Results show that participants who were led to believe the task was self-relevant or having to do with intelligence provided more difficult clues when their partner was a friend versus a stranger—suggesting a competitive uptick associated with relationship closeness. However, when performance was implied to be irrelevant to the self, partners gave easier clues to friends than strangers.

SEM can predict which of our friends and which of our comparison dimensions are self-relevant ([Tesser & Campbell, 2006](#); [Zuckerman & Jost, 2001](#)). For example, suppose playing chess is highly self-relevant for you. In this case you will naturally compare yourselves to other chess players. Now, suppose that your chess-playing friend consistently beats you. In fact, each time you play she beats you by a wider and wider margin. SEM would predict that one of two things will likely happen: (1) winning at chess will no longer be self-relevant to you, or (2) you will no longer be friends with this individual. In fact, if the first option occurs—you lose interest in competing—you will begin to bask in the glory of your chess playing friend as his or her performance approaches perfection.

These psychological processes have real world implications! They may determine who is hired in an organization or who is promoted at work. For example, suppose you are a faculty member of a university law school. Your work performance is appraised based on your teaching and on your academic publications. Although you do not have the most publications in your law school, you do have the most publications in prestigious journals.

Now, suppose that you are chairing a committee to hire a new faculty member. One candidate has even more top tier publications than you, while another candidate has the most publications in general of all the faculty members. How do you think social comparison might influence your choice of applicants? Research suggests that someone in your hypothetical shoes would likely favor the second candidate over the first candidate: people will actively champion the candidate who does not threaten their standing on a relevant dimension in an organization ([Garcia, Song, & Tesser, 2010](#)). In other words, the SEM forces are so powerful that people will essentially advocate for a candidate whom they feel is inferior!



It is common advice in the business world for managers to “hire your replacement.” In other words, to hire people with as much talent as possible, even those who could do the job better than the manager. The SEM model suggests that managers may prefer sub-optimal candidates who aren’t likely to challenge their standing in the organization. [Image: Ethan, <http://goo.gl/lnqzas>, CC BY 2.0, <http://goo.gl/v4Y0Zv>]

Individual Differences

It is also worth mentioning that social comparison and its effects on self-evaluation will often depend on [personality](#) and [individual differences](#). For example, people with [mastery goals](#) ([Poortvliet, Janssen, Van Yperen, &](#)

[Van de Vliert, 2007](#)) may not interpret an upward comparison as a threat to the self but more as challenge, and a hopeful sign that one can achieve a certain level of performance. Another individual difference is whether one has a “[fixed mindset](#)” or “[growth mindset](#)” ([Dweck, 2007](#)). People with fixed mindsets think that their abilities and talents cannot change; thus, an upward comparison will likely threaten their self-evaluation and prompt them to experience negative consequences of social comparison, such as competitive behavior, envy, or unhappiness. People with growth mindsets, however, are likely to interpret an upward comparison as a challenge, and an opportunity to improve themselves.

Situational factors

Social comparison researchers are actively exploring situational factors that can likewise influence degrees of social comparison:

Number

As the number of comparison targets (i.e., the number of people with whom you can compare) increases, social comparison tends to decrease. For example, imagine you are running a race with competitors of similar ability as your own, and the top 20% will receive a prize. Do you think you would try harder if there were only 10 people in the race, or if there were 100? The findings on [N-Effect](#) ([Garcia & Tor, 2009](#); [Tor & Garcia, 2010](#)) suggest the answer is 10. Even though the expected value of winning is the same in both cases, people will try harder when there are fewer people. In fact, findings suggest that as the number of SAT test-takers at a particular venue increases, the lower the average SAT score for that venue will be ([Garcia & Tor, 2009](#)). One of the mechanisms behind the N-Effect is social comparison. As the number of competitors increases, social comparison—one of the engines behind competitive motivation—becomes less important. Perhaps you have experienced this if you have had to give class presentations. As the number of presenters increases, you feel a decreasing amount of comparison pressure.

Local



It is natural to make comparisons between oneself and others on a variety of different standards and to compare oneself with a variety of different people. Comparisons to friends are among the most influential of all. [Image: Corrie M, <http://goo.gl/FRbOfQ>, CC BY-ND 2.0, <http://goo.gl/FuDJ6c>]

Research on the [local dominance effect \(Zell & Alicke, 2010\)](#) also provides insights about social comparison. People are more influenced by social comparison when the comparison is more localized rather than being broad and general. For example, if you wanted to evaluate your height by using social comparison, you could compare your height to a good friend, a group of friends, people in your workplace, or even the average height of people living in your city. Although any of these comparisons is hypothetically possible people generally rely on more local comparisons. They are more likely to compare with friends or co-workers than they are to industry or national averages. So, if you are among the tallest in your group of friends, it may very well give you a bigger boost to your self-esteem, even if you're still among the shortest individuals at the national level.

Proximity to a Standard

Research suggests that social comparison involves the [proximity](#) of a standard—such as the #1 ranking or other qualitative threshold. One consequence of this is an increase in competitive behavior. For example, in childhood games, if someone shouts, “First one to the tree is the coolest-person-in the-world!” then the children who are nearest the tree will tug and pull at each other for the lead. However, if someone shouts, “Last one there is a rotten-egg!” then the children who are in last place will be the ones tugging and pulling each other to get ahead. In the proximity of a standard, social comparison concerns increase. We also see this in rankings. Rivals ranked #2 and #3, for instance, are less willing to maximize joint gains (in which they both benefit) if it means their opponent will benefit *more*, compared to rivals ranked #202 and #203 ([Garcia, Tor, & Gonzalez, 2006](#); [Garcia & Tor, 2007](#)). These latter rivals are so far from the #1 rank (i.e., the standard) that it does not bother them if their opponent benefits more than them. Thus, social comparison concerns are only important in the proximity of a standard.

Social Category Lines

Social comparison can also happen between groups. This is especially the case when groups come from different social categories versus the same [social category](#). For example, if students were deciding what kind of music to play at the high school prom, one option would be to simply flip a coin—say, heads for hip-hop, tails for pop. In this case, everyone represents the same social category—high school seniors—and social comparison isn't an issue. However, if all the boys wanted hip-hop and all the girls wanted pop flipping a coin is not such an easy solution as it privileges one social category over another ([Garcia & Miller, 2007](#)). For more on this, consider looking into the research literature about the difficulties of win-win scenarios between different social categories ([Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971](#); Turner, Brown, & Tajfel, 1979).

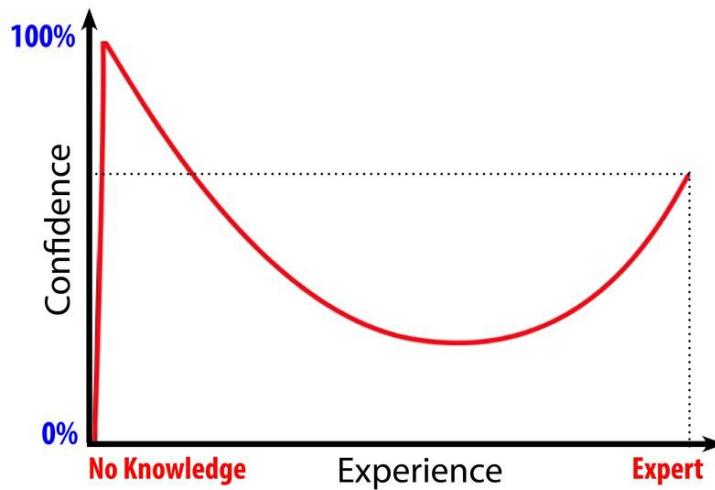
Related Phenomena

Frog Pond Effect

One interesting phenomenon of social comparison is the [Frog Pond Effect](#). As the name suggests, its premise can be illustrated using the simple analogy of a frog in a pond: as a frog, would you rather be in a small pond where you're a big frog, or a large pond where you're a small frog? According to Marsh, Trautwein, Ludtke and Koller ([2008](#)), people in general had a better academic self-concept if they were a big frog in a small pond (e.g., the top student in their local high school) rather than a small frog in a large one (e.g., one of many good students at an Ivy League university). In a large study of students, they found that school-average ability can have a negative impact on the academic self-esteem of a student when the average ability is 1 standard deviation higher than normal (i.e., a big pond). In other words, average students have a higher academic self-concept when attending a below-average school (big fish in a small pond), and they have a lower academic self-concept when attending an above-average school (small fish in a big pond) ([Marsh, 1987](#); [Marsh & Parker, 1984](#)).

The Dunning-Kruger Effect

Another related topic to social comparison is the [Dunning-Kruger Effect](#). The Dunning-Kruger effect, as explained by Dunning, Johnson, Ehrlinger and Kruger ([2003](#)), addresses the fact that unskilled people often think they are on par or superior to their peers in tasks such as test-taking abilities. That is, they are overconfident. Basically, they fail to accurately compare themselves or their skills within their surroundings. For example, Dunning et al. ([2003](#)) asked students to disclose how well they thought they had done on an exam they'd just taken. The bottom 25% of students with the lowest test scores overestimated their performance by approximately 30%, thinking their performance was above the 50th percentile. This estimation problem doesn't only apply to poor performers, however. According to Dunning et al. ([2003](#)), top performers tend to underestimate their skills or percentile ranking in their surrounding context. Some explanations are provided by Dunning et al. ([2003](#)) for this effect on both the good and poor performers: The poor performers, compared to their more capable peers, lack specific logical abilities similar to the logic necessary to do some of the tasks/tests in these studies and, as such, cannot really distinguish which questions they are getting right or wrong. This is known as the double-curse explanation. However, the good performers do not have this particular logic problem and are actually quite good at estimating their raw scores. Ironically, the good performers usually overestimate how well the people around them are doing and therefore devalue their own performance. As a result, most people tend to think they are above average in what they do, when in actuality not everyone can be above average.



The Dunning-Kruger Effect shows that the least experienced and least knowledgeable people are over-confident. These people don't know what they don't know and are more likely to overestimate their own abilities.

Conclusion

Social comparison is a natural psychological tendency and one that can exert a powerful influence on the way we feel and behave. Many people act as if social comparison is an ugly phenomenon and one to be avoided. This sentiment is at the heart of phrases like “keeping up with the Joneses” and “the rat race,” in which it is assumed that people are primarily motivated by a desire to beat others. In truth, social comparison has many positive aspects. Just think about it: how could you ever gauge your skills in chess without having anyone to compare yourself to? It would be nearly impossible to ever know just how good your chess skills are, or even what criteria determine “good” vs. “bad” chess skills. In addition, the engine of social comparison can also provide the push you need to rise to the occasion and increase your motivation, and therefore make progress toward your goals.

Take a Quiz:

An optional quiz is available for this chapter here: <https://nobaproject.com/modules/social-comparison>

Discussion Questions

1. On what do you compare yourself with others? Qualities such as attractiveness and intelligence? Skills such as school performance or athleticism? Do others also make these same types of comparisons or does each person make a unique set? Why do you think this is?
2. How can making comparisons to others help you?
3. One way to make comparisons is to compare yourself with your own past performance. Discuss a time you did this. Could this example be described as an “upward” or “downward” comparison? How did this type of comparison

affect you?

Vocabulary

Counterfactual thinking

Mentally comparing actual events with fantasies of what might have been possible in alternative scenarios.

Downward comparison

Making mental comparisons with people who are perceived to be inferior on the standard of comparison.

Dunning-Kruger Effect

The tendency for unskilled people to be overconfident in their ability and highly skilled people to underestimate their ability.

Fixed mindset

The belief that personal qualities such as intelligence are traits that cannot be developed. People with fixed mindsets often underperform compared to those with “growth mindsets”

Frog Pond Effect

The theory that a person’s comparison group can affect their evaluations of themselves. Specifically, people have a tendency to have lower self-evaluations when comparing themselves to higher performing groups.

Growth mindset

The belief that personal qualities, such as intelligence, can be developed through effort and practice.

Individual differences

Psychological traits, abilities, aptitudes and tendencies that vary from person to person.

Local dominance effect

People are generally more influenced by social comparison when that comparison is personally relevant rather than broad and general.

Mastery goals

Goals that are focused primarily on learning, competence, and self-development. These are contrasted with “performance goals” that are focused on the quality of a person’s performance.

N-Effect

The finding that increasing the number of competitors generally decreases one’s motivation to compete.

Personality

A person’s relatively stable patterns of thought, feeling, and behavior.

Proximity

The relative closeness or distance from a given comparison standard. The further from the standard a person is, the less important he or she considers the standard. When a person is closer to the standard he/she is more likely to be competitive.

Self-enhancement effect

The finding that people can boost their own self-evaluations by comparing themselves to others who rank lower on a particular comparison standard.

Self-esteem

The feeling of confidence in one's own abilities or worth.

Self-evaluation maintenance (SEM)

A model of social comparison that emphasizes one's closeness to the comparison target, the relative performance of that target person, and the relevance of the comparison behavior to one's self-concept.

Social category

Any group in which membership is defined by similarities between its members. Examples include religious, ethnic, and athletic groups.

Social comparison

The process by which people understand their own ability or condition by mentally comparing themselves to others.

Upward comparisons

Making mental comparisons to people who are perceived to be superior on the standard of comparison.

Outside Resources

Video: Downward Comparison

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=c3gGkiWSzvg%3Fcolor%3Dred%26modestbranding%3D1%26showinfo%3D0%26origin%3Dhttps%3A>

Video: Dunning-Kruger Effect

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=htEMitphv8w%3Fcolor%3Dred%26modestbranding%3D1%26showinfo%3D0%26origin%3Dhttps%3A>

Video: Social Comparison overview

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=HIRAQvP0ABg%3Fcolor%3Dred%26modestbranding%3D1%26showinfo%3D0%26origin%3Dhttps%3A>

Video: Social Media and Comparison

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=0mobWMwryKY%3Fcolor%3Dred%26modestbranding%3D1%26showinfo%3D0%26origin%3Dhttps%3A>

Video: Upward Comparison

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=HlBKORVcyGk%3Fcolor%3Dred%26modestbranding%3D1%26showinfo%3D0%26origin%3Dhttps%3A>

Web: Self-Compassion to counter the negative effects of social comparison

<http://self-compassion.org/the-three-elements-of-self-compassion-2/>

References

- Dunning, D., Johnson, K., Ehrlinger, J., & Kruger, J. (2003). Why People Fail To Recognize Their Own Incompetence. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 12(3), 83-87.
- Dweck, C. (2007). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. New York, NY: Ballantine Books
- Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human relations*, 7(2), 117-140.
- Fiske, S. (2011). Envy up, scorn down: how comparison divides us. *The American Psychologist*, 65(8), 698-706.
- Garcia, S. M., & Miller, D. (2007). Social categories and group preference disputes: The aversion to winner-take-all solutions. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, 10, 581-593.
- Garcia, S. M., & Tor, A. (2007). Rankings, standards, and competition: Task vs. scale comparisons. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 102, 95-108.
- Garcia, S. M., Song, H., & Tesser, A. (2010). Tainted Recommendations: The Social Comparison Bias. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 113(2), 97-101.
- Garcia, S. M., Tor, A. (2009). The N-Effect: More Competitors, Less Competition. *Psychological Science*. 20. 871-877.
- Garcia, S. M., Tor, A., & Gonzalez, R. D. (2006). Ranks and rivals: A theory of competition. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 32, 970-982.
- Garcia, S. M., Tor, A., & Schiff, T. (2013). The Psychology of Competition: A Social Comparison Perspective. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 8(6), 634-650.
- Goethals, G., & Darley, J. (1977). Social comparison theory: An attributional approach. In J. Suls & R. L. Miller (Eds.), *Social comparison processes: Theoretical and empirical perspectives* (pp. 259-278). Washington, DC: Hemisphere.
- Johnson, C. (2012). Behavioral responses to threatening social comparisons: From dastardly deeds to rising above. *Social & Personality Psychology Compass*, 6, 515-524
- Marsh, H. W. (1987). The big-fish-little-pond effect on academic self-concept. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 79, 280-295
- Marsh, H. W., & Parker, J. (1984). Determinants of student self-concept: Is it better to be a relatively large fish in a small pond even if you don't learn to swim as well? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 47, 213-231
- Marsh, H. W., Trautwein, U., Lüdtke, O. & Köller, O. (2008). Social comparison and big-fish-little-pond effects on self-concept and other self-belief constructs: Role of generalized and specific others. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 100, 510-524.
- Medvec, V., Madey, S., & Gilovich, T. (1995). When Less Is More. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69(4), 603-610.
- Poortvliet, P., Janssen, O., Yperen, N., & Vliert, E. (2007). Achievement Goals and Interpersonal Behavior: How Mastery and Performance Goals Shape Information Exchange. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 33(10), 1435-1447.
- Salovey, P., & Rodin, J. (1984). Some antecedents and consequences of social-comparison jealousy. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 47, 780-792
- Tajfel, H., Billig, M. G., Bundy, R. P., & Flament, C. (1971). Social categorization and intergroup behavior. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 1, 149-177
- Tesser, A., & Campbell, J. (2006). Self-evaluation maintenance and the perception of friends and strangers. *Journal of Personality* 50(3), 261 - 279.
- Tesser, A., & Collins, J. (1988). Emotion in social reflection and comparison situations: Intuitive, systematic, and exploratory approaches. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 55(5), 695-709.
- Tesser, A., & Smith, J. (1980). Some effects of task relevance and friendship on helping: You don't always help the one you like. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 16, 582-590
- Tor, A., & Garcia, S. M. (2010). The N-Effect: Beyond probability judgments. *Psychological Science*, 21, 748-749.
- White, J., Langer, E., Yariv, L., & Welch, J. (2006). Frequent Social Comparisons And Destructive Emotions And

Behaviors: The Dark Side Of Social Comparisons. *Journal of Adult Development*, 13(1), 36–44.

- Wills, T.A. (1981). "Downward Comparison Principle in Social Psychology." *Psychological Bulletin* 90: 245–71.
- Zell, E., & Aliche, M. D. (2010). The local dominance effect in self-evaluation: Evidence and explanations. *Personality and Social Psychological Review*, 14, 368–384.
- Zuckerman, E. W., & Jost, J. T. (2001). What makes you think you're so popular?: Self-evaluation maintenance and the subjective side of the "friendship paradox." *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 64, 207–223.

Authors



• Stephen Garcia

Stephen Garcia is an associate professor of psychology and organizational studies at the University of Michigan. He is interested in social comparison, competition, and, more broadly, judgment and decision making.



• Arnor Halldorsson

Arnor Halldorsson hails from Iceland and received his undergraduate degree in psychology from the University of Michigan in 2016. He is interested in social comparison, culture, and industrial/organizational psychology.

4. The Psychology of Groups

From [the Noba Project](#) By [Donelson R. Forsyth](#), University of Richmond

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.

[PDF Download](#)

Key topics:

- [Group decision making](#)
- [Groupthink](#)
- [Need to belong](#)
- [Self-esteem](#)
- [Social facilitation](#)
- [Social loafing](#)
- [Teamwork](#)

Learning Objectives

- Review the evidence that suggests humans have a fundamental need to belong to groups.
- Compare the sociometer model of self-esteem to a more traditional view of self-esteem.
- 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 a study group).
- Summarize the methods used by Latané, Williams, and Harkins to identify the relative impact of social loafing and coordination problems on group performance.
- Describe how groups change over time.
- Apply the theory of groupthink to a well-known decision-making group, such as the group of advisors responsible for planning the Bay of Pigs operation.
- List and discuss the factors that facilitate and impede group performance and decision making.
- Develop a list of recommendations that, if followed, would minimize the possibility of groupthink developing in a group.

The Psychology of Groups

Psychologists study groups because nearly all human activities—working, learning, worshiping, relaxing, playing, and even sleeping—occur in groups. The lone individual who is cut off from all groups is a rarity. Most of us live out our lives in groups, and these groups have a profound impact on our thoughts, feelings, and actions. Many psychologists focus their attention on single individuals, but social psychologists expand their analysis to include groups, organizations, communities, and even cultures.

This module examines the psychology of groups and group membership. It begins with a basic question: What is the psychological significance of groups? People are, undeniably, more often in groups rather than alone. What accounts for this marked gregariousness and what does it say about our psychological makeup? The module then reviews some of the key findings from studies of groups. Researchers have asked many questions about people and groups: Do people work as hard as they can when they are in groups? Are groups more cautious than individuals? Do groups make wiser decisions than single individuals? In many cases the answers are not what common sense and folk wisdom might suggest.



How many groups are you a part of on a daily basis? Whether it's family, class, work, social, sports, church or other areas, we typically spend a good deal of our time and attention each day interacting with others in groups. [Image: CC0 Public Domain, <https://goo.gl/m25gce>]

The Psychological Significance of Groups

Many people loudly proclaim their autonomy and independence. Like Ralph Waldo Emerson, they avow, “I must be myself. I will not hide my tastes or aversions . . . I will seek my own” ([1903/2004](#), p. 127). Even though people are capable of living separate and apart from others, they join with others because groups meet their psychological and social needs.

The Need to Belong



The need to belong is a strong psychological motivation. [Image: CC0 Public Domain, <https://goo.gl/m25gce>]

be rejected by a group, they feel unhappy, helpless, and depressed. Studies of **ostracism**—the deliberate exclusion from groups—indicate this experience is highly stressful and can lead to depression, confused thinking, and even aggression ([Williams, 2007](#)). When researchers used a functional magnetic resonance imaging scanner to track neural responses to exclusion, they found that people who were left out of a group activity displayed heightened cortical activity in two specific areas of the brain—the dorsal anterior cingulate cortex and the anterior insula. These areas of the brain are associated with the experience of physical pain sensations ([Eisenberger, Lieberman, & Williams, 2003](#)). It hurts, quite literally, to be left out of a group.

Across individuals, societies, and even eras, humans consistently seek inclusion over exclusion, membership over isolation, and acceptance over rejection. As Roy Baumeister and Mark Leary (1995) conclude, humans have a *need to belong*: “a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and impactful interpersonal relationships” (p. 497). And most of us satisfy this need by joining groups. When surveyed, 87.3% of Americans reported that they lived with other people, including family members, partners, and roommates ([Davis & Smith, 2007](#)). The majority, ranging from 50% to 80%, reported regularly doing things in groups, such as attending a sports event together, visiting one another for the evening, sharing a meal together, or going out as a group to see a movie ([Putnam, 2000](#)).

People respond negatively when their need to belong is unfulfilled. People who are accepted members of a group tend to feel happier and more satisfied. But should they

Affiliation in Groups

Groups not only satisfy the need to belong, they also provide members with information, assistance, and social support. Leon Festinger's theory of **social comparison** ([1950, 1954](#)) suggested that in many cases people join with others to evaluate the accuracy of their personal beliefs and attitudes. Stanley Schachter ([1959](#)) explored this process by putting individuals in ambiguous, stressful situations and asking them if they wished to wait alone or with others. He found that people *affiliate* in such situations—they seek the company of others.

Although any kind of companionship is appreciated, we prefer those who provide us with reassurance and support as well as accurate information. In some cases, we also prefer to join with others who are even worse off than we are. Imagine, for example, how you would respond when the teacher hands back the test and yours is marked 85%. Do you want to affiliate with a friend who got a 95% or a friend who got a 78%? To maintain a sense of self-worth, people seek out and compare themselves to the less fortunate. This process is known as *downward social comparison*.

Identity and Membership

Groups are not only founts of information during times of ambiguity, they also help us answer the existentially significant question, “Who am I?” People are defined not only by their traits, preferences, interests, likes, and dislikes, but also by their friendships, social roles, family connections, and group memberships. The self is not just a “me,” but also a “we.”

Even demographic qualities such as sex or age can influence us if we categorize ourselves based on these qualities. [Social identity theory](#), for example, assumes that we don’t just classify other people into such social categories as man, woman, Anglo, elderly, or college student, but we also categorize ourselves. According to Tajfel and Turner (1986), social identities are directed by our memberships in particular groups, or social categories. If we strongly identify with these categories, then we will ascribe the characteristics of the typical member of these groups to ourselves, and so stereotype ourselves. If, for example, we believe that college students are intellectual, then we will assume we, too, are intellectual if we identify with that group ([Hogg, 2001](#)).

Groups also provide a variety of means for maintaining and enhancing a sense of self-worth, as our assessment of the quality of groups we belong to influences our [collective self-esteem](#) ([Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990](#)). If our self-esteem is shaken by a personal setback, we can focus on our group’s success and prestige. In addition, by comparing our group to other groups, we frequently discover that we are members of the better group, and so can take pride in our superiority. By denigrating other groups, we elevate both our personal and our collective self-esteem ([Crocker & Major, 1989](#)).

Mark Leary’s [sociometer model](#) goes so far as to suggest that “self-esteem is part of a sociometer that monitors peoples’ relational value in other people’s eyes” ([2007](#), p. 328). He maintains self-esteem is not just an index of one’s sense of personal value, but also an indicator of acceptance into groups. Like a gauge that indicates how much fuel is left in the tank, a dip in self-esteem indicates exclusion from our group is likely. Disquieting feelings of self-worth, then, prompt us to search for and correct characteristics and qualities that put us at risk of social exclusion. Self-esteem is not just high self-regard, but the self-approbation that we feel when included in groups ([Leary & Baumeister, 2000](#)).

Evolutionary Advantages of Group Living

Groups may be humans’ most useful invention, for they provide us with the means to reach goals that would elude us if we remained alone. Individuals in groups can secure advantages and avoid disadvantages that would plague the lone individuals. In his theory of social integration, Moreland concludes that groups tend to form whenever “people become dependent on one another for the satisfaction of their needs” ([1987](#), p. 104). The advantages of group life may be so great that humans are biologically prepared to seek membership and avoid isolation. From an evolutionary psychology perspective, because groups have increased humans’ overall fitness for countless generations, individuals who carried genes that promoted solitude-seeking were less likely to survive and procreate compared to those with genes that prompted them to join groups ([Darwin, 1859/1963](#)). This process of natural selection culminated in the creation of a modern human who seeks out membership in groups instinctively, for most of us are descendants of “joiners” rather than “loners.”

Motivation and Performance

Social Facilitation in Groups

Do people perform more effectively when alone or when part of a group? Norman Triplett (1898) examined this issue in one of the first empirical studies in psychology. While watching bicycle races, Triplett noticed that cyclists were faster when they competed against other racers than when they raced alone against the clock. To determine if the presence of others leads to the psychological stimulation that enhances performance, he arranged for 40 children to play a game that involved turning a small reel as quickly as possible (see Figure 1). When he measured how quickly they turned the reel, he confirmed that children performed slightly better when they played the game in pairs compared to when they played alone (see [Stroebe, 2012](#); [Strube, 2005](#)).

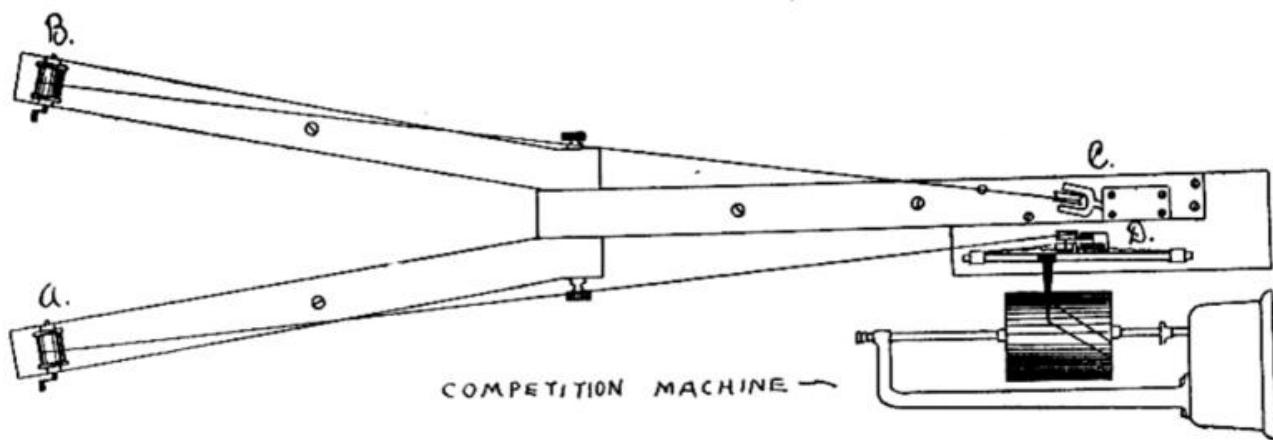


Figure 1: The “competition machine” Triplett used to study the impact of competition on performance. Triplett’s study was one of the first laboratory studies conducted in the field of social psychology. Triplett, N. (1898)

Triplett succeeded in sparking interest in a phenomenon now known as [social facilitation](#): the enhancement of an individual's performance when that person works in the presence of other people. However, it remained for Robert Zajonc (1965) to specify when social facilitation does and does not occur. After reviewing prior research, Zajonc noted that the facilitating effects of an audience usually only occur when the task requires the person to perform **dominant responses** (i.e., ones that are well-learned or based on instinctive behaviors). If the task requires **nondominant responses** (i.e., novel, complicated, or untried behaviors that the organism has never performed before or has performed only infrequently) then the presence of others inhibits performance. Hence, students write poorer quality essays on complex philosophical questions when they labor in a group rather than alone ([Allport, 1924](#)), but they make fewer mistakes in solving simple, low-level multiplication problems with an audience or a coactor than when they work in isolation ([Dashiell, 1930](#)).

Social facilitation, then, depends on the task: other people facilitate performance when the task is so simple that it requires only dominant responses, but others interfere when the task requires nondominant responses. However, a number of psychological processes combine to influence when social facilitation, not social interference, occurs. Studies of the challenge-threat response and brain imaging, for example, confirm that we respond physiologically and neurologically to the presence of others ([Blascovich, Mendes, Hunter, & Salomon, 1999](#)). Other people also can trigger evaluation apprehension, particularly when we feel that our individual performance will be known to others, and those others might

judge it negatively ([Bond, Atoum, & VanLeeuwen, 1996](#)). The presence of other people can also cause perturbations in our capacity to concentrate on and process information ([Harkins, 2006](#)). Distractions due to the presence of other people have been shown to improve performance on certain tasks, such as the Stroop task, but undermine performance on more cognitively demanding tasks([Huguet, Galvaing, Monteil, & Dumas, 1999](#)).

Social Loafing

Groups usually outperform individuals. A single student, working alone on a paper, will get less done in an hour than will four students working on a group project. One person playing a tug-of-war game against a group will lose. A crew of movers can pack up and transport your household belongings faster than you can by yourself. As the saying goes, “Many hands make light the work” ([Littlepage, 1991](#); [Steiner, 1972](#)).

Groups, though, tend to be underachievers. Studies of social facilitation confirmed the positive motivational benefits of working with other people on well-practiced tasks in which each member’s contribution to the collective enterprise can be identified and evaluated. But what happens when tasks require a truly collective effort? First, when people work together they must coordinate their individual activities and contributions to reach the maximum level of efficiency—but they rarely do ([Diehl & Stroebe, 1987](#)). Three people in a tug-of-war competition, for example, invariably pull and pause at slightly different times, so their efforts are uncoordinated. The result is **coordination loss: the three-person group is stronger than a single person, but not three times as strong**. Second, people just don’t exert as much effort when working on a collective endeavor, nor do they expend as much cognitive effort trying to solve problems, as they do when working alone. They display [social loafing](#) ([Latané, 1981](#)).

Bibb Latané, Kip Williams, and Stephen Harkins ([1979](#)) examined both coordination losses and social loafing by arranging for students to cheer or clap either alone or in groups of varying sizes. The students cheered alone or in 2- or 6-person groups, or they were lead to believe they were in 2- or 6-person groups (those in the “pseudo-groups” wore blindfolds and headsets that played masking sound). As Figure 2 indicates, groups generated more noise than solitary subjects, but the productivity dropped as the groups became larger in size. In dyads, each subject worked at only 66% of capacity, and in 6-person groups at 36%. Productivity also dropped when subjects merely believed they were in groups. If subjects thought that one other person was shouting with them, they shouted 82% as intensely, and if they thought five other people were shouting, they reached only 74% of their capacity. These loses in productivity were not due to coordination problems; this decline in production could be attributed only to a reduction in effort—to social loafing ([Latané et al., 1979, Experiment 2](#)).

Teamwork

Social loafing is not a rare phenomenon. When sales personnel work in groups with shared goals, they tend to “take it easy” if another salesperson is nearby who can do their work ([George, 1992](#)). People who are trying to generate new, creative ideas in group brainstorming sessions usually put in less effort and are thus less productive than people who are generating new ideas individually ([Paulus & Brown, 2007](#)). Students assigned group projects often complain of inequity in the quality and quantity of each member’s contributions: Some people just don’t work as much as they should to help the group reach its learning goals ([Neu, 2012](#)). People carrying out all sorts of physical and mental tasks expend less effort when working in groups, and the larger the group, the more they loaf ([Karau & Williams, 1993](#)).

Groups can, however, overcome this impediment to performance through [teamwork](#). A group may include many talented individuals, but they must learn how to pool their individual abilities and energies to maximize the team’s performance. Team goals must be set, work patterns structured, and a sense of group identity developed. Individual members must learn how to coordinate their actions, and any strains and stresses in interpersonal relations need to be identified and resolved ([Salas, Rosen, Burke, & Goodwin, 2009](#)).

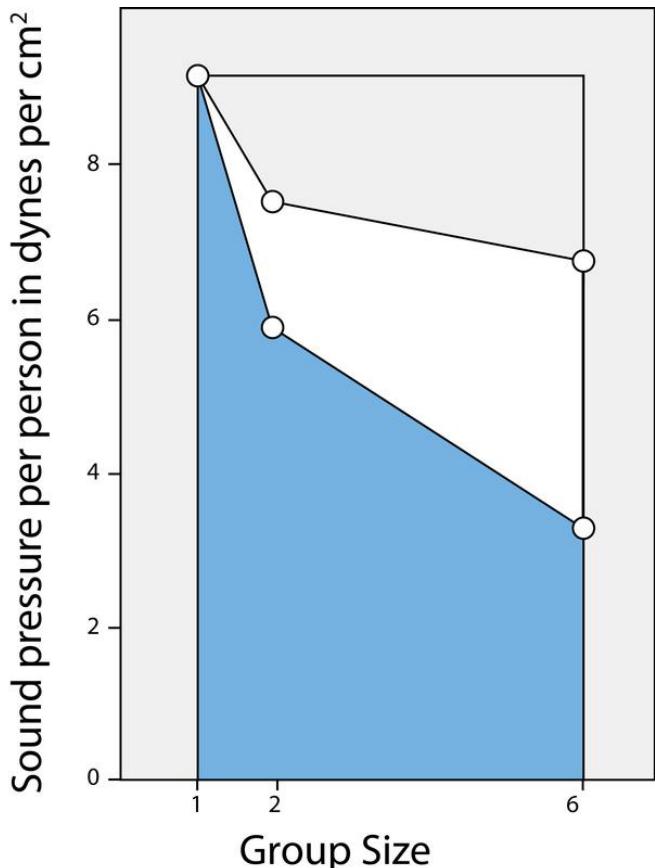


Figure 2: Sound pressure per person as a function of group or pseudo group size. Latane, B. (1981)



Social loafing can be a problem. One way to overcome it is by recognizing that each group member has an important part to play in the success of the group. [Image: Marc Dalmulder, <https://goo.gl/Xa5aiE>, CC BY 2.0, <https://goo.gl/BRvSA7>]

Researchers have identified two key ingredients to effective teamwork: **a shared mental representation of the task and group unity**. Teams improve their performance over time as they develop a shared understanding of the team and the tasks they are attempting. Some semblance of this [shared mental model](#) is present nearly from its inception, but as the team practices, differences among the members in terms of their understanding of their situation and their team diminish as a consensus becomes implicitly accepted ([Tindale, Stawiski, & Jacobs, 2008](#)). Effective teams are also, in most cases, cohesive groups ([Dion, 2000](#)). [Group cohesion](#) is the integrity, solidarity, social integration, or unity of a group. In most cases, members of cohesive groups like each other and the group and they also are united in their pursuit of collective, group-level goals. Members tend to enjoy their groups more when they are cohesive, and cohesive groups usually outperform ones that lack cohesion. This cohesion-performance relationship, however, is a complex one. Meta-analytic studies suggest that cohesion improves teamwork among members, but that performance quality influences cohesion more than cohesion influences performance ([Mullen & Copper, 1994](#); [Mullen, Driskell, & Salas, 1998](#); see Figure 3). Cohesive groups also can be spectacularly unproductive if the group's norms stress low productivity rather than high productivity ([Seashore, 1954](#)).

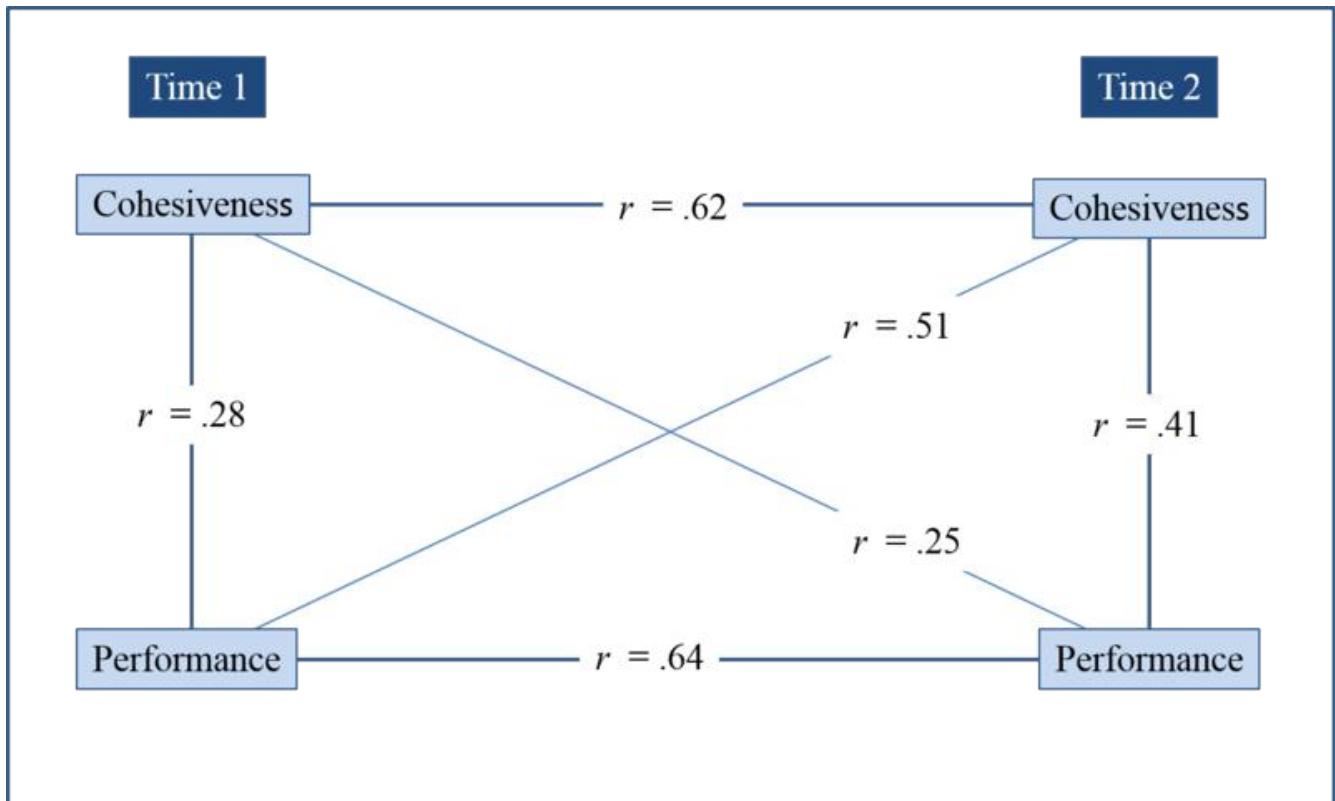


Figure 3: The relationship between group cohesion and performance over time. Groups that are cohesive do tend to perform well on tasks now (Time 1) and in the future (Time 2). Notice, though, that the relationship between Performance at Time 1 and Cohesiveness at Time 2 is greater ($r=.51$) than the relationship between Cohesion at Time 1 and Performance at Time 2 ($r=.25$). These findings suggest that cohesion improves performance, but that a group that performs well is likely to also become more cohesive. Mullen, Driskell, & Salas (1998)

Group Development

In most cases groups do not become smooth-functioning teams overnight. As Bruce Tuckman's (1965) theory of group development suggests, groups usually pass through several stages of development as they change from a newly formed group into an effective team. As noted in Focus Topic 1, in the **forming** phase, the members become oriented toward one another. In the **storming** phase, the group members find themselves in conflict, and some solution is sought to improve the group environment. In the **norming** phase standards for behavior and roles develop that regulate behavior. In the **performing** phase the group has reached a point where it can work as a unit to achieve desired goals, and the **adjourning** phase ends the sequence of development; the group disbands. Throughout these stages groups tend to oscillate between the task-oriented issues and the relationship issues, with members sometimes working hard but at other times strengthening their interpersonal bonds (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977).

Focus Topic 1: Group Development Stages and Characteristics

Stage 1 – “Forming”. Members expose information about themselves in polite but tentative interactions.

They explore the purposes of the group and gather information about each other's interests, skills, and personal tendencies.

Stage 2 – “Storming”. Disagreements about procedures and purposes surface, so criticism and conflict increase. Much of the conflict stems from challenges between members who are seeking to increase their status and control in the group.

Stage 3 – “Norming”. Once the group agrees on its goals, procedures, and leadership, norms, roles, and social relationships develop that increase the group's stability and cohesiveness.

Stage 4 – “Performing”. The group focuses its energies and attention on its goals, displaying higher rates of task-orientation, decision-making, and problem-solving.

Stage 5 – “Adjourning”. The group prepares to disband by completing its tasks, reduces levels of dependency among members, and dealing with any unresolved issues.

Sources based on Tuckman (1965) and Tuckman & Jensen (1977)

We also experience change as we pass through a group, for we don't become full-fledged members of a group in an instant. Instead, we gradually become a part of the group and remain in the group until we leave it. Richard Moreland and John Levine's (1982) model of group socialization describes this process, beginning with initial entry into the group and ending when the member exits it. For example, when you are thinking of joining a new group—a social club, a professional society, a fraternity or sorority, or a sports team—you investigate what the group has to offer, but the group also investigates you. During this investigation stage you are still an outsider: interested in joining the group, but not yet committed to it in any way. But once the group accepts you and you accept the group, socialization begins: you learn the group's norms and take on different responsibilities depending on your role. On a sports team, for example, you may initially hope to be a star who starts every game or plays a particular position, but the team may need something else from you. In time, though, the group will accept you as a full-fledged member and both sides in the process—you and the group itself—increase their commitment to one another. When that commitment wanes, however, your membership may come to an end as well.

Making Decisions in Groups

Groups are particularly useful when it comes to making a decision, for groups can draw on more resources than can a lone individual. A single individual may know a great deal about a problem and possible solutions, but his or her information is far surpassed by the combined knowledge of a group. Groups not only generate more ideas and possible solutions by discussing the problem, but they can also more objectively evaluate the options that they generate during discussion. Before accepting a solution, a group may require that a certain number of people favor it, or that it meets

some other standard of acceptability. People generally feel that a group's decision will be superior to an individual's decision.

Groups, however, do not always make good decisions. For example, juries sometimes render verdicts that run counter to the evidence presented. Community groups take radical stances on issues before thinking through all the ramifications. Military strategists concoct plans that seem, in retrospect, ill-conceived and short-sighted. Why do groups sometimes make poor decisions?

Group Polarization

Let's say you are part of a group assigned to make a presentation. One of the group members suggests showing a short video that, although amusing, includes some provocative images. Even though initially you think the clip is inappropriate, you begin to change your mind as the group discusses the idea. The group decides, eventually, to throw caution to the wind and show the clip—and your instructor is horrified by your choice.

This hypothetical example is consistent with studies of groups making decisions that involve risk. Common sense notions suggest that groups exert a moderating, subduing effect on their members. However, when researchers looked at groups closely, they discovered many groups shift toward more extreme decisions rather than less extreme decisions after group interaction. Discussion, it turns out, doesn't moderate people's judgments after all. Instead, it leads to **group polarization: judgments made after group discussion will be more extreme in the same direction as the average of individual judgments made prior to discussion** ([Myers & Lamm, 1976](#)). If a majority of members feel that taking risks is more acceptable than exercising caution, then the group will become riskier after a discussion. For example, in France, where people generally like their government but dislike Americans, group discussion improved their attitude toward their government but exacerbated their negative opinions of Americans ([Moscovici & Zavalloni, 1969](#)). Similarly, prejudiced people who discussed racial issues with other prejudiced individuals became even more negative, but those who were relatively unprejudiced exhibited even more acceptance of diversity when in groups ([Myers & Bishop, 1970](#)).

Common Knowledge Effect or Shared Information Bias

One of the advantages of making decisions in groups is the group's greater access to information. When seeking a solution to a problem, group members can put their ideas on the table and share their knowledge and judgments with each other through discussions. But all too often groups spend much of their discussion time examining common knowledge—information that two or more group members know in common—rather than unshared information. This **common knowledge effect or shared information bias** will result in a bad outcome if something known by only one or two group members is very important.

Researchers have studied this bias using the *hidden profile task*. On such tasks, information known to many of the group members suggests that one alternative, say Option A, is best. However, Option B is definitely the better choice, but all the facts that support Option B are only known to individual group members—they are not common knowledge in the group. As a result, the group will likely spend most of its time reviewing the factors that favor Option A, and never discover any of its drawbacks. In consequence, groups often perform poorly when working on problems with nonobvious solutions that can only be identified by extensive information sharing ([Stasser & Titus, 1987](#)).

Groupthink



Groupthink helps us blend in and feel accepted and validated but it can also lead to problems. [Image: CC0 Public Domain, <https://goo.gl/m25gce>]

Groups sometimes make spectacularly bad decisions. In 1961, a special advisory committee to President John F. Kennedy planned and implemented a covert invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs that ended in total disaster. In 1986, NASA carefully, and incorrectly, decided to launch the Challenger space shuttle in temperatures that were too cold.

Irving Janis (1982), intrigued by these kinds of blundering groups, carried out a number of case studies of such groups: the military experts that planned the defense of Pearl Harbor; Kennedy's Bay of Pigs planning group; the presidential team that escalated the war in Vietnam. Each group, he concluded, fell prey to a distorted style of thinking that rendered the group members incapable of making a rational decision. Janis labeled this syndrome **groupthink**: "a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action" (p. 9).

Janis identified both the telltale symptoms that signal the group is experiencing groupthink and the interpersonal factors that combine to cause groupthink. These symptoms include overestimating the group's skills and wisdom, biased perceptions and evaluations of other groups and people who are outside of the group, strong conformity pressures within the group, and poor decision-making methods.

Janis also singled out four group-level factors that combine to cause groupthink: cohesion, isolation, biased leadership, and decisional stress.

- **Cohesion.** Groupthink only occurs in cohesive groups. Such groups have many advantages over groups that lack unity. People enjoy their membership much more in cohesive groups, they are less likely to abandon the group, and they work harder in pursuit of the group's goals. But extreme cohesiveness can be dangerous. When cohesiveness intensifies, members become more likely to accept the goals, decisions, and norms of the group without reservation. Conformity pressures also rise as members become reluctant to say or do anything that goes against the grain of the group, and the number of internal disagreements—necessary for good decision making—decreases.
- **Isolation.** Groupthink groups too often work behind closed doors, keeping out of the limelight. They isolate themselves from outsiders and refuse to modify their beliefs to bring them into line with society's beliefs. They avoid leaks by maintaining strict confidentiality and working only with people who are members of their group.
- **Biased leadership.** A biased leader who exerts too much authority over group members can increase conformity pressures and railroad decisions. In groupthink groups, the leader determines the agenda for each meeting, sets limits on discussion, and can even decide who will be heard.
- **Decisional stress.** Groupthink becomes more likely when the group is stressed, particularly by time pressures. When groups are stressed they minimize their discomfort by quickly choosing a plan of action with little argument or dissension. Then, through collective discussion, the group members can rationalize their choice by exaggerating the positive consequences, minimizing the possibility of negative outcomes, concentrating on minor

details, and overlooking larger issues.

You and Your Groups



Even groups that like one another and work well together in most situations can be victims of groupthink or the common knowledge effect. But knowing that these pitfalls exist is the first step to overcoming them. [Image: CCO Public Domain, <https://goo.gl/m25gce>]

Most of us belong to at least one group that must make decisions from time to time: a community group that needs to choose a fund-raising project; a union or employee group that must ratify a new contract; a family that must discuss your college plans; or the staff of a high school discussing ways to deal with the potential for violence during football games. Could these kinds of groups experience groupthink? Yes they could, if the symptoms of groupthink discussed above are present, combined with other contributing causal factors, such as cohesiveness, isolation, biased leadership, and stress. To avoid polarization, the common knowledge effect, and groupthink, groups should strive to emphasize open inquiry of all sides of the issue while admitting the possibility of failure. The leaders of the group can also do much to limit groupthink by requiring full discussion of pros and cons, appointing devil's advocates, and breaking the group up into small discussion groups.

If these precautions are taken, your group has a much greater chance of making an informed, rational decision. Furthermore, although your group should review its goals, teamwork, and decision-making strategies, the human side of groups—the strong friendships and bonds that make group activity so enjoyable—shouldn't be overlooked. Groups have instrumental, practical value, but also emotional, psychological value. In groups we find others who appreciate and value us. In groups, we gain the support we need in difficult times, but also have the opportunity to influence others. In groups we find evidence of our self-worth, and secure ourselves from the threat of loneliness and despair. For most of us, groups are the secret source of well-being.



United States' team celebrates with the trophy after winning the Women's World Cup final soccer match between the US and The Netherlands at the Stade de Lyon in Decines, outside Lyon, France (on Sunday, July 7, 2019) (AP Photo/Alessandra Tarantino).

<https://media.voltron.vوانews.com/Drupal/Ollive-166/styles/sourced/s3/ap-images/2019/07/a3f7f5dbd443fb70af0523496bbac26f.jpg?itok=FLPLK2ln>.

Take a Quiz:

An optional quiz is available for this unit here: <https://nobaproject.com/modules/the-psychology-of-groups>

Discussion Questions

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of sociality? Why do people often join groups?
2. Is self-esteem shaped by your personality qualities or by the value and qualities of groups to which you belong?
3. In what ways does membership in a group change a person's self-concept and social identity?
4. What steps would you take if you were to base a self-esteem enrichment program in schools on the sociometer model of self-worth?
5. If you were a college professor, what would you do to increase the success of in-class learning teams?
6. What are the key ingredients to transforming a working group into a true team?
7. Have you ever been part of a group that made a poor decision and, if so, were any of the symptoms of groupthink present in your group?

Vocabulary

Collective self-esteem

Feelings of self-worth that are based on evaluation of relationships with others and membership in social groups.

Common knowledge effect AKA Shared information bias

The tendency for groups to spend more time discussing information that all members know (shared information) and less time examining information that only a few members know (unshared).

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 shared commitment to group goals.

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.

Groupthink

A set of negative group-level processes, including illusions of invulnerability, self-censorship, and pressures to conform, that occur when highly cohesive groups seek concurrence when making a decision.

Ostracism

Excluding one or more individuals from a group by reducing or eliminating contact with the person, usually by ignoring, shunning, or explicitly banishing them.

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.

Social comparison

The process of contrasting one's personal qualities and outcomes, including beliefs, attitudes, values, abilities, accomplishments, and experiences, to those of other people.

Social facilitation

Improvement in task performance that occurs when people work in the presence of other people.

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.

Social loafing

The reduction of individual effort exerted when people work in groups compared with when they work alone.

Sociometer model

A conceptual analysis of self-evaluation processes that theorizes self-esteem functions to psychologically monitor of one's degree of inclusion and exclusion in social groups.

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.

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. Balceris, 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://jfmuel ler.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://youtube.com/watch?v=7EYAUazLl9k%3Fcolor%3Dred%26modestbranding%3D1%26showinfo%3D0%26origin%3Dhttps%3A>

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

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

References

- Allport, F. H. (1924). *Social psychology*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117, 497–529.
- Blascovich, J., Mendes, W. B., Hunter, S. B., & Salomon, K. (1999). Social “facilitation” as challenge and threat. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 77, 68–77.
- Bond, C. F., Atoum, A. O., & VanLeeuwen, M. D. (1996). Social impairment of complex learning in the wake of public embarrassment. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 18, 31–44.
- Buote, V. M., Pancer, S. M., Pratt, M. W., Adams, G., Birnie-Lefcovitch, S., Polivy, J., & Wintre, M. G. (2007). The importance of friends: Friendship and adjustment among 1st-year university students. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 22(6), 665–689.
- Crocker, J., & Luhtanen, R. (1990). Collective self-esteem and ingroup bias. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 58, 60–67.
- Crocker, J., & Major, B. (1989). Social stigma and self-esteem: The self-protective properties of stigma. *Psychological Review*, 96, 608–630.
- Darwin, C. (1859/1963). *The origin of species*. New York: Washington Square Press.
- Dashiell, J. F. (1930). An experimental analysis of some group effects. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 25, 190–199.
- Davis, J. A., & Smith, T. W. (2007). *General social surveys (1972–2006)*. [machine-readable data file]. Chicago: National Opinion Research Center & Storrs, CT: The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research. Retrieved from <http://www.norc.uchicago.edu>
- Diehl, M., & Stroebe, W. (1987). Productivity loss in brainstorming groups: Toward the solution of a riddle. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 53, 497–509.
- Dion, K. L. (2000). Group cohesion: From “field of forces” to multidimensional construct. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 4, 7–26.
- Eisenberger, N. I., Lieberman, M. D., & Williams, K. D. (2003). Does rejection hurt? An fMRI study of social exclusion. *Science*, 302, 290–292.
- Emerson, R. W. (2004). *Essays and poems by Ralph Waldo Emerson*. New York: Barnes & Noble. (originally published 1903).
- Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human Relations*, 7, 117–140.
- Festinger, L. (1950). Informal social communication. *Psychological Review*, 57, 271–282.
- George, J. M. (1992). Extrinsic and intrinsic origins of perceived social loafing in organizations. *Academy of Management Journal*, 35, 191–202.
- Harkins, S. G. (2006). Mere effort as the mediator of the evaluation-performance relationship. *Journal of*

Personality and Social Psychology, 91(3), 436–455.

- Hogg, M. A. (2001). Social categorization, depersonalization, and group behavior. In M. A. Hogg & R. S. Tindale (Eds.), *Blackwell handbook of social psychology: Group processes* (pp. 56–85). Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Huguet, P., Galvaing, M. P., Monteil, J. M., & Dumas, F. (1999). Social presence effects in the Stroop task: Further evidence for an attentional view of social facilitation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 77, 1011–1025.
- Janis, I. L. (1982). *Groupthink: Psychological studies of policy decisions and fiascos* (2nd ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Karau, S. J., & Williams, K. D. (1993). Social loafing: A meta-analytic review and theoretical integration. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 65, 681–706.
- Latané, B. (1981). The psychology of social impact. *American Psychologist*, 36, 343–356.
- Latané, B., Williams, K., & Harkins, S. (1979). Many hands make light the work: The causes and consequences of social loafing. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37, 822–832.
- Leary, M. R. (2007). Motivational and emotional aspects of the self. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 58, 317–344.
- Leary, M. R. & Baumeister, R. F. (2000). The nature and function of self-esteem: Sociometer theory. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 32, 1–62.
- Littlepage, G. E. (1991). Effects of group size and task characteristics on group performance: A test of Steiner's model. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17, 449–456.
- Moreland, R. L. (1987). The formation of small groups. *Review of Personality and Social Psychology*, 8, 80–110.
- Moreland, R. L., & Levine, J. M. (1982). Socialization in small groups: Temporal changes in individual-group relations. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 15, 137–192.
- Moscovici, S., & Zavalloni, M. (1969). The group as a polarizer of attitudes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 12, 125–135.
- Mullen, B., & Copper, C. (1994). The relation between group cohesiveness and performance: An integration. *Psychological Bulletin*, 115, 210–227.
- Mullen, B., Driskell, J. E., & Salas, E. (1998). Meta-analysis and the study of group dynamics. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 2, 213–229.
- Myers, D. G., & Bishop, G. D. (1970). Discussion effects on racial attitudes. *Science*, 169, 778–789.
- Myers, D. G., & Lamm, H. (1976). The group polarization phenomenon. *Psychological Bulletin*, 83, 602–627.
- Neu, W. A. (2012). Unintended cognitive, affective, and behavioral consequences of group assignments. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 34(1), 67–81.
- Paulus, P. B., & Brown, V. R. (2007). Toward more creative and innovative group idea generation: A cognitive-social-motivational perspective of brainstorming. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 1, 248–265.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Salas, E., Rosen, M. A., Burke, C. S., & Goodwin, G. F. (2009). The wisdom of collectives in organizations: An update of the teamwork competencies. In E. Salas, G. F. Goodwin, & C. S. Burke (Eds.), *Team effectiveness in complex organizations: Cross-disciplinary perspectives and approaches* (pp. 39–79). New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.
- Schachter, S. (1959). *The psychology of affiliation*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Seashore, S. E. (1954). *Group cohesiveness in the industrial work group*. Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research.
- Stasser, G., & Titus, W. (1987). Effects of information load and percentage of shared information on the dissemination of unshared information during group discussion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 53, 81–93.
- Steiner, I. D. (1972). *Group process and productivity*. New York: Academic Press.
- Stroebe, W. (2012). The truth about Triplett (1898), but nobody seems to care. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 7(1), 54–57.
- Strube, M. J. (2005). What did Triplett really find? A contemporary analysis of the first experiment in social psychology. *American Journal of Psychology*, 118, 271–286.
- Tajfel, H. & Turner, J.C. (1986). The social identity theory of inter-group behavior. In S. Worchel & L.W. Austin (Eds.),

Psychology of Intergroup Relations.(pp. 7-24)Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall

- Tindale, R. S., Stawiski, S., & Jacobs, E. (2008). Shared cognition and group learning. In V. I. Sessa & M. London (Eds.), *Work group learning: Understanding, improving and assessing how groups learn in organizations* (pp. 73–90). New York: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Triplett, N. (1898). The dynamogenic factors in pacemaking and competition. *American Journal of Psychology*, 9, 507–533.
- Tuckman, B. W. (1965). Developmental sequences in small groups. *Psychological Bulletin*, 63, 384–399.
- Tuckman, B. W., & Jensen, M. A. C. (1977). Stages of small group development revisited. *Group and Organizational Studies*, 2, 419–427.
- Williams, K. D. (2007). Ostracism. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 58, 425–452.
- Zajonc, R. B. (1965). Social facilitation. *Science*, 149, 269–274.

Authors



• Donelson R. Forsyth

Donelson R. Forsyth, a social and personality psychologist, holds the Colonel Leo K. and Gaylee Thorsness Endowed Chair in Ethical Leadership at the Jepson School of Leadership Studies at the University of Richmond. A fellow of the American Psychological Association, he researches and writes about ethics, groups, and related topics.

Creative Commons License



The Psychology of Groups by [Donelson R. Forsyth](#) is licensed under a [Creative](#)

[Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#). Permissions beyond the scope of this license may be available in our [Licensing Agreement](#).

How to cite this Noba module using APA Style

Forsyth, D. R. (2019). The psychology of groups. In R. Biswas-Diener & E. Diener (Eds), *Noba textbook series: Psychology*. Champaign, IL: DEF publishers. DOI:nobaproject.com

Media Attributions

- APTOPIX France US Netherlands WWCup Soccer



The Psychology of Groups by Cameron W. Piercy, Ph.D. is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

5. Shared Information Bias

From [Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#).

Sharing information with other group members is associated with group member perceptions of competence, knowledge, and credibility (Wittenbaum & Park, 2001). According to Broderick, Kerschreiter, Mojzisch, and Schulz-Hardt (2007), information known to only a single member of a group prior to group discussion will be mentioned less often and evaluated less favorably compared with information known to multiple group members prior to a group discussion. This phenomenon describes *shared information bias* (Baker, 2010). **Shared information bias** (also known as the collective information sampling bias) is thus a tendency for group members to spend more time and energy discussing information that multiple members are already familiar with (i.e., shared information). Researchers predict poor decision-making can arise when the group does not have access to unshared information for making well-informed decisions. The result of inaccessible unshared information is called hidden profiles. **Hidden profiles** describe group decision tasks in which different (but correct) possible solutions exist, but no group member detects it based on his or her individual information prior to the discussion (Stasser, 1988).

Causes

Although discussing unshared information may be enlightening, groups are often motivated to discuss shared information in order to reach group [consensus](#) on some course of action. According to Postmes, Spears, and Cihangir (2001), when group members are motivated by a desire to reach [closure](#) (e.g., a desire imposed by time constraints), their bias for discussing shared information is stronger. However, if members are concerned with making the best decision possible, this bias becomes less salient.^[4] Stewart and Stasser (1998) have asserted that the shared information bias is strongest for group members working on ambiguous, judgment-oriented tasks because their goal is to reach consensual agreement than to distinguish a correct solution.^[5] The shared information bias may also develop during group discussion in response to the interpersonal and [psychological needs](#) of individual group members. For example, some group members tend to seek group support for their own personal opinions. This psychological motivation to garner collective acceptance of one's own initial views has been linked to group preferences for shared information during decision-making activities (Greitemeyer & Schulz-Hardt, 2003; Henningsen & Henningsen, 2003)^{[6][7]} Lastly, the nature of the discussion between group members reflects whether biases for shared information will surface. According to Wittenbaum et al. (2004), members are motivated to establish and maintain [reputations](#), to secure tighter bonds, and to compete for success against other group members.^[8] As a result, individuals tend to be selective when disclosing information to other group members.

Outcomes

Wittenbaum, Hubbell, and Zuckerman (1999) examined mutual enhancement during various discussions about job candidates (i.e., interactions between two people). Participant dyads were assigned to one of two conditions. Before meeting to discuss candidate profiles, researchers had dyads in the first condition look at same information about candidates, while the second condition had dyads receive different information. Participants in condition one evaluated both their partner and self as more competent and credible.

Avoidance strategies

Several strategies can be employed to reduce group focus on discussing shared information:

- Make effort to spend more time actively discussing collective decisions. Given that group members tend to discuss shared information first, [9] longer meetings increase likelihood of reviewing unshared information as well.
- Make effort to avoid generalized discussions by increasing the diversity of opinions within the group (Smith, 2008).
- Introduce the discussion of a new topic to avoid returning to previously discussed items among members (Reimer, Reimer, & Hinsz, 2010). [10]
- Avoid time pressure or time constraints that motivate group members to discuss less information (Kelly & Karau, 1999; Bowman & Wittenbaum, 2012). [11][12]
- Clarify to group members when certain individuals have relevant expertise (Stewart & Stasser, 1995). [13]
- Include more group members who have task-relevant experience (Wittenbaum, 1998). [14]
- Technology (e.g., [group decision support systems](#), GDSS) can also offer group members a way to catalog information that must be discussed. These technological tools (e.g., search engines, databases, computer programs that estimate risk) help facilitate communication between members while structuralizing the group's decision-making process (Hollingshead, 2001).

References

- Baker, D. F. (2010). Enhancing group decision making: An exercise to reduce shared information bias. *Journal of Management Education*, 34, 249-279.
- Brodbeck, F.C., Kerschreiter, R., Mojzisch, A., & Schulz-Hardt, S. (2007). Group decision making under conditions of distributed knowledge: The information asymmetries model. *Academy of Management Review*, 32, 459-479.
- Hollingshead, A. B. (2001). Cognitive interdependence and convergent expectations in transactive memory. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 8, 1080-1089. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.81.6.1080
- Stasser, G. (1988). Computer simulation as a research tool: The DISCUSS model of group decision making. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 24, 393-422.
- Stasser, G., & Titus, W. (1985). Pooling of unshared information in group decision making: Biased information sampling during discussion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 48, 1467-1478
- Wittenbaum, G. M., Hubbell, A. P., & Zuckerman, C. (1999). Mutual enhancement: Toward an understanding of the collective preference for shared information. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 77, 967-978. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.77.5.967
- Wittenbaum, G. M., & Park, E. S. (2001). The Collective Preference for Shared Information. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 10, 70-73. <https://doi-org.www2.lib.ku.edu/10.1111/1467-8721.00118>



Shared Information Bias by Cameron W. Piercy, Ph.D. is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

6. Inattentional Blindness

From [the Noba Project](#)

By [Daniel Simons](#)

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

We think important objects and events in our world will automatically grab our attention, but they often don't, particularly when our attention is focused on something else. The failure to notice unexpected objects or events when attention is focused elsewhere is now known as inattentional blindness. The study of such failures of awareness has a long history, but their practical importance has received increasing attention over the past decade. This module describes the history and status of research on inattentional blindness, discusses the reasons why we find these results to be counterintuitive, and the implications of failures of awareness for how we see and act in our world.

- [PDF Download](#)

Key terms:

- [Attention](#)
- [Awareness](#)
- [Cocktail party effect](#)
- [Focused attention](#)
- [Inattentional blindness](#)
- [Inattentional deafness](#)
- [Individual differences](#)
- [Selective listening](#)
- [Selective looking](#)

Learning Objectives

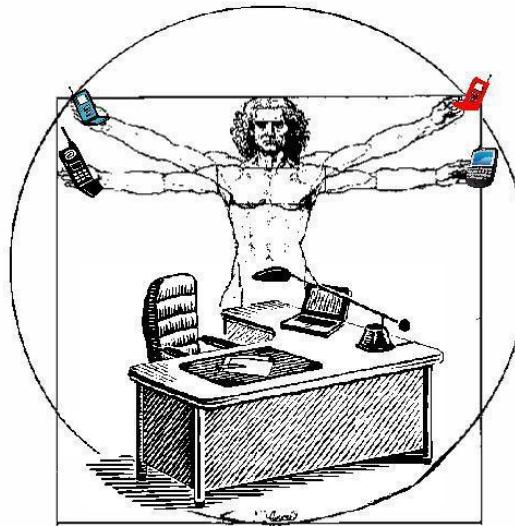
- Learn about inattentional blindness and why it occurs.
- Identify ways in which failures of awareness are counterintuitive.
- Better understand the link between focused attention and failures of awareness.

Do you regularly spot editing errors in movies? Can you multitask effectively, texting while talking with your friends or watching television? Are you fully aware of your surroundings? If you answered yes to any of those questions, you're not alone. And, you're most likely wrong. More than 50 years ago, experimental psychologists began documenting the many ways that our perception of the world is limited, not by our eyes and ears, but by our minds. We appear able to process only one stream of information at a time, effectively filtering other information from awareness. To a large extent, we perceive only that which receives the focus of our cognitive efforts: our attention.

Imagine the following task, known as **dichotic listening** (e.g., [Cherry, 1953](#); [Moray, 1959](#); [Treisman, 1960](#)): You put on a set of headphones that play two completely different speech streams, one to your left ear and one to your right ear. Your task is to repeat each syllable spoken into your left ear as quickly and accurately as possible, mimicking each sound as you hear it. When performing this attention-demanding task, you won't notice if the speaker in your right ear switches to a different language or is replaced by a different speaker with a similar voice. You won't notice if the content of their speech becomes nonsensical. In effect, you are deaf to the substance of the ignored speech. But, that is not because of the limits of your auditory senses. It is a form of cognitive deafness, due to the nature of focused, selective attention. Even if the speaker on your right headphone says your name, you will notice it only about one-third of the time ([Conway, Cowan, & Bunting, 2001](#)). And, at least by some accounts, you only notice it that often because you still devote some of your limited attention to the ignored speech stream ([Holendar, 1986](#)). In this task, you will tend to notice only large physical changes (e.g., a switch from a male to a female speaker), but not substantive ones, except in rare cases.

This **selective listening task** highlights the power of attention to filter extraneous information from awareness while letting in only those elements of our world that we want to hear. Focused attention is crucial to our powers of observation, making it possible for us to zero in on what we want to see or hear while filtering out irrelevant distractions. But, it has consequences as well: We can miss what would otherwise be obvious and important signals.

The same pattern holds for vision. In a groundbreaking series of studies in the 1970s and early 1980s, Neisser and his colleagues devised a visual analogue of the dichotic listening task ([Neisser & Becklen, 1975](#)). Their subjects viewed a video of two distinct, but partially transparent and overlapping, events. For example, one event might involve two people playing a hand-clapping game and the other might show people passing a ball. Because the two events were partially transparent and overlapping, **both produced sensory signals on the retina regardless of which event received the participant's attention**. When participants were asked to monitor one of the events by counting the number of times the actors performed an action (e.g., hand clapping or completed passes), they often failed to notice unexpected events in the ignored video stream (e.g., the hand-clapping players stopping their game and shaking hands). As for dichotic listening, the participants were unaware of events happening outside the focus of their attention, even when looking right at them. They could tell that other "stuff" was happening on the screen, but many were unaware of the meaning or substance of that stuff.



Some researchers contend that there really is no such thing as multi-tasking. Instead, people are just rapidly switching their attention between tasks, rather than holding those tasks in their attention at the same time. [Image: Mike Licht, <https://goo.gl/z7rkve>, CC BY 2.0, <https://goo.gl/v4Y0Zv>]



Have you ever been paying attention to something so closely you missed another event in the background? Or have you ever been so used to seeing something a certain way that when it changed, you didn't even notice it had? [Image: Tilde Ann Thurium, <https://goo.gl/pb8I6Q>, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0, <https://goo.gl/TocOZF>]

method for nearly 20 years. Inspired by these counterintuitive findings and after discussing them with Neisser himself, Christopher Chabris and I revisited them in the late 1990s ([Simons & Chabris, 1999](#)). We replicated Neisser's work, again finding that many people missed the umbrella woman when all of the actors in the video were partially transparent and occupying the same space. But, we added another wrinkle: a version of the video in which all of the actions of both teams of players were choreographed and filmed with a single camera. The players moved in and around each other and were fully visible. In the most dramatic version, we had a woman in a gorilla suit walk into the scene, stop to face the camera, thump her chest, and then walk off the other side after nine seconds on screen. Fully half the observers missed the gorilla when counting passes by the team in white.

This phenomenon is **now known as [inattentional blindness](#), the surprising failure to notice an unexpected object or event when attention is focused on something else** ([Mack & Rock, 1998](#)). The past 15 years has seen a surge of interest in such failures of awareness, and we now have a better handle on the factors that cause people to miss unexpected events as well as the range of situations in which inattentional blindness occurs. People are much more likely to notice unexpected objects that share features with the attended items in a display ([Most et al., 2001](#)). For example, if you count passes by the players wearing black, you are more likely to notice the gorilla than if you count passes by the players wearing white because the color of the gorilla more closely matches that of the black-shirted players ([Simons & Chabris, 1999](#)). However, even unique items can go unnoticed. In one task, people monitored black shapes and ignored white shapes that moved around a computer window ([Most et al., 2001](#)). Approximately 30 percent of them failed to detect the bright red cross traversing the display, even though it was the only colored item and was visible for five seconds.

Another crucial influence on noticing is the effort you put into the **attention-demanding task**. If you have to keep separate counts of bounce passes and aerial passes, you are less likely to notice the gorilla ([Simons & Chabris, 1999](#)), and if you are tracking faster moving objects, you are less likely to notice ([Simons & Jensen, 2009](#)). You can even miss unexpected visual objects when you devote your limited cognitive resources to a memory task ([Fougnie & Marois, 2007](#)), so the limits are not purely visual. Instead, they appear to reflect limits on the capacity of attention. **Without attention to the unexpected event, you are unlikely to become aware of it** ([Mack & Rock, 1998](#); [Most, Scholl, Clifford, & Simons, 2005](#)).

To test the power of selective attention to induce failures of awareness, Neisser and colleagues ([Neisser, 1979](#)) designed a variant of this task in which participants watched a video of two teams of players, one wearing white shirts and one wearing black shirts. Subjects were asked to press a key whenever the players in white successfully passed a ball, but to ignore the players in black. As for the other videos, the teams were filmed separately and then superimposed so that they literally occupied the same space (they were partially transparent). Partway through the video, a person wearing a raincoat and carrying an umbrella strolled through the scene. People were so intently focused on spotting passes that they often missed the "umbrella woman." (Pro tip: If you look closely at the video, you'll see that Ulric Neisser plays on both the black and white teams.)

These surprising findings were well known in the field, but for decades, researchers dismissed their implications because the displays had such an odd, ghostly appearance. Of course, we would notice if the displays were fully opaque and vivid rather than partly transparent and grainy. Surprisingly, no studies were built on Neisser's

In a recent study, Chabris, Weinberger, Fontaine, and Simons (2011) simulated a famous police misconduct case in which a Boston police officer was convicted of lying because he claimed not to have seen a brutal beating (Lehr, 2009).

At the time, he had been chasing a murder suspect and ran right past the scene of a brutal assault. In Chabris' simulation, subjects jogged behind an experimenter who ran right past a simulated fight scene. At night, 65 percent missed the fight scene. Even during broad daylight, 44 percent of observers jogged right past it without noticing, lending some plausibility to the Boston cop's story that he was telling the truth and never saw the beating.

Perhaps more importantly, auditory distractions can induce real-world failures to see. In a dramatic illustration of cell phone-induced inattentional blindness, Ira Hymen observed that people talking on a cell phone as they walked across a college campus were less likely than other pedestrians to notice a unicycling clown who rode across their path ([Hymen, Boss, Wise, McKenzie, & Caggiano, 2011](#)).

Recently, the study of this sort of awareness failure has returned to its roots in studies of listening, with studies documenting [inattentional deafness](#): When listening to a set of spatially localized conversations over headphones, people often fail to notice the voice of a person walking through the scene repeatedly stating "I am a gorilla" ([Dalton & Fraenkel, 2012](#)). Under conditions of focused attention, we see and hear far less of the unattended information than we might expect ([Macdonald & Lavie, 2011](#); [Wayand, Levin, & Varakin, 2005](#)).



Now you see me, now you don't! Although the research on attention has only developed over the last few decades, magicians have been taking advantage of our susceptibility to misguided focus for centuries. [Image: ShahanB, <https://goo.gl/p5DYXH>, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://goo.gl/eLCn2O>]

Thus, the greater the demands on attention, the less likely people are to notice objects falling outside their attention ([Macdonald & Lavie, 2011](#); [Simons & Chabris, 1999](#); [Simons & Jensen, 2009](#)). The more like the ignored elements of a scene, the less likely people are to notice. And, the more distracted we are, the less likely we are to be aware of our surroundings. Under conditions of distraction, we effectively develop tunnel vision.

Despite this growing understanding of the limits of attention and the factors that lead to more or less noticing, we have relatively less understanding of individual differences in noticing ([Simons & Jensen, 2009](#)). Do some people consistently notice the unexpected while others are obviously unaware of their surroundings? Or, are we all subject to inattentional blindness due to structural limits on the nature of attention? The question remains controversial. A few studies suggest that those people who have a greater working memory capacity are more likely to notice unexpected objects ([Hannon & Richards, 2010](#); [Richards, Hannon, & Derakshan, 2010](#)).

In effect, those who have more resources available when focusing attention are more likely to spot other aspects of their world. However, other studies find no such relationship: Those with greater working memory capacity are not any more likely to spot an unexpected object or event ([Seegmiller, Watson, & Strayer, 2011](#); [Bredemeier & Simons, 2012](#)). There are theoretical reasons to predict each pattern. With more resources available, people should be more likely to notice (see [Macdonald & Lavie, 2011](#)). However, people with greater working memory capacity also tend to be better able to maintain their focus on their prescribed task, meaning that they should be less likely to notice. At least one study suggests that the ability to perform a task does not predict the likelihood of noticing ([Simons & Jensen, 2009](#); for a replication, see [Bredemeier & Simons, 2012](#)). In a study I conducted with Melinda Jensen, we measured how well people could track moving objects around a display, gradually increasing the speed until people reached a level of 75% accuracy. Tracking ability varied greatly: Some people could track objects at more than twice the speed others could. Yet, the ability to track objects more easily was unrelated to the odds of noticing an unexpected event. Apparently, as long as people try to perform the tracking task, they are relatively unlikely to notice unexpected events.

Given the limits on attention coupled with our mistaken impression that important events will capture our attention, how has our species survived? Why weren't our ancestors eaten by unexpected predators? One reason is that our ability to focus attention intently might have been more evolutionarily useful than the ability to notice unexpected events. After all, for an event to be unexpected, it must occur relatively infrequently. Moreover, most events don't require our immediate attention, so if inattentional blindness delays our ability to notice the events, the consequences could well be minimal. In a social context, others might notice that event and call attention to it. Although inattentional blindness might have had minimal consequences over the course of our evolutionary history, it does have consequences now.

At pedestrian speeds and with minimal distraction, inattentional blindness might not matter for survival. But in modern society, we face greater distractions and move at greater speeds, and even a minor delay in noticing something unexpected can mean the difference between a fender-bender and a lethal collision. If talking on a phone increases your odds of missing a unicycling clown, it likely also increases your odds of missing the child who runs into the street or the car that runs a red light. Why, then, do people continue to talk on the phone when driving? The reason might well be the same mistaken intuition that makes inattentional blindness surprising: Drivers simply do not notice how distracted they are when they are talking on a phone, so they believe they can drive just as well when talking on a phone even though they can't ([Strayer & Johnston, 2001](#)).

So, what can you do about inattentional blindness? The short answer appears to be, "not much." There is no magical elixir that will overcome the limits on attention, allowing you to notice everything (and that would not be a good outcome anyway). But, there is something you can do to mitigate the consequences of such limits. Now that you know about inattentional blindness, you can take steps to limit its impact by recognizing how your intuitions will lead you astray.



Distracted Driving Retrieved from <https://unsplash.com/photos/BNrlDv8w07Y>

we avoid the modern-day consequences of those limits.

