

Chapter Twelve



Group Dynamics

Learning Objectives

When you finish studying the material in this chapter, you should be able to:

- 1 Identify the four sociological criteria of a group and explain the role of equity in the Workplace/Social Exchange Network (W/EN) model.
- 2 Describe the five stages in Tuckman's theory of group development, and discuss the threat of group decay.
- 3 Distinguish between role conflict and role ambiguity.
- 4 Contrast roles and norms, and specify four reasons norms are enforced in organizations.
- 5 Distinguish between task and maintenance functions in groups.
- 6 Summarize the practical contingency management implications for group size.
- 7 Discuss why managers need to carefully handle mixed-gender task groups.
- 8 Describe groupthink, and identify at least four of its symptoms.
- 9 Define social loafing, and explain how managers can prevent it.

www.ivillage.com

Networking is a powerful way to meet people and get things done. Unfortunately, it's one of those important but not urgent things that don't always get the attention they deserve. For women in particular—who may also be running households and raising children (and who almost always shoulder most of the responsibility for those things, according to recent reality checks)—there isn't enough time to attend a formal networking meeting. And the more informal contacts one makes could be more helpful by being more specific and less guarded about giving advice and sharing information. It's easier to ask a friend about salary negotiation than to ask someone sitting across from you at a luncheon meeting.

Many women have risen to the challenge by forming their own small groups—Girl Gangs—that get together regularly in person, by phone, or via email to talk about life and career. These buddies share ideas and con-

tacts, celebrate personal and professional successes, and help their members get more done. The power they represent is as awesome as that of any of the Powerpuff Girls on Saturday morning TV.

No less a personage than Oprah Winfrey says she relies on informal networks. . . .

In this era of multitasking, Oprah isn't the only woman who is mingling her personal and professional lives with the



Oprah Winfrey, seen here hugging singer/actress Jennifer Lopez, enjoys the support of an informal network of friends.
AP/Wide World Photos

help of an informal network of likeminded people. Given the demands faced by the average American woman juggling work, family, and life in general, an informal group offers a great way to harness the energy of different people dealing with similar situations. . . .

The Corporate Manager

In a big company, one needs to network just to navigate efficiently. In fact, it's as important to network within a company as it is to network outside of it.

Daimler-Chrysler has 13,000 people working in its Auburn Hills, Michigan, headquarters. Kathryn Lee, staff labor programs administrator, is proud that her company supports a Women's Network Group and provides a number of opportunities for after-hours networking, including guest speakers and presentations. But as a working mother of two young children, formal networking is a low priority for her right now.

"Being perfectly candid, I would rather spend my evenings with my family and pass on the optional business gatherings," she says. Intentionally or not, her company has provided a networking opportunity for women in the exact same circumstance.

After her second child was born, Lee started spending her lunches and breaks in Daimler-Chrysler's lactation room, where she met a lot of other women.

"You could spot us a mile away," she says, "with the sweater or suit jacket to cover up leaks and the oversized Pump-N-Style bag. Since we were all on a schedule, we got to know each other pretty well. It felt like we were in a secret club."

In part because they didn't work together, these women would use their pumping sessions to share ideas for work as well as to talk about kids. Lee credits the group for helping her stick to nursing for a year, which isn't easy. She says she's also grateful for the opportunity to meet others in her company without taking extra time to attend meetings after work.

"I learned which areas in the company have great bosses, which departments have a lot of international travel, and other information that I can use on my job," she says. And her

companion nursing mothers formed a cross-departmental network as strong as any within the company.

The Academic

Universities are hardly free from the political and career-management demands of corporate life. Marita Golden is a writer and professor in the MFA Graduate Creative Writing Program at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond. She often meets with a group of other African American women teaching at colleges in the Washington, DC, area.

"The group has helped us feel that we are supported in the trenches, even though we're not all at the same university," she says. "It's very good to know that you're not alone and that your experiences are valid."

Golden believes these groups are vitally important. "Even in a university, there are very few situations where we get together to talk about what we are doing creatively," she says.

In Golden's experience, an informal group gives members a better chance to talk about their research or their articles in progress than in an organized faculty forum, which often degenerates into discussions about students, grading, and university policies. Her group finds that exchanging ideas informally leads to better formal academic work in the long run. They also enjoy discussing their lives in general with colleagues who have become friends.

"One woman in the group was a grandmother who provided great wisdom about life that we came to rely on," says Golden.

That powerful combination of the personal and the professional is one reason that members come to rely on their girl gangs.¹

For Discussion

What would you say to a manager who doesn't like informal networks because they are not "under control?"

Because the management of organizational behavior is above all else a social endeavor, managers need a strong working knowledge of *interpersonal* behavior. Research consistently reveals the importance of social skills for both individual and organizational success. An ongoing study by the Center for Creative Leadership (involving diverse samplings from Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Spain) found four stumbling blocks that tend to derail executives' careers. According to the researchers, "A derailed executive is one who, having reached the general manager level, finds that there is little chance of future advancement due to a misfit between job requirements and personal skills."² The four stumbling blocks, consistent across the cultures studied, are as follows:

Table 12–1 *Key Social Skills Managers Need for Building Social Capital*

Social Skill	Description	Topical Linkages in This Text
Social perception	Ability to perceive accurately the emotions, traits, motives, and intentions of others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual differences, Chapters 5 and 6 • Emotional intelligence, Chapter 5 • Social perception, Chapter 7 • Employee motivation, Chapters 8 and 9
Impression management	Tactics designed to induce liking and a favorable first impression by others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impression management, Chapter 16
Persuasion and social influence	Ability to change others' attitudes or behavior in desired directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence tactics and social power, Chapter 16 • Leadership, Chapter 17
Social adaptability	Ability to adapt to, or feel comfortable in, a wide range of social situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional intelligence, Chapter 5 • Managing change, Chapter 19

SOURCE: Columns 1 and 2 excerpted from R A Baron and G D Markman, "Beyond Social Capital: How Social Skills Can Enhance Entrepreneurs' Success," *Academy of Management Executive*, February 2000, table 1, p. 110.

1. Problems with interpersonal relationships.
2. Failure to meet business objectives.
3. Failure to build and lead a team.
4. Inability to change or adapt during a transition.³

Notice how both the first and third career stumbling blocks involve social skills—the ability to get along and work effectively with others. Managers with interpersonal problems typically were described as manipulative and insensitive. Interestingly, two-thirds of the derailed European managers studied had problems with interpersonal relationships. That same problem reportedly plagued one-third of the derailed US executives. Management, as defined in Chapter 1, involves getting things done with and through others. Experts say managers need to build social capital with four key social skills: social perception, impression management, persuasion and social influence, and social adaptability (see Table 12–1).⁴ How polished are your social skills? Where do you need improvement?

Let us begin by defining the term *group* as a prelude to examining types of groups, functions of group members, social exchanges in the workplace, and the group development process. Our attention then turns to group roles and norms, the basic building blocks of group dynamics. Effects of group structure and member characteristics on group outcomes are explored next. Finally, three serious threats to group effectiveness are discussed. (This chapter serves as a foundation for our discussion of teams and teamwork in the following chapter.)

Groups and Social Exchanges

Groups and teams are inescapable features of modern life. College students are often teamed with their peers for class projects. Parents serve on community advisory boards at their local high school. Managers find themselves on product planning committees

and productivity task forces. Productive organizations simply cannot function without gathering individuals into groups and teams. But as personal experience shows, group effort can bring out both the best and the worst in people. A marketing department meeting, where several people excitedly brainstorm and refine a creative new advertising campaign, can yield results beyond the capabilities of individual contributors. Conversely, committees have become the butt of jokes (e.g., a committee is a place where they take minutes and waste hours; a camel is a horse designed by a committee) because they all too often are plagued by lack of direction and by conflict. Modern managers need a solid understanding of groups and group processes so as to both avoid their pitfalls and tap their vast potential. Moreover, the huge and growing presence of the Internet—with its own unique network of informal and formal social relationships—is a major challenge for profit-minded business managers.

Although other definitions of groups exist, we draw from the field of sociology and define a **group** as two or more freely interacting individuals who share collective norms and goals and have a common identity.⁵ Figure 12–1 illustrates how the four criteria in this definition combine to form a conceptual whole. Organizational psychologist Edgar Schein shed additional light on this concept by drawing instructive distinctions between a group, a crowd, and an organization:

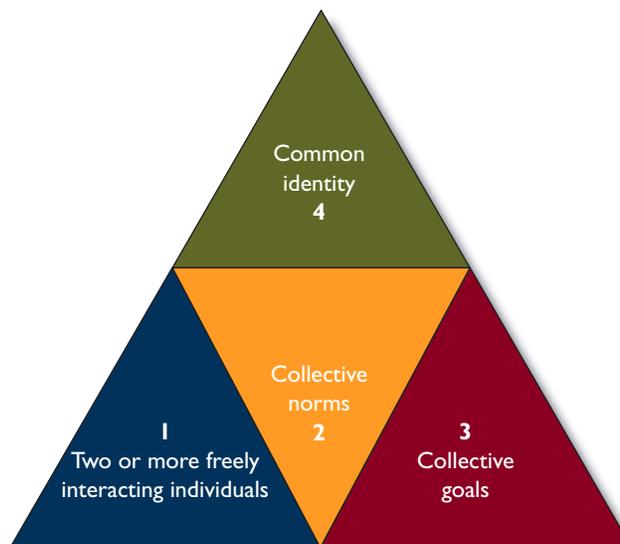
The size of a group is thus limited by the possibilities of mutual interaction and mutual awareness. Mere aggregates of people do not fit this definition because they do not interact and do not perceive themselves to be a group even if they are aware of each other as, for instance, a crowd on a street corner watching some event. A total department, a union, or a whole organization would not be a group in spite of thinking of themselves as “we,” because they generally do not all interact and are not all aware of each other. However, work teams, committees, subparts of departments, cliques, and various other informal associations among organizational members would fit this definition of a group.⁶

Take a moment now to think of various groups of which you are a member. Does each of your groups satisfy the four criteria in Figure 12–1?

Group

Two or more freely interacting people with shared norms and goals and a common identity.

Figure 12–1 *Four Sociological Criteria of a Group*



Formal and Informal Groups

Individuals join groups, or are assigned to groups, to accomplish various purposes. If the group is formed by a manager to help the organization accomplish its goals, then it qualifies as a **formal group**. Formal groups typically wear such labels as work group, team, committee, quality circle, or task force. An **informal group** exists when the members' overriding purpose of getting together is friendship or common interests.⁷ Although formal and informal groups often overlap, such as a team of corporate auditors heading for the tennis courts after work, some employees are not friends with their co-workers. The desirability of overlapping formal and informal groups is problematic. Some managers firmly believe personal friendship fosters productive teamwork on the job while others view workplace "bull sessions" as a serious threat to productivity. Both situations are common, and it is the manager's job to strike a workable balance, based on the maturity and goals of the people involved.

Formal group

Formed by the organization.

Informal group

Formed by friends or those with common interests.

Functions of Formal Groups

Researchers point out that formal groups fulfill two basic functions: *organizational* and *individual*. The various functions are listed in Table 12–2. Complex combinations of these functions can be found in formal groups at any given time.

For example, consider what Mazda's new American employees experienced when they spent a month working in Japan before the opening of the firm's Flat Rock, Michigan, plant:

After a month of training in Mazda's factory methods, whipping their new Japanese buddies at softball and sampling local watering holes, the Americans were fired up.... [A maintenance manager] even faintly praised the Japanese practice of holding group calisthenics at the start of each working day: "I didn't think I'd like doing exercises every morning, but I kind of like it."⁸

Table 12–2 *Formal Groups Fulfill Organizational and Individual Functions*

Organizational Functions	Individual Functions
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accomplish complex, interdependent tasks that are beyond the capabilities of individuals. 2. Generate new or creative ideas and solutions. 3. Coordinate interdepartmental efforts. 4. Provide a problem-solving mechanism for complex problems requiring varied information and assessments. 5. Implement complex decisions. 6. Socialize and train newcomers. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Satisfy the individual's need for affiliation. 2. Develop, enhance, and confirm the individual's self-esteem and sense of identity. 3. Give individuals an opportunity to test and share their perceptions of social reality. 4. Reduce the individual's anxieties and feelings of insecurity and powerlessness. 5. Provide a problem-solving mechanism for personal and interpersonal problems.

