



Psicologia dei Gruppi e delle Relazioni Sociali

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Psicologia dei Gruppi e delle Relazioni Sociali

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Theoretical Lessons (Part 1):

- 1- An introduction to the group dynamics (1)***
- 2- An introduction to the group dynamics (2)***
- 3- Studying Groups***
- 4- Inclusion and Identity***
- 5- Formation***
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Lesson: 12 - (1/4)

Title: Decision Making

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Lesson 12 Outline

- **Groups and Decisions: The Functional Perspective**
 - *Orientation*
 - *Discussion*
 - *Decision*
 - *Implementation*
 - *Who Decides—Individuals or Groups?*

- **Groups as Imperfect Decision Makers**
 - *Group Discussion Pitfalls*
 - *The Shared Information Bias*
 - *Cognitive Limitations*

- **Group Polarization**
 - *The Risky-Shift Phenomenon*
 - *Polarization Processes in Groups*
 - *What Causes Group Polarization?*
 - *The Consequences of Polarization*

- **Victims of Groupthink**
 - *Symptoms of Groupthink*
 - *Defective Decision Making*
 - *Causes of Groupthink*

People turn to groups when they must solve problems and make decisions. Groups often make better decisions than individuals, for groups can process more information more thoroughly. But groups, like individuals, sometimes make mistakes. When a group sacrifices rationality in its pursuit of unity, the decisions it makes can yield calamitous consequences



A Group Decision?

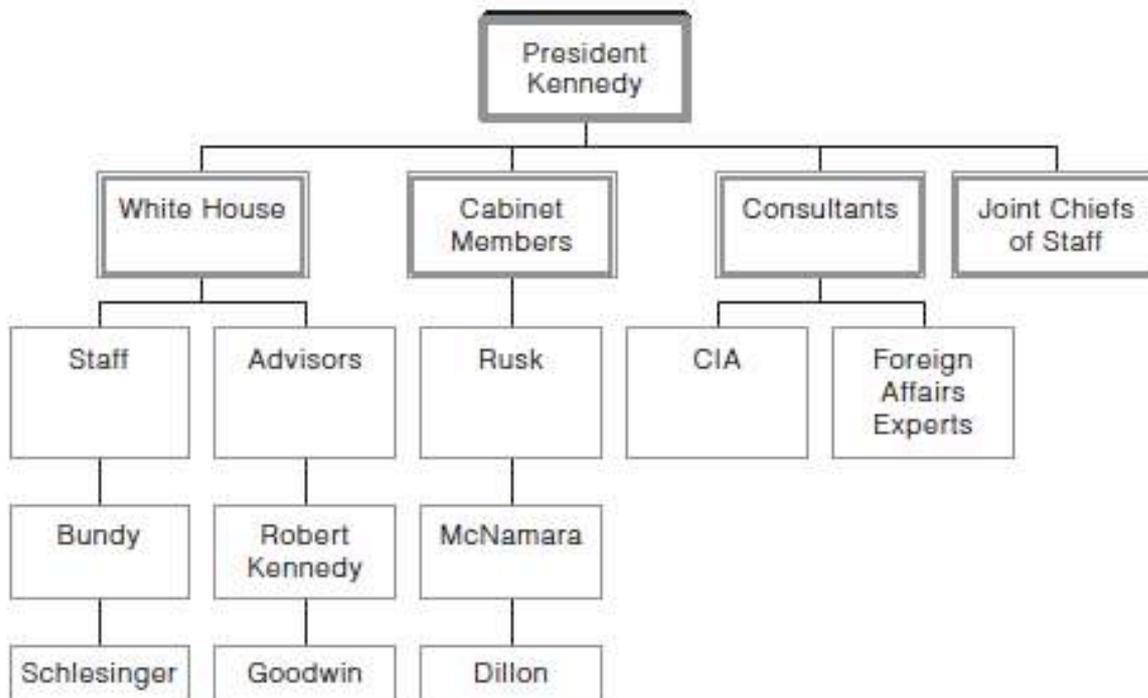


FIGURE 11.1 The members of ExCom, the advisory committee who planned the Bay of Pigs invasion.



Group and Decision

The functional perspective

Why people reliance on groups?

- People turn to groups because, in most cases, **groups are better at choosing, judging, estimating, and problem solving than are individuals** (Stasser & Dietz-Uhler, 2001).
- **Groups form more accurate perceptions of people than do individuals** (Ruscher & Hammer, 2006).
- **Groups using Google can find the information they need faster** than single individuals can (Lazonder, 2005).
- **Teams of physicians making a diagnosis are more accurate** than single physicians (Glick & Staley, 2007).
- **Students permitted to take a test in groups get better grades** than individual students (Zimbardo, Butler, & Wolfe, 2003).
- **Burglars who work in groups are less likely to be caught** than are thieves who work alone (Warr, 2002).
- Apparently “**none of us alone is as smart as all of us together**” (Myers, 2002).

Functional Theory of Group Decision Making

A conceptual analysis of the steps or processes that groups generally follow when making a decision, with a focus on the intended purpose of each step or process in the overall decision-making sequence.

Group and Decision

The functional perspective

What is the secret to groups' superiority in making decisions?

A functional theory of group decision making suggests that skilled decision-making groups are more likely to make use of group procedures that enhance the way they gather, analyze, and weigh information.

- The group defines the problem, sets goals, and develops a strategy in the orientation phase.
- Next, during the discussion phase, the group gathers information about the situation and, if a decision must be made, identifies and considers options.
- In the decision phase, the group chooses its solution by reaching consensus, voting, or using some other social decision process.
- In the implementation phase, the decision must be put into action and the impact of the decision assessed.

Groups that follow these four stages are more likely to make better decisions than those who sidestep or mishandle information at any particular stage (Hollingshead et al., 2005; Wittenbaum et al., 2004).

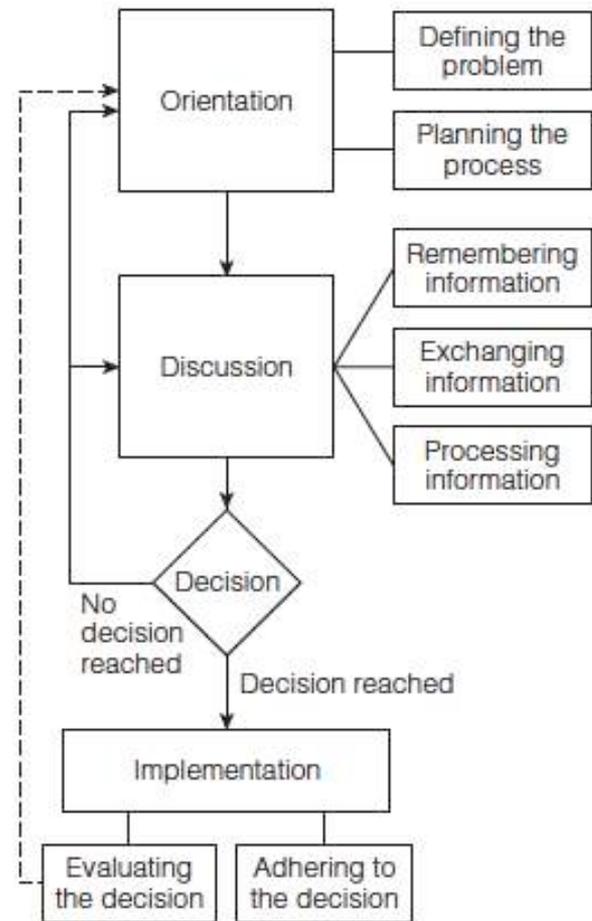


FIGURE 11.2 A functional model of group decision making.



