12

The Psychology of Groups: Basic Principles

Bernard A. Nijstad and Daan van Knippenberg

KEY CONCEPTS

cohesion
commitment
entitativity
expectation states theory
group socialization
initiation
interpersonal cohesion
need to belong
role
role transition
socio-emotional behaviour
speaking hierarchy
staffing level
status
task behaviour
task cohesion
transactive memory

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Groups are pervasive in social life. In this chapter, we discuss why people form and join groups, and what types of groups can be distinguished. We further discuss three levels of analysis. At the individual level, we discuss the (changing) relations between the group and its members. At the group level, we discuss group development, group structure (status and roles) and group norms. At the intergroup level, we discuss how the (intergroup) context shapes the behaviour of group members and the structure of groups.

Introduction

Imagine you're spending a weekend in Amsterdam. You enter a subway station, which is quite crowded. From the way people are dressed – many are wearing red and white Ajax shirts – you infer that they must be Ajax fans going to support their football team. These fans show remarkable behaviour: they sing and shout in ways they would not normally behave in public. Yet, most of them are adults (and not all are drunk), and they only show this behaviour when there is an Ajax match. The most striking aspect of their behaviour is that the fans behave so similarly. However,

Plate 12.1 *These fans share membership of a social group: they are all Ajax football supporters.*

many of them do not even know each other, and their behaviour is quite out of the ordinary: normally, people would not sing and shout in a subway.

The only reason these fans behave so similarly is that they share membership of a social group: they are all Ajax fans. In this chapter, we argue that in order to understand their behaviour and behaviour in other groups, we need to consider three *levels of analysis*: the individual level, the group level and the wider context in which groups are situated. At the individual level, all Ajax fans in the subway are individually aware of their group membership (being an Ajax fan) and of the fact that the other people in the subway are Ajax fans as well. At the group level, the fact that their behaviour is so similar indicates that it cannot be caused by idiosyncratic tendencies of individual Ajax fans, such as their individual personalities. Rather, there is something 'groupy' going on which guides

their behaviour. At the broader level, one could argue that these fans only show this behaviour because of the context: there is going to be a football match in which Ajax will play against another team. Indeed, if there had been no such match, the fans would behave quite differently.

In this chapter, we use this three-level framework to discuss some basic characteristics of groups and some basic processes in groups. We first examine the issues of what a group is, why people form or join groups, and what types of groups can be distinguished. We then move on to the individual level and discuss how individuals join groups and how their group membership develops over time. We then consider the group level, as we discuss group development and group structure. Finally, we discuss the (intergroup) context in which groups exist and how this context affects processes that occur in groups.

THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF GROUPS

What is a group?
Why do people form, join and distinguish groups?
What kinds of groups can be distinguished, and what are their characteristics?
What is group entitativity, and what contributes to perceptions of entitativity?

Defining groups

Groups are everywhere: we see groups of friends in a bar, groups of colleagues in an organization, groups of fans in a stadium. But what exactly do we mean by the word 'group?' Many authors have suggested different ingredients towards a definition of groups. Lewin (1948) suggested that common fate is critical: people are a group to the extent that they experience similar outcomes. Sherif and Sherif (1969) proposed that some form of social structure (status or role differentiation, e.g., a leadership role) is essential, because otherwise the 'group' would just be a loose collection of individuals. Bales (1950) stressed the importance of face-to-face interaction. We suggest a broader definition of groups: following Tajfel (1981), we argue that *a group exists when two or more individuals define themselves as members of a group*.

A few things should be noted. First, many different groups would fit this definition, including religious groups (Christians), national groups (the British), organizational groups (the psychology department) and friendship groups (a student society). Second, it is subjective and does not include any 'objective' characteristics of groups, such as common fate or face-to-face interaction. Rather, it emphasizes common identity: sharing the view with others that you belong to the same group. Third, it is important to recognize

that one can only talk about groups to the extent that there are people who do not belong to the group, although they belong to other groups.

Why groups?

Why do humans form, join and distinguish groups? Several theoretical perspectives can be applied to answer that question. We will discuss three: a sociobiological, a cognitive and a utilitarian perspective (also see Baron & Kerr, 2003). These three perspectives are complementary rather than mutually exclusive.