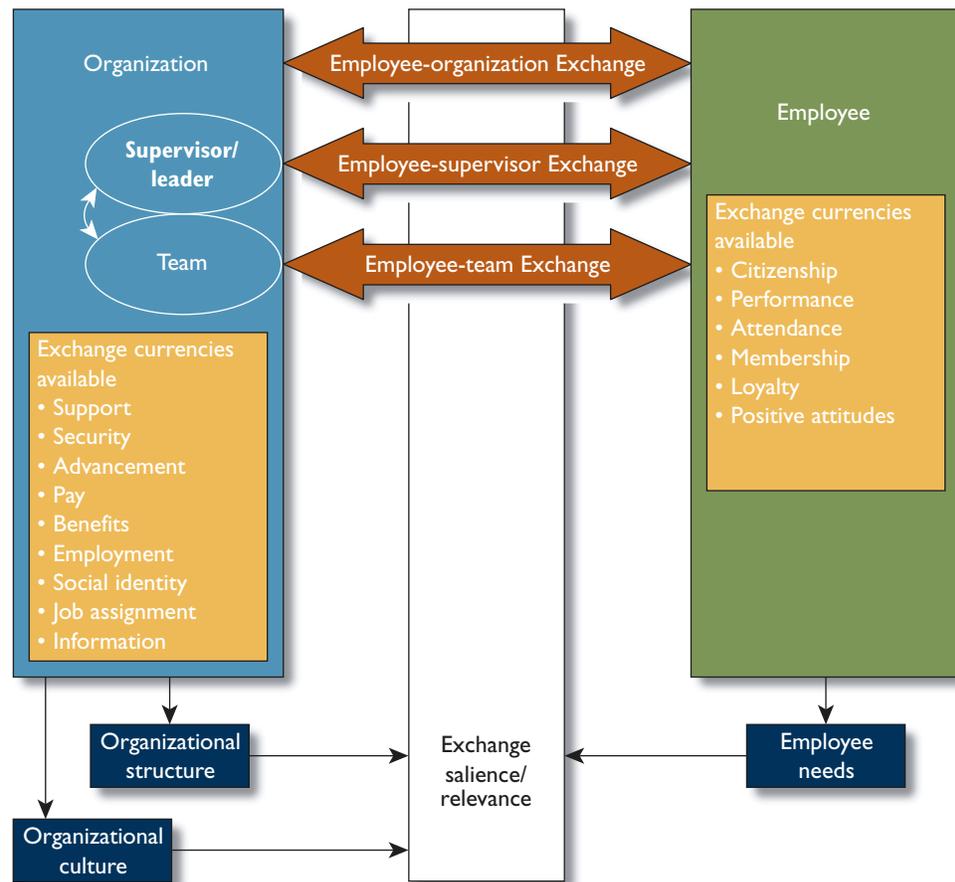
SOURCE: Adapted from E H Schein, *Organizational Psychology*, 3rd ed (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1980), pp. 149–51.

While Mazda pursued the organizational functions it wanted—interdependent teamwork, creativity, coordination, problem solving, and training—the American workers benefited from the individual functions of formal groups. Among those benefits were affiliation with new friends, enhanced self-esteem, exposure to the Japanese social reality, and reduction of anxieties about working for a foreign-owned company. In short, Mazda created a workable blend of organizational and individual group functions by training its newly hired American employees in Japan.

Social Exchanges in the Workplace

Social relationships are complex, alive, and dynamic. Accordingly, we need dynamic models for realistic understanding. A team of researchers from Auburn University recently proposed the instructive model shown in Figure 12–2. They call it the Workplace Social Exchange Network (WSEN) because it captures multilevel social

Figure 12–2 *The Workplace Social Exchange Network Model*



SOURCE: Adapted from M S Cole, W S Schaninger Jr, and S G Harris, "The Workplace Social Exchange Network: A Multilevel, Conceptual Examination," *Group & Organization Management*, March 2002, figure 1, p. 148, Copyright © 2002 by Sage Publication, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Sage Publications, Inc.

exchanges within organizations, along with the complex *network* of variables affecting those exchanges.⁹

The Exchange of Currencies The economic notion of exchange is at the heart of this model. In starkest economic terms, people exchange their time and labor for money when they take a job. But as this model realistically shows, there is much more at stake than just the exchange of time and labor for money. Individuals, organizations, and teams have many “currencies” they can grant or withhold.

Notably, the only social exchange currency that is not self-explanatory is “citizenship.” *Organizational citizenship* involves going above and beyond what is expected (e.g., voluntarily working late to finish an important project)—in short, being a good citizen.

Three Types of Social Exchange According to the WSEN model, every employee has social exchanges on three levels: with the organization, with the boss, and with the work team as a whole. From the individual’s perspective, exchanges at the various levels can be favorable or unfavorable. They can be motivating or demotivating, depending on the perceived equity of the exchange. (Recall our discussion of equity motivation theory in Chapter 9.) For example, someone may have high-quality exchanges with his or her supervisor and work team, and thus want to be around them, be motivated to work hard for them, and be loyal to them. However, because the organization has a reputation for massive layoffs, the employee–organization exchange would be perceived unfavorably, thus fostering dissatisfaction and possibly poor performance and turnover.

Situational Factors The WSEN model includes three intervening factors: organizational structure, organizational culture, and employee needs. Structure—in the form of reporting relationships, policies, and work rules—shapes the individual’s expectations about what is fair and what is unfair. So, too, cultural norms and traditions create a context for judging the fairness of social exchanges. The individual’s need profile, as discussed in Chapter 8, will determine which of the organization’s exchange currencies are motivating and which are not. People are motivated when they have a realistic chance of having their needs satisfied.

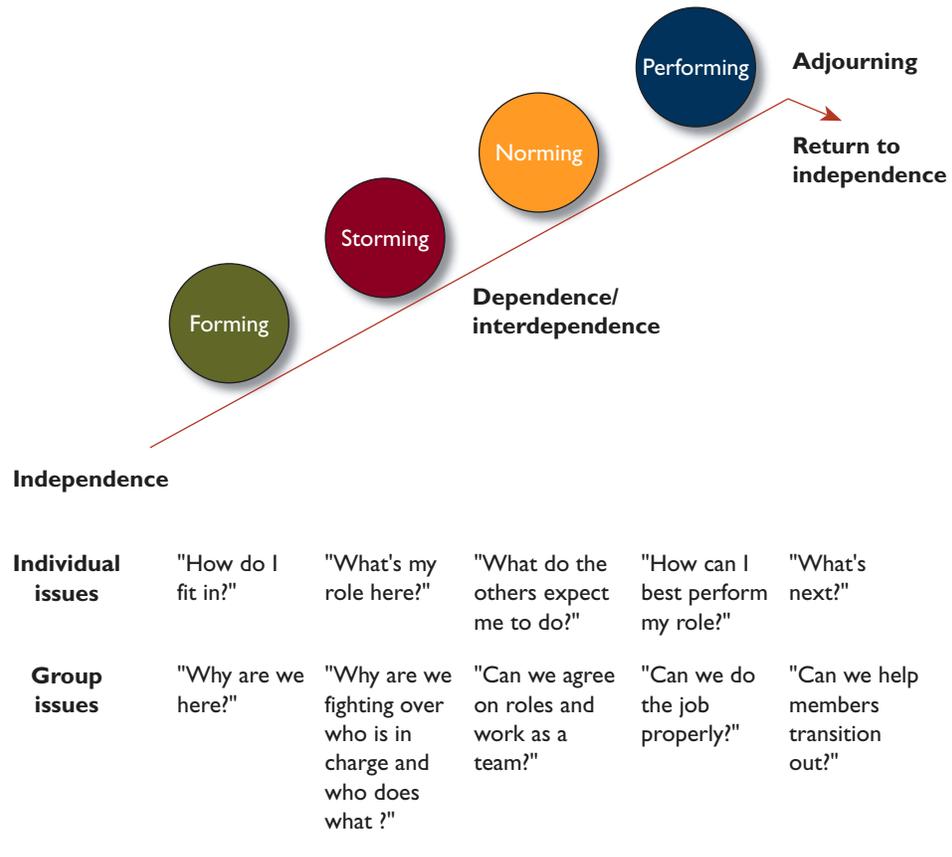
Is the Social Exchange Relevant? Finally, at the bottom center of the WSEN model is the individual’s perceptual filter. Is the particular social exchange salient or relevant? Recall from the discussion of social perception in Chapter 7 that salient stimuli tend to capture and dominate one’s attention. An exchange between the employee and his or her organization, leader, or team needs to be salient if it is to influence behavior. If, say, a marketing assistant is indifferent to her teammates on a special project, that particular exchange would not be salient or relevant for her.

Overall, the WSEN model does a good job of building a conceptual bridge between motivation theories and group dynamics. Also, it realistically indicates the multilevel nature of social relationships within organizations.

The Group Development Process

Groups and teams in the workplace go through a maturation process, such as one would find in any life-cycle situation (e.g., humans, organizations, products). While there is general agreement among theorists that the group development process occurs

Figure 12–3 *Tuckman’s Five-Stage Theory of Group Development*



in identifiable stages, they disagree about the exact number, sequence, length, and nature of those stages.¹⁰ One oft-cited model is the one proposed in 1965 by educational psychologist Bruce W Tuckman. His original model involved only four stages (forming, storming, norming, and performing). The five-stage model in Figure 12–3 evolved when Tuckman and a doctoral student added “adjourning” in 1977.¹¹ A word of caution is in order. Somewhat akin to Maslow’s need hierarchy theory, Tuckman’s theory has been repeated and taught so often and for so long that many have come to view it as documented fact, not merely a theory. Even today, it is good to remember Tuckman’s own caution that his group development model was derived more from group therapy sessions than from natural-life groups. Still, many in the OB field like Tuckman’s five-stage model of group development because of its easy-to-remember labels and common-sense appeal.¹²

Five Stages

Let us briefly examine each of the five stages in Tuckman’s model. Notice in Figure 12–3 how individuals give up a measure of their independence when they join and participate in a group. Also, the various stages are not necessarily of the same duration or

intensity. For instance, the storming stage may be practically nonexistent or painfully long, depending on the goal clarity and the commitment and maturity of the members. You can make this process come to life by relating the various stages to your own experiences with work groups, committees, athletic teams, social or religious groups, or class project teams. Some group happenings that surprised you when they occurred may now make sense or strike you as inevitable when seen as part of a natural development process.

Stage 1: Forming During this ice-breaking stage, group members tend to be uncertain and anxious about such things as their roles, who is in charge, and the group's goals. Mutual trust is low, and there is a good deal of holding back to see who takes charge and how. If the formal leader (e.g., a supervisor) does not assert his or her authority, an emergent leader will eventually step in to fulfill the group's need for leadership and direction. Leaders typically mistake this honeymoon period as a mandate for permanent control. But later problems may force a leadership change.

Stage 2: Storming This is a time of testing. Individuals test the leader's policies and assumptions as they try to determine how they fit into the power structure. Subgroups take shape, and subtle forms of rebellion, such as procrastination, occur. Many groups stall in stage 2 because power politics erupts into open rebellion.¹³

Stage 3: Norming Groups that make it through stage 2 generally do so because a respected member, other than the leader, challenges the group to resolve its power struggles so something can be accomplished. Questions about authority and power are resolved through unemotional, matter-of-fact group discussion. A feeling of team spirit is experienced because members believe they have found their proper roles. **Group cohesiveness**, defined as the “we feeling” that binds members of a group together, is the principal by-product of stage 3.¹⁴ (For a good laugh, see the golfing explanation below the photo on page 416.)

Group cohesiveness
A “we feeling” binding group members together.

Stage 4: Performing Activity during this vital stage is focused on solving task problems. As members of a mature group, contributors get their work done without hampering others. (See the Personal Awareness and Growth Exercise at the end of this chapter for a way to measure group maturity.) There is a climate of open communication, strong cooperation, and lots of helping behavior. Conflicts and job boundary disputes are handled constructively and efficiently. Cohesiveness and personal commitment to group goals help the group achieve more than could any one individual acting alone. According to a pair of group development experts,

the group structure can become flexible and adjust to fit the requirements of the situation without causing problems for the members. Influence can shift depending on who has the particular expertise or skills required for the group task or activity. Subgroups can work on special problems or subproblems without posing threats to the authority or cohesiveness of the rest of the group.¹⁵

Stage 5: Adjourning The work is done; it is time to move on to other things. Having worked so hard to get along and get something done, many members feel a compelling sense of loss. The return to independence can be eased by rituals celebrating “the end” and “new beginnings.” Parties, award ceremonies, graduations, or mock



A recent *Fortune* article examined the question, Why do people love to mix golf and business? (Hint: It's all about group dynamics.):

Ask people why they golf with business associates, and the answer is always the same: It's a great way to build relationships. They say this far more about golf than about going to dinner or attending a baseball game, and for good reason. Indeed, this may be the central fact about corporate golf, though it's rarely said: When people golf together, they see one another humiliated. At least 95% of all golfers are terrible, which means that in 18 holes everyone in the foursome will hit a tree, take three strokes in one bunker, or four-putt, with everyone else watching. Bonding is simply a matter of people jointly going through adversity, and a round of golf will furnish plenty of it. Of course it's only a game, but of course it isn't, so the bonds can be surprisingly strong. And what's that worth?