Group and Decision

The functional perspective: Orientation

Orientation: A decision-making process often begins with recognition of the unsatisfactory state of the current situation and the search for a solution. But groups also meet, more routinely, to check progress, review feedback, identify any possible issues, and to identify new goals. In the first stage of problem solving the group must organize the procedures it will use in its work. Members clarify the group's goals, identify the resources needed to make the decision, enumerate obstacles that must be overcome or avoided, specify the procedures to be followed in gathering information and making the decision, and agree on procedures to follow during the meeting (Gouran & Hirokawa, 1996, p. 76–77).

Defining the Problem One particularly valuable outcome of this period of orientation is the development of a shared mental model—a cognitive schema that organizes declarative and procedural information pertaining to the problem and the group that is held in common by the group members (Klimoski & Mohammed, 1994). When group members adopt the same general conceptualization of their tasks, goals, and procedures, their final choices reflect the group's preferences rather than the group members' personal biases (Tindale et al., 2001).



Group and Decision

The functional perspective: Orientation

Planning Process In a time-urgent world, groups sometimes rush through the orientation stage; they want to get on with the work, and not waste time with preliminaries (Varela, 1971). However, research clearly favors delaying the discussion of the issue at hand until the group reviews and, if needed, clarifies its goals, procedures, and time constraints (Weingart, 1992; Weldon, Jehn, & Pradhan, 1991). The importance of planning is so great that in some cases it is the only thing that differentiates successful groups from unsuccessful ones (Hirokawa, 1980). Participants tend to be more satisfied when the decisional procedures had been discussed in advance (Vinokur et al., 1985). Similarly, in a project that experimentally manipulated the use of process planning, groups were more productive when they were encouraged to discuss their performance strategies before working on a task requiring intermember coordination (Hackman, Brousseau, & Weiss, 1976).



Group and Decision

The functional perspective: Orientation

Shared Mental Model

Knowledge, expectations, conceptualizations, and other cognitive representations that members of a group have in common pertaining to the group and its members, tasks, procedures, and resources.

Parkinson's law

A task will expand to fill the time available for its completion.

Law of Triviality

The amount of time a group spends on discussing any issue will be in inverse proportion to the consequentiality of the issue.



Group and Decision

The functional perspective: Orientation

In the first stage of problem solving the group must organize the procedures it will use in its work.

- Members clarify the group's goals, identify the resources needed to make the decision, enumerate obstacles that must be overcome or avoided, specify the procedures to be followed in gathering information and making the decision, and agree on procedures to follow during the meeting (Gouran & Hirokawa, 1996).
- All this planning provides the blueprint for "the order in which a sequence of operations is to be performed" (Miller, Galanter, & Pribram, 1960, p. 16), so that actions are structured effectively.



Group and Decision

The functional perspective: Discussion

If information is the lifeblood of decision making, then the discussion phase must be the heart of that process (Kowert, 2002).

- During the discussion stage, group members gather and process the information needed to make a decision. As Robert Freed Bales (1955) and his colleagues discovered when they watched and recorded groups at work, more than 50% of all comments made by members are suggestions, expressions of opinion, and attempts at orientation.
- A collective information processing approach to decision making assumes that people seek out and process relevant information, but that they do this cognitive work during the group discussion. Three information processing gains that result from discussion are improved memory for information, increased information exchange, and more thorough processing of information (Hinsz, Tindale, & Vollrath, 1997; Larson & Christensen, 1993; Propp, 1999).



Group and Decision

The functional perspective: Discussion

Collective information processing model

A general theoretical explanation of group decision making assuming that groups use communication and discussion among members to gather and process the information needed to formulate decisions, choices, and judgments.

Collective memory

A group's combined memories, including each member's memories, the group's shared mental models, and transactive memory systems.

Group and Decision

The functional perspective: Discussion

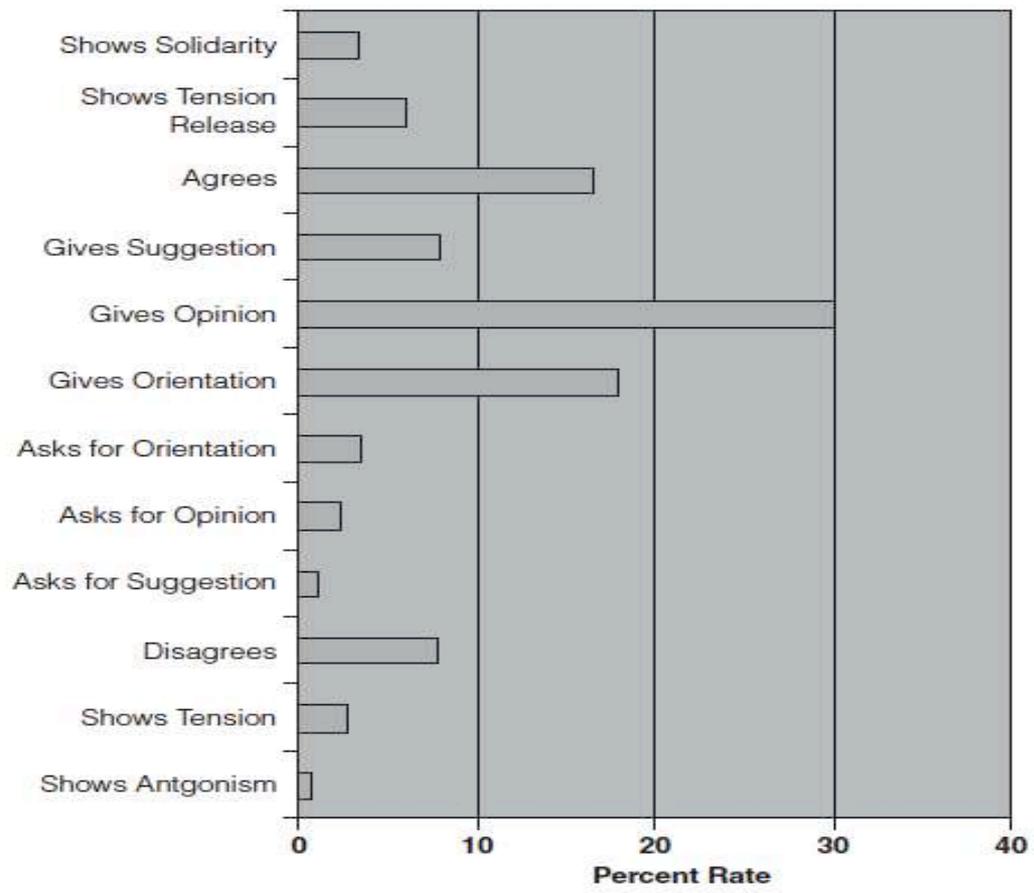


FIGURE 11.3 Average interaction profile for discussion groups (Bales, 1999).