Following Darwin's evolution theory, the *sociobiological perspective* (e.g., Bowlby, 1958) emphasizes the adaptive value of forming groups. Forming groups enables humans (and other social animals) to deal more effectively with enemies or predators, and allows cooperation in such areas as raising children, farming or hunting. Especially earlier in our evolutionary history, when food was often scarce and enemies and predators were dangerous, forming groups had a significant advantage. A predisposition to form groups increased the chances of survival of the individual and, through the evolutionary principle of natural selection, this predisposition was selected and passed on to later generations. This human predisposition to form and maintain stable, strong and positive relationships with others is called the *need to belong* (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Baumeister and

> **need to belong** the fundamental and innate human motivation to form positive, strong and stable bonds with others

Leary argued that this human need is innate and universal. Indeed, evidence indicates that the tendency to form groups is found across all cultures and situations, suggesting that this tendency is evolutionarily 'built in'.

According to the *cognitive perspective*, groups help us to understand our world. *Social comparison theory* (Festinger, 1954; see Chapters 5 and 10, this volume) argues that people want to hold accurate views of the world. They can do this by validating their

beliefs either against 'physical reality' (e.g., 'Will this glass crack if I hit it with a hammer?') or against 'social reality' (e.g., 'I like this new music; I wonder what my friends think about it?'). People turn to others especially for beliefs for which there is no physical reality (e.g., preferences). Building on these ideas, *social identity theory* (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1986; see Chapter 5, this volume) and *self-categorization theory* (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987; see Chapters 5 and 11, this volume) argue that people define themselves and others partly in terms of group membership. The theory argues that seeing oneself and others as members of groups helps to reduce uncertainty and make sense of our world (e.g., Hogg & Abrams, 1993). Being a member of a group often provides guidelines for the way we should behave and think. If you think about the Ajax football fans we started this chapter with, their behaviour is clearly guided by their group membership and the behaviours thought to be appropriate for that group (see our later discussion of group norms). Further, seeing other people as members of certain groups helps to interpret their behaviour: knowing that the people in the subway are Ajax fans makes it much easier to understand what is going on.

A *utilitarian perspective* argues that people derive benefits from groups. *Social exchange theory* (e.g., Thibaut & Kelley, 1959; see Chapter 10, this volume) argues that social relations (including those within groups) help to fulfil the individual's needs and often take the form of exchange processes. These exchanges might involve material goods (e.g., borrowing a tool, selling your car) or interpersonal helping (helping a friend move house), but also psychological 'goods' such as love, friendship or approval. Enduring exchange relations between two or more people are more effectively organized when people form a (more or less stable) group. Thus, groups exist because they facilitate mutually beneficial social exchange.

Social exchange theory argues that social relations involve costs as well as benefits, and as long as the benefits exceed the costs the relation will yield a 'profit'. There is much evidence that people are unhappy about relations if they feel that they invest more in them (e.g., time) than they get back (e.g., approval) (e.g., Le & Agnew, 2003; see also Chapter 10). Furthermore, satisfaction with an exchange relationship depends on the degree to which alternative relationships exist that yield more profit. Thus, people join groups because they derive benefits from their group membership. People may leave groups (if possible) when they are unhappy about the benefits relative to the costs of group membership, or when alternative groups exist that have a better cost–benefit ratio (also see Rusbult & Farrell, 1983). In general, people will leave groups when better alternatives are available, including the option of being alone.

Types of groups and group entitativity

As we noted earlier, our definition of groups is relatively broad and many types of groups may be included. However, there are different types of groups with different characteristics. Further, some groups seem more 'groupy' than other groups, a phenomenon often referred to as the **entitativity** of groups: the degree to which a collection of persons is perceived as being bonded together in a coherent unit (Campbell, 1958).

> **entitativity** the degree to which a collection of persons is perceived as being bonded together in a coherent unit

So, what different types of groups can we distinguish? Lickel et al. (2000) wondered whether people spontaneously distinguish between different types of groups. They provided their participants (American and Polish students) with a sample of 40 different groups, such as 'members of a family', 'blacks', 'members of a jury' and 'people in line at a bank'. Participants had to rate these different groups on eight dimensions: importance of group members to each other, common goals and common outcomes for group members, degree of interaction among members, size, duration, permeability (how easy it is to join or leave the group) and similarity among group members. The groups were also rated on the degree to which the group really was a group (group entitativity). After they had done the ratings, participants were asked to sort the 40 groups into different categories using their own individual criteria, including as many or as few categories as they wanted.