SOURCE: G Colvin, "Why Execs Love Golf," *Fortune*, April 30, 2001, p 46.

(c) George Jolly/Corbis/stockMarket

funerals can provide the needed punctuation at the end of a significant group project. Leaders need to emphasize valuable lessons learned in group dynamics to prepare everyone for future group and team efforts.

Group Development: Research and Practical Implications

A growing body of group development research provides managers with some practical insights.

Extending the Tuckman Model: Group Decay An interesting study of 10 software development teams, ranging in size from 5 to 16 members, enhanced the practical significance of Tuckman's model.¹⁶ Unlike Tuckman's laboratory groups who worked together only briefly, the teams of software engineers worked on projects lasting *years*. Consequently, the researchers discovered more than simply a five-stage group development process. Groups were observed actually shifting into reverse once

Tuckman's "performing" stage was reached, in what the researchers called *group decay*. In keeping with Tuckman's terminology, the three observed stages of group decay were labeled "de-norming," "de-storming," and "de-forming." These additional stages take shape as follows:

- *De-norming*. As the project evolves, there is a natural erosion of standards of conduct. Group members drift in different directions as their interests and expectations change.
- *De-storming*. This stage of group decay is a mirror opposite of the storming stage. Whereas disagreements and conflicts arise rather suddenly during the storming stage, an undercurrent of discontent slowly comes to the surface during the destorming stage. Individual resistance increases and cohesiveness declines.
- *De-forming*. The work group literally falls apart as subgroups battle for control. Those pieces of the project that are not claimed by individuals or subgroups are abandoned. "Group members begin isolating themselves from each other and from their leaders. Performance declines rapidly because the whole job is no longer being done and group members little care what happens beyond their self-imposed borders."¹⁷

The primary management lesson from this study is that group leaders should not become complacent upon reaching the performing stage. According to the researchers: "The performing stage is a knife edge or saddle point, not a point of static equilibrium."¹⁸ Awareness is the first line of defense. Beyond that, constructive steps need to be taken to reinforce norms, bolster cohesiveness, and reaffirm the common goal—even when work groups seem to be doing their best.

Feedback Another fruitful study was carried out by a pair of Dutch social psychologists. They hypothesized that interpersonal feedback would vary systematically during the group development process. "The unit of feedback measured was a verbal message directed from one participant to another in which some aspect of behavior was addressed."¹⁹ After collecting and categorizing 1,600 instances of feedback from four different eight-person groups, they concluded the following:

- Interpersonal feedback increases as the group develops through successive stages.
- As the group develops, positive feedback increases and negative feedback decreases.
- Interpersonal feedback becomes more specific as the group develops.
- The credibility of peer feedback increases as the group develops.²⁰

These findings hold important lessons for managers. The content and delivery of interpersonal feedback among work group or committee members can be used as a gauge of whether the group is developing properly. For example, the onset of stage 2 (storming) will be signaled by a noticeable increase in *negative* feedback. Effort can then be directed at generating specific, positive feedback among the members so the group's development will not stall. The feedback model discussed in Chapter 10 is helpful in this regard.

Deadlines Field and laboratory studies found uncertainty about deadlines to be a major disruptive force in both group development and intergroup relations. The practical implications of this finding were summed up by the researcher as follows:

Uncertain or shifting deadlines are a fact of life in many organizations. Interdependent organizational units and groups may keep each other waiting, may suddenly move deadlines

forward or back, or may create deadlines that are known to be earlier than is necessary in efforts to control erratic workflows. The current research suggests that the consequences of such uncertainty may involve more than stress, wasted time, overtime work, and intergroup conflicts. Synchrony in group members' expectations about deadlines may be critical to groups' abilities to accomplish successful transitions in their work.²¹

Thus, effective group management involves clarifying not only tasks and goals, but deadlines as well. When group members accurately perceive important deadlines, the pacing of work and timing of interdependent tasks tend to be more efficient.

Leadership Styles Along a somewhat different line, experts in the area of leadership contend that different leadership styles are needed as work groups develop.

In general, it has been documented that leadership behavior that is active, aggressive, directive, structured, and task-oriented seems to have favorable results early in the group's history. However, when those behaviors are maintained throughout the life of the group, they seem to have a negative impact on cohesiveness and quality of work. Conversely, leadership behavior that is supportive, democratic, decentralized, and participative seems to be related to poorer functioning in the early group development stages. However, when these behaviors are maintained throughout the life of the group, more productivity, satisfaction, and creativity result.²²

The practical punch line here is that managers are advised to shift from a directive and structured leadership style to a participative and supportive style as the group develops.²³

Roles and Norms: Social Building Blocks for Group and Organizational Behavior

Work groups transform individuals into functioning organizational members through subtle yet powerful social forces.²⁴ These social forces, in effect, turn “I” into “we” and “me” into “us.” Group influence weaves individuals into the organization's social fabric by communicating and enforcing both role expectations and norms. We need to understand roles and norms if we are to effectively manage group and organizational behavior.

Roles

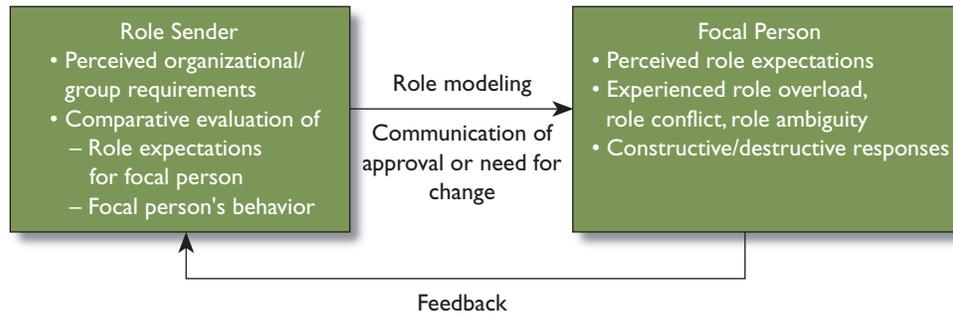
Four centuries have passed since William Shakespeare had his character Jaques speak the following memorable lines in Act II of *As You Like It*: “All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts.” This intriguing notion of all people as actors in a universal play was not lost on 20th-century sociologists who developed a complex theory of human interaction based on roles. According to an OB scholar, “**roles** are sets of behaviors that persons expect of occupants of a position.”²⁵ Role theory attempts to explain how these social expectations influence employee behavior. This section explores role theory by analyzing a role episode and defining the terms *role overload*, *role conflict*, and *role ambiguity*.

Role Episodes A role episode, as illustrated in Figure 12–4, consists of a snapshot of the ongoing interaction between two people. In any given role episode, there is a role sender and a focal person who is expected to act out the role. Within a broader

Roles

Expected behaviors for a given position.

Figure 12–4 A Role Episode



SOURCE: Adapted in part from R L Kohn, D M Wolfe, R P Quinn, and J D Snoek, *Organizational Stress: Studies in Role Conflict and Ambiguity*, 1981 ed. (Malabar, FL: Robert E Krieger Publishing, 1964), p. 26.

context, one may be simultaneously a role sender and a focal person. For the sake of social analysis, however, it is instructive to deal with separate role episodes.

Role episodes begin with the role sender’s perception of the relevant organization’s or group’s behavioral requirements. Those requirements serve as a standard for formulating expectations for the focal person’s behavior. The role sender then cognitively evaluates the focal person’s actual behavior against those expectations. Appropriate verbal and behavioral messages are then sent to the focal person to pressure him or her into behaving as expected.²⁶ Consider how Westinghouse used a carrot-and-stick approach to communicate role expectations:

The carrot is a plan, that . . . rewarded 134 managers with options to buy 764,000 shares of stock for boosting the company’s financial performance.

The stick is quarterly meetings that are used to rank managers by how much their operations contribute to earnings per share. The soft-spoken . . . [chairman of the board] doesn’t scold. He just charts in green the results of the sectors that have met their goals and charts the laggards in red. Peer pressure does the rest. Shame “is a powerful tool,” says one executive.²⁷

On the receiving end of the role episode, the focal person accurately or inaccurately perceives the communicated role expectations and modeled behavior. Various combinations of role overload, role conflict, and role ambiguity are then experienced. (These three outcomes are defined and discussed in the following sections.) The focal person then responds constructively by engaging in problem solving, for example, or destructively because of undue tension, stress, and strain.²⁸

Role Overload According to organizational psychologist Edgar Schein, **role overload** occurs when “the sum total of what role senders expect of the focal person far exceeds what he or she is able to do.”²⁹ Students who attempt to handle a full course load and maintain a decent social life while working 30 or more hours a week know full well the consequences of role overload. As the individual tries to do more and more in less and less time, stress mounts and personal effectiveness slips.

Role Conflict Have you ever felt like you were being torn apart by the conflicting demands of those around you? If so, you were a victim of role conflict. **Role conflict** is experienced when “different members of the role set expect different things of

Role overload
Others’ expectations exceed one’s ability.

Role conflict
Others have conflicting or inconsistent expectations.

the focal person.”³⁰ Managers often face conflicting demands between work and family, as discussed in Chapter 6. Women experience greater role conflict between work and family than men because women continue to perform the majority of the household duties and child-care responsibilities.³¹ Employees in single-person households have their own version of role conflict between work and outside interests. This is the situation Liz Dolan faced prior to quitting her job as Nike’s global marketing chief and becoming a part-time consultant:

It’s hard to admit that your work life is out of control. I loved my job at Nike, but it was all-consuming. I had no life. My housekeeper was spending more time at my house than I was. I reached a point where I could not remember the last time I had slept in my own bed. I love summers in Oregon, but I was never there long enough to enjoy one. But the real indicator that my life was out of whack came when I got a call from my brother, Brendan. He’d been trying to reach me for several weeks. I was always too “busy” to call him back. When we finally connected, he told me that he’d had to do a Lexis-Nexis search on me to figure out where I was that week. I was being Lexis-Nexised by my own brother! That really made me stop and think.³²

Role conflict also may be experienced when internalized values, ethics, or personal standards collide with others’ expectations. For instance, an otherwise ethical production supervisor may be told by a superior to “fudge a little” on the quality control reports so an important deadline will be met. The resulting role conflict forces the supervisor to choose between being loyal but unethical or ethical but disloyal. Tough ethical choices such as this mean personal turmoil, interpersonal conflict, and even resignation.³³ Consequently, experts say business schools should do a better job of weaving ethics training into their course requirements.

Role Ambiguity Those who experience role conflict may have trouble complying with role demands, but they at least know what is expected of them. Such is not the case with **role ambiguity**, which occurs when “members of the role set fail to communicate to the focal person expectations they have or information needed to perform the role, either because they do not have the information or because they deliberately withhold it.”³⁴ In short, people experience role ambiguity when they do not know what is expected of them. Organizational newcomers often complain about unclear job descriptions and vague promotion criteria. According to role theory, prolonged role ambiguity can foster job dissatisfaction, erode self-confidence, and hamper job performance.

As might be expected, role ambiguity varies across cultures. In a 21-nation study, people in individualistic cultures were found to have higher role ambiguity than people in collectivist cultures.³⁵ In other words, people in collectivist or “we” cultures had a clearer idea of others’ expectations. Collectivist cultures make sure everyone knows their proper place in society. People in individualistic “me” cultures, such as the United States, may enjoy more individual discretion, but comparatively less input from others has its price—namely, greater role ambiguity.

As mentioned earlier, these role outcomes typically are experienced in some combination, usually to the detriment of the individual and the organization. In fact, a study in Israel documented lower job performance when employees experienced a combination of role conflict and role ambiguity.³⁶

Take a moment now to complete the self-assessment exercise in the OB Exercise on page 421. See if you can distinguish between sources of role conflict and sources of role ambiguity, as they affect your working life.

Role ambiguity

Others’ expectations are unknown.

OB Exercise Measuring Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity

Instructions

Step 1. While thinking of your current (or last) job, circle one response for each of the following statements. Please consider each statement carefully because some are worded positively and some negatively.