SOURCE: *Social Interaction Systems: Theory and Measurement*, by Robert Freed Bales, Transaction Publishers, 1999, p. 240.



Group and Decision

The functional perspective: Discussion

Collective Memory

Two heads are better than one because groups have superior memories for information relative to individuals. A groups' collective memory is the shared reservoir of information held in the memories of two or more members of a group.

- **Groups remember more than individuals**, because groups draw on more memories that contain different types of information.
- Similarly, **when students are permitted to take examinations as a group, they usually outperform individuals**, for the student who is stumped by the question, “Name four common phases of group decision making,” may be saved by a group member who remembers the mnemonic acronym ODD-I: Orientation, Discussion, Decision, and Implementation (Michaelsen, Watson, & Black, 1989; Stasson & Bradshaw, 1995).
- **Groups can also get more information than individuals can**. In many cases, decision-making groups are staffed by individuals who have widely differing experiences, backgrounds, and associations, so each one can acquire a unique set of information that he or she can contribute to the discussion (Henningesen & Henningesen, 2007).

Group and Decision

The functional perspective: Discussion

But groups are not mnemonic marvels (Van Swol, 2008).

- ***When researchers compared the memories of collaborative groups, nominal groups (groups of noninteracting individuals), and individuals, collaborative groups outperformed both the average single individual and the best single individual.***
- ***Collaborative groups did not, however, perform as well as nominal groups, and the groups displayed many of the characteristics typically seen in individual memory.***
- ***Individuals, for example, generally have better memory for information that they process more deeply and better memory for pictures than for words.*** Groups displayed these same tendencies when their memories were tested (Weldon & Bellinger, 1997).
- ***Groups also reported words that were not on the original list, and their memories were also less well structured*** (Finlay, Hitch, & Meudell, 2000).
- ***Groups do not remember as much as they could because members free-ride and loaf.*** (Weldon, Blair, & Huebsch, 2000).
- ***Apparently, the complexity of the group setting disrupts group members' ability to organize information in memory and then retrieve that information.*** In consequence, ***collaborating groups perform particularly poorly when trying to remember badly organized information, but perform the same as noninteracting (nominal) groups when trying to remember organized information*** (Basden et al., 1997).



Group and Decision

The functional perspective: Discussion

Information Exchange

Groups do not merely draw on a larger pool of information than individuals. They can also exchange information among the members of the group, thereby further strengthening their access to information as well as their recall of that information.

- A group, then, is a ***“multiagent connectionist” informational network “that consists of a collection of individual recurrent networks that communicate with each other and, as such, is a network of networks”*** (Van Overwalle & Heylighen, 2006, p. 606).
- When group members exchange information, they may give each other cues that help them remember things that they would not recall if working alone. This ***process is known as cross-cueing***. (Meudell, Hitch, & Kirby, 1992).
- Unfortunately, ***if a group member offers up a misleading cue, then such cueing can inhibit memory retrieval rather than facilitate it*** (Andersson, Hitch, Meudell, 2006).



Group and Decision

The functional perspective: Discussion

Transactive memory (TM)

also enhances the groups' capacity to store and quickly access information by dividing data among the members.

- Members working in the same group often specialize, to a degree, in different areas. These individuals not only have more information on a given topic, but they are also the ones who should be more responsible for storing any new information that is relevant to their area of expertise. (Hollingshead, 2001a; Wegner, Giuliano, & Hertel, 1985).

Cross-cueing

The enhancement of recall that occurs during group discussion when the statements made by group members serve as cues for the retrieval of information from the memories of other group members.

Transactive memory system

A process by which information to be remembered is distributed to various members of the group who can then be relied upon to provide that information when it is needed.



Group and Decision

The functional perspective: Discussion

Processing Information

Groups not only recall and exchange information more effectively than individuals, they also process that information more thoroughly through discussion. Members ask questions, and others offer answers. Alternative options are discussed, and the strengths and weaknesses of each option are considered.

- Most group discussions also include an **interpersonal element that complements the focus on the work to be done** (Barge, 2002).
- Decision making groups not only **share and evaluate information; they also encourage each other, express commitment to the group, and help each other** (Jehn & Shah, 1997; Weingart & Weldon, 1991).
- Just as the orientation period is essential to effective decision making, so **the time spent in active discussion increases the quality of the group's decision** (Katz & Tushman, 1979).
- **When researchers monitored group members' communications** while working on a problem that could be solved only by properly sequencing individuals' responses, they found that the **group's use of essential information through discussion proved to be the best predictor of success** (Lanzetta & Roby, 1960).



Group and Decision

The functional perspective: Discussion

Processing Information

Groups not only recall and exchange information more effectively than individuals, they also process that information more thoroughly through discussion. Members ask questions, and others offer answers. Alternative options are discussed, and the strengths and weaknesses of each option are considered.

- Groups working on collective induction problems—tasks that require a cycle of hypothesis generation and ***testing—performed best when members discussed the problems actively and focused their analysis on evidence rather than on hypotheses*** (Laughlin & Hollingshead, 1995).
- Studies of ***online groups have found that the online format substantially hampers the group's ability to make an informed decision*** if the rate of information exchange is too low and too slow (Baltes et al., 2002).
- When researchers watched groups make decisions, they found that ***information sharing were correlated with judgmental accuracy*** (Jehn & Shah, 1997).



Lesson: 12 - (2/4)

Title: Decision Making

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Group and Decision

The functional perspective: Decision

Social decision scheme

A strategy or rule used in a group to select a single alternative from among various alternatives proposed and discussed during the group's deliberations, including explicitly acknowledged decision rules (e.g., the group accepts the alternative favored by the majority) and implicit decisional procedures (e.g., the group accepts the alternative favored by the most powerful members).





Group and Decision

The functional perspective: Decision

A social decision scheme is a group's method for combining individual members' inputs in a single group decision.

- Some ***groups have clearly defined ways of making a decision***. In many cases, though, the social decision scheme is an implicit one that is taken for granted by group. Not until someone says, “Let’s take a vote” does the group realize that a decision must be made about how to make decisions (Ladbury & Hinsz, 2005).
- Some ***common social decision schemes are delegation, averaging, voting, consensus*** (discussion to unanimity), and ***random choice*** (Hastie & Kameda, 2005).