Lickel et al. (2000) found that some of their 40 groups were consistently sorted into one common category, whereas other groups were consistently sorted into other categories. Further, groups that were sorted into the same category were also rated similarly on the eight dimensions. Lickel et al. identified four types of groups: intimacy groups, task groups, social categories and loose associations. In Table 12.1 we give a summary of their findings and some examples of the different types of groups. As can be seen in the table, the types of groups differed along the different dimensions. For example, intimacy groups (e.g., a family) were seen as

PIONEER

John Walter Thibaut (1917–1986) was born in Marion, Ohio. He studied philosophy at the University of North Carolina. During World War II, he came into contact with psychology when he was assigned to the Aviation Psychology Program. In 1946, he moved to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to study with Kurt Lewin. After Lewin's death in 1947, Thibaut moved to the University of Michigan where he received his PhD. His subsequent career took him to Boston University, Harvard University and back to the University of North Carolina. Thibaut is best known for his 1959 book (co-authored with Harold Kelley) *The Social Psychology of Groups*. In that book, Thibaut and Kelley laid out the foundations of social exchange theory, arguing that social relations take the form of social exchange processes.

Plate 12.2 *Intimacy groups, e.g. a family, are seen as high in entitativity.*

et al. (2000) also considered which of their eight group characteristics best predicted group entitativity. They found that the single most important predictor was interaction among group members: higher levels of interaction were associated with higher entitativity. The other characteristics also contributed to entitativity: importance, common goals and outcomes, group member similarity and duration showed a positive relation (the higher the importance, common goals, etc., the higher the perceived entitativity), whereas group size and permeability showed a weak negative relation (larger groups and highly permeable groups were rated lower in entitativity). Note that some of the possible components of a definition of groups that we described earlier (common fate, face-to-face interaction) were positively associated with perceived group entitativity: they indeed make groups more 'groupy'.

important, with high levels of interaction, common goals and outcomes, a high degree of similarity, fairly small, of long duration and low permeability. Social categories (e.g., women), in contrast, were rated low on importance of members to each other, with low levels of interaction, common goals and outcomes, and member similarity, and were rated to be large, of long duration and low in permeability.

With regard to group entitativity, intimacy groups and task groups were seen as high in entitativity, loose associations as low, and social categories occupied an intermediate position. Lickel

SUMMARY

Forming, joining and distinguishing groups has a number of advantages: groups help us to make sense of our world and to coordinate more effectively mutually beneficial social exchange. The tendency to form groups probably is evolutionarily built in, as groups are found everywhere. However, not every type of group is equally important or 'groupy': especially intimacy groups and task groups are seen to be important and high in entitativity, while social categories and loose associations are less so.

Table 12.1 *Characteristics of different types of groups (based on Lickel et al., 2000)*

Characteristic	*Type of group (examples)*			
	Intimacy group (family members, friends, romantic partners)	*Task group (jury members, cast of a play, sports team)*	*Social category (women, blacks, Americans)*	*Loose association (people at a bus stop, at the cinema, living in same area)*
Entitativity	High	High	Moderate	Low
Interaction	High	Moderate/High	Low	Low
Importance	High	Moderate/High	Low	Low
Common goals	High	Moderate/High	Low	Low
Common outcomes	High	Moderate/High	Low	Low
Similarity	High	Moderate	Low	Low
Duration	Long	Moderate	Long	Short
Permeability	Low	Moderate	Low	High
Size	Small	Small	Large	Moderate

INDIVIDUALS IN GROUPS: THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL OF ANALYSIS

What stages of group socialization can be distinguished?
What are role transitions and what determines their occurrence?
How does dissonance theory explain severity of initiation?

In this section we consider the individual within the group: that is, we focus on the individual level of analysis. In particular, we discuss Moreland and Levine's (1982) model of *group socialization*, which is depicted in Figure 12.1. The model is applicable to groups that exist for comparatively long periods of time and have direct interaction between members, but that experience changes in membership. Examples would include a sports team, a team within an organization or a student society (i.e., many intimacy groups and task groups).