Step 2. In the space in the far right column, label each statement with either a “C” for role conflict or an “A” for role ambiguity. (See Chapter 12 footnote 37 for a correct categorization.)

Step 3. Calculate separate totals for role conflict and role ambiguity, and compare them with these arbitrary norms: 5–14 = low; 15–25 = moderate; 26–35 = high.

	Very False	Very True	
1. I feel certain about how much authority I have.	7 — 6 — 5 — 4 — 3 — 2 — 1		_____
2. I have to do things that should be done differently.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7		_____
3. I know that I have divided my time properly.	7 — 6 — 5 — 4 — 3 — 2 — 1		_____
4. I know what my responsibilities are.	7 — 6 — 5 — 4 — 3 — 2 — 1		_____
5. I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7		_____
6. I feel certain how I will be evaluated for a raise or promotion.	7 — 6 — 5 — 4 — 3 — 2 — 1		_____
7. I work with two or more groups who operate quite differently.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7		_____
8. I know exactly what is expected of me.	7 — 6 — 5 — 4 — 3 — 2 — 1		_____
9. I do things that are apt to be accepted by one person and not accepted by others.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7		_____
10. I work on unnecessary things.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7		_____
Role conflict score = _____			
Role ambiguity score = _____			

SOURCE: Adapted from J R Rizzo, R J House, and S I Lirtzman, “Role Conflict and Ambiguity in Complex Organizations,” *Administrative Science Quarterly*, June 1970, p. 156.

Norms

Norms are more encompassing than roles. While roles involve behavioral expectations for specific positions, norms help organizational members determine right from wrong and good from bad (see the International OB on page 422). According to one respected team of management consultants: “A **norm** is an attitude, opinion, feeling, or action—shared by two or more people—that guides their behavior.”³⁸ Although norms are typically unwritten and seldom discussed openly, they have a powerful influence on group and organizational behavior.³⁹ PepsiCo Inc., for instance, has evolved a norm that equates corporate competitiveness with physical fitness. According to observers,

Leanness and nimbleness are qualities that pervade the company. When Pepsi’s brash young managers take a few minutes away from the office, they often head straight for the company’s physical fitness center or for a jog around the museum-quality sculptures outside of PepsiCo’s Purchase, New York, headquarters.⁴⁰

At PepsiCo and elsewhere, group members positively reinforce those who adhere to current norms with friendship and acceptance. On the other hand, nonconformists experience criticism and even **ostracism**, or rejection by group members. Anyone who

Norm

Shared attitudes, opinions, feelings, or actions that guide social behavior.

Ostracism

Rejection by other group members.



International OB

Cooperative Norms Drive South African Philosophy of *Ubuntu*

www.lonelyplanet.com

The dismantling of apartheid in the 1990s was a watershed of historic development for South Africa. The world watched as the country charted its course toward the establishment of a democratic, nonracial, nonsexist system of government. With democratic processes now firmly in place, the spotlight has shifted to economic revitalization. South Africa has shown steady economic progress since the days of apartheid, and stands 42nd in the 2001 IMD world competitiveness rankings. This recovery is a welcome sign that South Africa has turned the corner. Now it can focus on those practices that will allow it to excel domestically and globally. An important step will be to understand the culture, values, norms, and beliefs held by the largest segment of the population, the Africans. . . .

Observable workplace behavior is strongly influenced by latent, unobservable social attitudes. Such social attitudes manifest the philosophical thought system of the group from which the individual comes. The philosophical thought system itself is a product of various factors including history, folklore, mythology, culture, norms, values, and religious beliefs. . . .

There are important lessons to be learned from understanding the philosophical thought system known as *ubuntu*, which embodies the beliefs, values, and behaviors of a large majority of the South African population. Whether it is a critical issue that needs to be interpreted or a problem that needs to be solved, *ubuntu* is invariably invoked as a scale for weighing good versus bad, right versus wrong, just versus unjust. . . .

Ubuntu can be defined as humaneness—a pervasive spirit of caring and community, harmony and hospitality, respect and responsiveness—that individuals and groups display for one another. *Ubuntu* is the foundation for the basic values that manifest themselves in the ways African

people think and behave toward each other and everyone else they encounter. One of the most important attributes of *ubuntu* is the high degree of harmony and continuity throughout the system. Unfortunately, with all the talk about *ubuntu*, the philosophy has not been fully embraced in the workplace since its strategic advantages are not fully appreciated by managers. Traditional management systems are guided by misapplied economic assumptions about human nature: that self-interest is the ultimate determinant of behavior, and it is maximized when employees earn as much as possible from contributing as little as possible. . . .

An organizing concept of *ubuntu* is human interdependence. The driving norms are reciprocity, suppression of self-interest, and the virtue of symbiosis. Hence it is often repeated that *umntu ngumntu ngabanye* (a person is a person through others). This statement conveys the notion that a person becomes a person only through his/her relationship with and recognition by others. This recognition has far-reaching implications for day-to-day interactions among people and for an individual's status in society. . . .

An equally important aspect of relationships with others is teamwork. The solidarity spirit of *ubuntu* simultaneously supports cooperation and competitiveness by allowing individuals to contribute their best efforts for the betterment of the entire team. Everyone understands that together the team can accomplish more than if each individual worked alone. The notion of synergy, i.e., the creation of a whole that is larger than the sum of the individual parts, is an integral part of *ubuntu*. Organizations can ensure that individuals continue to uphold this spirit, by linking their reward systems to team performance.

SOURCE: Excerpted from M P Mangaliso, "Building Competitive Advantage from *Ubuntu*: Management Lessons from South Africa," *Academy of Management Executive*, August 2001, pp. 23–33.

has experienced the “silent treatment” from a group of friends knows what a potent social weapon ostracism can be. Norms can be put into proper perspective by understanding how they develop and why they are enforced.

How Norms Are Developed Experts say norms evolve in an informal manner as the group or organization determines what it takes to be effective. Generally speaking, norms develop in various combinations of the following four ways:

1. *Explicit statements by supervisors or co-workers.* For instance, a group leader might explicitly set norms about not drinking (alcohol) at lunch.

2. *Critical events in the group's history.* At times there is a critical event in the group's history that establishes an important precedent. (For example, a key recruit may have decided to work elsewhere because a group member said too many negative things about the organization. Hence, a norm against such "sour grapes" behavior might evolve.)
3. *Primacy.* The first behavior pattern that emerges in a group often sets group expectations. If the first group meeting is marked by very formal interaction between supervisors and employees, then the group often expects future meetings to be conducted in the same way.
4. *Carryover behaviors from past situations.* Such carryover of individual behaviors from past situations can increase the predictability of group members' behaviors in new settings and facilitate task accomplishment. For instance, students and professors carry fairly constant sets of expectations from class to class.⁴¹

We would like you to take a few moments and think about the norms that are currently in effect in your classroom. List the norms on a sheet of paper. Do these norms help or hinder your ability to learn? Norms can affect performance either positively or negatively.⁴²

Why Norms Are Enforced Norms tend to be enforced by group members when they

- Help the group or organization survive.
- Clarify or simplify behavioral expectations.
- Help individuals avoid embarrassing situations.
- Clarify the group's or organization's central values and/or unique identity.⁴³

Working examples of each of these four situations are presented in Table 12–3.

Table 12–3 *Four Reasons Norms Are Enforced*

Norm	Reason for Enforcement	Example
"Make our department look good in top management's eyes."	Group/organization survival	After vigorously defending the vital role played by the Human Resources Management Department at a divisional meeting, a staff specialist is complimented by her boss.
"Success comes to those who work hard and don't make waves."	Clarification of behavioral expectations	A senior manager takes a young associate aside and cautions him to be a bit more patient with co-workers who see things differently.
"Be a team player, not a star."	Avoidance of embarrassment	A project team member is ridiculed by her peers for dominating the discussion during a progress report to top management.
"Customer service is our top priority."	Clarification of central values/unique identity	Two sales representatives are given a surprise Friday afternoon party for having received prestigious best-in-the-industry customer service awards from an industry association.

Relevant Research Insights and Managerial Implications

Although instruments used to measure role conflict and role ambiguity have questionable validity,⁴⁴ two separate meta-analyses indicated that role conflict and role ambiguity negatively affected employees. Specifically, role conflict and role ambiguity were associated with job dissatisfaction, tension and anxiety, lack of organizational commitment, intentions to quit, and, to a lesser extent, poor job performance.⁴⁵

The meta-analyses results hold few surprises for managers. Generally, because of the negative association reported, it makes sense for management to reduce both role conflict and role ambiguity. In this endeavor, managers can use feedback, formal rules and procedures, directive leadership, setting of specific (difficult) goals, and participation. Managers also can use the mentoring process discussed in Chapter 3 to reduce role conflict and ambiguity.

Regarding norms, a recent set of laboratory studies involving a total of 1,504 college students as subjects has important implications for workplace diversity programs. Subjects in groups where the norm was to express prejudices, condone discrimination, and laugh at hostile jokes tended to engage in these undesirable behaviors. Conversely, subjects tended to disapprove of prejudicial and discriminatory conduct when exposed to groups with more socially acceptable norms.⁴⁶ So, once again, Mom and our teachers were right when they warned us about the dangers of hanging out with “the wrong crowd.” Managers who want to build strong diversity programs need to cultivate favorable role models and group norms. Poor role models and antisocial norms need to be identified and weeded out.

Group Structure and Composition

Work groups of varying size are made up of individuals with varying ability and motivation. Moreover, those individuals perform different roles, on either an assigned or voluntary basis. No wonder some work groups are more productive than others. No wonder some committees are tightly knit while others wallow in conflict. In this section, we examine three important dimensions of group structure and composition: (1) functional roles of group members, (2) group size, and (3) gender composition. Each of these dimensions alternatively can enhance or hinder group effectiveness, depending on how it is managed.

Functional Roles Performed by Group Members

As described in Table 12–4, both task and maintenance roles need to be performed if a work group is to accomplish anything.⁴⁷

Task versus Maintenance Roles **Task roles** enable the work group to define, clarify, and pursue a common purpose. Meanwhile, **maintenance roles** foster supportive and constructive interpersonal relationships. In short, task roles keep the group *on track* while maintenance roles keep the group *together*. A project team member is performing a task function when he or she stands at an update meeting and says, “What is the real issue here? We don’t seem to be getting anywhere.” Another individual who

Task roles

Task-oriented group behavior.

Maintenance roles

Relationship-building group behavior.

Table 12–4 *Functional Roles Performed by Group Members*

Task Roles	Description
Initiator	Suggests new goals or ideas.
Information seeker/giver	Clarifies key issues.
Opinion seeker/giver	Clarifies pertinent values.
Elaborator	Promotes greater understanding through examples or exploration of implications.
Coordinator	Pulls together ideas and suggestions.
Orienter	Keeps group headed toward its stated goal(s).
Evaluator	Tests group's accomplishments with various criteria such as logic and practicality.
Energizer	Prods group to move along or to accomplish more.
Procedural technician	Performs routine duties (e.g., handing out materials or rearranging seats).
Recorder	Performs a "group memory" function by documenting discussion and outcomes.
Maintenance Roles	Description
Encourager	Fosters group solidarity by accepting and praising various points of view.
Harmonizer	Mediates conflict through reconciliation or humor.
Compromiser	Helps resolve conflict by meeting others half way.
Gatekeeper	Encourages all group members to participate.
Standard setter	Evaluates the quality of group processes.
Commentator	Records and comments on group processes/dynamics.
Follower	Serves as a passive audience.

SOURCE: Adapted from discussion in K D Benne and P Sheats, "Functional Roles of Group Members," *Journal of Social Issues*, Spring 1948, pp. 41–49.

says, "Let's hear from those who oppose this plan," is performing a maintenance function. Importantly, each of the various task and maintenance roles may be played in varying combinations and sequences by either the group's leader or any of its members.

Checklist for Managers The task and maintenance roles listed in Table 12–4 can serve as a handy checklist for managers and group leaders who wish to ensure proper group development. Roles that are not always performed when needed, such as those of coordinator, evaluator, and gatekeeper, can be performed in a timely manner by the formal leader or assigned to other members. The task roles of initiator, orienter, and energizer are especially important because they are *goal-directed* roles. Research studies on group goal setting confirm the motivational power of challenging goals. As with individual goal setting (in Chapter 9), difficult but achievable goals are associated with better group results.⁴⁸ Also in line with individual goal-setting theory and research, group goals are more effective if group members clearly understand them and are both individually and collectively committed to achieving them. Initiators, orienters, and energizers can be very helpful in this regard.