First, maximize the attention you do have available by avoiding distractions, especially under conditions for which an unexpected event might be catastrophic. The ring of a new call or the ding of a new text are hard to resist, so make it impossible to succumb to the temptation by turning your phone off or putting it somewhere out of reach when you are driving. If you know that you will be tempted and you know that using your phone will increase inattentional blindness, you must be proactive. Second, pay attention to what others might not notice. If you are a bicyclist, don't assume that the driver sees you, even if they appear to make eye contact. Looking is not the same as seeing. Only by understanding the limits of attention and by recognizing our mistaken beliefs about what we "know" to be true can

Discussion Questions

1. Many people, upon learning about inattentional blindness, try to think of ways to eliminate it, allowing themselves

- complete situation awareness. Why might we be far worse off if we were not subject to inattentional blindness?
2. If inattentional blindness cannot be eliminated, what steps might you take to avoid its consequences?
 3. Can you think of situations in which inattentional blindness is highly likely to be a problem? Can you think of cases in which inattentional blindness would not have much of an impact?

Vocabulary

Dichotic listening

A task in which different audio streams are presented to each ear. Typically, people are asked to monitor one stream while ignoring the other.

Inattentional blindness

The failure to notice a fully visible, but unexpected, object or event when attention is devoted to something else.

Inattentional deafness

The auditory analog of inattentional blindness. People fail to notice an unexpected sound or voice when attention is devoted to other aspects of a scene.

Selective listening

A method for studying selective attention in which people focus attention on one auditory stream of information while deliberately ignoring other auditory information.

Outside Resources

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

References

- Bredemeier, K., & Simons, D. J. (2012). Working memory and inattentional blindness. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, 19, 239–244.
- Chabris, C. F., Weinberger, A., Fontaine, M., & Simons, D. J. (2011). You do not talk about fight club if you do not notice fight club: Inattentional blindness for a simulated real-world assault. *i-Perception*, 2, 150–153.
- Cherry, E. C. (1953). Experiments on the recognition of speech with one and two ears. *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, 25, 975–979.
- Conway, A. R. A., Cowan, N., & Bunting, M. F. (2001). The cocktail party phenomenon revisited: The importance of working memory capacity. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, 8, 331–335.
- Dalton, P., & Fraenkel, N. (2012). Gorillas we have missed: Sustained inattentional deafness for dynamic events. *Cognition*, 124, 367–372.
- Levin, D. T., & Angelone, B. L. (2008). The visual metacognition questionnaire: A measure of intuitions about vision. *The American Journal of Psychology*, 121, 451–472.
- Macdonald, J. S. P., & Lavie, N. (2011). Visual perceptual load induces inattentional deafness. *Attention, Perception, & Psychophysics*, 73, 1780–1789.
- Mack A., & Rock I. (1998). Inattentional blindness. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Moray, N. (1959). Attention in dichotic listening: Affective cues and the influence of instructions. *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 11, 56–60.
- Most, S. B., Scholl, B. J., Clifford, E. R., & Simons, D. J. (2005). What you see is what you set: Sustained inattentional blindness and the capture of awareness. *Psychological Review*, 112, 217–242.
- Most, S. B., Simons, D. J., Scholl, B. J., Jimenez, R., Clifford, E., & Chabris, C. F. (2001). How not to be seen: The contribution of similarity and selective ignoring to sustained inattentional blindness. *Psychological Science*, 12, 9–17.
- Neisser U., & Becklen R., (1975). Selective looking: Attending to visually specified events. *Cognitive Psychology*, 7, 480–494.
- Neisser, U. (1979). The control of information pickup in selective looking. In A. D. Pick (Ed.), *Perception and its development: A tribute to Eleanor J. Gibson* (pp. 201–219). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Richards, A., Hannon, E., & Derakshan, N. (2010). Predicting and manipulating the incidence of inattentional blindness. *Psychological Research*, 74, 513–523.
- Seegmiller, J. K., Watson, J. M., & Strayer, D. L. (2011). Individual differences in susceptibility to inattentional blindness. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 37, 785–791.
- Simons, D. J., & Chabris, C. F. (2010). *The invisible gorilla, and other ways our intuitions deceive us*. New York, NY: Crown.
- Simons, D. J., & Chabris, C. F. (1999). Gorillas in our midst: Sustained inattentional blindness for dynamic events. *Perception*, 28, 1059–1074.
- Simons, D. J., & Jensen, M. S. (2009). The effects of individual differences and task difficulty on inattentional blindness. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, 16(2), 398–403.
- Strayer, D. L., & Johnston, W. A. (2001). Driven to distraction: Dual-task studies of simulated driving and conversing on a cellular telephone. *Psychological Science*, 12, 462–466.
- Treisman, A. (1960). Contextual cues in selective listening. *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 12, 242–248.
- Wayand, J. F., Levin, D. T., & Varakin, D. A. (2005). Inattentional blindness for a noxious multimodal stimulus. *The American Journal of Psychology*, 118, 339–352.

Authors



Daniel Simons

Daniel Simons, Professor of Psychology at the University of Illinois, received the APA Early Career Award for his work on change blindness and attention. He is best known for his work on the limits of attention and awareness and for co-authoring the NY Times bestseller, *The Invisible Gorilla*.

Creative Commons License



Failures of Awareness: The Case of Inattentional Blindness by [Daniel Simons](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#). Permissions beyond the scope of this license may be available in our [Licensing Agreement](#).

Media Attributions

- photo-1520088096110-20308c23a3cd



Inattentional Blindness by Cameron W. Piercy, Ph.D. is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

7. Teams as Systems

Content in this chapter comes from the Open University at Open.edu. [Source 1](#) and [Source 2](#)

Creating successful teams: A holistic view

This section focusses on an open systems' approach to teamwork – a helpful approach which encourages teams to consider the context in which they works. The approach considers team processes, which are divided into three parts: *inputs*, *throughputs* and *outputs*. These highlight the different issues and activities a team and leaders needs to engage with or oversee during the life of a team. As you read, think about the processes the team went through (or will go through).

Inputs, throughputs and outputs

The systems perspective ask us to think of teams as part of the wider context of an organization or the community. Considering a systems perspective ensures that team-leaders can find the resources to help the team function successfully. A systems perspective asks: what needs to be controlled, monitored and/ or influenced within and outside the team? At the same time, leaders needs to consider the team in terms of its task phases and processes, from start to finish. This allows leaders put a particular team-related issue in context in order to understand it better.

A leader's task is to understand, plan and monitor all these different processes. This seemingly complex and unwieldy task is easier to understand and manage when broken down into its component parts. The open systems model of team work (Schermerhorn et al., 1995; Ingram et al., 1997) can help to explain and characterize effective team-work processes.

The open systems approach to team working

Schermerhorn and colleagues suggest that teamwork can be considered as a three-stage sequence. Teams are viewed as systems which take in resources such as time, people, skills, problems (*inputs*) and through transformational processes (*throughputs*) such as decision-making and different behaviors and activities, transform them into outputs, such as work, solutions and satisfactions (Ingram et al., 1997). Thus, team performance is the collective competencies, knowledge, and actions of team members (DiSanza & Legge, 2017). This is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

Inputs are factors which are controlled and influenced by management. They include 'climate', the atmosphere under which the team works, and 'group configuration', how the team is put together, who is selected to work in it and why. Management will also influence how a team should work by making sure at the outset that the team strategy is in line with the *vision and strategic direction* of

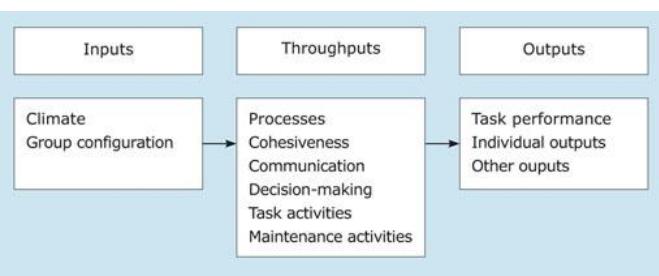


Figure 1

the organization and that it uses the organization's preferred work practices; for example, face-to-face or virtual working.

Throughputs refer to the activities and tasks that help to transform inputs into outputs. They may have the greatest influence on effective team work as they include team processes such as developing and maintaining cohesiveness, and communication. They also involve task activities which get the work done and maintenance activities which support the development and smooth functioning of the team.

Outputs are those (successful) outcomes which satisfy organizational or personal goals or other predetermined criteria. The success of outputs may be assessed by a number of stakeholders, including the organization itself and team members, and by a range of other stakeholders. Team outputs include the performance of team tasks and individual outputs (such as professional development).

How can this framework be applied in a way which highlights how to manage or lead a team and its task? Imagine you have been asked to put together a team to produce the company's internal newsletter. What inputs, throughputs and outputs would you need? What questions would you need to ask yourself about different aspects of the process? We now consider what you might need to think about for the newsletter example. Some of the questions could be adapted and applied to other situations as well.

Inputs

Inputs are often controlled or influenced by management. This may be the direct manager of the group or team or the result of senior management decisions and strategies. This means in practice that the way a team is put together and will function is influenced by the organization's values, vision and strategy, and its practices and procedures.

Two main factors to consider at this stage are **communication climate and group configuration**. Communication climate refers to the communicative norms for a workplace, usually this focuses on how willing or unwilling people are to raise issues or concerns and to speak freely. Group configuration refers to the roles adopted by group members. Some groups have strong hierarchy (the leader makes all decisions) other groups distribute decisions among all members (i.e., democratic or egalitarian). The communication climate and configuration of members determines how inputs can be leveraged.

Some input-related questions for you to consider at this stage are given in Table 1:

Table 1 Input-related questions

- How much support is there for this newsletter among senior management?
- Who might need to be influenced?
- What objectives will it fulfill?
- What resources will be provided for it? What others might be needed? Where could they come from?
- How will individuals working on this be rewarded or recognized?
- What might they learn? What skills could they hope to develop?
- How many people will be needed to perform this task?
- What technical skills are needed (e.g. desktop publishing)?

What training and development opportunities are available?
What roles are needed (e.g. a co-coordinator)?
Who might work well together?

Throughputs

Some common throughputs include:

Team processes. A sense of unity is created through sharing clear goals which are understood and accepted by the members.

Cohesiveness. This involves encouraging feelings of belonging, cooperation, openness and commitment to the team.

Communication. This involves being clear, accurate, open and honest.

Decision-making. This involves making sure that established procedures are in place, that everybody is clear about leadership and an environment of trust is being created.

Task and maintenance activities. These include activities that ensure that the task is produced effectively, such as planning, agreeing on procedures and controls. They also include activities that minimise threats to the process, such as monitoring and reviewing internal processes and dealing constructively with conflict.

In Table 2, you'll find out more on "Throughputs":

Table 2: Throughputs

Some common throughputs include:

Team processes. A sense of unity is created through sharing clear goals which are understood and accepted by the members.

Cohesiveness. This involves encouraging feelings of belonging, cooperation, openness and commitment to the team.

Communication. This involves being clear, accurate, open and honest.

Decision-making. This involves making sure that established procedures are in place, that everybody is clear about leadership and an environment of trust is being created.

Task and maintenance activities. These include activities that ensure that the task is produced effectively, such as planning, agreeing on procedures and controls. They also include activities that minimize threats to the process, such as monitoring and reviewing internal processes and dealing constructively with conflict.

In the case of the newsletter project, you may need to think about ways of setting up the project. Would it be possible to have a team away day? If so, what would the themes of the day be? Perhaps you could work backwards from the finished product. How do team members envisage the newsletter in terms of aim, goals, content and look? Can they come up with an appropriate design and name for the newsletter? Then, what needs to be done in order for this to be produced? Some ground rules for working together may also need to be set at an early stage. Some throughput-related questions are set out in Table 3.

Table 3: Throughput-related questions

- What can you do to build a sense of belonging among the team members?**
- How will the group communicate? (Face-to-face, email, group software?)**
- Do any ground rules need setting up? How can this be done?**
- What established procedures for decision-making are there?**
- Will there be a team leader? How will the person be chosen?**
- What tasks need to be performed to complete the project?**
- What maintenance behaviors does the group need to exhibit to get the job done and to benefit and develop from the experience?**
- Who will be responsible for ensuring that the different tasks and maintenance activities are performed?**
- Are there structures and systems in place to review processes?**

Outputs

Outcomes can be examined in terms of task performance, individual performance and other (incidental) outcomes.

Task performance. This may be judged on a number of criteria, such as quality of the formal outputs or objectives. In this case a product (the newsletter) and the time taken to perform the task are the criteria.

Individual outputs. These may include personal satisfaction and personal development and learning.

Other outcomes. These include transferable skills to apply in future to other teamwork. They include, for example, experience of effective teamwork and task-specific skills.

In general, it is always appropriate to evaluate outcomes. In this case you may need to think about:

- *Evaluating the newsletter itself.* Was it well-received?
- *Evaluating individual outcomes.* Have members developed transferable skills that they can take to new projects?
- *Evaluating other outcomes.* Has the experience enhanced team members' ability to work in a team?

Some output-related questions are set out in Table 4.

Table 4 Output-related questions

- Has the team completed the task it was given?
- Has it kept to cost and to time?
- What has the team learned from this experience?
- Should the team now be broken up or could it go on to another activity?
- What have individuals learned from the experience?
- Have members experienced an effective team?
- Have any learning and development needs been identified? How can they be addressed?
- Have members developed transferable teamworking and other skills?
- Where can these skills be used in the organization?

The open systems model of teamwork shows us how effective teamwork can offer benefits to organization and staff. However, it also shows us that these benefits do not occur without effort and planning. Leaders need to ensure that the right team is put together to perform a given task and that it is given appropriate tasks. They also need to secure the freedom, resources and support for the team to undertake the task. The model alerts teams and leaders to both the micro and the macro issues they will need to be aware of in managing effective teams.

Group size

Another significant feature of a work group is its size. To be effective it should be neither too large nor too small. As membership increases there is a trade-off between increased collective expertise and decreased involvement and satisfaction of individual members. A very small group may not have the range of skills it requires to function well. The optimum size depends partly on the group's purpose. A group for information sharing or decision making may need to be larger than one for problem solving.

A simple calculation can indicate how quickly the number of two-way interactions in a group increases with increasing size. In a group of N people (where N stands for a number) each of the N individuals relates with $N \times 1$ others, so there are $N \times (N - 1) / 2$ possible interactions.

In many organizations, there is a tendency to include representatives from every conceivable grouping on all committees in the belief that this enhances participation and effectiveness. There is also the view that putting a representative of every possible related department into a given group helps smooth information flow and project progress. **In practice, communication is usually reduced in larger groups.** As the group size grows, members feel less involved in the process, alienation tends to increase and commitment to the project tends to decrease. The numbers most commonly quoted for effective group size in a face-to-face team are between 5 and 10, so reducing the number of interactions and lessening the risk of conflict.

There is a nice demonstration that the 'between 5 and 10' rule is due to communication limitations. If we devise special procedures to manage the interpersonal exchanges (as in some computer-based brainstorming systems, where the computers handle all the gathering and feeding back of ideas) the advantages of the small group disappears: the larger the group, the more ideas are generated.

However, in the normal face-to-face mode, if there are more than about 12 members in our team we are likely to encounter group-size problems. If the numbers cannot be reduced we might consider restructuring the team into sub-groups and delegating responsibility for achieving some of the team's objectives. We may find that if we don't do this deliberately it will happen anyway. For instance, members who like each other or share common interests may spontaneously form sub-groups.

Unfortunately, the breakdown of large groups into sub-groups and cliques may not help a team achieve its goals. One device for keeping large numbers of people informed about a project is for a small group to manage the task and for it to invite relevant people to attend particular meetings. Alternatively, the small group can arrange to give information seminars to larger groups of colleagues. So, for the purposes of achieving team goals it is better that the process of restructuring big groups into smaller groups is managed consciously and carefully.

Managing group membership

The range of people that makes up the membership of a team, and the relationships they have with each other, have great influence on the team's effectiveness. The members should all be able to contribute their skills and expertise to the team's goals to make the best use of the resources. If you are ever in the position of being able to select your own team, you will need to identify your objectives and the methods for achieving your goals. From this will come the competences – the knowledge, understanding, skills and personal qualities – which you need in your team members.

The **least-sized group** principle contends that the ideal group size is one which incorporates a wide variety of views and opinions but contains as few members as possible. Restated, a group should be as small as possible while still incorporating as wide a range of perspectives as possible. It is important to appraise as systematically as possible the relationship between team functions and required competences in order to identify gaps and begin to allocate responsibilities, organize training and so on. [Figure 2](#) provides a useful way of weighing up the mixture of 'task' and 'people' functions (or 'faces') of a team.

Overview

Faces 1 and 2 are *external* to the team and concern:

- adapting to the environment and using organizational resources effectively in order to satisfy the requirements of the team's sponsor.
- relating effectively with people outside the team in order to meet the needs of clients or customers, whether internal or external to the organization.

Faces 3 and 4 are *internal* to the team and concern:

- using systems and procedures appropriately to carry out goal-oriented tasks.
- working in a way which makes people feel part of a team.

Each face implies different competences.

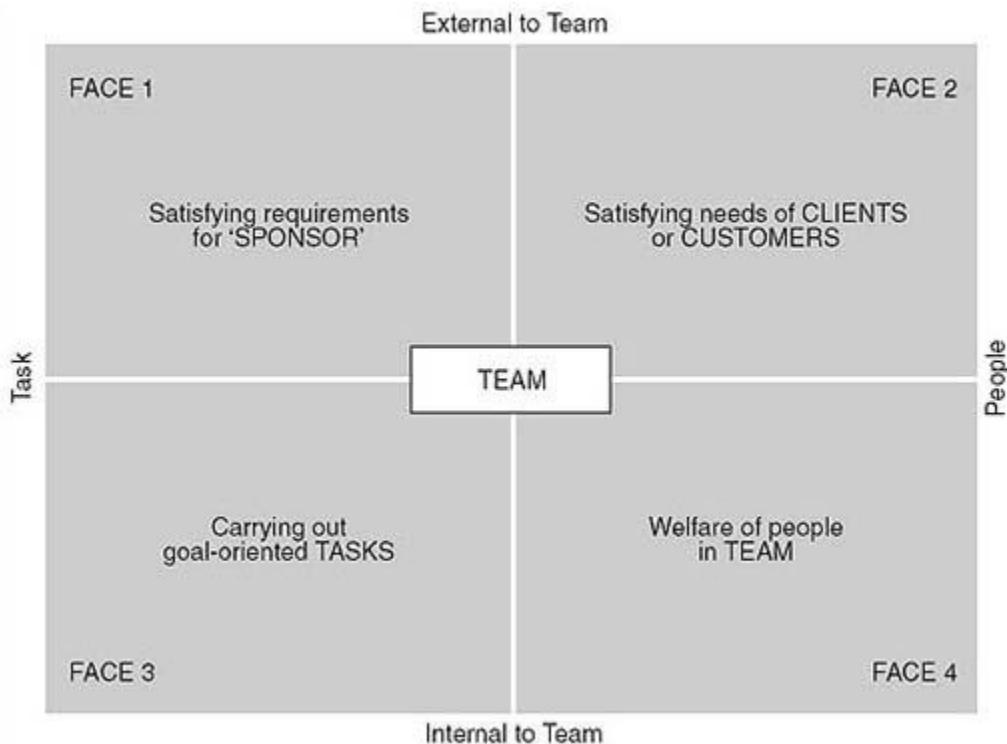


Figure 2 The four faces of a team (adapted from Lewis and Lawton, 1992)

We may find that when we are setting up a team we have to guess a little about the competences that are required. We may also find that as the team develops and gets on with its work, there are changes in everyone's perception of the skills and knowledge needed. It is therefore important to keep an eye on changes that affect the expertise needed by the team and actively recruit new members if necessary. It is frequently the case that team members have other work commitments outside the team. The implications of this should be taken into account when recruiting team members and allocating tasks and responsibilities to them. Team loyalties and commitments need to be balanced with other loyalties and commitments. Often we will have limited or no choice about who is recruited to the team. We may find that we just have to make do with the situation and struggle to be effective despite limitations in the competence base.

As well as competencies there are other factors that can influence the working of a team. The balance of men and women and people from different nationalities or cultural backgrounds all play a part. Differences in personality can also have a significant effect. Achieving the best mix in a team invariably involves working on the tensions that surround issues of uniformity and diversity. The pushes and pulls in different directions need to be managed. The dismantling of many of the restrictions in the European labour market supports moves towards recruitment practices which seek team members with proven capabilities to work in other countries. Legislation and social changes make it easier for organizations to develop and train their staff to appreciate ethnic and national differences in values, style, attitudes and performance standards. Nevertheless, there are countervailing tendencies, internally and externally.

Developing openness and trust, for example, can often seem easier in the first instance on the basis of a high degree of homogeneity; strengthening diversity can seem threatening in an established team.

Functional and team roles

When individuals are being selected for membership of a team, the choice is usually made on the basis of task-related

issues, such as their prior skills, knowledge, and experience. However, team effectiveness is equally dependent on the personal qualities and attributes of individual team members. It is just as important to select for these as well.

When we work with other people in a group or team we each bring two types of role to that relationship. The first, and more obvious, is our **functional role, which relies on the skills and experiences that we bring to the project or problem in hand**. The second, and often overlooked, contribution is our **team role**, which tends to be based on our personality or preferred style of action. To a large extent, our team role can be said to determine how we apply the skills and experiences that comprise our functional role.

Belbin (1981, 1993) researched the functional role/team role distinction and its implications for teams. He found that, while there are a few people who do not function well in any team role, most of us have perhaps two or three roles that we feel comfortable in (our so-called 'preferred roles') and others in which we feel less at ease (our so-called 'non-preferred roles'). In fact, Belbin and his associates identified nine such team roles. Some of the non-preferred roles are ones we can cope with if we have to. However, there are also likely to be others in which we are both uncomfortable and ineffective.

Belbin's nine team roles are listed in Table 1. It is worth noting that all nine are equally important to team effectiveness, provided that they are used by the team at the right times and in an appropriate manner.

When a team first addresses a problem or kicks off a project, the basic requirement is usually for innovative ideas (the need for a 'plant'), closely followed by the requirement to appreciate how these ideas can be turned into practical actions and manageable tasks (the 'implementer'). These steps stand most chance of being achieved if the team has a good chairperson (the 'coordinator') who ensures that the appropriate team members contribute at the right times. Drive and impetus are brought to the team's activities by the energetic 'shaper'. When delicate negotiations with contacts outside the team are called for, it is the personality of the 'resource investigator' that comes into its own. To stop the team becoming over-enthusiastic and missing key points, the 'monitor/evaluator' must be allowed to play a part. Any sources of friction or misunderstanding within the team are diffused by the 'teamworker', whilst the 'specialist' is used for skills or knowledge that are in short supply and not used regularly. The 'completer/finisher' ensures that proper attention is paid to the details of any solutions or follow-up actions.

It is essential that team members share details of their team roles with their colleagues if the team is to gain the full benefit from its range of roles; the team can then see if any of the nine team roles are missing. If this is the case, those team members whose non-preferred roles match the missing roles need to make the effort required to fill the gap. If not it may be necessary to bring in additional team members. Clearly, this sharing calls for a degree of openness and trust, which should exist in a well-organised, well-led team. Unfortunately, in teams that have not yet developed mutual trust and openness, some people who may be quite open about the details of their functional roles tend to be somewhat coy about sharing personality details. A competent leader will handle this situation in a sensitive manner.

Table 1:
Belbin team roles

| Team role | Team strengths | Allowable weaknesses |
|------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| Plant | Creative, imaginative, unorthodox | Weak in communication skills |
| | An innovator | Easily upset |
| | Team's source of original ideas | Can dwell on 'interesting ideas' |
| Implementer | Turns ideas into practical actions | Somewhat inflexible |
| | Turns decisions into manageable tasks | Does not like 'airy-fairy' ideas |
| | Brings method to the team's activities | Upset by frequent changes of plan |
| Completer-finisher | Painstaking and conscientious | Anxious introvert; inclined to worry |
| | Sees tasks through to completion | Reluctant to delegate |
| | Delivers on time | Dislikes casual approach by others |
| Monitor-evaluator | Offers dispassionate, critical analysis | Lacks drive and inspiration |
| | Has a strategic, discerning view | Lacks warmth and imagination |
| | Judges accurately; sees all options | Can lower morale by being a damper |
| Resource investigator | Diplomat with many contacts | Loses interest as enthusiasm wanes |
| | Improviser; explores opportunities | Jumps from one task to another |
| | Enthusiastic and communicative | Thrives on pressure |
| Shaper | Task minded; brings drive to the team | Easily provoked or frustrated |
| | Makes things happen | Impulsive and impatient |
| | Dynamic, outgoing and challenging | Intolerant of wooliness or vagueness |
| Teamworker | Promotes team harmony; diffuses friction | Indecisive in crunch situations |
| | Listens; builds on the ideas of others | May avoid confrontation situations |
| | Sensitive but gently assertive | May avoid commitment at decision time |
| Coordinator | Clarifies goals; good chairperson | Can be seen as manipulative |
| | Promotes decision making | Inclined to let others do the work |
| | Good communicator; social leader | May take credit for the team's work |
| Specialist | Provides rare skills and knowledge | Contributes only on a narrow front |
| | Single-minded and focused | Communication skills are often weak |
| | Self-starting and dedicated | Often cannot see the 'big picture' |

Leaders sometimes try to rationalize having teams that are unbalanced in a team-role sense by claiming that they have been assigned a group of people as their team and they must live with it. In most of today's workplaces there is a steady and regular movement of staff in and out of management groups and departments. When selecting or accepting new people into their groups or departments, leaders with an understanding of team-role concepts will look for team-role strengths in addition to functional-role strengths.

Each team role brings valuable strengths to the overall team (team strength), but each also has a downside. Belbin has coined the phrase 'an allowable weakness' for what is the converse of a team strength. The tendency is for a leader to try to correct perceived weaknesses in an employee. But by doing this with allowable weaknesses we face the possibility of not only failing to eradicate what is after all a natural weakness, but also risking undermining the strength that goes with it. This is not to suggest that weaknesses should not be addressed. The point is that any attempts at improvement should be kept in balance and we should be prepared to manage and work around the weaknesses of our team colleagues and ourselves. Many people put on an act in an attempt to hide their weaknesses. Once they see that they can admit to them without prejudice, they feel a sense of relief and are ready to play their part in the team in a more open manner.



Teams as Systems by Cameron W. Piercy, Ph.D. is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

SECTION III

GROUPS & TEAMS (IN)ACTION

This section focuses primarily on the practice and process of engaging in group and team activities.

8. Professional Writing

This chapter is taken from: <https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/part/chapter-7-revising-and-presenting-your-writing/>

I'm not a very good writer, but I'm an excellent rewriter.

-James A. Michener

Half my life is an act of revision.

-John Irving

INTRODUCTORY EXERCISES

1. Find an article you read online and review it, noting at least one area that would benefit from revision. Please share your results with classmates.
2. Exchange draft revisions of a document prepared for a class or work assignment with a classmate or colleague. Note at least one strength and one area for improvement. Provide feedback to the writer.

One of the hardest tests to pass is the one of peer review. In the academic environment, professors conduct research, learn lessons, and share their findings by contributing articles for professional journals. Each academic journal article undergoes peer review, or evaluation by colleagues in the same field as the professor who wrote the article. These evaluations, often conducted by leaders in each field, do not only consider the value of the writer's findings. They also evaluate the mechanics of the document (spelling and grammar) and its presentation, organization, and design. The first time a scholar submits an article for peer review, he or she can expect rejections and liberal use of the red pen.

You may not experience such a rigorous and vigorous review of your writing, but in many ways the world of business is equally challenging. Academic publications ultimately value solid findings that contribute to the field or discipline. Business writing ultimately values writing that produces results or outcomes in environments where you do not have the luxury of controlling the variables, designing the context, or limiting the scope of your inquiry. Your business document will be evaluated by people you never met or even anticipated would read it, and errors will have a negative impact on its performance.

In every career, industry, and profession, today's business climate is a results-oriented environment. Regardless of what you write, there exists the possibility, even probability, that misunderstandings and miscommunications can and will occur. Although you will not always have control over the importance of the ideas you are assigned to communicate in your writing, there is one thing you can control: errors. If you avoid mistakes, both in the document itself and in the way your audience interprets your message, your document will have its best chance of success. To this end a thorough revision is an important part of your writing process.

As you review and evaluate documents, those written by you and others, you will need to keep in mind the three goals of being correct, clear, and concise. Next you will have to focus on effectiveness and efficiency, recognizing that in a climate of increasing demands and limited resources like time, you need to get it right the first time.

The environment of a business writer can be stressful, but it can also be rewarding. Recognition from your peers—suppliers, internal department colleagues, or customers—can make it all worthwhile. Still, the reward in terms of acknowledgement may come in the form of silence. When your document clearly meets expectations and accomplishes its goal, the outcome may be the absence of error or misinterpretation, a rare occasion that often goes unheralded. As a business writer you need to value your work and note what works. When it does, take pride in your hard work in effort. You may not always be celebrated for your error-free documents that communicate concepts and ideas clearly, but know that they are successful, and their success is your success.

1 General Revision Points to Consider

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Discuss the process of revision
2. List three general elements of every document that require revision

Just when you think the production of your document is done, the revision process begins. Runners often refer to “the wall,” where the limits of physical exertion are met and exhaustion is imminent. The writing process requires effort, from overcoming writer’s block to the intense concentration composing a document often involves. It is only natural to have a sense of relief when your document is drafted from beginning to end. This relief is false confidence, though. Your document is not complete, and in its current state it could, in fact, do more harm than good. Errors, omissions, and unclear phrases may lurk within your document, waiting to reflect poorly on you when it reaches your audience. Now is not time to let your guard down, prematurely celebrate, or to mentally move on to the next assignment. Think of the revision process as one that hardens and strengthens your document, even though it may require the sacrifice of some hard-earned writing.

General revision requires attention to content, organization, style, and readability. These four main categories should give you a template from which to begin to explore details in depth. A cursory review of these elements in and of itself is insufficient for even the briefest review. Across this chapter we will explore ways to expand your revision efforts to cover the common areas of weakness and error. You may need to take some time away from your document to approach it again with a fresh perspective. Writers often juggle multiple projects that are at different stages of development. This allows the writer to leave one document and return to another without losing valuable production time. Overall, your goal is similar to what it was during your writing preparation and production: a clear mind.

Evaluate Content

Content is only one aspect of your document. Let’s say you were assigned a report on the sales trends for a specific product in a relatively new market. You could produce a one-page chart comparing last year’s results to current figures and call it a day, but would it clearly and concisely deliver content that is useful and correct? Are you supposed to highlight trends? Are you supposed to spotlight factors that contributed to the increase or decrease? Are you supposed to include projections for next year? Our list of questions could continue, but for now let’s focus on content and its relationship to the directions. Have you included the content that corresponds to the given assignment, left any information out that may be necessary to fulfill the expectations, or have you gone beyond the assignment directions?

Content will address the central questions of who, what, where, when, why and how within the range and parameters of the assignment.

Evaluate Organization

Organization is another key aspect of any document. Standard formats that include an introduction, body, and conclusion may be part of your document, but did you decide on a direct or indirect approach? Can you tell? A direct approach will announce the main point or purpose at the beginning, while an indirect approach will present an introduction before the main point. Your document may use any of a wide variety of organizing principles, such as chronological, spatial, compare/contrast. Is your organizing principle clear to the reader?

Beyond the overall organization, pay special attention to transitions. Readers often have difficulty following a document if the writer makes the common error of failing to make one point relevant to the next, or to illustrate the relationships between the points. Finally, your conclusion should mirror your introduction and not introduce new material.

Evaluate Style

Style is created through content and organization, but also involves word choice and grammatical structures. Is your document written in an informal or formal tone, or does it present a blend, a mix, or an awkward mismatch? Does it provide a coherent and unifying voice with a professional tone? If you are collaborating on the project with other writers or contributors, pay special attention to unifying the document across the different authors' styles of writing. Even if they were all to write in a professional, formal style, the document may lack a consistent voice. Read it out loud—can you tell who is writing what? If so, that is a clear clue that you need to do more revising in terms of style.

Evaluate Readability

Readability refers to the reader's ability to read and comprehend the document. A variety of tools are available to make an estimate of a document's reading level, often correlated to a school grade level. If this chapter has a reading level of 11.8, it would be appropriate for most readers in the eleventh grade. But just because you are in grade thirteen, eighteen, or twenty-one doesn't mean that your audience, in their everyday use of language, reads at a postsecondary level. As a business writer, your goal is to make your writing clear and concise, not complex and challenging.

You can often use the "Tools" menu of your word processing program to determine the approximate reading level of your document. The program will evaluate the number of characters per word, add in the number of words per sentence, and come up with a rating. It may also note the percentage of passive sentences, and other information that will allow you to evaluate readability. Like any computer-generated rating, it should serve you as one point of evaluation, but not the only point. Your concerted effort to choose words you perceive as appropriate for the audience will serve you better than any computer evaluation of your writing.

KEY TAKEAWAY

The four main categories—**content, organization, style, and readability**—provide a template for general revision.

EXERCISES

1. Select a document, such as an article from a Web site, newspaper, magazine, or a piece of writing you have completed for a course. Evaluate the document according to the four main categories described in this section. Could the document benefit from revision in any of these areas? Discuss your findings with your classmates.
2. Interview a coworker or colleague and specifically ask how much time and attention they dedicate to the revision process of their written work. Compare your results with classmates.
3. Find a particularly good example of writing according to the above criteria. Review it and share it with your classmates.
4. Find a particularly bad example of writing according to the above criteria. Review it and share it with your classmates.

2 Specific Revision Points to Consider

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. List six specific elements of every document to check for revision

When revising your document, it can be helpful to focus on specific points. When you consider each point in turn, you will be able to break down the revision process into manageable steps. When you have examined each point, you can be confident that you have avoided many possible areas for errors. Specific revision requires attention to the following:

- Format
- Facts
- Names
- Spelling
- Punctuation
- Grammar

Let's examine these characteristics one by one.

Format

Format is an important part of the revision process. Format involves the design expectations of author and audience. If a letter format normally designates a date at the top, or the sender's address on the left side of the page before the salutation, the information should be in the correct location. Formatting that is messy or fails to conform to the company style will reflect poorly on you before the reader even starts to read it. By presenting a document that is properly formatted according to the expectations of your organization and your readers, you will start off making a good impression.

Facts

Another key part of the revision process is checking your facts. Did you know that news organizations and magazines employ professional fact-checkers? These workers are responsible for examining every article before it gets published and consulting original sources to make sure the information in the article is accurate. This can involve making phone calls to the people who were interviewed for the article—for example, “Mr. Diaz, our report states that you are thirty-nine years old. Our article will be published on the fifteenth. Will that be your correct age on that date?” Fact checking also involves looking facts up in encyclopedias, directories, atlases, and other standard reference works; and, increasingly, in online sources.

While you can't be expected to have the skills of a professional fact-checker, you do need to reread your writing with a critical eye to the information in it. Inaccurate content can expose you and your organization to liability, and will create far more work than a simple revision of a document. So, when you revise a document, ask yourself the following:

- Does my writing contain any statistics or references that need to be verified?
- Where can I get reliable information to verify it?

It is often useful to do independent verification—that is, look up the fact in a different source from the one where you first got it. For example, perhaps a colleague gave you a list of closing averages for the Dow Jones Industrial on certain dates. You still have the list, so you can make sure your document agrees with the numbers your colleague provided. But what if your colleague made a mistake? The Web sites of the *Wall Street Journal* and other major newspapers list closings for “the Dow,” so it is reasonably easy for you to look up the numbers and verify them independently.

Names



Figure 1 © 2010 Jupiterimages Corporation

Always spell a person's name correctly.

There is no more embarrassing error in business writing than to misspell someone's name. To the writer, and to some readers, spelling a name "Michelle" instead of "Michele" may seem like a minor matter, but to Michele herself it will make a big difference. Attribution is one way we often involve a person's name, and giving credit where credit is due is essential. There are many other reasons for including someone's name, but regardless of your reasons for choosing to focus on them, you need to make sure the spelling is correct. Incorrect spelling of names is a quick way to undermine your credibility; it can also have a negative impact on your organization's reputation, and in some cases it may even have legal ramifications.

Spelling

Correct spelling is another element essential for your credibility, and errors will be glaringly obvious to many readers. The negative impact on your reputation as a writer, and its perception that you lack attention to detail or do not value your work, will be hard to overcome. In addition to the negative personal consequences, spelling errors can become factual errors and destroy the value of content. This may lead you to click the "spell check" button in your word

processing program, but computer spell-checking is not enough. Spell checkers have improved in the years since they were first invented, but they are not infallible. They can and do make mistakes.

Typically, your incorrect word may in fact be a word, and therefore, according to the program, correct. For example, suppose you wrote, “The major will attend the meeting” when you meant to write “The mayor will attend the meeting.” The program would miss this error because “major” is a word, but your meaning would be twisted beyond recognition.

Punctuation

Punctuation marks are the traffic signals, signs, and indications that allow us to navigate the written word. They serve to warn us in advance when a transition is coming or the complete thought has come to an end. A period indicates the thought is complete, while a comma signals that additional elements or modifiers are coming. Correct signals will help your reader follow the thoughts through sentences and paragraphs, and enable you to communicate with maximum efficiency while reducing the probability of error.¹

Table 1 “Punctuation Marks” lists twelve punctuation marks that are commonly used in English in alphabetical order along with an example of each.

Table 1 Punctuation Marks

| Symbol | Example | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Apostrophe | ' Michele's report is due tomorrow. | |
| Colon | : | This is what I think: you need to revise your paper. |
| Comma | , | The report advised us when to sell, what to sell, and where to find buyers. |
| Dash | - | This is more difficult than it seems--buyers are scarce when credit is tight. |
| Ellipsis | ... | Lincoln spoke of "a new nation...dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." |
| Exclamation Point | ! | How exciting! |
| Hyphen | - | The question is a many-faceted one. |
| Parentheses | () | To answer it (or at least to begin addressing it) we will need more information. |
| Period | . | The answer is no. Period. Full stop. |
| Question Mark | ? | Can I talk you into changing your mind? |
| Quotation Marks | " " | The manager told him, "I will make sure Renée is available to help you." |
| Semicolon | ; | Theresa was late to the meeting; her computer had frozen and she was stuck at her desk until a tech rep came to fix it. |

It may be daunting to realize that the number of possible punctuation errors is as extensive as the number of symbols and constructions available to the author. Software program may catch many punctuation errors, but again it is the committed writer that makes the difference. Here we will provide details on how to avoid mistakes with three of the most commonly used punctuation marks: the comma, the semicolon, and the apostrophe.

1. Strunk, W., Jr., & White, E. B. (1979). *The elements of style* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Macmillian.

Commas

The comma is probably the most versatile of all punctuation marks. This means you as a writer can use your judgment in many cases as to whether you need a comma or not. It also means that the possible errors involving commas are many. Commas are necessary some of the time, but careless writers often place a comma in a sentence where it is simply not needed.

Commas are used to separate two independent clauses joined by a conjunction like “but,” “and,” and “or.”

Example

The advertising department is effective, but don't expect miracles in this business climate.

Commas are not used simply to join two independent clauses. This is known as the comma splice error, and the way to correct it is to insert a conjunction after the comma.

Examples

The advertising department is effective, the sales department needs to produce more results.

The advertising department is effective, but the sales department needs to produce more results.

Commas are used for introductory phrases and to offset clauses that are not essential to the sentence. If the meaning would remain intact without the phrase, it is considered nonessential.

Examples

After the summary of this year's sales, the sales department had good reason to celebrate.

The sales department, last year's winner of the most productive award, celebrated their stellar sales success this year.

The sales department celebrated their stellar sales success this year.

Commas are used to offset words that help create unity across a sentence like “however” and “therefore.”

Examples

The sales department discovered, however, that the forecast for next year is challenging.

However, the sales department discovered that the forecast for next year is challenging.

Commas are often used to separate more than one adjective modifying a noun.

Example

The sales department discovered the troublesome, challenging forecast for next year.

Commas are used to separate addresses, dates, and titles; they are also used in dialogue sequences.

Examples

John is from Ancud, Chile.

Katy was born on August 2, 2002.

Mackenzie McLean, D. V., is an excellent veterinarian.

Lisa said, “When writing, omit needless words.”

Semicolons

Semicolons have two uses. First, they indicate relationships among groups of items in a series when the individual items are separated by commas. Second, a semicolon can be used to join two independent clauses; this is another way of avoiding the comma splice error mentioned above. Using a semicolon this way is often effective if the meaning of the two independent clauses is linked in some way, such as a cause-effect relationship.

Examples

Merchandise on order includes women's wear such as sweaters, skirts, and blouses; men's wear such as shirts, jackets, and slacks; and outerwear such as coats, parkas, and hats.

The sales campaign was successful; without its contributions our bottom line would have been dismal indeed.

Apostrophes

The apostrophe, like the semicolon, has two uses: it replaces letters omitted in a contraction, and it often indicates the possessive.

Because contractions are associated with an informal style, they may not be appropriate for some professional writing. The business writer will—as always—evaluate the expectations and audience of the given assignment.

Examples

It's great news that sales were up. It is also good news that *we've* managed to reduce our advertising costs.

When you indicate possession, pay attention to the placement of the apostrophe. Nouns commonly receive “s” when they are made possessive. But plurals that end in “s” receive a hanging apostrophe when they are made possessive, and the word “it” forms the possessive (“its”) with no apostrophe at all.

Examples

Mackenzie's sheep are ready to be sheared.

The parents' meeting is scheduled for Thursday.

We are willing to adopt a dog that has already had its shots.

Grammar

Learning to use good, correct standard English grammar is more of a practice than an event, or even a process. Grammar involves the written construction of meaning from words and involves customs that evolve and adapt to usage over time. Because grammar is always evolving, none of us can sit back and rest assured that we “know” how to write with proper grammar. Instead, it is important to write and revise with close attention to grammar, keeping in mind that grammatical errors can undermine your credibility, reflect poorly on your employer, and cause misunderstandings.

Jean Wyrick has provided a list of common errors in grammar to watch out for, which we have adapted here for easy reference.² In each case, **the error is in italics and the [correct form] is italicized within square bracket below.**

Subject-Verb Agreement

The subject and verb should agree on the number under consideration. In faulty writing, a singular subject is sometimes mismatched with a plural verb form, or vice versa.

Examples

Sales have not been consistent and they *doesn't* [*do not*] reflect your hard work and effort.

The president appreciates your hard work and *wish* [*wishes*] to thank you.

Verb Tense

Verb tense refers to the point in time where action occurs. The most common tenses are past, present, and future. There is nothing wrong with mixing tenses in a sentence if the action is intended to take place at different times. In faulty or careless writing, however, they are often mismatched illogically.

Examples

Sharon was under pressure to finish the report, so she *uses* [*used*] a shortcut to paste in the sales figures.

The sales department holds a status meeting every week, and last week's meeting *will be* [*was*] at the Garden Inn.

Split Infinitive

The infinitive form of verb is one without a reference to time, and in its standard form it includes the auxiliary word “to,” as in “to write is to revise.” It has been customary to keep the “to” next to the verb; to place an adverb between them is known as splitting the infinitive. Some modern writers do this all the time (for example, “to boldly go...”), and since all grammar is essentially a set of customs that govern the written word, you will need to understand what the custom is where you work. If you are working with colleagues trained across the last fifty years, they may find split infinitives annoying. For this reason, it’s often best to avoid splitting an infinitive wherever you can do so without distorting the meaning of the sentence.

Examples

The Marketing Department needs assistance to *accurately understand our readers* [*to understand our readers accurately*].

David pondered *how to best revise* [*how best to revise*] the sentence.

2. Wyrick, J. (2008). *Steps to writing well* (10th ed.). Boston, MA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Double Negative

A double negative uses two negatives to communicate a single idea, duplicating the negation. In some languages, such as Spanish, when the main action in the sentence is negative, it is correct to express the other elements in the sentence negatively as well. However, in English, this is incorrect. In addition to sounding wrong (you can often hear the error if you read the sentence out loud), a double negative in English causes an error in logic, because two negatives cancel each other out and yield a positive. In fact, the wording of ballot measures is often criticized for confusing voters with double negatives.

Examples

John doesn't need no [any] assistance with his sales presentation. [Or John needs no assistance with his sales presentation.]

Jeri could not find no [any] reason to approve the request. [Or Jeri could find no reason to approve the request.]

Irregular Verbs

Most verbs represent the past with the addition of the suffix “ed,” as in “ask” becomes “asked.” Irregular verbs change a vowel or convert to another word when representing the past tense. Consider the irregular verb “to go”; the past tense is “went,” not “goed.”

Examples

The need arised [arose] to seek additional funding.

Katy leaped [leapt] onto the stage to introduce the presentation.

Commas in a Series

A comma is used to separate the items in a series, but in some writing styles the comma is omitted between the final two items of the series, where the conjunction joins the last and next-to-last items. The comma in this position is known as the “serial comma.” The serial comma is typically required in academic writing and typically omitted in journalism. Other writers omit the serial comma if the final two items in the series have a closer logical connection than the other items. In business writing, you may use it or omit it according to the prevailing style in your organization or industry. Know your audience and be aware of the rule.

Examples

Lisa is an amazing wife, mother, teacher, *gardener, and editor*.

Lisa is an amazing wife, mother teacher, *gardener and editor*.

Lisa is an amazing teacher, editor, *gardener, wife and mother*.

Faulty Comparisons

When comparing two objects by degree, there should be no mention of “est,” as in “biggest” as all you can really say is

that one is bigger than the other. If you are comparing three or more objects, then “est” will accurately communicate which is the “biggest” of them all.

Examples

Between the twins, Mackenzie is the *fastest* [*faster*] of the two.

Among our three children, Mackenzie is the *tallest*.

Dangling Modifiers

Modifiers describe a subject in a sentence or indicate how or when the subject carried out the action. If the subject is omitted, the modifier intended for the subject is left dangling or hanging out on its own without a clear relationship to the sentence. Who is doing the seeing in the first sentence?

Examples

Seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, celebrations were in order.

Seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, *we decided* that celebrations were in order.

Misplaced Modifiers

Modifiers that are misplaced are not lost, they are simply in the wrong place. Their unfortunate location is often far from the word or words they describe, making it easy for readers to misinterpret the sentence.

Examples

Trying to avoid the deer, *the tree hit my car*.

My car hit the tree when I tried to avoid a deer in the road.

KEY TAKEAWAY

By revising for format, facts, names, spelling, punctuation, and grammar, you can increase your chances of correcting many common errors in your writing.

EXERCISES

1. Select a news article from a news Web site, newspaper, or magazine. Find as many facts in the article as you can that could require fact-checking. Then check as many of these facts as you can,

using sources available to you in the library and on the Internet. Did you find any errors in the article? Discuss your findings with your classmates.

2. Find an example of an assertion without attribution and share it with classmates.
3. Find an example of an error in a published document and share it with classmates.
4. Interview a coworker or colleague and specifically ask them to share a story where an error got past them during the revision process and made it to print or publication. How did they handle it? How much time did it take to correct? What did they learn from the experience? Compare your results with classmates.

Style Revisions

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. Discuss and demonstrate the use of twelve points to consider for style revisions.

You know the difference between cloudy and clear water, but can you tell when your writing is cloudy, when meaning is hidden in shadows, when the message you are trying to communicate is obscured by the style you use to present it? Water filtration involves removing particulates, harmful inorganic and organic materials, and clarifying the water. In the same way, the revision process requires filtration. You may come across word choices you thought were appropriate at the time or notice words you thought you wrote but are absent, and the revision process will start to produce results. Some words and sentence constructions will be harmful to the effective delivery and require attention. Some transitions fail to show the connections between thoughts and need to be changed.

Another way of conceptualizing the revision process in general and the clarifying process specifically is the common reference to a diamond in the rough. Like muddy water, diamonds do not come to have significant value until they have had their rough edges removed, have received expert polish, and been evaluated for clarity. Your attention to this important process will bring the value quotient of your writing up as it begins to more accurately communicate intended meaning. As we've discussed before, now is not the time to lose momentum. Just the opposite, now is the time to make your writing shine.

Here we will discuss several strategies to help clarify your writing style. If you have made wise word choices, the then next step to clarifying your document is to take it sentence by sentence. Each sentence should stand on its own, but each sentence is also interdependent on all other sentences in your document. These strategies will require significant attention to detail and an awareness of grammar that might not be your area of strength, but the more you practice them the more they will become good habits that will enhance your writing.

Break Up Long Sentences

By revising long sentences you can often increase the overall clarity of your document. To do this, let's start off with one strategy that will produce immediate results. Count the number of conjunctions in your document. Word processing programs will often perform a search for a specific word and for our use, "and" will do just fine. Simple sentences often become compound and complex through the use of the word "and." The further the subject, the action, and the modifiers or descriptions are from one another is directly related to the complexity of the sentence, increasing the probability of reader error and misunderstandings. Look for the word "and" and evaluate whether the sentence has two complete thoughts or ideas. Does it try to join two dissimilar ideas or ones better off on their own?

In prose, and your expository writing classes, you may have learned that complex sentences can communicate emotions, settings, and scenes that evoke a sense of place and time with your reading audience. In business writing, our goals aim more toward precision and the elimination of error; a good business document won't read like a college essay. A professor may have advised you to avoid short, choppy writing. Are we asking you to do something along those lines? No. Choppy writing is hard to follow, but simple, clear writing does the job with a minimum of fuss and without decoration.

But we would also qualify its use: when you have two long and awkward independent clauses that form an unwieldy sentence, it may indeed be better to divide the clauses into two independent sentences. Your skill as a business writer is required to balance the needs of the sentence to communicate meaning with your understanding of audience expectations, and clarity often involves concise sentences.

Revise Big Words and Long Phrases

Big words can clutter your writing with needless jargon that may be a barrier to many readers. Even if you know your audience has significant education and training in a field, you may need to include definitions and examples as effective strategies to communicate meaning. Don't confuse simple writing with simplistic writing. Your task will almost certainly not require an elementary approach for new readers, but it may very well require attention to words and the degree to which they contribute to, or detract from, the communication of your intended message. Long noun sequences, often used as descriptive phrases, can be one example of how writing can reduce clarity. If you need to describe a noun, use a phrase that modifies the noun clearly, with commas to offset for example, to enhance clarity.

Another long phrase to watch out for is often located in the introduction. Long preambles can make the sentence awkward and will require revision. Sentences that start with "It is" or "There are" can often be shortened or made clearer through revision.

Evaluate Long Prepositional Phrases

A prepositional phrase is a phrase composed of a preposition (a "where" word; a word that indicates location) and its object, which may be a noun, a pronoun, or a clause. Some examples of simple prepositional phrases include "with Tom," "before me," and "inside the building security perimeter."

Prepositional phrases are necessary—it would be difficult to write without them—but some add to the bottom line word count without adding much to the sentence. Bureaucratic writing often uses this technique in an attempt to make a sentence sound important, but the effort usually has the undesirable dual effects of obscuring meaning and sounding pompous.

Examples

The 1040 Form will *in all certainty* serve the majority of our customers.

The 1040 Form will *certainly* serve the majority of our customers.

The revision places an adverb in place of a long prepositional phrase and allows for a reduction in the word count while strengthening the sentence.

Delete Repetitious Words

Some level of repetition is to be expected and can be beneficial. It is also important to be consistent in your use of words when precise terminology is appropriate. However, needless repetition can make your document less than vigorous and discourage readers. For example, use of the word “said” when attributing dialogue is acceptable a couple of times, but if it is the only word you use, it will lose its impact quickly. People can “indicate,” “point out,” “share,” and “mention” as easily as they can “say” words or phrases. Synonyms are useful in avoiding the boredom of repetition.

Eliminate Archaic Expressions or References

Some writing has been ritualized to the point of cliché and has lost its impact. For example, consider “Hheretofore, we have discussed the goal of omitting needless words.” *Hheretofore* is an outdated word that could easily be cut from the previous sentence. Another example is “as per your request for documents that emphasize clarity and reduce reader error.” Feel free to eliminate *as per your request* from your word choices.

Similar to outdated words and phrases, some references are equally outdated. While it is important to recognize leaders in a field, and this text does include references to pioneers in the field of communication, it also focuses on current research and concepts. Without additional clarification and examples, readers may not understand references to an author long since passed even though he or she made an important contribution to the field. For example, Shannon and Weaver pioneered the linear model of communication that revolutionized our understanding of interaction and contributed to computer interfaces as we know them today.³ However, if we mention them without explaining how their work relates to our current context, we may lose our readers.

Avoid Fillers

Like, you know, like, you know what I mean, ahh, umm, and all the fillers you may use or hear in oral communication have, well, little or no place in the written representation of the spoken word. Review your writing for extra words that serve the written equivalent of “like” and omit them. They do not serve you as an author, and do not serve the reading audience.

3. McLean, S. (2005). *The basics of interpersonal communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Eliminate Slang

Many college professors can give examples of e-mails they have received from students that use all the modern characteristics of instant message and text abbreviation combined with a complete disregard for any norms of grammar or spelling, resulting in nearly incomprehensible messages. If your goal is to be professional, and the audience expectations do not include the use of slang, then it is inappropriate to include it in your document. Eliminate slang as you would a jargon term that serves as a barrier to understanding meaning. Not everyone will understand your slang word no more than they would a highly specialized term, and it will defeat your purpose. Norms for capitalization and punctuation that are routinely abandoned in efficient text messages or tweets are necessary and required in professional documents. Finally, there is no place in reputable business writing for offensive slang or profanity.

Evaluate Clichés

Clichés are words or phrases that through their overuse have lost their impact. That definition does not imply they have lost their meaning, and sometimes a well-placed cliché can communicate a message effectively. “Actions speak louder than words” is a cliché, but its five words speak volumes that many of your readers will recognize. This appeal to familiarity can be an effective strategy to communicate, but use it carefully. Excessive reliance on clichés will make your writing trite, while eliminating them altogether may not serve you well either. As an effective business writer, you will need to evaluate your use of clichés for their impact versus detraction from your message.

Emphasize Precise Words

Concrete words that are immediately available to your audience are often more effective than abstract terms that require definitions, examples, and qualifications. All these strategies have their place, but excessive use of abstractions will make your document less than precise, requiring additional clarification that can translate to work for you as the author and, more importantly, for your readers. Qualifiers deserve special mention here. Some instructors may indicate that words like “may,” “seems,” or “apparently” make your writing weak. Words are just words and it is how we use them that creates meaning. Some qualifiers are necessary, particularly if the document serves as record or may be the point of discussion in a legal issue. In other cases direct language is required, and qualifiers must be eliminated. Too many qualifiers can weaken your writing, but too few can expose you to liability. As a business writer, your understanding of audience expectations and assignment requirements will guide you to the judicious use of qualifiers.

Evaluate Parallel Construction

When you are writing in a series or have more than one idea to express, it is important to present them in similar ways to preserve and promote unity across your document. Parallel construction refers to the use of same grammatical pattern; it can be applied to words, phrases, and sentences. For example, “We found the seminar interesting, entertaining, and inspiring” is a sentence with parallel construction, whereas “We found the seminar interesting, entertaining, and it inspired us” is not. If your sentences do not seem to flow well, particularly when you read them out loud, look for misplaced parallels and change them to make the construction truly parallel.

Obscured Verbs

Business writing should be clear and concise. If the meaning is obscured, then revision is required. One common problem is the conversion of verbs into nouns with the addition of suffixes like: -ant, -ent, -ion, -tion, -sion, -ence, -ance, and ing. Instead of hiding meaning within the phrase “through the consolidation of,” consider whether to use the verb forms “consolidated” or “consolidating.” Similarly, instead of “the inclusion of,” consider using “including,” which will likely make the sentence more active and vigorous.

The “Is It Professional?” Test

Finally, when revising your document with an attention to detail, you simply need to ask the question: is it professional? If a document is too emphatic, it may seem like an attempt at cheerleading. If it uses too much jargon, it may be appropriate for “nerds” but may limit access to the information by a nontechnical audience. If the document appears too simplistic, it may seem to be “talking down” to the audience, treating the readers more like children than adults. Does your document represent you and your organization in a professional manner? Will you be proud of the work a year from now? Does it accomplish its mission, stated objectives, and the audience’s expectations? Business writing is not expository, wordy, or decorative, and the presence of these traits may obscure meaning. Business writing is professional, respectful, and clearly communicates a message with minimal breakdown.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Revising for style can increase a document’s clarity, conciseness, and professionalism.

EXERCISES

1. Which of the following sentences are examples of good business writing in standard English? For the sentences needing improvement, make revisions as you see fit and explain what was wrong with the original sentence. Discuss your results with your classmates.
 1. Caitlin likes gardening, golfing, hiking, and to swim.
 2. At any given point in time, well, there is a possibility that we could, like, be called upon for help.
 3. The evaluation of writing can be done through the examination and modification of each sentence.
 4. While in the meeting, the fire alarm rang.
 5. Children benefit from getting enough sleep, eating a balanced diet, and outdoor playtime.
 6. Yee has asked us to maximize the department’s ka-ching by enhancing the bling-bling of our merchandise; if we fail to do this the darn president may put the kibosh on our project.

7. Ortega's memo stated in no uncertain terms that all employees need to arrive for work on time every day.
 8. Although there are many challenges in today's market and stock values have dropped considerably since last year, but we can hope to benefit from strategic thinking and careful decision making.
 9. If you are unable to attend the meeting, please let Steve or I know as soon as possible.
 10. One of the shipping containers are open.
-
2. Find an example of a good example of effective business writing, review it, and share it with your classmates.
 3. Find an example of a bad example of effective business writing, review it, and share it with your classmates.
 4. Revision requires attention to detail, and you may be under pressure to produce quality results within a deadline. How do you communicate your need for time for the revision process to those who are waiting on you to complete the document? Share and discuss your responses with your classmates.

Evaluating the Work of Others

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Describe five elements of critical analysis to use in evaluating someone else's writing.
2. Demonstrate how to deliver an evaluation constructively and respectfully.

As an experienced business writer, you may be called upon to review others' work. Having a clear understanding of the process will help you be efficient in your review, producing constructive advice that would benefit the essay while resisting change for change's sake.

Five Steps in EVALUATION

By following a sequence of orderly steps, you can increase the likelihood that your evaluation of someone else's writing will be fair, constructive, and useful. Below are the five steps in evaluation:

1. **Understand the assignment.**
2. **Evaluate how well the writing carries out the assignment.**
3. **Evaluate assertions.**

4. Check facts.
5. Look for errors.

First, review the instructions that were given to the writer. Make sure you understand the assignment and the target audience. What resources did the writer have access to, and how much time was allotted for completing the assignment? What purpose did the document need to fulfill, and what role will this document have in future business activities or decisions?

Second, evaluate how well the document fulfills its stated goals. As a reader, do you see the goals carried out in the document? If you didn't know the writer and you were to find the document next year in a file where you were searching for information, would it provide you with the information it aims to convey? For example, suppose the document refers to the sales history of the past five years. Does the writer provide the sales history for the reader's reference, or indicate where the reader can get this information?

Evaluate the assertions made in the document. An assertion is a declaration, statement, or claim of fact. Suppose the writer indicates that the sales history for the past five years is a significant factor. Does the writer explain why this history is significant? Is the explanation logical and sufficient?

Evaluate the facts cited in the document. Does the writer credit the sources of facts, statistics, and numbers? For example, suppose the writer mentions that the population of the United States is approximately three hundred million. Obviously, the writer did not count all U.S. residents to arrive at this number. Where did it come from? If you have access to sources where you can independently verify the accuracy of these details, look them up and note any discrepancies.

Finally, check the document for proper format and for errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Word processing spell checkers do not catch all errors.

Delivering the Evaluation

If you are asked to evaluate someone else's written work, keep in mind that not everyone can separate process from product, or product from personality. Many authors, particularly those new to the writing process, see the written word as an extension of self. To help the recipient receive your evaluation as professional advice, rather than as personal criticism, use strategies to be tactful and diplomatic.

Until you know the author and have an established relationship, it is best to use "I" statements, as in "I find this sentence difficult to understand." The sentence places the emphasis on the speaker rather than the sentence, and further distances the author from the sentence. If you were to say, "This sentence is awful," all the author may hear is, "I am an awful writer" and fail to pay attention to your message, the sentence under examination, or ways to improve it. Business writing produces products, and all products can be improved, but not all authors can separate messenger from message.

Avoid the use of the word *you* in your evaluation, oral or written, as it can put the recipient on the defensive. This will inhibit listening and decrease the probability of effective communication.⁴ If you phrase an evaluation point as, "Why did you include this word here?" it can be interpreted as a personal attack. Just as speakers are often quite self-conscious of their public speaking abilities, writers are often quite attached to the works they have produced. Anticipating and respecting this relationship and the anxiety it sometimes carries can help you serve as a better evaluator.

4. McLean, S. (2005). *The basics of interpersonal communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

To help the recipient receive your evaluation as professional advice, rather than as personal criticism, use strategies to be tactful and diplomatic.

Phrasing disagreement as a question is often an effective response strategy. Let's rephrase that previous question to, "What is this sentence intended to communicate?" This places the emphasis on the sentence, not the author, and allows for dialogue. Phrasing your evaluation as a question emphasizes your need to understand, and provides the author with space to respond in a collaborative fashion.

Focus on the document as a product, an "it," and avoid associating the author or authors with it. There may be times when the social rank or status of the individual involved with work requires respectful consideration, and choosing to focus on the document as a work in progress, distinct from authors themselves, can serve you well. This also means that at times you may notice a glaring error but be reluctant to challenge the author directly as you anticipate a less than collaborative response. By treating the document as a product, and focusing on ways to strengthen it, keeping in mind our goals of clear and concise as reference points, you can approach issues without involving personalities.



© 2010 Jupiterimages Corporation

KEY TAKEAWAY

When evaluating the work of others, make sure you understand the assignment, evaluate how well the writing carries out the assignment, evaluate assertions, check facts, and watch for errors. Deliver your evaluation with tact and diplomacy.

EXERCISES

1. Select a piece of writing from a Web site, book, newspaper, or magazine. Imagine that you are delivering an evaluation to the author of the piece. Using the strategies in this section, write a tactful and diplomatic critique. Your instructor may choose to make this a class exercise, asking students to exchange papers and evaluate each others' writing.
2. Select a piece of writing from a Web site, book, newspaper, or magazine. Imagine that you are editing it half its original length. Share the article and your revised copy with your classmates.
3. What responsibility do you have to point out the need for correction in a document when the author or team leader outranks you at work? Does it make a difference if you anticipate they will take the feedback negatively? How do you reconcile these concerns with your responsibility to the organization? Share and discuss your responses with your classmates.

Proofreading and Design Evaluation

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Understand the difference between revising and proofreading, and how to use proofreading marks.
2. Describe six design elements for evaluation.

In traditional publishing, proofreading and design are the final stages a book undergoes before it is published. If the earlier steps of research, organizing, writing, revising, and formatting have been done carefully, proofreading and design should go smoothly. Now is not the time to go back and revise a document's content, or to experiment with changes in format. Instead, the emphasis is on catching any typographical errors that have slipped through the revision process, and "pouring" the format into a design that will enhance the writer's message.

Proofreading

By now you have completed a general and specific review of the document, with attention to detail. You may have made changes, and most word processing programs will allow you to track those changes across several versions and authors.

If you work in an environment where a document exists as a hard copy during the revision process, you may use or see handwritten proofreading symbols. Professional proofreaders often use standard markings that serve to indicate where changes needed to be made on a physical document. Some of today's word processing programs incorporate many proofreading symbols in their menus. It is useful to be familiar with the various proofreading marks that were traditionally used to review and revise hard copy documents. Even if you never use the symbols in a document, your awareness of them—and the points of emphasis under review—will serve you well. Do you need to insert a word, delete a word, capitalize a letter, or start a new paragraph? There are specific symbols for each of these actions because the review and revision process has common and consistent elements that need to be addressed.

Design Evaluation

If you are asked to review a document, design an element that deserves consideration. While most of our attention has focused on words (i.e., sentence construction and common errors), design can have a strong impact on the representation and presentation of information.

Framing

Framing refers to how information is presented, including margins, line justifications, and template expectations. Just as frame creates a border around a painting, highlighting part of the image while hiding the margins, the frame of a page influences how information is received. Margins create space around the edge and help draw attention to the content. One-inch margins are standard, but differences in margin widths will depend on the assignment requirements. A brief letter, for example, may have margins as wide as two inches so that the body of the letter fills up the stationery in a

more balanced fashion. Template expectations are distinct from audience expectation, though they are often related. Most software programs have templates for basic documents, including letters, reports, and résumés.

Templates represent the normative expectations for a specific type of document. Templates have spaces that establish where a date should be indicated and where personal contact information should be represented. They also often allow you to “fill in the blank,” reflecting each document’s basic expectations of where information is presented.

For example, line justification involves where the text lines up on the page. Letters often have a left justify, lining up the text on the left side of the page while allowing the ends of each line on the right side to be “ragged,” or not aligned. This creates even spaces between words and gives the appearance of organization while promoting white space, the space on the page free of text. Balance between text (often black) and white space creates contrast and allows for areas of emphasis. Left justify often produces the appearance of balance, as the words are evenly spaced, while left and right justify can produce large gaps between words, making the sentences appear awkward and hard to read.

Typefaces

Typeface refers to design of symbols, including letters and numbers.⁵ The creation of the face of the type, as in a typing machine or printing press, has long been both an art and a science. In past centuries, carvings of the face of the type in copperplate, where ink was applied and then pressed to paper, created intricate and intriguing images designed to communicate style, prestige, status, and formality with the communication of words and symbols. We no longer use copper or hot lead type, but the typeface still exists as a medium for communication in addition to the word itself.

There are two general categories of typeface: serif and sans serif. “Sans” means without, so the emphasis here is on whether the face of the type has a serif or not. A serif is a small cross line, often perpendicular to the stroke of the letter, that is decorative but also serves the useful purpose of differentiating characters that could otherwise look similar (e.g., “m” and “rn,” “d” and “cl,” or “3” and “8”). For this reason, serif typefaces, such as Times New Roman and Garamond, are often easier to read, especially when the font size is small. Sans serif fonts, such as Arial and Helvetica, lack the serif and can be harder to read in long text sequences. They are most commonly used for headings. However, when text is to be read electronically (on the screen of a computer or other device), serifs can tend to break up, so sans serif typefaces can be a better choice.

The rule of thumb, or common wisdom, is to limit your document to two typefaces, contrasting sans serif (headings) with text (serif). Take care not to use a font that is hard to read, creating an unnecessary barrier for your reader. Also, use a font that conveys the tone of your professional message to enhance your effectiveness.

Paragraphs

Paragraphs are the basic organizational unit for presenting and emphasizing the key points in a document. Effective paragraphs can provide an effective emphasis strategy, but the placement within the page can also influence recall and impact. The first point presented is often the second in importance, the second point is the least important, and the third point in a series of three is often the most important. People generally recall the last point presented, and tend to forget or ignore the content in the middle of a sequence. Use this strategy to place your best point in the most appropriate location.

A lengthy document that consists of paragraph after paragraph can become monotonous, making reading a chore.

5. Kostelnick, C., & Roberts, D. (1998). *Designing visual language: Strategies for professional communicators*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

and obscuring pieces of information that need to stand out. To give the document visual variety and to emphasize key information, consider the following strategies:

- Bullets
- Numbers
- Boldface
- Italics
- Underlining
- Capitalization (all caps)

Remember, however, that using all caps (all capitals) for body text (as opposed to headings) is often considered rude, like shouting, particularly in electronic communications.

Visual Aids

If you have the luxury of including visual aids, such as graphics and pictures, in your document, take care to make sure that the verbal and visual messages complement each other. The visual should illustrate the text, and should be placed near the words so that the relationship is immediately clear. Sometimes during editing, a photograph will get pushed to the next page, leaving the relevant text behind and creating discontinuity. This creates a barrier for your reader, so avoid it if possible.

Designing Interactive Documents

Finally, documents increasingly have an interactivity component that can lead the reader in many directions. Providing links can facilitate interactivity, and that depth of resources can be a distinct advantage when writing documents to be read on a computer. However, be careful when integrating a web link within your document, as your audience may leave your message behind and not return. If you create a link associated with clicking on a photograph or icon, make sure that the scroll-over message is clear and communicates whether the reader will leave the current page. As we have seen in many design elements, there are strengths and weaknesses associated with each option and it requires a skilled business writer to create and deliver an effective message.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Proofreading and design put the finishing touches on a completed document.

EXERCISES

1. Using proofreading marks, mark the errors in the following paragraph:

I never wanted to bacome a writer, but when I decidedon a career in sales, I found out that being able to write was a skill that would help me. So much of my daily work involved Writing that I sometimes thought i'd fallen asleep

and woken up in someone else's life. Messages, about actual sales, were the least of it. In order to attract customers, I have to send notes to people I already knew, asking them for sales leads. Then when I got a lead, I'd write to the contact asking for a few minutes of their time. If I got to meet with them or even have a phone conversation, my next task was to write them a thank-you note. Oh, and the reports—I was always filing out reports; for my sales manager, tracking my progress with each customer and each lead. If someone had told me how much writing tasks would involve, I think I would have paid more attention to my writing courses in school.

2. With a writing assignment in draft form from your class, swap with a classmate and review the spelling, grammar, and punctuation, using proofreading marks where applicable.

Additional Resources

- Online Writing Laboratory (OWL) at Purdue University provides a comprehensive guide to the revision process. OWL is open access, free, and an excellent resource for any writer. Please feel free to consult it anytime during our discussion to go more in depth on a grammatical point or writing tip. <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/561/05>
- Visit this YourDictionary.com page for a useful article about punctuation marks. <http://www.yourdictionary.com/grammar-rules/Fourteen-Punctuation-Marks.html>
- Visit this site for a useful list of irregular verbs in English. <http://www.englishpage.com/irregularverbs/irregularverbs.html>
- This site from Capital Community College in Connecticut provides a menu of English grammar resources. <http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar>
- EnglishClub.com is dedicated to English learners and those for whom English is a second language—but it can be useful for all of us. <http://www.englishclub.com/grammar>
- The original (1918) edition of the famous style guide *The Elements of Style* is available online at Bartleby.com. <http://www.bartleby.com/141>
- The Writers and Editors site presents an article on tact and tone in editing the work of others. http://www.writersandeditors.com/tips_on_tact_and_tone_30805.htm
- Merriam-Webster provides a chart of proofreader's marks and their meanings. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/mw/table/proofrea.htm>
- Visit this About.com site for information on designing a document. http://desktoppub.about.com/od/designprinciples/Principles_of_Design.htm
- For in-depth information on how to present visuals effectively, visit the Web site of Edward Tufte, a Professor Emeritus at Yale University, where he taught courses in statistical evidence, information design, and interface design. <http://www.edwardtufte.com/tufte/index>
- For a wealth of articles and information about typefaces and other aspects of document design, explore the Web site of AIGA, the professional association for design. <http://www.aiga.org/content.cfm/about>



Professional Writing by Cameron W. Piercy, Ph.D. is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

9. Persuasive Presentations

Content in this chapter is adapted from: <https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/>

We are more easily persuaded, in general, by the reasons that we ourselves discovers than
by those which are given to us by others.
—Pascal

For every sale you miss because you're too enthusiastic, you will miss a hundred because
you're not enthusiastic enough.
—Zig Ziglar

Getting Started

Introductory Exercises

1. Please list three things that you recently purchased, preferably in the last twenty-four hours—the things can be items or services. Decide which purchase on your list stands out as most important to you and consider why you made that purchase decision. See if you can list three reasons. Now pretend you are going to sell that same item or service to a friend—would the three reasons remain the same, or would you try additional points for them to consider? Compare your results with a classmate.
2. Please think of one major purchase you made in the past year. It should be significant to you, and not a daily or monthly purchase. Once you made the purchase decision and received the item (e.g., a car), did you notice similar cars on the roads? Did you pay attention to details like color, modifications, or reports in the popular press about quality? Did you talk to your friends about it? What kind of information did you pay attention to—information that reinforced your purchase decision, or information that detracted from your appreciation of your newly acquired possession? Discuss your responses with classmates.

No doubt there has been a time when you wanted something from your parents, your supervisor, or your friends, and you thought about how you were going to present your request. But do you think about how often people—including people you have never met and never will meet—want something from you? When you watch television, advertisements reach out for your attention, whether you watch them or not. When you use the Internet, pop-up advertisements often appear. Living in the United States, and many parts of the world, means that you have been surrounded, even inundated, by persuasive messages. Mass media in general and television in particular make a significant impact you will certainly recognize.

Consider these facts:

- The average person sees between four hundred and six hundred ads per day—that is forty million to fifty million by the time he or she is sixty years old. One of every eleven commercials has a direct message about beauty (Raimondo M., 2010).
- By age eighteen, the average American teenager will have spent more time watching television—25,000 hours—than learning in a classroom (Ship, J., 2005).
- An analysis of music videos found that nearly one-fourth of all MTV videos portray overt violence, with attractive role models being aggressors in more than 80 percent of the violent videos (DuRant, R. H., 1997).
- Forty percent of nine- and ten-year-old girls have tried to lose weight, according to an ongoing study funded by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (Body image and nutrition: Fast facts., 2009).
- A 1996 study found that the amount of time an adolescent watches soaps, movies, and music videos is associated with their degree of body dissatisfaction and desire to be thin (Tiggemann, M. and Pickering, A. S., 1996).
- Identification with television stars (for girls and boys), models (girls), or athletes (boys) positively correlated with body dissatisfaction (Hofschild, L. J. and Greenberg, B. S., 2002).
- At age thirteen, 53 percent of American girls are “unhappy with their bodies.” This grows to 78 percent by the time they reach seventeen (Brumber, J. J., 1997).
- By age eighteen, the average American teenager will witness on television 200,000 acts of violence, including 40,000 murders (Huston, A. C., et al., 1992).

Mass communication contains persuasive messages, often called propaganda, in narrative form, in stories and even in presidential speeches. When President Bush made his case for invading Iraq, his speeches incorporated many of the techniques we'll cover in this chapter. Your local city council often involves dialogue, and persuasive speeches, to determine zoning issues, resource allocation, and even spending priorities. You yourself have learned many of the techniques by trial and error and through imitation. If you ever wanted the keys to your parents' car for a special occasion, you used the principles of persuasion to reach your goal.

What Is Persuasion?

Learning Objectives

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of persuasion.
2. Describe similarities and differences between persuasion and motivation.

Persuasion is an act or process of presenting arguments to move, motivate, or change your audience. Aristotle taught that rhetoric, or the art of public speaking, involves the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion (Covino, W. A. and Jolliffe, D. A., 1995). In the case of President Obama, he may have appealed to your sense of duty and national values. In persuading your parents to lend you the car keys, you may have asked one parent instead of the other, calculating the probable response of each parent and electing to approach the one who was more likely to adopt your position (and give you the keys). Persuasion can be implicit or explicit and can have both positive and negative effects. In this chapter we'll discuss the importance of ethics, as we have in previous chapters, when presenting your audience with arguments in order to motivate them to adopt your view, consider your points, or change their behavior.

Motivation is distinct from persuasion in that it involves the force, stimulus, or influence to bring about change. Persuasion is the process, and motivation is the compelling stimulus that encourages your audience to change their beliefs or behavior, to adopt your position, or to consider your arguments. Why think of yourself as fat or thin? Why should you choose to spay or neuter your pet? Messages about what is beautiful, or what is the right thing to do in terms of your pet, involve persuasion, and the motivation compels you to do something.

Another way to relate to motivation also can be drawn from the mass media. Perhaps you have watched programs like *Law and Order*, *Cold Case*, or *CSI* where the police detectives have many of the facts of the case, but they search for motive. They want to establish motive in the case to provide the proverbial “missing piece of the puzzle.” They want to know why someone would act in a certain manner. You’ll be asking your audience to consider your position and provide both persuasive arguments and motivation for them to contemplate. You may have heard a speech where the speaker tried to persuade you, tried to motivate you to change, and you resisted the message. Use this perspective to your advantage and consider why an audience should be motivated, and you may find the most compelling examples or points. Relying on positions like “I believe it, so you should too,” “Trust me, I know what is right,” or “It’s the right thing to do” may not be explicitly stated but may be used with limited effectiveness. Why should the audience believe, trust, or consider the position “right?” Keep an audience-centered perspective as you consider your persuasive speech to increase your effectiveness.

You may think initially that many people in your audience would naturally support your position in favor of spaying or neutering your pet. After careful consideration and audience analysis, however, you may find that people are more divergent in their views. Some audience members may already agree with your view, but others may be hostile to the idea for various reasons. Some people may be neutral on the topic and look to you to consider the salient arguments. Your audience will have a range of opinions, attitudes, and beliefs across a range from hostile to agreement.

Rather than view this speech as a means to get everyone to agree with you, look at the concept of measurable gain, a system of assessing the extent to which audience members respond to a persuasive message. You may reinforce existing beliefs in the members of the audience that agree with you and do a fine job of persuasion. You may also get hostile members of the audience to consider one of your arguments, and move from a hostile position to one that is more neutral or ambivalent. The goal in each case is to move the audience members toward your position. Some change may be small but measurable, and that is considered gain. The next time a hostile audience member considers the issue, they may be more open to it. [Figure 1 “Measurable Gain”](#) is a useful diagram to illustrate this concept.