> **group socialization** the efforts of the group to assimilate new members to existing group norms and practices

Moreland and Levine's model distinguishes five stages of group membership: investigation, socialization, maintenance, resocialization and remembrance. According to the model, moving from one stage to the next involves a *role transition*. Thus, moving from prospective member (the stage of investigation) to new member (the stage of socialization) involves the role transition of entry. Further role transitions are acceptance (from new member to full member), divergence (from full member to marginal member) and exit (from marginal member to ex-member). As can be seen in Figure 12.1, the five different stages differ in the degree of *commitment* of the individual to the group, in other words, the degree to which a group member identifies with the group and its goals and wishes to maintain group membership. Commitment increases gradually as people become full members, after which it decreases towards the point that individuals wish to leave the group.

> **role transition** a change in the relation between a group member and a group
>
> **commitment** the degree to which a group member identifies with the group and its goals and wishes to maintain group membership

Role transitions occur as a result of evaluation processes in which the group and the individual evaluate one another's 're-wardingness', or the extent to which the group is rewarding for the member and the member is valued by the group. When the group is rewarding for members, they will try to enter the group or maintain group membership (i.e., feel commitment). Similarly, when a group values a (prospective) member, the group will encourage the person to become or stay a member of the group (i.e., the group is committed to the member). This is related to our earlier discussion of social exchange processes and the benefits people
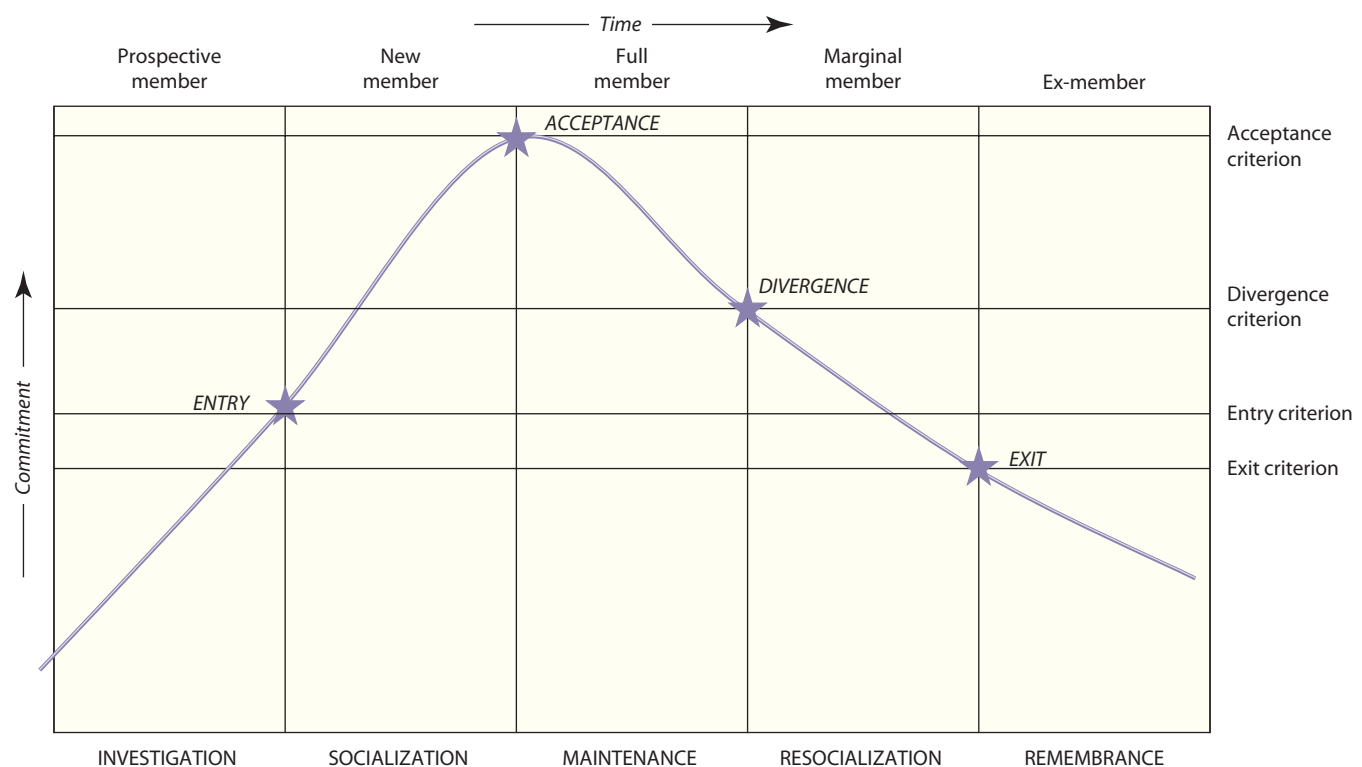

Figure 12.1 *The Moreland and Levine (1982) model of group socialization.*

can derive from them (e.g., to gain social approval or receive help or material goods). Indeed, according to Moreland and Levine (1982), commitment is a function of the past, present and expected future rewardingness of the group as compared to the rewardingness of alternative groups. In the remainder of this section, we consider the five stages shown in Figure 12.1.