International managers need to be sensitive to cultural differences regarding the relative importance of task and maintenance roles. In Japan, for example, cultural tradition calls for more emphasis on maintenance roles, especially the roles of harmonizer and compromiser:

Courtesy requires that members not be conspicuous or disputatious in a meeting or classroom. If two or more members discover that their views differ—a fact that is tactfully taken to be unfortunate—they adjourn to find more information and to work toward a stance that all can accept. They do not press their personal opinions through strong arguments, neat logic, or rewards and threats. And they do not hesitate to shift their beliefs if doing so will preserve smooth interpersonal relations. (To lose is to win.)⁴⁹

Group Size

How many group members is too many? The answer to this deceptively simple question has intrigued managers and academics for years. Folk wisdom says “two heads are better than one” but that “too many cooks spoil the broth.” So where should a manager draw the line when staffing a committee? At 3? At 5 or 6? At 10 or more? Researchers have taken two different approaches to pinpointing optimum group size: mathematical modeling and laboratory simulations. Let us briefly review research evidence from these two approaches.

The Mathematical Modeling Approach This approach involves building a mathematical model around certain desired outcomes of group action such as decision quality. Due to differing assumptions and statistical techniques, the results of this research are inconclusive. Statistical estimates of optimum group size have ranged from 3 to 13.⁵⁰

The Laboratory Simulation Approach This stream of research is based on the assumption that group behavior needs to be observed firsthand in controlled laboratory settings. A laboratory study by respected Australian researcher Philip Yetton and his colleague, Preston Bottger, provides useful insights about group size and performance.⁵¹

A total of 555 subjects (330 managers and 225 graduate management students, of whom 20% were female) were assigned to task teams ranging in size from 2 to 6. The teams worked on the National Aeronautics and Space Administration moon survival exercise. (This exercise involves the rank ordering of 15 pieces of equipment that would enable a spaceship crew on the moon to survive a 200-mile trip between a crash-landing site and home base.)⁵² After analyzing the relationships between group size and group performance, Yetton and Bottger concluded the following:

It would be difficult, at least with respect to decision quality, to justify groups larger than five members. . . . Of course, to meet needs other than high decision quality, organizations may employ groups significantly larger than four or five.⁵³

More recent laboratory studies exploring the brainstorming productivity of various size groups (2 to 12 people), in face-to-face versus computer-mediated situations, proved fruitful. In the usual face-to-face brainstorming sessions, productivity of ideas did not increase as the size of the group increased. But brainstorming productivity increased as the size of the group increased when ideas were typed into networked computers.⁵⁴ These results suggest that computer networks are helping to deliver on the promise of productivity improvement through modern information technology.

Managerial Implications Within a contingency management framework, there is no hard-and-fast rule about group size. It depends on the manager's objective for the group. If a high-quality decision is the main objective, then a three- to five-member group would be appropriate. However, if the objective is to generate creative ideas, encourage participation, socialize new members, engage in training, or communicate policies, then groups much larger than five could be justified. But even in this developmental domain, researchers have found upward limits on group size. According to a meta-analysis, the positive effects of team-building activities diminished as group size increased.⁵⁵ Managers also need to be aware of *qualitative* changes that occur when group size increases. A meta-analysis of eight studies found the following relationships: as group size increased, group leaders tended to become more directive, and group member satisfaction tended to decline slightly.⁵⁶

Odd-numbered groups (e.g., three, five, seven members) are recommended if the issue is to be settled by a majority vote. Voting deadlocks (e.g., 2–2, 3–3) too often hamper effectiveness of even-numbered groups. For example, as outlined in this recent news clipping, a voting deadlock paved the way for inept government oversight of business:

Pepsi got the go-ahead for its \$13.4 billion acquisition of Quaker Oats after the Federal Trade Commission deadlocked Wednesday on whether to try to block the deal.

In a closed meeting, FTC commissioners split 2–2 on whether to go to court to oppose Pepsi's bid for Quaker and its powerhouse Gatorade sports-drink brand. FTC staff investigating the deal had recommended that the agency try to block it because of the increased clout Pepsi would get in the \$56 billion soft-drink industry.

The move to go to court required a majority. After the failed vote, commissioners voted unanimously to close the probe begun after the deal was announced in December. That vote allows Pepsi and Quaker to close the deal without regulatory conditions. Pepsi said it expects to do so before the weekend.⁵⁷

A five-member FTC panel might well have rendered the same outcome, but in a more decisive manner.

Effects of Men and Women Working Together in Groups

As pointed out in Chapter 2, the female portion of the US labor force has grown significantly in recent decades. This demographic shift brought an increase in the number of organizational committees and teams composed of both men and women. Some profound effects on group dynamics might be expected.⁵⁸ Let us see what researchers have found in the way of group gender composition effects and what managers can do about them.

Women Face an Uphill Battle in Mixed-Gender Task Groups Laboratory and field studies paint a picture of inequality for women working in mixed-gender groups. Both women and men need to be aware of these often subtle but powerful group dynamics so corrective steps can be taken.

In a laboratory study of six-person task groups, a clear pattern of gender inequality was found in the way group members interrupted each other. Men interrupted women significantly more often than they did other men. Women, who tended to interrupt less frequently and less successfully than men, interrupted men and women equally.⁵⁹

One study suggests that females entering male-dominated fields, such as law enforcement, face greater challenges than do males entering female-dominated fields.

A. Ramey/Stock Boston



A field study of mixed-gender police and nursing teams in the Netherlands found another group dynamics disadvantage for women. These two particular professions—police work and nursing—were fruitful research areas because men dominate the former while women dominate the latter. As women move into male-dominated police forces and men gain employment opportunities in the female-dominated world of nursing, who faces the greatest resistance? The answer from this study was the women police officers. As the representation of the minority gender (either female police officers or male nurses) increased in the work groups, the following changes in attitude were observed:

The attitude of the male majority changes from neutral to resistant, whereas the attitude of the female majority changes from favorable to neutral. In other words, men increasingly want to keep their domain for themselves, while women remain willing to share their domain with men.⁶⁰

Again, managers are faced with the challenge of countering discriminatory tendencies in group dynamics.

The Issue of Sexual Harassment Social-sexual behavior was the focus of a random survey of 1,232 working men ($n = 405$) and women ($n = 827$) in the Los Angeles area.⁶¹ Both harassing and nonharassing sexual conduct were investigated. One-third of the female employees and one-fourth of the male employees reported being sexually harassed in their current job. Nonharassing sexual behavior was much more common, with 80% of the total sample reporting experience with such behavior. Indeed, according to the researchers, increased social contact between men and women in work groups and organizations had led to increased sexualization (e.g., flirting and romance) in the workplace.

From an OB research standpoint, sexual harassment is a complex and multifaceted problem. For example, a recent meta-analysis of 62 studies found women perceiving a broader range of behaviors as sexual harassment (see Table 12–5), as opposed to what men perceived. Women and men tended to agree that sexual propositions and coercion qualified as sexual harassment, but there was less agreement about other aspects of a hostile work environment.⁶²

Table 12–5 *Behavioral Categories of Sexual Harassment*

Category	Description	Behavioral Examples
Derogatory attitudes— impersonal	Behaviors that reflect derogatory attitudes about men or women in general	Obscene gestures not directed at target Sex-stereotyped jokes
Derogatory attitudes— personal	Behaviors that are directed at the target that reflect derogatory attitudes about the target's gender	Obscene phone calls Belittling the target's competence
Unwanted dating pressure	Persistent requests for dates after the target has refused	Repeated requests to go out after work or school
Sexual propositions	Explicit requests for sexual encounters	Proposition for an affair
Physical sexual contact	Behaviors in which the harasser makes physical sexual contact with the target	Embracing the target Kissing the target
Physical nonsexual contact	Behaviors in which the harasser makes physical nonsexual contact with the target	Congratulatory hug
Sexual coercion	Requests for sexual encounters or forced encounters that are made a condition of employment or promotion	Threatening punishment unless sexual favors are given Sexual bribery

SOURCE: M Rotundo, D Nguyen, and P R Sackett, "A Meta-Analytic Review of Gender Differences in Perceptions of Sexual Harassment," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, October 2001, Article 914–922, copyright © 2001 by the American Psychological Association. Reprinted with permission.

Constructive Managerial Action Male and female employees can and often do work well together in groups.⁶³ A survey of 387 male US government employees sought to determine how they were affected by the growing number of female co-workers. The researchers concluded, "Under many circumstances, including inter-gender interaction in work groups, frequent contact leads to cooperative and supportive social relations."⁶⁴ Still, managers need to take affirmative steps to ensure that the documented sexualization of work environments does not erode into sexual harassment. Whether perpetrated against women or men, sexual harassment is demeaning, unethical, and appropriately called "work environment pollution." Moreover, the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission holds employers legally accountable for behavior it considers sexually harassing. An expert on the subject explains:

What exactly is sexual harassment? The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) says that unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when submission to such conduct is made a condition of employment; when submission to or rejection of sexual advances is used as a basis for employment decisions; or when such conduct creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment. These EEOC guidelines interpreting Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 further state that employers are responsible for the actions of their supervisors and agents and that employers are responsible for the actions of other employees if the employer knows or should have known about the sexual harassment.⁶⁵

Training magazine's 2001 survey of 1,652 US companies with at least 100 employees found 91% conducting some sort of sexual harassment training, and 68% doing so at least annually.⁶⁶ Given the disagreement between women and men about what constitutes sexual harassment, this type of education is very important.

Beyond avoiding lawsuits by establishing and enforcing antidiscrimination and sexual harassment policies, managers need to take additional steps. Workforce diversity

training is a popular approach today. Gender-issue workshops are another option. “Du Pont Co., for example, holds monthly workshops to make managers aware of gender-related attitudes.”⁶⁷ Phyllis B Davis, a senior vice president at Avon Corporation, has framed the goal of such efforts by saying: “It’s a question of consciously creating an environment where everyone has an equal shot at contributing, participating, and most of all advancing.”⁶⁸

Importantly, this embracing of organizational and work group diversity goes beyond gender, race, ethnicity, and culture. A laboratory study of US college students found a stronger positive relationship between group effectiveness and *value* diversity (as opposed to demographic diversity).⁶⁹ Once again we see the importance of managers recognizing and accommodating individual differences rather than relying on stereotypes.

Threats to Group Effectiveness

Even when managers carefully staff and organize task groups, group dynamics can still go haywire. Forehand knowledge of three major threats to group effectiveness—the Asch effect, groupthink, and social loafing—can help managers take necessary preventive steps. Because the first two problems relate to blind conformity, some brief background work is in order.

Very little would be accomplished in task groups and organizations without conformity to norms, role expectations, policies, and rules and regulations. After all, deadlines, commitments, and product/service quality standards have to be established and adhered to if the organization is to survive. But as pointed out by management consultants Robert Blake and Jane Srygley Mouton, conformity is a two-edged sword:

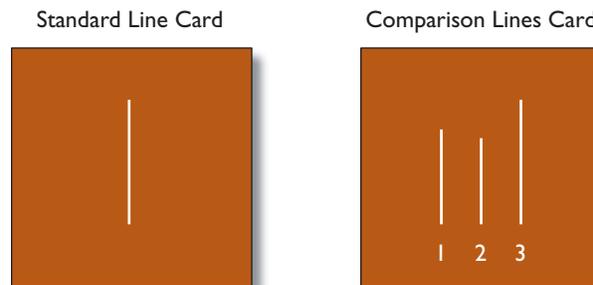
Social forces powerful enough to influence members to conform may influence them to perform at a very high level of quality and productivity. All too often, however, the pressure to conform stifles creativity, influencing members to cling to attitudes that may be out of touch with organizational needs and even out of kilter with the times.⁷⁰

Moreover, excessive or blind conformity can stifle critical thinking, the last line of defense against unethical conduct. Almost daily accounts in the popular media of executive misdeeds, insider trading scandals, price fixing, illegal dumping of hazardous wastes, and other unethical practices make it imperative that future managers understand the mechanics of blind conformity.

The Asch Effect

Fifty years ago, social psychologist Solomon Asch conducted a series of laboratory experiments that revealed a negative side of group dynamics.⁷¹ Under the guise of a “perception test,” Asch had groups of seven to nine volunteer college students look at 12 pairs of cards such as the ones in Figure 12–5. The object was to identify the line that was the same length as the standard line. Each individual was told to announce his or her choice to the group. Since the differences among the comparison lines were obvious, there should have been unanimous agreement during each of the 12 rounds. But that was not the case.