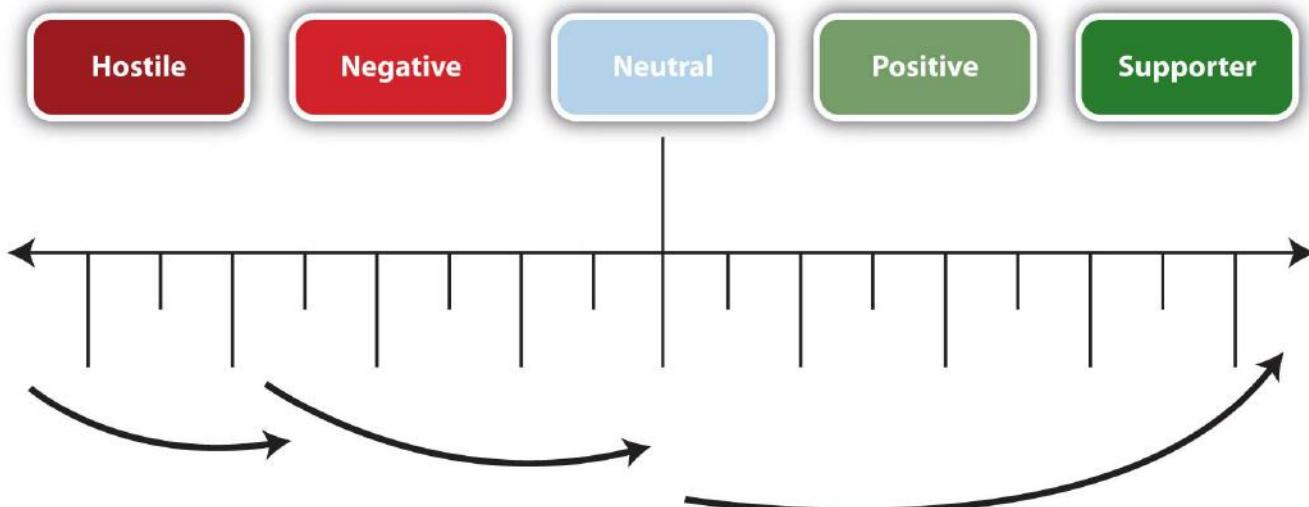


Figure 1 Measurable Gain

Edward Hall also underlines this point when discussing the importance of context. The situation in which a conversation occurs provides a lot of meaning and understanding for the participants in some cultures. In Japan, for example, the context, such as a business setting, says a great deal about the conversation and the meaning to the words and expressions within that context. In the United States, however, the concept of a workplace or a business meeting is less structured, and the context offers less meaning and understanding.

Cultures that value context highly are aptly called high-context cultures. Those that value context to a lesser degree are called low-context cultures. These divergent perspectives influence the process of persuasion and are worthy of your consideration when planning your speech. If your audience is primarily high-context, you may be able to rely on many cultural norms as you proceed, but in a low-context culture, like the United States, you'll be expected to provide structure and clearly outline your position and expectations. This ability to understand motivation and context is key to good communication, and one we will examine throughout this chapter.

Key Takeaway

Persuasion is the act of presenting arguments for change, while motivation involves the force to bring about change. The concept of measurable gain assesses audience response to a persuasive message.

Exercises

1. Select an online advertisement that you find particularly effective or ineffective. Why does it succeed, or fail, in persuading you to want to buy the advertised product? Discuss your ideas with your classmates.
2. Think of a social issue, widely held belief, or political position where change has occurred in your lifetime, or where you would like to see change happen. What kinds of persuasion and motivation were involved—or would need to happen—to produce measurable gain? Explain your thoughts to a classmate.
3. Think of a time when someone tried to persuade you to do something you did not want to do. Did their persuasion succeed? Why or why not? Discuss the event with a classmate.

Meeting the Listener's Basic Needs

Learning Objective

1. Identify and describe several basic needs that people seek to fulfill when they communicate.

In this section we will examine why we communicate, illustrating how meeting the listener's basic needs is central to effective communication. It's normal for the audience to consider why you are persuading them, and there is significant support for the notion that by meeting the audience's basic needs, whether they are a customer, colleague, or supervisor, you will more effectively persuade them to consider your position.

Not all oral presentations involve taking a position, or overt persuasion, but all focus on the inherent relationships and basic needs within the business context. Getting someone to listen to what you have to say involves a measure of persuasion, and getting that person to act on it might require considerable skill. Whether you are persuading a customer to try a new product or service, or informing a supplier that you need additional merchandise, the relationship is central to your communication. The emphasis inherent in our next two discussions is that we all share this common ground, and by understanding that we share basic needs, we can better negotiate meaning and achieve understanding.

[Table 1 “Reasons for Engaging in Communication”](#) presents some reasons for engaging in communication. As you can see, the final item in the table indicates that we communicate in order to meet our needs. What are those needs? We will discuss them next.

Table 1 Reasons for Engaging in Communication

| Review | Why We Engage in Communication |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Gain Information | We engage in communication to gain information. This information can involve directions to an unknown location, or a better understanding about another person through observation or self-disclosure. |
| Understand Communication Contexts | We also want to understand the context in which we communicate, discerning the range between impersonal and intimate, to better anticipate how to communicate effectively in each setting. |
| Understand Our Identity | Through engaging in communication, we come to perceive ourselves, our roles, and our relationships with others. |
| Meet Our Needs | We meet our needs through communication. |

Maslow's Hierarchy

If you have taken courses in anthropology, philosophy, psychology, or perhaps sociology in the past, you may have seen Maslow's hierarchy of needs ([Figure 3 “Maslow's Hierarchy”](#)). Psychologist Abraham Maslow provides seven basic categories for human needs, and arranges them in order of priority, from the most basic to the most advanced.

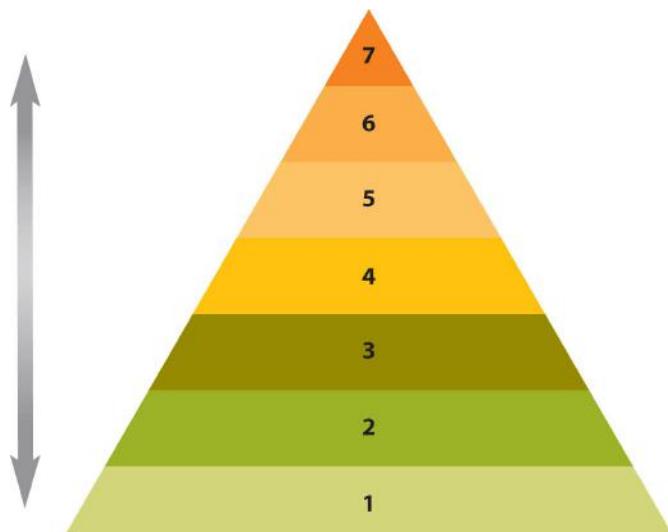


Figure 3 Maslow's Hierarchy

In this figure, we can see that we need energy, water, and air to live. Without any of these three basic elements, which meet our physiological needs (1), we cannot survive. We need to meet them before anything else, and will often sacrifice everything else to get them. Once we have what we need to live, we seek safety (2). A defensible place, protecting your supply lines for your most basic needs, could be your home. For some, however, home is a dangerous place that compromises their safety. Children and victims of domestic violence need shelter to meet this need. In order to leave a hostile living environment, people may place the well-being and safety of another over their own needs, in effect placing themselves at risk. An animal would fight for its own survival above all else, but humans can and do acts of heroism that directly

contradict their own self-interest. Our own basic needs motivate us, but sometimes the basic needs of others are more important to us than our own.

We seek affection from others once we have the basics to live and feel safe from immediate danger. We look for a sense of love and belonging (3). All needs in Maslow's model build on the foundation of the previous needs, and the third level reinforces our need to be a part of a family, community, or group. This is an important step that directly relates to business communication. If a person feels safe at your place of business, they are more likely to be open to communication. Communication is the foundation of the business relationship, and without it, you will fail. If they feel on edge, or that they might be pushed around, made to feel stupid, or even unwanted, they will leave and your business will disappear. On the other hand, if you make them feel welcome, provide multiple ways for them to learn, educate themselves, and ask questions in a safe environment, you will form relationships that transcend business and invite success.

Once we have been integrated in a group, we begin to assert our sense of self and self-respect, addressing our need for self-esteem (4). Self-esteem is essentially how we feel about ourselves. Let's say you are a male, but you weren't born with a "fix-it" gene. It's nothing to be ashamed of, but for many men it can be hard to admit. We no longer live in a time when we have to build our own houses or learn about electricity and plumbing as we grow up, and if it is not part of your learning experience, it is unreasonable to expect that you'll be handy with a wrench from the first turn.

The do-it-yourself chain Home Depot may have recognized how this interest in home repair is paired with many men's reluctance to admit their lack of experience. They certainly turned it into an opportunity. Each Saturday around the country, home repair clinics on all sorts of tasks, from cutting and laying tile to building a bird house, are available free to customers at Home Depot stores. You can participate, learn, gain mastery of a skill set, and walk out of the store with all the supplies you need to get the job done. You will also now know someone (the instructor, a Home Depot employee) whom you can return to for follow-up questions. Ultimately, if you don't succeed in getting the job done right, they will help you arrange for professional installation. This model reinforces safety and familiarity, belonging to a group or perceiving a trustworthy support system, and the freedom to make mistakes. It's an interactive program that squarely addresses one of customers' basic of human needs.

Maslow discusses the next level of needs in terms of how we feel about ourselves and our ability to assert control and influence over our lives. Once we are part of a group and have begun to assert ourselves, we start to feel as if we have reached our potential and are actively making a difference in our own world. Maslow calls this self-actualization (5). Self-actualization can involve reaching your full potential, feeling accepted for who you are, and perceiving a degree of control or empowerment in your environment. It may mean the freedom to go beyond building the bird house to the tree house, and to design it yourself as an example of self-expression.

As we progress beyond these levels, our basic human curiosity about the world around us emerges. When we have our basic needs met, we do not need to fear losing our place in a group or access to resources. We are free to explore and play, discovering the world around us. Our need to know (6) motivates us to grow and learn. You may have taken an elective art class that sparked your interest in a new area, or you started a new sport or hobby, like woodworking. If you worked at low-paying jobs that earned you barely enough to meet your basic needs, you may not be able to explore all your interests. You might be too exhausted after sixty or seventy hours a week on a combination of the night shift and the early morning shift across two jobs. If you didn't have to work as many hours to meet your more basic needs, you'd have time to explore your curiosity and address the need to learn. Want to read a good book? You'd have the time. Want to take a watercolor class? Sounds interesting. If, however, we are too busy hunting and gathering food, there is little time for contemplating beauty.

Beyond curiosity lies the aesthetic need to experience beauty (7). Form is freed from function, so that a wine bottle opener can be appreciated for its clever design that resembles a rabbit's head instead of simply how well it works to remove the cork. The appreciation of beauty transcends the everyday, the usual; it becomes exceptional. You may have walked in a building or church and become captivated by the light, the stained-glass windows, or the design. That moment that transcends the mundane, that stops you in your tracks, comes close to describing the human appreciation for the aesthetic, but it's really up to you.

We can see in Maslow's hierarchy how our most basic needs are quite specific, and as we progress through the levels,

the level of abstraction increases until ultimately we are freed from the daily grind to contemplate the meaning of a modern painting. As we increase our degree of interconnectedness with others, we become interdependent and, at the same time, begin to express independence and individuality. As a speaker, you may seek the safety of the familiar, only to progress with time and practice to a point where you make words your own.

Your audience will share with you a need for control. You can help meet this need by constructing your speech with an effective introduction, references to points you've discussed, and a clear conclusion. The introduction will set up audience expectations of points you will consider, and allow the audience to see briefly what is coming. Your internal summaries, signposts, and support of your main points all serve to remind the audience what you've discussed and what you will discuss. Finally, your conclusion answers the inherent question, "Did the speaker actually talk about what they said they were going to talk about?" and affirms to the audience that you have fulfilled your objectives.

Social Penetration Theory

The field of communication draws from many disciplines, and in this case, draws lessons from two prominent social psychologists. Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor articulated the social penetration theory, which describes how we move from superficial talk to intimate and revealing talk (Altman, I. and Taylor, D., 1973). Altman and Taylor discuss how we attempt to learn about others so that we can better understand how to interact (Altman, I. and Taylor, D., 1973). With a better understanding of others and with more information, we are in a better position to predict how they may behave, what they may value, or what they might feel in specific situations. We usually gain this understanding of others without thinking about it through observation or self-disclosure. In this model, often called the "onion model," we see how we start out on superficial level, but as we peel away the layers, we gain knowledge about the other person that encompasses both breadth and depth.

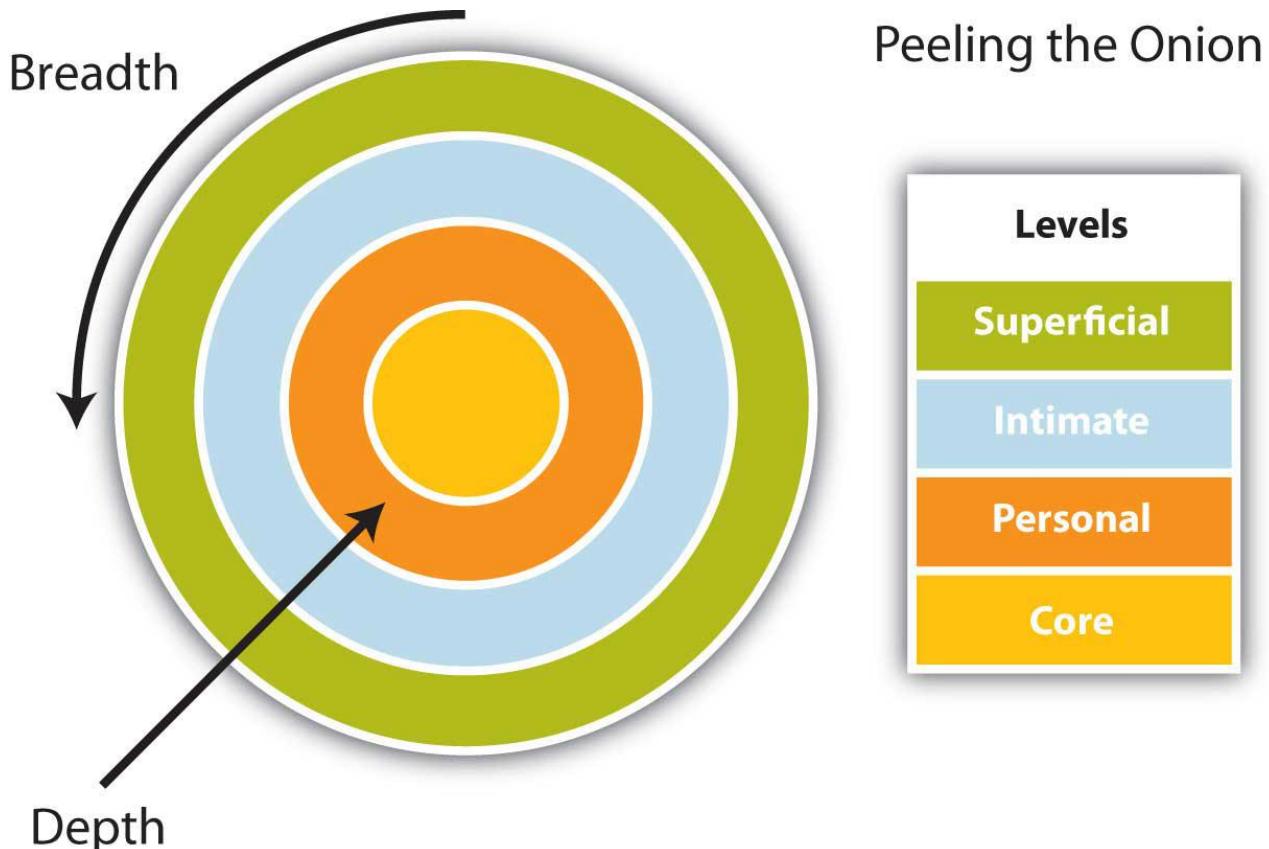


Figure 4 Altman and Taylor's Social Penetration Model, Source: Adapted from Altman and Taylor's social penetration model (Altman, I and Taylor, D., 1973).

We come to know more about the way a person perceives a situation (breadth), but also gain perspective into how they see the situation through an understanding of their previous experiences (depth). Imagine these two spheres, which represent people, coming together. What touches first? The superficial level. As the two start to overlap, the personal levels may touch, then the intimate level, and finally the core levels may even touch. Have you ever known a couple—perhaps your parents or grandparents—who have been together for a very long time? They know each other's stories and finish each other's sentences. They might represent the near overlap, where their core values, attitudes, and beliefs are similar through a lifetime of shared experiences.

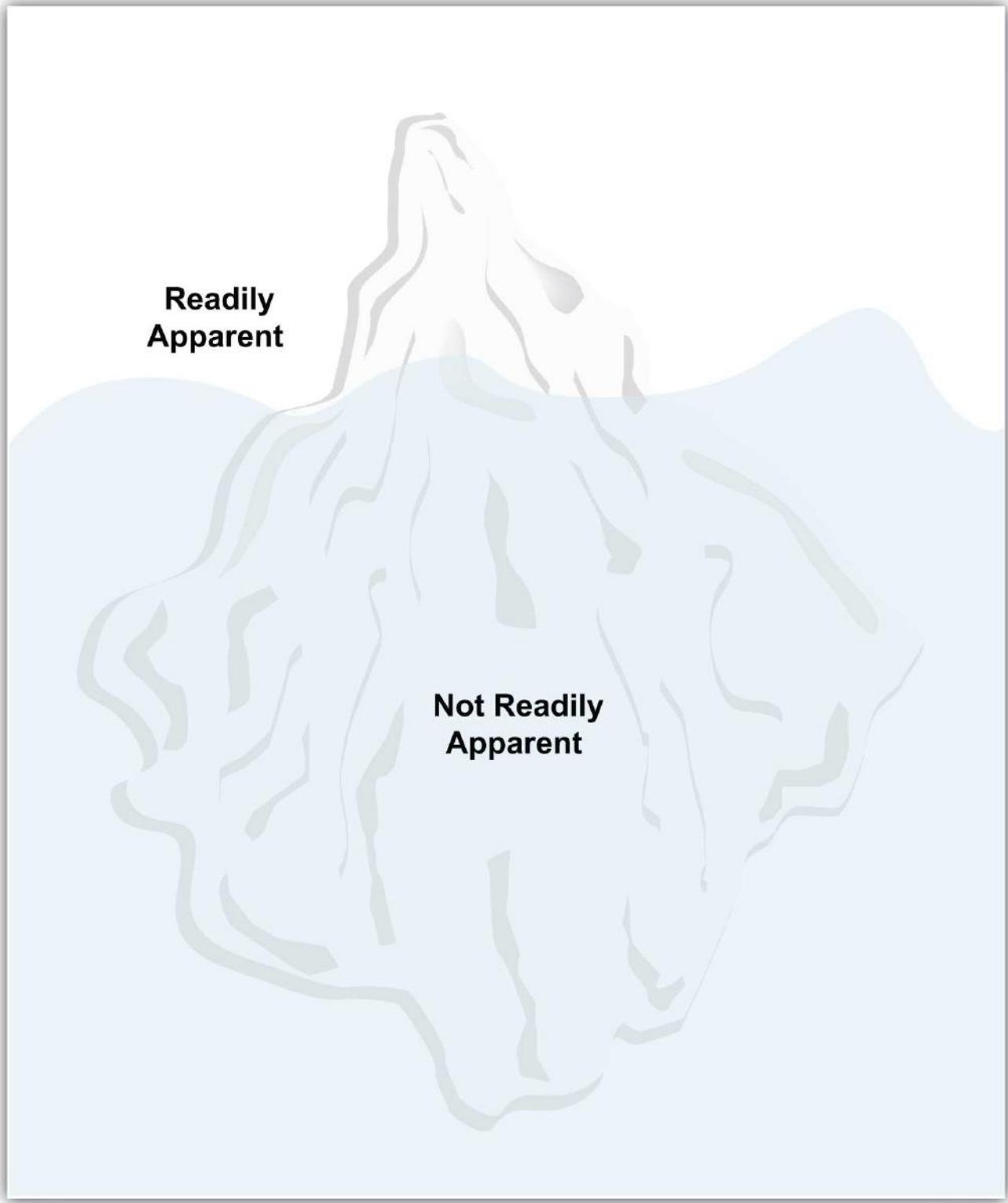


Figure 5 American Foreign Service Manual Iceberg Model

We move from public to private information as we progress from small talk to intimate conversations. Imagine an onion.

The outer surface can be peeled away, and each new layer reveals another until you arrive at the heart of the onion. People interact on the surface, and only remove layers as trust and confidence grows.

Another way to look at it is to imagine an iceberg. How much of the total iceberg can you see from the surface of the ocean? Not much. But once you start to look under the water, you gain an understanding of the large size of the iceberg, and the extent of its depth. We have to go beyond superficial understanding to know each other, and progress through the process of self-disclosure to come to know and understand one another. See [Figure 5 “American Foreign Service Manual Iceberg Model”](#) for an illustration of an “iceberg model” adapted from the American Foreign Service Manual (American Foreign Service Manual, 1975). This model has existed in several forms since the 1960s, and serves as a useful illustration of how little we perceive of each other with our first impressions and general assumptions.

Key Takeaway

We are motivated to communicate in order to gain information, get to know one another, better understand our situation or context, come to know ourselves and our role or identity, and meet our fundamental interpersonal needs.

Exercises

1. Consider your life in relation to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. To what degree do you feel you have attained the different levels in the hierarchy? Two or three years ago, were you at the same level where you currently are, or has your position in the hierarchy changed? In what ways do you expect it to change in the future? Discuss your thoughts with your classmates.
2. Think of someone you have met but do not know very well. What kinds of conversations have you had with this person? How might you expect your conversations to change if you have more opportunities to get better acquainted? Discuss your thoughts with a classmate.
3. Think of a conversation you have had within the past day. What were the reasons for having that conversation? Can you relate it to the reasons for engaging in conversation listed in [Table 1 “Reasons for Engaging in Communication”](#)? Discuss your thoughts with a classmate.
4. Write a brief paragraph about getting to know someone. Discuss whether, in your experience, it followed the social penetration theory. Share and compare with classmates.

Speaking Ethically and Avoiding Fallacies

Learning Objectives

1. Demonstrate the importance of ethics as part of the persuasion process.
2. Identify and provide examples of eight common fallacies in persuasive speaking.

What comes to mind when you think of speaking to persuade? Perhaps the idea of persuasion may bring to mind propaganda and issues of manipulation, deception, intentional bias, bribery, and even coercion. Each element relates to persuasion, but in distinct ways. In a democratic society, we would hope that our Bill of Rights is intact and validated, and that we would support the exercise of freedom to discuss, consider and debate issues when considering change. We can recognize that each of these elements in some ways has a negative connotation associated with it. Why do you think that deceiving your audience, bribing a judge, or coercing people to do something against their wishes is wrong? These tactics violate our sense of fairness, freedom, and ethics.

Manipulation involves the management of facts, ideas or points of view to play upon inherent insecurities or emotional appeals to one's own advantage. Your audience expects you to treat them with respect, and deliberately manipulating them by means of fear, guilt, duty, or a relationship is unethical. In the same way, deception involves the use of lies, partial truths, or the omission of relevant information to deceive your audience. No one likes to be lied to, or made to believe something that is not true. Deception can involve intentional bias, or the selection of information to support your position while framing negatively any information that might challenge your belief.

Bribery involves the giving of something in return for an expected favor, consideration, or privilege. It circumvents the normal protocol for personal gain, and again is a strategy that misleads your audience. Coercion is the use of power to compel action. You make someone do something they would not choose to do freely. You might threaten punishment, and people may go along with you while the "stick" is present, but once the threat is removed, they will revert to their previous position, often with new antagonism toward the person or agency that coerced them. While you may raise the issue that the ends justify the means, and you are "doing it for the audience's own good," recognize the unethical nature of coercion.

As Martin Luther King Jr. stated in his advocacy of nonviolent resistance, two wrongs do not make a right. They are just two wrongs and violate the ethics that contribute to community and healthy relationships. Each issue certainly relates to persuasion, but you as the speaker should be aware of each in order to present an ethical persuasive speech. Learn to recognize when others try to use these tactics on you, and know that your audience will be watching to see if you try any of these strategies on them.

Eleven Points for Speaking Ethically

In his book *Ethics in Human Communication* (Johannesen, R., 1996), Richard Johannesen offers eleven points to consider when speaking to persuade. His main points reiterate many of the points across this chapter and should be kept in mind as you prepare, and present, your persuasive message.

Do not:

- use false, fabricated, misrepresented, distorted or irrelevant evidence to support arguments or claims.

- intentionally use unsupported, misleading, or illogical reasoning.
- represent yourself as informed or an “expert” on a subject when you are not.
- use irrelevant appeals to divert attention from the issue at hand.
- ask your audience to link your idea or proposal to emotion-laden values, motives, or goals to which it is actually not related.
- deceive your audience by concealing your real purpose, by concealing self-interest, by concealing the group you represent, or by concealing your position as an advocate of a viewpoint.
- distort, hide, or misrepresent the number, scope, intensity, or undesirable features of consequences or effects.
- use “emotional appeals” that lack a supporting basis of evidence or reasoning.
- oversimplify complex, gradation-laden situations into simplistic, two-valued, either-or, polar views or choices.
- pretend certainty where tentativeness and degrees of probability would be more accurate.
- advocate something which you yourself do not believe in.

Aristotle said the mark of a good person, well spoken was a clear command of the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion. He discussed the idea of perceiving the many points of view related to a topic, and their thoughtful consideration. While it's important to be able to perceive the complexity of a case, you are not asked to be a lawyer defending a client.

In your speech to persuade, consider honesty and integrity as you assemble your arguments. Your audience will appreciate your thoughtful consideration of more than one view, your understanding of the complexity, and you will build your ethos, or credibility, as you present. Be careful not to stretch the facts, or assemble them only to prove yourself, and instead prove the argument on its own merits. Deception, coercion, intentional bias, manipulation and bribery have no place in your speech to persuade.

Avoiding Fallacies

Fallacies are another way of saying false logic. These rhetorical tricks deceive your audience with their style, drama, or pattern, but add little to your speech in terms of substance and can actually detract from your effectiveness. There are several techniques or “tricks” that allow the speaker to rely on style without offering substantive argument, to obscure the central message, or twist the facts to their own gain. Here we will examine the eight classical fallacies. You may note that some of them relate to the ethical cautions listed earlier in this section. Eight common fallacies are presented in [Table 5 “Fallacies”](#). Learn to recognize these fallacies so they can't be used against you, and so that you can avoid using them with your audience.

Table 5 Fallacies

| Fallacy | Definition | Example |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| 1. Red Herring | Any diversion intended to distract attention from the main issue, particularly by relating the issue to a common fear. | It's not just about the death penalty; it's about the victims and their rights. You wouldn't want to be a victim, but if you were, you'd want justice. |
| 2. Straw Man | A weak argument set up to be easily refuted, distracting attention from stronger arguments | What if we released criminals who commit murder after just a few years of rehabilitation? Think of how unsafe our streets would be then! |
| 3. Begging the Question | Claiming the truth of the very matter in question, as if it were already an obvious conclusion. | We know that they will be released and unleashed on society to repeat their crimes again and again. |
| 4. Circular Argument | The proposition is used to prove itself. Assumes the very thing it aims to prove. Related to begging the question. | Once a killer, always a killer. |
| 5. Ad Populum | Appeals to a common belief of some people, often prejudicial, and states everyone holds this belief. Also called the Bandwagon Fallacy, as people "jump on the bandwagon" of a perceived popular view. | Most people would prefer to get rid of a few "bad apples" and keep our streets safe. |
| 6. Ad Hominem | "Argument against the man" instead of against his message. Stating that someone's argument is wrong solely because of something about the person rather than about the argument itself. | Our representative is a drunk and philanderer. How can we trust him on the issues of safety and family? |
| 7. Non Sequitur | "It does not follow." The conclusion does not follow from the premises. They are not related. | Since the liberal antiwar demonstrations of the 1960s, we've seen an increase in convicts who got let off death row. |
| 8. Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc | "After this, therefore because of this," also called a coincidental correlation. It tries to establish a cause-and-effect relationship where only a correlation exists. | Violent death rates went down once they started publicizing executions. |

Avoid false logic and make a strong case or argument for your proposition. Finally, here is a five-step motivational checklist to keep in mind as you bring it all together:

1. Get their attention
2. Identify the need (i.e., Problem)
3. Satisfy the need (i.e., Solution to the problem)
4. Present a vision or solution
5. Take action

This simple organizational pattern can help you focus on the basic elements of a persuasive message when time is short and your performance is critical.

Key Takeaway

Speaking to persuade should not involve manipulation, coercion, false logic, or other unethical techniques.

Exercises

1. Can persuasion be ethical? Why or why not? Discuss your opinion with a classmate.
2. Select a persuasive article or video from a Web site that you feel uses unethical techniques to persuade the audience. What techniques are being used? What makes them unethical? Discuss your findings with your classmates.
3. Find an example of a particularly effective scene where a character in your favorite television program is persuaded to believe or do something. Write a two- to three-paragraph description of the scene and why it was effective. Share and compare with classmates.
4. Find an example of a particularly ineffective scene where a character in your favorite television program is not persuaded to believe or do something. Write a two- to three-paragraph description of the scene and why it was ineffective. Share and compare with classmates.
5. Find an example of a fallacy in an advertisement and share it with the class.
6. Find an example of an effective argument in an advertisement and share it with the class.
7. Write a two- to three-paragraph description of a persuasive message that caused you to believe or do something. Share and compare your description with classmates.

Elevator Speech

Learning Objectives

1. Discuss the basic parts of an elevator speech.
2. Create an effective elevator speech.

An elevator speech is to oral communication what a Twitter message (limited to 140 characters) is to written communication. It has to engage and interest the listener, inform and/or persuade, and be memorable (Howell, L., 2006). An elevator speech is a presentation that persuades the listener in less than thirty seconds, or around a hundred words. It takes its name from the idea that in a short elevator ride (of perhaps ten floors), carefully chosen words can make a difference. In addition to actual conversations taking place during elevator rides, other common examples include the following:

- An entrepreneur making a brief presentation to a venture capitalist or investor
- A conversation at the water cooler
- Comments during intermission at a basketball game
- A conversation as you stroll across the parking lot

Creating an Elevator Speech

An elevator speech does not have to be a formal event, though it can be. An elevator speech is not a full sales pitch and should not get bloated with too much information. The idea is not to rattle off as much information as possible in a short time, nor to present a “canned” thirty-second advertising message, but rather to give a relaxed and genuine “nutshell” summary of one main idea. The speech can be generic and nonspecific to the audience or listener, but the more you know about your audience, the better. When you tailor your message to that audience, you zero in on your target and increase your effectiveness (Albertson, E., 2008). The emphasis is on brevity, but a good elevator speech will address several key questions:

1. What is the topic, product or service?
2. Who are you?
3. Who is the target market? (if applicable)
4. What is the revenue model? (if applicable)
5. What or who is the competition and what are your advantages?

[Table 7 “Parts of an Elevator Speech”](#) adapts the five parts of a speech to the format of the elevator speech.

Table 7 Parts of an Elevator Speech

| Speech Component | Adapted to Elevator Speech |
|-------------------------|---|
| Attention Statement | Hook + information about you |
| Introduction | What you offer |
| Body | Benefits; what's in it for the listener |
| Conclusion | Example that sums it up |
| Residual Message | Call for action |

Example:

1. How are you doing?
2. Great! Glad you asked. I'm with (X Company) and we just received this new (product x)—it is amazing. It beats the competition hands down for a third of the price. Smaller, faster, and less expensive make it a winner. It's already a sales leader. Hey, if you know anyone who might be interested, call me! (Hands business card to the listener as visual aid)

Key Takeaway

You often don't know when opportunity to inform or persuade will present itself, but with an elevator speech, you are prepared!

Exercises

1. Pick a product or service and prepare an elevator speech (less than a hundred words, no more than thirty seconds). Rehearse the draft out loud to see how it sounds and post or present it in class.
2. Find an example of an elevator speech online (YouTube, for example) and review it. Post the link and a brief summary of strengths and weaknesses. Share and compare with classmates.
3. Prepare an elevator speech (no more than thirty seconds) and present to the class.

References

- Albertson, E. (2008). *How to open doors with a brilliant elevator speech*. New Providence, NJ: R. R. Bowker.
- Howell, L. (2006). *Give your elevator speech a lift*. Bothell, WA: Publishers Network.
- Johannesen, R. (1996). *Ethics in human communication* (4th ed.). Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.
- Altman, I., & Taylor, D. (1973). *Social penetration: The development of interpersonal relationships*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.
- American Foreign Service Manual. (1975).
- Maslow, A. (1970). *Motivation and personality* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Harper & Roe.

- Covino, W. A., & Jolliffe, D. A. (1995). *Rhetoric: Concepts, definitions, boundaries*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Hall, E. (1966). *The hidden dimension*. New York, NY: Doubleday.
- Body image and nutrition: Fast facts. (2009). *Teen Health and the Media*. Retrieved from <http://depts.washington.edu/thmedia/view.cgi?section=bodyimage&page=fastfacts>.
- Brumberg, J. J. (1997). *The body project: An intimate history of American girls*. New York, NY: Random House.
- DuRant, R. H. (1997). Tobacco and alcohol use behaviors portrayed in music videos: Content analysis. *American Journal of Public Health*, 87, 1131–1135.
- Hofschire, L. J., & Greenberg, B. S. (2002). Media's impact on adolescent's body dissatisfaction. In D. Brown, J. R. Steele, & K. Walsh-Childers (Eds.), *Sexual Teens, Sexual Media*. NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Huston, A. C., et al. (1992). *Big world, small screen: The role of television in American society*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.\
- Raimondo, M. (2010). About-face facts on the media. *About-face*. Retrieved from <http://www.about-face.org/r/facts/media.shtml>.
- Ship, J. (2005, December). Entertain. Inspire. Empower. How to speak a teen's language, even if you're not one. *ChangeThis*. Retrieved from <http://www.changethis.com/pdf/20.02.TeensLanguage.pdf>.
- Tiggemann, M., & Pickering, A. S. (1996). Role of television in adolescent women's body: Dissatisfaction and drive for thinness. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 20, 199–203.



Persuasive Presentations by Cameron W. Piercy, Ph.D. is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

10. Groups and meetings

Learning Objectives

- Discuss how to prepare for group meetings
- Identify strategies for effectively facilitating meetings
- Understand how to use technology to aid in group communications

Meetings are a part of how groups get work done. Some view meetings as boring, pointless, and futile exercises, while others see them as opportunities to exchange information and produce results. A combination of preparation and execution makes all the difference. Remember, too, that meetings do not have to take place in a physical space where the participants meet face to face. Instead, a number of technological tools make it possible to hold virtual meetings in which the participants are half a world away from one another. Virtual meetings are formally arranged gatherings where participants, located in distinct geographic locations, come together via the Internet.

Are you lonely?

Tired of working on your own?
Do you hate making decisions?

HOLD A MEETING!

You can –

- See people
- Show charts
- Feel important
- Point with a stick
- Eat donuts
- Impress your colleagues

All on company time!



MEETINGS

THE PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVE TO WORK

Meetings?! Source: <http://www.codinghorror.com/blog/2012/02/meetings-where-work-goes-to-die.html>

Preparation

A meeting, like a problem-solving group, needs a clear purpose statement. The specific goal for the specific meeting will clearly relate to the overall goal of the group or committee. Determining your purpose is central to an effective meeting and getting together just to get together is called a party, not a meeting. Do not schedule a meeting just because you met at the same time last month or because it is a standing committee. Members will resent the intrusion into their schedules and quickly perceive the lack of purpose.

Similarly, if the need for a meeting arises, do not rush into it without planning. A poorly planned meeting announced at the last minute is sure to be less than effective. People may be unable to change their schedules, may fail to attend, or may impede the progress and discussion of the group because of their absence. Those who attend may feel hindered because they needed more time to prepare and present comprehensive results to the group or committee.

DECIDING HOW TO MEET

If a meeting is necessary, and a clear purpose can be articulated, then you'll need to decide how and where to meet. Distance is no longer an obstacle to participation, as we will see later in this section when we explore some of the technologies for virtual meetings. However, there are many advantages to meeting in person. People communicate not just with words but also with their body language—facial expressions, hand gestures, head nodding or head shaking, and posture. These subtleties of communication can be key to determining how group members really feel about an issue or question. Meeting in real time can be important, too, as all group members have the benefit of receiving new information at the same time. For purposes of our present discussion, we will focus on meetings taking place face to face in real time. Later in this chapter, we will discuss virtual meetings.

FORMULATING AN AGENDA

If you have a purpose statement for the meeting, then it also follows that you should be able to create an **agenda**, or a list of topics to be discussed. You may need to solicit information from members to formulate an agenda, and this pre-meeting contact can serve to encourage active participation. The agenda will have a time, date, place, and method of interaction noted, as well as a list of participants. It will also have a statement of purpose, a list of points to be considered, and a brief summary of relevant information that relates to each point. Somewhere on the agenda the start and end times need to be clearly indicated, and it is always a good idea to leave time at the end for questions and additional points that individual members may want to share. If the meeting has an emotional point or theme, or the news is negative, plan for additional time for discussion, clarification, and recycling of conversations as the participants process the information.



"We're having this meeting to explore ways to reduce the number of meetings we have."

INVITING MEETING PARTICIPANTS

If you are planning an intense work session, you need to consider the number of possible interactions among the participants and limit them. Smaller groups are generally more productive. If you are gathering to present information or to motivate the sales staff, a large audience, where little interaction is expected, is appropriate. Each member has a role, and attention to how and why they are interacting will produce the best results. Review the stages of group formation in view of the idea that a meeting is a short-term group. You can anticipate a “forming” stage, and if roles are not clear, there may be a bit of “storming” before the group establishes norms and becomes productive. Adding additional participants for no clear reason will only make the process more complex and may produce negative results.

Inviting the participants via e-mail has become increasingly common across business and industry. Software programs like Microsoft Outlook allow you to initiate a meeting request and receive an “accept” or “decline” response that makes the invitation process organized and straightforward. Reliance on a software program, however, may not be enough to encourage and ensure participation. A reminder on the individual’s computer may go off fifteen minutes prior to the meeting, but if they are away from their computer or if Outlook is not running, the reminder will go unseen and unheard. A reminder e-mail on the day of the meeting, often early in the morning, can serve as a personal effort to highlight the activities of the day.

IDENTIFYING AN APPROPRIATE MEETING SPACE

There has been quite a discussion on the role of seating arrangements in meeting. Generally, a table that is square, rectangular, or U-shaped has a fixed point at which the attention is directed, often referred to as the head of the table. This space is often associated with power, status, and hierarchy and may play an important role in the flow of interactions across the meeting. If information is to be distributed and presented from administration to managers, for example, a table with a clear focal point for the head or CEO may be indicated. Tables that are round, or tables arranged in a circular pattern, allow for a more egalitarian model of interaction, reducing the hierarchical aspects while reinforcing the clear line of sight among all participants. If a meeting requires intense interaction and collaboration, generally a round table or a circular pattern is indicated.



One of the important decisions to make in planning for a meeting is the space in which you will hold it and the arrangements of that space. For example, different types of tables facilitate different kinds of interactions during the meeting. (Credit: [Christina@WOCinTechChat](#)/Unsplash)

Some meetings do not call for a table, but rather rows of seats all facing toward the speaker; you probably recognize this arrangement from many class lectures you have attended. For relatively formal meetings in which information is being delivered to a large number of listeners and little interaction is desired, seating in rows is an efficient use of space.

If you are the person responsible for the room reservation, confirm the reservation a week before the meeting and again the day before the meeting. Redundancy in the confirmation process can help eliminate double-booking a room, where two meetings are scheduled at the same time. If technology is required at the meeting, such as a microphone, conference telephone, or laptop and projector, make sure you confirm their reservation at the same time as you confirm the meeting room reservation. Always personally inspect the room and test these systems prior to the meeting. There is nothing more embarrassing than introducing a high-profile speaker, such as the company president, and then finding that the PowerPoint projector is not working properly.

FACILITATING AN EFFECTIVE MEETING

Facilitating a meeting requires care, vigilance, flexibility, resilience, humility, and humor. In a way, to run a meeting effectively calls someone to act the way a skilled athletic coach does, watching the action, calling plays, and encouraging good performance. Furthermore, you need to monitor the interaction of everyone around you and “call the plays”

based on a game plan that you and your fellow group members have presumably agreed upon in advance. Finally, like a coach, you sometimes need to call timeouts—breaks—when people are weary or the action is starting to get raggedy or undisciplined.

MEETING CHECKLIST FOR PARTICIPANTS

Mary Ellen Guffey (2007) provides a useful participant checklist that is adapted here for our use:

- Arrive on time and stay until the meeting adjourns (unless there are prior arrangements)
- Leave the meeting only for established breaks or emergencies
- Be prepared and have everything you need on hand
- Turn off cell phones and personal digital assistants
- Follow the established protocol for turn taking
- Respect time limits
- Demonstrate professionalism in your verbal and nonverbal interactions
- Communicate interest and stay engaged in the discussion
- Avoid tangents and side discussions
- Respect space and don't place your notebook or papers all around you
- Clean up after yourself
- Engage in polite conversation after the conclusion

Perils of Poor Facilitation

Unfortunately, many people lack the skills to effectively facilitate a meeting. As a result, a variety of negative results can take place as they fail to act capably as meeting facilitators. Here are some signs to watch for:

- An argument starts about an established fact.
- Opinions are introduced as if they were truths.
- People intimidate others with real or imaginary “knowledge.”
- People overwhelm each other with too many proposals for the time available to consider them.
- People become angry for no good reason.
- People promote their own visions at the expense of everyone else's.
- People demand or offer much more information than is needed.
- Discussion becomes circular; people repeat themselves without making any progress toward conclusions.

Guidelines for Facilitating a Meeting

Many authorities have recommended actions and attitudes which can help you facilitate a meeting well (Barge, 1991;

Lumsden & Lumsden 2004; Parker & Hoffman, 2006). Here are several such suggestions, taken partly from these writers' works and partly from the authors' experiences as facilitators and participants in meetings over the years:

1. **Start promptly:** Some time, calculate the cost to your group—even at minimum-wage rates—for the minutes its members sit around waiting for meetings to begin. You may occasionally be delayed for good reasons, but if you're chronically late you'll eventually aggravate folks who've arrived on time—the very ones whose professionalism you'd particularly like to reinforce and praise. Consistently starting on time may even boost morale: "Early in, early out" will probably appeal to most of a group's members, since they are likely to have other things they need to do as soon as a meeting ends.
2. **Begin with something positive:** Face it: no matter what you do, many people in your group would probably rather be somewhere else than in a meeting. If you'd like them to overcome this familiar aversion and get pumped up about what you'll be doing in a meeting, therefore, you might emulate the practice of City Year, a Boston-based nonprofit international service organization. City Year begins its meetings by inviting members to describe from their own recent life experiences an example of what Robert F. Kennedy referred to as a "ripple of hope" (Grossman, 1998). This could be a good deed they've seen someone do for someone else, a news item about a decline in the crime rate, or perhaps even a loving note they've received from a child or other family member. Sharing with their fellow group members such examples of altruism, love, or community improvement focuses and motivates City Year members by reminding them in specific, personal terms of why their meetings can be truly worthwhile.
3. **Tend to housekeeping details:** People's productivity depends in part on their biological state. Once you convene your meeting, announce or remind the group members of where they can find restrooms, water fountains, vending machines, and any other amenities that may contribute to their physical comfort.
4. **Make sure people understand their roles.** At the start of the meeting, review what you understand is going to happen and ask for confirmation of what you think people are expected to do in the time you're going to be spending together. Calling on someone to make a report if he or she isn't aware it's required can be embarrassing for both you and that person.
5. **Keep to your agenda.** Social time makes people happy and relieves stress. Most group meetings, however, should not consist primarily of social time. You may want to designate someone in the group to watch for departures from the agenda and courteously direct people back on task. Either you or the that person might want to periodically provide "signposts" indicating where you are in your process, too, such as "It looks like we've got 25 minutes left in our meeting, and we haven't discussed yet who's going to be working on the report to give to Mary." If your meetings habitually exceed the time you allot for them, consider either budgeting more time or, if you want to stick to your guns, setting a kitchen timer to ring when you've reached the point when you've said you'll quit. The co-founder of one technology firm, Jeff Atwood, put together a list of rules for his company's meetings which included this one: "No meeting should ever be more than an hour, under penalty of death (Milian, 2012). Similarly, the library staff at one college in the Midwest conducts all their meetings standing up in a circle, which encourages brevity and efficiency.
6. **Guide, don't dictate:** If you're in charge of the meeting, that doesn't mean you're responsible for everything people say in it, nor does it mean you have to personally comment on every idea or proposal that comes up. Let the other members of the group carry the content as long as they're not straying from the process you feel needs to be followed. You may see that some people regularly dominate discussion in your group's meetings and that others are perhaps slower to talk despite having important contributions to make. One way to deal with these disparities is by providing the group with a "talking stick" and specifying that people must hold it in their hands in order to speak. You could also invoke the "NOSTUESOrule" with respect to the talking stick, which says that "No One Speaks Twice Until Everybody Speaks Once."

7. **Keep your eyes open for nonverbal communication.** As a meeting progresses, people's physical and emotional states are likely to change. As the facilitator, you should do your best to identify such change and accommodate it within the structures and processes your group has established for itself. When people do something as simple as crossing their arms in front of them, for instance, they might be signaling that they're closed to what others are saying—or they might just be trying to stay warm in a room that feels too cold to them. When one person in the meeting has the floor and is talking, it's a good idea to watch how the rest of the group seems to be responding. You may notice clues indicating that people are pleased and receptive, or that they're uninterested, skeptical, or even itching to respond negatively. You may want to do a **perception check** to see if you're interpreting nonverbal cues accurately. For instance, you might say, "Terry, could we pause here a bit? I get the impression that people might have some questions for you." As an alternative, you might address the whole group and ask "Does anyone have questions for Terry at this point?"
8. **Capture and assign action items.** Unless they are held purely to communicate information, or for other special purposes, most meetings result in action items, tasks, and other assignments for one or more participants. Sometimes these items arise unexpectedly because someone comes up with a great new idea and volunteers or is assigned to pursue it after the discussion ends. Be on the alert for these elements of a meeting.
9. **Make things fun and healthy.** Appeal to people's tummies and funnybones. Provide something to eat or drink, even if it's just coffee or peanuts in a bowl. Glenn Parker and George Hoffman's book on how to run meetings well includes a chapter titled "Eating Well=Meeting Well," and it also refers to the fact that the American Cancer Society offers a program to help groups organize meetings and other events with good health in mind.
10. **Avoid sarcasm and cynicism.** Encourage humor and merriment. If your agenda includes some challenging items, try to start out with "quick wins" to warm the mood of the group.
11. **Take breaks regularly, even when you think you don't need them.** If you've ever gone on a long hike on a beautiful day, you may have decided to continue a mile or two beyond your original intended destination because the scenery was beautiful and you were feeling spunky. If you're like the authors, though, you probably regretted "going the extra mile" later because it meant you had to go back that mile plus all the rest of the way you'd come. Something similar can arise in a meeting. People sometimes feel full of energy and clamor to keep a lively discussion going past the time scheduled for a break, but they may not realize that they're tiring and losing focus until someone says or does something ill-advised. Taking even five-minute breathers at set intervals can help group members remain physically refreshed over the long haul.
12. **Show respect for everyone.** Seek consensus. Avoid "groupthink" by encouraging a free and full airing of opinions. Observe the Golden Rule. Listen sincerely to everyone, but avoid giving a small minority so much clout that in disputed matters "99-to-1 is a tie." Keep disagreements agreeable. If you must criticize, criticize positions, not people. If someone's behavior shows a pattern of consistently irritating others or disrupting the flow of your group's meetings, talk to the person privately and express your concern in a polite but clear fashion. Be specific in stating what you expect the person to do or stop doing, and keep an open mind to whatever response you receive.
13. **Expect the unexpected.** Do your best to anticipate and prepare for confrontations and conflicts. If you didn't already make time to do so earlier, take a minute just before the start of the meeting to mark items on your agenda which you think might turn out to be especially contentious or time-consuming.
14. **Conduct multiple assessments of the meeting.** **Formative assessment** takes place during an activity and allows people to modify their behavior in response to its results. Why not perform a brief interim evaluation during every meeting in which you ask, for instance, "If we were to end this meeting right now, where would it be, and if we need to make changes now in what's happening in our meeting, what should they be?" **Summative assessment** is implemented at the end of an activity. When you finish a meeting, for example, you might check to see how well

people feel that the gathering met its intended goals. If you want something in writing, you might distribute a half sheet of paper to each person asking “What was best about our meeting?” and “What might have made this meeting better?” Or you could write two columns on a whiteboard, one with a plus and the other with a minus, and ask people orally to identify items they think belong in each category. If you feel a less formal check-up is sufficient, you might just go around the table or room and ask every person for one word that captures how she or he feels.

15. **Think (and talk) ahead.** If you didn’t write it on your agenda—which would have been a good idea, most likely—remind group members, before the meeting breaks up, of where and when their next gathering is to take place.

POST-Meeting Communication

Once the meeting has accomplished its goals in the established time frame, it is time to facilitate the transition to a conclusion. You may conclude by summarizing what has been discussed or decided, and what actions the group members are to take as a result of the meeting. If there is a clear purpose for holding a subsequent meeting, discuss the time and date, and specifically note assignments for next time.

Feedback is an important part of any communication interaction. **Minutes** are a written document that serves to record the interaction and can provide an opportunity for clarification. Minutes often appear as the agenda with notes in relation to actions taken during the meeting or specific indications of who is responsible for what before the next meeting. In many organizations, minutes of the meeting are tentative, like a rough draft, until they are approved by the members of the group or committee. Normally minutes are sent within a week of the meeting if it is a monthly event, and more quickly if the need to meet more frequently has been determined. If your group or organization does not call for minutes, you can still benefit by reviewing your notes after a meeting and comparing them with those of others to make sure you understood what was discussed and did not miss—or misinterpret—any key information.

Using Technology to Facilitate Meetings

Given the widespread availability and increasingly low cost of electronic communication, technologies that once served to bring people together across continents and time zones are now also serving people in the same geographic area. Rather than traveling (by plane, car, or even elevator within the same building) to a central point for a face-to-face interaction, busy and cost-conscious professionals often choose to see and hear each other via one of many different electronic interface technologies. It is important to be aware of the dimensions of nonverbal communication that are lost in a virtual meeting compared to an in-person meeting. Nevertheless, these technologies are a boon to today’s business organizations, and knowing how to use them is a key skill for all job seekers. We will discuss the technologies by category, beginning with audio-only, then audio-visual, and finally social media.

Audio-Only Interactions

The simplest form of audio-only interaction is, of course, a telephone call. Chances are that you have been using the phone all your life, yet did you know that some executives hire professional voice coaches to help them increase their effectiveness in phone communication? When you stop to think about it, we use a great many audio-only modes of communication, ranging from phone calls and voice-activated telephone menus to radio interviews, public

address systems, dictation recording systems, and computer voice recognition technology. The importance of audio communication in the business world has increased with the availability of conference calls, Web conferences, and voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) communications.

Your voice has qualities that cannot be communicated in written form, and you can use these qualities to your advantage as you interact with colleagues. If you are sending a general informative message to all employees, an e-mail may serve you well, but if you are congratulating one employee on receiving an industry award, your voice as the channel carries your enthusiasm.

Take care to pay attention to your pronunciation of words, stating them correctly in normal ways, and avoiding words that you are not comfortable with as you may mispronounce them. Mispronunciation can have a negative impact on your reputation or perceived credibility. Instead of using complicated words that may cause you to stumble, choose a simple phrase if you can, or learn to pronounce the word correctly before you use it in a formal interactive setting.

Your voice quality, volume, and pitch also influence how your spoken words are interpreted. **Quality** often refers to emotional tone of your voice, from happy and enthusiastic to serious or even sad. In most business situations, it is appropriate to speak with some level of formality, yet avoid sounding stilted or arrogant. Your **volume** (the loudness of your voice) should be normal, but do make sure your listeners can hear you. In some situations, you may be using a directional microphone that only amplifies your voice signal if you speak directly into it.

If your audience includes English learners, remember that speaking louder (i.e., shouting) does not help them to understand you any better than speaking in a normal tone. Your word choices will make a much more significant impact when communicating across cultures; strive to use direct sentences and avoid figures of speech that do not translate literally.

Pitch refers to the frequency, high or low, of your voice. A pleasant, natural voice will have some variation in pitch. A speaker with a flat pitch, or a monotone (one-tone) voice, is often interpreted as being bored and often bores his or her listeners.

If you are leaving a voice mail, state all the relevant information in concise, clear terms, making sure to speak slowly; don't forget to include your contact information, even if you think the person already knows your phone number. Imagine you were writing down your phone number as you recite it and you will be better able to record it at a "listener-friendly" speed. Don't leave a long, rambling voice mail message. You may later wish you had said less, and the more content you provide the more you increase the possibility for misunderstandings without your being present for clarification.

Audio-Visual Interactions

Rather than call each other, we often call and interact in both audio and visual ways via the Internet. There are several ways to interface via audio and video, and new technologies in this area are being invented all the time. For example, platforms like Zoom or WebX allow participants to see and hear each other across time and distance with one-on-one calls and video conferencing. This form of audio-visual communication is quickly becoming a low- or no-cost business tool for interaction.



On the Internet, a majority of our interactions take place audio-visually, using platforms such as Skype or Zoom. (Credit: Chris Montgomery/[Zoom Call with Coffee](#)/Unsplash).

If you are going to interact via audio and visual signals, make sure you are prepared. Appropriate dress, setting, and attitude are all required. Pay close attention to your surroundings and what will be visible to others. The integration of a visual signal to the traditional phone call means that nonverbal gestures can now be observed in real time and can both aid and detract from the message.

If you are unfamiliar with the technology, practice with it before your actual business interaction. Try out the features with a friend and know where to find and access the information. If the call doesn't go as planned, or the signal isn't what you expected or experienced in the past, keep a good attitude and try again.

TIPS FOR VIRTUAL MEETINGS

Here are some further tips and suggestions for leading or participating in virtual meetings, each based on the unique features of such gatherings:

1. Get all the participants in an audio meeting to say something brief at the start of the meeting so that everyone becomes familiar with everyone else's voice.
2. Remind people of the purpose of the meeting and of the key outcome(s) you hope to achieve together.
3. Listen/watch for people who aren't participating and ask them periodically if they have thoughts or suggestions to add to the discussion.

4. Summarize the status of the meeting from time to time.
5. If you're holding an audio conference, discourage people from calling in on a cell phone because of potential problems with sound quality.
6. Because you may not have nonverbal cues to refer to, ask other members to clarify their meanings and intentions if you're not sure their words alone convey all you need to know.
7. If you know you're going to have to leave a meeting before it ends, inform the organizer in advance. Sign off publicly, but quickly, when you leave rather than just hanging up on the meeting connection.

Review & Reflection Questions

- Imagine you are about to meet with your group for the first time. What are key steps you want to consider in preparing for a meeting? What items might you want to include on your first agenda?
- Reflect on meetings you have attended in the past. What strategies have you observed facilitators use? What did you find to be effective and ineffective?
- How might you use technology to conduct a group meeting? What might be the advantages and disadvantages?

References

- Barge, J.K. (1991, November). Task skills and competence in group leadership. Paper presented at the meeting of the Speech Communication Association, Atlanta, GA.
- Grossman, J. (1998, April). We've got to start meeting like this. *Inc.*, 70–74.
- Guffey, M. (2007). *Essentials of business communication* (7th ed.). Thomson/Wadsworth.
- Lumsden, G., & Lumsden, D. (2004). *Communicating in groups and teams: Sharing leadership* (4th ed.). Wadsworth/Thompson Learning.
- Milian, M. (2012, June 11–June 17). It's not you, it's meetings. *Bloomberg Businessweek*, 51–52.
- Parker, G., & Hoffman, R. (2006). *Meeting excellence: 33 tools to lead meetings that get results*. Jossey-Bass.
- Tucker, M., Meyer, G., & Westman, J. (1986). *Thinking through communication: An introduction to the study of human communication*. Allyn & Bacon.

Author & Attribution

This remix comes from Dr. Jasmine Linabary at Emporia State University. This chapter is also available in her book: [Small Group Communication: Forming and Sustaining Teams](#).

The sections “Preparation,” “Post-Meeting Communication” and “Using Technology to Facilitate Meetings” are adapted from “[Business and Professional Meetings](#)” in [Business Communication for Success](#) from the University of Minnesota. The book was adapted from a work produced and distributed under a Creative Commons license (CC BY-NC-SA) by a publisher who has requested that they and the original author not receive attribution. This work is made available under the terms of a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike license](#).

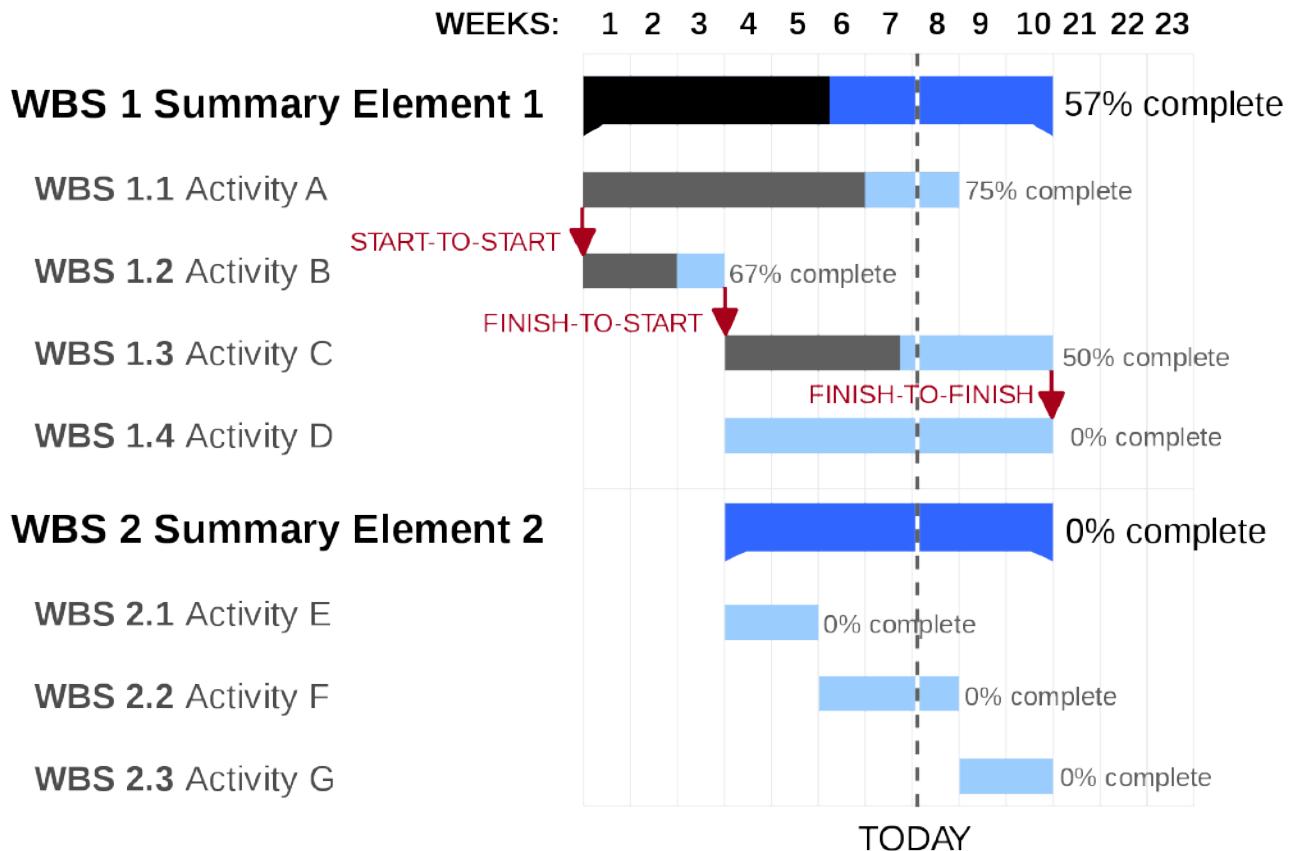
The section “Facilitating an Effective Meeting” is adapted and remixed from “[Groups and Meetings](#)” from [An Introduction To Group Communication](#). This content is available under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported](#) (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0) License without attribution as requested by the work’s original creator or licensor.



Groups and meetings by Cameron W. Piercy, Ph.D. is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

II. Gantt Chart

[From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)



A Gantt chart showing three kinds of schedule dependencies (in red) and percent complete indications.

Introduction

A Gantt chart is a type of bar chart^{[3][4]} that illustrates a project schedule.^[5] This chart lists the tasks to be performed on the vertical axis, and time intervals on the horizontal axis.^{[3][6]} The width of the horizontal bars in the graph shows the duration of each activity.^{[6][7]} Gantt charts illustrate the start and finish dates of the terminal elements and summary elements of a [project](#). Terminal elements and summary elements constitute the [work breakdown structure](#) of the project. Modern Gantt charts also show the [dependency](#) (i.e., precedence network) relationships between activities.

Gantt charts can be used to show current schedule status using percent-complete shadings and a vertical “TODAY” line as shown here.

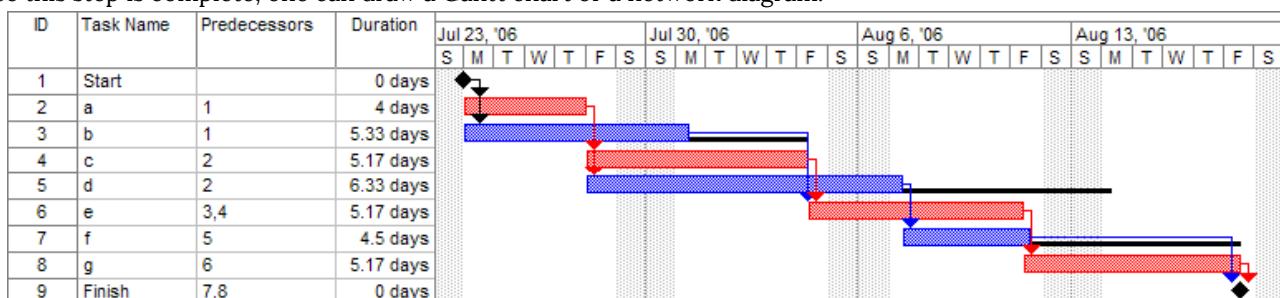
Gantt charts are usually created initially using an *early start time approach*, where each task is scheduled to start immediately when its prerequisites are complete. This method maximizes the [float time](#) available for all tasks. In 1999, Gantt charts were identified as “one of the most widely used management tools for project scheduling and control”.^[3]

Example

In the following table there are seven tasks, labeled *a* through *g*. Some tasks can be done concurrently (*a* and *b*) while others cannot be done until their predecessor task is complete (*c* and *d* cannot begin until *a* is complete). Additionally, each task has three time estimates: the optimistic time estimate (O), the most likely or normal time estimate (M), and the pessimistic time estimate (P). The expected time (T_E) is estimated.

| Activity | Predecessor | Time estimates | | | Expected time (T_E) |
|----------|-------------|----------------|------------|-----------|-------------------------|
| | | Opt. (O) | Normal (M) | Pess. (P) | |
| <i>a</i> | – | 2 | 4 | 6 | 4.00 |
| <i>b</i> | – | 3 | 5 | 9 | 5.33 |
| <i>c</i> | <i>a</i> | 4 | 5 | 7 | 5.17 |
| <i>d</i> | <i>a</i> | 4 | 6 | 10 | 6.33 |
| <i>e</i> | <i>b, c</i> | 4 | 5 | 7 | 5.17 |
| <i>f</i> | <i>d</i> | 3 | 4 | 8 | 4.50 |
| <i>g</i> | <i>e</i> | 3 | 5 | 8 | 5.17 |

Once this step is complete, one can draw a Gantt chart or a network diagram.



A Gantt chart created using [Microsoft Project](#) (MSP). Note (1) the [critical path](#) is in red, (2) the [slack](#) is the black lines connected to non-critical activities, (3) since Saturday and Sunday are not work days and are thus excluded from the schedule, some bars on the Gantt chart are longer if they cut through a weekend.

See [this tutorial from Microsoft Office](#) for a step-by-step guide to creating a Gantt chart in excel. If you’re reading the text version of this book, visit support.microsoft.com and search for Gantt Chart.

Using Gantt Charts – Exelon Development (a Tech Company):

According to Matt Heusser (2020), Gantt charts help a team to sort out just how multiple units can be shuffled without missing deadlines. Gantt charts could be useful for the company to forecast. A good Gantt chart will provide a coherent strategy, giving you a roadmap of the project from beginning to end in one visual snapshot.

Progress Gantt charts

In a progress Gantt chart, tasks are shaded in proportion to the degree of their completion: a task that is 60% complete would be 60% shaded, starting from the left. A vertical line is drawn at the time index when the progress Gantt chart is created, and this line can then be compared with shaded tasks. If everything is on schedule, all task portions left of the line will be shaded, and all task portions right of the line will not be shaded. This provides a visual representation of how the project and its tasks are ahead or behind schedule.^[20]

A Gantt chart is essentially a tool for project management. According to an article on Asanda.com ([a company specializing in project management software](#)), the **Gantt Chart typically includes the following pieces of information:**

- When the project is due
- When to start and finish each task
- How long each task takes
- Who is responsible for each task
- Which tasks depend on others
- How each task is categorized or grouped

Citations

1. ^ [Jump up to:^{ab} Gantt 1910](#).
2. ^ [Jump up to:^{ab} Morris 1997](#), p. 7.
3. ^ [Jump up to:^{abcdef} Klein 1999](#), p. 49.
4. [Richman 2002](#), pp. 97, 117, 276.
5. [KUMAR, PANKAJA PRADEEP \(2005\). "EFFECTIVE USE OF GANTT CHART FOR MANAGING LARGE SCALE PROJECTS". COST ENGINEERING. MORGANTOWN, WV: AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COST ENGINEERS. 47 \(7\): 13–21. ISSN0274-9696. OCLC209778284](#).
6. ^ [Jump up to:^{ab} Richman 2002](#), pp. 117, 276.
7. ^ [Jump up to:^{ab} Selig 2008](#), p. 235.
8. ^ [Jump up to:^{ab} Flouris & Lock 2012](#), p. 236, Chapter 12.
9. [Wilson 2003](#).

10. [^ Marsh 1974](#), p. 32.
11. [^ Weaver 2012a](#), pp. 5–6.
12. [^ Weaver 2012b](#), pp. 4–6.
13. [^ Weaver 2017](#), pp. 6–7.
14. [^ Weaver 2017](#), p. 7.
15. [^ Weaver 2017](#), p. 6.
16. [^ Clark 1922](#).
17. [^ Jump up to:^a^b Flouris & Lock 2012](#), p. 281, Chapter 14.
18. [^ Kelly, D. J. \(2004\) “Marxist Manager Amidst the Progressives: Walter N. Polakov and the Taylor Society”, Journal of Industrial History, 6\(2\), November 2004, 61–75](#)
19. [^ OLSON, RICHARD G. \(2015\). SCIENTISM AND TECHNOCRACY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: THE LEGACY OF SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT. LEXINGTON BOOKS. ISBN9781498525718. RETRIEVED 25 SEPTEMBER 2018.](#)
20. [^ Klein 1999](#), pp. 56–57.
21. [^ Flouris & Lock 2012](#), p. 239, Chapter 12.

References

- Asanda.com (n.d.) New to Gantt charts? Start here. Retrieved from <https://asana.com/resources/gantt-chart-basics>
- CLARK, WALLACE (1922). [THE GANTT CHART: A WORKING TOOL OF MANAGEMENT](#). NEW YORK, NY: RONALD PRESS.
- FLOURIS, TRIANT G.; LOCK, DENNIS (2012). [MANAGING AVIATION PROJECTS FROM CONCEPT TO COMPLETION](#). ASHGATE PUBLISHING LIMITED. ISBN978-1-4094-8613-8.
- GANTT, H.L. (1910). “WORK, WAGES AND PROFIT”. [ENGINEERING MAGAZINE](#). NEW YORK; republished as WORK, WAGES AND PROFITS. EASTON, PENNSYLVANIA: HIVE PUBLISHING COMPANY. 1974. ISBN0-87960-048-9.
- HEUSSER, M. (2020, MARCH, 17) WHAT'S THE PURPOSE OF A GANNT CHART FOR LARGE SCALE PROJECTS? ACCESSED AT <https://searchsoftwarequality.techtarget.com/tip/Whats-the-purpose-of-a-Gantt-chart-for-large-scale-projects>
- KLEIN, R. (1999). [SCHEDULING OF RESOURCE-CONSTRAINED PROJECTS](#). OPERATIONS RESEARCH/COMPUTER SCIENCE INTERFACES SERIES. SPRINGER US. ISBN978-0-7923-8637-7.
- MARSH, EDWARD R. (1974). “THE HARMONOGRAM OF KAROL ADAMIECKI”. ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT PROCEEDINGS: 32. DOI:10.5465/AMBPP1974.I7530521. ISSN0065-0668.
- MORRIS, PETER W. G. (1997) [1994]. [THE MANAGEMENT OF PROJECTS](#). THOMAS TELFORD. ISBN978-0-7277-2593-6.
- RICHMAN, L. (2002). [PROJECT MANAGEMENT STEP-BY-STEP](#). AMACOM. ISBN978-0-8144-2657-9.
- SELIG, GAD J. (2008). [IMPLEMENTING IT GOVERNANCE: A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES IN IT MANAGEMENT](#). VAN HAREN PUBLISHING. ISBN978-90-8753-774-6.
- WEAVER, PATRICK (2012A). [“HENRY L GANTT, 1861-1919: A RETROSPECTIVE VIEW OF HIS WORK”](#)(PDF). PM WORLD JOURNAL. RETRIEVED 29 JANUARY 2018. (It is unclear when this was last modified. The PDF metadata indicates 2015, and a note in the text says “Augmented with additional materials received since publication.”)
- WEAVER, PATRICK (2012B). [“HENRY L GANTT, 1861-1919: DEBUNKING THE MYTHS, A RETROSPECTIVE VIEW OF HIS WORK”](#)(PDF). 1 (5). RETRIEVED 29 JANUARY 2018.
- WEAVER, PATRICK (2017). [“A BRIEF HISTORY OF SCHEDULING: BACK TO THE FUTURE”](#)(PDF). RETRIEVED 29 JANUARY 2018. Adapted from [“A BRIEF HISTORY OF SCHEDULING: BACK TO THE FUTURE”](#)(PDF). PM WORLD JOURNAL. 3 (8). 2014. Adapted from an even earlier 2006 presentation.
- WILSON, JAMES M. (2003). [“GANTT CHARTS: A CENTENARY APPRECIATION”](#)(PDF). EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF OPERATIONAL RESEARCH. 149 (2): 430–437. DOI:10.1016/S0377-2217(02)00769-5. ARCHIVED FROM [THE ORIGINAL](#)(PDF) ON 26 NOVEMBER

2013. RETRIEVED 28 JULY 2013.



Problem Solving in Teams and Groups by Cameron W. Piercy, Ph.D. is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

12. Organizational culture

The following content comes from: <https://open.lib.umn.edu/organizationalbehavior/part/chapter-15-organizational-culture/>

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Describe organizational culture and why it is important for an organization.
- Understand the dimensions that make up a company's culture.
- Understand factors that create culture.
- Understand how to change culture.
- Understand how organizational culture and ethics relate.
- Understand cross-cultural differences in organizational culture.

Just like individuals, you can think of organizations as having their own personalities, more typically known as organizational cultures. The opening case illustrates that Nordstrom is a retailer with the foremost value of making customers happy. At Nordstrom, when a customer is unhappy, employees are expected to identify what would make the person satisfied, and then act on it, without necessarily checking with a superior or consulting a lengthy policy book. If they do not, they receive peer pressure and may be made to feel that they let the company down. In other words, this organization seems to have successfully created a service culture. Understanding how culture is created, communicated, and changed will help you be more effective in your organizational life. But first, let's define organizational culture.

Building a Customer Service Culture: The Case of Nordstrom

Figure 1



[Wikimedia Commons](#) – CC BY 2.0.

Nordstrom Inc. (NYSE: JWN) is a Seattle-based department store rivaling the likes of Saks Fifth Avenue, Neiman Marcus, and Bloomingdale's. Nordstrom is a Hall of Fame member of Fortune magazine's "100 Best Companies to Work For" list, including being ranked 34th in 2008. Nordstrom is known for its quality apparel, upscale environment, and generous employee rewards. However, what Nordstrom is most famous for is its delivery of customer service above and beyond the norms of the retail industry. Stories about Nordstrom service abound. For example, according to one story the company confirms, in 1975 Nordstrom moved into a new location that had formerly been a tire store. A customer brought a set of tires into the store to return them. Without a word about the mix-up, the tires were accepted, and the customer was fully refunded the purchase price. In a different story, a customer tried on several pairs of shoes but failed to find the right combination of size and color. As she was about to leave, the clerk called other Nordstrom stores but could only locate the right pair at Macy's, a nearby competitor. The clerk had Macy's ship the shoes to the customer's home at Nordstrom's expense. In a third story, a customer describes wandering into a Portland, Oregon, Nordstrom looking for an Armani tuxedo for his daughter's wedding. The sales associate took his measurements just in case one was found. The next day, the customer got a phone call, informing him that the tux was available. When pressed, she revealed that using her

connections she found one in New York, had it put on a truck destined to Chicago, and dispatched someone to meet the truck in Chicago at a rest stop. The next day she shipped the tux to the customer's address, and the customer found that the tux had already been altered for his measurements and was ready to wear. What is even more impressive about this story is that Nordstrom does not sell Armani tuxedos.

How does Nordstrom persist in creating these stories? If you guessed that they have a large number of rules and regulations designed to emphasize quality in customer service, you'd be wrong. In fact, the company gives employees a 5½-inch by 7½-inch card as the employee handbook. On one side of the card, the company welcomes employees to Nordstrom and states that their number one goal is to provide outstanding customer service, and for this they have only one rule. On the other side of the card, the single rule is stated: "Use good judgment in all situations." By leaving it in the hands of Nordstrom associates, the company seems to have empowered employees who deliver customer service heroics every day.

Based on information from Chatman, J. A., & Eunyoung Cha, S. (2003). Leading by leveraging culture. *California Management Review*, 45, 19–34; McCarthy, P. D., & Spector, R. (2005). *The Nordstrom way to customer service excellence: A handbook for implementing great service in your organization*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley; Pfeffer, J. (2005). Producing sustainable competitive advantage through the effective management of people. *Academy of Management Executive*, 19, 95–106.

Discussion Questions

1. Describe Nordstrom's organizational culture.
2. Despite the low wages and long hours that are typical of retail employment, Nordstrom still has the ability to motivate its staff to exhibit exemplary customer service. How might this be explained?
3. What suggestions would you give Nordstrom for maintaining and evolving the organizational culture that has contributed to its success?
4. What type of organizational culture do you view as most important?
5. What attributes of Nordstrom's culture do you find most appealing?

Understanding Organizational Culture

Learning Objectives

1. Define organizational culture.
2. Understand why organizational culture is important.
3. Understand the different levels of organizational culture.

What Is Organizational Culture?

Organizational culture refers to a system of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs that show employees what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior (Chatman & Eunyoung, 2003; Kerr & Slocum Jr., 2005). These values have a strong influence on employee behavior as well as organizational performance. In fact, the term *organizational culture* was made popular in the 1980s when Peters and Waterman's best-selling book *In Search of Excellence* made the argument that company success could be attributed to an organizational culture that was decisive, customer-oriented, empowering, and people-oriented. Since then, organizational culture has become the subject of numerous research studies, books, and articles. However, organizational culture is still a relatively new concept. In contrast to a topic such as leadership, which has a history spanning several centuries, organizational culture is a young but fast-growing area within organizational behavior.

Geertz (1973) discussed culture as “webs of significance” that people, as symbolic creatures, have collectively spun (pp. 5–6). Pacanowsky and O’Donnell-Trujillo (1983) proposed that researchers should start focusing on the *act of spinning*. If we focus only on cultural webs, researchers cannot wholly grasp organizational culture, we miss the vital aspect of our agency and contribute to those webs.

Culture is by and large invisible to individuals. Even though it affects all employee behaviors, thinking, and behavioral patterns, individuals tend to become more aware of their organization’s culture when they have the opportunity to compare it to other organizations. If you have worked in multiple organizations, you can attest to this. Maybe the first organization you worked in was a place where employees dressed formally. It was completely inappropriate to question your boss in a meeting; such behaviors would only be acceptable in private. It was important to check your e-mail at night as well as during weekends or else you would face questions on Monday about where you were and whether you were sick. Contrast this company to a second organization where employees dress more casually. You are encouraged to raise issues and question your boss or peers, even in front of clients. What is more important is not to maintain impressions but to arrive at the best solution to any problem. It is widely known that family life is very important, so it is acceptable to leave work a bit early to go to a family event. Additionally, you are not expected to do work at night or over the weekends unless there is a deadline. These two hypothetical organizations illustrate that organizations have different cultures, and culture dictates what is right and what is acceptable behavior as well as what is wrong and unacceptable.

Why Does Organizational Culture Matter?

An organization's culture may be one of its strongest assets, as well as its biggest liability. In fact, it has been argued that organizations that have a rare and hard-to-imitate organizational culture benefit from it as a competitive advantage (Barney, 1986). In a survey conducted by the management consulting firm Bain & Company in 2007, worldwide business leaders identified corporate culture as important as corporate strategy for business success (Why culture can mean life or death, 2007). This comes as no surprise to many leaders of successful businesses, who are quick to attribute their company's success to their organization's culture.