Joining a group and group socialization: Becoming a full member

Investigation In the stage of investigation, groups look for people who might make a contribution to the attainment of group goals. Task groups will often search for people who have the required skills and abilities, whereas intimacy groups will tend to emphasize compatibility (e.g., similarity) with the existing membership. Prospective members, on the other hand, will look for groups that may potentially fulfil their needs. For example, when you have just moved to a new city to start college, you will probably try to identify certain groups that may help to fulfil your social needs. Thus, you may join a student society, hoping to find people with whom you can start a new, positive and stable relation (i.e., fulfil your need to belong).

Entry and initiation When the level of mutual commitment between group and prospective member reaches an entry criterion, a role transition will occur: *entry*. Entry is often marked by some ritual or ceremony that makes it clear that the relation between the group and the (prospective) member has changed. In an organization, this may take the form of a welcome speech, and in social groups it may be a party. At other times the entry or *initiation* ritual can be quite unpleasant and painful for the prospective member.

> **initiation** the role transition of entry into a group, often accompanied by some ritual

Lodewijkx and Syroit (1997) studied initiation into a Dutch sorority (a student society for female students). The novices first stay in a campsite for a week. Everyone wears a shapeless, sack-like uniform, they are not called by their real names and they have to undergo physical hardship (hard work and lack of sleep and food). After a week they return to the city and participate in 'evening gatherings' for a further one and a half weeks. During these gatherings, which are regarded as threatening by the novices, they are often bullied and embarrassed. Then, finally, the inauguration ceremony takes place, after which they have a meal with the senior members – the so-called 'integration party' – and the initiation is ended.

As these severe initiations take place in many different groups (e.g., the military, some sports teams, student societies), the question arises as to why groups perform these harsh rituals. Aronson and Mills (1959) suggested a classic argument. They maintained that severe initiations increase the liking for and commitment to the group. Their argument is based upon *cognitive dissonance theory* (Festinger, 1957; see Chapter 7, this volume). Suppose a prospective member has undergone harsh treatment but it later appears that the group is not as attractive as initially believed. This would lead to cognitive dissonance: members can no longer maintain that they had good reasons to undergo the harsh treatment when they admit that the group is not so attractive after all. Thus, the member will deny that the group is unattractive and will maintain a high level of commitment to the group.

Aronson and Mills (1959) performed an experiment to test this reasoning. They offered female students the opportunity to join a discussion group about sexuality. However, some of the prospective members first had to undergo the embarrassing experience of reading aloud sexually explicit passages, while other prospective members did not have to do this. Next, the participants listened to an actual group discussion that was recorded on tape. This discussion was in fact quite boring and was about the secondary sexual behaviour of lower animals. Participants were next asked to rate the attractiveness of the group. In line with the dissonance explanation, the women who had to read the embarrassing passages rated the group more attractive than those who did not.

Lodewijkx and Syroit (1997), however, did not find a positive relation between severity of initiation and group liking. They conducted a field study among the prospective members of the sorority mentioned above and found, in fact, that severe initiations *decreased* the liking for the group. Thus, prospective members of the sorority who rated the initiation as more severe liked the group less. The reason was that severe initiations led to loneliness and frustration, and this in turn reduced the liking for the group. What Lodewijkx and Syriot did find was that, during the initiation, positive relations developed among prospective members and these increased liking for the group.

Thus, severe initiations do not always increase liking for the group, as they may lead to loneliness and frustration. In the Aronson and Mills study, in which the initiation was very brief, this probably did not happen. Severe initiations may also have other functions: they deter potential members who are not eager enough to join the group, and prospective members can show their interest in the group by undergoing these harsh treatments (Moreland & Levine, 1982).

Socialization After entry, the stage of socialization begins. In this stage, new members learn the *norms* of the group: the (unwritten) rules that prescribe the attitudes and behaviours that are (or are not) appropriate in the context of the group. In addition, new members may acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to function effectively as a group member (i.e., learn their *role* in the group: the set of behaviours associated with a certain position in the group).