A Minority of One All but one member of each group were Asch’s confederates who agreed to systematically select the wrong line during seven of the rounds (the other five rounds were control rounds for comparison purposes). The remaining individual

Figure 12–5 *The Asch Experiment*

was the naive subject who was being tricked. Group pressure was created by having the naive subject in each group be among the last to announce his or her choice. Thirty-one subjects were tested. Asch's research question was: "How often would the naive subjects conform to a majority opinion that was obviously wrong?"

Only 20% of Asch's subjects remained entirely independent; 80% yielded to the pressures of group opinion at least once! Fifty-eight percent knuckled under to the "immoral majority" at least twice. Hence, the **Asch effect**, the distortion of individual judgment by a unanimous but incorrect opposition, was documented. (Do you ever turn your back on your better judgment by giving in to group pressure?)

Asch effect

Giving in to a unanimous but wrong opposition.

A Managerial Perspective Asch's experiment has been widely replicated with mixed results. Both high and low degrees of blind conformity have been observed with various situations and subjects. Replications in Japan and Kuwait have demonstrated that the Asch effect is not unique to the United States.⁷² A 1996 meta-analysis of 133 Asch-line experiments from 17 countries found a *decline* in conformity among US subjects since the 1950s. Internationally, collectivist countries, where the group prevails over the individual, produced higher levels of conformity than individualistic countries.⁷³ The point is not precisely how great the Asch effect is in a given situation or culture, but rather, managers committed to ethical conduct need to be concerned that the Asch effect exists.

For Jeffrey Skilling, the disgraced former CEO of Enron, the Asch effect was something to cultivate and nurture. Consider this organizational climate for blind obedience:

Skilling was filling headquarters with his own troops. He was not looking for "fuzzy skills," a former employee recalls. His recruits talked about a socialization process called "Enronizing." Family time? Quality of life? Forget it. Anybody who did not embrace the elbows-out culture "didn't get it." They were "damaged goods" and "shipwrecks," likely to be fired by their bosses at blistering annual job reviews known as rank-and-yank sessions. The culture turned paranoid: former CIA and FBI agents were hired to enforce security. Using "sniffer" programs, they would pounce on anyone E-mailing a potential competitor. The "spooks," as the former agents were called, were known to barge into offices and confiscate computers.⁷⁴

Even isolated instances of blind, unthinking conformity seriously threaten the effectiveness and integrity of work groups and organizations. Functional conflict and assertiveness, discussed in Chapters 14 and 15, can help employees respond appropriately when they find themselves facing an immoral majority. Ethical codes mentioning specific practices also can provide support and guidance.

Groupthink

Why did President Lyndon B Johnson and his group of intelligent White House advisers make some very *unintelligent* decisions that escalated the Vietnam War? Those fateful decisions were made despite obvious warning signals, including stronger than expected resistance from the North Vietnamese and withering support at home and abroad. Systematic analysis of the decision-making processes underlying the war in Vietnam and other US foreign policy fiascoes prompted Yale University’s Irving Janis to coin the term *groupthink*.⁷⁵ Modern managers can all too easily become victims of groupthink, just like President Johnson’s staff, if they passively ignore the danger.

Groupthink

Janis’s term for a cohesive in-group’s unwillingness to realistically view alternatives.

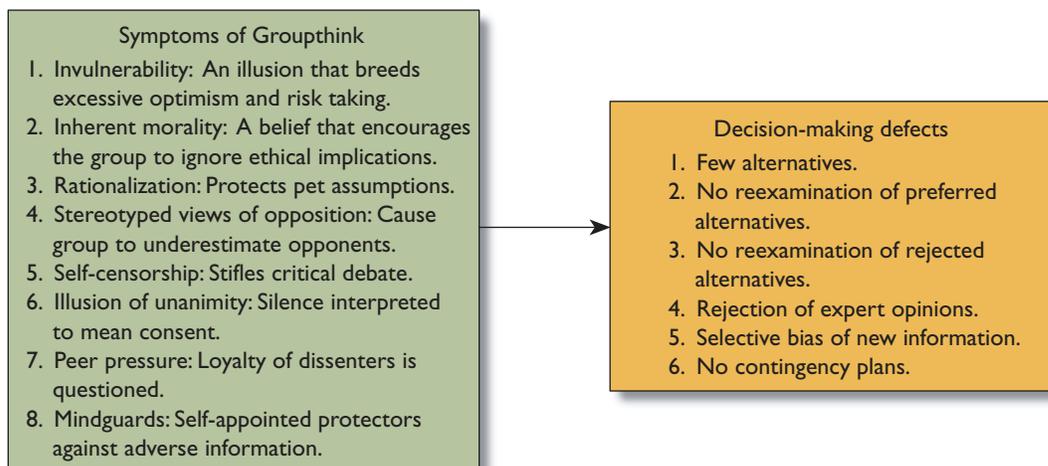
Definition and Symptoms of Groupthink Janis defines **groupthink** as “a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when members’ strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action.”⁷⁶ He adds, “Groupthink refers to a deterioration of mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment that results from in-group pressures.”⁷⁷ Unlike Asch’s subjects, who were strangers to each other, members of groups victimized by groupthink are friendly, tightly knit, and cohesive.

The symptoms of groupthink listed in Figure 12–6 thrive in the sort of climate outlined in the following critique of corporate directors in the United States:

Many directors simply don’t rock the boat. “No one likes to be the skunk at the garden party,” says [management consultant] Victor H. Palmieri. . . . “One does not make friends and influence people in the boardroom or elsewhere by raising hard questions that create embarrassment or discomfort for management.”⁷⁸

In short, policy- and decision-making groups can become so cohesive that strong-willed executives are able to gain unanimous support for poor decisions.

Figure 12–6 *Symptoms of Groupthink Lead to Defective Decision Making*



Groupthink Research and Prevention Laboratory studies using college students as subjects validate portions of Janis’s groupthink concept. Specifically, it has been found that

- Groups with a moderate amount of cohesiveness produce better decisions than low- or high-cohesive groups.
- Highly cohesive groups victimized by groupthink make the poorest decisions, despite high confidence in those decisions.⁷⁹

Janis believes prevention is better than cure when dealing with groupthink. He recommends the following preventive measures:

1. Each member of the group should be assigned the role of critical evaluator. This role involves actively voicing objections and doubts.
2. Top-level executives should not use policy committees to rubber-stamp decisions that have already been made.
3. Different groups with different leaders should explore the same policy questions.
4. Subgroup debates and outside experts should be used to introduce fresh perspectives.
5. Someone should be given the role of devil’s advocate when discussing major alternatives. This person tries to uncover every conceivable negative factor.
6. Once a consensus has been reached, everyone should be encouraged to rethink their position to check for flaws.⁸⁰

These antigroupthink measures can help cohesive groups produce sound recommendations and decisions. When *Business Week* recently tackled the issue of corporate governance, this was one of the recommendations:

The best insurance against crossing the ethical divide is a roomful of skeptics. CEOs must actively encourage dissent among senior managers by creating decision-making processes, reporting relationships, and incentives that encourage opposing viewpoints. At too many companies, the performance review system encourages a “yes-man culture” that subverts the organization’s checks and balances. By advocating dissent, top executives can create a climate where wrongdoing will not go unchallenged.⁸¹

Groupthink also will be less likely.

The OB in Action Case Study at the end of this chapter explores the possible role of groupthink in the 1986 Challenger Space Shuttle disaster.

Social Loafing

Is group performance less than, equal to, or greater than the sum of its parts? Can three people, for example, working together accomplish less than, the same as, or more than they would working separately? An interesting study conducted more than a half century ago by a French agricultural engineer named Ringelmann found the answer to be “less than.”⁸² In a rope-pulling exercise, Ringelmann reportedly found that three people pulling together could achieve only two and a half times the average individual rate. Eight pullers achieved less than four times the individual rate. This tendency for individual effort to decline as group size increases has come to be called **social loafing**.⁸³ Let us briefly analyze this threat to group effectiveness and synergy with an eye toward avoiding it.

Social loafing
Decrease in individual effort as group size increases.

Social Loafing Theory and Research Among the theoretical explanations for the social loafing effect are (1) equity of effort (“Everyone else is goofing off, so why shouldn’t I?”), (2) loss of personal accountability (“I’m lost in the crowd, so who cares?”), (3) motivational loss due to the sharing of rewards (“Why should I work harder than the others when everyone gets the same reward?”), and (4) coordination loss as more people perform the task (“We’re getting in each other’s way.”).

Laboratory studies refined these theories by identifying situational factors that moderated the social loafing effect. Social loafing occurred when

- The task was perceived to be unimportant, simple, or not interesting.⁸⁴
- Group members thought their individual output was not identifiable.⁸⁵
- Group members expected their co-workers to loaf.⁸⁶

But social loafing did *not* occur when group members in two laboratory studies expected to be evaluated.⁸⁷ Also, research suggests that self-reliant “individualists” are more prone to social loafing than are group-oriented “collectivists.” But individualists can be made more cooperative by keeping the group small and holding each member personally accountable for results.⁸⁸

Practical Implications These findings demonstrate that social loafing is not an inevitable part of group effort. Management can curb this threat to group effectiveness by making sure the task is challenging and perceived as important. Additionally, it is a good idea to hold group members personally accountable for identifiable portions of the group’s task. One way to do this is with the *stepladder technique*, a group decision-making process proven effective by researchers (see Table 12–6). Compared with conventional groups, stepladder groups produced significantly better decisions in the same

Table 12–6 *How to Avoid Social Loafing in Groups and Teams: The Stepladder Technique*

The stepladder technique is intended to enhance group decision making by structuring the entry of group members into a core group. Increasing or decreasing the number of group members alters the number of steps. In a four-person group, the stepladder technique has three steps. Initially, two group members (the initial core group) work together on the problem at hand. Next, a third member joins the core group and presents his or her preliminary solutions for the same problem. The entering member’s presentation is followed by a three-person discussion. Finally, the fourth group member joins the core group and presents his or her preliminary solutions. This is followed by a four-person discussion, which has as its goal the rendering of a final group decision.

The stepladder technique has four requirements. First, each group member must be given the group’s task and sufficient time to think about the problem before entering the core group. Second, the entering member must present his or her preliminary solutions before hearing the core group’s preliminary solutions. Third, with the entry of each additional member to the core group, sufficient time to discuss the problem is necessary. Fourth, a final decision must be purposely delayed until the group has been formed in its entirety.

SOURCE: Excerpted from S G Rogelberg, J L Barnes-Farrell, and C A Lowe, “The Stepladder Technique: An Alternative Group Structure Facilitating Effective Group Decision Making,” *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 77 (October 1992), p. 731. Copyright © 1992 by the American Psychological Association. Reprinted with permission.

amount of time. “Furthermore, stepladder groups’ decisions surpassed the quality of their best individual members’ decisions 56% of the time. In contrast, conventional groups’ decisions surpassed the quality of their best members’ decisions only 13% of the time.”⁸⁹ The stepladder technique could be a useful tool for organizations relying on self-managed or total quality management (TQM) teams.

Summary of Key Concepts

1. *Identify the four sociological criteria of a group, and explain the role of equity in the Workplace Social Exchange Network (WSEN) model.* Sociologically, a *group* is defined as two or more freely interacting individuals who share collective norms and goals and have a common identity. The WSEN model identifies three levels of social exchange: employee–organization, employee–supervisor, and employee–team. Individuals judge each type of social exchange in terms of perceived equity or fairness. The greater the perceived fairness, the more loyal, motivated, and hard-working the individual will be. Lack of perceived fairness is demotivating.
2. *Describe the five stages in Tuckman’s theory of group development, and discuss the threat of group decay.* The five stages in Tuckman’s theory are *forming* (the group comes together), *storming* (members test the limits and each other), *norming* (questions about authority and power are resolved as the group becomes more cohesive), *performing* (effective communication and cooperation help the group get things done), and *adjourning* (group members go their own way). According to recent research, group decay occurs when a work group achieves the “performing” stage and then shifts into reverse. Group decay occurs through *de-norming* (erosion of standards), *de-storming* (growing discontent and loss of cohesiveness), and *de-forming* (fragmentation and break-up of the group).
3. *Distinguish between role conflict and role ambiguity.* Organizational *roles* are sets of behaviors persons expect of occupants of a position. One may experience role overload (too much to do in too little time), role conflict (conflicting role expectations), or role ambiguity (unclear role expectations).
4. *Contrast roles and norms, and specify four reasons norms are enforced in organizations.* While roles are specific to the person’s position, norms are shared attitudes that differentiate appropriate from inappropriate behavior in a variety of situations. Norms evolve informally and are enforced because they help the group or organization survive, clarify behavioral expectations, help people avoid embarrassing situations, and clarify the group’s or organization’s central values.
5. *Distinguish between task and maintenance functions in groups.* Members of formal groups need to perform both task (goal-oriented) and maintenance (relationship-oriented) roles if anything is to be accomplished.
6. *Summarize the practical contingency management implications for group size.* Laboratory simulation studies suggest decision-making groups should be limited to five or fewer members. Larger groups are appropriate when creativity, participation, or socialization are the main objectives. If majority votes are to be taken, odd-numbered groups are recommended to avoid deadlocks.
7. *Discuss why managers need to carefully handle mixed-gender task groups.* Women face special group dynamics challenges in mixed-gender task groups. Steps need to be taken to make sure increased sexualization of work environments does not erode into illegal sexual harassment.
8. *Describe groupthink, and identify at least four of its symptoms.* Groupthink plagues cohesive in-groups that shortchange moral judgment while putting too much emphasis on unanimity. Symptoms of groupthink include invulnerability, inherent morality, rationalization, stereotyped views of opposition, self-censorship, illusion of unanimity, peer pressure, and mindguards. Critical evaluators, outside expertise, and devil’s advocates are among the preventive measures recommended by Irving Janis, who coined the term *groupthink*.
9. *Define social loafing, and explain how managers can prevent it.* Social loafing involves the tendency for individual effort to decrease as group size increases. This problem can be contained if the task is challenging and important, individuals are held accountable for results and group members expect everyone to work hard. The stepladder technique, a structured approach to group decision making, can reduce social loafing by increasing personal effort and accountability.