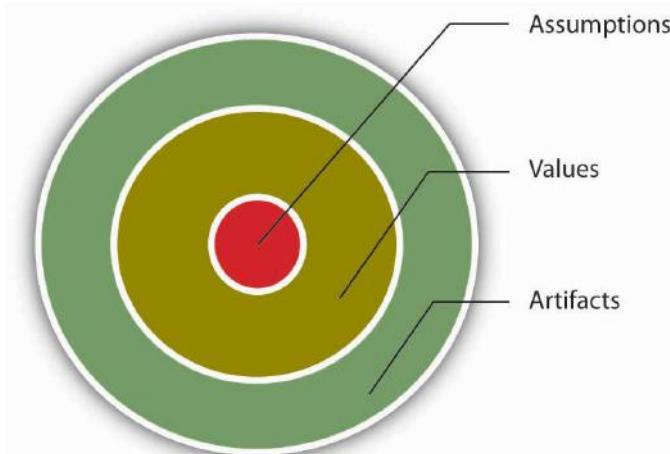
Culture, or shared values within the organization, may be related to increased performance. Researchers found a relationship between organizational cultures and company performance, with respect to success indicators such as revenues, sales volume, market share, and stock prices (Kotter & Heskett, 1992; Marcoulides & Heck, 1993). At the same time, it is important to have a culture that fits with the demands of the company's environment. To the extent shared values are proper for the company in question, company performance may benefit from culture (Arogyaswamy & Byles, 1987). For example, if a company is in the high-tech industry, having a culture that encourages innovativeness and adaptability will support its performance. However, if a company in the same industry has a culture characterized by stability, a high respect for tradition, and a strong preference for upholding rules and procedures, the company may suffer as a result of its culture. In other words, just as having the "right" culture may be a competitive advantage for an organization, having the "wrong" culture may lead to performance difficulties, may be responsible for organizational failure, and may act as a barrier preventing the company from changing and taking risks.

In addition to having implications for organizational performance, *organizational culture is an effective control mechanism for dictating employee behavior.* Culture is in fact a more powerful way of controlling and managing employee behaviors than organizational rules and regulations. When problems are unique, rules tend to be less helpful. Instead, creating a culture of customer service achieves the same result by encouraging employees to think like customers, knowing that the company priorities in this case are clear: Keeping the customer happy is preferable to other concerns such as saving the cost of a refund.

Levels of Organizational Culture

Organizational culture consists of some aspects that are relatively more visible, as well as aspects that may lie below one's conscious awareness. Organizational culture can be thought of as consisting of three interrelated levels (Schein, 1992).

Figure 3



Organizational culture consists of three levels. Source: Adapted from Schein, E. H. (1992). *Organizational culture and leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

At the deepest level, below our awareness lie basic assumptions. **Assumptions** are taken for granted, and they reflect beliefs about human nature and reality. At the second level, values exist. **Values** are shared principles, standards, and goals. Finally, at the surface we have artifacts, or visible, tangible aspects of organizational culture. For example, in an organization one of the basic assumptions employees and managers share might be that happy employees benefit their organizations. This assumption could translate into values such as social equality, high-quality relationships, and having fun. The artifacts reflecting such values might be an executive “open door” policy, an office layout that includes open spaces and gathering areas equipped with pool tables, and frequent company picnics in the workplace. For example, Alcoa Inc. designed their headquarters to reflect the values of making people more

visible and accessible and to promote collaboration (Stegmeier, 2008). In other words, understanding the organization’s culture may start from observing its artifacts: the physical environment, employee interactions, company policies, reward systems, and other observable characteristics. When you are interviewing for a position, observing the physical environment, how people dress, where they relax, and how they talk to others is definitely a good start to understanding the company’s culture. However, simply looking at these tangible aspects is unlikely to give a full picture of the organization. An important chunk of what makes up culture exists below one’s degree of awareness. The values and, at a deeper level, the assumptions that shape the organization’s culture can be uncovered by observing how employees interact and the choices they make, as well as by inquiring about their beliefs and perceptions regarding what is right and appropriate behavior.

Key Takeaway

Organizational culture is a system of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs that help individuals within an organization understand which behaviors are and are not appropriate within an organization. Cultures can be a source of competitive advantage for organizations. Strong organizational cultures can be an organizing as well as a controlling mechanism for organizations. And finally, organizational culture consists of three levels: assumptions, which are below the surface, values, and artifacts.

Exercises

1. Why do companies need culture?
2. Give an example of an aspect of company culture that is a strength and one that is a weakness.
3. In what ways does culture serve as a controlling mechanism?

4. If assumptions are below the surface, why do they matter?
5. Share examples of artifacts you have noticed at different organizations.

Characteristics of Organizational Culture

Learning Objectives

1. Understand different dimensions of organizational culture.
2. Understand the strength of culture.
3. Explore subcultures within organizations.

Strength of Culture

A strong culture is one that is shared by organizational members (Arogyaswamy & Byles, 1987; Chatman & Eunyoung, 2003). In other words, if most employees in the organization show consensus regarding the values of the company, it is possible to talk about the existence of a strong culture. A culture's content is more likely to affect the way employees think and behave when the culture in question is strong. For example, cultural values emphasizing customer service will lead to higher quality customer service if there is widespread agreement among employees on the importance of customer service-related values (Schneider, Salvaggio, & Subirats, 2002).

It is important to realize that a strong culture may act as an asset or liability for the organization, depending on the types of values that are shared. For example, imagine a company with a culture that is strongly outcome oriented. If this value system matches the organizational environment, the company outperforms its competitors. On the other hand, a strong outcome-oriented culture coupled with unethical behaviors and an obsession with quantitative performance indicators may be detrimental to an organization's effectiveness. An extreme example of this dysfunctional type of strong culture is Enron.

A strong culture may sometimes outperform a weak culture because of the consistency of expectations. In a strong culture, members know what is expected of them, and the culture serves as an effective control mechanism on member behaviors. Research shows that strong cultures lead to more stable corporate performance in stable environments. However, in volatile environments, the advantages of culture strength disappear (Sorensen 2002).

One limitation of a strong culture is the difficulty of changing a strong culture. If an organization with widely shared beliefs decides to adopt a different set of values, unlearning the old values and learning the new ones will be a challenge, because employees will need to adopt new ways of thinking, behaving, and responding to critical events. For example, the Home Depot Inc. had a decentralized, autonomous culture where many business decisions were made using "gut feeling" while ignoring the available data. When Robert Nardelli became CEO of the company in 2000, he decided to change its culture, starting with centralizing many of the decisions that were previously left to individual stores. This initiative met with substantial resistance, and many high-level employees left during his first year. Despite getting financial results such as doubling the sales of the company, many of the changes he made were criticized. He left the company in January 2007 (Charan, 2006; Herman & Wernle, 2007).

A strong culture may also be a liability during a merger. During mergers and acquisitions, companies inevitably experience a clash of cultures, as well as a clash of structures and operating systems. Culture clash becomes more problematic if both parties have unique and strong cultures. For example, during the merger of Daimler AG with Chrysler Motors LLC to create DaimlerChrysler AG, the differing strong cultures of each company acted as a barrier to effective integration. Daimler had a strong engineering culture that was more hierarchical and emphasized routinely working long hours. Daimler employees were used to being part of an elite organization, evidenced by flying first class on all business trips. On the other hand, Chrysler had a sales culture where employees and managers were used to autonomy, working shorter hours, and adhering to budget limits that meant only the elite flew first class. The different ways of thinking and behaving in these two companies introduced a number of unanticipated problems during the integration process (Badrtalei & Bates, 2007; Bower, 2001). Differences in culture may be part of the reason that, in the end, the merger didn't work out.



Figure 7 Walt Disney created a strong culture at his company, which has evolved since the company's founding in 1923.
Wikimedia Commons – public domain

Do Organizations Have a Single Culture?

So far, we have assumed that a company has a single culture that is shared throughout the organization. However, you may have realized that this is an oversimplification. In reality there might be multiple cultures within any given organization. For example, people working on the sales floor may experience a different culture from that experienced by people working in the warehouse. A culture that emerges within different departments, branches, or geographic

locations is called a **subculture**. Subcultures may arise from the personal characteristics of employees and managers, as well as the different conditions under which work is performed. Within the same organization, marketing and manufacturing departments often have different cultures such that the marketing department may emphasize innovativeness, whereas the manufacturing department may have a shared emphasis on detail orientation. In an interesting study, researchers uncovered five different subcultures within a single police organization. These subcultures differed depending on the level of danger involved and the type of background experience the individuals held, including “crime-fighting street professionals” who did what their job required without rigidly following protocol and “anti-military social workers” who felt that most problems could be resolved by talking to the parties involved (Jermier et al., 1991). Research has shown that employee perceptions regarding subcultures were related to employee commitment to the organization (Lok, Westwood, & Crawford, 2005). Therefore, in addition to understanding the broader organization’s values, managers will need to make an effort to understand subculture values to see its impact on workforce behavior and attitudes. Moreover, as an employee, you need to understand the type of subculture in the department where you will work in addition to understanding the company’s overall culture.

Sometimes, a subculture may take the form of a **counterculture**. Defined as shared values and beliefs that are in direct opposition to the values of the broader organizational culture (Kerr & Slocum, 2005), countercultures are often shaped around a charismatic leader. For example, within a large bureaucratic organization, an enclave of innovativeness and risk taking may emerge within a single department. A counterculture may be tolerated by the organization as long as it is bringing in results and contributing positively to the effectiveness of the organization. However, its existence may be perceived as a threat to the broader organizational culture. In some cases this may lead to actions that would take away the autonomy of the managers and eliminate the counterculture.

Key Takeaway

Culture can be understood in terms of seven different culture dimensions, depending on what is most emphasized within the organization. For example, innovative cultures are flexible and adaptable, and they experiment with new ideas, while stable cultures are predictable, rule-oriented, and bureaucratic. Strong cultures can be an asset or a liability for an organization but can be challenging to change. Organizations may have subcultures and countercultures, which can be challenging to manage.

Exercises

1. Think about an organization you are familiar with. Based on the dimensions of OCP, how would you characterize its culture?
2. Out of the culture dimensions described, which dimension do you think would lead to higher levels of employee satisfaction and retention? Which one would be related to company performance?
3. What are the pros and cons of an outcome-oriented culture?
4. When bureaucracies were first invented they were considered quite innovative. Do you think that different cultures are more or less effective at different points in time and in different industries? Why or why not?
5. Can you imagine an effective use of subcultures within an organization?

Creating and Maintaining Organizational Culture

Learning Objectives

1. Understand how cultures are created.
2. Learn how to maintain a culture.
3. Recognize organizational culture signs.

How Are Cultures Created?

Where do cultures come from? Understanding this question is important so that you know how they can be changed. An organization's culture is shaped as the organization faces external and internal challenges and learns how to deal with them. When the organization's way of doing business provides a successful adaptation to environmental challenges and ensures success, those values are retained. These values and ways of doing business are taught to new members as the way to do business (Schein, 1992).

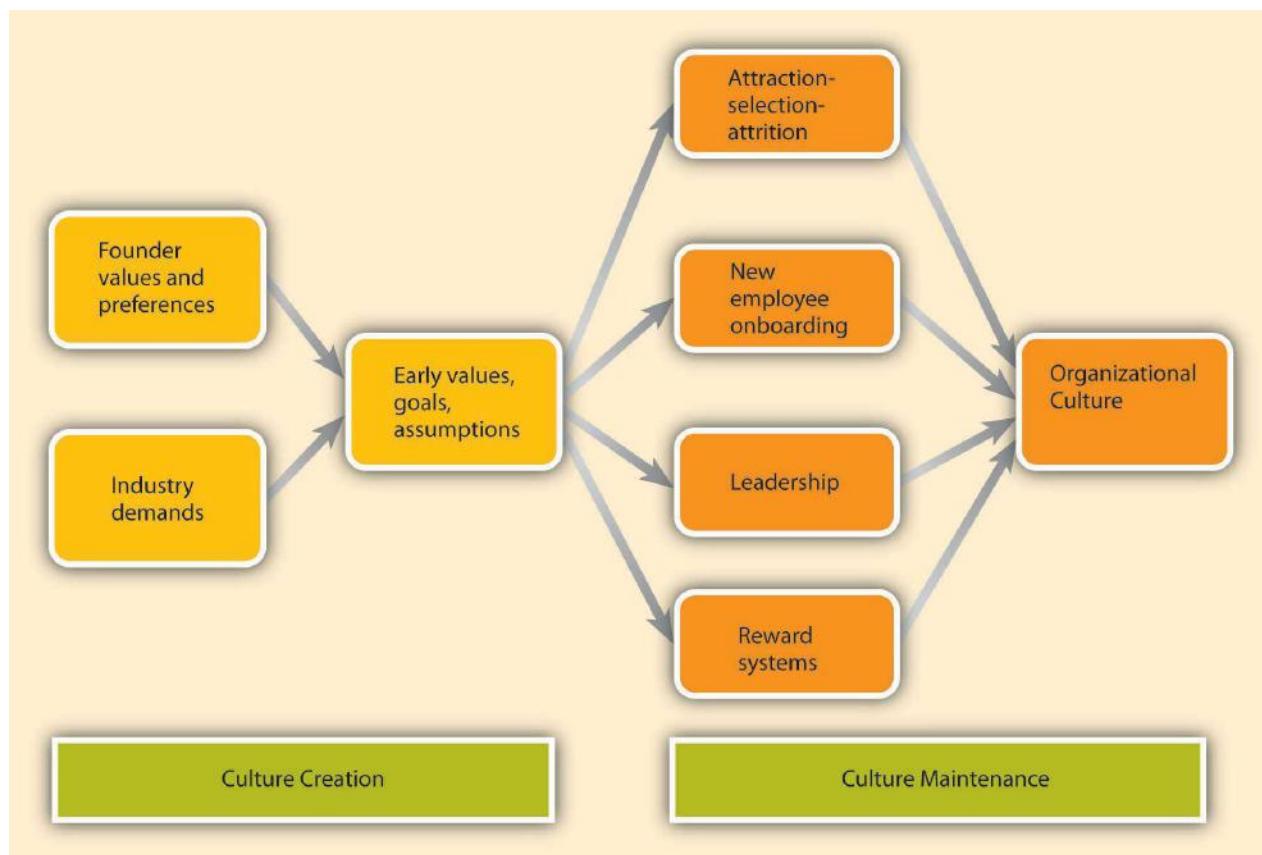


Figure 8 Culture Creation and Maintenance

The factors that are most important in the creation of an organization's culture include founders' values, preferences, and industry demands.

How Are Cultures Maintained?

As a company matures, its cultural values are refined and strengthened. The early values of a company's culture exert influence over its future values. It is possible to think of organizational culture as an organism that protects itself from external forces. Organizational culture determines what types of people are hired by an organization and what types are left out. Moreover, once new employees are hired, the company assimilates new employees and teaches them the way things are done in the organization. We call these processes **attraction-selection-attrition** and **onboarding** processes. We will also examine the role of *leaders* and *reward systems* in shaping and maintaining an organization's culture. It is important to remember two points: The process of culture creation is in fact more complex and less clean than the name implies. Additionally, the influence of each factor on culture creation is reciprocal. For example, just as leaders may influence what type of values the company has, the culture may also determine what types of behaviors leaders demonstrate.

Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA)

Organizational culture is maintained through a process known as attraction-selection-attrition. First, employees are attracted to organizations where they will fit in. In other words, different job applicants will find different cultures to be attractive. Someone who has a competitive nature may feel comfortable and prefer to work in a company where interpersonal competition is the norm. Others may prefer to work in a team-oriented workplace. Research shows that employees with different personality traits find different cultures attractive. For example, out of the Big Five personality traits, employees who demonstrate neurotic personalities were less likely to be attracted to innovative cultures, whereas those who had openness to experience were more likely to be attracted to innovative cultures (Judge & Cable, 1997). As a result, individuals will self-select the companies they work for and may stay away from companies that have core values that are radically different from their own.

Of course this process is imperfect, and value similarity is only one reason a candidate might be attracted to a company. There may be other, more powerful attractions such as good benefits. For example, candidates who are potential misfits may still be attracted to Google because of the cool perks associated with being a Google employee. At this point in the process, the second component of the ASA framework prevents them from getting in: Selection. Just as candidates are looking for places where they will fit in, companies are also looking for people who will fit into their current corporate culture. Many companies are hiring people for fit with their culture, as opposed to fit with a certain job. For example, Southwest Airlines prides itself for hiring employees based on personality and attitude rather than specific job-related skills, which are learned after being hired. This is important for job applicants to know, because in addition to highlighting your job-relevant skills, you will need to discuss why your personality and values match those of the company. Companies use different techniques to weed out candidates who do not fit with corporate values. For example, Google relies on multiple interviews with future peers. By introducing the candidate to several future coworkers and learning what these coworkers think of the candidate, it becomes easier to assess the level of fit. The Container Store Inc. ensures culture fit by hiring among their customers (Arnold, 2007). This way, they can make sure that job candidates are already interested in organizing their lives and understand the company's commitment to helping customers organize theirs. Companies may also use employee referrals in their recruitment process. By using their current employees as a source of future employees, companies may make sure that the newly hired employees go through a screening process to avoid potential person-culture mismatch.

Even after a company selects people for person-organization fit, there may be new employees who do not fit in. Some candidates may be skillful in impressing recruiters and signal high levels of culture fit even though they do not necessarily share the company's values. Moreover, recruiters may suffer from perceptual biases and hire some candidates thinking that they fit with the culture even though the actual fit is low. In any event, the organization is going to eventually eliminate candidates who do not fit in through attrition. Attrition refers to the natural process in which the candidates who do not fit in will leave the company. Research indicates that person-organization misfit is one of the important reasons for employee turnover (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; O'Reilly III, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991).

Click and Learn More

Texas Instruments Inc. includes a Workplace and Values Check on its Web page for potential applicants to see if they fit Texas Instrument's culture.

To view this Web site, go to <http://focus.ti.com/careers/docs/fitchecktool.tsp?sectionId=152&tabId=1678>

As a result of the ASA process, the company attracts, selects, and retains people who share its core values. On the other hand, those people who are different in core values will be excluded from the organization either during the hiring process or later on through naturally occurring turnover. Thus, organizational culture will act as a self-defending organism where intrusive elements are kept out. Supporting the existence of such self-protective mechanisms, research shows that organizations demonstrate a certain level of homogeneity regarding personalities and values of organizational members (Giberson, Resick, & Dickson, 2005).

New Employee Onboarding

Another way in which an organization's values, norms, and behavioral patterns are transmitted to employees is through onboarding (also referred to as the **organizational socialization** process). Onboarding refers to the process through which new employees learn the attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviors required to function effectively within an organization. If an organization can successfully socialize new employees into becoming organizational insiders, new employees feel confident regarding their ability to perform, sense that they will feel accepted by their peers, and understand and share the assumptions, norms, and values that are part of the organization's culture. This understanding and confidence in turn translate into more effective new employees who perform better and have higher job satisfaction, stronger organizational commitment, and longer tenure within the company (Bauer et al., 2007).

There are many factors that play a role in the successful adjustment of new employees. New employees can engage in several activities to help increase their own chances of success at a new organization. Organizations also engage in different activities, such as implementing orientation programs or matching new employees with mentors, which may facilitate onboarding.

OB Toolbox: You've Got a New Job! Now How Do You Get on Board?

- *Gather information.* Try to find as much about the company and the job as you can before your first day. After you start working, be a good observer, gather information, and read as much as you can to understand your job and the company. Examine how people are interacting, how they dress, and how they act to avoid behaviors that might indicate to others that you are a misfit.
- *Manage your first impression.* First impressions may endure, so make sure that you dress appropriately, are friendly, and communicate your excitement to be a part of the team. Be on your best behavior!
- *Invest in relationship development.* The relationships you develop with your manager and with coworkers will be essential for you to adjust to your new job. Take the time to strike up conversations with them. If there are work functions during your early days, make sure not to miss them!
- *Seek feedback.* Ask your manager or coworkers how well you are doing and whether you are meeting expectations. Listen to what they are telling you and also listen to what they are not saying. Then, make sure to act upon any suggestions for improvement. Be aware that after seeking feedback, you may create a negative impression if you consistently ignore the feedback you receive.
- *Show success early on.* In order to gain the trust of your new manager and colleagues, you may want to establish a history of success early. Volunteer for high-profile projects where you will be able to demonstrate your skills. Alternatively, volunteer for projects that may serve as learning opportunities or that may put you in touch with the key people in the company.

Sources: Adapted from ideas in Couzins, M., & Beagrie, S. (2005, March 1). How to...survive the first six months of a new job. *Personnel Today*, 27; Wahlgreen, E. (2002, December 5). Getting up to speed at a new job. *Business Week Online*. Retrieved January 29, 2009, from http://www.businessweek.com/careers/content/dec2002/ca2002123_2774.htm.

Leadership

Leaders are instrumental in creating and changing an organization's culture. There is a direct correspondence between a leader's style and an organization's culture. For example, when leaders motivate employees through inspiration, corporate culture tends to be more supportive and people oriented. When leaders motivate by making rewards contingent on performance, the corporate culture tends to be more performance oriented and competitive (Sarros, Gray, & Dernsten, 2002). In these and many other ways, what leaders do directly influences the cultures their organizations have.

Part of the leader's influence over culture is through role modeling. Many studies have suggested that leader behavior, the consistency between organizational policy and leader actions, and leader role modeling determine the degree to which the organization's culture emphasizes ethics (Driscoll & McKee, 2007). The leader's own behaviors will signal to employees what is acceptable behavior and what is unacceptable. In an organization in which high-level managers make the effort to involve others in decision making and seek opinions of others, a team-oriented culture is more likely to evolve. By acting as role models, leaders send signals to the organization about the norms and values that are expected to guide the actions of organizational members.

Leaders also shape culture by their reactions to the actions of others around them. For example, do they praise a

job well done, or do they praise a favored employee regardless of what was accomplished? How do they react when someone admits to making an honest mistake? What are their priorities? In meetings, what types of questions do they ask? Do they want to know what caused accidents so that they can be prevented, or do they seem more concerned about how much money was lost as a result of an accident? Do they seem outraged when an employee is disrespectful to a coworker, or does their reaction depend on whether they like the harasser? Through their day-to-day actions, leaders shape and maintain an organization's culture.

Reward Systems

Finally, the company culture is shaped by the type of reward systems used in the organization, and the kinds of behaviors and outcomes it chooses to reward and punish. One relevant element of the reward system is whether the organization rewards behaviors or results. Some companies have reward systems that emphasize intangible elements of performance as well as more easily observable metrics. In these companies, supervisors and peers may evaluate an employee's performance by assessing the person's behaviors as well as the results. In such companies, we may expect a culture that is relatively people or team oriented, and employees act as part of a family (Kerr & Slocum, 2005). On the other hand, in companies that purely reward goal achievement, there is a focus on measuring only the results without much regard to the process. In these companies, we might observe outcome-oriented and competitive cultures. Another categorization of reward systems might be whether the organization uses rankings or ratings. In a company where the reward system pits members against one another, where employees are ranked against each other and the lower performers receive long-term or short-term punishments, it would be hard to develop a culture of people orientation and may lead to a competitive culture. On the other hand, evaluation systems that reward employee behavior by comparing them to absolute standards as opposed to comparing employees to each other may pave the way to a team-oriented culture. Whether the organization rewards performance or seniority would also make a difference in culture. When promotions are based on seniority, it would be difficult to establish a culture of outcome orientation. Finally, the types of behaviors that are rewarded or ignored set the tone for the culture. Service-oriented cultures reward, recognize, and publicize exceptional service on the part of their employees. In safety cultures, safety metrics are emphasized and the organization is proud of its low accident ratings. What behaviors are rewarded, which ones are punished, and which are ignored will determine how a company's culture evolves.

Visual Elements of Organizational Culture

How do you find out about a company's culture? We emphasized earlier that culture influences the way members of the organization think, behave, and interact with one another. Thus, one way of finding out about a company's culture is by observing employees or interviewing them. At the same time, culture manifests itself in some visible aspects of the organization's environment. In this section, we discuss five ways in which culture shows itself to observers and employees.

Mission Statement

A mission statement is a statement of purpose, describing who the company is and what it does. Many companies have mission statements, but they do not always reflect the company's values and its purpose. An effective mission statement

is well known by employees, is transmitted to all employees starting from their first day at work, and influences employee behavior.

Not all mission statements are effective, because some are written by public relations specialists and can be found in a company's Web site, but it does not affect how employees act or behave. In fact, some mission statements reflect who the company wants to be as opposed to who they actually are. If the mission statement does not affect employee behavior on a day-to-day basis, it has little usefulness as a tool for understanding the company's culture. An oft-cited example of a mission statement that had little impact on how a company operates belongs to Enron. Their missions and values statement began, "As a partner in the communities in which we operate, Enron believes it has a responsibility to conduct itself according to certain basic principles." Their values statement included such ironic declarations as "We do not tolerate abusive or disrespectful treatment. Ruthlessness, callousness and arrogance don't belong here" (Kunen, 2002).

A mission statement that is taken seriously and widely communicated may provide insights into the corporate culture. For example, the Mayo Clinic's mission statement is "The needs of the patient come first." This mission statement evolved from the founders who are quoted as saying, "The best interest of the patient is the only interest to be considered." Mayo Clinics have a corporate culture that puts patients first. For example, no incentives are given to physicians based on the number of patients they see. Because doctors are salaried, they have no interest in retaining a patient for themselves and they refer the patient to other doctors when needed (Jarnagin & Slocum, 2007). Wal-Mart Stores Inc. may be another example of a company who lives its mission statement, and therefore its mission statement may give hints about its culture: "Saving people money so they can live better" (Wal-Mart, 2008). In fact, their culture emphasizes thrift and cost control in everything they do. For example, even though most CEOs of large companies in the United States have lavish salaries and showy offices, Wal-Mart's CEO Michael Duke and other high-level corporate officers work out of modest offices in the company's headquarters.

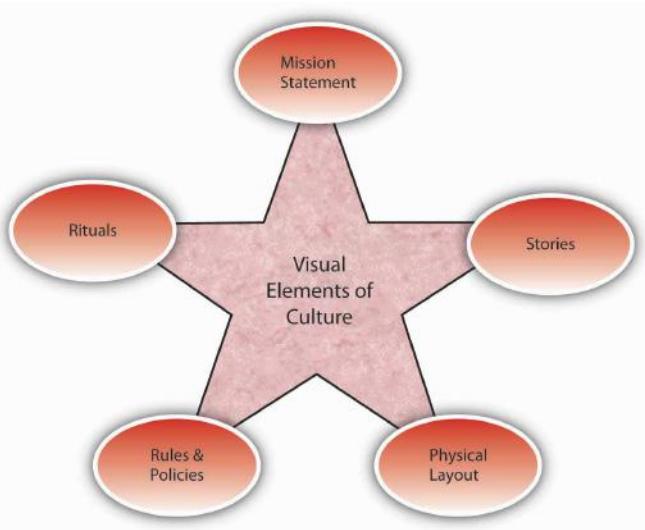


Figure 10 Visual Elements of Culture

Rituals

Rituals refer to repetitive activities within an organization that have symbolic meaning (Anand, 2005). Usually rituals have their roots in the history of a company's culture. They create camaraderie and a sense of belonging among employees. They also serve to teach employees corporate values and create identification with the organization. For example, at the cosmetics firm Mary Kay Inc., employees attend award ceremonies recognizing their top salespeople with an award of a new car—traditionally a pink Cadillac. These ceremonies are conducted in large auditoriums where participants wear elaborate evening gowns and sing company songs that create emotional excitement. During this ritual, employees feel a connection to the company culture and its values, such as self-determination, will power, and enthusiasm (Jarnagin & Slocum, 2007). Another example of rituals is the Saturday morning meetings of Wal-Mart. This ritual was first created by the company founder Sam Walton, who used these meetings to discuss which products and practices were doing well and which required adjustment. He was able to use this information to make changes in Wal-Mart's stores before the start of the week, which gave him a competitive advantage over rival stores who would make their adjustments based on weekly sales figures during the middle of the following week. Today, hundreds of Wal-Mart associates attend the Saturday morning meetings in the Bentonville, Arkansas, headquarters. The meetings, which run from 7:00 to 9:30 a.m., start and end with the Wal-Mart cheer; the agenda includes a discussion of weekly sales figures and merchandising tactics. As a ritual, the meetings help maintain a small-company atmosphere, ensure employee involvement and accountability, communicate a performance orientation, and demonstrate taking quick action (Schlender, 2005; Wal around the world, 2001).



Figure 11 Tradition is important at Wal-Mart. Sam Walton's original Walton's Five and Dime is now the Wal-Mart Visitor's Center in Bentonville, Arkansas

Rules and Policies

Another way in which an observer may find out about a company's culture is to examine its rules and policies. Companies create rules to determine acceptable and unacceptable behavior, and thus the rules that exist in a company will signal the type of values it has. Policies about issues such as decision making, human resources, and employee privacy reveal what the company values and emphasizes. For example, a company that has a policy such as "all pricing decisions of merchandise will be made at corporate headquarters" is likely to have a centralized culture that is hierarchical, as opposed to decentralized and empowering. Similarly, a company that extends benefits to both part-time and full-time employees, as well as to spouses and domestic partners, signals to employees and observers that it cares about its employees and shows concern for their well-being. By offering employees flexible work hours, sabbaticals, and telecommuting opportunities, a company may communicate its emphasis on work-life balance. The presence or absence of policies on sensitive issues such as English-only rules, bullying or unfair treatment of others, workplace surveillance, open-door policies, sexual harassment, workplace romances, and corporate social responsibility all provide pieces of the puzzle that make up a company's culture.

Physical Layout

A company's building, including the layout of employee offices and other work spaces, communicates important messages about a company's culture. The building architecture may indicate the core values of an organization's culture. For example, visitors walking into the Nike Inc. campus in Beaverton, Oregon, can witness firsthand some of the distinguishing characteristics of the company's culture. The campus is set on 74 acres and boasts an artificial lake, walking trails, soccer fields, and cutting-edge fitness centers. The campus functions as a symbol of Nike's values such as energy, physical fitness, an emphasis on quality, and a competitive orientation. In addition, at fitness centers on the Nike headquarters, only those wearing Nike shoes and apparel are allowed in. This sends a strong signal that loyalty is expected. The company's devotion to athletes and their winning spirits is manifested in campus buildings named after famous athletes, photos of athletes hanging on the walls, and honorary statues dotting the campus (Capowski, 1993; Collins & Porras, 1996; Labich & Carvell, 1995; Mitchell, 2002). A very different tone awaits visitors to Wal-Mart headquarters, where managers have gray and windowless offices (Berner, 2007). By putting its managers in small offices and avoiding outward signs of flashiness, Wal-Mart does a good job of highlighting its values of economy.

The layout of the office space also is a strong indicator of a company's culture. A company that has an open layout where high-level managers interact with employees may have a culture of team orientation and egalitarianism, whereas a company where high-level managers have their own floor may indicate a higher level of hierarchy. Microsoft employees tend to have offices with walls and a door, because the culture emphasizes solitude, concentration, and privacy. In contrast, Intel Corporation is famous for its standard cubicles, which reflect its culture of equality. The same value can also be observed in its avoidance of private and reserved parking spots (Clark, 2007). The degree to which playfulness, humor, and fun is part of a company's culture may be indicated in the office environment. For example, Jive Software boasts a colorful, modern, and comfortable office design. Their break room is equipped with a keg of beer, free snacks and sodas, an XBOX 360, and Nintendo Wii. A casual observation of their work environment sends the message that employees who work there see their work as fun (Jive Software, 2008).

Stories

Perhaps the most colorful and effective way in which organizations communicate their culture to new employees and organizational members is through the skillful use of stories. A story can highlight a critical event an organization faced and the collective response to it, or can emphasize a heroic effort of a single employee illustrating the company's values. The stories usually engage employee emotions and generate employee identification with the company or the heroes of the tale. A compelling story may be a key mechanism through which managers motivate employees by giving their behavior direction and energizing them toward a certain goal (Beslin, 2007). Moreover, stories shared with new employees communicate the company's history, its values and priorities, and serve the purpose of creating a bond between the new employee and the organization. For example, you may already be familiar with the story of how a scientist at 3M invented Post-it notes. Arthur Fry, a 3M scientist, was using slips of paper to mark the pages of hymns in his church choir, but they kept falling off. He remembered a super-weak adhesive that had been invented in 3M's labs, and he coated the markers with this adhesive. Thus, the Post-it notes were born. However, marketing surveys for the interest in such a product were weak, and the distributors were not convinced that it had a market. Instead of giving up, Fry distributed samples of the small yellow sticky notes to secretaries throughout his company. Once they tried them, people loved them and asked for more. Word spread, and this led to the ultimate success of the product. As you can see, this story does a great job of describing the core values of a 3M employee: Being innovative by finding unexpected uses for objects, persevering, and being proactive in the face of negative feedback (Higgins & McAllester, 2002).

OB Toolbox: As a Job Candidate, How Would You Find Out If You Are a Good Fit?

- *Do your research.* Talking to friends and family members who are familiar with the company, doing an online search for news articles about the company, browsing the company's Web site, and reading their mission statement would be a good start.
- *Observe the physical environment.* Do people work in cubicles or in offices? What is the dress code? What is the building structure? Do employees look happy, tired, or stressed? The answers to these questions are all pieces of the puzzle.
- *Read between the lines.* For example, the absence of a lengthy employee handbook or detailed procedures might mean that the company is more flexible and less bureaucratic.
- *How are you treated?* The recruitment process is your first connection to the company. Were you treated with respect? Do they maintain contact with you, or are you being ignored for long stretches at a time?
- *Ask questions.* What happened to the previous incumbent of this job? What does it take to be successful in this firm? What would their ideal candidate for the job look like? The answers to these questions will reveal a lot about the way they do business.
- *Listen to your gut.* Your feelings about the place in general, and your future manager and coworkers in particular, are important signs that you should not ignore.

Sources: Adapted from ideas in Daniel, L., & Brandon, C. (2006). Finding the right job fit. *HR Magazine*, 51, 62–67; Sacks, D. (2005). Cracking your next company's culture. *Fast Company*, 99, 85–87.

Key Takeaway

Organization cultures are created by a variety of factors, including founders' values and preferences, industry demands, and early values, goals, and assumptions. Culture is maintained through attraction-selection-attrition, new employee onboarding, leadership, and organizational reward systems. Signs of a company's culture include the organization's mission statement, stories, physical layout, rules and policies, and rituals.

Exercises

1. Do you think it is a good idea for companies to emphasize person-organization fit when hiring new employees? What advantages and disadvantages do you see when hiring people who fit with company values?
2. What is the influence of company founders on company culture? Give examples based on your

personal knowledge.

3. What are the methods companies use to aid with employee onboarding? What is the importance of onboarding for organizations?
4. What type of a company do you feel would be a good fit for you? What type of a culture would be a misfit for you? In your past work experience, were there any moments when you felt that you did not fit with the organization? Why?
5. What is the role of physical layout as an indicator of company culture? What type of a physical layout would you expect from a company that is people oriented? Team oriented? Stable?

Creating Culture Change

Learning Objectives

1. Explain why culture change may be necessary.
2. Understand the process of culture change.

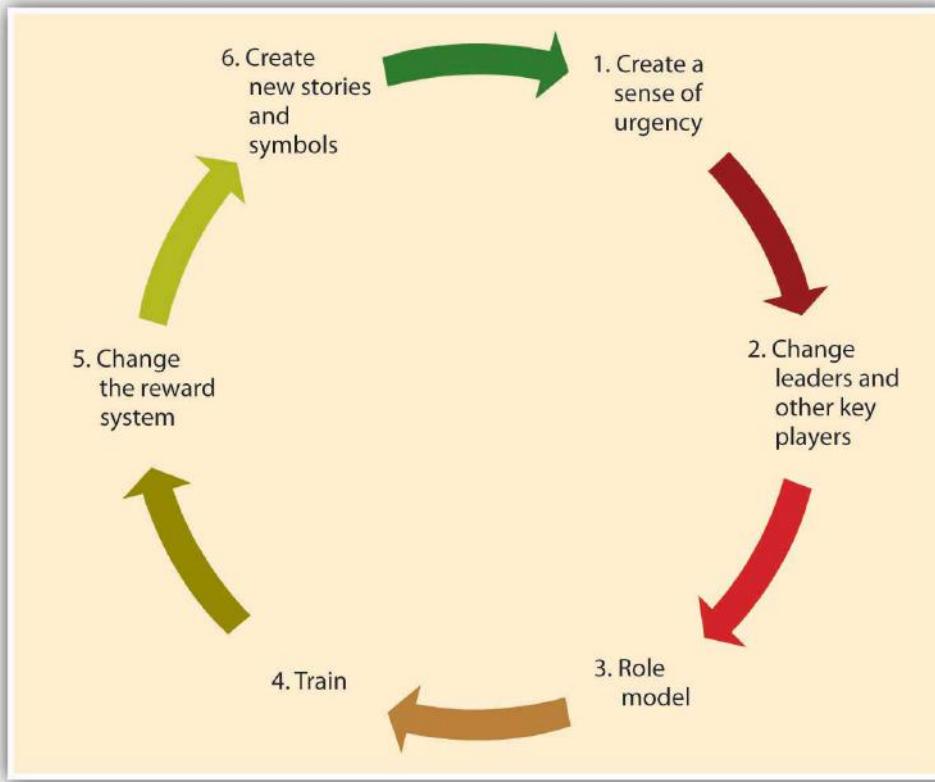
How Do Cultures Change?

Culture is part of a company's DNA and is resistant to change efforts. Unfortunately, many organizations may not even realize that their current culture constitutes a barrier against organizational productivity and performance. Changing company culture may be the key to the company turnaround when there is a mismatch between an organization's values and the demands of its environment.

Certain conditions may help with culture change. For example, if an organization is *experiencing failure* in the short run or is under threat of bankruptcy or an imminent loss of market share, it would be easier to convince managers and employees that culture change is necessary. A company can use such downturns to generate employee commitment to the change effort. However, if the organization has been successful in the past, and if employees do not perceive an urgency necessitating culture change, the change effort will be more challenging. Sometimes the external environment may force an organization to undergo culture change. *Mergers and acquisitions* are another example of an event that changes a company's culture. In fact, the ability of the two merging companies to harmonize their corporate cultures is often what makes or breaks a merger effort. When Ben & Jerry's was acquired by Unilever, Ben & Jerry's had to change parts of its culture while attempting to retain some of its unique aspects. Corporate social responsibility, creativity, and fun remained as parts of the culture. In fact, when Unilever appointed a veteran French executive as the CEO of Ben & Jerry's in 2000, he was greeted by an Eiffel tower made out of ice cream pints, Edith Piaf songs, and employees wearing berets and dark glasses. At the same time, the company had to become more performance oriented in response to the acquisition. All employees had to keep an eye on the bottom line. For this purpose, they took an accounting and finance course for which they had to operate a lemonade stand (Kiger, 2005). Achieving culture change is challenging, and many

companies ultimately fail in this mission. Research and case studies of companies that successfully changed their culture indicate that the following six steps increase the chances of success (Schein, 1990).

Figure 15.12 Six Steps to Culture Change



Creating a Sense of Urgency

In order for the change effort to be successful, it is important to communicate the need for change to employees. One way of doing this is to create a sense of urgency on the part of employees and explain to them why changing the fundamental way in which business is done is so important. In successful culture change efforts, leaders communicate with employees and present a case for culture change as the essential element that will lead the company to eventual success. As an example, consider the situation at IBM Corporation in 1993 when Lou Gerstner was brought in as CEO and chairman. After decades of dominating the market for mainframe computers, IBM was rapidly losing market share to competitors, and its efforts to sell personal computers—the original “PC”—were seriously undercut by cheaper “clones.” In the public’s estimation, the name IBM had become associated with obsolescence. Gerstner recalls that the crisis IBM was facing became his ally in changing the organization’s culture. Instead of spreading optimism about the company’s future, he used the crisis at every opportunity to get buy-in from employees (Gerstner, 2002).

Changing Leaders and Other Key Players

A leader’s vision is an important factor that influences how things are done in an organization. Thus, culture change often follows changes at the highest levels of the organization. Moreover, in order to implement the change effort

quickly and efficiently, a company may find it helpful to remove managers and other powerful employees who are acting as a barrier to change. Because of political reasons, self interest, or habits, managers may create powerful resistance to change efforts. In such cases, replacing these positions with employees and managers giving visible support to the change effort may increase the likelihood that the change effort succeeds. For example, when Robert Iger replaced Michael Eisner as CEO of the Walt Disney Company, one of the first things he did was to abolish the central planning unit, which was staffed by people close to ex-CEO Eisner. This department was viewed as a barrier to creativity at Disney, and its removal from the company was helpful in ensuring the innovativeness of the company culture (McGregor et al., 2007).

Role Modeling

Role modeling is the process by which employees modify their own beliefs and behaviors to reflect those of the leader (Kark & Dijk, 2007). CEOs can model the behaviors that are expected of employees to change the culture. The ultimate goal is that these behaviors will trickle down to lower level employees. For example, when Robert Iger took over Disney, in order to show his commitment to innovation, he personally became involved in the process of game creation, attended summits of developers, and gave feedback to programmers about the games. Thus, he modeled his engagement in the idea creation process. In contrast, modeling of inappropriate behavior from the top will lead to the same behavior trickling down to lower levels. A recent example of this type of role modeling is the scandal involving Hewlett-Packard Development Company LP board members. In 2006, when board members were suspected of leaking confidential company information to the press, the company's top-level executives hired a team of security experts to find the source of the leak. The investigators sought the phone records of board members, linking them to journalists. For this purpose, they posed as board members and called phone companies to obtain the itemized home phone records of board members and journalists. When the investigators' methods came to light, HP's chairman and four other top executives faced criminal and civil charges. When such behavior is modeled at top levels, it is likely to have an adverse impact on the company culture (Barron, 2007).

Training

Well-crafted training programs may be instrumental in bringing about culture change by teaching employees the new norms and behavioral styles. For example, after the space shuttle Columbia disintegrated upon reentry from a February 2003 mission, NASA decided to change its culture to become more safety sensitive and minimize decision-making errors leading to unsafe behaviors. The change effort included training programs in team processes and cognitive bias awareness. Similarly, when auto repairer Midas International Corporation felt the need to change its culture to be more committed to customers, they developed a training program making employees familiar with customer emotions and helping form better connections with them. Customer reports have been overwhelmingly positive in stores that underwent this training (BST to guide culture change effort at NASA, 2004).

Changing the Reward System

The criteria with which employees are rewarded and punished have a powerful role in determining the cultural values in existence. Switching from a commission-based incentive structure to a straight salary system may be instrumental in bringing about customer focus among sales employees. Moreover, by rewarding employees who embrace the company's

new values and even promoting these employees, organizations can make sure that changes in culture have a lasting impact. If a company wants to develop a team-oriented culture where employees collaborate with each other, methods such as using individual-based incentives may backfire. Instead, distributing bonuses to intact teams might be more successful in bringing about culture change.

Creating New Symbols and Stories

Finally, the success of the culture change effort may be increased by developing new rituals, symbols, and stories. Continental Airlines Inc. is a company that successfully changed its culture to be less bureaucratic and more team oriented in the 1990s. One of the first things management did to show employees that they really meant to abolish many of the detailed procedures the company had and create a culture of empowerment was to burn the heavy 800-page company policy manual in their parking lot. The new manual was only 80 pages. This action symbolized the upcoming changes in the culture and served as a powerful story that circulated among employees. Another early action was the redecorating of waiting areas and repainting of all their planes, again symbolizing the new order of things (Higgins & McAllester, 2004). By replacing the old symbols and stories, the new symbols and stories will help enable the culture change and ensure that the new values are communicated.

Key Takeaway

Organizations need to change their culture to respond to changing conditions in the environment, to remain competitive, and to avoid complacency or stagnation. Culture change often begins with the creation of a sense of urgency. Next, a change of leaders and other key players may enact change and serve as effective role models of new behavior. Training can also be targeted toward fostering these new behaviors. Reward systems are changed within the organization. Finally, the organization creates new stories and symbols.

Exercises

1. Can new employees change a company's culture? If so, how?
2. Are there conditions under which change is not possible? If so, what would such conditions be?
3. Have you ever observed a change process at an organization you were involved with? If so, what worked well and what didn't?
4. What recommendations would you have for someone considering a major change of culture within their own organization?

References

- Allen, T. D., Eby, L. T., & Lentz, E. (2006). Mentorship behaviors and mentorship quality associated with formal mentoring programs: Closing the gap between research and practice. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91, 567–578.
- Anand, N. (2005). *Blackwell encyclopedic dictionary of organizational behavior*. Cambridge: Wiley.
- Arnold, J. T. (2007, April). Customers as employees. *HR Magazine*, 77–82.
- Arogyaswamy, B., & Byles, C. H. (1987). Organizational culture: Internal and external fits. *Journal of Management*, 13, 647–658.
- Arogyaswamy, B., & Byles, C. M. (1987). Organizational culture: Internal and external fits. *Journal of Management*, 13, 647–658.
- Badrtalei, J., & Bates, D. L. (2007). Effect of organizational cultures on mergers and acquisitions: The case of DaimlerChrysler. *International Journal of Management*, 24, 303–317.
- Barney, J. B. (1986). Organizational culture: Can it be a source of sustained competitive advantage? *Academy of Management Review*, 11, 656–665.
- Bauer, T. N., & Green, S. G. (1998). Testing the combined effects of newcomer information seeking and manager behavior on socialization. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 83, 72–83.
- Bauer, T. N., Bodner, T., Erdogan, B., Truxillo, D. M., & Tucker, J. S. (2007). Newcomer adjustment during organizational socialization: A meta-analytic review of antecedents, outcomes, and methods. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92, 707–721.
- Berner, R. (2007, February 12). My Year at Wal-Mart. *Business Week*, 4021, 70–74.
- Beslin, R. (2007). Story building: A new tool for engaging employees in setting direction. *Ivey Business Journal*, 71, 1–8.
- Bolino, M. C., & Turnley, W. H. (2003). Going the extra mile: Cultivating and managing employee citizenship behavior. *Academy of Management Executive*, 17, 60–71.
- Bower, J. L. (2001). Not all M&As are alike—and that matters. *Harvard Business Review*, 79, 92–101.
- Boyle, M. (2004, November 15). Kraft's arrested development. *Fortune*, 150, 144.
- Capowski, G. S. (1993, June). Designing a corporate identity. *Management Review*, 82, 37–41.
- Charan, R. (2006, April). Home Depot's blueprint for culture change. *Harvard Business Review*, 84, 60–70.
- Chatman, J. A., & Eunyoung Cha, S. (2003). Leading by leveraging culture. *California Management Review*, 45, 20–34.
- Chatman, J. A., & Eunyoung Cha, S. (2003). Leading by leveraging culture. *California Management Review*, 45, 19–34.
- Chatman, J. A., & Jehn, K. A. (1991). Assessing the relationship between industry characteristics and organizational culture: How different can you be? *Academy of Management Journal*, 37, 522–553.
- Chatman, J. A., & Jehn, K. A. (1994). Assessing the relationship between industry characteristics and organizational culture: How different can you be? *Academy of Management Journal*, 37, 522–553.
- Christie, L. (2005). America's most dangerous jobs. Survey: Loggers and fisherman still take the most risk; roofers record sharp increase in fatalities. CNN/Money. Retrieved from http://money.cnn.com/2005/08/26/pf/jobs_jeopardy/.
- Clark, D. (2007, October 15). Why Silicon Valley is rethinking the cubicle office. *Wall Street Journal*, 250, p. B9.
- Collins, J., & Porras, J. I. (1996). Building your company's vision. *Harvard Business Review*, 74, 65–77.
- Conley, L. (2005, April). Cultural phenomenon. *Fast Company*, 93, 76–77.
- Copeland, M. V. (2004, July). Best Buy's selling machine. *Business 2.0*, 5, 92–102.
- Deutschman, A. (2004, December). The fabric of creativity. *Fast Company*, 89, 54–62.
- Driscoll, K., & McKee, M. (2007). Restorying a culture of ethical and spiritual values: A role for leader storytelling. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 73, 205–217.
- Durett, J. (2006, March 1). Technology opens the door to success at Ritz-Carlton. Retrieved January 28, 2009, from http://www.managesmarter.com/msg/search/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1002157749.

- Elswick, J. (2000, February). Puttin' on the Ritz: Hotel chain touts training to benefit its recruiting and retention. *Employee Benefit News*, 14, 9.
- Erdogan, B., Liden, R. C., & Kraimer, M. L. (2006). Justice and leader-member exchange: The moderating role of organizational culture. *Academy of Management Journal*, 49, 395–406.
- Fisher, A. (2005, March 7). Starting a new job? Don't blow it. *Fortune*, 151, 48.
- Fitch, S. (2004, May 10). Soft pillows and sharp elbows. *Forbes*, 173, 66–78.
- Ford, R. C., & Heaton, C. P. (2001). Lessons from hospitality that can serve anyone. *Organizational Dynamics*, 30, 30–47.
- Giberson, T. R., Resick, C. J., & Dickson, M. W. (2005). Embedding leader characteristics: An examination of homogeneity of personality and values in organizations. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 90, 1002–1010.
- Gordon, G. G. (1991). Industry determinants of organizational culture. *Academy of Management Review*, 16, 396–415.
- Greene, J., Reinhardt, A., & Lowry, T. (2004, May 31). Teaching Microsoft to make nice? *Business Week*, 3885, 80–81.
- Herman, J., & Wernle, B. (2007, August 13). The book on Bob Nardelli: Driven, demanding. *Automotive News*, 81, 42.
- Higgins, J. M., & McAllester, C. (2002). Want innovation? Then use cultural artifacts that support it. *Organizational Dynamics*, 31, 74–84.
- Hofmann, D. A., Morgeson, F. P., & Gerras, S. J. (2003). Climate as a moderator of the relationship between leader-member exchange and content specific citizenship: Safety climate as an exemplar. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88, 170–178.
- Hofmann, M. A. (2007, January 22). BP slammed for poor leadership on safety. *Business Insurance*, 41, 3–26.
- Jarnagin, C., & Slocum, J. W., Jr. (2007). Creating corporate cultures through mythopoetic leadership. *Organizational Dynamics*, 36, 288–302.
- Jermier, J. M., Slocum, J. W., Jr., Fry, L. W., & Gaines, J. (1991, May). Organizational subcultures in a soft bureaucracy: Resistance behind the myth and facade of an official culture. *Organization Science*, 2, 170–194.
- Jive Software. (2008). Careers. Retrieved November 20, 2008, from <http://www.jivesoftware.com/company>.
- Judge, T. A., & Cable, D. M. (1997). Applicant personality, organizational culture, and organization attraction. *Personnel Psychology*, 50, 359–394.
- Kammeyer-Mueller, J. D., & Wanberg, C. R. (2003). Unwrapping the organizational entry process: Disentangling multiple antecedents and their pathways to adjustment. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88, 779–794.
- Kerr, J., & Slocum, J. W., Jr. (2005). Managing corporate culture through reward systems. *Academy of Management Executive*, 19, 130–138.
- Kerr, J., & Slocum, J. W., Jr. (2005). Managing corporate culture through reward systems. *Academy of Management Executive*, 19, 130–138.
- Kerr, J., & Slocum, J. W., Jr. (2005). Managing corporate culture through reward systems. *Academy of Management Executive*, 19, 130–138.
- Kiger, P. J. (April, 2005). Corporate crunch. *Workforce Management*, 84, 32–38.
- Kim, T., Cable, D. M., & Kim, S. (2005). Socialization tactics, employee proactivity, and person-organization fit. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 90, 232–241.
- Klein, H. J., & Weaver, N. A. (2000). The effectiveness of an organizational level orientation training program in the socialization of new employees. *Personnel Psychology*, 53, 47–66.
- Kolesnikov-Jessop, S. (2005, November). Four Seasons Singapore: Tops in Asia. *Institutional Investor*, 39, 103–104.
- Kotter, J. P., & Heskett, J. L. (1992). *Corporate culture and performance*. New York: Free Press.
- Kristof-Brown, A. L., Zimmerman, R. D., & Johnson, E. C. (2005). Consequences of individuals' fit at work: A meta-analysis of person-job, person-organization, person-group, and person-supervisor fit. *Personnel Psychology*, 58, 281–342.
- Kuehner-Herbert, K. (2003, June 20). Unorthodox branch style gets more so at Umpqua. *American Banker*, 168, 5.
- Kunen, J. S. (2002, January 19). Enron's vision (and values) thing. *The New York Times*, p. 19.
- Labich, K., & Carvell, T. (1995, September 18). Nike vs. Reebok. *Fortune*, 132, 90–114.
- Lok, P., Westwood, R., & Crawford, J. (2005). Perceptions of organisational subculture and their significance for

organisational commitment. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 54, 490–514.

- Marcoulides, G. A., & Heck, R. H. (1993, May). Organizational culture and performance: Proposing and testing a model. *Organizational Science*, 4, 209–225.
- Markels, A. (2007, April 23). Dishing it out in style. *U.S. News & World Report*, 142, 52–55.
- Miles, S. J., & Mangold, G. (2005). Positioning Southwest Airlines through employee branding. *Business Horizons*, 48, 535–545.
- Mitchell, C. (2002). Selling the brand inside. *Harvard Business Review*, 80, 99–105.
- Morris, B., Burke, D., & Neering, P. (2006, January 23). The best place to work now. *Fortune*, 153, 78–86.
- Moscato, D. (2005, April). Using technology to get employees on board. *HR Magazine*, 50, 107–109.
- Motivation secrets of the 100 best employers. (2003, October). *HR Focus*, 80, 1–15.
- Mouawad, J. (2008, November 16). Exxon doesn't plan on ditching oil. *International Herald Tribune*. Retrieved November 16, 2008, from <http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/11/16/business/16exxon.php>.
- Nohria, N., Joyce, W., & Roberson, B. (2003, July). What really works. *Harvard Business Review*, 81, 42–52.
- O'Reilly, C. A., III, Chatman, J. A., & Caldwell, D. F. (1991). People and organizational culture: A profile comparison approach to assessing person-organization fit. *Academy of Management Journal*, 34, 487–516.
- O'Reilly, III, C. A., Chatman, J. A., & Caldwell, D. F. (1991). People and organizational culture: A profile comparison approach to assessing person-organization fit. *Academy of Management Journal*, 34, 487–516.
- Probst, G., & Raisch, S. (2005). Organizational crisis: The logic of failure. *Academy of Management Executive*, 19, 90–105.
- Rubis, L., Fox, A., Pomeroy, A., Leonard, B., Shea, T. F., Moss, D., Kraft, G., & Overman, S. (2005). 50 for history. *HR Magazine*, 50, 13, 10–24.
- Sarros, J. C., Gray, J., & Densten, I. L. (2002). Leadership and its impact on organizational culture. *International Journal of Business Studies*, 10, 1–26.
- Schein, E. H. (1992). *Organizational culture and leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Schein, E. H. (1992). *Organizational culture and leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Schlender, B. (1998, June 22). Gates' crusade. *Fortune*, 137, 30–32.
- Schlender, B. (1998, June 22). Gates' crusade. *Fortune*, 137, 30–32.
- Schlender, B. (2005, April 18). Wal-Mart's \$288 billion meeting. *Fortune*, 151, 90–106.
- Schlender, B. (2007, December 10). Bill Gates. *Fortune*, 156, 54.
- Schneider, B., Salvaggio, A., & Subirats, M. (2002). Climate strength: A new direction for climate research. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87, 220–229.
- Sheridan, J. (1992). Organizational culture and employee retention. *Academy of Management Journal*, 35, 1036–1056.
- Smalley, S. (2007, December 3). Ben & Jerry's bitter crunch. *Newsweek*, 150, 50.
- Smith, S. (2007, November). Safety is electric at M. B. Herzog. *Occupational Hazards*, 69, 42.
- Sorensen, J. B. (2002). The strength of corporate culture and the reliability of firm performance. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 47, 70–91.
- Stegmeier, D. (2008). *Innovations in office design: The critical influence approach to effective work environments*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley.
- Tennissen, M. (2007, December 19). Second BP trial ends early with settlement. *Southeast Texas Record*.
- The Ritz-Carlton Company: How it became a "legend" in service. (2001, Jan–Feb). *Corporate University Review*, 9, 16.
- Thompson, J. (2005, September). The time we waste. *Management Today*, pp. 44–47.
- Thompson, S. (2006, September 18). Kraft CEO slams company, trims marketing staff. *Advertising Age*, 76, 3–62.
- Wal around the world. (2001, December 8). *Economist*, 361, 55–57.
- Wal-Mart Stores Inc. (2008). Investor frequently asked questions. Retrieved November 20, 2008, from <http://walmartstores.com/Investors/7614.aspx>.
- Wanberg, C. R., & Kammeyer-Mueller, J. D. (2000). Predictors and outcomes of proactivity in the socialization process. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 85, 373–385.
- Weber, G. (2005, February). Preserving the counter culture. *Workforce Management*, 84, 28–34.

- Wesson, M. J., & Gogus, C. I. (2005). Shaking hands with a computer: An examination of two methods of organizational newcomer orientation. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 90, 1018–1026.
- Westrum, R. (2004, August). Increasing the number of guards at nuclear power plants. *Risk Analysis: An International Journal*, 24, 959–961.
- Why culture can mean life or death for your organization. (2007, September). *HR Focus*, 84, 9.



Organizational culture by Cameron W. Piercy, Ph.D. is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

I3. Performance Evaluation

Introduction

Content in this chapter is available from [the OpenStax Exchange](#).



Figure 1: Performance meeting (Credit: home thods/flickr/ Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0))

Learning Outcomes

After reading this chapter, you should be able to answer these questions:

1. How do organizations effectively use performance appraisals to improve individual job performance, and what are the limitations inherent in the use of various appraisal systems?
2. What practices are used in the performance appraisal process?
3. How do managers give effective feedback to subordinates?
4. How do organizations choose the best appraisal system for their organization?
5. How do managers and organizations use incentives and rewards effectively to secure the best possible performance from employees?

Case Study

EXPLORING MANAGERIAL CAREERS

Two Performance Appraisal Interviews

"Janet, thanks for coming in. As you know, it's that time of year again. I've been going over this performance appraisal form and have written in my evaluation. I'd like you to look it over and then sign it."

Janet looked over her ratings, which were nearly all in the "satisfactory" range. Even the category of dependability was marked "satisfactory"; yet, it was Janet who came in on three different occasions to cover for workers in her group who were absent for one reason or another. Janet mentioned this issue to her boss, Ken.

"Well, Janet, you're right and that's exactly what I expect of my employees. You know this is your first year here and you can't expect to reach the top in one jump. But I like your style and if you keep it up, who knows how far you'll go."

Twenty-four minutes after the interview began, Janet left, bewildered and disappointed. She had worked hard during her first year; in fact, she had gone the extra mile on a few occasions, and now she was more confused than ever about what was expected of her and what constituted good performance. "Maybe it just doesn't pay to work hard."

Two weeks before their scheduled interview, Mary asked Ron to review his goals and accomplishments for the last six months and to note any major changes in his job that had taken place during that period. In the meantime, Mary pulled out the file in which she had periodically recorded both positive and negative specific incidents over the last six months concerning Ron's performance. She also reviewed the goals they had jointly set at the end of the last review and thought carefully about not only the possible goals for the next six months but longer-term development needs and goals that might be appropriate for Ron.

On the day of the interview, both Mary and Ron came well prepared to review the past six months as well as to think about and plan for the next performance period and beyond. The interview took nearly two hours. After candidly discussing Ron's past performance and the extent to which both sides felt he had or had not accomplished the goals for that period, they began to focus on what should be accomplished in the future. The discussion caused both sides to make changes in their original evaluations and ideas about targets for the future. When it was over, Ron left more motivated than before and confident that even though he had areas in which he could improve, he had a bright future ahead of him if he continued to be motivated and work hard.

Performance Appraisal Systems

1. How do organizations effectively use performance appraisals to improve individual job performance, and what are the limitations inherent in the use of various appraisal systems?

Performance appraisals are one of the most important and often one of the most mishandled aspects of management. Typically, we think of performance appraisals as involving a boss evaluating a subordinate. However, performance

appraisals increasingly involve subordinates appraising bosses through a feedback process known as 360 feedback,¹ customers appraising providers, and peers evaluating coworkers.

Whether appraisals are done by subordinates, peers, customers, or superiors, the process itself is vital to the lifeblood of the organization. Performance appraisal systems provide a means of systematically evaluating employees across various performance dimensions to ensure that organizations are getting what they pay for. They provide valuable feedback to employees and managers, and they assist in identifying promotable people as well as problems. However, such appraisals are meaningless unless they are accompanied by an effective feedback system that ensures that the employee gets the right messages concerning performance.

Reward systems represent a powerful motivational force in organizations, but this is true only when the system is fair and tied to performance. Because a variety of approaches to appraising performance exists, managers should be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of each. In turn, an understanding of reward systems will help managers select the system best suited to the needs and goals of the organization.

Performance appraisal systems serve a variety of functions of central importance to employees. Appraisal techniques practiced today are not without problems, though. Managers should keep abreast of recent developments in compensation and reward systems so they can modify existing systems when more appropriate alternatives become available.

A key management responsibility has always been to oversee and develop subordinates. In fact, it has been said that every manager is a human resource manager. Nowhere is this truer than with regard to evaluating and rewarding subordinates. Managers are consistently involved with employee training and development, monitoring employee performance, providing job-related feedback, and administering rewards.

In this chapter, we examine three interrelated aspects of the performance appraisal and reward process. As [Figure 2](#) shows, this process moves from evaluating employee performance to providing adequate and constructive feedback to determining discretionary rewards. Where effort and performance are properly evaluated and rewarded, we would expect to see more stable and consistent job performance. On the other hand, where such performance is only evaluated intermittently or where the appraisal and review process is poorly done, we would generally see less consistent performance. We begin our discussion with a look at the nature of appraisals.

We begin by examining three aspects of performance appraisal systems: (1) the uses of performance appraisals, (2) problems found in performance appraisals, and (3) methods for reducing errors in the appraisal system. This overview will provide a foundation for studying specific techniques of performance appraisal. Those interested in more detailed information on performance appraisal systems may wish to consult books on personnel administration or compensation.

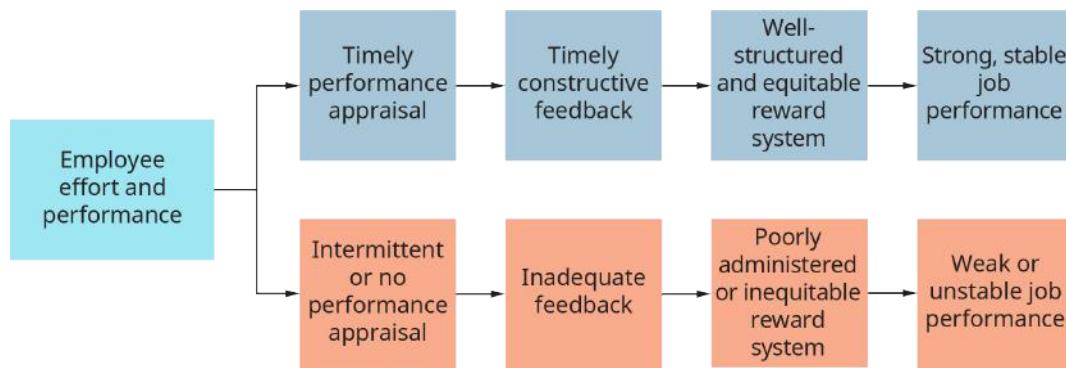


Figure 2 The Performance Appraisal and Reward Process (Attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license)

Uses of Performance Appraisals

In most work organizations, performance appraisals are used for a variety of reasons. These reasons range from

improving employee productivity to developing the employees themselves. This diversity of uses is well documented in a study of why companies use performance appraisals.² Traditionally, compensation and performance feedback have been the most prominent reasons organizations use performance appraisals.

Feedback to employees. Performance appraisals provide feedback to employees about quantity and quality of job performance. Without this information, employees have little knowledge of how well they are doing their jobs and how they might improve their work.

Self-development. Performance appraisals can also serve as an aid to employee self-development. Individuals learn about their strengths and weaknesses as seen by others and can initiate self-improvement programs (see discussion on behavioral self-management programs).

Reward systems. In addition, appraisals may form the bases of organizational reward systems—particularly merit-based compensation plans.

Personnel decisions. Performance appraisals serve personnel-related functions as well. In making personnel decisions, such as those relating to promotions, transfers, and terminations, they can be quite useful. Employers can make choices on the basis of information about individual talents and shortcomings. In addition, appraisal systems help management evaluate the effectiveness of its selection and placement functions. If newly hired employees generally perform poorly, managers should consider whether the right kind of people are being hired in the first place.

Training and development. Finally, appraisals can help managers identify areas in which employees lack critical skills for either immediate or future performance. In these situations, new or revised training programs can be established to further develop the company's human resources.

It is apparent that performance appraisal systems serve a variety of functions in organizations. In light of the importance of these functions, it is imperative that the accuracy and fairness of the appraisal be paramount considerations in the evaluation of a system. Many performance appraisal systems exist. It is the manager's job to select the technique or combination of techniques that best serves the particular needs (and constraints) of the organization. Before considering these various techniques, let us look at some of the more prominent problems and sources of error that are common to several of them.

Problems with Performance Appraisals

A number of problems can be identified that pose a threat to the value of appraisal techniques. Most of these problems deal with the related issues of the validity and reliability of the instruments or techniques themselves. Validity is the extent to which an instrument actually measures what it intends to measure, whereas reliability is the extent to which the instrument consistently yields the same results each time it is used. Ideally, a good performance appraisal system will exhibit high levels of both validity and reliability. If not, serious questions must be raised concerning the utility (and possibly the legality) of the system.

It is possible to identify several common sources of error in performance appraisal systems. These include: (1) central tendency error, (2) strictness or leniency error, (3) halo effect, (4) recency error, and (5) personal biases.

Central Tendency Error. It has often been found that supervisors rate most of their employees within a narrow range. Regardless of how people actually perform, the rater fails to distinguish significant differences among group members and lumps everyone together in an “average” category. This is called central tendency error and is shown in [Figure 3](#). In short, the central tendency error is the failure to recognize either very good or very poor performers.

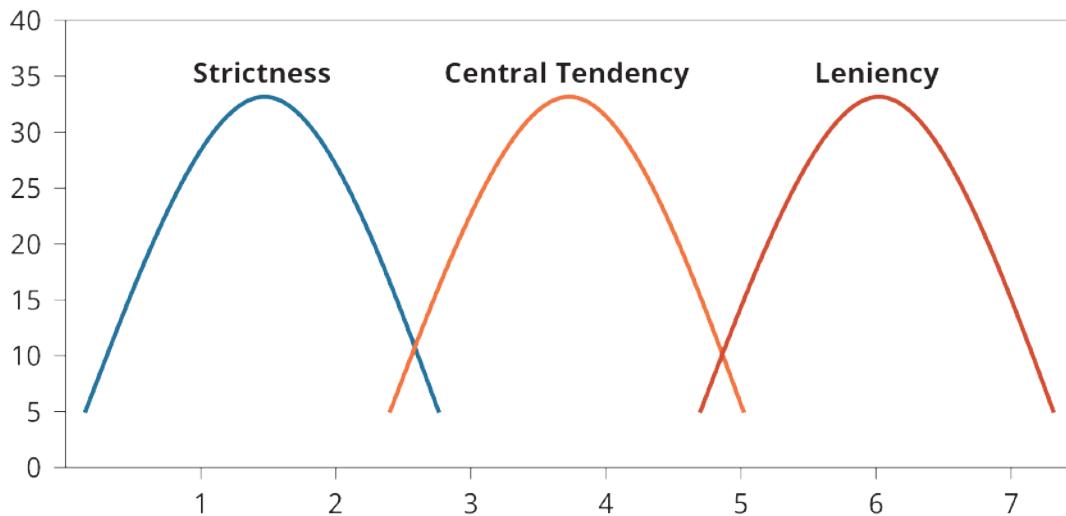


Figure 3 Examples of Strictness, Central Tendency, and Leniency Errors (Attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license)

Strictness or Leniency Error. A related rating problem exists when a supervisor is overly strict or overly lenient in evaluations (see [Figure 3](#)). In college classrooms, we hear of professors who are “tough graders” or, conversely, “easy A’s.” Similar situations exist in the workplace, where some supervisors see most subordinates as not measuring up to their high standards, whereas other supervisors see most subordinates as deserving of a high rating. As with central tendency error, strictness error and leniency error fail to distinguish adequately between good and bad performers and instead relegate almost everyone to the same or related categories.

Halo Effect. The halo effect exists where a supervisor assigns the same rating to each factor being evaluated for an individual. For example, an employee rated above average on quantity of performance may also be rated above average on quality of performance, interpersonal competence, attendance, and promotion readiness. In other words, the supervisor cannot effectively differentiate between relatively discrete categories and instead gives a global rating.

These types of bias are based on our perceptions of others. The halo effect occurs when managers have an overly positive view of a particular employee. This can impact the objectivity of reviews, with managers consistently giving an employee high ratings and failing to recognize areas for improvement.

Whether positive or negative, we also have a natural tendency to confirm our preconceived beliefs about people in the way we interpret or recall performance, which is known as confirmatory bias.

For example, a manager may have a preconception that her male report is more assertive. This could cause her to recall instances more easily in which her report asserted his position during a meeting. On the other hand, she may perceive her female report to be less assertive, predisposing her to forget when the report suggested an effective strategy or was successful in a tough negotiation.

The halo effect is often a consequence of people having a similarity bias for certain types of people. We naturally tend to favor and trust people who are similar to us. Whether it’s people who also have a penchant for golf or people who remind us of a younger version of ourselves, favoritism that results from a similarity bias can give certain employees an unfair advantage over others. This can impact a team to the point that those employees may receive more coaching, better reviews and, as a result, more opportunities for advancement.³

Recency Error. Oftentimes evaluators focus on an employee’s most recent behavior in the evaluation process. This is known as the recency error. That is, in an annual evaluation, a supervisor may give undue emphasis to performance during the past months—or even weeks—and ignore performance levels prior to this. This practice, if known to employees, leads to a situation where employees may “float” for the initial months of the evaluation period and then overexert themselves in the last few months or weeks prior to evaluation. This practice leads to uneven performance and contributes to the attitude of “playing the game.”

Personal Biases. Finally, it is not uncommon to find situations in which supervisors allow their own personal biases to

influence their appraisals. Such biases include like or dislike for someone, as well as racial and sexual biases. Personal biases can interfere with the fairness and accuracy of an evaluation and are illegal in many situations.

Reducing Errors in Performance Appraisals

A number of suggestions have been advanced recently to minimize the effects of various biases and errors on the performance appraisal process.⁴ When errors are reduced, more accurate information is available for personnel decisions and personal development. These methods for reducing error include

- ensuring that each dimension or factor on a performance appraisal form represents a single job activity instead of a group of job activities.
- avoiding terms such as *average*, because different evaluators define the term differently.
- ensuring that raters observe subordinates on a regular basis throughout the evaluation period. It is even helpful if the rater takes notes for future reference.
- keeping the number of persons evaluated by one rater to a reasonable number. When one person must evaluate many subordinates, it becomes difficult to discriminate. Rating fatigue increases with the number of ratees.
- ensuring that the dimensions used are clearly stated, meaningful, and relevant to good job performance.
- training raters so they can recognize various sources of error and understand the rationale underlying the evaluation process.

Using mechanisms like these, better employee ratings that can have greater meaning both for the individual employee and the organization will result.

CONCEPT CHECK

1. What are performance appraisals, and how are they used in organizations?
2. How are performance appraisals used as a reward system, and what problems can they cause?

Techniques of Performance Appraisal

2. What practices are used in the performance appraisal process?

Organizations use numerous methods to evaluate personnel. We will summarize several popular techniques. Although countless variations on these themes can be found, the basic methods presented provide a good summary of the commonly available techniques. Following this review, we will consider the various strengths and weaknesses of each

technique. Six techniques are reviewed here: (1) graphic rating scales, (2) critical incident technique, (3) behaviorally anchored rating scales, (4) behavioral observation scales, (5) management by objectives, and (6) assessment centers.

Graphic Rating Scales

Certainly, the most popular method of evaluation used in organizations today is the graphic rating scale. One study found that 57 percent of the organizations surveyed used rating scales, and another study found the figure to be 65 percent.⁵ Although this method appears in many formats, the supervisor or rater is typically presented with a printed or online form that contains both the employee's name and several evaluation dimensions (quantity of work, quality of work, knowledge of job, attendance). The rater is then asked to rate the employee by assigning a number or rating on each of the dimensions. An example of a graphic rating scale is shown in [Table 1](#).

| A Sample of a Typical Graphic Rating Scale | | | | | |
|--|-------------|------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|
| Name _____ | Dept. _____ | Date _____ | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory |
| Quantity of work | | | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory |
| Volume of acceptable work under normal conditions | | | Fair | Unsatisfactory | |
| Comments: | | | | | |
| Quality of work | | | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory |
| Thoroughness, neatness, and accuracy of work | | | Fair | Unsatisfactory | |
| Comments: | | | | | |
| Knowledge of job | | | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory |
| Clear understanding of the facts or factors pertinent to the job | | | Fair | Unsatisfactory | |
| Comments: | | | | | |
| Personal qualities | | | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory |
| Personality, appearance, sociability, leadership, integrity | | | Fair | Unsatisfactory | |
| Comments: | | | | | |
| Cooperation | | | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory |
| Ability and willingness to work with associates, supervisors, and subordinates toward common goal | | | Fair | Unsatisfactory | |
| Comments: | | | | | |
| Dependability | | | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory |
| Conscientious, thorough, accurate, reliable with respect to attendance, lunch periods, reliefs, etc. | | | Fair | Unsatisfactory | |
| Comments: | | | | | |
| Initiative | | | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory |
| Earnestness in seeking increased responsibilities Self-starting, unafraid to proceed alone | | | Fair | Unsatisfactory | |
| Comments: | | | | | |

Table 1 (Attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license)

By using this method, if we assume that evaluator biases can be minimized, it is possible to compare employees objectively. It is also possible to examine the relative strengths and weaknesses of a single employee by comparing scores on the various dimensions.

However, one of the most serious drawbacks of this technique is its openness to central tendency, strictness, and leniency errors. It is possible to rate almost everyone in the middle of the scale or, conversely, at one end of the scale. In order to control for this, some companies have assigned required percentage distributions to the various scale points. Supervisors may be allowed to rate only 10 percent of their people outstanding and are required to rate 10 percent unsatisfactory, perhaps assigning 20 percent, 40 percent, and 20 percent to the remaining middle categories. By doing this, a distribution is forced within each department. However, this procedure may penalize a group of truly outstanding performers or reward a group of poor ones.

Critical Incident Technique

With the critical incident technique of performance appraisal, supervisors record incidents, or examples, of each subordinate's behavior that led to either unusual success or unusual failure on some aspect of the job. These incidents are recorded in a daily or weekly log under predesignated categories (planning, decision-making, interpersonal relations, report writing). The final performance rating consists of a series of descriptive paragraphs or notes about various aspects of an employee's performance (see [Table 2](#)).

An Example of Critical Incident Evaluation

The following performance areas are designed to assist you in preparing this appraisal and in discussing an individual's performance with her. It is suggested that areas of performance that you feel are significantly good or poor be documented below with specific examples or actions. The points listed are suggested as typical and are by no means all-inclusive. Examples related to these points may be viewed from either a positive or negative standpoint.

1. Performance on Technology of the Job

A. Safety Effectiveness—possible considerations:

1. sets an excellent safety example for others in the department by words and action
2. trains people well in safety areas
3. gains the cooperation and participation of people in safety
4. insists that safety be designed into procedure and processes
5. is instrumental in initiating departmental safety program
6. accepts safety as a fundamental job responsibility

| Item | Related Examples |
|------|------------------|
|------|------------------|

B. Job Knowledge—Technical and/or Specialized—possible considerations:

1. shows exceptional knowledge in methods, materials, and techniques; applies in a resourceful and practical manner
2. stays abreast of development(s) in field and applies to job
3. "keeps up" on latest material in her special field
4. participates in professional or technical organizations pertinent to her activities

| Item | Related Examples |
|------|------------------|
|------|------------------|

2. Performance on Human Relations

A. Ability to Communicate—possible considerations:

1. gives logical, clear-cut, understandable instructions on complex problems
2. uses clear and direct language in written and oral reporting
3. organizes presentations in logical order and in order of importance
4. provides supervisor and subordinates with pertinent and adequate information
5. tailors communications approach to group or individual
6. keeps informed on how subordinates think and feel about things

| Item | Related Examples |
|------|------------------|
|------|------------------|

B. Results Achieved through Others—possible considerations:

1. develops enthusiasm in others that gets the job done
2. has respect and confidence of others
3. recognizes and credits skills of others
4. coordinates well with other involved groups to get the job done

| Item | Related Examples |
|------|------------------|
|------|------------------|

Source: Adapted from R. Daft and R. Steers, *Organizations: A Micro/Macro Approach* (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1986), p. 129.

Table 2 (Attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license)

The critical incident method provides useful information for appraisal interviews, and managers and subordinates can discuss specific incidents. Good qualitative information is generated. However, because little quantitative data emerge,

it is difficult to use this technique for promotion or salary decisions. The qualitative output here has led some companies to combine the critical incident technique with one of the quantitative techniques, such as the rating scale, to provide different kinds of feedback to the employees.

Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales

An appraisal system that has received increasing attention in recent years is the behaviorally anchored rating scale (BARS). This system requires considerable work prior to evaluation but, if the work is carefully done, can lead to highly accurate ratings with high inter-rater reliability. Specifically, the BARS technique begins by selecting a job that can be described in observable behaviors. Managers and personnel specialists then identify these behaviors as they relate to superior or inferior performance.

An example of this is shown in [Figure 4](#), where the BARS technique has been applied to the job of college professor. As shown, as one moves from extremely poor performance to extremely good performance, the performance descriptions, or behavioral anchors, increase. Oftentimes, six to ten scales are used to describe performance on the job. [Figure 4](#) evaluates the professor's organizational skills. Other scales could relate to the professor's teaching effectiveness, knowledge of the material, availability to students, and fairness in grading. Once these scales are determined, the evaluator has only to check the category that describes what she observes on the job, and the employee's rating is simultaneously determined. The BARS technique has several purported advantages. In particular, many of the sources of error discussed earlier (central tendency, leniency, halo) should be significantly reduced because raters are considering verbal descriptions of specific behaviors instead of general categories of behaviors, such as those used in graphic rating scales. In addition, the technique focuses on job-related behaviors and ignores less relevant issues such as the subordinate's personality, race, or gender. This technique should also lead to employees being less defensive during performance appraisals, because the focus of the discussion would be actual measured behaviors, not the person. Finally, BARS can aid in employee training and development by identifying those domains needing most attention.