> **role** the behaviours expected of a person with a specific position in the group

Thus, the group tries to assimilate the member to fit the expectations of the group. However, socialization is a two-way street, and the new member may also try to influence the group in such a way that the member's needs are best met. For example, a new member may try to change the group's norms or customs (e.g., 'I think that we should meet more often'). Research close-up 12.1 describes a study of newcomer influence.

During socialization, the commitment of the member towards the group and the commitment of the group towards the member
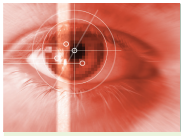
RESEARCH CLOSE-UP 12.1

Conditions under which newcomers can influence a group

Choi, H.S. & Levine, J.M. (2004). Minority influence in work teams: The impact of newcomers. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *40*, 273–280.

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Introduction

Choi and Levine studied the impact of newcomers on groups. In particular, they were interested in the degree to which the other group members would accept a newcomer's suggestion to change the way in which the group works. Choi and Levine argued that this would be dependent on task success: when the group had been successful before the newcomer's arrival, they would be unmotivated to change their strategy, whereas they would more likely consider it after failure. Second, they argued that when the group had chosen their own way of working, they would be less likely to give it up because they would feel more committed to it. On the other hand, groups that had been assigned a specific way of working would more easily accept the newcomer's suggestion.

Method

Participants
Participants were 141 male undergraduates who took part in 47 three-person groups.

Design and procedure
Participants performed a task twice. After the first task trial, one of the group members was replaced by a newcomer, who suggested changing the way of working. The experimental design was a 2 (group performance: failure/success) × 2 (group choice: no choice/choice) factorial. Group performance was manipulated by giving false feedback after the first task trial. Group choice was manipulated by having the groups choose their own way of working before the first trial or not giving them that choice.

The task the groups had to perform was an air-surveillance task. The three group members were seated at different computers. One of them was randomly appointed commander, the other two specialists. The two specialists had to monitor eight characteristics of planes flying through a simulated airspace, such as airspeed, direction and weapons. They had to pass the information on to the commander, who had to use a formula to integrate the information and assign a threat value to each plane. Based on the accuracy of that value, the group could earn points.

After task training, the first independent variable was introduced. Groups were given a description of two strategies of how to divide the workload between the two specialists – one according to the importance and one based on the difficulty of monitoring plane characteristics. Some groups could choose their preferred strategy, while others were given no choice. Then the first trial, lasting 15 minutes, was performed. The groups received either positive or negative feedback about how well they had done in that first trial (the performance manipulation). One of the specialists was then replaced by a newcomer, who in fact was a confederate of the experimenter. To get acquainted, the two real participants were allowed to have an electronic chat with the newcomer. During this chat, the newcomer proposed using the other strategy (i.e., the one the group had not used in the first trial). A second 15 minute trial followed, in which the groups made an assessment whether to stay with their old strategy or adopt the newcomer's suggestion to change.

Results

Results are shown in Figure 12.2. As predicted, both group choice and group performance affected the adoption of the newcomer's suggestion. After failure and when the initial strategy had been assigned, groups were more likely to change strategies than after success or when they had chosen their initial strategy themselves.

Discussion

Choi and Levine conclude that newcomers are not merely passive recipients of influence. Under some conditions, such as failure on the group task, newcomers can have a substantial influence on the practices of the group. As such, newcomers can bring about changes and introduce innovations to the group.
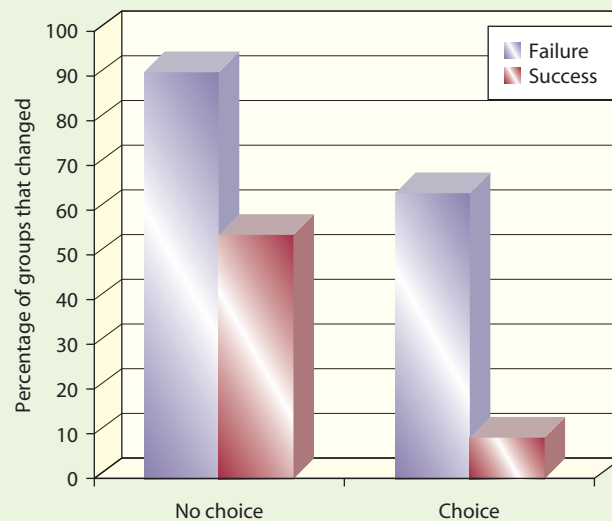