Group and Decision

The functional perspective: Decision

1. **Delegating decisions:** An individual, subgroup, or external party makes the decision for the group. Under an authority scheme, the leader, president, or other individual makes the final decision with or without input from the group members. When an oligarchy operates in the group, a coalition speaks for the entire group. Other forms of delegation include asking an expert to answer (the best-informed member) or forming a subcommittee made up of a few members to study the issue and reach a conclusion.
2. **Averaging decisions:** Each group member makes his or her decision individually (either before or after a group discussion) and these private recommendations are averaged together to yield a nominal group decision. Such decisions do not necessarily require any interaction among members.
3. **Plurality decisions:** Members express their individual preferences by voting, either publicly or by secret ballot. In most cases, the group selects the alternative favored by the majority of the members (the very common majority-rules scheme), but in some cases, a more substantial plurality (such as a two-thirds majority scheme) is needed before a decision becomes final. Some groups also use ranking methods, with more points awarded to alternatives that are ranked higher than others (the Borda count method).
4. **Unanimous decisions (consensus):** The group discusses the issue until it reaches unanimous agreement without voting. This decision rule is imposed on many juries in the United States.
5. **Random decisions:** The group leaves the final decision to chance by, say, flipping a coin.



Group and Decision

The functional perspective: Decision

Each decision scheme has strengths as well as weaknesses.

- ***Delegation saves the group time and is appropriate for less important issues.*** Mandates from authorities can, however, leave members feeling disenfranchised and ignored. When groups average individual members' inputs, all the group members' opinions are considered, and this procedure often cancels out errors or extreme opinions. But a group that just averages without discussion may make an arbitrary decision that fails to satisfy any of the group members, all of whom may end up feeling little responsibility for implementing the decision.
- ***Most groups, at least in Western cultures, rely on some type of voting procedure to make final decisions*** (Mann, 1986).
- ***Voting is a way of making a clear-cut decision, even on issues that deeply divide the group. When researchers compared these decision rules, plurality was the most consistent in yielding a superior decision, and it involved the least amount of effort from individual group members*** (Hastie & Kameda, 2005).



Group and Decision

The functional perspective: Decision

Each decision scheme has strengths as well as weaknesses.

- ***But plurality, despite its overall effectiveness, has limitations.*** When the vote is close, some members of the group may feel alienated and defeated. In consequence, they become dissatisfied with membership and are less likely to lend support to the decision (Castore & Murnighan, 1978).
- ***Voting can also lead to internal politics, as members get together before meetings to apply pressure,*** form coalitions, and trade favors to ensure the passage of proposals that they favor. Also, if the vote is taken publicly, individuals may conform to previously stated opinions rather than expressing their personal views (Davis et al., 1988).



Group and Decision

The functional perspective: Decision

.... and the Consensus??

- Some groups avoid these drawbacks by relying on consensus to make decisions. ***Consensus decision schemes are involving and often lead to high levels of commitment to the decision and to the group.***
- Unfortunately, groups may not be able to reach consensus on all issues. ***Consensus building takes a good deal of time, and if rushed, the strategy can misfire.*** In many cases, too, groups explicitly claim to be using the unanimity scheme, but the implicit goal may be something less than unanimity (Kameda et al., 2002).
- ***Groups often prefer to reach consensus on questions that require sensitive judgments, such as issues of morality, but they favor a majority-rules voting scheme on problem-solving tasks*** (Kaplan & Miller, 1987).



Group and Decision

The functional perspective: Implementation

Implementation

When the die is cast and the decision made, two significant pieces of work remain to be done.

1. First, the decision must be implemented.
2. Second, the quality of the decision must be evaluated.

Procedural justice

Perception of the fairness and legitimacy of the methods used to make decisions, resolve disputes, and allocate resources; also, in judicial contexts, the use of fair and impartial procedures.



Group and Decision

Procedural Justice *The functional perspective: Implementation*

Implementation is affected by procedural justice: group members' evaluation of the fairness in the processes that the group used to make its decisions. Willingness to endorse and support a group's decisions depends on such factors as members' sense of control over the process, involvement in it, and evaluation of the outcome itself; if the group members believe that the procedures that the group used to make its decision were fair ones, then they will be more likely to act in supportive, pro-group ways.

- ***People are more likely to regard a decision as a fair one if the decisional procedures are implemented*** “(a) consistently, (b) without self-interest, (c) on the basis of accurate information, (d) with opportunities to correct the decision, (e) with the interests of all concerned parties represented, and (f) following moral and ethical standards” (Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996, p. 189).
- ***The group that uses procedurally just methods for making decisions will be more successful during the implementation stage*** (Colquitt & Greenberg, 2003; Skitka, Winkvist, & Hutchinson, 2003).

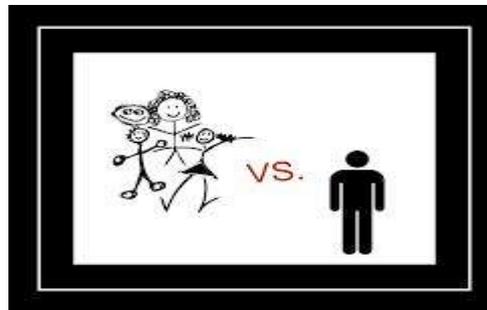
Group and Decision

The functional perspective: Implementation

Who Decides—Individuals or Groups?

Making a decision in a group offers a number of advantages over making a decision alone.

- ***Groups, with their greater informational resources and capacity to process that information, may be able to identify better solutions and to detect errors in reasoning.***
- ***Members may also find a group's decision more satisfying than that of a single individual, particularly if the group uses a consensusbuilding decision process.***
- ***Group decisions, however, can take more time than people wish to give to them, and so groups too often sacrifice quality for timeliness.***
- ***Some issues, too, are so trivial, so convoluted, or so contentious that a group approach may end in failure.***





Group and Decision

The functional perspective: Implementation

Who Decides—Individuals or Groups?

Vroom's normative model of decision making suggests that different types of situations call for different types of decision-making methods (Vroom, 2003; Vroom & Jago, 1988, 2007; Vroom & Yetton, 1973).

Normative model of decision making

A theory of decision making and leadership developed by Victor Vroom that predicts the effectiveness of group-centered, consultative, and autocratic decisional procedures across a number of group settings.



Group and Decision

The functional perspective: Implementation

Vroom's Model

Decide: The leader solves the problem or makes the decision and announces it to the group. The leader may rely on information available to him or her at that time, but may also obtain information from group members. The members only provide information to the leader and the leader may not tell the group members why the information is needed.

Consult (Individual): The leader shares the problem with the group members individually, getting their ideas and suggestions one-on-one without meeting as a full group. The leader then makes the decision, which may not reflect the group members' influence.