Organizational skills: A good constructional order of material slides smoothly from one topic to another; design of course optimizes interest; students can easily follow organizational strategy; course outline is followed.

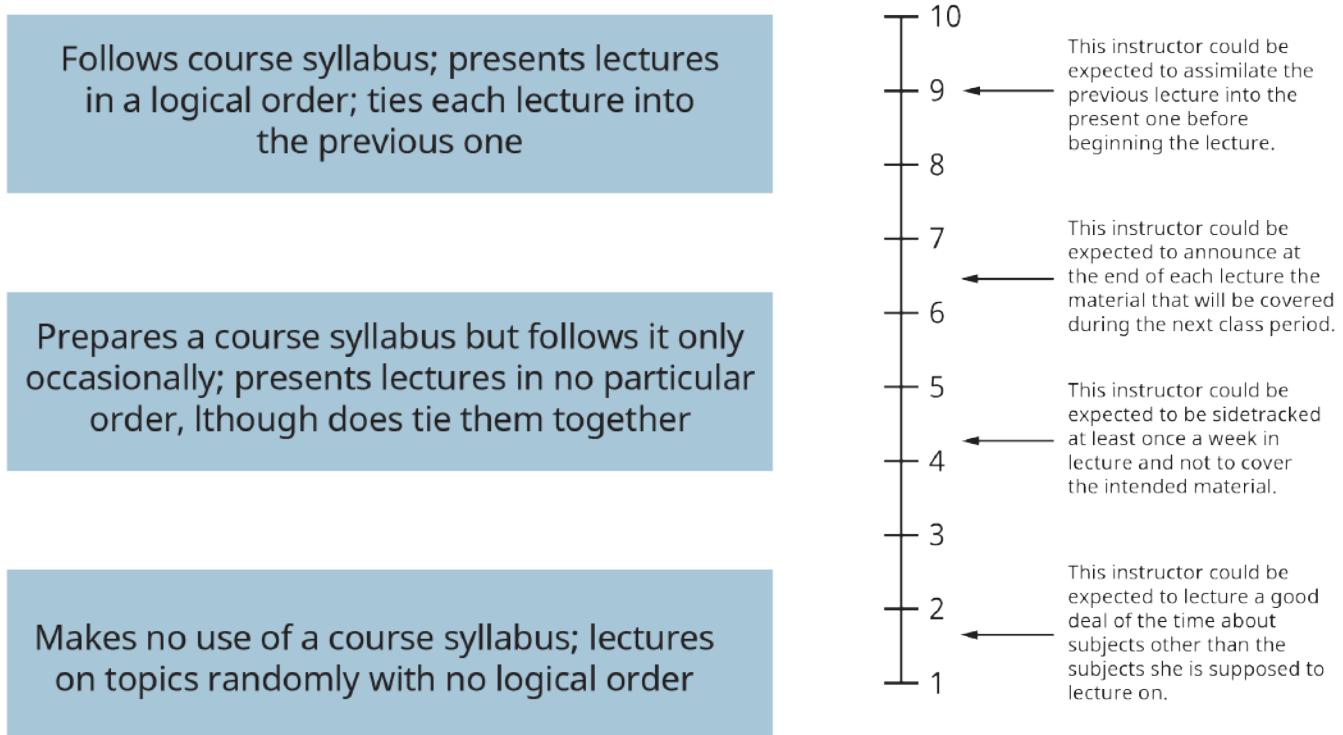


Figure 4 A Behaviorally Anchored Scale for Rating College Professors Source:Reprinted by permission of H. John Bernardin. (Attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license)

On the negative side, as noted above, considerable time and effort in designing the forms are required before the actual rating. Because a separate BARS is required for each distinct job, it is only cost-efficient for common jobs. Finally, because the technique relies on observable behaviors, it may have little applicability for such jobs in such areas as research science (and sometimes management), where much of the work is mental and relevant observable behaviors are difficult to obtain.

Behavioral Observation Scales

The behavioral observation scale (BOS) is similar to BARS in that both focus on identifying observable behaviors as they relate to performance. It is, however, less demanding of the evaluator. Typically, the evaluator is asked to rate each behavior on a scale from 1 to 5 to indicate the frequency with which the employee exhibits the behavior. Evaluation of an employee's performance on a particular dimension is derived by summing the frequency ratings for the behaviors in each dimension.

For example, in [Table 3](#) we can see an example of a form to evaluate a manager's ability to overcome resistance to change. The rater simply has to circle the appropriate numbers describing observed behaviors and get a summary rating by adding the results. The BOS technique is easier to construct than the BARS and makes the evaluator's job somewhat simpler. Even so, this is a relatively new technique that is only now receiving some support in industry.

Example of a Behavioral Observation Scale for Managers: Overcoming Resistance to Change

| | Almost Never | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Almost Always |
|---|-------------------|----------|-------|-----------|----------|------------------|
| 1. Describes the details of the change to subordinates | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| 2. Explains why the change is necessary | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| 3. Discusses how the change will affect the employee | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| 4. Listens to the employee's concerns | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| 5. Asks the employee for help in making the change work | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| 6. If necessary, specifies the date for a follow-up meeting to respond to employee's concerns | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Total: | 6-10 | 11-15 | 16-20 | 21-25 | 26-30 | |
| | Below adequate | Adequate | Full | Excellent | Superior | |

Source: Adapted from K. Wexley and G. Latham, *Increasing Productivity Through Performance Appraisal*, 3rd ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001.

Table 3 (Attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license)

Management by Objectives

A popular technique for evaluating employees who are involved in jobs that have clear quantitative output is management by objectives (MBO). Although the concept of MBO encompasses much more than just the appraisal process (incorporating an organization-wide motivation, performance, and control system), we will focus here on its narrower application to evaluating employee performance. MBO is closely related to the goal-setting theory of motivation.

Under MBO, individual employees work with their supervisor to establish goals and objectives for which they will be responsible during the coming year. These goals are stated in clear language and relate to tasks that are within the domain of the employee. An example of these goals for a sales representative is shown in [Table 4](#). Following a specified period of time, the employee's performance is compared to the preset goals to determine the extent to which the goals have been met or exceeded.

MBO Evaluation Report for Sales Representative

| Goals Categories | Goal | Actual Performance | Variance |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------|
| 1. Number of sales calls | 40 | 38 | 95% |
| 2. Number of new customers contacted | 10 | 10 | 100% |
| 3. Number of customer complaints | 5 | 10 | 50% |
| 4. Sales of product #1 | 10,000 units | 11,000 units | 110% |
| 5. Sales of product #2 | 15,000 units | 14,000 units | 93% |
| 6. Sales of product #3 | 25,000 units | 30,000 units | 120% |

Table 4 (Attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license)

Several advantages of MBO have been observed. These include the ability to do better planning; improved motivation, because of knowledge of results; fairer evaluations, done on the basis of results rather than personality; improved commitment through participation; and improved supervisory skills in such areas as listening, counseling, and

evaluating. On the negative side, however, MBO has been criticized because it emphasizes quantitative goals at the expense of qualitative goals and often creates too much paperwork. It is difficult to compare performance levels among employees because most are responsible for different goals. Sometimes the implementation of MBO goals are autocratic and therefore ineffective or even counterproductive. As discussed in the study of motivation, goals must be accepted to be effective. Finally, in order to be successful, MBO implementation must have constant attention and support from top management; MBO does not run itself. In the absence of this support, the technique loses legitimacy and often falls into disrepair.

Assessment Centers

A relatively new method of evaluation is the assessment center. Assessment centers are unique among appraisal techniques in that they focus more on evaluating an employee's long-range potential to an organization than on her performance over the past year. They are also unique in that they are used almost exclusively among managerial personnel.

An assessment center consists of a series of standardized evaluations of behavior based on multiple inputs. Over a two- or three-day period (away from the job), trained observers make judgments on managers' behavior in response to specially developed exercises. These exercises may consist of in-basket exercises, role-playing, and case analyses, as well as personal interviews and psychological tests. An example of an assessment center program is shown in [Table 5](#).

Example of Two-Day Assessment Center Schedule

| Day #1 | Day #2 |
|--|---|
| 8:00–9:00 A.M. Orientation session | 8:00–10:30 A.M. In-basket exercise |
| 9:00 –10:30 A.M. Psychological testing | 10:30–10:45 A.M. Coffee break |
| 10:30–10:45 A.M. Coffee break | 10:45–12:30 P.M. Role-playing exercise |
| 10:45–12:30 P.M. Management simulation game | 12:30–1:30 P.M. Lunch |
| 12:30–1:30 P.M. Lunch | 1:30–3:15 P.M. Group problem-solving exercise |
| 1:30–3:15 P.M. Individual decision-making exercise | 3:15–3:30 P.M. Coffee break |
| 3:15–3:30 P.M. Coffee break | 3:30–4:30 P.M. Debriefing by raters |
| 3:30–4:30 P.M. Interview with raters | |

Table 5 (Attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license)

On the basis of these exercises, the trained observers make judgments on employees' potential for future managerial assignments in the organization. More specifically, information is obtained concerning employees' interpersonal skills, communication ability, creativity, problem-solving skills, tolerance for stress and ambiguity, and planning ability. This technique has been used successfully by some of the largest corporations in the United States, including AT&T, IBM, and General Electric.

Results from a series of assessment center programs appear promising, and the technique is growing in popularity as a means of identifying future managerial potential. For example, Coca-Cola USA experimented with using assessment centers to select its managerial personnel. After a detailed study, the company found that those selected in this way were only one-third as likely to leave the company or be fired than those selected in the traditional way. Although the assessment center approach added about 6 percent to the cost of hiring, the lower turnover rate led to large overall savings.⁶

Some problems with the technique have been noted. In particular, because of the highly stressful environment created in assessment centers, many otherwise good managers may simply not perform to their potential. Moreover, the results

of a poor evaluation in an assessment center may be far-reaching; individuals may receive a “loser” image that will follow them for a long time. And, finally, there is some question concerning exactly how valid and reliable assessment centers really are in predicting future managerial success.⁷ Despite these problems, assessment centers remain a popular vehicle in some companies for developing and appraising managerial potential.

ETHICS IN PRACTICE

Tesla's Performance Review

At Tesla, the automotive giant, the standards are set extremely high for their employees. In 2017, Tesla conducted its annual performance reviews as it does each year. Due to the review process, the company sees both voluntary and involuntary departures. During the review process, the managers discuss “results that were achieved, as well as how those results were achieved” with their employees.* Tesla also has a performance recognition and compensation program that includes equity rewards as well as promotions in some cases, along with the constructive feedback.

The departure of employees during the review period is not unique to Tesla; however, in 2017 there was a large exodus of approximately 700 employees following their employee reviews. Elon Musk, who recently has stepped down from the role of chairman and has been under scrutiny for his behavior,* saw the media coverage of this news as “ridiculous.”

“You have two boxes of equal ability, and one’s much smaller, the big guy’s going to crush the little guy, obviously,” states Musk. “So, the little guy better have a heck of a lot more skill or he’s going to get clobbered. So that is why our standards are high . . . if they’re not high, we will die.”

Overall, approximately 17 percent of their employees were promoted, almost half in manufacturing. As Tesla continues to grow and develop new vehicles, it is consistently pushing the boundaries and pushing its employees to new limits. Performance reviews are of the highest importance for Tesla’s business to succeed; the company needs the best people with the best skills. It is constantly growing and attempting to “suck the labor pool dry” to fill positions at many of its locations and factories.

Questions

1. What factors do you feel could have changed in Tesla’s approach to its performance reviews?
2. How can a high-pressure environment affect an employee’s performance? What factors should be considered to combat these issues?

Comparison of Appraisal Techniques

It is important to consider which appraisal technique or set of techniques may be most appropriate for a given situation. Although there is no simple answer to this question, we can consider the various strengths and weaknesses of each

technique. This is done in **Table 6**. It is important to keep in mind that the appropriateness of a particular appraisal technique is in part a function of the purpose for the appraisal. For example, if the purpose of the appraisal is to identify high potential executives, then assessment centers are more appropriate than rating scales.

Major Strengths and Weaknesses of Appraisal Techniques

| | Rating Scales | Critical Incidents | BARS | BOS | MBO | Assessment Centers |
|--|----------------------|---------------------------|-------------|------------|------------|---------------------------|
| Meaningful dimensions | Sometimes | Sometimes | Usually | Usually | Usually | Usually |
| Amount of time required | Low | Medium | High | Medium | High | High |
| Development costs | Low | Low | High | Medium | Medium | High |
| Potential for rating errors | High | Medium | Low | Low | Low | Low |
| Acceptability to subordinates | Low | Medium | High | High | High | High |
| Acceptability to superiors | Low | Medium | High | High | High | High |
| Usefulness for allocating rewards | Poor | Fair | Good | Good | Good | Fair |
| Usefulness for employee counseling | Poor | Fair | Good | Good | Good | Good |
| Usefulness for identifying promotion potential | Poor | Fair | Fair | Fair | Fair | Good |

Table 6 (Attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license)

As would be expected, the easiest and least expensive techniques are also the least accurate. They are also the least useful for purposes of personnel decisions and employee development. Once again, it appears that managers and organizations get what they pay for. If performance appraisals represent an important aspect of organizational life, clearly the more sophisticated—and more time-consuming—techniques are preferable. If, on the other hand, it is necessary to evaluate employees quickly and with few resources, techniques such as the graphic rating scale may be more appropriate. Managers must make cost-benefit decisions about the price (in time and money) they are willing to pay for a quality performance appraisal system.

CONCEPT CHECK

1. What are the techniques and scales used in performance appraisals?
2. What are MBOs, and how do they relate to performance appraisals?
3. What are assessment centers?

Feedback

3. How do managers give effective feedback to subordinates?

As previously noted, feedback represents a critical variable in determining the success or failure of the goal-setting process. The same applies to the performance appraisal process. Without effective knowledge of results, the motivational impact of the appraisal process is lost. To better understand how feedback in work settings affects employee behavior, consider the model shown in [Figure 5](#).⁸

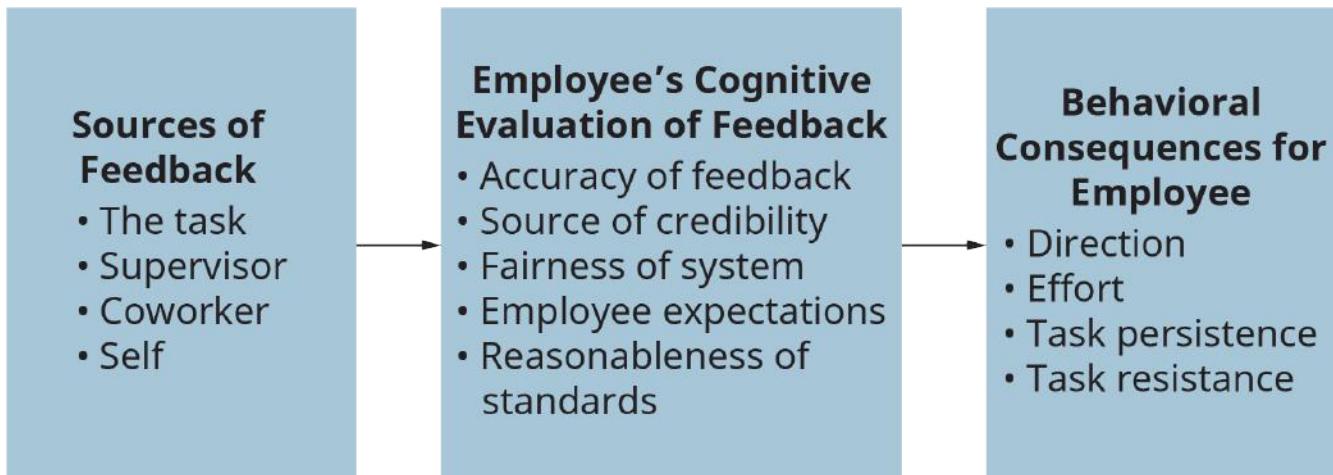


Figure 5 Effects of Feedback on Job Performance (Attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license)

Feedback comes from many sources, including the task at hand, the supervisor, coworkers, and oneself. This input is then cognitively evaluated by the employee, who considers such factors as the perceived *accuracy* of the feedback (e.g., does the employee consider the information to be correct?); the *credibility* of the source of the feedback (e.g., does the employee trust the supervisor's opinion?); the employee's opinion concerning the *fairness* of the evaluation-process; the extent to which the feedback met the employee's *expectations* (e.g., does the employee think she could have done better?); and the *reasonableness* of the performance standards.

If one or more of these evaluations prove negative (for example, the employee believes she is being unfairly evaluated), the credibility of the feedback is dismissed, and the employee may increase her resistance to task effort. On the other hand, where the feedback is accepted, it reinforces the employee's direction, effort on the task, and persistence on the task. Thus, although feedback is essential, it is the nature and quality of the feedback that ultimately determines employee response.

CONCEPT CHECK

1. What types of feedback do performance appraisals provide to all organization members?

Reward Systems in Organizations

4. How do organizations choose the best appraisal system for their organization?

After a company has designed and implemented a systematic performance appraisal system and provided adequate feedback to employees, the next step is to consider how to tie available corporate rewards to the outcomes of the appraisal. Behavioral research consistently demonstrates that performance levels are highest when rewards are contingent upon performance. Thus, in this section, we will examine five aspects of reward systems in organizations: (1) functions served by reward systems, (2) bases for reward distribution, (3) intrinsic versus extrinsic rewards, (4) the relationship between money and motivation and, finally, (5) pay secrecy.

Functions of Reward Systems

Reward systems in organizations are used for a variety of reasons. It is generally agreed that reward systems influence the following:

- **Job effort and performance.** Following expectancy theory, employees' effort and performance would be expected to increase when they felt that rewards were contingent upon good performance. Hence, reward systems serve a very basic motivational function.
- **Attendance and retention.** Reward systems have also been shown to influence an employee's decision to come to work or to remain with the organization. This was discussed in the previous chapter.
- **Employee commitment to the organization.** It has been found that reward systems in no small way influence employee commitment to the organization, primarily through the exchange process.⁹ That is, employees develop ties with organizations when they perceive that the organization is interested in their welfare and willing to protect their interests. This exchange process is shown in Figure 6 To the extent that employee needs and goals are met by the company, we would expect commitment to increase.
- **Job satisfaction.** Job satisfaction has also been shown to be related to rewards, as discussed in the previous chapter. Edward E. Lawler, a well-known researcher on employee compensation, has identified four conclusions concerning the relationship between rewards and satisfaction: (1) satisfaction with a reward is a function of both how much is received and how much the individual feels should have been received; (2) satisfaction is influenced by comparisons with what happens to others, especially one's coworkers; (3) people differ with respect to the rewards they value; and (4) some rewards are satisfying because they lead to other rewards.¹⁰
- **Occupational and organizational choice.** Finally, the selection of an occupation by an individual, as well as the decision to join a particular organization within that occupation, are influenced by the rewards that are thought to be available in the occupation or organization. To prove this, simply look at the classified section of your local newspaper and notice how many jobs highlight beginning salaries.

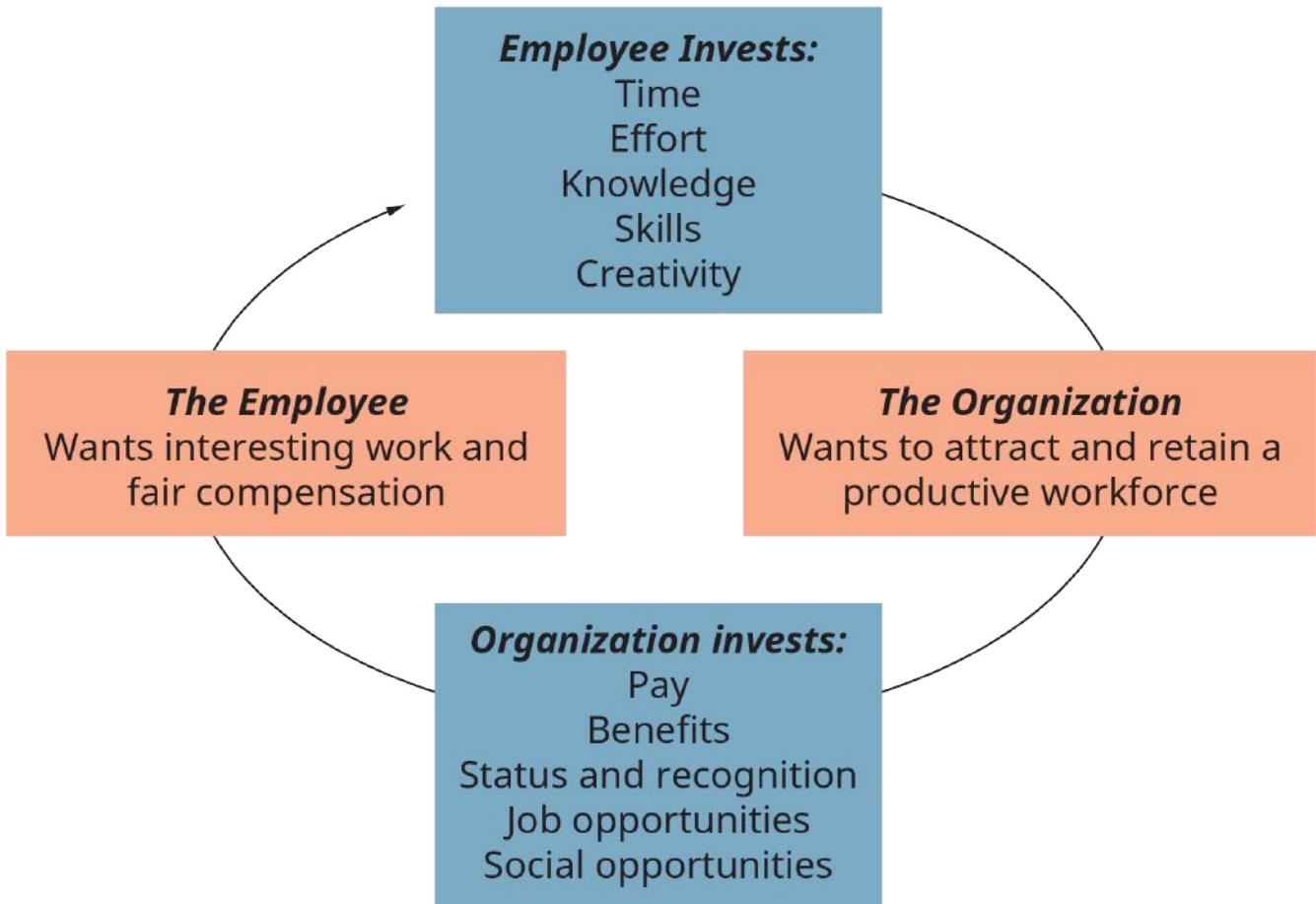


Figure 6 The Exchange Process Between Employee and Organization (Attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license)

Reward systems in organizations have far-reaching consequences for both individual satisfaction and organizational effectiveness. Unfortunately, cases can easily be cited where reward systems have been distorted to punish good performance or inhibit creativity. Consider, for example, the Greyhound Bus Company driver who was suspended for 10 days without pay for breaking a company rule against using a CB radio on his bus. The bus driver had used the radio to alert police that his bus, with 32 passengers on board, was being hijacked by an armed man. The police arrested the hijacker, and the bus driver was suspended for breaking company rules.¹¹ Such incidents hardly encourage employees to focus their efforts on responsible performance.

Bases for Reward Distribution

A common reality in many contemporary work organizations is the inequity that exists in the distribution of available rewards. One often sees little correlation between those who perform well and those who receive the greatest rewards. At the extreme, it is hard to understand how a company could pay its president \$10 to \$20 million per year (as many large corporations do) while it pays its secretaries and clerks less than \$15,000. Each works approximately 40 hours per week, and both are important for organizational performance. Is it really possible that the president is 1,000 times more important than the secretary, as the salary differential suggests?

How do organizations decide on the distribution of available rewards? At least four mechanisms can be identified. In

more cases than we choose to admit, rewards go to those with the greatest power (either market power or personal power). In many of the corporations whose presidents earn eight-figure incomes, we find that these same people are either major shareholders in the company or have certain abilities, connections, or status that the company wants. Indeed, a threat of resignation from an important or high-performing executive often leads to increased rewards.

A second possible basis for reward distribution is *equality*. Here, all individuals within one job classification would receive the same, or at least similar, rewards. The most common example here can be found among unionized workers, where pay rates are established and standardized with little or no reference to actual performance level. Instead of ability or performance, these systems usually recognize seniority as the key factor in pay raises or promotions.

What does a team appraisal look like?

How do we increase individual motivation through team appraisal?

Establish the metrics of what the goals are.

What happens when one or a few individuals carry the whole team?

How do you differentiate low, medium + outstanding performers.

How do you establish accountability?

Figure 7 Team Based Rewards Performance appraisals, whether team or individual, provide feedback to workers or organizational teams. Traditionally, performance evaluations provide information to help improve individual performance, increase efficiency and define management's expectations. Performance appraisals compare work performed against measurable objectives that the employee and supervisor agreed to at the beginning of the appraisal period. As work has become more team oriented, performance appraisals now measure how a team of workers perform rather than just how an individual performs his job. (Attribution; Deb Nystrom/flickr/ Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0))

The basis for the social welfare reward system in this country is need. In large part, the greater the need, the greater the level of support. It is not uncommon to see situations in business firms where need is taken into account in layoff situations—where an employee is not laid off because she is the sole support of a family.

A fourth mechanism used by organizations in allocating rewards is distributive justice. Under this approach, employees receive (at least a portion of) their rewards as a function of their level of contribution to the organization. The greater the contribution (such as performance), the greater the reward. This mechanism is most prominent in merit-based incentive programs, where pay and bonuses are determined by performance levels.

Extrinsic and Intrinsic Rewards

The variety of rewards that employees can receive in exchange for their contributions of time and effort can be classified as either extrinsic or intrinsic rewards. Extrinsic rewards are external to the work itself. They are administered externally—that is, by someone else (usually management). Examples of extrinsic rewards include wages and salary, fringe benefits, promotions, and recognition and praise from others.

On the other hand, intrinsic rewards represent those rewards that are related directly to performing the job. In this sense, they are often described as “self-administered” rewards, because engaging in the task itself leads to their receipt. Examples of intrinsic rewards include feelings of task accomplishment, autonomy, and personal growth and development that come from the job.

In the literature on employee motivation, there is considerable controversy concerning the possible interrelationship of these two kinds of reward. It has been argued (with some research support) that extrinsic rewards tend to drive out the positive effects of some intrinsic rewards and can lead to unethical behavior.¹² Consider, for example, the child next door who begs you to let her help you wash your car. For a young child, this task can carry considerable excitement (and intrinsic motivation). Now, consider what happens on a Saturday afternoon when you need your car washed but the child has other options. What do you do? You offer to pay her this time to help wash your car. What do you think will happen the next time you ask the neighbor to help you wash the car for free? In other words, when extrinsic rewards such as pay are tied closely to performance (called performance-reward contingency), intrinsic motivation—the desire to do a task because you enjoy it—can decrease.

Also, it is important to keep in mind that because extrinsic rewards are administered by sources external to the individual, their effectiveness rests on accurate and fair monitoring, evaluating, and administration. Implementation can be expensive, and the timing of performance and rewards may not always be close. For example, you may perform well on a task, but unless there is a way for that to be noticed, evaluated, recorded, and rewarded within a reasonable time frame, an extrinsic reward may not have a significant impact. Intrinsic rewards are a function of self-monitoring, evaluation, and administration; consequently, these rewards often are less costly and more effectively administered. For example, even if no one else notices or rewards you for superior performance on a task, you can still reward yourself with a mental pat on the back for a job well done or a sense of satisfaction for overcoming a challenge. The implications of this finding will become apparent when exploring efforts to enrich employees’ jobs.

Money and Motivation: A Closer Look

A recurring debate among managers focuses on the issue of whether money is a primary motivator. Some argue that most behavior in organizational settings is motivated by money (or at least monetary factors), whereas others argue that money is only one of many factors that motivate performance. Whichever group is correct, we must recognize that money can have important motivational consequences for many people in many situations. In fact, money serves several important functions in work settings.¹³ These include serving as (1) a goal or incentive, (2) a source of satisfaction, (3) an instrument for gaining other desired outcomes, (4) a standard of comparison for determining relative standing or worth, and (5) a conditional reinforcer where its receipt is contingent upon a certain level of performance. Even so, experience tells us that the effectiveness of pay as a motivator varies considerably. Sometimes there seems to be an almost direct

relationship between pay and effort, whereas at other times no such relationship is found. Why? Lawler suggests that certain conditions must be present in order for pay to act as a strong motivator:¹⁴

- Trust levels between managers and subordinates must be high.
- Individual performance must be able to be accurately measured.
- Pay rewards to high performers must be substantially higher than those to poor performers.
- Few, if any, negative consequences for good performance must be perceived.

Under these conditions, a climate or culture is created in which employees have reason to believe that significant performance-reward contingencies truly exist. Given this perception (and assuming the reward is valued), we would expect performance to be increased.¹⁵

Pay Secrecy

Secrecy about pay rates seems to be a widely accepted practice in work organizations, particularly among managerial personnel. It is argued that salary is a personal matter and we should not invade another's privacy. Available evidence, however, suggests that pay secrecy may have several negative side effects. To begin, it has been consistently found that in the absence of actual knowledge, people have a tendency to overestimate the pay of coworkers and those above them in the hierarchy. As a result, much of the motivational potential of a differential reward system is lost.¹⁶ Even if an employee receives a relatively sizable salary increase, she may still perceive an inequity compared to what others are receiving. This problem is highlighted in the results of a study by Lawler. In considering the effects of pay secrecy on motivation, Lawler noted:

Almost regardless of how well the individual manager was performing, he felt he was getting less than the average raise. This problem was particularly severe among high performers, since they believed that they were doing well yet received minimal reward. They did not believe that pay was in fact based upon merit. This was ironic, since their pay did reflect performance. . . . Thus, even though pay was tied to performance, these managers were not motivated because they could not see the connection.¹⁷

Pay secrecy also affects motivation via feedback. Several studies have shown the value of feedback in motivating performance (see previous discussion). The problem is that for managers, money represents one of the most meaningful forms of feedback. Pay secrecy eliminates the feedback.

When salary information is open (or at least when the range of percentage increases within a job classification are made known to the people in that group), employees are generally provided with more recognition for satisfactory performance and are often more motivated to perform on subsequent tasks. It is easier to establish feelings of pay equity and trust in the salary administration system. On the other hand, publicizing pay rates and pay raises can cause jealousy among employees and create pressures on managers to reduce perceived inequities in the system. There is no correct position concerning whether pay rates should be secret or open. The point is that managers should not assume a priori that pay secrecy—or pay openness—is a good thing. Instead, careful consideration should be given to the possible consequences of either approach in view of the particular situation in the organization at the time.

CONCEPT CHECK

1. What is the best appraisal system for organizations to adopt?
2. How are rewards tied to performance appraisals?

Individual and Group Incentive Plans

5. How do managers and organizations use incentives and rewards effectively to secure the best possible performance from employees?

We now turn to an examination of various employee incentive programs used by organizations. First, we consider the relative merits of individual versus group incentive programs. Next, we focus on several relatively new approaches to motivation and compensation. Finally, we suggest several guidelines for effective incentive systems.

Individual versus Group Incentives

Companies usually have choices among various compensation plans and must make decisions about which is most effective for its situation. Incentive systems in organizations are usually divided into two categories on the basis of whether the unit of analysis—and the recipient of the reward—is the individual or a group. Among individual incentive plans, several approaches can be identified, including merit-based compensation (commonly known as merit compensation), piece-rate incentive programs (where people are paid according to the quantity of output), bonus systems of various sorts, and commissions. In each case, rewards are tied fairly directly to the performance level of the individual.

Although individual incentive systems often lead to improved performance, some reservations have been noted. In particular, these programs may at times lead to employees competing with one another, with undesirable results. For instance, department store salespeople on commission may fight over customers, thereby chasing the customers away. After all, customers don't care who they deal with, only that the service is good. Second, these plans typically are resisted by unions, which prefer compensation to be based on seniority or job classification. Third, where quality control systems are lax, individual incentives such as piece rates may lead employees to maximize units of output while sacrificing quality. And, finally, in order for these programs to be successful, an atmosphere of trust and cooperation is necessary.

In order to overcome some of these shortcomings, many companies have turned to group or organizational incentive plans. Group incentive programs base at least some of an employee's rewards on group or organization performance. Hence, employees are encouraged to cooperate with one another and with the corporation so that all employees can benefit. Programs such as profit-sharing or gain-sharing plans (discussed below) are designed to tie the employees' future rewards and prosperity to that of the company and reduce the age-old antagonism between the two. The results are often dramatic.

Creative Pay Practices

Recently, we have seen several innovations in the way corporations approach reward systems. These efforts are designed to facilitate the integration of employee and company interests in a way that maximizes both productivity and quality of working life. Five such creative pay practices should be noted: (1) gain-sharing plans, (2) skills-based incentives, (3) lump-sum pay increases, (4) participative pay decisions, and (5) flexible benefits programs. These approaches, along with their major advantages and drawbacks, are summarized in [Table 7](#).

| Advantages and Disadvantages of New Pay Practices | | |
|---|--|--|
| Pay Practice | Advantages | Disadvantages |
| Gain sharing | Ties pay to performance; encourages group cooperation | Plans that focus exclusively on productivity may lead employees to ignore other important objectives, such as quality. |
| Skills-based incentives | More flexible and skilled workforce; increased satisfaction | Higher training and salary costs |
| Lump-sum increase | Greater visibility of pay increases; increased pay satisfaction | Cost of administration |
| Participative pay decisions | Increased trust in a satisfaction with pay decisions; better pay decisions | Time-consuming |
| Flexible benefits | Increased satisfaction with pay and benefits | Cost of administration |

Table 7 (Attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license)

Gain-Sharing Plans. Giving executives and senior managers bonuses to reflect their contributions to organizational effectiveness is commonplace. In fact, in some companies executive bonuses are often larger than salaries. Recently, companies have increasingly applied this same principle to all employees in the form of **gain-sharing** (profit-sharing) plans. Here, employees are given a chance to share in corporate productivity gains through increased earnings. The greater the productivity gains, the greater the earnings. Several variations on this theme can be found, including the Scanlon Plan, IMPROSHARE, the Ruker Plan, and the Lincoln Electric Plan. Regardless of the title, the basic plan is similar.

For example, under the Scanlon Plan (probably the oldest such program), three operating guidelines are used: (1) each department or division is treated as a business unit for purposes of performance measurement, (2) specific cost measures associated with the production process are identified and agreed to by all parties, and (3) bonuses are paid to all employees according to a predetermined formula tying the amount of the bonus to the actual cost savings realized during the time period. Under such a plan, it is clearly in the employees' best interest to contribute to cost savings, thereby increasing their own incomes.

EXPANDING AROUND THE GLOBE

Providing Feedback in Different Countries

Global workplaces are increasing within the world businesses, and it has become a trend to have managers from one country, most likely the country in which the headquarters arise, manage employees abroad. An important consideration when managing globally is how cultural differences can have a profound effect on performance evaluations, negotiations, and criticisms.

For example, oftentimes in the United States, a method of critical feedback in the "hamburger method" (Step 1: Identify

tasks. As a group, identify technical steps that would be involved in implementing. Step 2: Identify options for tasks. Split the team into several small groups. Step 3: Combine results.) is acceptable, while other countries give their feedback with just the meal alone. This strategy in the Netherlands and Germany can be off-putting to other cultures, and when you read into another culture's technique with your own lens of reference, it can feel wrong.

Managing globally means that you need to do your research on which approach for feedback is best received for the employee's cultural differences. For example, being direct is key when communicating with a Dutch person. In contrast, in England or the United States, criticism is not delivered directly, but with positive pieces wrapped around the negative. In Asian countries, feedback is often avoided or the message is blurred in order to "save face." With all of these complications and considerations, it is ever more important to acutely understand the culture, the cultural understandings of employees who are direct reports, and also the lens through which feedback is being viewed as well.

Questions:

1. How can a new manager that is working with international employees ensure she is providing reviews in an appropriate manner?
2. What methods can a manager employ in her preparation for the review to be successful when providing feedback to employees of different cultures?

Skills-Based Incentives. Typical compensation programs are tied to job evaluations. In these, jobs are analyzed to assess their characteristics, and then salary levels are assigned to each job on the basis of factors such as job difficulty and labor market scarcity. In other words, pay levels are set on the basis of the job, not the individual. This approach fails to encourage employees to improve their skills on the job, because there is no reward for the improvement. This thinking also keeps all employees in their places and minimizes the possibility of inter-job transfers.

Under the **skills-based incentive** program, employees are paid according to their skills level (that is, the number of jobs they can perform), regardless of the actual tasks they are allowed to perform. This approach has proved successful in organizations such as Procter & Gamble and General Foods. Employees are encouraged to learn additional skills and are appropriately rewarded. The organization is provided with a more highly trained and more flexible workforce. However, training and compensation costs are necessarily increased, so the program is appropriate only in some situations. The technique is most often seen as part of a larger quality-of-working-life program, where it is associated with job redesign efforts.

Lump-Sum Pay Increases. Another technique that has received some attention is to allow employees to decide how (that is, in what amounts) they wish to receive their pay raises for the coming year. Under the traditional program, pay raises are paid in equal amounts in each paycheck over the year. Under the alternate plan, employees can elect to receive equal amounts during the year, or they can choose to take the entire raise in one lump-sum pay increase. This plan allows employees greater discretion over their own financial matters. If an employee wants to use the entire pay raise for a vacation, it can be paid in a lump sum in June. Then, if the employee quits before the end of the year, the unearned part of the pay raise is subtracted from the final paycheck. This plan increases the visibility of the reward to the employee. The employee receives, for example, a \$600 pay raise (a rather sizable amount) instead of twelve \$50 monthly pay raises. As with the flexible rewards system discussed below, however, the administration costs of the lump-sum plan are greater than those of the traditional method.

Participative Pay Decisions. In addition, of concern to many managers is the extent to which employees should be

involved in decisions over pay raises. This is the issue of participative pay decisions. Recently, several organizations have been experimenting with involving employees in pay raise decisions, and the results seem to be quite positive. By allowing employees to participate either in the design of the reward system or in actual pay raise decisions (perhaps through a committee), it is argued that decisions of higher quality are made on the basis of greater information. Also, employees then have greater reason to place confidence in the fairness of the decisions. On the negative side, this approach requires considerably more time for both the manager and the participating subordinates. Costs must be weighed against benefits to determine which approach is most suitable for the particular organization and its goals.

Flexible Benefits Systems. A typical fringe benefit package provides the same benefits—and the same number of benefits—to all employees. As a result, individual differences or preferences are largely ignored. Studies by Lawler indicate variations in benefit preferences.¹⁸ For instance, young unmarried men prefer more vacation time, whereas young married men prefer to give up vacation time for higher pay. Older employees want more retirement benefits, whereas younger employees prefer greater income. Through a **flexible benefits program** (also called a “cafeteria benefits program”), employees are allowed some discretion in the determination of their own packages and can make trade-offs, within certain limits. Organizations such as PepsiCo, TRW, and the Educational Testing Service already use such programs. Although certain problems of administration exist with the programs, efforts in this direction can lead to increased need satisfaction among employees.

Which approaches are most effective in motivating employees? This is obviously a difficult question to answer. One such study asked major employers which of a variety of approaches had been used with a high success level. The results are shown in **Table 8**. Skills-based compensation, earned time off, and gain sharing all received high marks from personnel executives, although other programs are also widely supported. It would appear from these results that many approaches can be useful; the choice of which one to use would depend upon the circumstances and goals of a particular organization.

Guidelines for Effective Incentive Programs

Whatever incentive plan is selected, care must be taken to ensure that the plan is appropriate for the particular organization and workforce. In fact, a simple test of the effectiveness of an incentive plan would be as follows:¹⁹

- Does the plan capture attention? Do employees discuss the plan and take pride in their early successes?
- Do employees understand the plan? Can employees explain how the plan works, and do they understand what they must do to earn the incentive?
- Does the plan improve communication? As a result of the plan, do employees understand more about corporate mission, goals, and objectives?
- Does the plan pay out when it should? Are incentives being paid for desired results, and are they withheld for undesirable results?
- Is the company performing better as a result of the plan? Are profits or market share up or down? Have any gains resulted in part from the incentive plan?

Companies Successfully Using Creative Incentive Plans

| Type of Incentive | Percent of Companies Reporting Success |
|---------------------------|--|
| Skills-based compensation | 89% |
| Earned time off | 85 |
| Gain-sharing plans | 81 |
| Small-group incentives | 75 |
| Individual incentives | 73 |
| All-salaried workforce | 67 |
| Lump-sum bonus | 66 |

Source: Data adapted from J. Horn, *Psychology Today*, July 1987, pp. 54–57.

Table 8 (Attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license)

If a new (or existing) pay plan can meet these tests, it is probably fairly effective in motivating employee performance and should be retained by the organization. If not, perhaps some other approach should be tried. On the basis of such a test, several specific guidelines can be identified to increase the effectiveness of the programs. These include the following:²⁰

- Any reward system or incentive plan should be as closely tied to *actual job performance* as possible. This point was discussed earlier in this chapter.
- If possible, incentive programs should *allow for individual differences*. They should recognize that different people want different outcomes from a job. Flexible benefits programs such as the ones discussed here make an effort to accomplish this.
- Incentive programs should *reflect the type of work that is done* and the structure of the organization. This simply means that the program should be tailored to the particular needs, goals, and structures of a given organization. Individual incentive programs, for example, would probably be less successful among unionized personnel than would group programs such as the Scanlon plan. This point has been clearly demonstrated in research by Lawler, which points out that organizations with traditional management and those with more participative management might approach reward systems quite differently in order to be effective.²¹ As shown in **Table 9**, both types of company can be effective as long as their reward systems are congruent with their overall approach to management.
- The incentive program should *be consistent with the culture* and constraints of the organization. Where trust levels are low, for example, it may take considerable effort to get any program to work. In an industry already characterized by high levels of efficiency, basing an incentive system on increasing efficiency even further may have little effect, because employees may see the task as nearly impossible.
- Finally, incentive programs should be *carefully monitored over time* to ensure that they are being fairly administered and that they accurately reflect current technological and organizational conditions. For instance, it may be appropriate to offer sales clerks in a department store an incentive to sell outdated merchandise because current fashion items sell themselves. Responsibility falls on managers not to select the incentive program that is in vogue or used “next door,” but rather to consider the unique situations and needs of their own organizations. Then, with this understanding, a program can be developed and implemented that will facilitate goal-oriented performance.

Matching Reward Systems to Management Style

| Reward System | Traditional | Participative |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| Fringe benefits | Vary according to organizational level | Cafeteria—same for all levels |
| Promotion | All decisions made by top management | Open posting for all jobs; peer group involvement in decision process |
| Status symbols | A great many, carefully allocated on the basis of job position | Few present, low emphasis on organization level |
| Pay type | Hourly and salary | All salary |
| Base rate | Based on job performed; high enough to attract job applicants | Based on skills; high enough to provide security and attract applicants |
| Incentive plan | Piece rate | Group and organization-wide bonus, lump-sum increase |
| Communication policy | Very restricted distribution of information | Individual rates, salary survey data, all other information made public |
| Decision-making locus | Top management | Close to location of person whose pay is being set |

Source: Adapted from E. E. Lawler, *The Design of Effective Reward Systems*, Technical Report (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 1983), p. 52.

Table 9 (Attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license)

CONCEPT CHECK

1. What are the differences between individual and group incentives?
2. What is the variety of reward incentives available to organizations?

Key Terms

Central tendency error

The failure to recognize either very good or very poor performers.

Halo effect

Results in a supervisor assigning the same rating to each factor being evaluated for an individual.

Leniency error

Fails to distinguish adequately between good and bad performers and instead relegates almost everyone to the same or related categories.

Performance appraisals

A system that provides a means of systematically evaluating employees across various performance dimensions to ensure that organizations are getting what they pay for.

Recency error

Occurs when, in an evaluation, a supervisor may give undue emphasis to performance during the past months—or

even weeks—and ignore performance levels prior to this.

Reliability

The extent to which the instrument consistently yields the same results each time it is used.

Validity

The extent to which an instrument actually measures what it intends to measure.

Strictness error

Fails to distinguish adequately between good and bad performers and instead relegates almost everyone to the same or related categories.

Assessment center

Consists of a series of standardized evaluations of behavior based on multiple inputs.

Behaviorally anchored rating scale

A system that requires considerable work prior to evaluation but, if the work is carefully done, can lead to highly accurate ratings with high inter-rater reliability.

Behavioral observation scale

Identifies observable behaviors as they relate to performance and is less demanding of the evaluator.

Critical incident technique

A technique where supervisors record incidents, or examples, of each subordinate's behavior that led to either unusual success or unusual failure on some aspect of the job.

Graphic rating scale

A performance appraisal technique where the supervisor or rater is typically presented with a printed or online form that contains both the employee's name and several evaluation dimensions (quantity of work, quality of work, knowledge of job, attendance). The rater is then asked to rate the employee by assigning a number or rating on each of the dimensions.

Management by objectives

Closely related to the goal-setting theory of motivation.

Distributive justice

Where employees receive (at least a portion of) their rewards as a function of their level of contribution to the organization.

Extrinsic rewards

Rewards that are external to the work itself.

Intrinsic motivation

The desire to do a task because you enjoy it.

Intrinsic rewards

Rewards that are external to the work itself.

Skills-based incentives

Rewards employees on the basis of the skills they possess and not just the skills they are allowed to use at work.

Flexible benefits system

A rewards program where employees are allowed some discretion in the determination of their own packages and can make trade-offs, within certain limits.

Gain sharing

An incentive plan in which employees or customers receive benefits directly as a result of cost-saving measures that they initiate or participate in.

Lump-sum pay increase

A technique that allows employees to decide how (that is, in what amounts) they wish to receive their pay raises for the coming year.

Participative pay decisions

Involving employees in pay raise decisions.

SUMMARY OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

Performance Appraisal Systems

1. How do organizations effectively use performance appraisals to improve individual job performance, and what are the limitations inherent in the use of various appraisal systems?

If performance is to be changed or improved, it must be rewarded. To be rewarded, it must be measured. However, great care must be taken to (1) measure important behaviors and outcomes (individual, group, or organizational) and not just those that are easy to measure, (2) measure them with the appropriate technique(s), and (3) tie appropriate rewards to the desired behaviors and outcomes.

Organizations use performance appraisals for several reasons: (1) to provide feedback to employees, (2) to allow for employee self-development, (3) to allocate rewards, (4) to gather information for personnel decisions, and (5) to guide them in developing training and development efforts.

Techniques of Performance Appraisal

2. What practices are used in the performance appraisal process?

Performance appraisals are subject to several problems, including central tendency error, strictness or leniency error, halo effect, recency error, and personal biases.

Feedback

3. How do managers give effective feedback to subordinates?

Among the most common appraisal systems are graphic rating scales, critical incident technique, behaviorally anchored rating scales, behavioral observation scales, management by objectives, and assessment centers. Assessment centers represent a special case of evaluations in that they focus on assessing an employee's long-term potential to an organization.

Reward Systems in Organizations

4. How do organizations choose the best appraisal system for their organization?

Rewards serve several functions, including (1) stimulating job effort and performance, (2) reducing absenteeism and turnover, (3) enhancing employee commitment, (4) facilitating job satisfaction, and (5) facilitating occupational and organizational choice.

Rewards may be distributed on the basis of power, equality, need, or distributive justice. Distributive justice rests on the principle of allocating rewards in proportion to employee contribution. Intrinsic rewards represent those outcomes that are administered by the employee (e.g., a sense of task accomplishment), whereas extrinsic rewards are administered by others (e.g., wages).

Gain-sharing incentive plans base some of the employees' pay on corporate profits or productivity. As a result, employees are generally more interested in facilitating corporate performance. Skills-based incentives reward

employees on the basis of the skills they possess, not the skills they are allowed to use at work. As a result, employees are encouraged to continually upgrade their skill levels.

A lump-sum salary increase simply provides employees with their pay raises at one time (possibly shortly before summer vacation or a major holiday).

Participative pay decisions allow employees some input in determining their pay raises.

Individual and Group Incentive Plans

5. How do managers and organizations use incentives and rewards effectively to secure the best possible performance from employees?

Flexible benefits allow employees to choose the fringe benefits that best suit their needs.

A good reward system (1) is closely tied to performance, (2) allows for individual differences, (3) reflects the type of work that is being done, (4) is consistent with the corporate culture, and (5) is carefully monitored over time.

Chapter Review Questions

1. Identify the various functions of performance appraisals. How are appraisals used in most work organizations?
2. What are some problems associated with performance appraisals?
3. Define *validity* and *reliability*. Why are these two concepts important from a managerial standpoint?
4. How can errors in appraisals be reduced?
5. Critically evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of the various techniques of performance appraisal.
6. Discuss the role of feedback in employee performance.
7. What is the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic rewards?
8. Identify the major bases of reward distribution.
9. How does money influence employee motivation?
10. Discuss the relative merits of individual and group incentive programs.
11. Describe the benefits and drawbacks of several of the new approaches to reward systems. Which ones do you feel would be most effective in work organizations?

Examples

Management Skills Application Exercises

How Would You Rate Your Supervisor?

Instructions: Think of your current supervisor or one for any job you have held, and evaluate her on the following dimensions. Give a “1” for very poor, a “3” for average, a “5” for outstanding, etc.

| | | Very Poor | Average | Outstanding |
|----|---|------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| 1. | Your boss's knowledge of the job | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. | Your boss's leadership skills | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3. | Your boss's communication skills | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. | Your boss's ability to motivate subordinates | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. | Your boss's attendance and promptness | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 6. | Your boss's commitment to the organization | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 7. | Your boss's long-term potential for promotion | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 8. | What is your overall assessment of your supervisor? | 1 | 2 | 3 |

Think of a current or previous job, and evaluate the source and quality of the feedback you received from your supervisor. When you are through, refer to [Appendix B](#) for scoring procedures.

Examples

How Much Feedback Are You Getting from Your Job?

Instructions: Think of a current or previous job. With this in mind, answer the following questions as accurately as possible.

1. My boss lets me know when I make a mistake.

| Strongly Disagree | | | Strongly Agree | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|----------------|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

2. My coworkers help me improve on the job.

| Strongly Disagree | | | Strongly Agree | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|----------------|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

3. I receive formal evaluations from the company on my job.

| Strongly Disagree | | | Strongly Agree | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|----------------|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

4. My boss always tells me when I do a good job.

| Strongly Disagree | | | Strongly Agree | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|----------------|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

5. This company really appreciates good performance.

| Strongly Disagree | | | Strongly Agree | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|----------------|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

6. When I do something especially well, I receive a “thanks” from my boss.

| Strongly Disagree | | | Strongly Agree | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|----------------|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

7. My coworkers are very appreciative when I do a good job.

| Strongly Disagree | | | Strongly Agree | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|----------------|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

8. My coworkers compliment me on the quality of my work.

| Strongly Disagree | Strongly Agree | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

9. My coworkers are very supportive of my efforts.

| Strongly Disagree | Strongly Agree | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

10. I know when I have done a good job.

| Strongly Disagree | Strongly Agree | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

11. My job provides me with solid feedback on my performance.

| Strongly Disagree | Strongly Agree | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

12. I can see the results when I learn to do something better.

| Strongly Disagree | Strongly Agree | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Sources:

C. Solbach. "Feedback through cultural looking glass." Krauthammer, September 16, 2015, [https://www.krauthammer.com/en/publications/personal-development/2017/04/12/12/07/feedback-through-cultural-looking-glass/](https://www.krauthammer.com/en/publications/personal-development/2017/04/12/12/07/feedback-through-cultural-looking-glass;);

M. Abadi. "The exact same sentence from your boss can mean 'yes,' 'no,' or 'maybe' depending on the country where you work." Business Insider, December 7, 2017, <https://www.businessinsider.com/direct-feedback-work-depends-on-culture-2017-12>; J. Windust. "An International Approach to 360-Degree Feedback."

Cognology, July 26, 2016, <https://www.cognology.com.au/international-approach-360-degree-feedback/>; "Giving Employee Feedback To A Culturally Diverse Workforce." Impraise Blog, accessed January 26, 2019, <https://blog.impraise.com/360-feedback/how-to-handle-cultural-differences-between-branchescountries-in-feedback-behavior-performance-review>.

K. Korosec. "Tesla Fires Hundreds of Workers After Their Annual Performance Review." Fortune, October 14, 2017,<http://fortune.com/2017/10/13/tesla-fires-employees/>; D. Muoio. "Tesla fired 700 employees after performance reviews in the third quarter." Business Insider, November 1, 2017, <https://www.businessinsider.com/tesla-fired-700-employees-performance-reviews-2017-11>;

J. Wattles. "Elon Musk agrees to pay \$20 million and quit as Tesla chairman in deal with SEC." Money, September 30, 2018, <https://money.cnn.com/2018/09/29/technology/business/elon-musk-tesla-sec-settlement/index.html>.



Problem Solving in Teams and Groups by Cameron W. Piercy, Ph.D. is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

SECTION IV

GROUP & TEAM THEORY

This section overviews the important theories that guide group and team interaction.

I4. Power in Teams and Groups

Learning Objectives

- Explain different conceptualizations of power
- Describe the relationship between power and oppression
- Discuss behaviors associated with high status in a group
- Differentiate between the common power bases in groups
- Discuss what it means to exercise power ethically

Given the complexity of group interaction, it's short-sighted to try to understand group communication without looking at notions of power. Power influences how we interpret the messages of others and determines the extent to which we feel we have the right to speak up and voice our concerns and opinions to others. Power and status are key ways that people exercise influence within groups. In the storming phase of group development, members are likely to engage in more obvious power struggles, but power is constantly at work in our interactions within and outside our group whether we are fully conscious of it or not. In this chapter, we will define power and discuss its relationship to systems of privilege and oppression and to status within groups. We will also discuss the bases and tactics of power that can operate in groups and teams, as well as the ethical use of power.

Defining Power

Take a moment to reflect on the different ways you think about power. What images come to mind for you when you think of power? Are there different kinds of power? Are some people inherently more powerful than others? Do you consider yourself to be a powerful person? We highlight three ways to understand power as it relates to group and team communication. The word "power" literally means "to be able" and has many implications.

If you associate power with control or dominance, this refers to the notion of power as **power-over**. According to Starhawk (1987), "*power-over enables one individual or group to make the decisions that affect others, and to enforce control*" (p. 9). Control can and does take many forms in society. Starhawk explains that,

This power is wielded from the workplace, in the schools, in the courts, in the doctor's office. It may rule with weapons that are physical or by controlling the resources we need to live: money, food, medical care; or by controlling more subtle resources: information, approval, love. We are so accustomed to power-over, so steeped in its language and its implicit threats, that we often become aware of its functioning only when we see its extreme manifestations. (p. 9)

When we are in group situations and someone dominates the conversation, makes all of the decisions, or controls the resources of the group such as money or equipment, this is power-over.

Power-from-within refers to a more personal sense of strength or agency. Power-from-within manifests itself when *we can stand, walk, and speak "words that convey our needs and thoughts"* (Starhawk, 1987, p. 10). In groups, this type of

power “arises from our sense of connection, our bonding with other human beings, and with the environment” (10). As Heider explains in *The Tao of Leadership*, “Since all creation is a whole, separateness is an illusion. Like it or not, we are team players. Power comes through cooperation, independence through service, and a greater self through selflessness” (77). If you think about your role in groups, how have you influenced other group members? Your strategies indicate your sense of power-from-within.

Finally, groups manifest **power-with**, which is “*the power of a strong individual in a group of equals, the power not to command, but to suggest and be listened to, to begin something and see it happen*” (Starhawk, 1987, p. 10). For this to be effective in a group or team, at least two qualities must be present among members: (1) all group members must communicate respect and equality for one another, and (2) the leader must not abuse power-with and attempt to turn it into power-over. Have you ever been involved in a group where people did not treat each others as equals or with respect? How did you feel about the group? What was the outcome? Could you have done anything to change that dynamic?

UNDERSTANDING POWER AND OPPRESSION



(Credit: National Numismatic Collection, National Museum of American History/[1854 \\$3 Indian Princess Head](#)/Public Domain).

Power and oppression can be said to be mirror reflections of one another in a sense or two sides of the same coin. Where you see power that causes harm, you will likely see oppression. Oppression is defined in Merriam-Webster dictionary as: “Unjust or cruel exercise of authority or power especially by the imposition of burdens; the condition of being weighed down; an act of pressing down; a sense of heaviness or obstruction in the body or mind.” This definition demonstrates the intensity of oppression, which also shows how difficult such a challenge is to address or eradicate. Further, the word oppression comes from the Latin root *primere*, which actually means “pressed down”. Importantly, we can conclude that oppression is the social act of placing severe restrictions on an individual, group, or institution.

Oppression emerges as a result of power, with its roots in global colonialism and conquests. For example, oppression as an action can deny certain groups jobs that pay living wages, can establish unequal education (e.g., through a lack of adequate capital per student for resources), can deny affordable housing, and the list goes on. You may be

wondering why some groups live in poverty, reside in substandard housing, or simply do not measure up to the dominant society in some facet. As discussed at a seminar at the Leaven Center (2003), groups that do not have “power over” are those society classifies or labels as **disenfranchised**; they are exploited and victimized in a variety of ways by agents of oppression and/or systems and institutions. They are subjected to restrictions and seen as expendable and replaceable—particularly by agents of oppression. This philosophy, in turn, minimizes the roles certain populations play in society. Sadly, agents of oppression often deny that this injustice occurs and blames oppressive conditions on the behaviors and actions of the oppressed group.

Oppression subsequently becomes a system and patterns are adopted and perpetuated. **Systems of privilege and oppression** discriminate or advantage based on perceived or real differences among people. . **Privilege** here refers to the benefits, advantages, and power that are gained based on perceived status or membership in a dominant group. For example, Thai and Lien (2019) discuss diversity and highlight the impact of white privilege as a major contributor to systems and patterns of oppression for non-privileged individuals and groups.

Additionally, socialization patterns help maintain systems of privilege and oppression. Members of society learn through formal and informal educational environments that advance the ideologies of the dominant group, and how they should act and what their role and place are in society. Power is thus exercised in this instance but now is both psychologically and physically harmful. This process of constructing knowledge is helpful to those who seek to control and oppress, through power, because physical coercion may not last, but psychological ramifications can be perpetual, particularly without intervention. As shared knowledge is sustained through social processes, and what we come to know and believe is socially constructed, so it becomes ever more important to discuss dominant narratives of our society and the meaning they lend to our culture, including as it relates to our interactions in groups and teams.

So what do systems of privilege and oppression mean for groups? Members in groups do not leave their identities or social and cultural contexts at the door. Power and status in groups are still shaped by these broader systems of privilege and oppression that are external to the group. This requires group members to reflect on how these broader systems are shaping dynamics within the group and their own perceptions and behaviors.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN Power and Status

In a group, members with higher status are apt to command greater respect and possess more prestige and power than those with lower status. **Status** can be defined as a person’s perceived level of importance or significance within a particular context.

Our status is often tied to our identities and their perceived value within our social and cultural context. Groups may confer status upon their members on the basis of their age, wealth, gender, race or ethnicity, ability, physical stature, perceived intelligence, and/or other attributes. Status can also be granted through title or position. In professional circles, for instance, having earned a “terminal” degree such as a Ph.D. or M.D. usually generates a degree of status. The same holds true for the documented outcomes of schooling or training in legal, engineering, or other professional fields. Likewise, people who’ve been honored for achievements in any number of areas may bring status to a group by virtue of that recognition if it relates to the nature and purpose of the group. Once a group has formed and begun to sort out its norms, it will also build upon the initial status that people bring to it by further allocating status according to its own internal processes and practices. For instance, choosing a member to serve as an officer in a group generally conveys status to that person.

Let’s say you’ve either come into a group with high status or have been granted high status by the other members. What does this mean to you, and how are you apt to behave? Here are some predictions based on research from several sources (Beebe & Masterson, 2015; Borman, 1989; Brilhart & Galanes, 1997; Homans, 1992).

¹²First, the volume and direction of your speech will differ from those of others in the group. You'll talk more than the low-status members do, and you'll communicate more with other high-status members than you will with lower-status individuals. In addition, you'll be more likely to speak to the whole group than will members with lower status.

Second, some indicators of your participation will be particularly positive. Your activity level and self-regard will surpass those of lower-status group members. So will your level of satisfaction with your position. Furthermore, the rest of the group is less likely to ignore your statements and proposals than it is to disregard what lower-status individuals say.

Finally, the content of your communication will probably be different from what your fellow members discuss. Because you may have access to special information about the group's activities and may be expected to shoulder specific responsibilities because of your position, you're apt to talk about topics which are relevant to the central purposes and direction of the group. Lower-status members, on the other hand, are likely to communicate more about other matters.



Those with higher status may communicate differently than those with lower status in group contexts like meetings. (Credit: [United States Mission Geneva/flickr/CC BY 2.0](#)).

There's no such thing as a "status neutral" group—one in which everyone always has the same status as everyone else. Differences in status within a group are inevitable and can be dangerous if not recognized and managed. For example, someone who gains status without possessing the skills or attributes required to use it well may cause real damage to other members of a group, or to a group as a whole. A high-status, low-ability person may develop an inflated self-image, begin to abuse power, or both. One of us worked for the new president of a college who acted as though his position entitled him to take whatever actions he wanted. In the process of interacting primarily with other high-status individuals who shared the majority of his viewpoints and goals, he overlooked or rejected concerns and complaints from people in other parts of the organization. Turmoil and dissension broke out. Morale plummeted. The president eventually suffered votes of no confidence from his college's faculty, staff, and students and was forced to resign.

- 1.
- 2.

Bases of Power in GROUPS

Within groups, there are a number of different ways in which power can operate. French and Raven (1968) identified five primary ways in which power can be exerted in social situations, including in groups and teams. These are considered to be different **bases of power**.

Referent Power

In some cases, person B looks up to or admires person A, and, as a result, B follows A largely because of A's personal qualities, characteristics, or reputation. In this case, A can use **referent power** to influence B. Referent power has also been called *charismatic power*, because allegiance is based on interpersonal attraction of one individual for another. Examples of referent power can be seen in advertising, where companies use celebrities to recommend their products; it is hoped that the star appeal of the person will rub off on the products. In work environments, junior managers often emulate senior managers and assume unnecessarily subservient roles more because of personal admiration than because of respect for authority.

Expert Power

Expert power is demonstrated when person A gains power because A has knowledge or expertise relevant to B. For instance, professors presumably have power in the classroom because of their mastery of a particular subject matter. Other examples of expert power can be seen in staff specialists in organizations (e.g., accountants, labor relations managers, management consultants, and corporate attorneys). In each case, the individual has credibility in a particular—and narrow—area as a result of experience and expertise, and this gives the individual power in that domain.

Legitimate Power

Legitimate power exists when person B submits to person A because B feels that A has a right to exert power in a certain domain (Tjosvold, 1985). Legitimate power is really another name for authority. A supervisor has a right, for instance, to assign work. Legitimate power differs from reward and coercive power in that it depends on the official position a person holds, and not on his or her relationship with others.

Reward Power

Reward power exists when person A has power over person B because A controls rewards that B wants. These rewards can cover a wide array of possibilities, including pay raises, promotions, desirable job assignments, more responsibility, new equipment, and so forth. Research has indicated that reward power often leads to increased job performance as employees see a strong performance-reward contingency (Shetty, 1978). However, in many organizations, supervisors and managers really do not control very many rewards. For example, salary and promotion among most blue-collar workers is based on a labor contract, not a performance appraisal.

Coercive Power

Coercive power is based primarily on fear. Here, person A has power over person B because A can administer some form of punishment to B. Thus, this kind of power is also referred to as punishment power. As Kipnis (1976) points out, coercive power does not have to rest on the threat of violence. “Individuals exercise coercive power through a reliance upon physical strength, verbal facility, or the ability to grant or withhold emotional support from others. These bases provide the individual with the means to physically harm, bully, humiliate, or deny love to others.” Examples of coercive power in organizations include the ability (actual or implied) to fire or demote people, transfer them to undesirable jobs or locations, or strip them of valued perquisites. Indeed, it has been suggested that a good deal of organizational behavior (such as prompt attendance, looking busy, avoiding whistle-blowing) can be attributed to coercive, not reward, power. As Kipnis (1976) explains, “Of all the bases of power available to man, the power to hurt others is possibly the most often used, most often condemned and most difficult to control.”

Consequences of Power

We have seen, then, that at least five bases of power can be identified. In each case, the power of the individual rests on a particular attribute of the power holder, the follower, or their relationship. In some cases (e.g., reward power), power rests in the superior; in others (e.g., referent power), power is given to the superior by the subordinate. In all cases, the exercise of power involves subtle and sometimes threatening interpersonal consequences for the parties involved. In fact, when power is exercised, individuals have several ways in which to respond. These are shown in **Figure 1**.

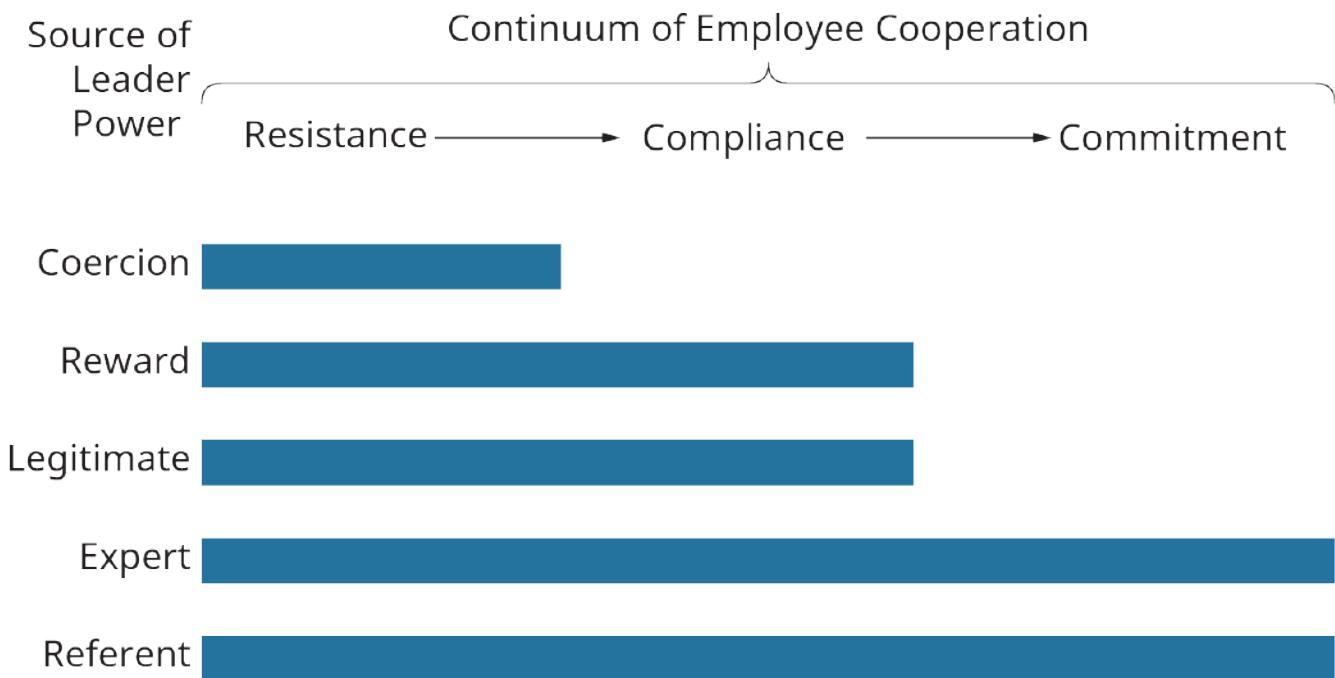


Figure 1 (Credit: Rice University Openstax/Employees Reactions to Bases of Power/CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

If the subordinate accepts and identifies with the leader, their behavioral response will probably be one of

commitment. That is, the subordinate will be motivated to follow the wishes of the leader. This is most likely to happen when the person in charge uses referent or expert power. Under these circumstances, the follower believes in the leader's cause and will exert considerable energies to help the leader succeed.

A second possible response is *compliance*. This occurs most frequently when the subordinate feels the leader has either legitimate power or reward power. Under such circumstances, the follower will comply, either because it is perceived as a duty or because a reward is expected; but commitment or enthusiasm for the project is lacking. Finally, under conditions of coercive power, subordinates will more than likely use *resistance*. Here, the subordinate sees little reason—either altruistic or material—for cooperating and will often engage in a series of tactics to defeat the leader's efforts.

Power Dependencies

In any situation involving power, at least two persons (or groups) can be identified: (1) the person attempting to influence others and (2) the target or targets of that influence. Until recently, attention focused almost exclusively on how people tried to influence others. More recently attention been given to how people try to nullify or moderate such influence attempts. In particular, we now recognize that the extent to which influence attempts are successful is determined in large part by the **power dependencies** of those on the receiving end of the influence attempts. In other words, all people are not subject to (or dependent upon) the same bases of power. What causes some people to be vulnerable to power attempts? At least three factors have been identified (Mitchell & Larson, 1988).

Subordinate's Values

To begin, person B's values can influence his susceptibility to influence. For example, if the outcomes that A can influence are important to B, then B is more likely to be open to influence than if the outcomes were unimportant. Hence, if an employee places a high value on money and believes the supervisor actually controls pay raises, we would expect the employee to be highly susceptible to the supervisor's influence. We hear comments about how young people don't really want to work hard anymore. Perhaps a reason for this phenomenon is that some young people don't place a high value on those things (for example, money) that traditionally have been used to influence behavior. In other words, such complaints may really be saying that young people are more difficult to influence than they used to be.

Nature of Relationship

In addition, the nature of the relationship between A and B can be a factor in power dependence. Are A and B peers or superior and subordinate? Is the job permanent or temporary? A person on a temporary job, for example, may feel less need to acquiesce, because he won't be holding the position for long. Moreover, if A and B are peers or good friends, the influence process is likely to be more delicate than if they are superior and subordinate.

Counterpower

Finally, a third factor to consider in power dependencies is **counterpower**. The concept of counterpower focuses on

the extent to which B has other sources of power to buffer the effects of A's power. For example, if B is unionized, the union's power may serve to negate A's influence attempts. The use of counterpower can be clearly seen in a variety of situations where various coalitions attempt to bargain with one another and check the power of their opponents.

Figure 2 presents a rudimentary model that combines the concepts of bases of power with the notion of power dependencies. As can be seen, A's bases of power interact with B's extent of power dependency to determine B's response to A's influence attempt. If A has significant power and B is highly dependent, we would expect B to comply with A's wishes.

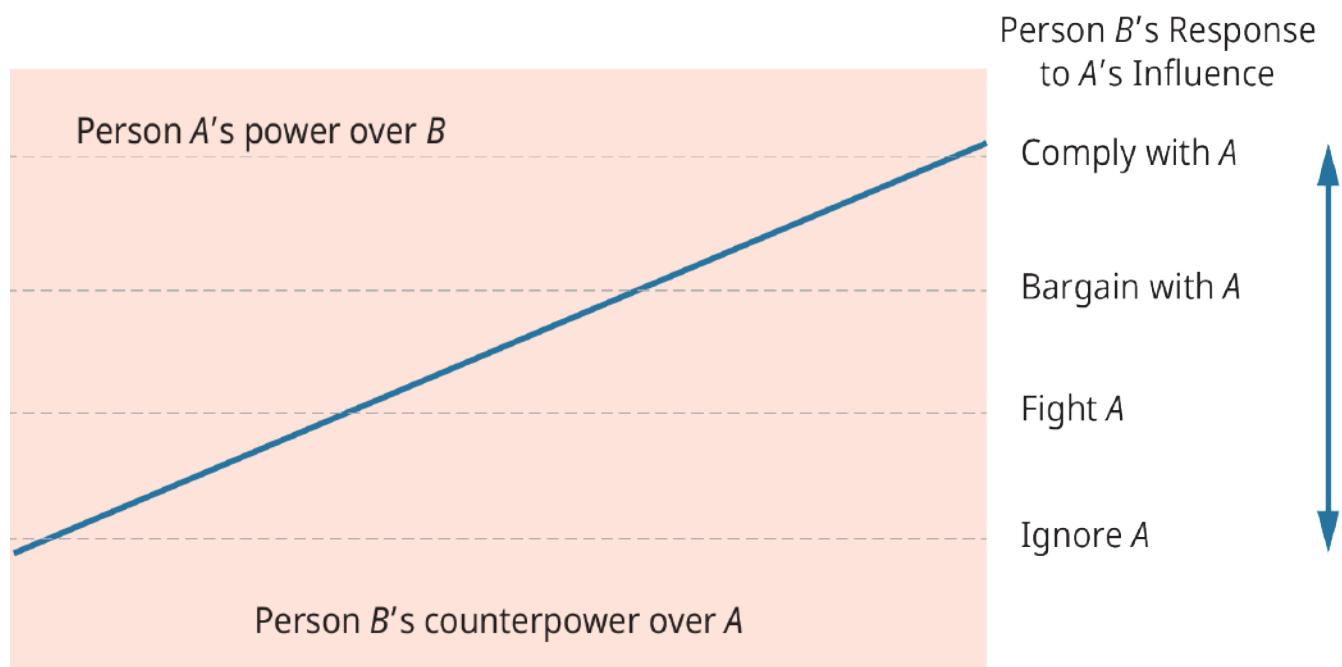


Figure 2 (Credit: Rice University Openstax/Typical Response Patterns in Dyadic Power Relationships/CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).

If A has more modest power over B, but B is still largely power dependent, B may try to bargain with A. Despite the fact that B would be bargaining from an unstable/weaker position, this strategy may serve to protect B's interests better than outright compliance. For instance, if your boss asked you to work overtime, you might attempt to strike a deal whereby you would get compensatory time off at a later date. If successful, although you would not have decreased your working hours, at least you would not have increased them. Where power distribution is more evenly divided, B may attempt to develop a cooperative working relationship with A in which both parties gain from the exchange. An example of this position is a labor contract negotiation where labor-management relations are characterized by a balance of power and a good working relationship.

If B has more power than A, B will more than likely reject A's influence attempt. B may even become the aggressor and attempt to influence A. Finally, when B is not certain of the power relationships, he may simply try to ignore A's efforts. In doing so, B will discover either that A does indeed have more power or that A cannot muster the power to be successful. A good illustration of this last strategy can be seen in some companies' responses to early governmental efforts to secure equal opportunities for minorities and women. These companies simply ignored governmental efforts until new regulations forced compliance.

Uses of Power

As we look at our groups and teams as well as our organizations, it is easy to see manifestations of power almost anywhere. In fact, there are a wide variety of power-based methods used to influence others. Here, we will examine two aspects of the use of power: commonly used power tactics and the ethical use of power.

Common Power Tactics in Organizations

As noted above, many power tactics are available for use. However, as we will see, some are more ethical than others. Here, we look at some of the more commonly used power tactics found in both business and public organizations (Pfeffer, 2011) that also have relevance for groups.

Controlling Access to Information

Most decisions rest on the availability of relevant information, so persons *controlling access to information* play a major role in decisions made. A good example of this is the common corporate practice of pay secrecy. Only the personnel department and senior managers typically have salary information—and power—for personnel decisions.

Controlling Access to Persons

Another related power tactic is the practice of *controlling access to persons*. A well-known factor contributing to President Nixon's downfall was his isolation from others. His two senior advisers had complete control over who saw the president. Similar criticisms were leveled against President Reagan.

Selective Use of Objective Criteria

Very few questions have one correct answer; instead, decisions must be made concerning the most appropriate criteria for evaluating results. As such, significant power can be exercised by those who can practice *selective use of objective criteria* that will lead to a decision favorable to themselves. According to Herbert Simon, if an individual is permitted to select decision criteria, then that person needn't care who actually makes the decision. Attempts to control objective decision criteria can be seen in faculty debates in a university or college over who gets hired or promoted. One group tends to emphasize teaching and will attempt to set criteria for employment dealing with teacher competence, subject area, interpersonal relations, and so on. Another group may emphasize research and will try to set criteria related to number of publications, reputation in the field, and so on.

Controlling the Agenda

One of the simplest ways to influence a decision is to ensure that it never comes up for consideration in the first place. There are a variety of strategies used for *controlling the agenda*. Efforts may be made to order the topics at a meeting in such a way that the undesired topic is last on the list. Failing this, opponents may raise a number of objections or points of information concerning the topic that cannot be easily answered, thereby tabling the topic until another day.

Using Outside Experts

Still another means to gain an advantage is *using outside experts*. The unit wishing to exercise power may take the initiative and bring in experts from the field or experts known to be in sympathy with their cause. Hence, when a dispute arises over spending more money on research versus actual production, we would expect differing answers from outside research consultants and outside production consultants. Most consultants have experienced situations in which their clients fed them information and biases they hoped the consultant would repeat in a meeting.

Bureaucratic Gamesmanship

In some situations, the organizations own policies and procedures provide ammunition for power plays, or *bureaucratic gamesmanship*. For instance, a group may drag its feet on making changes in the workplace by creating red tape, work slowdowns, or “work to rule.” (Working to rule occurs when employees diligently follow every work rule and policy statement to the letter; this typically results in the organization’s grinding to a halt as a result of the many and often conflicting rules and policy statements.) In this way, the group lets it be known that the workflow will continue to slow down until they get their way.

Coalitions and Alliances

The final power tactic to be discussed here is that of *coalitions* and *alliances*. One unit can effectively increase its power by forming an alliance with other groups that share similar interests. This technique is often used when multiple labor unions in the same corporation join forces to gain contract concessions for their workers. It can also be seen in the tendency of corporations within one industry to form trade associations to lobby for their position. Although the various members of a coalition need not agree on everything—indeed, they may be competitors—sufficient agreement on the problem under consideration is necessary as a basis for action.