Figure 12.2 *Effects of performance feedback and group choice on acceptance of newcomer suggestions (after Choi & Levine, 2004).*

will generally increase (except when the new member or the group is dissatisfied). At a certain point in time (when the acceptance criterion is reached), the member will no longer be treated as somebody who needs special attention, the socialization stage is ended and the new member is accepted as a full member. The new members may gain access to information that was previously hidden, join certain informal cliques, and their behaviour is monitored less strictly. As with entry, there may be some ritual to mark the transition of acceptance as a full member. A well-known example is the bar mitzvah ceremony for Jewish boys at the age of 13, after which the boy is accepted as a full member of Jewish society instead of being considered a child.

Being accepted as a full member is easier in some groups than in others. In part, it depends on the *staffing level* of the group:

> **staffing level** the degree to which the actual number of group members is similar to the ideal number of group members

the degree to which the actual number of group members is similar to the ideal number of group members. Groups can be overstaffed (have too many members) as well as understaffed (have too few members). One might expect that understaffed groups will be less demanding of new members (it is easier to become a full member) than overstaffed groups.

Cini, Moreland and Levine (1993) conducted a study among 93 student groups, including fine arts clubs, social groups and political groups. They held interviews with the president of each group in which they gathered information about the staffing level of the groups and about recruitment and socialization practices. It appeared that both understaffing and overstaffing caused problems. Understaffing led to a loss of resources (e.g., too few members contributing membership fees), poorer group performance and fatigue among group members. Overstaffing led to apathy and boredom, alienation (i.e., group members felt 'lost in the crowd'), and confusion and disorganization. The solution to understaffing, not surprisingly, was to recruit new members. Consequently, the groups that were understaffed were more open: they were less selective (it was easier to become a new member), and also less demanding for new members (it was easier to become a full member). For example, new members were evaluated and expected to perform special duties less often in understaffed as compared to overstaffed groups. Solutions to overstaffing, in contrast, were to restrict membership, but also to punish deviance from group norms more harshly, in the hope that deviant members would leave the group.

Being in a group: Maintenance and role negotiation

After acceptance, the stage of maintenance begins. This stage is characterized by high levels of commitment, and for both the member and the group the relation is seen as rewarding (see Figure 12.1). The major way in which groups and members try to increase the rewardingness of their relationship is through role negotiation. Thus, the member tries to occupy the role within the group that best satisfies his or her need, whereas the group tries to appoint roles to members in such a way that the group's goals can be best achieved. One of the more important roles within the group is that of group leader (see Chapter 13, this volume). However, there are often other roles that need to be fulfilled within groups, such as those of 'recruiter' (who identifies and evaluates prospective members) and 'trainer' (who has a role during socialization of new members). According to the model, the relation between the group and the member will be rewarding and commitment will remain high to the degree that role negotiations are successful. Being in a group is more extensively examined in the next section, where we discuss norms, roles and status.

Leaving a group: Divergence and exit

Divergence After a time, group members may lose interest in the group, for example because they are dissatisfied with their role in the group or because they have identified other groups that are more rewarding. On the other hand, the commitment of the group to its members may decline when members fail to live up to group expectations. For example, members may not perform well in their role or may violate important group norms. This will lead the group to relabel these members as marginal members or deviates. The group might, for instance, no longer give marginal members full information, or other group members may exclude marginal members from informal cliques (e.g., they are no longer asked to come along for a drink after work). Often, considerable pressure is exerted on deviates to realign or even to leave the group (especially if the group is overstaffed).

Schachter (1951) experimentally demonstrated the pressure that is exerted on deviates. He had groups discuss a delinquency case. In each of the experimental groups there were confederates playing different roles: the 'mode' who accommodated to the group's average judgement, the 'slider' who initially took an extreme position but then moved towards the group norm, and the 'deviate' who also took an extreme position but maintained it throughout the discussion. Initially, the group discussion was primarily aimed at the two deviating members (the slider and the deviate) in each group, trying to change their minds. When it became apparent that the deviates would not change, the groups eventually excluded them, refusing to talk to them and ignoring their contributions (see Figure 12.3).
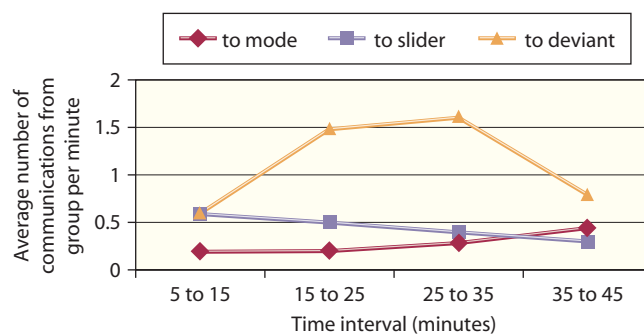