Consult (Group): The leader discusses the problem with the members as a group, collectively obtaining their input. Then the leader makes the decision, which may not reflect the group members' influence.

Facilitate: The leader coordinates a collaborative analysis of the problem, helping the group reach consensus on the issue. The leader is active in the processes, but does not try to influence the group to adopt a particular solution. The leader accepts the will of the group and implements any decision that is supported by the entire group.

Delegate: If the group already functions independently of the leader, then he or she can turn the problem over to the group. The group reaches a decision without the leader's direct involvement, but the leader provides support, direction, clarification, and resources as the group deliberates



Lesson: 12 - (3/4)

Title: Decision Making

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Group and Decision

Groups as imperfect decision makers

TABLE 11.1 **Group Members' Descriptions of Problems Experienced When Trying to Make a Group Decision**

Problem	Frequency	Description
Communication skills	10%	Poor listening skills, ineffective voice, poor nonverbal communication, lack of effective visual aids, misunderstands or does not clearly identify topic, is repetitive, uses jargon
Egocentric behavior	8%	Dominates conversation and group; behaviors are loud, overbearing; one-upmanship, show of power, manipulation, intimidation, filibustering; talks to hear self talk; followers or brown-nosers; clowns and goof-offs
Nonparticipation	7%	Not all participate, do not speak up, do not volunteer, are passive, lack discussion, silent starts
Sidetracking	6.5%	Leaves main topic
Interruptions	6%	Members interrupt speaker; talk over others; socialize; allow phone calls, messages from customers/clients
Negative leader behavior	6%	Unorganized and unfocused, not prepared, late, has no control, gets sidetracked, makes no decisions
Attitudes and emotions	5%	Poor attitude, defensive or evasive, argumentative, personal accusations, no courtesy or respect, complain or gripe, lack of control of emotions

SOURCE: Adapted from Di Salvo, Nikkel, & Monroe, 1989.



Group and Decision

Groups as imperfect decision makers: Discussion Pitfalls

Most experts on group communication agree that misunderstanding seems to be the rule in groups, with accurate understanding being the exception.

- One study of college students reported that **33% could not give accurate directions, 49% could not summarize the points made by a person who disagreed with them, and 35% could neither state their point of view clearly nor defend it** (Rubin, 1985).
- **On the receiver side, inaccuracies also arise from the information processing limitations and faulty listening habits of human beings.** Listeners tend to level (simplify and shorten), sharpen (embellish distinctions made by the speaker), and assimilate (interpret messages so that they match personal expectations and beliefs) information offered by others during a discussion (Campbell, 1958b; Collins & Guetzkow, 1964).
- **Nor do all group members have the interpersonal skills that a discussion demands** (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2002).
- **Sometimes groups use discussion to avoid rather than make a decision.** People tend to be “reluctant decision makers” who will do anything to avoid making a hard choice (Janis & Mann, 1977).



Group and Decision

Groups as imperfect decision makers: Discussion Pitfalls

Avoidance tactics

- ***Procrastination.*** The group postpones the decision rather than studying alternatives and arguing their relative merits.
- ***Bolstering.*** The group quickly but arbitrarily formulates a decision without thinking things through completely, and then bolsters the preferred solution by exaggerating the favorable consequences and minimizing the importance and likelihood of unfavorable consequences.
- ***Denying responsibility.*** The group avoids taking responsibility by delegating the decision to a subcommittee or by diffusing accountability throughout the entire assembly.
- ***Muddling through.*** The group muddles through the issue (Lindblom, 1965) by considering “only a very narrow range of policy alternatives that differ to only a small degree from the existing policy” (Janis & Mann, 1977, p. 33).
- ***“Satisficing”*** (what “satisfies” will “suffice”). Members accept a low-risk, easy solution instead of searching for the best solution.
- ***Trivializing the discussion.*** The group avoids dealing with larger issues by focusing on minor issues.



Group and Decision

Groups as imperfect decision makers: The Shared Information Bias

The good news is: that groups can pool their individual resources to make a decision that takes into account far more information than any one individual can consider.

The bad news is that groups spend too much of their discussion time examining shared information—details that two or more group members know in common—rather than unshared information (Stasser, 1992; Wittenbaum, Hollingshead, & Botero, 2004).

Shared information bias

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



Group and Decision

Groups as imperfect decision makers: The Shared Information Bias

What Causes the Shared Information Bias?

The shared information bias reflects the dual purposes of discussion. As a form of informational influence, discussions help individuals marshal the evidence and information they need to make good decisions. But as a form of normative influence, discussions give members the chance to influence each other's opinions on the issue.

Discussing unshared information may be enlightening, but discussing shared information helps the group reach consensus.

- Hence, ***when group members are motivated more by a desire get closure or to convince the group to back their initial preferences, biases are stronger; but if members are striving to make the best decision, the shared information bias becomes less pronounced*** (Postmes, Spears, & Cihangir, 2001; Scholten et al., 2007).
- ***The bias is strongest when groups work on judgmental tasks that do not have a demonstrably correct solution***, as the goal of the group is to reach agreement rather than to find the right answer (Stewart & Stasser, 1998).
- ***Groups are also more biased when their members think that they do not have enough information to make a fully informed decision*** (Stasser & Stewart, 1992).

Group and Decision

Groups as imperfect decision makers: The Shared Information Bias

What Causes the Shared Information Bias?

- ***If group members enter into the group discussion with a clear preference, they will argue in favor of their preference and resist changing their minds.*** If the shared information all points in one direction (Stasser and Titus's, 1985)
- ***The group's final choice reflects these initial preferences*** (Brodbeck et al., 2002; Gigone & Hastie, 1997; Greitemeyer & Schulz-Hardt, 2003; Henningsen & Henningsen, 2003).
- ***The shared information bias also reflects the nature of group discussion.*** Members are striving to reach the best decision possible, but they have other motivations as well: they are trying to establish reputations for themselves, secure tighter bonds of attraction with others, and possibly compete with and succeed against other group members (Wittenbaum et al., 2004).
- Therefore, ***they are selective regarding when they disclose information and to whom they disclose it***, often emphasizing shared information to express their agreement with others in the group (Wittenbaum, Hubbell, & Zuckerman, 1999).
- ***Members, to make a good impression with the group, dwell on what everyone knows rather than on the points that only they understand.*** Group members who anticipate a group discussion implicitly focus on information that they know others also possess, instead of concentrating on information that only they possess (Wittenbaum, Stasser, & Merry, 1996).