Discussion Questions

1. Which of the following would qualify as a sociological group? A crowd watching a baseball game? One of the baseball teams? Explain.
2. What is your opinion about employees being friends with their co-workers (overlapping formal and informal groups)?
3. What is your personal experience with groups that failed to achieve stage 4 of group development? At which stage did they stall? Why? Have you observed group decay? Explain.
4. Considering your current lifestyle, how many different roles are you playing? What sorts of role conflict and role ambiguity are you experiencing?
5. What norms do college students usually enforce in class? How are they enforced?
6. Which roles do you prefer to play in work groups: task or maintenance? How could you do a better job in this regard?
7. How would you respond to a manager who made the following statement? “When it comes to the size of work groups, the bigger the better.”
8. Are women typically at a disadvantage in mixed-gender work groups? Give your rationale.
9. Have you ever been a victim of either the Asch effect or groupthink? Explain the circumstances.
10. Have you observed any social loafing recently? What were the circumstances and what could be done to correct the problem?

Internet Exercise

Social skills are a central theme in this chapter, as well as in Chapters 13 through 17. Sexual harassment, in mixed-gender work groups, is a related topic of great importance today. The purpose of this exercise is to assess your basic social and communication skills and build your understanding of sexual harassment.

Free Self-Assessment Questionnaire for Social Skills

Managers, who are responsible for getting things accomplished with and through others, simply cannot be effective if they are unable to interact skillfully in social settings. As with any skill development program, you need to know *where you are* before constructing a learning agenda for *where you want to be*. Go to the Internet home page for Body-Mind Queendom (www.queendom.com), and select the category “Tests & Profiles.” (Note: Our use of this site is for instructional purposes only and does not constitute an endorsement of any products that may or may not suit your needs. There is no obligation to buy anything.) Next, choose “Relationships” and select the “Communication Skills Test.” Read the brief instructions, complete all 34 items, and click on the “score” button for automatic scoring. It is possible, if you choose, to print a personal copy of your completed questionnaire and results.

If you have time, some of the other relationships tests are interesting and fun. We recommend trying the follow-

www.queendom.com
www.de.psu.edu/harass/intro.htm

ing ones: Arguing Style Test; Assertiveness Test; Conflict Management Test; and Emotional IQ Test.

Free Tutorial about Sexual Harassment

As discussed in this chapter, sexual harassment can be a problem when women and men work together in groups. Professor Nancy Wyatt, from the Pennsylvania State University’s Delaware County campus, has compiled a comprehensive and instructive Internet site on the topic of sexual harassment (www.de.psu.edu/harass/intro.htm). Explore this resource for insights.

Questions

1. Possible scores on the self-assessment questionnaire range from 0 to 100. How did you score? Are you pleasantly (or unpleasantly) surprised by your score?
2. What is your strongest social/communication skill?
3. Reviewing the questionnaire item by item, can you find obvious weak spots in your social/communication skills? For instance, are you a poor listener? Do you interrupt too often? Do you need to be more aware of others, both verbally and nonverbally? Do you have a hard time tuning into others’ feelings or expressing your own feelings? How do you handle disagreement?
4. Based on the results of this questionnaire, what is your learning agenda for improving your social and



communication skills. (*Note:* You will find lots of good ideas and practical tips in Chapters 13 through 17.)

5. What insights did you pick up from the sexual harassment website? What is your personal

experience with sexual harassment in the workplace? Is the problem getting better or worse, in your estimation? What constructive steps need to be taken by today's managers and employees?

OB in Action Case Study

www.hq.nasa.gov

A 10-Year Retrospective of the Challenger Space Shuttle Disaster: Was It Groupthink?

A Fateful Decision

The debate over whether to launch on January 28, 1986, unfolded as follows, according to the report of the Presidential Commission on the Space Shuttle Challenger Accident:

Shortly after 1 PM ET on January 27, NASA's [the National Aeronautic and Space Administration's] booster rocket manager in Cape Canaveral, Larry Wear, asks officials of rocket maker Morton Thiokol in Utah whether cold weather on the 28th would present a problem for launch.

By 2 PM, NASA's top managers are discussing how temperatures in the 30s at the launch pad might affect the shuttle's performance. In Utah, an hour later, Thiokol engineer Roger Boisjoly learns of the forecast for the first time.

By late afternoon, midlevel NASA managers at the Cape are on the phone with Thiokol managers, who point out that the booster's rubbery O-rings, which seal in hot gases, might be affected by cold.

That concern brings in officials from NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama, which buys the rockets from Thiokol and readies them for launch.

Marshall managers decide that a three-way telephone conference call is needed, linking NASA and Thiokol engineers and managers in Alabama, Florida, and Utah.

The first conference call begins about 5:45 PM, and Thiokol tells NASA it believes launch should be delayed until noon or afternoon, when the weather turns warmer. It is decided a second conference call would be needed later that evening.

Marshall deputy project manager Judson Lovingood tells shuttle projects manager Stan Reinartz at the Cape that if Thiokol persists, NASA should not launch. Top NASA managers at Marshall are told of Thiokol's concern.

At 8:45 PM, the second conference call begins, involving 34 engineers and managers from NASA and Thiokol at the three sites.

Thiokol engineers Boisjoly and Arnie Thompson present charts showing a history of leaking O-ring joints from tests and previous flights.

The data show that the O-rings perform worse at lower temperatures and that the worst leak of hot gases came in

January 1985, when a shuttle launched with the temperature at 53 degrees. Thiokol managers recommend not flying Challenger at temperatures colder than that.

NASA's George Hardy says he's "appalled" at Thiokol's recommendation. Larry Mulloy, Marshall's booster rocket manager, complains that Thiokol is setting down new launch criteria and exclaims, "My God, Thiokol, when do you want me to launch, next April?"

Thiokol Vice President Joe Kilminster asks for five minutes to talk in private. The debate continues for 30 minutes. Boisjoly, Thompson, engineer Bob Ebeling, and others are overruled by Thiokol management, who decide to approve the launch.

At 11 PM, Kilminster tells NASA that Thiokol has changed its mind: Temperature is still a concern but the data are inconclusive. He recommends launch.

Thiokol's concerns that cold weather could hurt the booster joints are not passed up NASA's chain of command beyond officials at the Marshall Space Flight Center.

Challenger is launched at 11:38 AM January 28 in a temperature of 36 degrees.⁹⁰

Shortly after launch on January 28, 1986, Challenger was engulfed in a fiery explosion that led to the deaths of six astronauts and teacher-in-space Christa McAuliffe. As a shocked world watched great billows of smoke trail over the Atlantic, it was clear to those involved that launching Challenger in 36-degree weather was a catastrophic decision.⁹¹

Ten Years Later

Two who argued the longest and loudest against launch were Thiokol engineers Roger Boisjoly and Arnie Thompson. But their lives took widely differing paths after the accident.

Boisjoly remembers the prelaunch debate this way: "When NASA created the pressure, they all buckled."

He became nationally known as the primary whistleblower. Thiokol removed Boisjoly from the investigation team and sent him home after he testified before a presidential commission that the company ignored evidence that the booster rocket seals would fail in cold weather.

Boisjoly, 57, says he was blackballed by the industry and run out of town by Thiokol.

For a time, he sought psychiatric help. “It just became unbearable to function,” says Boisjoly, who now lives with his wife and daughter in a small mountain town in Utah. He spoke on condition that the town not be named because he fears for his family’s safety.

Boisjoly is convinced he is a marked man because some former co-workers believe his testimony contributed to resulting layoffs at Thiokol.

After the accident, he says, drivers would try to run him off the road when he was out on a walk. He got threatening phone calls. Someone tried to break into his house.

“It became so uncomfortable for me that I went out and bought a .38 revolver,” he says.

Now retired, Boisjoly earns \$1,500 for speeches to universities and business groups. He also runs his own engineering company and teaches Sunday school in the Mormon church, something he says he never would have dreamed of doing before the accident.

Says Thompson, the other voice against launch: “There were the two of us that didn’t want to fly and we were defeated. A lot of my top managers were not happy with me.”

Yet, with longer ties to Thiokol than Boisjoly, Thompson was promoted to manager and stayed on through the shuttle’s redesign.

He retired three years ago at the end of a 25-year-career. Now 66, he spends his time building a small office building in Brigham City, Utah.

“My attitude was, I wanted to stay on and redesign the bird and get back into the air,” says Thompson. “I had a personal goal to get flying again.” . . .

Thiokol’s Bob Ebeling was so sure that Challenger was doomed, he asked his daughter, Leslie, then 33, to his office to watch “a super colossal disaster” unfold on live TV.

When it exploded, “I was in the middle of a prayer for the Lord to do his will and let all these things come to a happy ending and not let this happen,” says Ebeling, who managed the rocket ignition system for Thiokol. “We did our level best but it wasn’t good enough.”

The fact that he foresaw disaster and could not stop it has tortured him since.

Ebeling, 69, says that within a week of the accident he became impotent and suffered high stress and constant headaches, problems he still has today. After 40 years of engineering experience, Thiokol “put me out to pasture on a medical” retirement, he says.

Ebeling still feels “the decision to recommend a launch was pre-ordained by others, by NASA leaning on our upper management. The deck was stacked.”

One of those who overruled Ebeling and the others was Jerry Mason, the senior Thiokol manager on the conference call. He took an early retirement from Thiokol five months after the disaster, ending a 25-year career in aerospace.

“I was basically responsible for the operation the day it happened,” says Mason, 69. “It was important to the company to put that behind them and get going on the recovery and it would be hard to do that with me sitting there. So I left.”

In Mason’s case, that meant going abruptly from corporate chieftain to unpaid volunteer. He helped set up a local economic development board and now chairs the Utah Wildlife Federation.

“I had a pretty successful career, and would liked to have gone out with the feeling that I really had done very well all the time instead of having to go out feeling I’d made a mistake at the end.”

For Judson Lovingood, the loss was more personal.

Formerly one of NASA’s deputy managers for the shuttle project, he wonders still if Challenger contributed to the breakup of his marriage.

“I think (Challenger) had an effect on my personal life,” says Lovingood, “a long-term effect.”

After the accident, he went to work for Thiokol in Huntsville and retired as director of engineering in 1993. Now remarried, he spends his time puttering in the yard of his Gurley, Alabama, home.

“Sometimes when I think about the seven people (aboard the shuttle), it’s pretty painful,” says Lovingood.

Besides McAuliffe, on board Challenger were commander Dick Scobee, pilot Mike Smith, and astronauts Ron McNair, Ellison Onizuka, Judy Resnik, and Greg Jarvis.

Their families settled with the government and Thiokol for more than \$1.5 billion. Still, “I think people should hold us collectively responsible as a group,” Lovingood says. “Every person in that meeting the night before the launch shared in the blame.” . . .

Investigations of the Challenger explosion placed much of the blame on NASA’s George Hardy, a senior engineering manager.

By saying he was “appalled” by Thiokol’s fears of flying in cold weather, critics charged, Hardy pressured Thiokol into approving the launch.