Ethical Use of Power

Several guidelines for the ethical use of power can be identified. These can be arranged according to our previous discussion of the five bases of power, as shown in **Table 1**. As will be noted, several techniques are available that accomplish their aims without compromising ethical standards. For example, a person using reward power can verify compliance with work directives, ensure that all requests are both feasible and reasonable, make only ethical or proper

requests, offer rewards that are valued, and ensure that all rewards for good performance are credible and reasonably attainable.

Table 1: The Ethical Use of Power

| Basis of Power | Guidelines for Use |
|------------------|--|
| Referent power | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Treat subordinates fairly• Defend subordinates' interests• Be sensitive to subordinates' needs, feelings• Select subordinates similar to oneself• Engage in role modeling |
| Expert power | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote the image of expertise• Maintain credibility• Act confident and decisive• Keep informed• Recognize employee concerns• Avoid threatening subordinates' self-esteem |
| Legitimate power | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be cordial and polite• Be confident• Be clear and follow up to verify understanding• Make sure request is appropriate• Explain reasons for request• Follow proper channels• Exercise power regularly• Enforce compliance• Be sensitive to subordinates' concerns |
| Reward power | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Verify compliance• Make feasible, reasonable requests• Make only ethical, proper requests• Offer rewards desired by subordinates• Offer only credible rewards |
| Coercive power | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inform subordinates of rules and penalties• Warn before punishing• Administer punishment consistently and uniformly• Understand the situation before acting• Maintain credibility• Fit punishment to the infraction• Punish in private |

Credit: Rice University/Openstax/CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Source: Adapted from Yukl (2013).

Even coercive power can be used without jeopardizing personal integrity. For example, a manager can make sure that all employees know the rules and penalties for rule infractions, provide warnings before punishing, administer punishments fairly and uniformly, and so forth. The point here is that people have at their disposal numerous tactics that they can employ without abusing their power.

Review & Reflection Questions

- Prior to reading the chapter, how did you define power? How might power-to, power-from-within and power-with make us think about power differently?
- What is the relationship between power and oppression?
- When you first joined your group, what assumptions did you make about the status of different members? Where did those assumptions come from?
- Identify five bases of power, and provide an example of each. Which base (or bases) of power do you feel would be most commonly found in groups?
- How can we exercise power ethically? What might be some best practices in the context of your group?

References

- Beebe, S.A., & Masterson, J.T. (2015). *Communicating in small groups: Principles and practices* (11th ed.). Pearson.
- Borman, E.G. (1989). *Discussion and group methods: Theory and practice* (3rd ed.). Harper and Row.
- Brilhart, J.K., & Galanes, G.J. (1997). *Effective group discussion*. Brown.
- French, J., & Raven, B. (1968). The bases of social power. In D. Cartwright and A. Zander (Eds.), *Group Dynamics*. Harper & Row.
- Heider, J. (2005). *The Tao of Leadership: Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching Adapted for a New Age* (1st ed.) Green Dragon.
- Homans, G.C. (1992). *The human group*. Harcourt Brace & World.
- Kipnis, D. (1976). *The Powerholders*. University of Chicago Press.
- Leaven Center (2003). *Doing Our Own Work: A Seminar for Anti-Racist White Women*. Visions, Inc. and the MSU Extension Multicultural Awareness Workshop.
- Mitchell, T. R., & Larson, J. (1988). *People in organizations*. McGraw-Hill.
- Shetty, Y. (1978). Managerial power and organizational effectiveness: A contingency analysis. *Journal of Management Studies*, 15, 178–181.
- Starhawk (1987). *Truth or dare: Encounters with power authority, and mystery*. Harper.
- Thai, N. D. & Lien, A. (2019). Respect for diversity. In L. A. Jason, O. Glantsman, J. F. O'Brien, & K. N. Ramian (Eds.), *Introduction to Community Psychology: Becoming an agent of change*. <https://press.rebus.community/introductiontocommunitypsychology/chapter/respect-for-diversity/>
- Tjosvold, D. (1985). Power and social context in the superior-subordinate interaction," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 281–293.
- Yukl, G. A. (2013). *Leadership in Organizations* (8th ed.). Pearson.

Author and Attribution

This remix comes from Dr. Jasmine Linabary at Emporia State University. This chapter is also available in her book: [Small Group Communication: Forming and Sustaining Teams](#).

The introduction and the section “Defining Power” are adapted from Chapter 10 “[Groups Communication](#)” from [Survey of Communication Study](#) by Laura K. Hawn and Scott T. Paynton. This content is available under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License](#).

The section “Relationship between Power and Status” is adapted from “[Status](#)” from [An Introduction To Group Communication](#). This content is available under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported](#) (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0) License without attribution as requested by the work’s original creator or licensor.

The sections “Bases of Power” and “Uses of Power” are adapted from “[Organizational Power and Politics](#)” Black, J.S.,

& Bright, D.S. (2019). *Organizational behavior*. OpenStax. <https://openstax.org/books/organizational-behavior/>. Access the full chapter for free [here](#). The content is available under a [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 license](#).

The section “Understanding Power and Oppression” is adapted from Palmer, G.L, Fernández, J. S., Lee, G., Masud, H., Hilson, S., Tang, C., Thomas, D., Clark, L., Guzman, B., & Bernai, I. [Oppression and power](#). In L. A. Jason, O. Glantsman, J. F. O’Brien, & K. N. Ramian (Eds.), [Introduction to Community Psychology](#). Pressbooks. <https://press.rebus.community/introductiontocommunitypsychology/>. The content is available under a [Creative Commons Attribution International 4.0 License](#).



Problem Solving in Teams and Groups by Cameron W. Piercy, Ph.D. is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

I5. Judgment and Decision Making

From [the Noba Project](#). By [Max H. Bazerman, Harvard University](#)

Humans are not perfect decision makers. Not only are we not perfect, but we depart from perfection or rationality in systematic and predictable ways. The understanding of these systematic and predictable departures is core to the field of judgment and decision making. By understanding these limitations, we can also identify strategies for making better and more effective decisions.

[PDF Download](#)

Key Terms

- [Anchoring](#)
- [Biases](#)
- [Bounded awareness](#)
- [Bounded ethicality](#)
- [Bounded rationality](#)
- [Bounded self-interest](#)
- [Bounded willpower](#)
- [Framing](#)
- [Overconfidence](#)
- [System 1](#)
- [System 2.](#)

Learning Objectives

- Understand the systematic biases that affect our judgment and decision making.
- Develop strategies for making better decisions.
- Experience some of the biases through sample decisions.

Introduction

Every day you have the opportunity to make countless decisions: should you eat dessert, cheat on a test, or attend a sports event with your friends. If you reflect on your own history of choices you will realize that they vary in quality; some are rational and some are not.

In his Nobel Prize-winning work, psychologist Herbert Simon ([1957](#); [March & Simon, 1958](#)) argued that our decisions

are bounded in their rationality. According to the [bounded rationality](#) framework, human beings try to make rational decisions (such as weighing the costs and benefits of a choice) but our cognitive limitations prevent us from being fully rational. Time and cost constraints limit the quantity and quality of the information that is available to us. Moreover, we only retain a relatively small amount of information in our usable memory. And limitations on intelligence and perceptions constrain the ability of even very bright decision makers to accurately make the best choice based on the information that is available.

About 15 years after the publication of Simon's seminal work, Tversky and Kahneman ([1973](#), [1974](#); [Kahneman & Tversky, 1979](#)) produced their own Nobel Prize-winning research, which provided critical information about specific systematic and predictable [biases](#), or mistakes, that influence judgment (Kahneman received the prize after Tversky's death). The work of Simon, Tversky, and Kahneman paved the way to our modern understanding of judgment and decision making. And their two Nobel prizes signaled the broad acceptance of the field of behavioral decision research as a mature area of intellectual study.

What Would a Rational Decision Look Like?



People often have to use incomplete information and intuition to make even the most important of decisions. A fully rational decision requires a careful, systematic process. [Image: CC0 Public Domain, <https://goo.gl/m25gce>]

Imagine that during your senior year in college, you apply to a number of doctoral programs, law schools, or business schools (or another set of programs in whatever field most interests you). The good news is that you receive many acceptance letters. So, how should you decide where to go? Bazerman and Moore ([2013](#)) outline the following six steps that you should take to make a rational decision:

- (1) define the problem (i.e., selecting the right graduate program)
- (2) identify the criteria necessary to judge the multiple options (location, prestige, faculty, etc.)
- (3) weight the criteria (rank them in terms of importance to you)
- (4) generate alternatives (the schools that admitted you)
- (5) rate each alternative on each criterion (rate each school on each criteria that you identified)
- (6) compute the optimal decision. Acting rationally would require that you follow these six steps in a fully rational manner.

I strongly advise people to think through important decisions such as this in a manner similar to this process. Unfortunately, we often don't. Many of us rely on our intuitions far more than we should. And when we do try to think systematically, the way we enter data into such formal decision-making processes is often biased.

Fortunately, psychologists have learned a great deal about the biases that affect our thinking. This knowledge about the systematic and predictable mistakes that even the best and the brightest make can help you identify flaws in your thought processes and reach better decisions.

Biases in Our Decision Process

Simon's concept of bounded rationality taught us that judgment deviates from rationality, but it did not tell us how judgment is biased. Tversky and Kahneman's (1974) research helped to diagnose the specific systematic, directional biases that affect human judgment. These biases are created by the tendency to short-circuit a rational decision process by relying on a number of simplifying strategies, or rules of thumb, known as [heuristics](#). Heuristics allow us to cope with the complex environment surrounding our decisions. Unfortunately, they also lead to systematic and predictable biases.

To highlight some of these biases please answer the following three quiz items:

Exercises

Problem 1 (adapted from Alpert & Raiffa, 1969):

Listed below are 10 uncertain quantities. Do not look up any information on these items. For each, write down your best estimate of the quantity. Next, put a lower and upper bound around your estimate, such that

you are 98 percent confident that your range surrounds the actual quantity. Respond to each of these items even if you admit to knowing very little about these quantities.

1. The first year the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded
2. The date the French celebrate “Bastille Day”
3. The distance from the Earth to the Moon
4. The height of the Leaning Tower of Pisa
5. Number of students attending Oxford University (as of 2014)
6. Number of people who have traveled to space (as of 2013)
7. 2012–2013 annual budget for the University of Pennsylvania
8. Average life expectancy in Bangladesh (as of 2012)
9. World record for pull-ups in a 24-hour period
10. Number of colleges and universities in the Boston metropolitan area

Exercises

Problem 2 (adapted from Joyce & Biddle, 1981):

We know that executive fraud occurs and that it has been associated with many recent financial scandals. And, we know that many cases of management fraud go undetected even when annual audits are performed. Do you think that the incidence of significant executive-level management fraud is more than 10 in 1,000 firms (that is, 1 percent) audited by Big Four accounting firms?

1. Yes, more than 10 in 1,000 Big Four clients have significant executive-level management fraud.
2. No, fewer than 10 in 1,000 Big Four clients have significant executive-level management fraud.

What is your estimate of the number of Big Four clients per 1,000 that have significant executive-level management fraud? (Fill in the blank below with the appropriate number.)

_____ in 1,000 Big Four clients have significant executive-level management fraud.

Exercises

Problem 3 (adapted from Tversky & Kahneman, 1981):

Imagine that the United States is preparing for the outbreak of an unusual avian disease that is expected to kill 600 people. Two alternative programs to combat the disease have been proposed. Assume that the exact scientific estimates of the consequences of the programs are as follows.

1. Program A: If Program A is adopted, 200 people will be saved.
2. Program B: If Program B is adopted, there is a one-third probability that 600 people will be saved and a two-thirds probability that no people will be saved.

Which of the two programs would you favor?

Overconfidence

On the first problem, if you set your ranges so that you were justifiably 98 percent confident, you should expect that approximately 9.8, or nine to 10, of your ranges would include the actual value. So, let's look at the correct answers:



Overconfidence is a natural part of most people's decision-making process and this can get us into trouble. Is it possible to overcome our faulty thinking? Perhaps. See the "Fixing Our Decisions" section below. [Image: Barn Images, <https://goo.gl/IYzbDV>, CC BY 2.0, <https://goo.gl/BRvSA7>]

1. 1901
2. 14th of July
3. 384,403 km (238,857 mi)
4. 56.67 m (183 ft)
5. 22,384 (as of 2014)
6. 536 people (as of 2013)
7. \$6.007 billion

8. 70.3 years (as of 2012)
9. 4,321
10. 52

Count the number of your 98% ranges that actually surrounded the true quantities. If you surrounded nine to 10, you were appropriately confident in your judgments. But most readers surround only between three (30%) and seven (70%) of the correct answers, despite claiming 98% confidence that each range would surround the true value. As this problem shows, humans tend to be [overconfident](#) in their judgments.

Anchoring

Regarding the second problem, people vary a great deal in their final assessment of the level of executive-level management fraud, but most think that 10 out of 1,000 is too low. When I run this exercise in class, half of the students respond to the question that I asked you to answer. The other half receive a similar problem, but instead are asked whether the correct answer is higher or lower than 200 rather than 10. Most people think that 200 is high. But, again, most people claim that this “[anchor](#)” does not affect their final estimate. Yet, on average, people who are presented with the question that focuses on the number 10 (out of 1,000) give answers that are about one-half the size of the estimates of those facing questions that use an anchor of 200. When we are making decisions, any initial anchor that we face is likely to influence our judgments, even if the anchor is arbitrary. That is, we insufficiently adjust our judgments away from the anchor.

Framing

Turning to Problem 3, most people choose Program A, which saves 200 lives for sure, over Program B. But, again, if I was in front of a classroom, only half of my students would receive this problem. The other half would have received the same set-up, but with the following two options:

1. Program C: If Program C is adopted, 400 people will die.
2. Program D: If Program D is adopted, there is a one-third probability that no one will die and a two-thirds probability that 600 people will die.

Which of the two programs would you favor?

Careful review of the two versions of this problem clarifies that they are objectively the same. Saving 200 people (Program A) means losing 400 people (Program C), and Programs B and D are also objectively identical. Yet, in one of the most famous problems in judgment and decision making, most individuals choose Program A in the first set and Program D in the second set (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). People respond very differently to saving versus losing lives—even when the difference is based just on the “[framing](#)” of the choices.

The problem that I asked you to respond to was framed in terms of saving lives, and the implied reference point was the worst outcome of 600 deaths. Most of us, when we make decisions that concern gains, are risk averse; as a consequence, we lock in the possibility of saving 200 lives for sure. In the alternative version, the problem is framed in terms of losses. Now the implicit reference point is the best outcome of no deaths due to the avian disease. And in this case, most people are risk seeking when making decisions regarding losses.

These are just three of the many biases that affect even the smartest among us. Other research shows that we are biased in favor of information that is easy for our minds to retrieve, are insensitive to the importance of base rates

and sample sizes when we are making inferences, assume that random events will always look random, search for information that confirms our expectations even when disconfirming information would be more informative, claim a priori knowledge that didn't exist due to the hindsight bias, and are subject to a host of other effects that continue to be developed in the literature ([Bazerman & Moore, 2013](#)).

Contemporary Developments



The concept of bounded willpower may explain why many of us are better shoppers than savers. [Image: CC0 Public Domain, <https://goo.gl/m25gce>]

Bounded rationality served as the integrating concept of the field of behavioral decision research for 40 years. Then, in 2000, Thaler ([2000](#)) suggested that decision making is bounded in two ways not precisely captured by the concept of bounded rationality. First, he argued that our [willpower is bounded](#) and that, as a consequence, we give greater weight to present concerns than to future concerns. Our immediate motivations are often inconsistent with our long-term interests in a variety of ways, such as the common failure to save adequately for retirement or the difficulty many people have staying on a diet. Second, Thaler suggested that our [self-interest is bounded](#) such that we care about the outcomes of others. Sometimes we positively value the outcomes of others—giving them more of a commodity than is necessary out of a desire to be fair, for example. And, in unfortunate contexts, we sometimes are willing to forgo our own benefits out of a desire to harm others.

My colleagues and I have recently added two other important bounds to the list. Chugh, Banaji, and Bazerman ([2005](#)) and Banaji and Bhaskar ([2000](#))

introduced the concept of [bounded ethicality](#), which refers to the notion that our ethics are limited in ways we are not even aware of ourselves. Second, Chugh and Bazerman ([2007](#)) developed the concept of [bounded awareness](#) to refer to the broad array of focusing failures that affect our judgment, specifically the many ways in which we fail to notice obvious and important information that is available to us.

A final development is the application of judgment and decision-making research to the areas of behavioral economics, behavioral finance, and behavioral marketing, among others. In each case, these fields have been transformed by applying and extending research from the judgment and decision-making literature.

Fixing Our Decisions

Ample evidence documents that even smart people are routinely impaired by biases. Early research demonstrated, unfortunately, that awareness of these problems does little to reduce bias ([Fischhoff, 1982](#)). The good news is that more recent research documents interventions that do help us overcome our faulty thinking ([Bazerman & Moore, 2013](#)).

One critical path to fixing our biases is provided in Stanovich and West's ([2000](#)) distinction between [System](#)

1 and [System 2](#) decision making. System 1 processing is our intuitive system, which is typically fast, automatic, effortless, implicit, and emotional. System 2 refers to decision making that is slower, conscious, effortful, explicit, and logical. The six logical steps of decision making outlined earlier describe a System 2 process.

Clearly, a complete System 2 process is not required for every decision we make. In most situations, our System 1 thinking is quite sufficient; it would be impractical, for example, to logically reason through every choice we make while shopping for groceries. But, preferably, System 2 logic should influence our most important decisions. Nonetheless, we use our System 1 processes for most decisions in life, relying on it even when making important decisions.

The key to reducing the effects of bias and improving our decisions is to transition from trusting our intuitive System 1 thinking toward engaging more in deliberative System 2 thought. Unfortunately, the busier and more rushed people are, the more they have on their minds, and the more likely they are to rely on System 1 thinking ([Chugh, 2004](#)). The frantic pace of professional life suggests that executives often rely on System 1 thinking ([Chugh, 2004](#)).

Fortunately, it is possible to identify conditions where we rely on intuition at our peril and substitute more deliberative thought. One fascinating example of this substitution comes from journalist Michael Lewis' ([2003](#)) account of how Billy Beane, the general manager of the Oakland Athletics, improved the outcomes of the failing baseball team after recognizing that the intuition of baseball executives was limited and systematically biased and that their intuitions had been incorporated into important decisions in ways that created enormous mistakes. Lewis ([2003](#)) documents that baseball professionals tend to overgeneralize from their personal experiences, be overly influenced by players' very recent performances, and overweight what they see with their own eyes, despite the fact that players' multiyear records provide far better data. By substituting valid predictors of future performance (System 2 thinking), the Athletics were able to outperform expectations given their very limited payroll.

Another important direction for improving decisions comes from Thaler and Sunstein's ([2008](#)) book *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness*. Rather than setting out to debias human judgment, Thaler and Sunstein outline a strategy for how "decision architects" can change environments in ways that account for human bias and trigger better decisions as a result. For example, Beshears, Choi, Laibson, and Madrian ([2008](#)) have shown that simple changes to defaults can dramatically improve people's decisions. They tackle the failure of many people to save for retirement and show that a simple change can significantly influence enrollment in 401(k) programs. In most companies, when you start your job, you need to proactively sign up to join the company's retirement savings plan. Many people take years before getting around to doing so. When, instead, companies automatically enroll their employees in 401(k) programs and give them the opportunity to "opt out," the net enrollment rate rises significantly. By changing defaults, we can counteract the human tendency to live with the status quo.

Similarly, Johnson and Goldstein's ([2003](#)) cross-European organ donation study reveals that countries that have opt-in organ donation policies, where the default is not to harvest people's organs without their prior consent, sacrifice thousands of lives in comparison to opt-out policies, where the default is to harvest organs. The United States and too many other countries require that citizens opt in to organ donation through a proactive effort; as a consequence, consent rates range between 4.25%–44% across these countries. In contrast, changing the decision architecture to an



Nudges can be used to help people make better decisions about saving for retirement. [Image: Tax Credits, <https://goo.gl/YLuyth>, CC BY 2.0, <https://goo.gl/BRvSA7>

opt-out policy improves consent rates to 85.9% to 99.98%. Designing the donation system with knowledge of the power of defaults can dramatically change donation rates without changing the options available to citizens. In contrast, a more intuitive strategy, such as the one in place in the United States, inspires defaults that result in many unnecessary deaths.

Take a Quiz

An (optional) quiz is available for this chapter [at the Noba Project's website](#).

Discussion Questions

1. Are the biases in this module a problem in the real world?
2. How would you use this module to be a better decision maker?
3. Can you see any biases in today's newspaper?

Vocabulary

Anchoring

The bias to be affected by an initial anchor, even if the anchor is arbitrary, and to insufficiently adjust our judgments away from that anchor.

Biases

The systematic and predictable mistakes that influence the judgment of even very talented human beings.

Bounded awareness

The systematic ways in which we fail to notice obvious and important information that is available to us.

Bounded ethicality

The systematic ways in which our ethics are limited in ways we are not even aware of ourselves.

Bounded rationality

Model of human behavior that suggests that humans try to make rational decisions but are bounded due to cognitive limitations.

Bounded self-interest

The systematic and predictable ways in which we care about the outcomes of others.

Bounded willpower

The tendency to place greater weight on present concerns rather than future concerns.

Framing

The bias to be systematically affected by the way in which information is presented, while holding the objective information constant.

Heuristics

cognitive (or thinking) strategies that simplify decision making by using mental short-cuts

Overconfident

The bias to have greater confidence in your judgment than is warranted based on a rational assessment.

System 1

Our intuitive decision-making system, which is typically fast, automatic, effortless, implicit, and emotional.

System 2

Our more deliberative decision-making system, which is slower, conscious, effortful, explicit, and logical.

Outside Resources

Book: Bazerman, M. H., & Moore, D. (2013). *Judgment in managerial decision making* (8th ed.). John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Book: Kahneman, D. (2011) *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Book: Thaler, R. H., & Sunstein, C. R. (2008). *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

References

- Alpert, M., & Raiffa, H. (1969). A progress report on the training of probability assessors. Unpublished Report.
- Banaji, M. R., & Bhaskar, R. (2000). Implicit stereotypes and memory: The bounded rationality of social beliefs. In D. L. Schacter & E. Scarry (Eds.), *Memory, brain, and belief* (pp. 139–175). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bazerman, M. H., & Moore, D. (2013). *Judgment in managerial decision making* (8th ed.). John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Beshears, J., Choi, J. J., Laibson, D., & Madrian, B. C. (2008). The importance of default options for retirement saving outcomes: Evidence from the United States. In S. J. Kay & T. Sinha (Eds.), *Lessons from pension reform in the Americas* (pp. 59–87). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chugh, D. (2004). Societal and managerial implications of implicit social cognition: Why milliseconds matter. *Social Justice Research*, 17(2), 203–222.
- Chugh, D., & Bazerman, M. H. (2007). Bounded awareness: What you fail to see can hurt you. *Mind & Society*, 6(1), 1–18.
- Chugh, D., Banaji, M. R., & Bazerman, M. H. (2005). Bounded ethicality as a psychological barrier to recognizing conflicts of interest. In D. Moore, D. M. Cain, G. Loewenstein, & M. H. Bazerman (Eds.), *Conflicts of Interest* (pp. 74–95). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Fischhoff, B. (1982). Debiasing. In D. Kahneman, P. Slovic, & A. Tversky (Eds.), *Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases* (pp. 422–444). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Johnson, E. J., & Goldstein, D. (2003). Do defaults save lives? *Science* 302(5649), 1338–1339.
- Joyce, E. J., & Biddle, G. C. (1981). Are auditors' judgments sufficiently regressive? *Journal of Accounting Research*, 19(2), 323–349.
- Kahneman, D., & Tversky, A. (1979). Prospect theory: An analysis of decision under risk. *Econometrica*, 47(2), 263–292.
- Lewis, M. (2003). *Moneyball: The art of winning an unfair game*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company Ltd.
- March, J. G., & Simon, H. A. (1958). *Organizations*. Oxford: Wiley.
- Simon, H. A. (1957). *Models of man, social and rational: Mathematical essays on rational human behavior in a social setting*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.

- Stanovich, K. E., & West, R. F. (2000). Individual differences in reasoning: Implications for the rationality debate? *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 23, 645–726.
- Thaler, R. H. (2000). From homo economicus to homo sapiens. *Journal of Economics Perspectives*, 14, 133–141.
- Thaler, R. H., & Sunstein, C. R. (2008). *Nudge: Improving decisions about health, wealth, and happiness*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1981). The framing of decisions and the psychology of choice. *Science, New Series*, 211(4481), 453–458.
- Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1974). Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases. *Science, New Series*, 185(4157), 1124–1131.
- Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1973). Availability: A heuristic for judging frequency and probability. *Cognitive Psychology*, 5(2), 207–232.

Authors



• Max H. Bazerman

Max H. Bazerman is the Jesse Isidor Straus Professor at the Harvard Business School and the co-director of the Center for Public Leadership at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. Max's awards include a 2006 honorary doctorate from the University of London (London Business School), the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Aspen Institute, and being named as one of Ethisphere's 100 Most Influential in Business Ethics. Details at www.people.hbs.edu/mbazerman.



Judgment and Decision Making by Cameron W. Piercy, Ph.D. is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/), except where otherwise noted.

I6. Cultivating a Supportive Group Climate

CULTIVATING A SUPPORTIVE GROUP CLIMATE

Learning Objectives

- Define group cohesion and group climate
- Explain symbolic convergence theory and its relationship to group cohesion
- Identify communication behaviors that contribute to supportive vs. defensive group climates

Any time a group of people come together, new dynamics are put into place that differ from the dynamics present in our typical dyadic interactions. The impressions we form about other people's likeability and the way we think about a group's purpose are affected by the climate within a group that is created by all members. In this chapter, we will define group cohesion and climate as well as discuss specific communication behaviors that can contribute to supportive and defensive group climates.

DEFINING GROUP COHESION AND CLIMATE

When something is **cohesive**, it sticks together, and the cohesion within a group helps establish an overall group climate.  Group climate refers to the relatively enduring tone and quality of group interaction that is experienced similarly by group members. To better understand cohesion and climate, we can examine two types of cohesion: task and social.

Task cohesion refers to the commitment of group members to the purpose and activities of the group. **Social cohesion** refers to the attraction and liking among group members. Ideally, groups would have an appropriate balance between these two types of cohesion relative to the group's purpose, with task-oriented groups having higher task cohesion and relational-oriented groups having higher social cohesion. Even the most task-focused groups need some degree of social cohesion, and vice versa, but the balance will be determined by the purpose of the group and the individual members. For example, a team of workers from the local car dealership may join a local summer softball league because they're good friends and love the game. They may end up beating the team of faculty members from the community college who joined the league just to get to know each other better and have an excuse to get together and drink beer in the afternoon. In this example, the players from the car dealership exhibit high social and task cohesion, while the faculty exhibit high social but low task cohesion.



Cohesive groups have an appropriate balance between task and social cohesion. (Credit: [Brooke Cagle](#)/Unsplash)

Cohesion benefits a group in many ways and can be assessed through specific group behaviors and characteristics. Groups with an appropriate level of cohesiveness (Hargie, 2011):

- set goals easily;
- exhibit a high commitment to achieving the purpose of the group;
- are more productive;
- experience fewer attendance issues;
- have group members who are willing to stick with the group during times of difficulty;
- have satisfied group members who identify with, promote, and defend the group;
- have members who are willing to listen to each other and offer support and constructive criticism; and
- experience less anger and tension.

Appropriate levels of group cohesion usually create a positive group climate, since group climate is affected by members' satisfaction with the group. Climate has also been described as group morale. Following are some qualities that contribute to a positive group climate and morale (Marston & Hecht, 1988):

- **Participation.** Group members feel better when they feel included in discussion and a part of the functioning of the group.
- **Messages.** Confirming messages help build relational dimensions within a group, and clear, organized, and relevant messages help build task dimensions within a group.

- **Feedback.** Positive, constructive, and relevant feedback contribute to group climate.
- **Equity.** Aside from individual participation, group members also like to feel as if participation is managed equally within the group and that appropriate turn taking is used.
- **Clear and accepted roles.** Group members like to know how status and hierarchy operate within a group. Knowing the roles isn't enough to lead to satisfaction, though—members must also be comfortable with and accept those roles.
- **Motivation.** Member motivation is activated by perceived connection to and relevance of the group's goals or purpose.

Group cohesion and climate is also demonstrated through symbolic convergence (Bormann, 1985). **Symbolic convergence** refers to the sense of community or group consciousness that develops in a group through non-task-related communication such as stories and jokes. The originator of symbolic convergence theory, Ernest Bormann, claims that the sharing of group fantasies creates symbolic convergence. Fantasy, in this sense, doesn't refer to fairy tales, sexual desire, or untrue things. In group communication, **group fantasies** are verbalized references to events outside the “here and now” of the group, including references to the group’s past, predictions for the future, or other communication about people or events outside the group (Griffin, 2009). For example, as a graduate student, I spent a lot of time talking with others in our small group about research, writing, and other things related to our classes and academia in general. Most of this communication wouldn’t lead to symbolic convergence or help establish the strong social bonds that we developed as a group. Instead, it was our grad student “war stories” about excessive reading loads and unreasonable paper requirements we had experienced in earlier years of grad school, horror stories about absent or vindictive thesis advisors, and “you won’t believe this” stories from the classes that we were teaching that brought us together.



As symbolic convergence theory suggests, non-task-related communication such as stories, jokes or shared experiences can actually be valuable for groups. (Credit: [Priscilla Du Preez](#)/Unsplash)

In any group, you can tell when symbolic convergence is occurring by observing how people share such fantasies and how group members react to them. If group members react positively and agree with or appreciate the teller's effort or other group members are triggered to tell their own related stories, then convergence is happening and cohesion and climate are being established. Over time, these fantasies build a shared vision of the group and what it means to be a member that creates a shared group consciousness. By reviewing and applying the concepts in this section, you can hopefully identify potential difficulties with group cohesion and work to enhance cohesion when needed in order to create more positive group climates and enhance your future group interactions.

SUPPORTIVE AND DEFENSIVE GROUP CLIMATES

Communication is key to developing positive group climates. This requires groups to attend to the supportive and defensive communication behaviors taking place in their groups. **Defensive communication** is defined as that communication behavior which occurs when an individual perceives threat or anticipates threat in the group. Those who behave defensively, even though they also give some attention to the common task, devote an appreciable portion of energy to defending themselves. Besides talking about the topic, they think about how they appear to others, how they may be seen more favorably, how they may win, dominate, impress or escape punishment, and/or how they may avoid or mitigate a perceived attack.

Such inner feelings and outward acts tend to create similarly defensive postures in others; and, if unchecked, the ensuing circular response becomes increasingly destructive. Defensive communication behavior, in short, engenders defensive listening, and this in turn produces postural, facial and verbal cues which raise the defense level of the original communicator. Defense arousal prevents the listener from concentrating upon the message. Not only do defensive communicators send off multiple value, motive and affect cues, but also defensive recipients distort what they receive. As a person becomes more and more defensive, he or she becomes less and less able to perceive accurately the motives, the values and the emotions of the sender. Defensive behaviors have been correlated positively with losses in efficiency in communication.

The converse, moreover, also is true. The more "supportive" or defense-reductive the climate, the less the receiver reads into the communication distorted loadings which arise from projections of their own anxieties, motives and concerns. As defenses are reduced, the receivers become better able to concentrate upon the structure, the content and the cognitive meanings of the message.

Jack Gibb (1961) developed six pairs of defensive and supportive communication categories presented below. Behavior which a listener perceives as possessing any of the characteristics listed in the left-hand column arouses defensiveness, whereas that which he interprets as having any of the qualities designated as supportive reduces defensive feelings. The degree to which these reactions occur depends upon the person's level of defensiveness and upon the general climate in the group at the time.

Table 1: Communication in Defensive vs. Supportive Climates

| Defensive Climates | Supportive Climates |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Evaluation | 1. Description |
| 2. Control | 2. Problem Orientation |
| 3. Strategy | 3. Spontaneity |
| 4. Neutrality | 4. Empathy |
| 5. Superiority | 5. Equality |
| 6. Certainty | 6. Provisionalism |

EVALUATION AND DESCRIPTION

Speech or other behavior which appears evaluative increases defensiveness. If by expression, manner of speech, tone of voice or verbal content the sender seems to be evaluating or judging the listener, the receiver goes on guard. Of course, other factors may inhibit the reaction. If the listener thought that the speaker regarded him/her as an equal and was being open and spontaneous, for example, the evaluativeness in a message would be neutralized and perhaps not even perceived. This same principle applies equally to the other five categories of potentially defense-producing climates. These six sets are interactive.

Because our attitudes toward other persons are frequently, and often necessarily, evaluative, expressions which the defensive person will regard as nonjudgmental are hard to frame. Even the simplest question usually conveys the answer that the sender wishes or implies the response that would fit into his or her value system. A mother, for example, immediately following an earth tremor that shook the house, sought for her small son with the question, "Bobby, where are you?" The timid and plaintive "Mommy, I didn't do it" indicated how Bobby's chronic mild defensiveness predisposed him to react with a projection of his own guilt and in the context of his chronic assumption that questions are full of accusation.

Anyone who has attempted to train professionals to use information-seeking speech with neutral affect appreciates how difficult it is to teach a person to say even the simple "who did that?" without being seen as accusing. Speech is so frequently judgmental that there is a reality base for the defensive interpretations which are so common.

When insecure, group members are particularly likely to place blame, to see others as fitting into categories of good or bad, to make moral judgments of their colleagues and to question the value, motive and affect loadings of the speech which they hear. Since value loadings imply a judgment of others, a belief that the standards of the speaker differ from his or her own causes the listener to become defensive.

Descriptive speech, in contrast to that which is evaluative, tends to arouse a minimum of uneasiness. Speech acts in which the listener perceives as genuine requests for information or as material with neutral loadings is descriptive. Specifically, presentation of feelings, events, perceptions or processes which do not ask or imply that the receiver change behavior or attitude are minimally defense producing.

CONTROL AND PROBLEM ORIENTATION

Speech which is used to control the listener evokes resistance. In most of our social interactions, someone is trying to do something to someone else—to change an attitude, to influence behavior, or to restrict the field of activity. The degree to which attempts to control produce defensiveness depends upon the openness of the effort, for a suspicion that hidden motives exist heightens resistance. For this reason, attempts of non-directive therapists and progressive educators to refrain from imposing a set of values, a point of view or a problem solution upon the receivers meet with many barriers. Since the norm is control, non-controllers must earn the perceptions that their efforts have no hidden motives. A bombardment of persuasive "messages" in the fields of politics, education, special causes, advertising, religion, medicine, industrial relations and guidance has bred cynical and paranoid responses in listeners.

Implicit in all attempts to alter another person is the assumption by the change agent that the person to be altered is inadequate. That the speaker secretly views the listener as ignorant, unable to make his or her own decisions, uninformed, immature, unwise, or possessed of wrong or inadequate attitudes is a subconscious perception which gives the latter a valid base for defensive reactions.

STRATEGY AND SPONTANEITY

When the sender is perceived as engaged in a stratagem involving ambiguous and multiple motivations, the receiver becomes defensive. No one wishes to be a guinea pig, a role player, or an impressed actor, and no one likes to be the victim of some hidden motivation. That which is concealed, also, may appear larger than it really is with the degree of defensiveness of the listener determining the perceived size of the element. The intense reaction of the reading audience to the material in *The Hidden Persuaders* indicates the prevalence of defensive reactions to multiple motivations behind strategy. Group members who are seen as "taking a role" as feigning emotion, as toying with their colleagues, as withholding information or as having special sources of data are especially resented. One participant once complained that another was "using a listening technique" on him!

A large part of the adverse reaction to much of the so-called human relations training is a feeling against what are perceived as gimmicks and tricks to fool or to "involve" people, to make a person think he or she is making their own decision, or to make the listener feel that the sender is genuinely interested in him or her as a person. Particularly violent reactions occur when it appears that someone is trying to make a stratagem appear spontaneous. One person reported a boss who incurred resentment by habitually using the gimmick of "spontaneously" looking at his watch and saying "my gosh, look at the time—I must run to an appointment." The belief was that the boss would create less irritation by honestly asking to be excused.

The aversion to deceit may account for one's resistance to politicians who are suspected of behind-the-scenes planning to get one's vote, to psychologists whose listening apparently is motivated by more than the manifest or content-level interest in one's behavior, or the sophisticated, smooth, or clever person whose one-upmanship is marked with guile. In training groups the role-flexible person frequently is resented because his or her changes in behavior are perceived as strategic maneuvers.

In contrast, behavior that appears to be spontaneous and free of deception is defense reductive. If the communicator is seen as having a clean id, as having uncomplicated motivations, as being straightforward and honest, as behaving spontaneously in response to the situation, he or she is likely to arouse minimal defensiveness.

NEUTRALITY AND EMPATHY

When neutrality in speech appears to the listener to indicate a lack of concern for his welfare, he becomes defensive. Group members usually desire to be perceived as valued persons, as individuals with special worth, and as objects of concern and affection. The clinical, detached, person-is-an-object-study attitude on the part of many psychologist-trainers is resented by group members. Speech with low affect that communicates little warmth or caring is in such contrast with the affect-laden speech in social situations that it sometimes communicates rejection.

Communication that conveys empathy for the feelings and respect for the worth of the listener, however, is particularly supportive and defense reductive. Reassurance results when a message indicates that the speaker identifies himself or herself with the listener's problems, shares her feelings, and accepts her emotional reactions at face value. Abortive efforts to deny the legitimacy of the receiver's emotions by assuring the receiver that she need not feel badly, that she should not feel rejected, or that she is overly anxious, although often intended as support giving, may impress the listener as lack of acceptance. The combination of understanding and empathizing with the other person's emotions with no accompanying effort to change him or her is supportive at a high level.

The importance of gestural behavior cues in communicating empathy should be mentioned. Apparently spontaneous facial and bodily evidences of concern are often interpreted as especially valid evidence of deep-level acceptance.

SUPERIORITY AND EQUALITY

When a person communicates to another that he or she feels superior in position, power, wealth, intellectual ability, physical characteristics, or other ways, she or he arouses defensiveness. Here, as with other sources of disturbance, whatever arouses feelings of inadequacy causes the listener to center upon the affect loading of the statement rather than upon the cognitive elements. The receiver then reacts by not hearing the message, by forgetting it, by competing with the sender, or by becoming jealous of him or her.

The person who is perceived as feeling superior communicates that he or she is not willing to enter into a shared problem-solving relationship, that he or she probably does not desire feedback, that he or she does not require help, and/or that he or she will be likely to try to reduce the power, the status, or the worth of the receiver.

Many ways exist for creating the atmosphere that the sender feels himself or herself equal to the listener. Defenses are reduced when one perceives the sender as being willing to enter into participative planning with mutual trust and respect. Differences in talent, ability, worth, appearance, status and power often exist, but the low defense communicator seems to attach little importance to these distinctions.

CERTAINTY AND PROVISIONALISM

The effects of dogmatism in producing defensiveness are well known. Those who seem to know the answers, to require no additional data, and to regard themselves as teachers rather than as co-workers tend to put others on guard. Moreover, listeners often perceive manifest expressions of certainty as connoting inward feelings of inferiority. They see the dogmatic individual as needing to be right, as wanting to win an argument rather than solve a problem and as seeing his or her ideas as truths to be defended. This kind of behavior often is associated with acts which others regarded as attempts to exercise control. People who are right seem to have low tolerance for members who are "wrong"—i.e., who do not agree with the sender.

One reduces the defensiveness of the listener when one communicates that one is willing to experiment with one's own behavior, attitudes and ideas. The person who appears to be taking provisional attitudes, to be investigating issues rather than taking sides on them, to be problem solving rather than doubting, and to be willing to experiment and explore tends to communicate that the listener may have some control over the shared quest or the investigation of the ideas. If a person is genuinely searching for information and data, he or she does not resent help or company along the way.

Review & Reflection Questions

- What is group cohesion? What is the relationship between group cohesion and climate?
- How does symbolic convergence help us understand group cohesion and climate?
- Identify and then compare and contrast a current or former small group that was cohesive and one that was not cohesive. How did the presence or lack of cohesion affect the group's climate?
- Think about a recent group meeting. Can you recognize instances of defensive vs. supportive communication? How have those communication behaviors been affecting your group climate?

REFERENCES

- Ahuja, M. K., & Galvin, J. E. (2003). Socialization in virtual groups. *Journal of Management* 29(2), 161-185.
- Bormann, E. G. (1985). Symbolic convergence theory: A communication formulation. *Journal of Communication*, 35(4), 128–38.
- Ellis, D. G., & Fisher, B. A. (1994). *Small group decision making: Communication and the group process*, (4th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Griffin, E. (2009). *A first look at communication theory* (7th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Gibb, J. R. (1961). Defensive communication. *Journal of communication*, 11(3), 141-148.
- Hargie, O. (2011). *Skilled interpersonal interaction: Research, theory, and practice* (5th ed.). Routledge.
- Marston, P. J., & Hecht, M. L. (1988). Group satisfaction. In R. Cathcart & L. Samovar (Eds.), *Small group communication* (5th ed.). Brown.

AUTHORS & ATTRIBUTION

This remix comes from Dr. Jasmine Linabary at Emporia State University. This chapter is also available in her book: [Small Group Communication: Forming and Sustaining Teams](#).

The introduction and the section “Defining Group Cohesion and Climate” is adapted from “[Small Group Dynamics](#)” in the book [Communication in the Real World](#) from the University of Minnesota. The book is adapted from a work produced and distributed under a Creative Commons license (CC BY-NC-SA) by a publisher who has requested that they and the original author not receive attribution. This work is made available under the terms of a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike license](#).

The section “Supportive and Defensive Group Climates” is adapted from “[Communication, Culture and Organizing](#)” in the book [Organizational Communication](#) by Julie Zink, Ph.D., and published by Granite State College. The book is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

I7. Structuration Theory

Structuration

From [Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

The theory of **structuration** is a [social theory](#) of the creation and reproduction of social systems that is based in the analysis of both [structure](#) and [agents](#) (see [structure and agency](#)), without giving primacy to either. Structuration proposes that structures (i.e., norms, rules, roles) interact with agency (i.e., free will) to reproduce in groups, teams, and organizations.

Duality of structure

Structure refers generally to “rules and resources” and more specifically to “the structuring properties allowing the ‘binding’ of time–space in social systems”. These properties make it possible for similar social practices to exist across time and space and that lend them “systemic” form.^{[1]:17} Agents—groups or individuals—draw upon these structures to perform social actions through embedded memory, called **mental models**. Mental models are the vehicle through which guide everyday social action.

However, structure and agency are mutually influential. Structure is the result of these social practices. Thus, Giddens conceives of the *duality of structure* as being:

...the essential recursiveness of social life, as constituted in social practices: structure is both medium and outcome of reproduction of practices. Structure enters simultaneously into the constitution of the agent and social practices, and ‘exists’ in the generating moments of this constitution.^{[5]:5}

Giddens uses “the duality of structure” (i.e. material/ideational, micro/macro) to emphasize structure’s nature as both medium and outcome. Structures exist both internally within agents as mental models that are the product of phenomenological and hermeneutic inheritance^{[2]:27} and externally as the manifestation of social actions. Similarly, social structures contain agents and/or are the product of past actions of agents. Giddens holds this duality, alongside “structure” and “system,” in addition to the concept of recursiveness, as the core of structuration theory.^[1]

Cycle of structuration

The duality of structure is essentially a [feedback–feedforward](#) process whereby agents and structures mutually enact social systems, and social systems in turn become part of that duality. Structuration thus recognizes a social cycle. In examining social systems, structuration theory examines [structure](#), [modality](#), and [interaction](#). The “modality” (discussed below) of a structural system is the means by which structures are translated into actions.

Interaction

Interaction is the agent’s activity within the social system, space and time. “It can be understood as the fitful yet routinized occurrence of encounters, fading away in time and space, yet constantly reconstituted within different areas of time–space.”^{[1]:86} [Rules](#) can affect interaction, as originally suggested by [Goffman](#). “Frames” are “clusters of

rules which help to constitute and regulate activities, defining them as activities of a certain sort and as subject to a given range of sanctions.”^{[1]:87} Frames are necessary for agents to feel “ontological security, the trust that everyday actions have some degree of predictability. Whenever individuals interact in a specific context they address—without any difficulty and in many cases without conscious acknowledgement—the question: “What is going on here?” Framing is the practice by which agents make sense of what they are doing.^[1]

Routinization

Structuration theory is centrally concerned with order as “the transcending of time and space in human social relationships”.^[1] [Institutionalized](#) action and routinization are foundational in the establishment of social order and the reproduction of social systems. Routine persists in society, even during social and political revolutions, where daily life is greatly deformed, “as Bettelheim demonstrates so well, routines, including those of an obnoxious sort, are re-established.”^{[1]:87} Routine interactions become institutionalized features of social systems via tradition, custom and/or habit, but this is no easy societal task and it “is a major error to suppose that these phenomena need no explanation. On the contrary, as [Goffman](#) (together with [ethnomethodology](#)) has helped to demonstrate, the routinized character of most social activity is something that has to be ‘worked at’ continually by those who sustain it in their day-to-day conduct.”^[1] Therefore, routinized social practices do not stem from coincidence, “but the skilled accomplishments of knowledgeable agents.”^{[2]:26}

Explanation

When I utter a sentence I draw upon various syntactical rules (sedimented in my practical consciousness of the language) in order to do so. These structural features of the language are the medium whereby I generate the utterance. But in producing a syntactically correct utterance I simultaneously contribute to the reproduction of the language as a whole. ...The relation between moment and totality for social theory... [involves] a dialectic of presence and absence which ties the most minor or trivial forms of social action to structural properties of the overall society, and to the coalescence of institutions over long stretches of historical time.^{[1]:24}

Thus, even the smallest social actions contribute to the alteration or reproduction of social systems. Social stability and order is not permanent; agents always possess a [dialectic of control](#) (discussed below) which allows them to break away from normative actions. Depending on the social factors present, agents may cause shifts in social structure.

The cycle of structuration is not a defined sequence; it is rarely a direct succession of causal events. Structures and agents are both internal and external to each other, mingling, interrupting, and continually changing each other as feedbacks and feedforwards occur. Giddens stated, “The degree of “[systemness](#)” is very variable. ...I take it to be one of the main features of structuration theory that the extension and ‘closure’ of societies across space and time is regarded as problematic.”^{[1]:165}

The use of “patriot” in political speech reflects this mingling, borrowing from and contributing to nationalistic norms and supports structures such as a [police state](#), from which it in turn gains impact.

Structure and society

Structures are the “rules and resources” embedded in agents’ mental models. Agents call upon their mental models on which they are “knowledgeable” to perform social actions. “Knowledgeability” refers to “what agents know about what

they do, and why they do it.”^[1] Giddens divides these reproducing mental models (*structures-within-knowledgeability*)^[2] into three types:

- **Domination (power):** Giddens also uses “resources” to refer to this type. “Authoritative resources” allow agents to control persons, whereas “allocative resources” allow agents to control material objects.
- **Signification (meaning):** Giddens suggests that meaning is inferred through structures. Agents use existing experience to infer meaning. For example, Zanin and Piercy (2019) show that mental illness meaning comes from contextualized experience.
- **Legitimation (norms):** Giddens sometimes uses “rules” to refer to either signification or legitimization. An agent draws upon these stocks of knowledge via memory to inform him or herself about the external context, conditions, and potential results of an action.

When an agent uses structures for social interactions, they are called **modalities**. **Modalities** emerge the forms of facility (domination), interpretive scheme/communication (signification) and norms/sanctions (legitimation).

Thus, he distinguishes between overall “structures-within-knowledgeability” and the more limited and task-specific “modalities” on which these agents subsequently draw when they interact.

The duality of structures means that structures enter “simultaneously into the constitution of the agent and social practices, and ‘exists’ in the generating moments of this constitution.”^[5]⁵ “Structures exist paradigmatically, as an absent set of differences, temporally “present” only in their instantiation, in the constituting moments of social systems.”^[5]⁶⁴ Giddens draws upon [structuralism](#) and [post-structuralism](#) in theorizing that structures and their meaning are understood by their differences.

Agents and society

According to Giddens, **agency** is human action. **Agency** is critical to both the reproduction and the transformation of society. Another way to explain this concept is by what Giddens calls the “reflexive monitoring of actions.”^[7] **“Reflexive monitoring”** refers to agents’ ability to monitor their actions and those actions’ settings and contexts. Monitoring is an essential characteristic of agency. Agents subsequently “rationalize,” or evaluate, the success of those efforts. All humans engage in this process, and expect the same from others. Through action, agents produce structures; through reflexive monitoring and rationalization, they transform them. To act, agents must be motivated, knowledgeable, and able to rationalize the action; further, agents must reflexively monitor the action.

Agents, while bounded in structure, draw upon their knowledge of that structural context when they act. However, actions are constrained by agents’ inherent capabilities and their understandings of available actions and external limitations. *Practical consciousness* and *discursive consciousness* inform these abilities. Practical consciousness is the knowledgeability that an agent brings to the tasks required by everyday life, which is so integrated as to be hardly noticed. Reflexive monitoring occurs at the level of practical consciousness.^[8] **Discursive consciousness** is the ability to verbally express knowledge. Alongside practical and discursive consciousness, Giddens recognizes actors as having reflexive, contextual knowledge, and that habitual, widespread use of knowledgeability makes structures become institutionalized.^[1]

Agents rationalize, and in doing so, link the agent and the agent’s knowledgeability. As agents, people coordinate ongoing projects, goals, and contexts while performing actions. This coordination is called **reflexive monitoring**, and is connected to ethnomethodology’s emphasis on agents’ intrinsic sense of accountability.^[1] According to Giddens (1984), **reflexivity** is comprised discursive consciousness (i.e., that which is said) and practical consciousness (i.e., the activity, or what is done). Kaspersen (2000) explained Giddens conceptualization of monitoring as what occurs as a result of routinized activity²⁹.

The factors that can enable or constrain an agent, as well as how an agent uses structures, are known as *capability*

constraints include age, cognitive/physical limits on performing multiple tasks at once and the physical impossibility of being in multiple places at once, available time and the relationship between movement in space and movement in time.

Location offers are a particular type of capability constraint. Examples include:

- Locale
- Regionalization: political or geographical zones, or rooms in a building
- Presence: Do other actors participate in the action? (see [co-presence](#)); and more specifically
- Physical presence: Are other actors physically nearby?

Agents are always able to engage in a *dialectic of control*, able to “intervene in the world or to refrain from such intervention, with the effect of influencing a specific process or state of affairs.”^{[1]:14} In essence, agents experience inherent and contrasting amounts of autonomy and dependence; agents can always either act or not.^[2]

Change

The existence of multiple structures implies that the knowledgeable agents whose actions produce systems are capable of applying different schemas to contexts with differing resources, contrary to the conception of a universal [habitus](#) (learned dispositions, skills and ways of acting). He wrote that “Societies are based on practices that derived from many distinct structures, which exist at different levels, operate in different modalities, and are themselves based on widely varying types and quantities of resources. ...It is never true that all of them are homologous.”^{[19]:16}

Originally from [Bourdieu](#), transposable schemas can be “applied to a wide and not fully predictable range of cases outside the context in which they were initially learned.” That capacity “is inherent in the knowledge of cultural schemas that characterizes all minimally competent members of society.”^{[19]:17}

Agents may modify schemas even though their use does not predictably accumulate resources. For example, the effect of a joke is never quite certain, but a comedian may alter it based on the amount of laughter it garners regardless of this variability.

Agents may interpret a particular resource according to different schemas. E.g., a commander could attribute his wealth to military prowess, while others could see it as a blessing from the gods or a coincidental initial advantage.

Structures often overlap, confusing interpretation (e.g., the structure of capitalist society includes production from both private property and worker [solidarity](#)).

Technology

This theory was adapted and augmented by researchers interested in the relationship between [technology](#) and social structures, such as [information technology](#) in organizations. DeSanctis and Poole proposed an “adaptive structuration theory” with respect to the emergence and use of group decision support systems. In particular, they chose Giddens’ notion of modalities to consider how technology is used with respect to its “spirit”. **Appropriations** are the immediate, visible actions that reveal deeper structuration processes and are enacted with “moves”. Appropriations may be faithful or unfaithful, be instrumental and be used with various attitudes.^[20]

Group communication

Poole, Seibold, and McPhee wrote that “group structuration theory,”^{[26]:3} provides “a theory of group interaction commensurate with the complexities of the phenomenon.”^{[27]:116}

The theory attempts to integrate macrosocial theories and individuals or small groups, as well as how to avoid the binary categorization of either “stable” or “emergent” groups.

Waldeck et al. concluded that the theory needs to better predict outcomes, rather than merely explaining them. Decision rules support decision-making, which produces a communication pattern that can be directly observable. Research has not yet examined the “rational” function of group communication and decision-making (i.e., how well it achieves goals), nor structural production or constraints. Researchers must empirically demonstrate the recursivity of action and structure, examine how structures stabilize and change over time due to group communication, and may want to integrate argumentation research.^[26]

References: Structuration

1. ^ [Jump up to:^{a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u}](#) GIDDENS, A. (1984). THE CONSTITUTION OF SOCIETY: OUTLINE OF THE THEORY OF STRUCTURATION. CAMBRIDGE: POLITY PRESS. [ISBN 978-0-520-05728-9](#).
2. ^ [Jump up to:^{a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s}](#) Stones, R. (2005). Structuration theory. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
3. ^ [Jump up to:^{a b}](#) Bryant, C.G.A., & Jary, D. (1991). Coming to terms with Anthony Giddens. In C.G.A. Bryant & D. Jary (Eds.), Giddens' theory of structuration: A critical appreciation (pp. 1-32). New York, NY: Routledge.
4. ^ [Jump up to:^{a b}](#) Giddens, A. (1993). New rules of sociological method: A positive critique of interpretative sociologies. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
5. ^ [Jump up to:^{a b c}](#) Giddens, A. (1979). Central problems in social theory: Action, structure, and contradiction in social analysis. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.
6. ^ McLennan, G. (1997/2000/2001). Critical or positive theory? A comment on the status of Anthony Giddens' social theory. In C.G.A. Bryant & D. Jary (Eds.), Anthony Giddens: Critical assessments (pp. 318-327). New York, NY: Routledge.
7. ^ Giddens, A. (1991). Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late modern age. Cambridge: Polity Press.
8. ^ Ilmonen, K. (2001). Sociology, consumption, and routine. In J. Gronow & A. Warde (Eds.), Ordinary Consumption (pp. 9-25). New York, NY: Routledge.
9. ^ Turner, J.H. (1986). Review essay: The theory of structuration. *American Journal of Sociology*, 91(4), 969-977.
10. ^ Archer, M. (1995). Realist social theory: The morphogenetic approach. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
11. ^ Healy, K. (1998). “Conceptualising constraint: Mouzelis, Archer, and the concept of social structure.” *Sociology*, 613(4), pp.613-635.
12. ^ Mouzelis, N. (1989). “Restructuring structuration theory.” *The Sociological Review*, 32(3), pp.509-522.
13. ^ [Jump up to:^{a b}](#) Mouzelis, N. (1991). Back to sociological theory: The construction of social orders. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.
14. ^ Parker, J. (2000). Structuration. Buckingham: Open University Press.
15. ^ ARCHER, ROBERT. [EDUCATION POLICY AND REALIST SOCIAL THEORY : PRIMARY TEACHERS, CHILD-CENTRED PHILOSOPHY AND NEW MANAGERIALISM](#). ROUTLEDGE. [ISBN 9780415464338](#).
16. ^ [Jump up to:^{a b c d e f g h}](#) Thompson, J.B. (1984). Studies in the theory of ideology. Cambridge: Polity Press.
17. ^ Giddens, A. (1981). A contemporary critique of historical materialism: vol 1: Power, property, and the state. London: Macmillan.
18. ^ Giddens, A. (1989). A reply to my critics. In D. Held & J. B. Thompson (Eds.), Social theory of modern societies: Anthony Giddens and his critics (pp.249-301). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

19. [^ Jump up to:^{a b c d}](#) Sewell, Jr., W. H. (1992). A theory of structure: duality, agency, and transformation. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 98(1):1-29.
20. [^ Jump up to:^{a b}](#) Desanctis, G. & Poole, M. S. (1994). Capturing the complexity in advanced technology use: adaptive structuration theory. *Organization Science*, 5(2):121-147.
21. [^](#) Orlikowski, W. J. (1992). The duality of technology: rethinking the concept of technology in organizations. *Organization Science*, 3(3):398-427. Earlier version at the URI <http://hdl.handle.net/1721.1/2300>
22. [^](#) Orlikowski, W. J. (2000). Using technology and constituting structures: a practice lens for studying technology in organizations. *Organization Science*, 11(4):404-428.
23. [^](#) Stillman, L. (2006). (Ph.D Thesis). Understandings of Technology in Community-Based Organisations: A Structurational Analysis. Monash University, Australia. Retrieved from: <http://webstylus.net/?q=node/182>.
24. [^](#) Workman, M., Ford, R., & Allen, W. (2008). A structuration agency approach to security policy enforcement in mobile ad hoc networks. *Information Security Journal*, 17, 267-277.
25. [^](#) Pavlou, P.A>, & Majchrzak, A. (2002). Structuration theory: Capturing the complexity of business-to-business intermediaries. In M. Warkentin (Ed.), *Business to business electronic commerce: Challenges & solutions* (pp.175-189). Hershey, PA: Idea Group Publishing.
26. [^ Jump up to:^{a b}](#) Waldeck, J.H., Shepard, C.A., Teitelbaum, J., Farrar, W.J., & Seibold, D.R. (2002). New directions for functional, symbolic convergence, structuration, and bona fide group perspectives of group communication. In L.R. Frey (Ed.), *New directions in group communication* (pp.3-25). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
27. [^](#) Poole, M.S., Seibold, D.R., & McPhee, R.D. (1996). The structuration of group decisions. In R.Y. Hirokawa & M.S. Poole (Eds.), *Communication and group decision making* (pp.114-146). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
28. [^ Jump up to:^{a b}](#) Falkheimer, J. (2009). On Giddens: Interpreting public relations through Anthony Giddens' structuration and late modernity theory. In O. Ihlen, B. van Ruler, & M. Frederiksson (Eds.), *Public relations and social theory: Key figures and concepts* (pp.103-119). New York, NY: Routledge.
29. Kaspersen, L. B. (2000). Anthony Giddens: An introduction to a social theorist (S. Sampson, Trans.). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.



Structuration Theory by Cameron W. Piercy, Ph.D. is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

I8. Leadership

Content in this chapter comes from [OpenStax](#)



Figure 1 (Credit: Tambako the Jaguar/flickr/ Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0))

After reading this chapter, you should be able to answer these questions:

1. What is the nature of leadership and the leadership process?
2. What are the processes associated with people coming to leadership positions?
3. How do leaders influence and move their followers to action?
4. What are the trait perspectives on leadership?
5. What are the behavioral perspectives on leadership?
6. What are the situational perspectives on leadership?
7. What does the concept “substitute for leadership” mean?
8. What are the characteristics of transactional, transformational, and charismatic leadership?
9. How do different approaches and styles of leadership impact what is needed now?

Examples

EXPLORING MANAGERIAL CAREERS

John Arroyo: Springfield Sea Lions

John Arroyo is thrilled with his new position as general manager of the Springfield Sea Lions, a minor league

baseball team in. Arroyo has been a baseball fan all of his life, and now his diligent work and his degree in sports management are paying off.

Arroyo knew he had a hard act to follow. The general manager whom John replaced, "T.J." Grevin, was a much-loved old-timer who had been with the Sea Lions since their inception 14 years ago. John knew it would be difficult for whoever followed T.J., but he didn't realize how ostracized and powerless he would feel. He tried a pep talk: "I'm the general manager—the CEO of this ball club! In time, the staff will respect me." [Not a very good pep talk!]

After his first season ends, Arroyo is discouraged. Ticket and concession sales are down, and some long-time employees are rumored to be thinking about leaving. If John doesn't turn things around, he knows his tenure with the Sea Lions will be short.

Questions: Is John correct in assuming that the staff will learn to respect him in time? What can John do to earn the loyalty of his staff and improve the ball club's performance?

Outcomes: During the winter, John thinks long and hard about how he can earn the respect of the Sea Lions staff. Before the next season opener, John announces his plan: "So I can better understand what your day is like, I'm going to spend one day in each of your shoes. I'm trading places with each of you. I will be a ticket taker, a roving hot dog vendor, and a janitor. And I will be a marketer, and an accountant—for a day. You in turn will have the day off so you can enjoy the game from the general manager's box." The staff laughs and whistles appreciatively. Then the Springfield mascot, Sparky the Sea Lion, speaks up: "Hey Mr. Arroyo, are you going to spend a day in my flippers?" "You bet!" says John, laughing. The entire staff cheers.

John continues. "At the close of the season, we will honor a staff member with the T.J. Grevin Award for outstanding contributions to the Sea Lions organization. T.J. was such a great guy, it's only right that we honor him." The meeting ends, but John's staff linger to tell him how excited they are about his ideas. Amidst the handshakes, he hopes that this year may be the best year yet for the Sea Lions.

Sarah Elizabeth Roisland is the manager of a district claims office for a large insurance company. Fourteen people work for her. The results of a recent attitude survey indicate that her employees have extremely high job satisfaction and motivation. Conflict is rare in Sarah's office. Furthermore, productivity measures place her group among the most productive in the entire company. Her success has brought the company's vice president of human resources to her office in an attempt to discover the secret to her success. Sarah's peers, superiors, and workers all give the same answer: she is more than a good manager—she is an outstanding leader. She continually gets high performance from her employees and does so in such a way that they enjoy working for her.

There is no magic formula for becoming a good leader. There are, however, many identifiable reasons why some people are better and more effective leaders. Leaders, especially effective leaders, are not created by simply attending a one-day leadership workshop. Yet effective leadership skills are not something most people are born with. You can become an effective leader if you are willing to invest the time and energy to develop all of the "right stuff."

According to Louise Axon, director of content strategy, and her colleagues at Harvard Business Publishing, in seeking management talent, *leadership* is an urgently needed quality in all managerial roles.¹ Good leaders and good leadership are rare. Harvard management professor John P. Kotter notes that "there is a leadership crisis in the U.S. today,"² and the late USC Professor Warren Bennis states that many of our organizations are overmanaged and underled.³

The Nature of Leadership

1. What is the nature of leadership and the leadership process?

The many definitions of leadership each have a different emphasis. Some definitions consider leadership an act or behavior, such as initiating structure so group members know how to complete a task. Others consider a leader to be the center or nucleus of group activity, an instrument of goal achievement who has a certain personality, a form of persuasion and power, and the art of inducing compliance.⁴ Some look at leadership in terms of the management of group processes. In this view, a good leader develops a vision for the group, communicates that vision,⁵ orchestrates the group's energy and activity toward goal attainment, "[turns] a group of individuals into a team," and "[transforms] good intentions into positive actions."⁶

Leadership is frequently defined as a social (interpersonal) influence relationship between two or more persons who depend on each other to attain certain mutual goals in a group situation.⁷ Effective leadership helps individuals and groups achieve their goals by focusing on the group's *maintenance needs* (the need for individuals to fit and work together by having, for example, shared norms) and *task needs* (the need for the group to make progress toward attaining the goal that brought them together).



Figure 2 Joe Madden at pitcher mound Joe Maddon, manager of the Chicago Cubs baseball team, is lauded for both his managerial and leadership skills. Maddon is a role model for managers competing in the business world. Managers can learn and profit from the Cubs skipper's philosophy of instilling an upbeat attitude with the team, staying loose but staying productive, and avoiding being the center of attention.

leadership as a social (interpersonal) influence relationship between two or more people who are dependent on each other for goal attainment.

Second, managers and leaders are commonly differentiated in terms of the processes through which they initially come to their position. Managers are generally appointed to their role. Even though many organizations appoint people to positions of leadership, leadership per se is a relationship that revolves around the followers' acceptance or rejection of the leader.⁸ Thus, leaders often emerge out of events that unfold among members of a group.

Third, managers and leaders often differ in terms of the types and sources of the power they exercise. Managers commonly derive their power from the larger organization. Virtually all organizations legitimize the use of certain "carrots and sticks" (rewards and punishments) as ways of securing the compliance of their employees. In other words, by virtue of the position that a manager occupies (president, vice president, department head, supervisor), certain "rights to act" (schedule production, contract to sell a product, hire and fire) accompany the position and its place within the hierarchy of authority. Leaders can also secure power and the ability to exercise influence using carrots and sticks;

Leader versus Manager

The two dual concepts, leader and manager, leadership and management, are not interchangeable, nor are they redundant. The differences between the two can, however, be confusing. In many instances, to be a good manager one needs to be an effective leader. Many CEOs have been hired in the hope that their leadership skills, their ability to formulate a vision and get others to "buy into" that vision, will propel the organization forward. In addition, effective leadership often necessitates the ability to manage—to set goals; plan, devise, and implement strategy; make decisions and solve problems; and organize and control. For our purposes, the two sets of concepts can be contrasted in several ways.

First, we define the two concepts differently. In *Management and Organizational Behavior*, we defined management as a process consisting of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling. Here we define

however, it is much more common for leaders to derive power from followers' perception of their knowledge (expertise), their personality and attractiveness, and the working relationship that has developed between leaders and followers.

From the perspective of those who are under the leader's and manager's influence, the motivation to comply often has a different base. The subordinate to a manager frequently complies because of the role authority of the manager, and because of the carrots and sticks that managers have at their disposal. The followers of a leader comply because they want to. Thus, leaders motivate primarily through intrinsic processes, while managers motivate primarily through extrinsic processes.

Finally, it is important to note that while managers may be successful in directing and supervising their subordinates, they often succeed or fail because of their ability or inability to lead.⁹ As noted above, effective leadership often calls for the ability to manage, and effective management often requires leadership.

CONCEPT CHECK

1. What is the nature of leadership and the leadership process?

The Leadership Process

1. What are the processes associated with people coming to leadership positions?

Leadership is a process, a complex and dynamic exchange relationship built over time between leader and follower and between leader and the group of followers who depend on each other to attain a mutually desired goal.¹⁰ There are several key components to this "working relationship": the leader, the followers, the context (situation), the leadership process per se, and the consequences (outcomes) (see [Figure 3](#)).¹¹ Across time, each component interacts with and influences the other components, and whatever consequences (such as leader-follower trust) are created influence future interactions. As any one of the components changes, so too will leadership.¹²

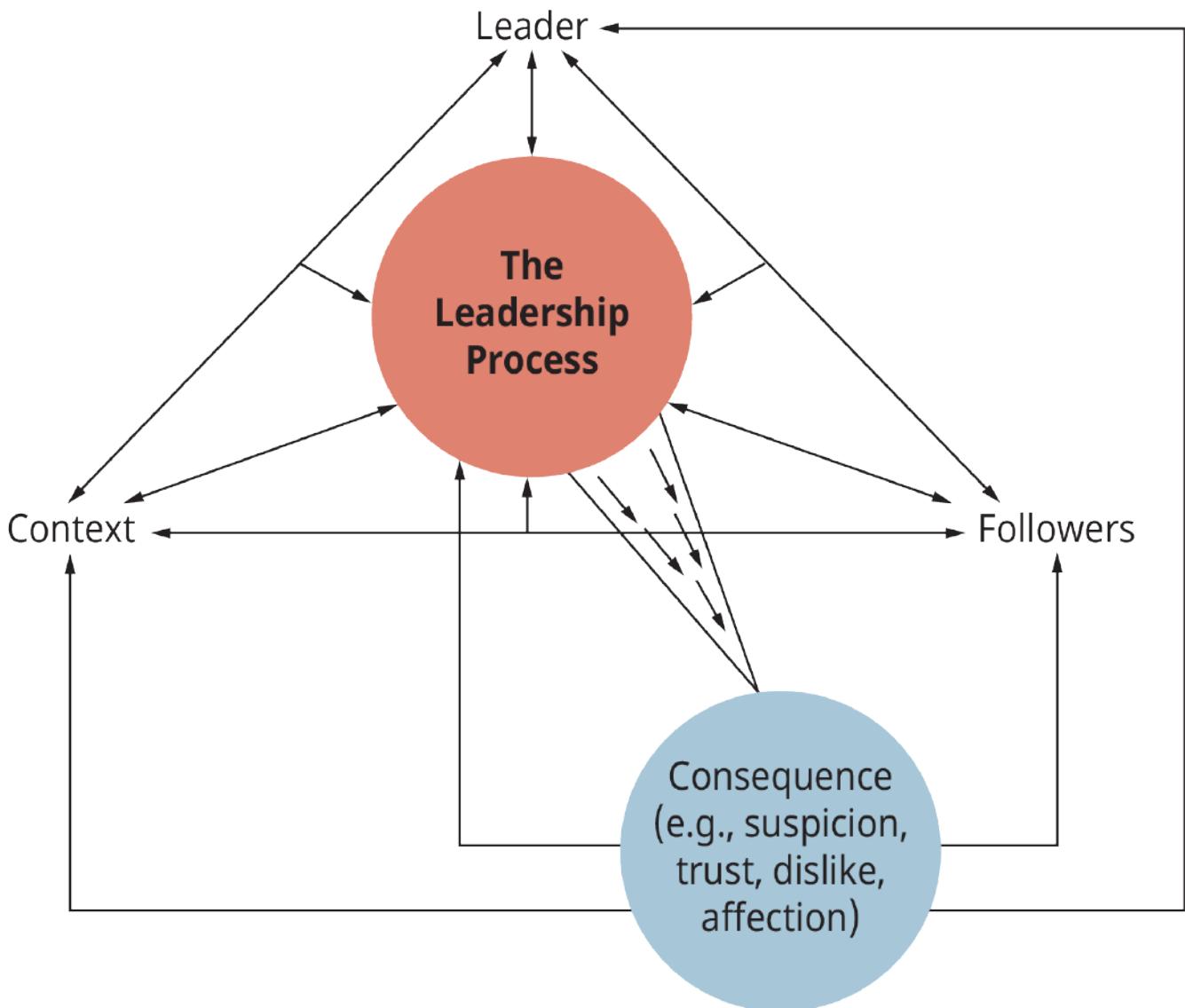


Figure 3 The Leadership Process (Attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC-BY 4.0 license)

The Leader

Leaders are people who take charge of or guide the activities of others. They are often seen as the focus or orchestrator of group activity, the people who set the tone of the group so that it can move forward to attain its goals. Leaders provide the group with what is required to fulfill its maintenance and task-related needs. (Later in the chapter, we will return to the “leader as a person” as part of our discussion of the trait approach to leadership.)



Figure 4 New York Philharmonic @ UN The New York Philharmonic, conducted by Music Director Alan Gilbert, paid special tribute in the General Assembly Hall to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as a tribute to his 10-year term. Gilbert is the formal leader of the New York Philharmonic.

The Context

Situations make demands on a group and its members, and not all situations are the same. Context refers to the situation that surrounds the leader and the followers. Situations are multidimensional. We discuss the context as it pertains to leadership in greater detail later in this chapter, but for now let's look at it in terms of the task and task environment that confront the group. Is the task structured or unstructured? Are the goals of the group clear or ambiguous? Is there agreement or disagreement about goals? Is there a body of knowledge that can guide task performance? Is the task boring? Frustrating? Intrinsically satisfying? Is the environment complex or simple, stable or unstable? These factors create different contexts within which leadership unfolds, and each factor places a different set of needs and demands on the leader and on the followers.

The Process

The process of leadership is separate and distinct from the leader (the person who occupies a central role in the group). The process is a complex, interactive, and dynamic working relationship between leader and followers. This working relationship, built over time, is directed toward fulfilling the group's maintenance and task needs. Part of the process consists of an exchange relationship between the leader and follower. The leader provides a resource directed toward fulfilling the group's needs, and the group gives compliance, recognition, and esteem to the leader. To the extent that leadership is the exercise of influence, part of the leadership process is captured by the surrender of power by the followers and the exercise of influence over the followers by the leader.¹⁹ Thus, the leader influences the followers and the followers influence the leader, the context influences the leader and the followers, and both leader and followers influence the context.

The Consequences

A number of outcomes or consequences of the leadership process unfold between leader, follower, and situation. At the group level, two outcomes are important:

- Have the group's maintenance needs been fulfilled? That is, do members of the group like and get along with one another, do they have a shared set of norms and values, and have they developed a good working relationship? Have individuals' needs been fulfilled as reflected in attendance, motivation, performance, satisfaction, citizenship, trust, and maintenance of the group membership?
- Have the group's task needs been met? That is, there are also important consequences of the leadership process for individuals: attendance, motivation, performance, satisfaction, citizenship, trust, and maintenance of their group membership.

The **leader-member exchange (LMX) theory** of the leadership process focuses attention on consequences associated with the leadership process. The theory views leadership as consisting of a number of dyadic relationships linking the leader with a follower. A leader-follower relationship tends to develop quickly and remains relatively stable over time. The quality of the relationship is reflected by the degree of mutual trust, loyalty, support, respect, and obligation. High- and low-quality relationships between a leader and each of his followers produce in and out groups among the followers. Members of the in group come to be key players, and high-quality exchange relationships tend to be associated with higher levels of performance, commitment, and satisfaction than are low-quality exchange relationships.²⁰ Attitudinal similarity and extroversion appear to be associated with a high-quality leader-member relationship.²¹

The nature of the leadership process varies substantially depending on the leader, the followers, and the situation and context. Thus, leadership is the function of an interaction between the leader, the follower, and the context.

The leadership context for the leader of a group of assembly line production workers differs from the context for the leader of a self-managing production team and from the context confronted by the lead scientists in a research laboratory. The leadership tactics that work in the first context might fail miserably in the latter two.

Examples

CATCHING THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

How a Start-Up Finds the Right Leader

Start-ups, by their very nature, require innovation to bring new products and services to market. Along with establishing a new brand or product, the leader has to develop the relationships and processes that make a company succeed, or risk its early demise. While leading an established firm has its challenges, a start-up requires even more from a leader.

How critical is leadership to a start-up? Ask the four cofounders of the now-defunct PYP (Pretty Young Professionals), a website founded as a source of information for young professional women. What began as four young professional women working on a new start-up ended with hurt feelings and threats of legal action. In 2010, Kathryn Minshew, Amanda Pouchot, Caroline Ghosn, and Alex Cavoulacos decided to create the website and Minshew was named CEO (Cohan 2011a). Lines blurred about Minshew's authority and the ultimate look, feel, and direction of the website. Ideals about shared leadership, where the company was going, and how it

was going to get there ultimately got lost in the power shuffle. By June 2011, passwords were changed and legal actions began, and in August Minshew and Cavoulacos left altogether (Cohan 2011b).

When the legal haggling from PYP was over, Alex Cavoulacos and Kathryn Minshew, joined by Melissa McCreery, tried again. But this time, rather than hoping for the best, they put a leadership plan in place. Minshew was named CEO of the new start-up, The Daily Muse, with Cavoulacos as chief operating officer and McCreery as editor in chief. Rather than trusting to luck, the three cofounders based their team positions on strengths and personalities. Cavoulacos and McCreery agreed that Minshew's outgoing personality and confidence made her the proper choice as CEO (Casserly 2013).

No single trait will guarantee that a person can lead a start-up from idea to greatness, but a survey of successful entrepreneurs does show some common traits. According to David Barbash, a partner at Boston-based law firm Posternak Blankstein & Lund LLP, personality is paramount: "You can have great technology but if you're not a great communicator it may die in the lab" (Casserly 2013 n.p.). A start-up needs a leader who is confident and willing, if not eager, to face the future. According to Michelle Randall, a principal of Enriching Leadership International, start-up CEOs have to be willing to fundraise and not be too proud to beg (Casserly 2013). Peter Shankman, an entrepreneur and angel investor, says leaders have to be willing to make the hard decisions, even risking being the bad guy (Casserly 2013).

Gary Vaynerchuk credits his success to six factors. Angel investor, social media marketer, and early social media adopter, Vaynerchuk leveraged YouTube in its early years to market wine from the family's liquor store, eventually increasing sales from \$3 million to \$60 million a year (Clifford 2017). Gary believes good leaders recognize that they don't dictate to the market, but rather respond to where it is going. They have respect for and believe in other people, and have a strong work ethic, what Vaynerchuk called a "lunch pail work ethic": they are willing to put in long hours because they love the work, not the perks. He also stresses that he loves technology and doesn't fear it, is obsessed with the youth of today, and is optimistic about people and the future of humanity (Vaynerchuk 2017).

Leading a startup requires more than simple management. It requires the right leader for the right company at the right time, which means matching the right management skills with the proper flexibility and drive to keep it all together and moving in the right direction.

Why would start-up leaders need different leadership qualities than someone managing an established firm?

CONCEPT CHECK

1. What are the processes associated with people coming to leadership positions?

Leader Emergence

How do leaders influence and move their followers to action?

Leaders hold a unique position in their groups, exercising influence and providing direction. Leonard Bernstein was part of the symphony, but his role as the New York Philharmonic conductor differed dramatically from that of the other symphony members. Besides conducting the orchestra, he created a vision for the symphony. In this capacity, leadership can be seen as a differentiated role and the nucleus of group activity.

Organizations have two kinds of leaders: formal and informal. A **formal leader** is that individual who is recognized by

those outside the group as the official leader of the group. Often, the formal leader is appointed by the organization to serve in a formal capacity as an agent of the organization. Jack Welch was the formal leader of General Electric, and Leonard Bernstein was the formal leader of the symphony. Practically all managers act as formal leaders as part of their assigned role. Organizations that use self-managed work teams allow members of the team to select the individual who will serve as their team leader. When this person's role is sanctioned by the formal organization, these team leaders become formal leaders. Increasingly, leaders in organizations will be those who "best sell" their ideas on how to complete a project—persuasiveness and inspiration are important ingredients in the leadership equation, especially in high-involvement organizations.²²

Informal leaders, by contrast, are not assigned by the organization. The **informal leader** is that individual whom members of the group acknowledge as their leader. Athletic teams often have informal leaders, individuals who exert considerable influence on team members even though they hold no official, formal leadership position. In fact, most work groups contain at least one informal leader. Just like formal leaders, informal leaders can benefit or harm an organization depending on whether their influence encourages group members to behave consistently with organizational goals.