Group and Decision

Groups as imperfect decision makers: The Shared Information Bias **Can the Shared Information Bias Be Avoided?**

- Even though groups prefer to spend their time discussing shared information, **experienced members avoid this tendency, and they often intervene to focus the group's attention on unshared data** (Wittenbaum, 1998).
- When researchers studied medical teams making decisions, they noted that **the more senior group members repeated more shared information, but they also repeated more unshared information than the other group members**. Moreover, as the discussion progressed, they were more likely to repeat unshared information that was mentioned during the session (Larson et al., 1996).
- **Groups can also avoid the shared information bias if they spend more time actively discussing their decisions**. Because group members tend to discuss shared information first, groups are more likely to review unshared information in longer meetings (Larson, Foster-Fishman, & Keys, 1994; Winquist & Larson, 1998).
- Other methods of avoiding the bias **include increasing the diversity of opinions within the group** (Smith, 2008),
- **using an advocacy approach rather than general discussion** (Greitemeyer et al., 2006),
- **emphasizing the importance of dissent** (Klocke, 2007),
- **introducing the discussion as a new topic** (new business) rather than a return to a previously discussed item (Reimer, Reimer, & Hinsz, 2008).



Group and Decision

Groups as imperfect decision makers: The Shared Information Bias

ICTechnology also offers a solution to the bias.

The Group decision support systems (GDSS) offer members a way to catalog, more comprehensively, the group's total stock of information and then share that information collectively.

Depending on the GDSS, the group would have access to an array of decision-making tools, such as databases, search engines for locating information, communication tools for sending messages to specific individuals and to the entire group, shared writing and drawing areas where members can collaborate on projects, and computational tools that will poll members automatically and help them to estimate costs, risks, probabilities, and so on (Hollingshead, 2001b).

Group decision support systems

A set of integrated tools groups use to structure and facilitate their decision making, including computer programs that expedite data acquisition, communication among group members, document sharing, and the systematic review of alternative actions and outcomes.

Group and Decision

Groups as imperfect decision makers: Cognitive limitations

Groups generate decisions through processes that are both active and complex. Members formulate initial preferences, gather and share information about those preferences, and then combine their views in a single group choice. Although these tasks are relatively ordinary ones, they sometimes demand too much cognitive work from members.

- *People's judgments in demanding situations are often systematically distorted by cognitive and motivational biases.*
- *People use the information they have available to them inappropriately, putting too much emphasis on interesting information and ignoring statistical information.*
- *People sometimes form conclusions very quickly and then do not sufficiently revise those conclusions once they acquire additional information.*
- *When people cannot easily imagine an outcome, they assume that such an outcome is less likely to occur than one that springs easily to mind.*
- *People overestimate their judgmental accuracy because they remember all the times their decisions were confirmed and forget the times when their predictions were disconfirmed.*
- *People make mistakes* (Arkes, 1993; Brownstein, 2003; Plous, 1993).



Group and Decision

Groups as imperfect decision makers: Cognitive limitations

***Groups, unfortunately, are not immune from these judgmental biases.
Groups can be characterized by three general categories of potential bias***

- ***Sins of commission:*** the misuse of information
- ***Sins of omission:*** overlooking useful information
- ***Sins of imprecision:*** relying inappropriately on mental rules of thumb, or heuristics, that oversimplify the decision

- ***Groups amplify rather than suppress these biases.***

For example, they use information that has already been discredited or they have been told to ignore; they overlook statistical information about general tendencies; they overemphasize personality as a cause of behaviors that are due, in part, to pressures of the situation; and they base decisions on information that is readily available rather than actually diagnostic. More so even than individuals, groups know decisional sin.



Group and Decision

Groups as imperfect decision makers: Cognitive limitations

TABLE 11.2 Types of Errors Made by Individuals and by Groups When Making Decisions

Type of Error	Examples
Sins of Commission	<p><i>Belief perseverance</i>: reliance on information that has already been reviewed and found to be inaccurate</p> <p><i>Sunk cost bias</i>: reluctance to abandon a course of action once an investment has been made in that action</p> <p><i>Extra-evidentiary bias</i>: the use of information that one has been told explicitly to ignore</p> <p><i>Hindsight bias</i>: the tendency to overestimate the accuracy of one's prior knowledge of an outcome</p>
Sins of Omission	<p><i>Base rate bias</i>: failure to pay attention to information about general tendencies</p> <p><i>Fundamental attribution error</i>: stressing dispositional causes when making attributions about the cause of people's behaviors</p>
Sins of Imprecision	<p><i>Availability heuristic</i>: basing decisions on information that is readily available</p> <p><i>Conjunctive bias</i>: failing to recognize that the probability of two events occurring together will always be less than the probability of just one of the events occurring</p> <p><i>Representativeness heuristic</i>: excessive reliance on salient but misleading aspects of a problem</p>

Group and Decision

Groups as imperfect decision makers: Cognitive limitations

The confirmation bias.

In decision-making situations, people often start off with an initial preference and then seek out additional information to test the accuracy of their initial inclinations. Unfortunately, this review is biased in many cases, for people usually seek out information that confirms their preferences, and they avoid disconfirming evidence.

- Groups, too, seek out information that supports the prediscussion preferences of most members, but they can minimize this bias if they deliberately ban any public statements of initial preferences (Dawes, 1988).
- Groups also avoid the confirmation bias when they include individuals who adopt divergent minority positions on the issue. Many results confirm the value of including people with a range of experiences and opinions as members of groups that must make critical decisions (Schulz-Hardt et al., 2000; see also Schulz-Hardt, Jochims, & Frey, 2002).

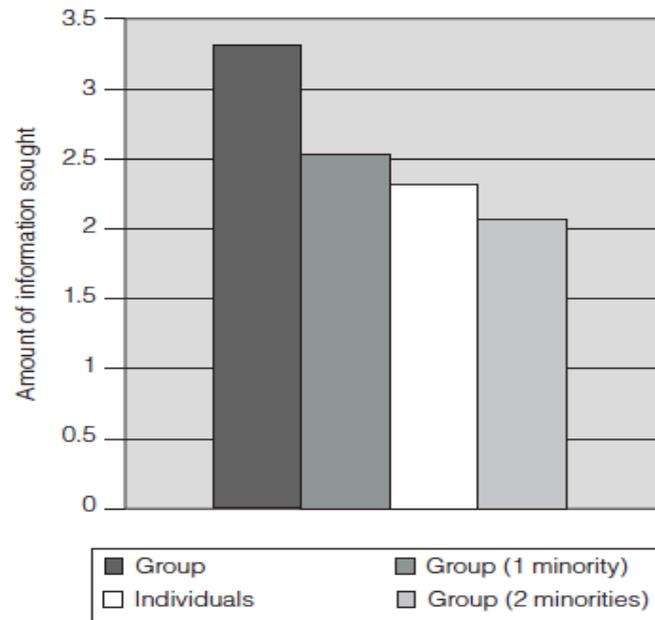


FIGURE 11.5 The magnitude of the confirmation bias in groups and individuals. Individuals, when they must make a decision, tend to seek out information that supports their initial preferences. This tendency is even stronger in groups, for groups showed a stronger preference for confirming information. Groups that include two members who initially disagree with the position taken by the majority of the members, however, are somewhat less biased than individuals.