But Hardy refuses to shoulder the blame. “If Thiokol had stuck to their position, there wasn’t any way we were going to launch,” he says.

Hardy left NASA four months after the accident. Now 65, he runs a small aerospace consulting company in Athens, Alabama.

Whatever else the last decade brought, many of the recollections return to that pressure-packed conference call on the eve of launch.

Questions for Discussion

1. Which task and maintenance roles in Table 12–4 should have been performed or performed better? By whom?

2. Using Figure 12–6 as a guide, which *symptoms* of groupthink are evident in this case?
3. Using Figure 12–6 as a guide, which *decision-making defects* can you identify in this case?
4. Do you think groupthink was a major contributor to the Challenger disaster? Explain.
5. All things considered, who was most to blame for the catastrophic decision to launch? Why?

Personal Awareness and Growth Exercise

Is This a Mature Work Group or Team?

Objectives

1. To increase your knowledge of group processes and dynamics.
2. To give you a tool for assessing the maturity of a work group or task team as well as a diagnostic tool for pinpointing group problems.
3. To help you become a more effective group leader or contributor.

Introduction

Group action is so common today that many of us take it for granted. But are the groups and teams to which we con-

tribute much of our valuable time mature and hence more likely to be effective? Or do they waste our time? How can they be improved? We can and should become tough critical evaluators of group processes.

Instructions

Think of a work group or task team with which you are very familiar (preferably one you worked with in the past or are currently working with). Rate the group’s maturity on each of the 20 dimensions.⁹² Then add your circled responses to get your total group maturity score. The higher the score, the greater the group’s maturity.

	Very False (or Never)	Very True (or Always)
1. Members are clear about group goals.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
2. Members agree with the group’s goals.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
3. Members are clear about their roles.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
4. Members accept their roles and status.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
5. Role assignments match member abilities.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
6. The leadership style matches the group’s developmental level.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
7. The group has an open communication structure in which all members participate.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
8. The group gets, gives, and uses feedback about its effectiveness and productivity.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
9. The group spends time planning how it will solve problems and make decisions.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
10. Voluntary conformity is high.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
11. The group norms encourage high performance and quality.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
12. The group expects to be successful.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
13. The group pays attention to the details of its work.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
14. The group accepts coalition and subgroup formation.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
15. Subgroups are integrated into the group as a whole.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
16. The group is highly cohesive.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
17. Interpersonal attraction among members is high.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
18. Members are cooperative.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
19. Periods of conflict are frequent but brief.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
20. The group has effective conflict-management strategies.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
Total score = _____		

Arbitrary Norms

- 20–39 “When in doubt, run in circles, scream and shout!”
- 40–59 A long way to go
- 60–79 On the right track
- 80–100 Ready for group dynamics graduate school

Questions for Discussion

1. Does your evaluation help explain why the group or team was successful or not? Explain.
2. Was (or is) there anything *you* could have done (or can do) to increase the maturity of this group? Explain.
3. How will this evaluation instrument help you be a more effective group member or leader in the future?

Group Exercise

A Committee Decision

Objectives

1. To give you firsthand experience with work group dynamics through a role-playing exercise.⁹³
2. To develop your ability to evaluate group effectiveness.

Introduction

Please read the following case before going on.

THE JOHNNY ROCCO CASE

Johnny has a grim personal background. He is the third child in a family of seven. He has not seen his father for several years, and his recollection is that his father used to come home drunk and beat up every member of the family; everyone ran when his father came staggering home.

His mother, according to Johnny, wasn't much better. She was irritable and unhappy, and she always predicted that Johnny would come to no good end. Yet she worked when her health allowed her to do so in order to keep the family in food and clothing. She always decried the fact that she was not able to be the kind of mother she would like to be.

Johnny quit school in the seventh grade. He had great difficulty conforming to the school routine—he misbehaved often, was truant frequently, and fought with schoolmates. On several occasions he was picked up by the police and, along with members of his group, questioned during several investigations into cases of both petty and grand larceny. The police regarded him as “probably a bad one.”

The juvenile officer of the court saw in Johnny some good qualities that no one else seemed to sense. Mr O'Brien took it on himself to act as a “big brother” to Johnny. He had several long conversations with Johnny,

during which he managed to penetrate to some degree Johnny's defensive shell. He represented to Johnny the first semblance of personal interest in his life. Through Mr O'Brien's efforts, Johnny returned to school and obtained a high school diploma. Afterwards, Mr O'Brien helped him obtain a job.

Now 20, Johnny is a stockroom clerk in one of the laboratories where you are employed. On the whole Johnny's performance has been acceptable, but there have been glaring exceptions. One involved a clear act of insubordination on a fairly unimportant matter. In another, Johnny was accused, on circumstantial grounds, of destroying some expensive equipment. Though the investigation is still open, it now appears the destruction was accidental.

Johnny's supervisor wants to keep him on for at least a trial period, but he wants “outside” advice as to the best way of helping Johnny grow into greater responsibility. Of course, much depends on how Johnny behaves in the next few months. Naturally, his supervisor must follow personnel policies that are accepted in the company as a whole. It is important to note that Johnny is not an attractive young man. He is rather weak and sickly, and he shows unmistakable signs of long years of social deprivation.

A committee is formed to decide the fate of Johnny Rocco. The chairperson of the meeting is Johnny's supervisor and should begin by assigning roles to the group members. These roles [shop steward (representing the union), head of production, Johnny's co-worker, director of personnel, and social worker who helped Johnny in the past] represent points of view the chairperson believes should be included in this meeting. (Johnny is not to be included.) Two observers should also be assigned. Thus, each group will have eight members.

Instructions

After roles have been assigned, each role player should complete the personal preference part of the work sheet, ranking from 1 to 11 the alternatives according to their appropriateness from the vantage point of his or her role.

Once the individual preferences have been determined, the chairperson should call the meeting to order. The following rules govern the meeting: (1) The group must reach a consensus ranking of the alternatives; (2) the group cannot use a statistical aggregation, or majority vote, decision-making process; (3) members should stay “in character” throughout the discussion. Treat this as a committee meeting consisting of members with different backgrounds, orientation, and interests who share a problem.

After the group has completed the assignment, the observers should conduct a discussion of the group process, using the Group Effectiveness Questions here as a guide. Group members should not look at these questions until after the group task has been completed.

Worksheet

Personal Preference	Group Discussion
---------------------	------------------

_____	_____	Warn Johnny that at the next sign of trouble he will be fired.
_____	_____	Do nothing, as it is unclear if Johnny did anything wrong.
_____	_____	Create strict controls (dos and don'ts) for Johnny with immediate strong punishment for any misbehavior.
_____	_____	Give Johnny a great deal of warmth and personal attention and affection (overlooking his present behavior) so he can learn to depend on others.
_____	_____	Fire him. It's not worth the time and effort spent for such a low-level position.
_____	_____	Talk over the problem with Johnny in an understanding way so he can learn to ask others for help in solving his problems.
_____	_____	Give Johnny a well-structured schedule of daily activities with immediate and unpleasant consequences for not adhering to the schedule.
_____	_____	Do nothing now, but watch him carefully and provide immediate punishment for any future behavior.
_____	_____	Treat Johnny the same as everyone else, but provide an orderly routine so he can learn to stand on his own two feet.
_____	_____	Call Johnny in and logically discuss the problem with him and ask what you can do to help him.
_____	_____	Do nothing now, but watch him so you can reward him the next time he does something good.

Group Effectiveness Questions

- A. Referring to Table 12–4, what task roles were performed? By whom?
- B. What maintenance roles were performed? By whom?
- C. Were any important task or maintenance roles ignored? Which?
- D. Was there any evidence of the Asch effect, groupthink, or social loafing? Explain.

Questions for Discussion

1. Did your committee do a good job? Explain.
2. What, if anything, should have been done differently?
3. How much similarity in rankings is there among the different groups in your class? What group dynamics apparently were responsible for any variations in rankings?

Ethical Dilemma



Can “Social Norming” Make the Grade on College Campuses?

Situation

You’re the dean of students at a major university and you’ve been getting a lot of pressure from parents and state legislators lately about curbing out-of-control alcohol and tobacco use among students. At a meeting today, a colleague gave you this newspaper article to read.

Nine out of every 10 college students have never damaged property because they were drunk or high. Three out of four have never blown an exam or school project because of drugs or alcohol. Ninety-nine percent of students who drink do not have unwanted sex.

Most kids don’t go out and get trashed every night.

Each year, more students choose to abstain from alcohol. Fewer choose to smoke and do drugs.

Death by alcohol-related accidents or suicide is rare.

The widespread impression that the norm for today’s young people is drunken debauchery simply isn’t true. Most kids are OK. It’s the best-kept secret on college campuses, and a growing number of experts believe that keeping all this good news quiet is doing far more harm than good.

Parents are often the most unaware, and they fear the worst when they send kids off to college, says Michael Haines, a substance-abuse expert at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb. Students today take very seriously the risks of drinking, he says, “yet parents are being sold a bill of goods, with kids portrayed in number-crunching stories as drunken, reckless, careless boozers.”

Haines is the father of a grassroots movement among prevention educators called “social norming,” and it’s gaining fast favor on college campuses. The premise is quite simple, but completely at odds with today’s accepted practice of scaring teens away from risky behaviors.

Social norming operates on this notion: If the general impression is that most kids don’t drink alcohol, then those who *do* drink will drink less, and fewer will start drinking in the first place. The key is to not overreport the incidences of dangerous drinking that occur, and to broadly promote the general good health of students so that it is perceived as normal not to drink.

At least 30 college campuses nationwide, including the universities of Arizona, North Carolina, Oregon, and Missouri, Rutgers University, and 23 campuses of the California State University system, have joined the social norming bandwagon to curb drinking among students. Dartmouth, home of the *Animal House* legend, is currently in the market to hire an educator with social norming experience.

The philosophy has begun trickling down to high schools and middle schools and has been expanded to target other risky behaviors, including smoking. . . .

Campuses in general have seen little change in student drinking patterns, despite comprehensive and consistent antidrinking programs, [student health and safety expert Drew] Hunter says. The social norming effort is showing results “by promoting health, not death and destruction.” . . .

The social norming program works by simply reframing the same data that traditionally highlights the minority of students who are boozing up heavily and presenting it with a focus on the majority who aren’t. The statistics most often used on a national level are those from the ongoing Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study, National College Health Assessment and the Core Alcohol and Drug Survey, all of which look at college drinking patterns. . . .

Campuses develop their own norming programs by polling students and feeding back to them—in the form of posters, pencils, Frisbees, and bumper stickers—data about the majority who aren’t drinking, smoking, or engaging in other risky behavior.

Funny thing, though, is that most students are surprised, since most students—like most parents—think most kids are drinking and smoking. That simply fuels the problem, says Lydia Gerzel Short, who is behind the nation’s first social norming program for high school students. Her three-year program in two DeKalb County high schools has seen drinking and smoking drop significantly faster than the national trends. . . .

“Misperceptions create a silent majority,” says Jan Gascoigne, director of health promotions with Bacchus & Gamma, which last fall launched a six-campus project with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to study how social norming might curb college smoking. When the University of Washington in Seattle polled students in 1999, it found that students believed nearly 95% of the student body smoked. In reality, about one-third were smokers.

“Social norming breaks down that perception,” says Gascoigne. “If I’m a student, and I think 95% of everybody smokes, there’s a perception that that’s what people do here. Potentially that becomes my behavior because I want to fit in.”

The drop in the rate of student smoking at the University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh after last year’s social-norm marketing campaign was so astonishing, officials are reluctant to release the data nationally because some population quirk may have skewed the numbers. The results: a 29% drop in student smoking, or one out of three smokers quit. . . .

Like many colleges and universities that try social norming, Wisconsin–Oshkosh turned to it as a “last resort” because nothing else was making a dent in student drinking and smoking, [psychologist Mike] Altekruze says. “We well-meaning health educators . . . just keep giving them knowledge that it’s unhealthy, and we hope they’ll quit drinking. But they don’t.”⁹⁴

How Should You Respond to This New Information about Social Norming? (Discuss the ethical implications for your answer.)

1. Read the article at home after work while relaxing with a glass of wine and a cigarette.
2. Deny that your university has any problems with alcohol or tobacco abuse. Toss the article.
3. Dismiss the idea as just another fad that, at best, might work for a semester and then become irrelevant.
4. Arrange a fact-finding meeting with one of your school's sociology professors who has published research articles on social norming. (What then?)
5. Decide to implement a social norming program on your campus. (How would you proceed?)
6. Invent other options. Discuss.

For an interpretation of this situation, visit our Web site, www.mhhe.com/kreitner.