As we have noted, the terms *leader* and *manager* are not synonymous. Grace Hopper, retired U.S. Navy admiral, draws a distinction between leading and managing: "You don't manage people, you manage things. You lead people."²³ Informal leaders often have considerable leverage over their colleagues. Traditionally, the roles of informal leaders have not included the total set of management responsibilities because an informal leader does not always exercise the functions of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling. However, high-involvement organizations frequently encourage their formal and informal leaders to exercise the full set of management roles. Many consider such actions necessary for self-managing work teams to succeed. Informal leaders are acknowledged by the group, and the group willingly responds to their leadership.

Paths to Leadership

People come to leadership positions through two dynamics. In many instances, people are put into positions of leadership by forces outside the group. University-based ROTC programs and military academies (like West Point) formally groom people to be leaders. We refer to this person as the **designated leader** (in this instance the designated and formal leader are the same person). **Emergent leaders**, on the other hand, arise from the dynamics and processes that unfold within and among a group of individuals as they endeavor to achieve a collective goal.

A variety of processes help us understand how leaders emerge. Gerald Salancik and Jeffrey Pfeffer observe that power to influence others flows to those individuals who possess the critical and scarce resources (often knowledge and expertise) that a group needs to overcome a major problem.²⁴ They note that the dominant coalition and leadership in American corporations during the 1950s was among engineers, because organizations were engaged in competition based on product design. The power base in many organizations shifted to marketing as competition became a game of advertising aimed at differentiating products in the consumer's mind. About 10–15 years ago, power and leadership once again shifted, this time to people with finance and legal backgrounds, because the critical contingencies facing many organizations were mergers, acquisitions, hostile takeovers, and creative financing. Thus, Salancik and Pfeffer reason that power and thus leadership flow to those individuals who have the ability to help an organization or group [overcome its critical contingencies]. As the challenges facing a group change, so too may the flow of power and leadership.

Many leaders emerge out of the needs of the situation. Different situations call for different configurations of knowledge, skills, and abilities. A group often turns to the member who possesses the knowledge, skills, and abilities that the group requires to achieve its goals.²⁵ People surrender their power to individuals whom they believe will make meaningful contributions to attaining group goals.²⁶ The individual to whom power is surrendered is often a member of the group who is in good standing. As a result of this member's contributions to the group's goals, he has accumulated *idiosyncrasy credits* (a form of competency-based status). These credits give the individual a status that allows him to influence the direction that the group takes as it works to achieve its goals.²⁷

It is important to recognize that the traits possessed by certain individuals contribute significantly to their emergence as leaders. Research indicates that people are unlikely to follow individuals who, for example, do not display drive, self-confidence, knowledge of the situation, honesty, and integrity.

Leadership as an Exercise of Influence

As we have noted, leadership is the exercise of influence over those who depend on one another for attaining a mutual goal in a group setting. But how do leaders effectively exercise this influence? Social or (interpersonal) influence is one's ability to effect a change in the motivation, attitudes, and/or behaviors of others. Power, then, essentially answers the "how" question: How do leaders influence their followers? The answer often is that a leader's social influence is the source of his power.

French and Raven provide us with a useful typology that identifies the sources and types of power. As a review those types of power are *reward power*, *coercive power*, *referent power*, *expert power*, and *legitimate power*.²⁸

As you know, not all forms of power are equally effective (see [Figure 5](#)), nor is a leader's total power base the simple sum of the powers at his disposal. Different types of power elicit different forms of compliance: Leaders who rely on coercive power often alienate followers who resist their influence attempts. Leaders who rely on reward power develop followers who are very measured in their responses to [what?]; the use of rewards often leads people to think in terms of "How much am I getting?" or "How much should I give?" or "Am I breaking even?" The use of referent power produces identification with the leader and his cause. The use of rationality, expert power, and/or moralistic appeal generally elicits commitment and the internalization of the leader's goals.²⁹

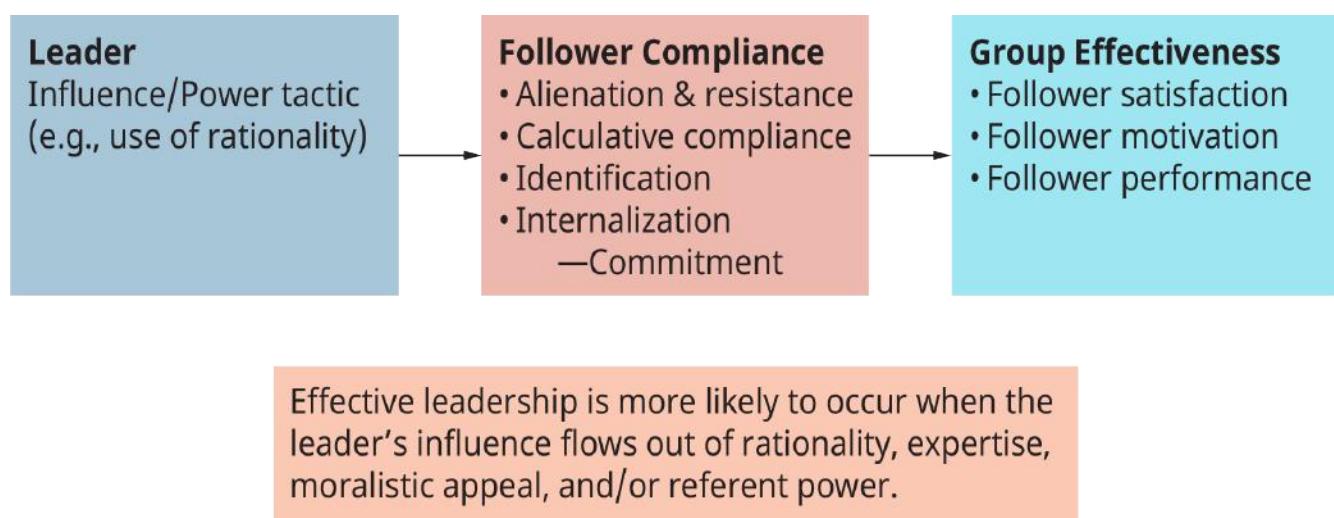


Figure 5 The Leader-Follower Power Relationship

Leaders who use referent and expert power commonly experience a favorable response in terms of follower satisfaction and performance. Research suggests that rationality is the most effective influence tactic in terms of its impact on follower commitment, motivation, performance, satisfaction, and group effectiveness.³⁰

Reward and legitimate power (that is, relying on one's position to influence others) produce inconsistent results. Sometimes these powers lead to follower performance and satisfaction, yet they also sometimes fail. Coercive power can result in favorable performance, yet follower and resistance dissatisfaction are not uncommon.

Good leaders, whether formal or informal, develop many sources of power. Leaders who rely solely on their legitimate power and authority seldom generate the influence necessary to help their organization and its members succeed. In the process of building their power base, effective leaders have discovered that the use of coercive power tends to dilute the effectiveness of other powers, while the development and use of referent power tends to magnify the effectiveness of other forms of power. A compliment or reward from a person we like generally has greater value than one from someone we dislike, and punishment from someone we love (such as "tough love" from a parent) is less offensive than the pain inflicted by someone we dislike.³¹

In sum, one key to effective leadership, especially as it pertains to the exercise of social and interpersonal influence,

relates to the type of power employed by the leader. Overall leader effectiveness will be higher when people follow because they want to follow. This is much more likely to happen when the leader's influence flows out of intrinsic such as rationality, expertise, moralistic appeal, and/or referent power.

Leadership is also about having a vision and communicating that vision to others in such a way that it provides meaning for the follower.³² Language, ritual, drama, myths, symbolic constructions, and stories are some of the tools leaders use to capture the attention of their "followers to be" to evoke emotion and to manage the meaning "of the task (challenges) facing the group."³³ These tools help the leader influence the attitudes, motivation, and behavior of their followers.

Influence-Based Leadership Styles

Many writers and researchers have explored how leaders can use power to address the needs of various situations. One view holds that in traditional organizations members expect to be told what to do and are willing to follow highly structured directions. Individuals attracted to high-involvement organizations, however, want to make their own decisions, expect their leaders to allow them to do so, and are willing to accept and act on this responsibility. This suggests that a leader may use and employ power in a variety of ways.

The Tannenbaum and Schmidt Continuum

In the 1950s, Tannenbaum and Schmidt created a continuum (see [Figure 6](#)) along which leadership styles range from authoritarian to extremely high levels of worker freedom.³⁴ Subsequent to Tannenbaum and Schmidt's work, researchers adapted the continuum by categorizing leader power styles as *autocratic* (boss-centered), *participative* (workers are consulted and involved), or *free-rein* (members are assigned the work and decide on their own how to do it; the leader relinquishes the active assumption of the role of leadership).³⁵

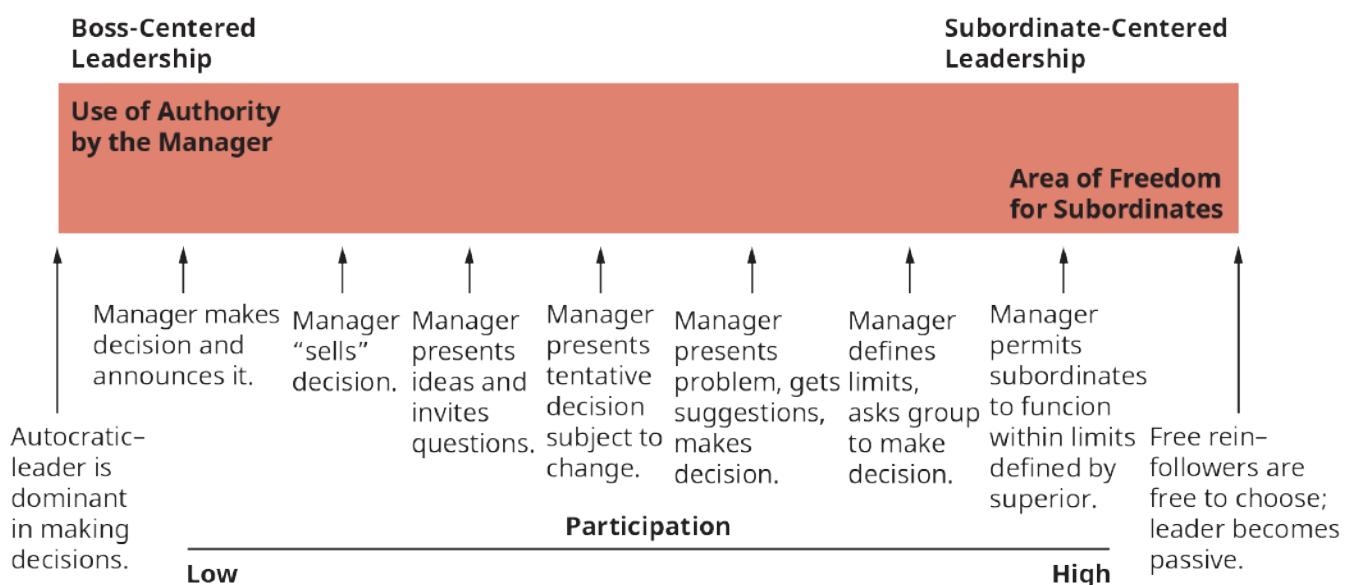


Figure 6 Tannenbaum and Schmidt's Leadership Continuum Source: Modified from R. Tannenbaum and W. H. Schmidt. May–June 1971. How to choose a leadership pattern. Harvard Business Review, 167.

Theory X and Theory Y Leaders

McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y posits two different sets of attitudes about the individual as an organizational member.³⁶ Theory X and Y thinking gives rise to two different styles of leadership. The Theory X leader assumes that the average individual dislikes work and is incapable of exercising adequate self-direction and self-control. As a consequence, they exert a highly controlling leadership style. In contrast, Theory Y leaders believe that people have creative capacities, as well as both the ability and desire to exercise self-direction and self-control. They typically allow organizational members significant amounts of discretion in their jobs and encourage them to participate in departmental and organizational decision-making. Theory Y leaders are much more likely to adopt involvement-oriented approaches to leadership and organically designed organizations for their leadership group.

Theory X and Theory Y thinking and leadership are not strictly an American phenomenon. Evidence suggests that managers from different parts of the global community commonly hold the same view. A study of 3,600 managers from 14 countries reveals that most of them held assumptions about human nature that could best be classified as Theory X.³⁷ Even though managers might publicly endorse the merits of participatory management, most of them doubted their workers' capacities to exercise self-direction and self-control and to contribute creatively.³⁸

Directive/Permissive Leadership Styles

Contemplating the central role of problem-solving in management and leadership, Jan P. Muczyk and Bernard C. Reimann of Cleveland State University offer an interesting perspective on four different leadership styles (see [Figure 7](#)) that revolve around decision-making and implementation processes.³⁹

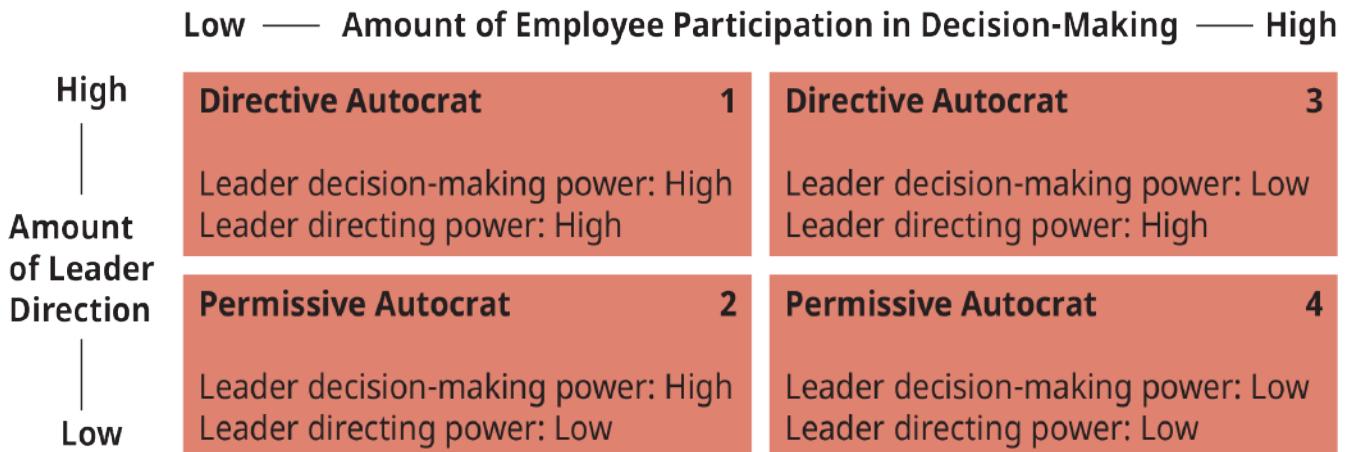


Figure 7 Leadership Behavior and the Uses of Power Source: Modified from J. P. Muczyk and B. C. Reimann. 1987. The case for directive leadership. *Academy of Management Executive*, 1:304.

A directive autocrat retains power, makes unilateral decisions, and closely supervises workers' activities. This style of leadership is seen as appropriate when circumstances require quick decisions and organizational members are new, inexperienced, or underqualified. A doctor in charge of a hastily constructed shelter for victims of a tornado may use this style to command nonmedical volunteers.

The permissive autocrat mixes his or her use of power by retaining decision-making power but permitting organizational members to exercise discretion when executing those decisions. This leader behavior is recommended when decision-making time is limited, when tasks are routine, or when organizational members have sufficient expertise to determine appropriate role behaviors.

Also sharing power is the *directive democrat*, who encourages participative decision-making but retains the power to direct team members in the execution of their roles. This style is appropriate when followers have valuable opinions and ideas, but one person needs to coordinate the execution of the ideas. A surgeon might allow the entire surgical team to participate in developing a plan for a surgical procedure. Once surgery begins, however, the surgeon is completely in charge.

Finally, the *permissive democrat* shares power with group members, soliciting involvement in both decision-making and execution. This style is appropriate when participation has both informational and motivational value, when time permits group decision-making, when group members are capable of improving decision quality, and when followers are capable of exercising self-management in their performance of work.

The permissive democratic approach to leadership is characteristic of leadership in high-involvement organizations. Here, leaders act as facilitators, process consultants, network builders, conflict managers, inspirationalists, coaches, teachers/mentors, and cheerleaders.⁴⁰ Such is the role of Ralph Stayer, founder, owner, and CEO of Johnsonville Foods. He defines himself as his company's philosopher. At Quad/Graphics, president Harry V. Quadracci is a permissive democrat because he encourages all Quad employees to play a major role in decision-making and execution as they manage their teams as independent profit centers.



Figure 8 Jeff Bezos Jeff Bezos, founder and CEO of Amazon, used to bring an empty chair to meetings to signal and remind participants of the most important people that did not have a seat at the table: the customers. He has now replaced the empty chair with Amazon employees with the job title Customer Experience Bar Raisers.

CONCEPT CHECK

1. What is the role of the leader and follower in the leadership process?
2. How do the theories of Tannenbaum and Schmidt's leadership continuum and McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y attempt to define leadership?

The Trait Approach to Leadership

1. What are the trait perspectives on leadership?

Ancient Greek, Roman, Egyptian, and Chinese scholars were keenly interested in leaders and leadership. Their writings portray leaders as heroes. Homer, in his poem *The Odyssey*, portrays Odysseus during and after the Trojan War as a great leader who had vision and self-confidence. His son Telemachus, under the tutelage of Mentor, developed his father's courage and leadership skills.⁴¹ Out of such stories there emerged the "great man" theory of leadership, and a starting point for the contemporary study of leadership.

The **great man theory of leadership** states that some people are born with the necessary attributes to be great leaders. Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Joan of Arc, Catherine the Great, Napoleon, and Mahatma Gandhi are cited as naturally great leaders, born with a set of personal qualities that made them effective leaders. Even today, the belief that truly great leaders are born is common. For example, Kenneth Labich, writer for *Fortune* magazine, commented that "the best leaders seem to possess a God-given spark."⁴²

During the early 1900s, scholars endeavored to understand leaders and leadership. They wanted to know, from an organizational perspective, what characteristics leaders hold in common in the hope that people with these characteristics could be identified, recruited, and placed in key organizational positions. This gave rise to early research efforts and to what is referred to as the *trait approach to leadership*. Prompted by the great man theory of leadership and the emerging interest in understanding what leadership is, researchers focused on the leader—Who is a leader? What are the distinguishing characteristics of the great and effective leaders? The great man theory of leadership holds that some people are born with a set of personal qualities that make truly great leaders. Mahatma Gandhi is often cited as a naturally great leader.

Leader Trait Research

Ralph Stogdill, while on the faculty at The Ohio State University, pioneered our modern (late 20th century) study of leadership.⁴³ Scholars taking the trait approach attempted to identify physiological (appearance, height, and weight), demographic (age, education, and socioeconomic background), personality (dominance, self-confidence, and aggressiveness), intellective (intelligence, decisiveness, judgment, and knowledge), task-related (achievement drive, initiative, and persistence), and social characteristics (sociability and cooperativeness) with leader emergence and leader effectiveness. After reviewing several hundred studies of leader traits, Stogdill in 1974 described the successful leader this way:

The [successful] leader is characterized by a strong drive for responsibility and task completion, vigor and persistence in pursuit of goals, venturesomeness and originality in problem solving, drive to exercise initiative in social situations, self-confidence and sense of personal identity, willingness to accept consequences of decision and action, readiness to absorb interpersonal stress, willingness to tolerate frustration and delay, ability to influence other person's behavior, and capacity to structure social interaction systems to the purpose at hand.⁴⁴

The last three decades of the 20th century witnessed continued exploration of the relationship between traits and both leader emergence and leader effectiveness. Edwin Locke from the University of Maryland and a number of his research associates, in their recent review of the trait research, observed that successful leaders possess a set of core characteristics that are different from those of other people.⁴⁵ Although these core traits do not solely determine whether a person will be a leader—or a successful leader—they are seen as preconditions that endow people with leadership potential. Among the core traits identified are:

- Drive—a high level of effort, including a strong desire for achievement as well as high levels of ambition, energy, tenacity, and initiative
- Leadership motivation—an intense desire to lead others
- Honesty and integrity—a commitment to the truth (nondeceit), where word and deed correspond
- Self-confidence—an assurance in one's self, one's ideas, and one's ability
- Cognitive ability—conceptually skilled, capable of exercising good judgment, having strong analytical abilities, possessing the capacity to think strategically and multidimensionally
- Knowledge of the business—a high degree of understanding of the company, industry, and technical matters
- Other traits—charisma, creativity/originality, and flexibility/adaptiveness⁴⁶

While leaders may be “people with the right stuff,” effective leadership requires more than simply possessing the correct set of motives and traits. Knowledge, skills, ability, vision, strategy, and effective vision implementation are all necessary for the person who has the “right stuff” to realize their leadership potential.⁴⁷ According to Locke, people endowed with these traits engage in behaviors that are associated with leadership. As followers, people are attracted to and inclined to follow individuals who display, for example, honesty and integrity, self-confidence, and the motivation to lead.

Personality psychologists remind us that behavior is a result of an interaction between the person and the situation—that is, Behavior = f [(Person) (Situation)]. To this, psychologist Walter Mischel adds the important observation that personality tends to get expressed through an individual's behavior in “weak” situations and to be suppressed in “strong” situations.⁴⁸ A strong situation is one with strong behavioral norms and rules, strong incentives, clear expectations, and rewards for a particular behavior. Our characterization of the mechanistic organization with its well-defined hierarchy of authority, jobs, and standard operating procedures exemplifies a strong situation. The organic social system exemplifies a weak situation. From a leadership perspective, a person's traits play a stronger role in their leader behavior and ultimately leader effectiveness when the situation permits the expression of their disposition. Thus, personality traits prominently shape leader behavior in weak situations.

Finally, about the validity of the “great person approach to leadership”: Evidence accumulated to date does not provide a strong base of support for the notion that leaders are born. Yet, the study of twins at the University of Minnesota leaves open the possibility that part of the answer might be found in our genes. Many personality traits and vocational interests (which might be related to one's interest in assuming responsibility for others and the motivation to lead) have been

found to be related to our “genetic dispositions” as well as to our life experiences.⁴⁹ Each core trait recently identified by Locke and his associates traces a significant part of its existence to life experiences. Thus, a person is not born with self-confidence. Self-confidence is developed, honesty and integrity are a matter of personal choice, motivation to lead comes from within the individual and is within his control, and knowledge of the business can be acquired. While cognitive ability does in part find its origin in the genes, it still needs to be developed. Finally, drive, as a dispositional trait, may also have a genetic component, but it too can be self- and other-encouraged. It goes without saying that none of these ingredients are acquired overnight.

CONCEPT CHECK

1. What are the trait perspectives on leadership?

Behavioral Approaches to Leadership

1. What are the behavioral perspectives on leadership?

The nearly four decades of research that focused on identifying the personal traits associated with the emergence of leaders and leader effectiveness resulted in two observations. First, leader traits are important—people who are endowed with the “right stuff” (drive, self-confidence, honesty, and integrity) are more likely to emerge as leaders and to be effective leaders than individuals who do not possess these characteristics. Second, traits are only a part of the story. Traits only account for part of why someone becomes a leader and why they are (or are not) effective leaders.

Still under the influence of the great man theory of leadership, researchers continued to focus on the leader in an effort to understand leadership—who emerges and what constitutes effective leadership. Researchers then began to reason that maybe the rest of the story could be understood by looking at what it is that leaders do. Thus, we now turn our attention to leader behaviors and the behavioral approaches to leadership.

It is now common to think of effective leadership in terms of what leaders do. CEOs and management consultants agree that effective leaders display trust in their employees, develop a vision, keep their cool, encourage risk, bring expertise into the work setting, invite dissent, and focus everyone’s attention on that which is important.⁵⁹ William Arruda, in a *Fortune* article, noted that “organizations with strong coaching cultures report their revenue to be above average, compared to their peer group.” Sixty-five percent of employees “from strong coaching cultures rated themselves as highly engaged,” compared to 13 percent of employees worldwide.⁶⁰ Jonathan Anthony calls himself an intrapreneur and corporate disorganizer, because same-old, same-old comms practices are dying in front of our eyes.⁶¹ Apple founder Steve Jobs believed that the best leaders are coaches and team cheerleaders. Similar views have been frequently echoed by management consultant Tom Peters.

During the late 1940s, two major research programs—The Ohio State University and the University of Michigan leadership studies—were launched to explore leadership from a behavioral perspective.

The Ohio State University Studies

A group of Ohio State University researchers, under the direction of Ralph Stogdill, began an extensive and systematic series of studies to identify leader behaviors associated with effective group performance. Their results identified two major sets of leader behaviors: consideration and initiating structure.

Consideration is the “relationship-oriented” behavior of a leader. It is instrumental in creating and maintaining good relationships (that is, addressing the group’s maintenance needs) with organizational members. Consideration behaviors include being supportive and friendly, representing people’s interests, communicating openly with group members, recognizing them, respecting their ideas, and sharing concern for their feelings.

Initiating structure involves “task-oriented” leader behaviors. It is instrumental in the efficient use of resources to attain organizational goals, thereby addressing the group’s task needs. Initiating structure behaviors include scheduling work, deciding what is to be done (and how and when to do it), providing direction to organizational members, planning, coordinating, problem-solving, maintaining standards of performance, and encouraging the use of uniform procedures.

After consideration and initiating structure behaviors were first identified, many leaders believed that they had to behave one way or the other. If they initiated structure, they could not be considerate, and vice versa. It did not take long, however, to recognize that leaders can simultaneously display any combination of both behaviors.

The Ohio State studies are important because they identified two critical categories of behavior that distinguish one leader from another. Both consideration and initiating structure behavior can significantly impact work attitudes and behaviors. Unfortunately, the effects of consideration and initiating structure are not consistent from situation to situation.⁶² In some of the organizations studied, for example, high levels of initiating structure increased performance. In other organizations, the amount of initiating structure seemed to make little difference. Although most organizational members reported greater satisfaction when leaders acted considerately, consideration behavior appeared to have no clear effect on performance.

Initially, these mixed findings were disappointing to researchers and managers alike. It had been hoped that a profile of the most effective leader behaviors could be identified so that leaders could be trained in the best ways to behave. Research made clear, however, that there is no one best style of leader behavior for all situations.

The University of Michigan Studies

At about the same time that the Ohio State studies were underway, researchers at the University of Michigan also began to investigate leader behaviors. As at Ohio State, the Michigan researchers attempted to identify behavioral elements that differentiated effective from ineffective leaders.⁶³

The two types of leader behavior that stand out in these studies are job centered and organizational member centered. Job-centered behaviors are devoted to supervisory functions, such as planning, scheduling, coordinating work activities, and providing the resources needed for task performance. Employee-member-centered behaviors include consideration and support for organizational members. These dimensions of behavior, of course, correspond closely to the dimensions of initiating structure and consideration identified at Ohio State. The similarity of the findings from two independent groups of researchers added to their credibility. As the Ohio State researchers had done, the Michigan researchers also found that any combination of the two behaviors was possible.

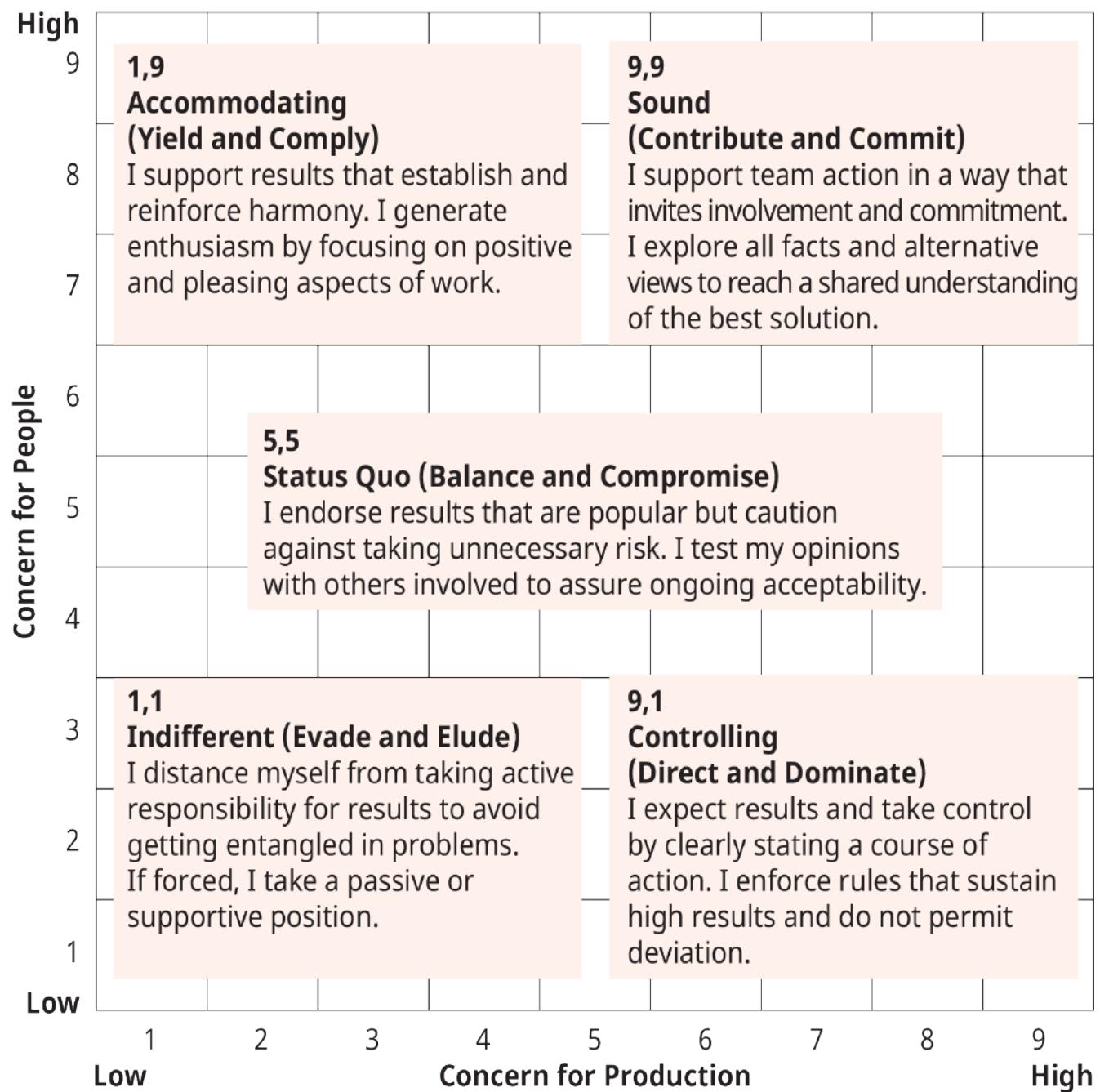
The studies at Michigan are significant because they reinforce the importance of leader behavior. They also provide the basis for later theories that identify specific, effective matches of work situations and leader behaviors. Subsequent research at Michigan and elsewhere has found additional behaviors associated with effective leadership: support, work facilitation, goal emphasis, and interaction facilitation.⁶⁴

These four behaviors are important to the successful functioning of the group in that support and interaction facilitation contribute to the group’s maintenance needs, and goal emphasis and work facilitation contribute to the group’s task needs. The Michigan researchers also found that these four behaviors do not need to be brought to the group by the leader. In essence, the leader’s real job is to set the tone and create the climate that ensure these critical behaviors are present.⁶⁵

The Leadership Grid®

Much of the credit for disseminating knowledge about important leader behaviors must go to Robert R. Blake and Jane S. Mouton, who developed a method for classifying styles of leadership compatible with many of the ideas from the Ohio State and Michigan studies.⁶⁶ In their classification scheme, concern for results (production) emphasizes output,

cost effectiveness, and (in for-profit organizations) a concern for profits. Concern for people involves promoting working relationships and paying attention to issues of importance to group members. As shown in [Figure 9](#), the Leadership Grid® demonstrates that any combination of these two leader concerns is possible, and five styles of leadership are highlighted here.



[Figure 9](#) Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid® Source: Adapted from R. McKee and B. Carlson. 1999. *The Power to Change*, p.16.

Blake and Mouton contend that the sound (contribute and commit) leader (a high concern for results and people, or 9,9) style is universally the most effective.⁶⁷ While the Leadership Grid® is appealing and well structured, research to date suggests that there is no universally effective style of leadership (9,9 or otherwise).⁶⁸ There are, however, well-identified situations in which a 9,9 style is unlikely to be effective. Organizational members of high-involvement organizations

who have mastered their job duties require little production-oriented leader behavior. Likewise, there is little time for people-oriented behavior during an emergency. Finally, evidence suggests that the “high-high” style may be effective when the situation calls for high levels of initiating structure. Under these conditions, the initiation of structure is more acceptable, favorably affecting follower satisfaction and performance, when the leader is also experienced as warm, supportive, and considerate.⁶⁹

CONCEPT CHECK

1. What are the behavioral approaches to defining leadership?
2. What roles do gender and the popular perceptions of gender roles have on views of leadership traits?

Situational (Contingency) Approaches to Leadership

1. What are the situational perspectives on leadership?

As early as 1948, Ralph Stogdill stated that “the qualities, characteristics, and skills required in a leader are determined to a large extent by the demands of the situation in which he is to function as a leader.”⁷⁰ In addition, it had been observed that two major leader behaviors, initiating structure and consideration, didn’t always lead to equally positive outcomes. That is, there are times when initiating structure results in performance increases and follower satisfaction, and there are times when the results are just the opposite. Contradictory findings such as this lead researchers to ask “Under what conditions are the results positive in nature?” and “When and why are they negative at other times?” Obviously, situational differences and key contingencies are at work.

Several theories have been advanced to address this issue. These are Fiedler’s contingency theory of leadership, the path-goal theory of leader effectiveness, Hersey and Blanchard’s life cycle theory, cognitive resource theory, the decision tree, and the decision process theory.⁷¹ We explore two of the better-known situational theories of leadership, Fred Fiedler’s contingency model and Robert J. House’s path-goal theory, here. Victor Vroom, Phillip Yetton, and Arthur Jago’s decision tree model also applies.

Fiedler’s Contingency Model

One of the earliest, best-known, and most controversial situation-contingent leadership theories was set forth by Fred E. Fiedler from the University of Washington.⁷² This theory is known as the **contingency theory of leadership**. According to Fiedler, organizations attempting to achieve group effectiveness through leadership must assess the leader according to an underlying trait, assess the situation faced by the leader, and construct a proper match between the two.

The Leader’s Trait

Leaders are asked about their **least-preferred coworker (LPC)**, the person with whom they least like to work. The most popular interpretation of the LPC score is that it reflects a leader’s underlying disposition toward others—for example: pleasant/unpleasant, cold/warm, friendly/unfriendly, and untrustworthy/trustworthy. (You can examine your own LPC score by completing the LPC self-assessment on the following page.)

Fiedler states that leaders with high LPC scores are relationship oriented—they need to develop and maintain close interpersonal relationships. They tend to evaluate their least-preferred coworkers in fairly favorable terms. Task

accomplishment is a secondary need to this type of leader and becomes important only after the need for relationships is reasonably well satisfied. In contrast, leaders with low LPC scores tend to evaluate the individuals with whom they least like to work fairly negatively. They are task-oriented people, and only after tasks have been accomplished are low-LPC leaders likely to work on establishing good social and interpersonal relations.

The Situational Factor

Some situations favor leaders more than others do. To Fiedler, situational favorableness is the degree to which leaders have control and influence and therefore feel that they can determine the outcomes of a group interaction.⁷³ Several years later, Fiedler changed his situational factor from situational favorability to situational control—where situational control essentially refers to the degree to which a leader can influence the group process.⁷⁴ Three factors work together to determine how favorable a situation is to a leader. In order of importance, they are (1) leader-member relations—the degree of the group's acceptance of the leader, their ability to work well together, and members' level of loyalty to the leader; (2) task structure—the degree to which the task specifies a detailed, unambiguous goal and how to achieve it; and (3) position power—a leader's direct ability to influence group members. The situation is most favorable for a leader when the relationship between the leader and group members is good, when the task is highly structured, and when the leader's position power is strong (cell 1 in [Figure 10](#)). The least-favorable situation occurs under poor leader-member relations, an unstructured task, and weak position power (cell 8).

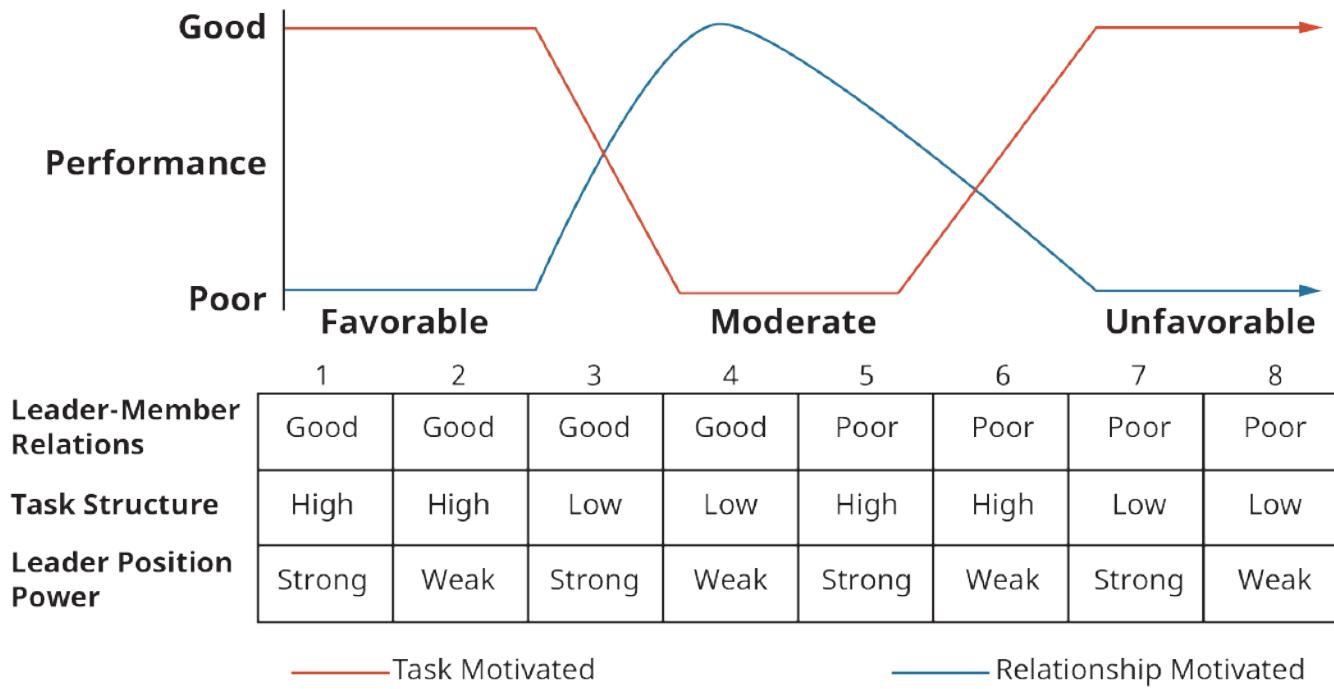


Figure 10 Fiedler's Contingency Model of Leader-Situation Matches Source: Adapted from F. E. Fiedler and M. M. Chemers. 1974. *Leadership and effective management*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman.

Leader-Situation Matches

Some combinations of leaders and situations work well; others do not. In search of the best combinations, Fiedler examined a large number of leadership situations. He argued that most leaders have a relatively unchangeable or dominant style, so organizations need to design job situations to fit the leader.⁷⁵

While the model has not been fully tested and tests have often produced mixed or contradictory findings,⁷⁶ Fiedler's research indicates that relationship-oriented (high-LPC) leaders are much more effective under conditions of intermediate favorability than under either highly favorable or highly unfavorable situations. Fiedler attributes the success of relationship-oriented leaders in situations with intermediate favorability to the leader's nondirective, permissive attitude; a more directive attitude could lead to anxiety in followers, conflict in the group, and a lack of cooperation.

For highly favorable and unfavorable situations, task-oriented leaders (those with a low LPC) are very effective. As tasks are accomplished, a task-oriented leader allows the group to perform its highly structured tasks without imposing more task-directed behavior. The job gets done without the need for the leader's direction. Under unfavorable conditions, task-oriented behaviors, such as setting goals, detailing work methods, and guiding and controlling work behaviors, move the group toward task accomplishment.

As might be expected, leaders with mid-range LPC scores can be more effective in a wider range of situations than high- or low-LPC leaders.⁷⁷ Under conditions of low favorability, for example, a middle-LPC leader can be task oriented to achieve performance, but show consideration for and allow organizational members to proceed on their own under conditions of high situational favorability.

Controversy over the Theory

Although Fiedler's theory often identifies appropriate leader-situation matches and has received broad support, it is not without critics. Some note that it characterizes leaders through reference to their attitudes or personality traits (LPC) while it explains the leader's effectiveness through their behaviors—those with a particular trait will behave in a particular fashion. The theory fails to make the connection between the least-preferred coworker attitude and subsequent behaviors. In addition, some tests of the model have produced mixed or contradictory findings.⁷⁸ Finally, what is the true meaning of the LPC score—exactly what is being revealed by a person who sees their least-preferred coworker in positive or negative terms? Robert J. House and Ram N. Aditya recently noted that, in spite of the criticisms, there has been substantial support for Fiedler's theory.⁷⁹

Path-Goal Theory

Robert J. House and Martin Evans, while on the faculty at the University of Toronto, developed a useful leadership theory. Like Fiedler's, it asserts that the type of leadership needed to enhance organizational effectiveness depends on the situation in which the leader is placed. Unlike Fiedler, however, House and Evans focus on the leader's observable behavior. Thus, managers can either match the situation to the leader or modify the leader's behavior to fit the situation.

The model of leadership advanced by House and Evans is called the **path-goal theory of leadership** because it suggests that an effective leader provides organizational members with a *path* to a valued *goal*. According to House, the motivational function of the leader consists of increasing personal payoffs to organizational members for work-goal attainment, and making the path to these payoffs easier to travel by clarifying it, reducing roadblocks and pitfalls, and increasing the opportunities for personal satisfaction en route.⁸⁰

Effective leaders therefore provide rewards that are valued by organizational members. These rewards may be pay, recognition, promotions, or any other item that gives members an incentive to work hard to achieve goals. Effective leaders also give clear instructions so that ambiguities about work are reduced and followers understand how to do their jobs effectively. They provide coaching, guidance, and training so that followers can perform the task expected of

them. They also remove barriers to task accomplishment, correcting shortages of materials, inoperative machinery, or interfering policies.

An Appropriate Match

According to the path-goal theory, the challenge facing leaders is basically twofold. First, they must analyze situations and identify the most appropriate leadership style. For example, experienced employees who work on a highly structured assembly line don't need a leader to spend much time telling them how to do their jobs—they already know this. The leader of an archeological expedition, though, may need to spend a great deal of time telling inexperienced laborers how to excavate and care for the relics they uncover.

Second, leaders must be flexible enough to use different leadership styles as appropriate. To be effective, leaders must engage in a wide variety of behaviors. Without an extensive repertoire of behaviors at their disposal, a leader's effectiveness is limited.⁸¹ All team members will not, for example, have the same need for autonomy. The leadership style that motivates organizational members with strong needs for autonomy (participative leadership) is different from that which motivates and satisfies members with weaker autonomy needs (directive leadership). The degree to which leadership behavior matches situational factors will determine members' motivation, satisfaction, and performance (see [Figure 11](#)).⁸²

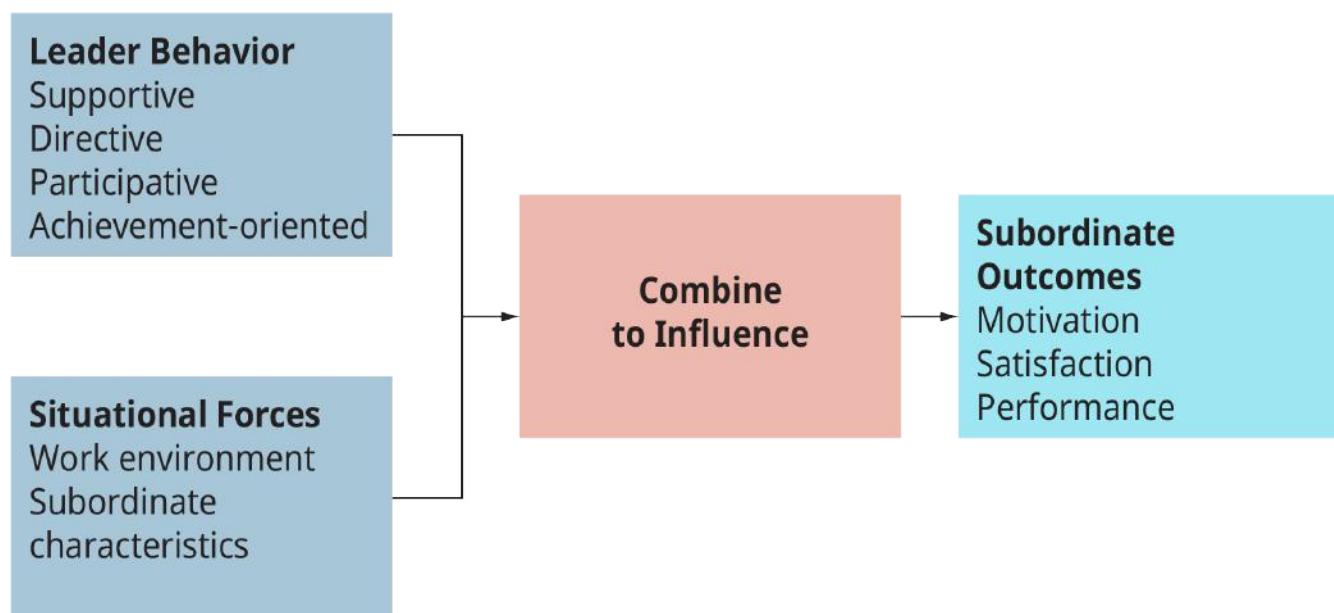


Figure 11 The Path-Goal Leadership Model (Attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC-BY 4.0 license)

Behavior Dimensions

According to path-goal theory, there are four important dimensions of leader behavior, each of which is suited to a particular set of situational demands.⁸³

- **Supportive leadership**—At times, effective leaders demonstrate concern for the well-being and personal needs of organizational members. Supportive leaders are friendly, approachable, and considerate to individuals in the workplace. Supportive leadership is especially effective when an organizational member is performing a boring, stressful, frustrating, tedious, or unpleasant task. If a task is difficult and a group member has low self-esteem, supportive leadership can reduce some of the person's anxiety, increase his confidence, and increase satisfaction and determination as well.
- **Directive leadership**—At times, effective leaders set goals and performance expectations, let organizational

members know what is expected, provide guidance, establish rules and procedures to guide work, and schedule and coordinate the activities of members. Directive leadership is called for when role ambiguity is high. Removing uncertainty and providing needed guidance can increase members' effort, job satisfaction, and job performance.

- **Participative leadership**—At times, effective leaders consult with group members about job-related activities and consider their opinions and suggestions when making decisions. Participative leadership is effective when tasks are unstructured. Participative leadership is used to great effect when leaders need help in identifying work procedures and where followers have the expertise to provide this help.
- **Achievement-oriented leadership**—At times, effective leaders set challenging goals, seek improvement in performance, emphasize excellence, and demonstrate confidence in organizational members' ability to attain high standards. Achievement-oriented leaders thus capitalize on members' needs for achievement and use goal-setting theory to great advantage.

CONCEPT CHECK

1. Identify and describe the variables presented in Fiedler's theory of leadership.
2. What are the leadership behaviors in the path-goal theory of leadership?
3. What role does culture have in how leadership is viewed?
4. What are the differences between the trait, behavioral, and situational approaches to defining leadership?

Substitutes for and Neutralizers of Leadership

1. What does the concept "substitute for leadership" mean?

Several factors have been discovered that can substitute for or neutralize the effects of leader behavior (see [Table 1.89 Substitutes](#) for leadership behavior can clarify role expectations, motivate organizational members, or satisfy members (making it unnecessary for the leader to attempt to do so). In some cases, these substitutes supplement the behavior of a leader. Sometimes it is a group member's characteristics that make leadership less necessary, as when a master craftsman or highly skilled worker performs up to his or her own high standards without needing outside prompting. Sometimes the task's characteristics take over, as when the work itself—solving an interesting problem or working on a familiar job—is intrinsically satisfying. Sometimes the characteristics of the organization make leadership less necessary, as when work rules are so clear and specific that workers know exactly what they must do without help from the leader (see *An Inside Look at flat management structure and the orchestra with no leader*).

Table 1: Substitutes for and Neutralizers of Leader Behavior

| Supportive or Neutralizer | Leader Behavior Influenced | |
|--|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| | Substitute Leadership | Instrumental Leadership |
| A. Subordinate Characteristics: | | |
| 1. Experience, ability, training | | Substitute |
| 2. "Professional" orientation | Substitute | Substitute |
| 3. Indifference toward rewards offered by organization | Neutralizer | Neutralizer |
| B. Task Characteristics: | | |
| 1. Structured, routine, unambiguous task | | Substitute |
| 2. Feedback provided by task | | Substitute |
| 3. Intrinsically satisfying task | Substitute | |
| C. Organization Characteristics: | | |
| 1. Cohesive work group | Substitute | Substitute |
| 2. Low position power (leader lacks control over organizational rewards) | Neutralizer | Neutralizer |
| 3. Formalization (explicit plans, goals, areas of responsibility) | | Substitute |
| 4. Inflexibility (rigid, unyielding rules and procedures) | | Neutralizer |
| 5. Leader located apart from subordinates with only limited communication possible | Neutralizer | Neutralizer |

Source: Adapted from *Leadership in organizations* by G. A. Yukl.

Neutralizers of leadership, on the other hand, are not helpful; they prevent leaders from acting as they wish. A computer-paced assembly line, for example, prevents a leader from using initiating structure behavior to pace the line. A union contract that specifies that workers be paid according to seniority prevents a leader from dispensing merit-based pay. Sometimes, of course, neutralizers can be beneficial. Union contracts, for example, clarify disciplinary proceedings and identify the responsibilities of both management and labor. Leaders must be aware of the presence of neutralizers and their effects so that they can eliminate troublesome neutralizers or take advantage of any potential benefits that accompany them (such as the clarity of responsibilities provided by a union contract). If a leader's effectiveness is being neutralized by a poor communication system, for example, the leader might try to remove the neutralizer by developing (or convincing the organization to develop) a more effective system.

Followers differ considerably in their *focus of attention* while at work, thereby affecting the effectiveness of the act of leadership. Focus of attention is an employee's cognitive orientation while at work. It reflects what and how strongly an individual thinks about various objects, events, or phenomena while physically present at work. Focus of attention reflects an individual difference in that not all individuals have the same cognitive orientation while at work—some think a great deal about their job, their coworkers, their leader, or off-the-job factors, while others daydream.⁹⁰ An employee's focus of attention has both "trait" and "state" qualities. For example, there is a significant amount of minute-by-minute variation in an employee's focus of attention (the "state" component), and there is reasonable consistency in the categories of events that employees think about while they are at work (the "trait" component).

Research suggests that the more followers focus on off-job (nonleader) factors, the less they will react to the leader's behaviors. Thus, a strong focus on one's life "away from work" (for example, time with family and friends) tends to neutralize the motivational, attitudinal, and/or behavioral effects associated with any particular leader behavior. It has also been observed, however, that a strong focus on the leader, either positive or negative, enhances the impact that the leader's behaviors have on followers.⁹¹

Examples

MANAGERIAL LEADERSHIP

You Are Now the Leader

Leading and managing are two very different things. Being a manager means something more than gaining authority or charge over former colleagues. With the title does come the power to affect company outcomes, but it also comes with something more: the power to shape the careers and personal growth of subordinates.

According to Steve Keating, a senior manager at the Toro Company, it is important not to assume that being made a manager automatically makes you a leader. Rather, being a manager means having the opportunity to lead. Enterprises need managers to guide processes, but the employees—the people—need a leader. Keating believes that leaders need a mindset that emphasizes people, and the leader's job is to help the people in the organization to be successful. According to Keating, "If you don't care for people, you can't lead them" (Hakim 2017 n.p.).

For someone who has been promoted over his peers, ground rules are essential. "Promotion doesn't mean the end of friendship but it does change it," according to Keating. If a peer has been promoted, rather than grouse and give in to envy, it is important to step back and look at the new manager; take a hard look at why the peer was promoted and what skill or characteristic made you a less appealing fit for the position (Hakim 2017).

Carol Walker, president of Prepared to Lead, a management consulting firm, advises new managers to develop a job philosophy. She urges new managers to develop a core philosophy that provides a guide to the day-to-day job of leading. She urges managers to build up the people they are leading and work as a "servant leader." The manager's perspective should be on employee growth and success. Leaders must bear in mind that employees don't work for the manager; they work for the organization—and for themselves. Managers coordinate this relationship; they are not the center of it. Work should not be assigned haphazardly, but with the employee's skills and growth in mind. "An employee who understands why she has been asked to do something is far more likely to assume true ownership for the assignment," Walker says (Yakowicz 2015 n.p.). A leader's agenda should be on employee success, not personal glory. Employees are more receptive when they recognize that their leader is working not for their own success, but for the employee's success.

A survey from HighGround revealed one important item that most new managers and even many seasoned managers overlook: asking for feedback. Everyone has room for growth, even managers. Traditional management dictates a top-down style in which managers review subordinates. But many companies have found it beneficial to turn things around and ask employees, "How can I be a better manager?" Of course, this upward review only works if employees believe that their opinion will be heard. Managers need to carefully cultivate a rapport where employees don't fear reprisals for negative feedback. Listening to criticism from those you are leading builds trust and helps ensure that as a manager, you are providing the sort of leadership that employees need to be successful (Kauflin 2017). Showing respect and caring for employees by asking this simple question is inspiring—an important aspect of leadership itself. Whether asking for feedback or focusing on an employee's fit with a particular job description, a leader helps guide employees through the day-to-day, builds a positive culture, and helps employees improve their skills.

Questions

1. What do you think are the most important qualities in a leader? In a manager? Are your two lists mutually exclusive? Why?
2. How do you think a leader can use feedback to model the growth process for employees?

CONCEPT CHECK

1. Identify and describe substitutes of leadership.

Transformational, Visionary, and Charismatic Leadership

1. What are the characteristics of transactional, transformational, and charismatic leadership?

Many organizations struggling with the need to manage chaos, to undergo a culture change, to empower organizational members, and to restructure have looked for answers in “hiring the right leader.” Many have come to believe that the transformational, visionary, and charismatic leader represents the style of leadership needed to move organizations through chaos.

The Transformational and Visionary Leader

Leaders who subscribe to the notion that “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” are often described as *transactional leaders*. They are extremely task oriented and instrumental in their approach, frequently looking for incentives that will induce their followers into a desired course of action.⁹² These reciprocal exchanges take place in the context of a mutually interdependent relationship between the leader and the follower, frequently resulting in interpersonal bonding.⁹³ The transactional leader moves a group toward task accomplishment by initiating structure and by offering an incentive in exchange for desired behaviors. The **transformational leader**, on the other hand, moves and changes (fixes) things “in a big way!” Unlike transactional leaders, they don’t cause change by offering inducements. Instead, they inspire others to action through their personal values, vision, passion, and belief in and commitment to the mission.⁹⁴ Through charisma (idealized influence), individualized consideration (a focus on the development of the follower), intellectual stimulation (questioning assumptions and challenging the status quo), and/or inspirational motivation (articulating an appealing vision), transformational leaders move others to follow.

The transformational leader is also referred to as a visionary leader. **Visionary leaders** are those who influence others through an emotional and/or intellectual attraction to the leader’s dreams of what “can be.” Vision links a present and future state, energizes and generates commitment, provides meaning for action, and serves as a standard against which to assess performance.⁹⁵ Evidence indicates that vision is positively related to follower attitudes and performance.⁹⁶ As pointed out by Warren Bennis, a vision is effective only to the extent that the leader can communicate it in such a way that others come to internalize it as their own.⁹⁷

As people, transformational leaders are engaging. They are characterized by extroversion, agreeableness, and openness to experience.⁹⁸ They energize others. They increase followers’ awareness of the importance of the designated outcome.⁹⁹ They motivate individuals to transcend their own self-interest for the benefit of the team and inspire organizational members to self-manage (become self-leaders).¹⁰⁰ Transformational leaders move people to focus on higher-order needs (self-esteem and self-actualization). When organizations face a turbulent environment, intense competition, products that may die early, and the need to move fast, managers cannot rely solely on organizational structure to guide organizational activity. In these situations, transformational leadership can motivate

followers to be fully engaged and inspired, to internalize the goals and values of the organization, and to move forward with dogged determination!

Transformational leadership is positively related to follower satisfaction, performance, and acts of citizenship. These effects result from the fact that transformational leader behaviors elicit trust and perceptions of procedural justice, which in turn favorably impact follower satisfaction and performance.¹⁰¹ As R. Pillai, C. Schriesheim, and E. Williams note, “when followers perceive that they can influence the outcomes of decisions that are important to them and that they are participants in an equitable relationship with their leader, their perceptions of procedural justice [and trust] are likely to be enhanced.”¹⁰² Trust and experiences of organizational justice promote leader effectiveness, follower satisfaction, motivation, performance, and citizenship behaviors.

Charismatic Leadership

Ronald Reagan, Jesse Jackson, and Queen Elizabeth I have something in common with Martin Luther King Jr., Indira Gandhi, and Winston Churchill. The effectiveness of these leaders originates in part in their **charisma**, a special magnetic charm and appeal that arouses loyalty and enthusiasm. Each exerted considerable personal influence to bring about major events.

It is difficult to differentiate the charismatic and the transformational leader. True transformational leaders may achieve their results through the magnetism of their personality. In this case, the two types of leaders are essentially one and the same, yet it is important to note that not all transformational leaders have a personal “aura.”

Sociologist Max Weber evidenced an interest in charismatic leadership in the 1920s, calling **charismatic leaders** people who possess legitimate power that arises from “exceptional sanctity, heroism, or exemplary character.”¹⁰³ Charismatic leaders “single-handedly” effect changes even in very large organizations. Their personality is a powerful force, and the relationship that they forge with their followers is extremely strong.

The charismatic leadership phenomenon involves a complex interplay between the attributes of the leader and followers’ needs, values, beliefs, and perceptions.¹⁰⁴ At its extreme, leader-follower relationships are characterized by followers’ unquestioning acceptance; trust in the leader’s beliefs; affection; willing obedience to, emulation of, and identification with the leader; emotional involvement with his mission; and feelings of self-efficacy directed toward the leader’s mission.¹⁰⁵ This can work to better the welfare of individuals, such as when Lee Iacocca saved thousands of jobs through his dramatic turnaround of a failing corporate giant, the Chrysler Corporation. It also can be disastrous, as when David Koresh led dozens and dozens of men, women, and children to their fiery death in Waco, Texas. Individuals working for charismatic leaders often have higher task performance, greater task satisfaction, and lower levels of role conflict than those working for leaders with considerate or structuring behaviors.¹⁰⁶ What are the characteristics of these people who can exert such a strong influence over their followers? Charismatic leaders have a strong need for power and the tendency to rely heavily on referent power as their primary power base.¹⁰⁷ Charismatic leaders also are extremely self-confident and convinced of the rightness of their own beliefs and ideals. This self-confidence and strength of conviction make people trust the charismatic leader’s judgment, unconditionally following the leader’s mission and directives for



Figure 12 Travis Kalanick Travis Kalanick was a praised CEO of Uber who managed to increase the value of the company to over \$60 billion. He was forced to resign after taking a leave of absence and having several key executives resign due to allegations of creating a hostile and unethical workplace.

action.[108](#) The result is a strong bond between leader and followers, a bond built primarily around the leader's personality.

Although there have been many effective charismatic leaders, those who succeed the most have coupled their charismatic capabilities with behaviors consistent with the same leadership principles followed by other effective leaders. Those who do not add these other dimensions still attract followers but do not meet organizational goals as effectively as they could. They are (at least for a time) the pied pipers of the business world, with lots of followers but no constructive direction.

Examples

ETHICS IN PRACTICE

Uber's Need for an Ethical Leader

Almost since its initial founding in 2009 as a luxury car service for the San Francisco area, controversy has followed Uber. Many complaints are against the tactics employed by the company's founder and former CEO, Travis Kalanick, but the effects are found throughout the business and its operations.

In 2009, UberBlack was a "black car" service, a high-end driving service that cost more than a taxi but less than hiring a private driver for the night. It wasn't until 2012 that the company launched UberX, the taxi-esque service most people think of today when they say "Uber." The UberX service contracted with private drivers who provided rides in their personal vehicles. A customer would use Uber's smartphone app to request the ride, and a private driver would show up. Originally launched in San Francisco, the service spread quickly, and by 2017, Uber was in 633 cities. The service was hailed by many as innovative and the free market's answer to high-priced and sometimes unreliable taxi services. But Uber has not been without its critics, both inside and outside of the company.

In 2013, as the UberX service spread, some UberBlack drivers protested at the company's headquarters complaining about poor company benefits and pay. They also claimed that competition from the newly launched UberX service was cutting into their sales and undermining job security. Kalanick rebuffed the protests, basically calling the complaints sour grapes: most of the protestors had been laid off earlier for poor service (Lawler 2013). Controversy also arose over the use of contract drivers rather than full-time employees. Contractors complained about a lack of benefits and low wages. Competitors, especially taxi services, complained that they were being unfairly undercut because Uber didn't have to abide by the same screening process and costs that traditional yellow taxi companies did. Some municipalities agreed, arguing further than Uber's lack of or insufficient screening of drivers put passengers at risk.

Uber quickly generated a reputation as a bully and Kalanick as an unethical leader (Ann 2016). The company has been accused of covering up cases of sexual assault, and Kalanick himself has been quoted as calling the service "Boob-er," a reference to using the service to pick up women (Ann 2016). Uber has been criticized for its recruiting practices; in particular, it has been accused of bribing drivers working for competitors to switch over and drive for Uber (Ann 2016). The company was also caught making false driver requests for competing companies and then canceling the order. The effect was to waste the other driver's time and make it more difficult for customers to secure rides on the competing service (D'Orazio 2014). Susan J. Fowler, former site reliability engineer at Uber, went public with cases of outright sexual harassment within Uber (Fowler 2017). Former employees described Uber's corporate culture as an "a**hole culture" and a "Hobbesian jungle' where you can never get ahead unless someone else dies." (Wong 2017) One employee described a leadership that

encouraged a company practice of developing incomplete solutions for the purpose of beating the competitor to market. Fowler went so far as to compare the experience to Game of Thrones, and other former employees even consider “making it” at Uber a black mark on a resume (Wong 2017).

In terms of social acrimony and PR disasters, arguably caused or even encouraged by leadership, Uber’s rise to notoriety has arguably been more bad than good. In June 2017, Kalanick made one too many headlines and agreed to step down as the company’s CEO.

Questions

1. In the summer of 2017, Transport of London (TfL) began proceedings to revoke Uber’s permit to operate in London. How do think Uber’s poor corporate reputation may have been a factor in TfL’s thinking?
2. What steps do you think Uber’s new CEO, Dara Khosrowshahi, needs to take to repair Uber’s reputation?
3. Despite Uber’s apparent success in launching in multiple markets, it continues to post quarterly losses in the millions and shareholders effectively subsidize 59 percent of every ride (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-uber-profitability/true-price-of-an-uber-ride-in-question-as-investors-assess-firms-value-idUSKCN1B3I03>). How is this an outworking of Uber’s overall corporate culture?

CONCEPT CHECK

1. What are the defining characteristics of transformational and charismatic leaders?

Leadership Needs in the 21st Century

1. How do different approaches and styles of leadership impact what is needed now?

Frequent headlines in popular business magazines like Fortune and Business Week call our attention to a major movement going on in the world of business. Organizations are being reengineered and restructured, and network, virtual, and modular corporations are emerging. People talk about the transnational organization, the boundaryless company, the post-hierarchical organization. By the end of the decade, the organizations that we will be living in, working with, and competing against are likely to be vastly different from what we know today.

The transition will not be easy; uncertainty tends to breed resistance. We are driven by linear and rational thinking, which leads us to believe that “we can get there from here” by making some incremental changes in who we are and what we are currently doing. Existing paradigms frame our perceptions and guide our thinking. Throwing away paradigms that have served us well in the past does not come easily.

A look back tells most observers that the past decade has been characterized by rapid change, intense competition, an explosion of new technologies, chaos, turbulence, and high levels of uncertainty. A quick scan of today’s business landscape suggests that this trend is not going away anytime soon. According to Professor Jay A. Conger from Canada’s McGill University, “In times of great transition, leadership becomes critically important. Leaders, in essence, offer us a

pathway of confidence and direction as we move through seeming chaos. The magnitude of today's changes will demand not only more leadership, but *newer forms of leadership*.¹⁰⁹

According to Conger, two major forces are defining for us the genius of the next generation of leaders. The first force is the organization's external environment. Global competitiveness is creating some unique leadership demands. The second force is the growing diversity in organizations' internal environments. Diversity will significantly change the relationship between organizational members, work, and the organization in challenging, difficult, and also very positive ways.

What will the leaders of tomorrow be like? Professor Conger suggests that the effective leaders of the 21st century will have to be many things.¹¹⁰ They will have to be strategic opportunists; only organizational visionaries will find strategic opportunities before competitors. They will have to be *globally aware*; with 80 percent of today's organizations facing significant foreign competition, knowledge of foreign markets, global economics, and geopolitics is crucial. They will have to be *capable of managing a highly decentralized organization*; movement toward the high-involvement organization will accelerate as the environmental demands for organizational speed, flexibility, learning, and leanness increase. They will have to be *sensitive to diversity*; during the first few years of the 21st century, fewer than 10 percent of those entering the workforce in North America will be white, Anglo-Saxon males, and the incoming women, minorities, and immigrants will bring with them a very different set of needs and concerns. They will have to be *interpersonally competent*; a highly diverse workforce will necessitate a leader who is extremely aware of and sensitive to multicultural expectations and needs. They will have to be *builders of an organizational community*; work and organizations will serve as a major source of need fulfillment, and in the process leaders will be called on to help build this community in such a way that organizational members develop a sense of ownership for the organization and its mission.

Finally, it is important to note that leadership theory construction and empirical inquiry are an ongoing endeavor. While the study of traits, behavior, and contingency models of leadership provide us with a great deal of insight into leadership, the mosaic is far from complete. During the past 15 years, several new theories of leadership have emerged; among them are leader-member exchange theory, implicit leadership theory, neocharismatic theory, value-based theory of leadership, and visionary leadership,¹¹¹ each of which over time will add to our bank of knowledge about leaders and the leadership process.

Leaders of the 21st-century organization have a monumental challenge awaiting them and a wealth of self-enriching and fulfilling opportunities. The challenge and rewards awaiting effective leaders are awesome!

CONCEPT CHECK

1. What is the role of leadership in the 21st century?

Key Terms

leadership

A social (interpersonal) influence relationship between two or more persons who depend on each other to attain certain mutual goals in a group situation.

designated leader

The person placed in the leadership position by forces outside the group.

emergent leader

The person who becomes a group's leader by virtue of processes and dynamics internal to the group.

formal leader

That individual who is recognized by those outside the group as the official leader of the group.

informal leader

That individual whom members of the group acknowledge as their leader.

great man theory of leadership

The belief that some people are born to be leaders and others are not.

consideration

A “relationship-oriented” leader behavior that is supportive, friendly, and focused on personal needs and interpersonal relationships.

initiating structure

A “task-oriented” leader behavior that is focused on goal attainment, organizing and scheduling work, solving problems, and maintaining work processes.

contingency theory of leadership

A theory advanced by Dr. Fred E. Fiedler that suggests that different leadership styles are effective as a function of the favorableness of the leadership situation least preferred.

Least-preferred coworker (LPC)

The person with whom the leader least likes to work.

path-goal theory of leadership

A theory that posits that leadership is path- and goal-oriented, suggesting that different leadership styles are effective as a function of the task confronting the group.

charisma

A special personal magnetic charm or appeal that arouses loyalty and enthusiasm in a leader-follower relationship.

charismatic leader

A person who possesses legitimate power that arises from “exceptional sanctity, heroism, or exemplary character.”

transformational leader

A leader who moves and changes things “in a big way” by inspiring others to perform the extraordinary.

visionary leader

A leader who influences others through an emotional and/or intellectual attraction to the leader’s dreams of what “can be.”

Summary of Learning Outcomes

13.1 The Nature of Leadership

1. What is the nature of leadership and the leadership process?

Leadership is a primary vehicle for fulfilling the directing function of management. Because of its importance, theorists, researchers, and practitioners have devoted a tremendous amount of attention and energy to unlocking the secrets of effective leadership. They have kept at this search for perhaps a greater period of time than for any other single issue related to management.

13.2 The Leadership Process

1. What are the processes associated with people coming to leadership positions?

Organizations typically have both formal and informal leaders. Their leadership is effective for virtually identical reasons. Leadership and management are not the same. Although effective leadership is a necessary part of effective

management, the overall management role is much larger than leadership alone. Managers plan, organize, direct, and control. As leaders, they are engaged primarily in the directing function.

13.3 Leader Emergence

1. How do leaders influence and move their followers to action?

There are many diverse perspectives on leadership. Some managers treat leadership primarily as an exercise of power. Others believe that a particular belief and attitude structure makes for effective leaders. Still others believe it is possible to identify a collection of leader traits that produces a leader who should be universally effective in any leadership situation. Even today, many believe that a profile of behaviors can universally guarantee successful leadership. Unfortunately, such simple solutions fall short of the reality.

13.4 The Trait Approach to Leadership

1. What are the trait perspectives on leadership?

13.5 Behavioral Approaches to Leadership

1. What are the behavioral perspectives on leadership?

It is clear that effective leaders are endowed with the “right stuff,” yet this “stuff” is only a precondition to effective leadership. Leaders need to connect with their followers and bring the right configuration of knowledge, skills, ability, vision, and strategy to the situational demands confronting the group.

13.6 Situational (Contingency) Approaches to Leadership

1. What are the situational perspectives on leadership?

We now know that there is no one best way to be an effective leader in all circumstances. Leaders need to recognize that how they choose to lead will affect the nature of their followers’ compliance with their influence tactics, and ultimately impacts motivation, satisfaction, performance, and group effectiveness. In addition, the nature of the situation—contextual demands and characteristics of the follower—dictates the type of leadership that is likely to be effective. Fiedler focuses on leader traits and argues that the favorableness of the leadership situation dictates the type of leadership approach needed. He recommends selecting leaders to match the situation or changing the situation to match the leader. Path-goal theory focuses on leader behavior that can be adapted to the demands of a particular work environment and organizational members’ characteristics. Path-goal theorists believe both that leaders can be matched with the situation and that the situation can be changed to match leaders. Together, these theories make clear that leadership is effective when the characteristics and behavior of the leader match the demands of the situation.

13.7 Substitutes for and Neutralizers of Leadership

1. What does the concept of “substitute for leadership” mean?

Characteristics of followers, tasks, and organizations can substitute for or neutralize many leader behaviors. Leaders must remain aware of these factors, no matter which perspective on leadership they adopt. Such awareness allows managers to use substitutes for, and neutralizers of, leadership to their benefit, rather than be stymied by their presence.

13.8 Transformational, Visionary, and Charismatic Leadership

1. What are the characteristics of transactional, transformational, and charismatic leadership?

In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in key leader traits and behaviors. As organizations face increasing

amounts of chaos in their external environments, searches for “the right leader” who can bring about major organizational transformations has intensified. This search once again focuses our attention on a set of “key” motives, knowledge, skills, and personality attributes. Emerging from this search has been the identification of the charismatic and transformational leader.

13.9 Leadership Needs in the 21st Century

1. How do different approaches and styles of leadership impact what is needed now?

Leadership in the high-involvement organization differs dramatically from that in the traditional and control-oriented organization. Leaders external to the team have as one of their primary roles empowering group members and the teams themselves to self-lead and self-manage. Leaders internal to the team are peers; they work alongside and simultaneously facilitate planning, organizing, directing, controlling, and the execution of the team’s work.

Although we know a great deal about the determinants of effective leadership, we have much to learn. Each theory presented in this chapter is put into practice by managers every day. None provides the complete answer to what makes leaders effective, but each has something important to offer.

Finally, our understanding of leadership has many shortcomings and limitations. The existing literature is largely based on observations from a Western industrialized context. The extent to which our theories of leadership are bound by our culture, limiting generalization to other cultures, is largely unknown. Cross-cultural leadership research will no doubt intensify as the global economy becomes an ever more dominant force in the world.

i

i

Chapter Review Questions

1. Define leadership and distinguish between leadership and management.
2. Discuss the processes associated with people coming to positions of leadership.
3. Discuss the different forms of power available to leaders and the effects associated with each.
4. It has been observed that effective leaders have the “right stuff.” What traits are commonly associated with leader emergence and effective leaders?
5. Both the Ohio State University and University of Michigan leadership studies identified central leader behaviors. What are these behaviors, and how are they different from one another?
6. Blake and Mouton’s work with the Leadership Grid® identified several leadership types. What are they, and how does this leadership model look from the perspective of situation theories of leadership?
7. Identify and describe the three situational variables presented in Fiedler’s contingency theory of leadership.
8. What are the four leadership behaviors in the path-goal theory of leadership?
9. Discuss the differences between the internal and external leadership roles surrounding self-managed work teams.
10. What are substitutes for leadership? What are neutralizers? Give an example of each.
11. What are the distinguishing features of the transformational and the charismatic leader

Group Skills Application Exercises

1. Identify a charismatic leader and a leader with little charisma. What are the traits and skills that allow them to succeed in their roles? How can you incorporate the traits that allow them to be successful in their roles into the skills you will need to have in a leadership position?
2. You have just taken a leadership position where 40 percent of the workforce telecommutes. You want to encourage teamwork and want to ensure that telecommuting is not hurting teamwork. What is your plan to discover how things are working and how to communicate your desire to have effective teamwork?

3. You are at a meeting, and during the meeting someone on the team addresses their manager and points out a crucial mistake that could doom the project. The person says that their manager should have caught it and because of that should resign. As a leader of the group, how would you deal with the subordinate, the manager, and communication with the entire team?



Problem Solving in Teams and Groups by Cameron W. Piercy, Ph.D. is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

I9. Conformity and Obedience

From the Noba Project By Jerry M. Burger Santa Clara University

We often change our attitudes and behaviors to match the attitudes and behaviors of the people around us. One reason for this conformity is a concern about what other people think of us. This process was demonstrated in a classic study in which college students deliberately gave wrong answers to a simple visual judgment task rather than go against the group. Another reason we conform to the norm is because other people often have information we do not, and relying on norms can be a reasonable strategy when we are uncertain about how we are supposed to act. Unfortunately, we frequently misperceive how the typical person acts, which can contribute to problems such as the excessive binge drinking often seen in college students. Obeying orders from an authority figure can sometimes lead to disturbing behavior. This danger was illustrated in a famous study in which participants were instructed to administer painful electric shocks to another person in what they believed to be a learning experiment. Despite vehement protests from the person receiving the shocks, most participants continued the procedure when instructed to do so by the experimenter. The findings raise questions about the power of blind obedience in deplorable situations such as atrocities and genocide. They also raise concerns about the ethical treatment of participants in psychology experiments.

- [PDF Download](#)

Key Terms

- [Conformity](#)
- [Descriptive norms](#)
- [Obedience](#)
- [Social norms](#)

Learning Objectives

- Become aware of how widespread conformity is in our lives and some of the ways each of us changes our attitudes and behavior to match the norm.
- Understand the two primary reasons why people often conform to perceived norms.
- Appreciate how obedience to authority has been examined in laboratory studies and some of the implications of the findings from these investigations.
- Consider some of the remaining issues and sources of controversy surrounding Milgram's obedience studies.

Introduction

When he was a teenager, my son often enjoyed looking at photographs of me and my wife taken when we were in high school. He laughed at the hairstyles, the clothing, and the kind of glasses people wore "back then." And when he

was through with his ridiculing, we would point out that no one is immune to fashions and fads and that someday his children will probably be equally amused by his high school photographs and the trends he found so normal at the time.

Everyday observation confirms that we often adopt the actions and attitudes of the people around us. Trends in clothing, music, foods, and entertainment are obvious. But our views on political issues, religious questions, and lifestyles also reflect to some degree the attitudes of the people we interact with. Similarly, decisions about behaviors such as smoking and drinking are influenced by whether the people we spend time with engage in these activities. Psychologists refer to this widespread tendency to act and think like the people around us as [conformity](#).



Fashion trends serve as good, and sometimes embarrassing, examples of our own susceptibility to conformity. [Image: bianca francesca, <https://goo.gl/Oroq35>, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0, <https://goo.gl/Toc0ZF>]

Conformity

Humans may possess an inherent tendency to imitate the actions of others. Even if people are unaware of it, many will mimic the gestures, body posture, language, speech rate, and other behaviors of the people we interact with. Researchers find that this mimicking increases the connection between people and allows our interactions to flow more smoothly ([Chartrand & Bargh, 1999](#)).

Beyond this automatic tendency to imitate others, psychologists have identified two primary reasons for conformity. The first of these is [normative influence](#). When normative influence is operating, people go along with the crowd because they are concerned about what others think of them. We don't want to look out of step or become the target of criticism just because we like different kinds of music or dress differently than everyone else. Fitting in also brings rewards such as camaraderie and compliments.