Lesson: 12 – (4/4)

Title: Decision Making

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Group and Decision

Groups as imperfect decision makers: Group polarization

Risky-shift phenomenon

The tendency for groups to make riskier decisions than individuals.

- Although some researchers discovered that groups preferred more conservative solutions than individuals, others found a surprising shift in the direction of greater risk (Stoner, 1961, 1968).

This shift was often measured using the Choice-Dilemmas Questionnaire,

Choice-Dilemmas Questionnaire

A self-report measure of willingness to make risky decisions that ask respondents to read a series of scenarios involving a course of action that may or may not yield financial, interpersonal, or educational benefits, then indicate what the odds of success would have to be before they would recommend the course of action.



Group and Decision

Groups as imperfect decision makers: Group polarization *Risky-shift phenomenon*

- ***When individuals were asked to make decisions individually*** and then they convened in a group to revisit their choices, ***the group decisions were somewhat riskier than those favored by individuals*** (Wallach, Kogan, & Bem, 1962).
- ***The finding that groups seem to make riskier decisions than individuals was dubbed the riskyshift phenomenon.*** Shifts were reliably demonstrated in countries around the world, including Canada, the United States, England, France, Germany, and New Zealand, and with many kinds of group participants (Pruitt, 1971).
- Although commentators sometimes wondered about the generality and significance of the phenomenon (Smith, 1972), ***laboratory findings were eventually corroborated by field studies*** (Lamm & Myers, 1978).

Group and Decision

Groups as imperfect decision makers: Group polarization

Polarization Processes in Group

Nevertheless

- ***In 1969 researchers reported evidence of individuals moving in both directions after a group discussion, suggesting that both cautious and risky shifts were possible (Doise, 1969).***
- ***Researchers also discovered that group discussions not only amplify choices between risky and cautious alternatives, but also group members' attitudes, beliefs, values, judgments, and perceptions (Myers, 1982).***
- ***Strongly prejudiced people who discussed racial issues with other prejudiced individuals became even more prejudiced.*** However, when mildly prejudiced persons discussed racial issues with other mildly prejudiced individuals, they became less prejudiced (Myers & Bishop, 1970).

Researchers realized that risky shifts after group discussions were a part of a more general process. When people discuss issues in groups, they sometimes draw a more extreme conclusion than would be suggested by the average of their individual judgments. The direction of this shift depends on their average initial preferences.

- ***David Myers and Helmut Lamm called this process group polarization because the “average postgroup response will tend to be more extreme in the same direction as the average of the pregroup responses” (Myers & Lamm, 1976, p. 603; see also Lamm & Myers, 1978).***

Group and Decision

Groups as imperfect decision makers: Group polarization

Polarization Processes in Group

Group Polarization

The tendency for members of a deliberating group to move to a more extreme position, with the direction of the shift determined by the majority or average of the members' predeliberation preferences.

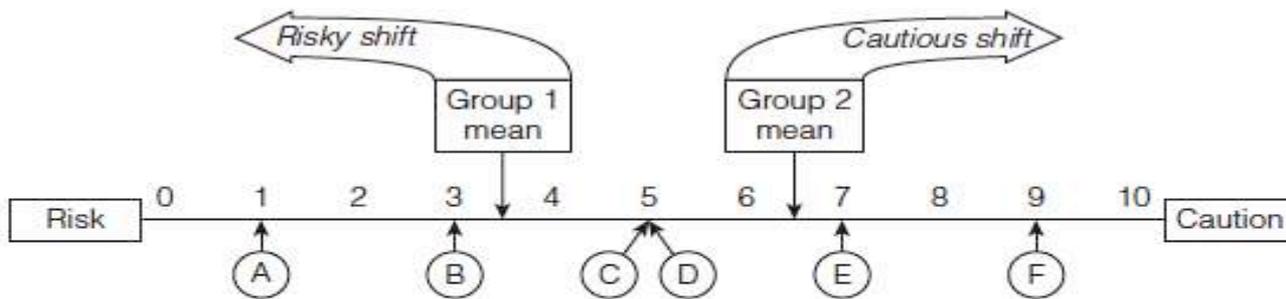


FIGURE 11.6 A schematic representation of polarization in groups. Imagine that Group 1 includes Person A (who chose 1), Person B (who chose 3), and Persons C and D (who both chose 5); the average of pregroup choices would be $(1 + 3 + 5 + 5)/4$, or 3.5. Because this mean is less than 5, a risky shift would probably occur in Group 1. If, in contrast, Group 2 contained Persons C, D, E, and F, their pregroup average would be $(5 + 5 + 7 + 9)/4$, or 6.5. Because this mean is closer to the caution pole, a cautious shift would probably occur in the group.



Group and Decision

Groups as imperfect decision makers: Group polarization

What Causes Group Polarization?

or

How do groups intensify individuals' reactions?

Early explanations suggested that groups feel less responsible for their decisions and are overly influenced by risk-prone leaders, but in time, investigators recognized that polarization results from social influence processes that operate routinely in groups, including

Social Comparison, Persuasion, and Social Identity

(Friedkin, 1999; Liu & Latané, 1998).



Group and Decision

Groups as imperfect decision makers: Group polarization

What Causes Group Polarization?

Social Comparison:

When people make decisions individually, they have no way to determine whether they are risk-averse or risk-takers; whether they are responding as most people do or are overreacting; whether the position they are defending is reasonable or whether they are arguing for an idea that most people think is bizarre.

- But *when group members make choices together, they use others as reference points to evaluate their own preferences and positions* (Goethals & Zanna, 1979; Myers, 1978).
- As social comparison theory suggests, *individuals spontaneously compare themselves to others, and if they find a difference between their view and the group's, they may move toward the group's view* (Sanders & Baron, 1977).
- *Polarization occurs because group members, through discussion, discover the group's norm on the issue*, and then they stake a claim to a position that exceeds that norm in whatever direction the majority of the members endorse (Weigold & Schlenker, 1991):.
- *"To be virtuous . . . is to be different from the mean—in the right direction and to the right degree"* (Brown, 1974, p. 469).

Group and Decision

Groups as imperfect decision makers: Group polarization

Social Identity

Curiously, at least for persuasive arguments theory, group members sometimes shift their opinions when they discover others' positions but not their arguments (Blascovich, Ginsburg, & Howe, 1975, 1976).

Why?

- Social identity theory suggests that ***people are not persuaded by the content of other's arguments, but by consensus of opinion***. If, through discussion, members come to believe that the prototypical group member holds a relatively extreme attitude on the issue, those who identify with the group will shift in that direction (Haslam, 2004).
- ***This conception of the prototype may also shift towards more extreme positions to differentiate the ingroup from other groups***. If group members learned another group had taken a risky position on an issue, the group members differentiated themselves from that group by becoming more cautious. When the group learned the other group was cautious, then the group shifted in the direction of risk (Hogg, Turner, & David, 1990).
- ***Polarization may also result because people are far more likely to respond positively to the arguments offered by ingroup members than outgroup members***, and so those who hold a shared social identity may end up persuading each other to take increasingly more extreme positions (Mackie & Queller, 2000).