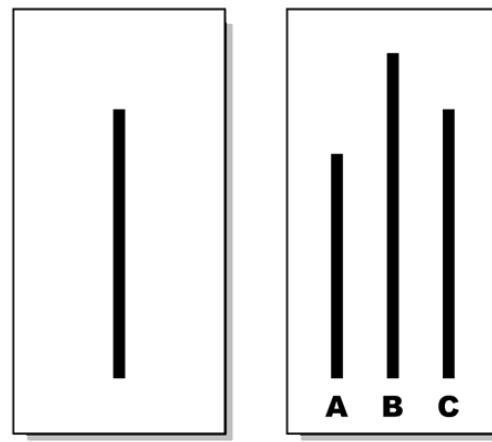
How powerful is **normative influence**? Consider a classic study conducted many years ago by Solomon Asch (1956). The participants were male college students who were asked to engage in a seemingly simple task. An experimenter standing several feet away held up a card that depicted one line on the left side and three lines on the right side. The participant's job was to say aloud which of the three lines on the right was the same length as the line on the left. Sixteen cards were presented one at a time, and the correct answer on each was so obvious as to make the task a little boring. Except for one thing. The participant was not alone. In fact, there were six other people in the room who also gave their answers to the line-judgment task aloud. Moreover, although they pretended to be fellow participants, these other individuals were, in fact, confederates working with the experimenter. The real participant was seated so that he always gave his answer after hearing what five other "participants" said. Everything went smoothly until the third trial, when inexplicably the first "participant" gave an obviously incorrect answer. The mistake might have been amusing, except the second participant gave the same answer. As did the third, the fourth, and the fifth participant. Suddenly the real participant was in a difficult situation. His eyes told him one thing, but five out of five people apparently saw something else.

It's one thing to wear your hair a certain way or like certain foods because everyone around you does. But, would participants intentionally give a wrong answer just to conform with the other participants? The confederates uniformly gave incorrect answers on 12 of the 16 trials, and 76 percent of the participants went along with the norm at least once and also gave the wrong answer. In total, they conformed with the group on one-third of the 12 test trials. Although we might be impressed that the majority of the time participants answered honestly, most psychologists find it remarkable that so many college students caved in to the pressure of the group rather than do the job they had volunteered to do. In almost all cases, the participants knew they were giving an incorrect answer, but their concern for what these other people might be thinking about them overpowered their desire to do the right thing.

Variations of Asch's procedures have been conducted numerous times (Bond, 2005; Bond & Smith, 1996). We now know that the findings are easily replicated, that there is an increase in conformity with more confederates (up to about five), that teenagers are more prone to conforming than are adults, and that people conform significantly less often when they believe the confederates will not hear their responses (Berndt, 1979; Bond, 2005; Crutchfield, 1955; Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). This last finding is consistent with the notion that participants change their answers because they are concerned about what others think of them.

The other reason we sometimes go along with the crowd is that people are often a source of information. Psychologists refer to this process as **informational influence**. Most of us, most of the time, are motivated to do the right thing. If society deems that we put litter in a proper container, speak softly in libraries, and tip our waiter, then that's what most of us will do. But sometimes it's not clear what society expects of us. In these situations, we often rely on **descriptive norms** (Cialdini, Reno, & Kallgren, 1990). That is, we act the way most people—or most people like us—act. This is not an unreasonable strategy. Other people often have information that we do not, especially when we find ourselves in new situations. If you have ever been part of a conversation that went something like this,

"Do you think we should?"
"Sure. Everyone else is doing it."



Examples of the cards used in the Asch experiment. How powerful is the normative influence? Would you be tempted to give a clearly incorrect answer, like many participants in the Asch experiment did, to better match the thoughts of a group of peers? [Image: Fred the Oyster, <https://goo.gl/Gi5mtu>, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://goo.gl/zVGXn8>]

you have experienced the power of informational influence.



Efforts to influence people to engage in healthier or more sustainable behaviors have benefitted from the informational influence. For example, hotels have been able to significantly increase the numbers of people who re-use bath towels (reducing water and energy use) by informing them on signs in their rooms that re-using towels is a typical behavior of other hotel guests. [Image: Infrogmation of New Orleans, <https://goo.gl/5P5F0v>, CC BY 2.0, <https://goo.gl/BRvSA7>]

[Lewis, Fosso, & Walter, 2009](#).

Researchers have demonstrated the power of descriptive norms in a number of areas. Homeowners reduced the amount of energy they used when they learned that they were consuming more energy than their neighbors ([Schultz, Nolan, Cialdini, Goldstein, & Griskevicius, 2007](#)). Undergraduates selected the healthy food option when led to believe that other students had made this choice ([Burger et al., 2010](#)). Hotel guests were more likely to reuse their towels when a hanger in the bathroom told them that this is what most guests did ([Goldstein, Cialdini, & Griskevicius, 2008](#)). And more people began using the stairs instead of the elevator when informed that the vast majority of people took the stairs to go up one or two floors ([Burger & Shelton, 2011](#)).

Obedience

Sometimes decisions about how to act are not so easy. Sometimes we are directed by a more powerful person to do things we may not want to do. Researchers who study [obedience](#) are interested in how people react when given an order or command from someone in a position of authority. In many situations, obedience is a good thing. We are taught at an early age to obey parents, teachers, and police officers. It's also important to follow instructions from judges, firefighters, and lifeguards. And a military would fail to function if soldiers stopped obeying orders from superiors. But, there is also a dark side to obedience. In the name of "following orders" or "just doing my job," people can violate ethical principles and break laws. More disturbingly, obedience often is at the heart of some of the worst of human behavior—massacres, atrocities, and even genocide.

However, it's not always easy to obtain good descriptive norm information, which means we sometimes rely on a flawed notion of the norm when deciding how we should behave. A good example of how misperceived norms can lead to problems is found in research on binge drinking among college students. Excessive drinking is a serious problem on many campuses ([Mita, 2009](#)). There are many reasons why students binge drink, but one of the most important is their perception of the descriptive norm. How much students drink is highly correlated with how much they believe the average student drinks ([Neighbors, Lee, Lewis, Fosso, & Larimer, 2007](#)). Unfortunately, students aren't very good at making this assessment. They notice the boisterous heavy drinker at the party but fail to consider all the students not attending the party. As a result, students typically overestimate the descriptive norm for college student drinking ([Borsari & Carey, 2003; Perkins, Haines, & Rice, 2005](#)). Most students believe they consume significantly less alcohol than the norm, a miscalculation that creates a dangerous push toward more and more excessive alcohol consumption. On the positive side, providing students with accurate information about drinking norms has been found to reduce overindulgent drinking ([Burger, LaSalvia, Hendricks, Mehdipour, & Neudeck, 2011; Neighbors, Lee, Lewis, Fosso, & Walter, 2009](#)).



Photographs of victims of Cambodian dictator Pol Pot. From 1975-79 the Khmer Rouge army obediently carried out orders to execute tens of thousands of civilians. [Image: ...your local connection, <https://goo.gl/ut9fvk>, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0, <https://goo.gl/TocOZF>]

It was this unsettling side of obedience that led to some of the most famous and most controversial research in the history of psychology. Stanley Milgram (1963, 1965, 1974) wanted to know why many German citizens went along with the brutality of the Nazi leaders during the Holocaust. Milgram (1963) wrote, “these inhumane policies may have originated in the mind of a single person...but they could only be carried out on a massive scale if a very large number of persons obeyed orders” (p. 371).

To understand this obedience, Milgram conducted a series of laboratory investigations. In all but one variation of the basic procedure, participants were men recruited from the community surrounding Yale University, where the research was carried out. These citizens signed up for what they believed to be an experiment on learning and memory. In particular, they were told the research concerned the effects of punishment on learning. Three people were involved in

each session. One was the participant. Another was the experimenter. The third was a confederate who pretended to be another participant.

The experimenter explained that the study consisted of a memory test and that one of the men would be the teacher and the other the learner. Through a rigged drawing, the real participant was always assigned the teacher's role and the confederate was always the learner. The teacher watched as the learner was strapped into a chair and had electrodes attached to his wrist. The teacher then moved to the room next door where he was seated in front of a large metal box the experimenter identified as a "shock generator." The front of the box displayed gauges and lights and, most noteworthy, a series of 30 levers across the bottom. Each lever was labeled with a voltage figure, starting with 15 volts and moving up in 15-volt increments to 450 volts. Labels also indicated the strength of the shocks, starting with "Slight Shock" and moving up to "Danger: Severe Shock" toward the end. The last two levers were simply labeled "XXX" in red.



Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/ctzQeGpmxFcXrZoBA>

The teacher administered a memory test to the learner in the next room through a microphone. The learner responded to the multiple-choice items by pressing one of four buttons that were barely within reach of his strapped-down hand. If the teacher saw the correct answer light up on his side of the wall, he simply moved on to the next item. But if the learner got the item wrong, the teacher pressed one of the shock levers and, thereby, delivered the learner's punishment. The teacher was instructed to start with the 15-volt lever and move up to the next highest shock for each successive wrong answer.

In reality, the learner received no shocks. Mistakes were made intentionally, and the teacher was to administer what he believed to be increasingly strong shocks. The purpose of the study was to see how far the teacher would go before refusing to continue. The teacher's first hint that something was amiss came after pressing the 75-volt lever and hearing through the wall the learner say "Ugh!" The learner's reactions became stronger and louder with each lever press. At 150 volts, the learner yelled out, "Experimenter! That's all. Get me out of here. I told you I had heart trouble. My heart's starting to bother me now. Get me out of here, please. My heart's starting to bother me. I refuse to go on. Let me out."

The experimenter's role was to encourage the participant to continue. If at any time the teacher asked to end the session, the experimenter responded with phrases such as, "The experiment requires that you continue," and "You have no other choice, you must go on." The experimenter ended the session only after the teacher stated four successive times that he did not want to continue. All the while, the learner's protests became more intense with each shock. After 300 volts, the learner refused to answer any more questions, which led the experimenter to say that no answer should be considered a wrong answer. After 330 volts, despite vehement protests from the learner following previous shocks, the teacher heard only silence, suggesting that the learner was now physically unable to respond. If the teacher reached 450 volts—the end of the generator—the experimenter told him to continue pressing the 450 volt lever for each wrong answer. It was only after the teacher pressed the 450-volt lever three times that the experimenter announced that the study was over.

If you had been a participant in this research, what would you have done? Virtually everyone says he or she would have stopped early in the process. And most people predict that very few if any participants would keep pressing all the way to 450 volts. Yet in the basic procedure described here, 65 percent of the participants continued to administer shocks to the very end of the session. These were not brutal, sadistic men. They were ordinary citizens who nonetheless followed the experimenter's instructions to administer what they believed to be excruciating if not dangerous electric shocks to an innocent person. The disturbing implication from the findings is that, under the right circumstances, each of us may be capable of acting in some very uncharacteristic and perhaps some very unsettling ways.

Milgram conducted many variations of this basic procedure to explore some of the factors that affect obedience. He found that obedience rates decreased when the learner was in the same room as the experimenter and declined even further when the teacher had to physically touch the learner to administer the punishment. Participants also were less willing to continue the procedure after seeing other teachers refuse to press the shock levers, and they were significantly less obedient when the instructions to continue came from a person they believed to be another participant rather than from the experimenter. Finally, Milgram found that women participants followed the experimenter's instructions at exactly the same rate the men had.

Milgram's obedience research has been the subject of much controversy and discussion. Psychologists continue to debate the extent to which Milgram's studies tell us something about atrocities in general and about the behavior of German citizens during the Holocaust in particular (Miller, 2004). Certainly, there are important features of that time and place that cannot be recreated in a laboratory, such as a pervasive climate of prejudice and dehumanization. Another issue concerns the relevance of the findings. Some people have argued that today we are more aware of the dangers of blind obedience than we were when the research was conducted back in the 1960s. However, findings from partial and modified replications of Milgram's procedures conducted in recent years suggest that people respond to the situation today much like they did a half a century ago (Burger, 2009).

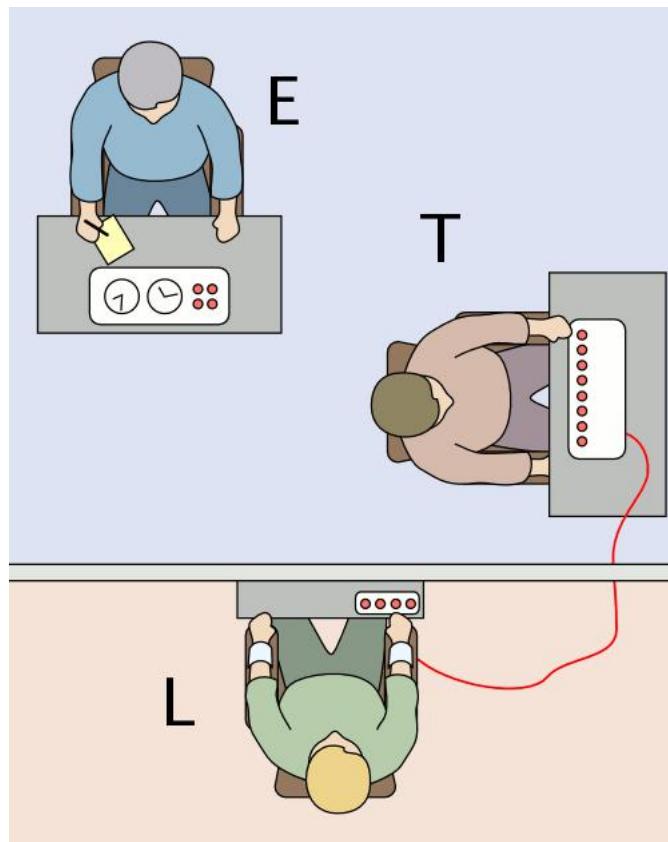
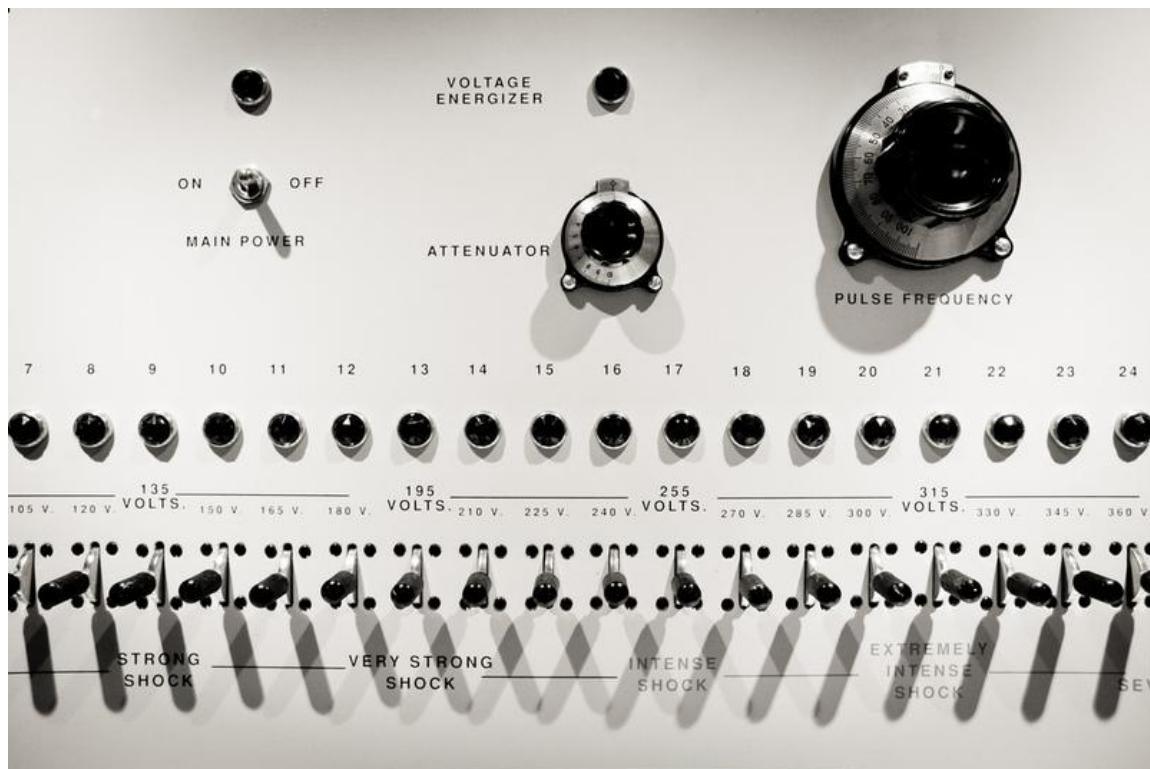


Diagram of the Milgram Experiment in which the "teacher" (T) was asked to deliver a (supposedly) painful electric shock to the "learner" (L). Would this experiment be approved by a review board today? [Image: Fred the Oyster, <https://goo.gl/ZlbQz1>, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://goo.gl/X3i0tq>]



If you had been “a teacher” in the Milgram experiment, would you have behaved differently than the majority who delivered what they thought were massive 450-volt shocks? [Image: Sharon Drummond, <https://goo.gl/uQZGtZ>, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0, <https://goo.gl/TocOZF>]

Another point of controversy concerns the ethical treatment of research participants. Researchers have an obligation to look out for the welfare of their participants. Yet, there is little doubt that many of Milgram’s participants experienced intense levels of stress as they went through the procedure. In his defense, Milgram was not unconcerned about the effects of the experience on his participants. And in follow-up questionnaires, the vast majority of his participants said they were pleased they had been part of the research and thought similar experiments should be conducted in the future. Nonetheless, in part because of Milgram’s studies, guidelines and procedures were developed to protect research participants from these kinds of experiences. Although Milgram’s intriguing findings left us with many unanswered questions, conducting a full replication of his experiment remains out of bounds by today’s standards.

Social psychologists are fond of saying that we are all influenced by the people around us more than we recognize. Of course, each person is unique, and ultimately each of us makes choices about how we will and will not act. But decades of research on conformity and obedience make it clear that we live in a social world and that—for better or worse—much of what we do is a reflection of the people we encounter.

Take a Quiz

An optional quiz is available for this chapter at <https://nobaproject.com/modules/conformity-and-obedience>

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways do you see normative influence operating among you and your peers? How difficult would it be to go against the norm? What would it take for you to not do something just because all your friends were doing it?
2. What are some examples of how informational influence helps us do the right thing? How can we use descriptive norm information to change problem behaviors?
3. Is conformity more likely or less likely to occur when interacting with other people through social media as compared to face-to-face encounters?
4. When is obedience to authority a good thing and when is it bad? What can be done to prevent people from obeying commands to engage in truly deplorable behavior such as atrocities and massacres?
5. In what ways do Milgram's experimental procedures fall outside the guidelines for research with human participants? Are there ways to conduct relevant research on obedience to authority without violating these guidelines?

Vocabulary

Conformity

Changing one's attitude or behavior to match a perceived social norm.

Descriptive norm

The perception of what most people do in a given situation.

Informational influence

Conformity that results from a concern to act in a socially approved manner as determined by how others act.

Normative influence

Conformity that results from a concern for what other people think of us.

Obedience

Responding to an order or command from a person in a position of authority.

Outside Resources

Student Video: Christine N. Winston and Hemali Maher's 'The Milgram Experiment' gives an excellent 3-minute overview of one of the most famous experiments in the history of psychology. It was one of the winning entries in the 2015 Noba Student Video Award.

https://youtube.com/watch?v=uVIUZwkM_G0%3Fcolor%3Dred%26modestbranding%3D1%26showinfo%3D0%26origin%3Dhttps%3A

Video: An example of information influence in a field setting

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=4yFeaS60nWk%3Fcolor%3Dred%26modestbranding%3D1%26showinfo%3D0%26origin%3Dhttps%3A>

Video: Scenes from a recent partial replication of Milgram's obedience studies

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=HwqNP9HRy7Y%3Fcolor%3Dred%26modestbranding%3D1%26showinfo%3D0%26origin%3Dhttps%3A>

Video: Scenes from a recent replication of Asch's conformity experiment

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=VgDx5g9qlg%3Fcolor%3Dred%26modestbranding%3D1%26showinfo%3D0%26origin%3Dhttps%3A>

Web: Website devoted to scholarship and research related to Milgram's obedience studies

<http://www.stanleymilgram.com>

References

- Asch, S. E. (1956). Studies of independence and conformity: I. A minority of one against a unanimous majority. *Psychological Monographs*, 70 (9, Whole No. 416).
- Berndt, T. J. (1979). Developmental changes in conformity to peers and parents. *Developmental Psychology*, 15, 608–616.
- Bond, R. (2005). Group size and conformity. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 8, 331–354.
- Bond, R., & Smith, P. B. (1996). Culture and conformity: A meta-analysis of studies using Asch's (1952b, 1956) line judgment task. *Psychological Bulletin*, 119, 111–137.
- Borsari, B., & Carey, K. B. (2003). Descriptive and injunctive norms in college drinking: A meta-analytic integration. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 64, 331–341.
- Burger, J. M. (2009). Replicating Milgram: Would people still obey today? *American Psychologist*, 64, 1–11.
- Burger, J. M., & Shelton, M. (2011). Changing everyday health behaviors through descriptive norm manipulations. *Social Influence*, 6, 69–77.
- Burger, J. M., Bell, H., Harvey, K., Johnson, J., Stewart, C., Dorian, K., & Swedroe, M. (2010). Nutritious or delicious? The effect of descriptive norm information on food choice. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 29, 228–242.
- Burger, J. M., LaSalvia, C. T., Hendricks, L. A., Mehdipour, T., & Neudeck, E. M. (2011). Partying before the party gets started: The effects of descriptive norms on pre-gaming behavior. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 33, 220–227.
- Chartrand, T. L., & Bargh, J. A. (1999). The chameleon effect: The perception-behavior link and social interaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76, 893–910.
- Cialdini, R. B., Reno, R. R., & Kallgren, C. A. (1990). A focus theory of normative conduct: Recycling the concept of norms to reduce littering in public places. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 58, 1015–1026.
- Crutchfield, R. S. (1955). Conformity and character. *American Psychologist*, 10, 191–198.
- Deutsch, M., & Gerard, H. B. (1955). A study of normative and informational social influences upon individual judgment. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 51, 629–636.
- Goldstein, N. J., Cialdini, R. B., & Griskevicius, V. (2008). A room with a viewpoint: Using social norms to motivate environmental conservation in hotels. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35, 472–482.
- Milgram, S. (1974). *Obedience to authority: An experimental view*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Milgram, S. (1965). Some conditions of obedience and disobedience to authority. *Human Relations*, 18, 57–76.
- Milgram, S. (1963). Behavioral study of obedience. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 67, 371.
- Miller, A. G. (2004). What can the Milgram obedience experiments tell us about the Holocaust? Generalizing from the social psychology laboratory. In A. G. Miller (Ed.), *The social psychology of good and evil* (pp. 193–239). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Mita, M. (2009). College binge drinking still on the rise. *JAMA: Journal of the American Medical Association*, 302,

836–837.

- Neighbors, C., Lee, C. M., Lewis, M. A., Fosso, N., & Larimer, M. E. (2007). Are social norms the best predictor of outcomes among heavy-drinking college students? *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 68, 556–565.
- Neighbors, C., Lee, C. M., Lewis, M. A., Fosso, N., & Walter, T. (2009). Internet-based personalized feedback to reduce 21st-birthday drinking: A randomized controlled trial of an event-specific prevention intervention. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 77, 51–63.
- Perkins, H. W., Haines, M. P., & Rice, R. (2005). Misperceiving the college drinking norm and related problems: A nationwide study of exposure to prevention information, perceived norms, and student alcohol misuse. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 66, 470–478.
- Schultz, P. W., Nolan, J. M., Cialdini, R. B., Goldstein, N. J., & Griskevicius, V. (2007). The constructive, destructive, and reconstructive power of social norms. *Psychological Science*, 18, 429–434.

Authors



Jerry M. Burger Jerry M. Burger is a Professor of Psychology at Santa Clara University. His primary research interests are in the area of social influence, especially processes related to obedience, compliance and social norms. His books include *Desire for control: Personality, social and clinical perspectives*, *Returning home: Reconnecting with our childhood and Personality*, a textbook now in its ninth edition.

Media Attributions

- Most-brilliant-social-psychology-experiments_4



Conformity and Obedience by Cameron W. Piercy, Ph.D. is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

20. Working in Diverse Teams

Learning Objectives

- Describe how diversity can enhance decision-making and problem-solving
- Identify challenges and best practices for working with multicultural teams
- Discuss divergent cultural characteristics and list several examples of such characteristics in the culture(s) you identify with

Decision-making and problem-solving can be much more dynamic and successful when performed in a diverse team environment. The multiple diverse perspectives can enhance both the understanding of the problem and the quality of the solution. Yet, working in diverse teams can be challenging given different identities, cultures, beliefs, and experiences. In this chapter, we will discuss the effects of team diversity on group decision-making and problem-solving, identify best practices and challenges for working in and with multicultural teams, and dig deeper into divergent cultural characteristics that teams may need to navigate.

Does Team Diversity Enhance Decision Making and Problem Solving?

In the *Harvard Business Review* article “Why Diverse Teams are Smarter,” David Rock and Heidi Grant (2016) support the idea that increasing workplace diversity is a good business decision. A 2015 McKinsey report on 366 public companies found that those in the top quartile for ethnic and racial diversity in management were 35% more likely to have financial returns above their industry mean, and those in the top quartile for gender diversity were 15% more likely to have returns above the industry mean. Similarly, in a global analysis conducted by Credit Suisse, organizations with at least one female board member yielded a higher return on equity and higher net income growth than those that did not have any women on the board.



Teams made up of diverse members tend to perform better than teams of similar backgrounds. Here, the Women of Color in Technology work on a project. The tech industry has been criticized for the lack of diversity among its ranks, and groups like the Women of Color in Technology are looking to change that. (Credit: [WOCin Tech Chat/CC BY 2.0](#))

Additional research on diversity has shown that diverse teams are better at decision-making and problem-solving because they tend to focus more on facts, per the Rock and Grant article. A study published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* showed that people from diverse backgrounds “might actually alter the behavior of a group’s social majority in ways that lead to improved and more accurate group thinking.” It turned out that in the study, the diverse panels raised more facts related to the case than homogeneous panels and made fewer factual errors while discussing available evidence. Another study noted in the article showed that diverse teams are “more likely to constantly reexamine facts and remain objective. They may also encourage greater scrutiny of each member’s actions, keeping their joint cognitive resources sharp and vigilant. By breaking up workforce homogeneity, you can allow your employees to become more aware of their own potential biases—entrenched ways of thinking that can otherwise blind them to key information and even lead them to make errors in decision-making processes.” In other words, when people are among homogeneous and like-minded (non-diverse) teammates, the team is susceptible to **groupthink** and may be reticent to think about opposing viewpoints since all team members are in alignment. In a more diverse team with a variety of backgrounds and experiences, the opposing viewpoints are more likely to come out and the team members feel obligated to research and address the questions that have been raised. Again, this enables a richer discussion and a more in-depth fact-finding and exploration of opposing ideas and viewpoints in order to solve problems.

Diversity in teams also leads to greater innovation. A Boston Consulting Group article entitled “The Mix that Matters: Innovation through Diversity” explains a study in which they sought to understand the relationship between diversity in managers (all management levels) and innovation (Lorenzo et al., 2017). The key findings of this study show that:

- The positive relationship between management diversity and innovation is statistically significant—and thus companies with higher levels of diversity derive more revenue from new products and services.
- The innovation boost isn't limited to a single type of diversity. The presence of managers who are either female or are from other countries, industries, or companies can cause an increase in innovation.
- Management diversity seems to have a particularly positive effect on innovation at complex companies—those that have multiple product lines or that operate in multiple industry segments.
- To reach its potential, gender diversity needs to go beyond tokenism. In the study, innovation performance only increased significantly when the workforce included more than 20% women in management positions. Having a high percentage of female employees doesn't increase innovation if only a small number of women are managers.
- At companies with diverse management teams, openness to contributions from lower-level workers and an environment in which employees feel free to speak their minds are crucial for fostering innovation.

When you consider the impact that diverse teams have on decision-making and problem-solving—through the discussion and incorporation of new perspectives, ideas, and data—it is no wonder that the BCG study shows greater innovation. Team leaders need to reflect upon these findings during the early stages of team selection so that they can reap the benefits of having diverse voices and backgrounds.

Challenges and Best Practices for Working with Multicultural Teams

As globalization has increased over the last decades, workplaces have felt the impact of working within multicultural teams. The earlier section on team diversity outlined some of the highlights and benefits of working on diverse teams, and a multicultural group certainly qualifies as diverse. However, there are some key practices that are recommended to those who are leading multicultural teams so that they can parlay the diversity into an advantage and not be derailed by it.

People may assume that communication is the key factor that can derail multicultural teams, as participants may have different languages and communication styles. In the *Harvard Business Review* article “Managing Multicultural Teams,” Brett et al. (2006) outline four key cultural differences that can cause destructive conflicts in a team. The first difference is direct versus indirect communication, also known as **high-context vs. low-context communication**. Some cultures are very direct and explicit in their communication, while others are more indirect and ask questions rather than pointing out problems. This difference can cause conflict because, at the extreme, the direct style may be considered offensive by some, while the indirect style may be perceived as unproductive and passive-aggressive in team interactions.

The second difference that multicultural teams may face is trouble with accents and fluency. When team members don't speak the same language, there may be one language that dominates the group interaction—and those who don't speak it may feel left out. The speakers of the primary language may feel that those members don't contribute as much or are less competent. The next challenge is when there are differing attitudes toward hierarchy. Some cultures are very respectful of the hierarchy and will treat team members based on that hierarchy. Other cultures are more egalitarian and don't observe hierarchical differences to the same degree. This may lead to clashes if some people feel that they are being disrespected and not treated according to their status. The final difference that may challenge multicultural teams is conflicting decision-making norms. Different cultures make decisions differently, and some will apply a great deal of analysis and preparation beforehand. Those cultures that make decisions more quickly (and need just enough information to make a decision) may be frustrated with the slow response and relatively longer thought process.

These cultural differences are good examples of how everyday team activities (decision-making, communication, interaction among team members) may become points of contention for a multicultural team if there isn't adequate understanding of everyone's culture. The authors propose that there are several potential interventions to try if these

conflicts arise. One simple intervention is *adaptation*, which is working with or around differences. This is best used when team members are willing to acknowledge the cultural differences and learn how to work with them. The next intervention technique is *structural intervention*, or reorganizing to reduce friction on the team. This technique is best used if there are unproductive subgroups or cliques within the team that need to be moved around. *Managerial intervention* is the technique of making decisions by management and without team involvement. This technique is one that should be used sparingly, as it essentially shows that the team needs guidance and can't move forward without management getting involved. Finally, *exit* is an intervention of last resort, and is the *voluntary or involuntary removal* of a team member. If the differences and challenges have proven to be so great that an individual on the team can no longer work with the team productively, then it may be necessary to remove the team member in question.

Developing Cultural Intelligence

There are some people who seem to be innately aware of and able to work with cultural differences on teams and in their organizations. These individuals might be said to have cultural intelligence. **Cultural intelligence** is a competency and a skill that enables individuals to function effectively in cross-cultural environments. It develops as people become more aware of the influence of culture and more capable of adapting their behavior to the norms of other cultures. In the IESE Insight article entitled “Cultural Competence: Why It Matters and How You Can Acquire It,” Lee and Liao (2015) assert that “multicultural leaders may relate better to team members from different cultures and resolve conflicts more easily. Their multiple talents can also be put to good use in international negotiations.” Multicultural leaders don’t have a lot of “baggage” from any one culture, and so are sometimes perceived as being culturally neutral. They are very good at handling diversity, which gives them a great advantage in their relationships with teammates.

In order to help people become better team members in a world that is increasingly multicultural, there are a few best practices that the authors recommend for honing cross-cultural skills. The first is to “broaden your mind”—expand your own cultural channels (travel, movies, books) and surround yourself with people from other cultures. This helps to raise your own awareness of the cultural differences and norms that you may encounter. Another best practice is to “develop your cross-cultural skills through practice” and experiential learning. You may have the opportunity to work or travel abroad—but if you don’t, then getting to know some of your company’s cross-cultural colleagues or foreign visitors will help you to practice your skills. Serving on a cross-cultural project team and taking the time to get to know and bond with your global colleagues is an excellent way to develop skills.

Once you have a sense of the different cultures and have started to work on developing your cross-cultural skills, another good practice is to “boost your cultural metacognition” and monitor your own behavior in multicultural situations. When you are in a situation in which you are interacting with multicultural individuals, you should test yourself and be aware of how you act and feel. Observe both your positive and negative interactions with people, and learn from them. Developing “cognitive complexity” is the final best practice for boosting multicultural skills. This is the most advanced, and it requires being able to view situations from more than one cultural framework. In order to see things from another perspective, you need to have a strong sense of emotional intelligence, empathy, and sympathy, and be willing to engage in honest communications.

In the *Harvard Business Review* article “Cultural Intelligence,” Earley and Mosakowski (2004) describe three sources of cultural intelligence that teams should consider if they are serious about becoming more adept in their cross-cultural skills and understanding. These sources, very simply, are head, body, and heart. One first learns about the beliefs, customs, and taboos of foreign cultures via the **head**. Training programs are based on providing this type of overview information—which is helpful, but obviously isn’t experiential. This is the cognitive component of cultural intelligence. The second source, the **body**, involves more commitment and experimentation with the new culture. It is this physical component (demeanor, eye contact, posture, accent) that shows a deeper level of understanding of the new culture and its physical manifestations. The final source, the **heart**, deals with a person’s own confidence in their ability to adapt to

and deal well with cultures outside of their own. Heart really speaks to one's own level of emotional commitment and motivation to understand the new culture.

The authors have created a quick assessment to diagnose cultural intelligence, based on these cognitive, physical, and emotional/motivational measures (i.e., head, body, heart). Please refer to the table below for a short diagnostic that allows you to assess your cultural intelligence.

Assessing Your Cultural Intelligence

Give your responses using a 1 to 5 scale where 1 means that you strongly disagree and 5 means that you strongly agree with the statement.

Before I interact with people from a new culture, I wonder to myself what I hope to achieve.

If I encounter something unexpected while working in a new culture, I use that experience to build new ways to approach other cultures in the future.

I plan on how I am going to relate to people from a different culture before I meet with them.

When I come into a new cultural situation, I can immediately sense whether things are going well or if things are going wrong.

Add your total from the four questions above.

Divide the total by 4. This is your **Cognitive Cultural Quotient**.

It is easy for me to change my body language (posture or facial expression) to suit people from a different culture.

I can alter my expressions when a cultural encounter requires it.

I can modify my speech style by changing my accent or pitch of voice to suit people from different cultures.

I can easily change the way I act when a cross-cultural encounter seems to require it.

Add your total from the four questions above.

Divide the total by 4. This is your **Cognitive Physical Quotient**.

I have confidence in my ability to deal well with people from different cultures than mine.

I am certain that I can befriend people of different cultural backgrounds than mine.

I can adapt to the lifestyle of a different culture with relative ease.

I am confident in my ability to deal with an unfamiliar cultural situation or encounter.

Add your total from the four questions above.

Divide the total by 4. This is your **Emotional/Motivational Cognitive Quotient**.

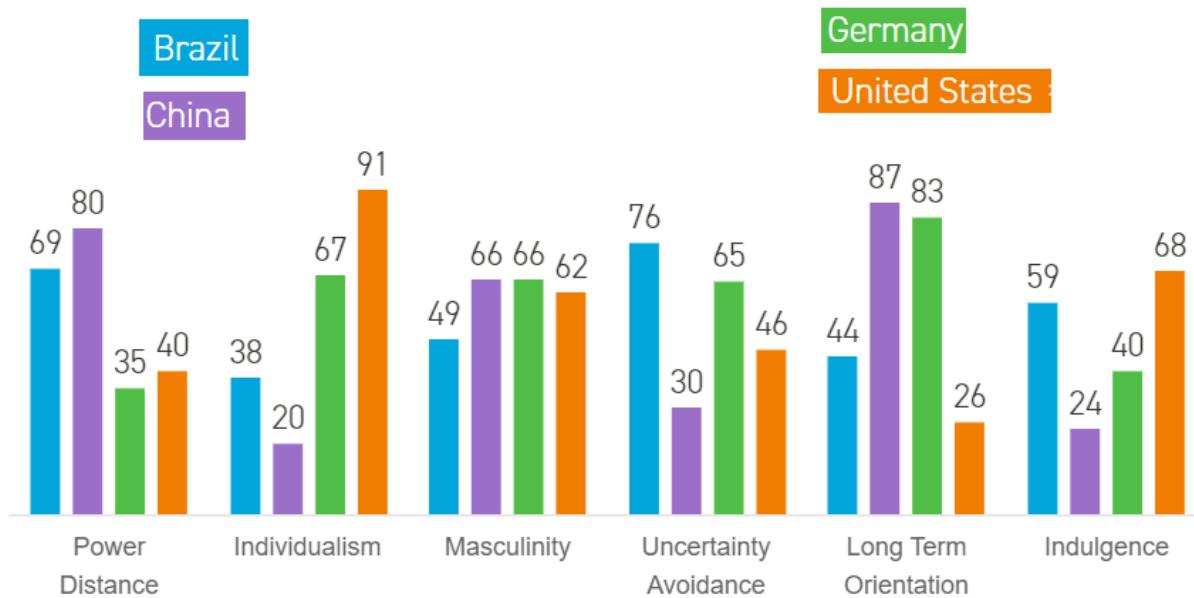
Generally, scoring below 3 in any one of the three measures signals an area requiring improvement. Averaging over 4 displays strength in cultural intelligence.

Adapted from "Cultural Intelligence," Earley and Mosakowski, Harvard Business Review, October 2004 (Credit: OpenStax/CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

Cultural intelligence is an extension of emotional intelligence. An individual must have a level of awareness and understanding of the new culture so that he or she can adapt to the style, pace, language, nonverbal communication, etc. and work together successfully with the new culture. A multicultural team can only find success if its members take the time to understand each other and ensure that everyone feels included. Multiculturalism and cultural intelligence are traits that are taking on increasing importance in the business world today. By following best practices and avoiding the challenges and pitfalls that can derail a multicultural team, a team can find great success and personal fulfillment well beyond the boundaries of the project or work engagement.

Digging in Deeper: Divergent Cultural Dimensions

Let's dig in deeper by examining several points of divergence across cultures and consider how these dimensions might play out in organizations and in groups or teams.



Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory. Comparison of 4 countries: US, China, Germany and Brazil in all 6 dimensions of the model.

Low-Power versus High-Power Distance

How comfortable are you with critiquing your boss's decisions? If you are from a low-power distance culture, your answer might be "no problem." In **low-power distance cultures**, according to Dutch researcher Geert Hofstede, people relate to one another more as equals and less as a reflection of dominant or subordinate roles, regardless of their actual formal roles as employee and manager, for example.

In a **high-power distance culture**, you would probably be much less likely to challenge the decision, to provide an alternative, or to give input. If you are working with people from a high-power distance culture, you may need to take extra care to elicit feedback and involve them in the discussion because their cultural framework may preclude their participation. They may have learned that less powerful people must accept decisions without comment, even if they have a concern or know there is a significant problem. Unless you are sensitive to cultural orientation and power distance, you may lose valuable information.

Individualistic versus Collectivist Cultures

People in **individualistic cultures** value individual freedom and personal independence, and cultures always have stories to reflect their values. You may recall the story of Superman, or John McLean in the Diehard series, and note how one person overcomes all obstacles. Through personal ingenuity, in spite of challenges, one person rises successfully to conquer or vanquish those obstacles. Sometimes there is an assist, as in basketball or football, where another person lends a hand, but still the story repeats itself again and again, reflecting the cultural viewpoint.

When Hofstede explored the concepts of individualism and collectivism across diverse cultures (Hofstede, 1982, 2001,

2005), he found that in individualistic cultures like the United States, people perceived their world primarily from their own viewpoint. They perceived themselves as empowered individuals, capable of making their own decisions, and able to make an impact on their own lives.

Cultural viewpoint is not an either/or dichotomy, but rather a continuum or range. You may belong to some communities that express individualistic cultural values, while others place the focus on a collective viewpoint. **Collectivist cultures** (Hofstede, 1982), including many in Asia and South America, focus on the needs of the nation, community, family, or group of workers. Ownership and private property is one way to examine this difference. In some cultures, property is almost exclusively private, while others tend toward community ownership. The collectively owned resource returns benefits to the community. Water, for example, has long been viewed as a community resource, much like air, but that has been changing as business and organizations have purchased water rights and gained control over resources. Public lands, such as parks, are often considered public, and individual exploitation of them is restricted. Copper, a metal with a variety of industrial applications, is collectively owned in Chile, with profits deposited in the general government fund. While public and private initiatives exist, the cultural viewpoint is our topic. How does someone raised in a culture that emphasizes the community interact with someone raised in a primarily individualistic culture? How could tensions be expressed and how might interactions be influenced by this point of divergence?

Masculine versus Feminine Orientation

There was a time when many cultures and religions valued a female figurehead, and with the rise of Western cultures we have observed a shift toward a masculine ideal. Each carries with it a set of cultural expectations and norms for gender behavior and gender roles across life, including business.

Hofstede describes the masculine-feminine dichotomy not in terms of whether men or women hold the power in a given culture, but rather the extent to which that culture values certain traits that may be considered **masculine** or **feminine**. Thus, “the assertive pole has been called ‘masculine’ and the modest, caring pole ‘feminine.’ The women in feminine countries have the same modest, caring values as the men; in the masculine countries they are somewhat assertive and competitive, but not as much as the men, so that these countries show a gap between men’s values and women’s values” (Hofstede, 2009).

We can observe this difference in where people gather, how they interact, and how they dress. We can see it during business negotiations, where it may make an important difference in the success of the organizations involved. Cultural expectations precede the interaction, so someone who doesn’t match those expectations may experience tension. Business in the United States has a masculine orientation—assertiveness and competition are highly valued. In other cultures, such as Sweden, business values are more attuned to modesty (lack of self-promotion) and taking care of society’s weaker members. This range of difference is one aspect of intercultural communication that requires significant attention when the business communicator enters a new environment.

Uncertainty-Accepting Cultures versus Uncertainty-Rejecting Cultures

When we meet each other for the first time, we often use what we have previously learned to understand our current context. We also do this to reduce our uncertainty. Some cultures, such as the United States and Britain, are **highly tolerant of uncertainty**, while others go to great lengths to reduce the element of surprise. Cultures in the Arab world, for example, are **high in uncertainty avoidance**; they tend to be resistant to change and reluctant to take risks. Whereas a U.S. business negotiator might enthusiastically agree to try a new procedure, the Egyptian counterpart would likely refuse to get involved until all the details are worked out.

Short-Term versus Long-Term Orientation

Do you want your reward right now or can you dedicate yourself to a long-term goal? You may work in a culture whose people value immediate results and grow impatient when those results do not materialize. Geert Hofstede discusses this relationship of time orientation to a culture as a “time horizon,” and it underscores the perspective of the individual within a cultural context. Many countries in Asia, influenced by the teachings of Confucius, value a long-term orientation, whereas other countries, including the United States, have a more short-term approach to life and results. Native American cultures are known for holding a long-term orientation, as illustrated by the proverb attributed to the Iroquois that decisions require contemplation of their impact seven generations removed.

If you work within a culture that has a **short-term orientation**, you may need to place greater emphasis on reciprocation of greetings, gifts, and rewards. For example, if you send a thank-you note the morning after being treated to a business dinner, your host will appreciate your promptness. While there may be a respect for tradition, there is also an emphasis on personal representation and honor, a reflection of identity and integrity. Personal stability and consistency are also valued in a short-term oriented culture, contributing to an overall sense of predictability and familiarity.

Long-term orientation is often marked by persistence, thrift and frugality, and an order to relationships based on age and status. A sense of shame for the family and community is also observed across generations. What an individual does reflects on the family and is carried by immediate and extended family members.

Time Orientation

Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall (1987) state that monochronic time-oriented cultures consider one thing at a time, whereas polychronic time-oriented cultures schedule many things at one time, and time is considered in a more fluid sense. In **monochromatic time**, interruptions are to be avoided, and everything has its own specific time. Even the multitasker from a monochromatic culture will, for example, recognize the value of work first before play or personal time. The United States, Germany, and Switzerland are often noted as countries that value a monochromatic time orientation.

Polychromatic time looks a little more complicated, with business and family mixing with dinner and dancing. Greece, Italy, Chile, and Saudi Arabia are countries where one can observe this perception of time; business meetings may be scheduled at a fixed time, but when they actually begin may be another story. Also note that the dinner invitation for 8 p.m. may in reality be more like 9 p.m. If you were to show up on time, you might be the first person to arrive and find that the hosts are not quite ready to receive you.

When in doubt, always ask before the event; many people from polychromatic cultures will be used to foreigner's tendency to be punctual, even compulsive, about respecting established times for events. The skilled business communicator is aware of this difference and takes steps to anticipate it. The value of time in different cultures is expressed in many ways, and your understanding can help you communicate more effectively.

Review & Reflection Questions

- Why are diverse teams better at decision-making and problem-solving?

- What are some of the challenges that multicultural teams face?
- How might you further cultivate your own cultural intelligence?
- What are some potential points of divergence between cultures?

References

- Brett, J., Behfar, K., Kern, M. (2006, November). Managing multicultural teams. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2006/11/managing-multicultural-teams>
- Dodd, C. (1998). *Dynamics of intercultural communication* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Earley, P.C., & Mosakowski, E. (2004, October). Cultural intelligence. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2004/10/cultural-intelligence>
- Hall, M. R., & Hall, E. T. (1987). *Hidden differences: Doing business with the Japanese*. New York, NY: Doubleday.
- Hofstede, G. (1982). *Culture's consequences* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hofstede, G. (2005). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Lee, Y-T., & Liao, Y. (2015). Cultural competence: Why it matters and how you can acquire it. IESE Insight. <https://www.ieseinsight.com/doc.aspx?id=1733&ar=20>
- Lorenzo, R., Yoigt, N., Schetelig, K., Zawadzki, A., Welpe, I., & Brosi, P. (2017). The mix that matters: Innovation through diversity. Boston Consulting Group. <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2017/people-organization-leadership-talent-innovation-through-diversity-mix-that-matters.aspx>
- Rock, D., & Grant, H. (2016, November 4). Why diverse teams are smarter. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2016/11/why-diverse-teams-are-smarter>

Author & Attribution

This remix comes from Dr. Jasmine Linabary at Emporia State University. This chapter is also available in her book: [Small Group Communication: Forming and Sustaining Teams](#).

The sections “How Does Team Diversity Enhance Decision Making and Problem Solving?” and “Challenges and Best Practices for Working with Multicultural Teams” are adapted from Black, J.S., & Bright, D.S. (2019). *Organizational behavior*. OpenStax. <https://openstax.org/books/organizational-behavior/>. Access the full chapter for free [here](#). The content is available under a [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 license](#).

The section “Digging in Deeper: Divergent Cultural Dimensions” is adapted from “[Divergent Cultural Characteristics](#)” in [Business Communication for Success](#) from the University of Minnesota. The book was adapted from a work produced and distributed under a Creative Commons license (CC BY-NC-SA) by a publisher who has requested that they and the original author not receive attribution. This work is made available under the terms of a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike license](#).



Working in Diverse Teams by Cameron W. Piercy, Ph.D. is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), except where otherwise noted.

2I. Intercultural and Plane Crashes

From [Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

Culture can affect **aviation safety** through its effect on how the flight crew deals with difficult situations; cultures with lower power distances and higher levels of individuality can result in better aviation safety outcomes. In higher power cultures subordinates are less likely to question their superiors. The crash of [Korean Air Flight 801](#) in 1997 was attributed to the pilot's decision to land despite the junior officer's disagreement, while the crash of [Avianca Flight 52](#) was caused by the failure to communicate critical low-fuel data between pilots and controllers, and by the failure of the controllers to ask the pilots if they were declaring an emergency and assist the pilots in landing the aircraft. The crashes have been blamed on aspects of the national cultures of the crews.^[citation needed]

Cultural differences in aviation

[Geert Hofstede](#) classified national cultures into four dimensions, two of which can be applied to the flight deck: power distance, which defines the "nature of relations between subordinates and superiors", or "how often subordinates are afraid to express disagreement";^[1] and whether the culture is collectivist or individualist in nature. Western cultures are individualistic and have a low power distance, whereas most Asian and Latin cultures are on the other side of the spectrum.^[2]

Past incidents

Tenerife Disaster



Wreckage of Tenerife airport disaster

On March 27, 1977, two [Boeing 747](#) passenger jets, [KLM Flight 4805](#) and [Pan Am Flight 1736](#), collided on the foggy runway at [Los Rodeos Airport](#) (now Tenerife North Airport), on the Spanish island of [Tenerife, Canary Islands](#), killing 583 people, making it the [deadliest accident in aviation history](#). Before takeoff, the KLM flight engineer expressed his concern about the Pan Am not being clear of the runway by asking the pilots in his own cockpit, "Is he not clear, that Pan American?" The KLM captain emphatically replied "Oh, yes" and continued with the takeoff, snubbing the junior officer's concern. This event led to widespread establishment of [crew resource management](#) as a fundamental part of airline pilots' training.^[6]

Korean Air Flight 801

On approach to Guam in 1997, [Korean 801](#) crashed, mainly due to pilot fatigue and poor communication between the flight crew. The captain made the decision to land despite the junior officer's disagreements, eventually bringing the plane down short of the runway, highlighting how a pilot can contribute to a disaster.^[7] In high power distance cultures, it is uncommon for subordinates to question their superiors. "Leaders may be autocratic".^{[8][importance?]} High power distance can be seen as the willingness to be in an unequal position, making it a challenge for an officer lower in the hierarchy to question the decisions of the one in power. At the same time, even in a high uncertainty avoidance culture, with the crew more likely to follow standard operating procedures (SOPs), the crew might react less efficiently to a novel situation.^[9]



Animation of Korean 801 on approach

Avianca Flight 52



Similar model of Avianca 52.

[Avianca 52](#) from [Bogota](#) to [New York](#) crashed after running out of fuel, a problem caused by language and cultural barriers. Both crew spoke Spanish as their primary language, but the first officer had better proficiency in English. "Colombia is a highly masculine, high power distance, and collectivist country", which might have led to the crew's reluctance to ask for help from the New York controllers when they knew they were in trouble.^[10] In 1977, a cargo aircraft crashed shortly after takeoff from Anchorage en route to Tokyo, killing all 3 crew. The captain was a US national, with the other two being Japanese. Neither Japanese pilot mentioned the captain's intoxication or stopped him from flying the plane. They were reluctant to do so, and given Japan's moderately high power-distance index, their deference to authority

could have been a major contributing factor. Had they done so, it would have humiliated the captain, who was clearly their superior, and from there on, it was impossible "to prevent the captain from taking control of the aircraft, even at the cost of an accident."^[11]

Other impacts of culture in airline safety

Although [crew resource management](#) (CRM) can improve safety in the aviation industry, it is not widely accepted across all cultures. This is likely due to differences in uncertainty avoidance, or "the need for rule-governed behavior and clearly defined procedures". Standard operating procedures are more easily accepted in high uncertainty avoidance cultures, such as Greece, Korea, and some Latin cultures. In the United States, however, where flexibility is emphasized, pilots may not be as accepting of CRM culture.^[12]

Improvements can be made to CRM by drawing on the strengths of both [individualistic](#) and [collectivistic](#) cultures. Western assertiveness can be helpful in developing a low power-distance cockpit, while the Eastern interdependence brings cooperation, interdependence, and communication to create a safer flying environment.^[13]

Ideally, "CRM represents low power distance (free exchange of information among the crew) and collectivism (recognition and acceptance of crew interdependence), a rare cultural combination."^[14]

References

1. [^ MERRITT, ASHLEIGH \(MAY 2000\). "CULTURE IN THE COCKPIT DO HOFSTEDE'S DIMENSIONS REPLICATE?". JOURNAL OF CROSS-CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY. 31 \(3\): 283–301. DOI:10.1177/0022022100031003001.](#)
2. [^ HAYWARD, BRENT \(1997\). "CULTURE, CRM AND AVIATION SAFETY". THE AUSTRALIAN AVIATION PSYCHOLOGY ASSOCIATION.](#)
3. [^ ENGLE, MICHAEL \(2000\). "CULTURE IN THE COCKPIT–CRM IN A MULTICULTURAL WORLD". JOURNAL OF AIR TRANSPORTATION WORLD WIDE. 5\(1\).](#)
4. [^ LI, WEN-CHIN; HARRIS, DON; CHEN, AURORA \(APRIL 2007\). "EASTERN MINDS IN WESTERN COCKPITS: META-ANALYSIS OF HUMAN FACTORS IN MISHAPS FROM THREE NATIONS". AVIATION, SPACE, AND ENVIRONMENTAL MEDICINE. 78 \(4\): 424.](#)
5. [^ HARRIS, DON; LI, WEN-CHIN \(MAY 2008\). "COCKPIT DESIGN AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES UNDERLYING FAILURES IN CREW RESOURCE MANAGEMENT". AVIATION, SPACE, AND ENVIRONMENTAL MEDICINE. 79\(5\): 537–538. DOI:10.3357/ASEM.2271.2008.](#)
6. [^ Baron, Robert. "The Cockpit, the Cabin, and Social Psychology". Global Operators Flight Information Resource. Retrieved May 11, 2011.](#)
7. [^ "AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT REPORT- KOREAN AIR FLIGHT 801" \(PDF\). NTSB. JAN 13, 2000. RETRIEVED NOV 1, 2015.](#)
8. [^ HELMREICH, ROBERT \(JUNE 2004\). "CULTURE, THREAT, AND ERROR: LESSONS FROM AVIATION". CANADIAN JOURNAL OF ANESTHESIA. 51 \(1\): R1–R4. DOI:10.1007/BF03018331.](#)
9. [^ HELMREICH, ROBERT \(1999\). "BUILDING SAFETY ON THE THREE CULTURES OF AVIATION". PROCEEDINGS OF THE IATA HUMAN FACTORS SEMINAR: 39–43.](#)
10. [^ ROSEKIND, MARK \(FEBRUARY 1996\). "CROSS-CULTURAL BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN AVIATION". NTRS.](#)
11. [^ STRAUCH, BARRY \(APR 2010\). "CAN CULTURAL DIFFERENCES LEAD TO ACCIDENTS? TEAM CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND SOCIOTECHNICAL SYSTEM OPERATIONS". HUMAN FACTORS. 52 \(2\): 246–263. DOI:10.1177/0018720810362238.](#)
12. [^ HELMREICH, ROBERT; MERRITT, ASHLEIGH; WILHELM, JOHN \(NOVEMBER 13, 2009\). "THE EVOLUTION OF CREW RESOURCE MANAGEMENT TRAINING IN COMMERCIAL AVIATION". THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF AVIATION PSYCHOLOGY. 9 \(19–32\).](#)
13. [^ MERRITT, ASHLEIGH \(JAN 1996\). "HUMAN FACTORS ON THE FLIGHT DECK THE INFLUENCE OF NATIONAL CULTURE". JOURNAL OF CROSS-CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY. 27 \(1\): 5–24. DOI:10.1177/0022022196271001.](#)
14. [^ HOFSTEDE, GEERT \(1991\). CULTURES AND ORGANIZATIONS: SOFTWARE OF THE MIND. MAIDENHEAD, UK: McGRAW-HILL.](#)



Intercultural and Plane Crashes by Cameron W. Piercy, Ph.D. is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

22. Conflict and Negotiation

Learning Objectives

- Define conflict
- Differentiate between functional and dysfunctional conflict
- Recognize various types of conflict in groups
- Describe the conflict process
- Identify and apply strategies for preventing or reducing conflict in groups

Most people probably regard conflict as something to avoid, or at least not something we go looking for. Still, we'd all agree that it's a familiar, perennial, and powerful part of human interaction, including among groups and teams. In this chapter, we will define conflict, consider whether conflict is functional or dysfunctional, discuss the conflict process, and identify strategies for preventing and reducing conflict in groups.

Definitions of Conflict

Hocker and Wilmot (2001) defined **conflict** as an expressed struggle between interdependent parties over goals which they perceive as incompatible or resources which they perceive to be insufficient. Let's examine the ingredients in their definition.

First of all, conflict must be expressed. If two members of a group dislike each other or disagree with each other's viewpoints but never show those sentiments, there's no conflict.

Second, conflict takes place between or among parties who are interdependent—that is, who need each other to accomplish something. If they can get what they want without each other, they may differ in how they do so, but they won't come into conflict.

Finally, conflict involves clashes over what people want or over the means for them to achieve it. Party A wants X, whereas party B wants Y. If they either can't both have what they want at all, or they can't each have what they want to the degree that they would prefer to, conflict will arise.

The Positive and Negative Sides of Conflict

There are some circumstances in which a moderate amount of conflict can be helpful. For example, conflict can stimulate innovation and change. Conflict can help individuals and group members grow and develop self-identities. As noted by Coser (1956):

Conflict, which aims at a resolution of tension between antagonists, is likely to have stabilizing and integrative functions for the relationship. By permitting immediate and direct expression of rival claims, such social systems

are able to readjust their structures by eliminating their sources of dissatisfaction. The multiple conflicts which they experience may serve to eliminate the causes for dissociation and to reestablish unity. These systems avail themselves, through the toleration and institutionalization of conflict, of an important stabilizing mechanism.

Conflict can have negative consequences when people divert energies away from performance and goal attainment and direct them toward resolving the conflict. Continued conflict can take a heavy toll in terms of psychological well-being. Conflict has a major influence on stress and the psychophysical consequences of stress. Finally, continued conflict can also affect the social climate of the group and inhibit group cohesiveness.



While often perceived as negative, some conflict can actually be productive. (Credit: Arisa Chattasa/[Never Give Up for Boxing](#)/Unsplash)

Thus, conflict can be either functional or dysfunctional depending upon the nature of the conflict, its intensity, and its duration. Indeed, both too much and too little conflict can lead to a variety of negative outcomes, as discussed above. This is shown in **Figure 1**. In such circumstances, a moderate amount of conflict may be the best course of action. The issue for groups, therefore, is not how to eliminate conflict but rather how to manage and resolve it when it occurs.

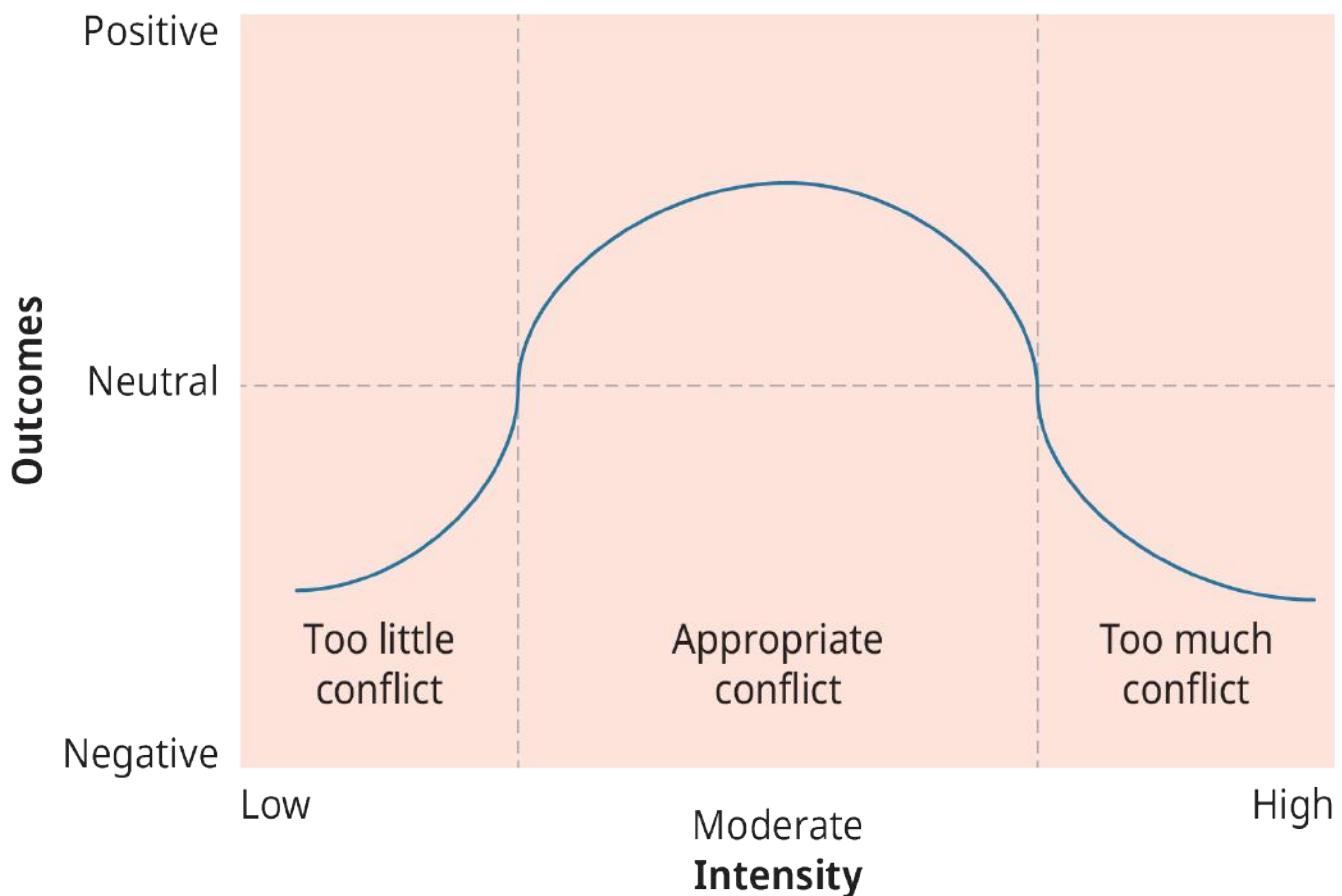


Figure 1: The Relationship Between Conflict Intensity and Outcomes. Adapted from Brown (1986). (Credit: Rice University/OpenStax/CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

Types of Conflict

Group conflicts may deal with many topics, needs, and elements. Kelly (2006) identified the following five types of conflict:

First, there are **conflicts of substance**. These conflicts, which relate to questions about what choices to make in a given situation, rest on differing views of the facts. If Terry thinks the biology assignment requires an annotated bibliography but Robin believes a simple list of readings will suffice, they're in a conflict of substance. Another term for this kind of conflict is "intrinsic conflict."

Conflicts of value are those in which various parties either hold totally different values or rank the same values in a significantly different order. The famous sociologist Milton Rokeach (1979), for instance, found that freedom and equality constitute values in the four major political systems of the past 100 years—communism, fascism, socialism, and capitalism. What differentiated the systems, however, was the degree to which proponents of each system ranked those two key values. According to Rokeach's analysis, socialism holds both values highly; fascism holds them in low regard; communism values equality over freedom, and capitalism values freedom over equality. As we all know, conflict among proponents of these four political systems preoccupied people and governments for the better part of the twentieth century.

Conflicts of process arise when people differ over how to reach goals or pursue values which they share. How closely should they stick to rules and timelines, for instance, and when should they let their hair down and simply brainstorm

new ideas? What about when multiple topics and challenges are intertwined; how and when should the group deal with each one? Another term for these disputes is “task conflicts.”

Conflicts of misperceived differences come up when people interpret each other’s actions or emotions erroneously. You can probably think of several times in your life when you first thought you disagreed with other people but later found out that you’d just misunderstood something they said and that you actually shared a perspective with them. Or perhaps you attributed a different motive to them than what really underlay their actions. One misconception about conflict, however, is that it always arises from misunderstandings. This isn’t the case, however. Robert Doolittle (1976) noted that “some of the most serious conflicts occur among individuals and groups who understand each other very well but who strongly disagree.”

The first four kinds of conflict may interact with each other over time, either reinforcing or weakening each other’s impact. They may also ebb and flow according to the topics and conditions a group confronts. Even if they’re dealt with well, however, further emotional and personal kinds of conflict can occur in a group. **Relationship conflicts**, also known as personality clashes, often involve people’s egos and sense of self-worth. Relationship conflicts tend to be particularly difficult to cope with, since they frequently aren’t admitted for what they are. Many times, they arise in a struggle for superiority or status.

A Model of the Conflict Process

The most commonly accepted model of the conflict process was developed by Kenneth Thomas (1976). This model consists of four stages: (1) frustration, (2) conceptualization, (3) behavior, and (4) outcome.

Stage 1: Frustration

As we have seen, conflict situations originate when an individual or group feels frustration in the pursuit of important goals. This frustration may be caused by a wide variety of factors, including disagreement over performance goals, failure to get a promotion or pay raise, a fight over scarce economic resources, new rules or policies, and so forth. In fact, conflict can be traced to frustration over almost anything a group or individual cares about.

Stage 2: Conceptualization

In stage 2, the conceptualization stage of the model, parties to the conflict attempt to understand the nature of the problem, what they themselves want as a resolution, what they think their opponents want as a resolution, and various strategies they feel each side may employ in resolving the conflict. This stage is really the problem-solving and strategy phase. For instance, when management and union negotiate a labor contract, both sides attempt to decide what is most important and what can be bargained away in exchange for these priority needs.

Stage 3: Behavior

The third stage in Thomas’s model is actual behavior. As a result of the conceptualization process, parties to a conflict attempt to implement their resolution mode by competing or accommodating in the hope of resolving problems. A major

task here is determining how best to proceed strategically. That is, what tactics will the party use to attempt to resolve the conflict? Thomas has identified five modes for conflict resolution: (1) competing, (2) collaborating, (3) compromising, (4) avoiding, and (5) accommodating (see **Table 1**).

The choice of an appropriate conflict resolution mode depends to a great extent on the situation and the goals of the party (see **Figure 2**). According to this model, each party must decide the extent to which it is interested in satisfying its own concerns—called assertiveness—and the extent to which it is interested in helping satisfy the opponent's concerns—called cooperativeness. Assertiveness can range from assertive to unassertive on one continuum, and cooperativeness can range from uncooperative to cooperative on the other continuum.

Once the parties have determined their desired balance between the two competing concerns—either consciously or unconsciously—the resolution strategy emerges. For example, if a union negotiator feels confident she can win on an issue that is of primary concern to union members (e.g., wages), a direct competition mode may be chosen (see upper left-hand corner of **Figure 2**). On the other hand, when the union is indifferent to an issue or when it actually supports management's concerns (e.g., plant safety), we would expect an accommodating or collaborating mode (on the right-hand side of the figure).

Table 1 – Five Modes of Resolving Conflict

| Conflict-Handling Modes | Appropriate Situations |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Competing | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. When quick, decisive action is vital—e.g., emergencies2. On important issues where unpopular actions need implementing—e.g., cost cutting, enforcing unpopular rules, discipline3. On issues vital to company welfare when you know you're right4. Against people who take advantage of noncompetitive behavior |
| Collaborating | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. When trying to find an integrative solution when both sets of concerns are too important to be compromised2. When your objective is to learn3. When merging insights from people with different perspectives4. When gaining commitment by incorporating concerns into a consensus5. When working through feelings that have interfered with a relationship |
| Compromising | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. When goals are important but not worth the effort or potential disruption of more assertive modes2. When opponents with equal power are committed to mutually exclusive goals3. When attempting to achieve temporary settlements to complex issues4. When arriving at expedient solutions under time pressure5. As a backup when collaboration or competition is unsuccessful |
| Avoiding | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. When an issue is trivial, or when more important issues are pressing2. When you perceive no chance of satisfying your concerns3. When potential disruption outweighs the benefits of resolution4. When letting people cool down and regain perspective5. When gathering information supersedes immediate decision6. When others can resolve the conflict more effectively7. When issues seem tangential or symptomatic of other issues |
| Accommodating | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. When you find you are wrong—to allow a better position to be heard, to learn, and to show your reasonableness2. When issues are more important to others than yourself—to satisfy others and maintain cooperation3. When building social credits for later issues4. When minimizing loss when you are outmatched and losing5. When harmony and stability are especially important.6. When allowing subordinates to develop by learning from mistakes. |

Source: Adapted from Thomas (1976). (Credit: Rice University/OpenStax/CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

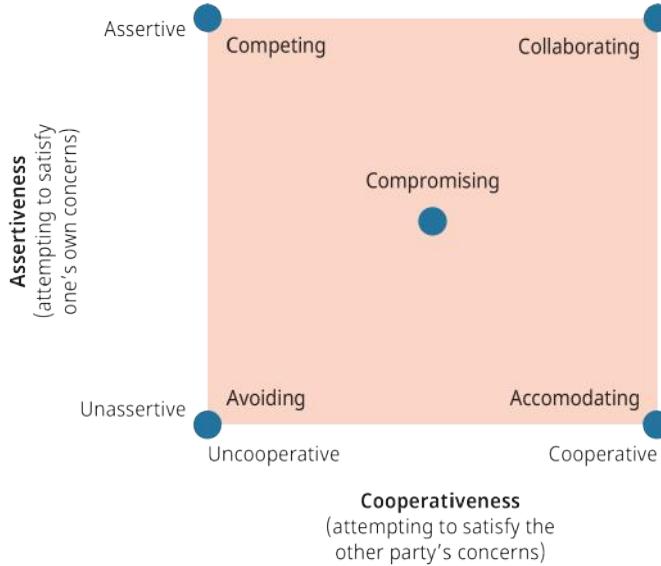


Figure 2: Approaches to Conflict Resolution. Adapted from Thomas (1976). (Credit: Rice University/OpenStax/CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

preceding figure. One unresolved conflict episode can easily set the stage for a second episode. Action aimed at achieving quick and satisfactory resolution is vital; failure to initiate such action leaves the possibility (more accurately, the probability) that new conflicts will soon emerge.

What is interesting in this process is the assumptions people make about their own modes compared to their opponents'. For example, in one study of executives, it was found that the executives typically described themselves as using collaboration or compromise to resolve conflict, whereas these same executives typically described their opponents as using a competitive mode almost exclusively (Thomas & Pandy, 1967). In other words, the executives underestimated their opponents' concern as uncompromising. Simultaneously, the executives had flattering portraits of their own willingness to satisfy both sides in a dispute.

Stage 4: Outcome. Finally, as a result of efforts to resolve the conflict, both sides determine the extent to which a satisfactory resolution or outcome has been achieved. Where one party to the conflict does not feel satisfied or feels only partially satisfied, the seeds of discontent are sown for a later conflict, as shown in the

RECOGNIZING YOUR EMOTIONS

Have you ever seen red, or perceived a situation through rage, anger, or frustration? Then you know that you cannot see or think clearly when you are experiencing strong emotions. There will be times in groups and teams when emotions run high, and your awareness of them can help you clear your mind and choose to wait until the moment has passed to tackle the challenge. This is an example of time when avoiding can be useful strategy, at least temporarily.

Emotions can be contagious, and fear of the unknown can influence people to act in irrational ways. The wise communicator can recognize when emotions are on edge in themselves or others, and choose to wait to communicate, problem-solve, or negotiate until after the moment has passed.

Bach and Wyden (1968) discuss **gunnysacking** (or backpacking) as the imaginary bag we all carry, into which we place unresolved conflicts or grievances over time. Holding onto the way things used to be can be like a stone in your gunnysack, and influence how you interpret your current context.

People may be aware of similar issues but might not know your history, and cannot see your backpack or its contents. For example, if you are used to things one way, and a group member handles them in a different way, this may cause you some degree of stress and frustration. Bottling up your frustrations only hurts you and can cause your relationships within the group to suffer. By addressing, or unpacking, the stones you carry, you can better assess the current situation with the current patterns and variables.

Preventing and Reducing Conflict

There are many things group members can do to reduce or actually solve dysfunctional conflict when it occurs. These generally fall into two categories: actions directed at conflict prevention and actions directed at conflict reduction.

Strategies for Conflict Prevention

We shall start by examining conflict prevention techniques, because preventing conflict is often easier than reducing it once it begins. These include:

1. *Emphasizing group goals and effectiveness.* Focusing on group goals and objectives should prevent goal conflict. If larger goals are emphasized, group members are more likely to see the big picture and work together to achieve corporate goals.
2. *Providing stable, well-structured tasks.* When work activities are clearly defined, understood, and accepted, conflict should be less likely to occur. Conflict is most likely to occur when task uncertainty is high; specifying or structuring roles and tasks minimizes ambiguity.
3. *Facilitating dialogue.* Misperception of the abilities, goals, and motivations of others often leads to conflict, so efforts to increase the dialogue among group members and to share information should help eliminate conflict. As group members come to know more about one another, suspicions often diminish, and greater intergroup teamwork becomes possible.
4. *Avoiding win-lose situations.* If win-lose situations are avoided, less potential for conflict exists.

Strategies for Conflict Reduction

Where dysfunctional conflict already exists, something must be done, and you may pursue one of at least two general approaches: you can try to change *attitudes*, or you can try to *behaviors*. If you change behavior, open conflict is often reduced, but group members may still dislike one another; the conflict simply becomes less visible. Changing attitudes, on the other hand, often leads to fundamental changes in the ways that groups get along. However, it also takes considerably longer to accomplish than behavior change because it requires a fundamental change in social perceptions.

Nine conflict reduction strategies are discussed below. The techniques should be viewed as a continuum, ranging from strategies that focus on changing behaviors near the top of the scale to strategies that focus on changing attitudes near the bottom of the scale.

1. *Physical separation.* The quickest and easiest solution to conflict is physical separation. Separation is useful when conflicting individuals or groups are not working on a joint task or do not need a high degree of interaction. Though this approach does not encourage members to change their attitudes, it does provide time to seek a better accommodation.
2. *Use of rules and regulations.* Conflict can also be reduced through the increasing specification of rules, regulations, and procedures. Again, however, basic attitudes are not modified.
3. *Limiting intergroup interaction.* Another approach to reducing conflict is to limit intergroup interaction to issues involving common goals. Where groups agree on a goal, cooperation becomes easier.
4. *Use of integrators.* Integrators are individuals who are assigned a boundary-spanning role between two people or groups. To be trusted, integrators must be perceived by both groups as legitimate and knowledgeable. The

- integrator often takes the “shuttle diplomacy” approach, moving from one person or group to another, identifying areas of agreement, and attempting to find areas of future cooperation.
5. *Confrontation and negotiation.* In this approach, competing parties are brought together face-to-face to discuss their basic areas of disagreement. The hope is that through open discussion and negotiation, means can be found to work out problems. Contract negotiations between union and management represent one such example. If a “win-win” solution can be identified through these negotiations, the chances of an acceptable resolution of the conflict increase.
 6. *Third-party consultation.* In some cases, it is helpful to bring in outside consultants for third-party consultation who understand human behavior and can facilitate a resolution. A third-party consultant not only serves as a go-between but can speak more directly to the issues, because she is not a member of the group.
 7. *Rotation of members.* By rotating from one group to another, individuals come to understand the frames of reference, values, and attitudes of other members; communication is thus increased. When those rotated are accepted by the receiving groups, change in attitudes as well as behavior becomes possible. This is clearly a long-term technique, as it takes time to develop good interpersonal relations and understanding among group members.
 8. *Identification of interdependent tasks and superordinate goals.* A further strategy is to establish goals that require groups to work together to achieve overall success.
 9. *Use of training.* The final technique on the continuum is training. Outside training experts are retained on a long-term basis to help groups develop relatively permanent mechanisms for working together. Structured workshops and training programs can help forge more favorable intergroup attitudes and, as a result, more constructive group behavior.

Review & Reflection Questions

- Is conflict in groups good or bad? Why?
- Identify the types of conflict and provide examples of each.
- What modes of conflict resolution do you find yourself using when faced with a conflict in a group? What modes have you observed at work in your current group?
- What strategies could you use to prevent or reduce conflict in your group?

References

- Bach, G., & Wyden, P. (1968). *The intimacy enemy*. Avon.
- Brown, D. L. (1986). *Managing conflict at organizational interfaces*. Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Inc.
- Coser, L. (1956). *The functions of social conflict*. Free Press.
- Doolittle, R.J. (1976). *Orientations to communication and conflict*. Science Research Associates.
- Hocker, J.L., & Wilmot, W.W. (2001). *Interpersonal conflict* (6th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Kelly, M.S. (2006). *Communication @ work: Ethical, effective, and expressive communication in the workplace*.

Pearson.

- Neilsen, E.H. (1972). Understanding and managing conflict. In J. Lorsch & P. Lawrence (Eds.), *Managing group and intergroup relations*. Irwin.
- Rokeach, M. (1979). *Understanding human values: Individual and societal*. The Free Press.
- Thomas, K. (1976). Conflict and conflict management. In M. D. Dunnette (Ed.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational behavior*. Wiley.
- Thomas, K., & Pandy, L. (1967). Toward an intent model of conflict management among principal parties. *Human Relations*, 30, 1089–1102.

Authors & Attribution

This remix comes from Dr. Jasmine Linabary at Emporia State University. This chapter is also available in her book: [Small Group Communication: Forming and Sustaining Teams](#).

The sections “The Positive and Negative Sides of Conflict,” “A Model of the Conflict Process,” and “Managing Conflict in Groups” are adapted from Black, J.S., & Bright, D.S. (2019). *Organizational behavior*. OpenStax. <https://openstax.org/books/organizational-behavior/>. Access the full chapter for free [here](#). The content is available under a [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 license](#).

The sections “Definitions of Conflict,” “Types of Conflict” and “Recognizing Emotion” are adapted from is adapted from “[Managing Conflict](#)” from [An Introduction To Group Communication](#). This content is available under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported](#) (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0) License without attribution as requested by the work’s original creator or licensor.



Problem Solving in Teams and Groups by Cameron W. Piercy, Ph.D. is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

Editor biography:

Cameron W. Piercy, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Kansas. He studies relationships in organizations and online. His work has been published in journals including: *Communication Research*, *New Media & Society*, *Qualitative Health Research*, *Communication Studies*, *Computers in Human Behavior*, and *Argumentation*. Dr. Piercy serves as the course supervisor for COMS342. Before becoming a professor, he was a cell-phone repair manager, IT administrator, and skating rink DJ. He earned his doctorate in communication from the University of Oklahoma.

Published by the University of Kansas Libraries