Group and Decision

Groups as imperfect decision makers: Group polarization

Persuasive Arguments

- *The group persuades itself, as more arguments favoring the dominant viewpoint are brought up during the discussion* (Burnstein & Vinokur, 1973, 1977; Vinokur & Burnstein, 1974, 1978).
- *If discussants are asked to repeat the arguments raised in the discussion, polarization increases because members are more likely to be persuaded by the content of the pool of available arguments* (Brauer, Judd, & Gliner, 1995).
- *The group's social decision scheme may also favor a more extreme position rather than a moderate one.* If, for example, a group adopts a “risk-supported-wins” rule, and two members of the group express a willingness to tolerate extreme risk, then the group may shift in that direction (Davis, Kameda, & Stasson, 1992; Zuber, Crott, & Werner, 1992).

Persuasive-arguments theory

An explanation of polarization in groups assuming that group members change their opinions during group discussion, generally adopting the position favored by the majority of the members, because the group can generate more arguments favoring that position.

Group and Decision

Groups as imperfect decision makers: Group polarization *The Consequences of Polarization*

Do groups amplify group members' shared tendencies?

- Studies of polarization say yes (Sunstein, 2002).
- They are sensitive to threats and urge caution when alarmed (Kameda & Tamura, 2007).

And the Groupthinking born





Group and Decision

Groups as imperfect decision makers: Group polarization

The Consequences of Polarization

The Human tendency to polarize could become a continuous seeking out of agreement with others (concurrency-seeking tendency), which in turn leads to two classes of observable consequences: symptoms of groupthink and symptoms of defective decision-making.

Tree categories of group thinking symptoms

- 1. Overestimation of the group,***
- 2. Closed-mindedness,***
- 3. Pressures toward uniformity***

(Janis, 1972, 1982, 1983, 1985, 1989; Janis & Mann, 1977; Longley & Pruitt, 1980; Wheeler & Janis, 1980).



Group and Decision

Groups as imperfect decision makers: Group polarization

The Consequences of Polarization

Overestimation of the Group

- *Groups that have fallen into the trap of groupthink are actually planning fiascoes and making all the wrong choices. Yet the members usually assume that everything is working perfectly. They even express enthusiasm in their public statements about their wrong-headed decisions (Tetlock, 1979).*
- *Such feelings of confidence and power may help athletic teams or combat units reach their objectives, but the feeling that all obstacles can be easily overcome through power and good luck can cut short clear, analytic thinking in decision-making groups (Silver & Bufanio, 1996).*
- *Although groups are capable of reaching admirable levels of moral thought, this capability is unrealized during groupthink (McGraw & Bloomfield, 1987).*

Closed-mindedness

- *Groups that are overtaken by groupthink are not open-minded groups, searching for new ideas and perspectives. Rather, they are closed-minded—rigidly shut off from alternatives, merely seeking to bolster their initial decision through rationalization. One key element of this closure is the tendency to view other groups in biased, simplistic ways (Forsyth, 2014)*

Group and Decision

Groups as imperfect decision makers: Group polarization

The Consequences of Polarization

Pressures toward Uniformity

- *The struggle for consensus is an essential and unavoidable aspect of life in groups, but in groupthink situations, interpersonal pressures make agreeing too easy and disagreeing too difficult.* Tolerance for any sort of dissent seems virtually nil, and groups may use harsh measures to bring those who disagree into line (Janis, 1980).
- As Janis (1972) explained, *the group members played up “areas of convergence in their thinking, at the expense of fully exploring divergences that might disrupt the apparent unity of the group”* (p. 39).
- This easygoing, supportive atmosphere did not extend to those who disagreed with the group, however. *Direct pressure was applied to dissenters, often by self-appointed vigilantes, or mindguards, who shielded the group from information that would shake the members’ confidence in themselves or their leader* (Uris, 1978).

Mindguard

A group member who shields the group from negative or controversial information by gatekeeping and suppressing dissent.

Group and Decision

Groups as imperfect decision makers: Group polarization

Abilene paradox

The counterintuitive tendency for a group to decide on a course of action that none of the members of the group individually endorses, resulting from the group's failure to recognize and manage its agreement on key issues.

Pluralistic ignorance

When members of a group hold a wide range of opinions, beliefs, or judgments but express similar opinions, beliefs, or judgments publicly because each member believes that his or her personal view is different from that of the others in the group.

Entrapment

A form of escalating investment in which individuals expend more of their resources in pursuing a chosen course of action than seems appropriate or justifiable by external standards.



Group and Decision

Groups as imperfect decision makers: Group polarization

Causes of Groupthink

Cohesiveness

Of the many factors that contribute to the rise of groupthink, Janis emphasized cohesiveness above all others. He agreed that groups that lack cohesion can also make terrible decisions—“especially if the members are engaging in internal warfare”—but they cannot experience groupthink (Janis, 1982, p. 176).

Structural Faults of the Group or Organization

Cohesion is a necessary condition for groupthink, but the syndrome is more likely to emerge when the group is organized in ways that inhibit the flow of information and promote carelessness in the application of decision-making procedures. Insulation of the group from other groups, for example, can promote the development of unique, potentially inaccurate perspectives on issues and their solution.

Provocative Situational Context

A number of provocative situational factors may push the group in the direction of error rather than accuracy. Because the insecurity of each individual can be minimized if the group quickly chooses a plan of action with little argument or dissension, the group may rush to reach closure by making a decision as quickly as possible (Callaway, Marriott, & Esser, 1985). Moreover any factors that work to lower members' self-esteem, such as a history of mistakes or prior lapses of morality, may further increase the possibility of groupthink.



Group and Decision

Groups as imperfect decision makers: Group polarization

Emergence of Groupthink

- As predicted, ***the higher the number of groupthink symptoms, the more unfavorable the outcome of the group's deliberations*** ($r = .62$; Herek, Janis, & Huth, 1987, 1989; Welch, 1989).
- ***Leaders in the groupthink situations showed signs of reduced complexity and they were more likely to make positive statements about the ingroup.*** (Tetlock, 1992; Peterson et al., 1998)
- ***Groups that derived their cohesiveness from their members' commitment to the task, for example, displayed significantly fewer symptoms of groupthink, whereas groups that were interpersonally cohesive displayed more symptoms of groupthink*** (Bernthal & Insko, 1993).
- ***Groups with a leader who adopted a closed style were more biased in their judgments, particularly when many of the group members had a high need for certainty*** (Hodson & Sorrentino, 1997).
- ***Groups with leaders with a strong need for power also performed less effectively, irrespective of the group's level of cohesion*** (Fodor & Smith, 1982)