Figure 12.3 *Communications directed towards the mode, slider and deviant over time (based on Schachter, 1951).*

Resocialization and exit Divergence might be followed by a period of resocialization. In this period, the group might try to persuade marginal members not to leave, or they might try to accommodate to the wishes of marginal members (e.g., give them a different role). Similarly, group members may try to convince the group not to expel them, and might try to assimilate to the group's expectations again. This might result in re-entry to the group when successful. However, when resocialization fails, group members may reach an exit criterion and leave the group. As with other role transitions, this may involve some ritual, such as a goodbye speech or a party. Alternatively, the group may expel the member, which can be quite a painful experience. For example, an employee might be fired or a church member might be excommunicated.

Research has shown that social exclusion from groups has enormous negative effects on excluded members. Consider the following situation. You are invited to come to the psychology lab to participate in an experiment and are asked to wait in a waiting room until the experiment starts. In that room two other participants are also waiting (they are, in fact, confederates of the experimenter). One of them has brought a tennis ball and playfully throws it to the other participant. That participant joins in and throws the ball to you. For a while, the three of you play this ball-tossing game. After some time, however, the other participants no longer throw the ball to you, but only to each other, and this goes on for several minutes. How would you feel?

Williams (2001) reports extensive evidence concerning the power of social exclusion. Using the ball-tossing game (and other situations), he found that social exclusion produces severe negative moods and anger, and leads to lower ratings on belongingness and self-esteem. Further, Eisenberger, Lieberman and Williams (2003) found that exclusion quite literally is a form of 'social pain'. These researchers had participants play a computerized version of the ball-tossing game while lying in an fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) brain scanner. Using the fMRI scanner, the researchers could identify which brain areas were active during social exclusion. Participants were led to believe that, by pushing a button, they could throw a (virtual) ball to another participant, who could then throw the ball back to them or to a third participant. In fact, there was only one real participant, and the computer was programmed in such a way that this participant received the ball nine times, after which the ball was no longer thrown to him or her. While being excluded from the game, an fMRI brain scan was made. Eisenberger et al. (2003) found that social exclusion activates an area in the brain (the anterior cingulate cortex) that is normally activated when a person is in physical pain. Furthermore, the level of activation of that brain area was correlated with participants' reports of distress.

Remembrance The last stage of the Moreland and Levine model is remembrance (see again Figure 12.1). In this stage, the ex-member and the group retrospectively evaluate each other. Thus, remaining group members will evaluate the ex-member's contributions to the group and will maintain some degree of commitment to the ex-member if these contributions are seen as positive. Similarly, ex-members look back on their time with the group with either fond or bitter memories. In extreme cases, ex-members may even try to destroy their former group in an act

of revenge. Workplace shootings (e.g., in Kansas City, USA, in 2004), in which employees who had been dismissed shot their boss or former colleagues, are extreme examples. Fortunately, these incidents are rare.

SUMMARY

Individuals move through different phases of group membership (prospective member, new member, full member, marginal member and ex-member). These stages of group membership differ in the degree of commitment of the group and the member to each other. Moving from one stage to the next involves a role transition, and role transitions can both be extreme (e.g., severe initiation rituals) and have a large impact on members (e.g., after exit).

GROUP DEVELOPMENT AND STRUCTURE: THE GROUP LEVEL OF ANALYSIS

What are the five stages of group development?
What is interaction process analysis, and how is it helpful when studying group development and group structure?
What are the functions of group norms?
How do status and role differences come about?

In the previous section we discussed the (changing) relation of the group member with the group. In this section we explore the group level of analysis. First, we discuss how groups themselves can also change over time. Second, groups have certain characteristics, such as norms to govern their behaviour and a group structure, in which certain members have more **status** than others or in which different members occupy different roles in the group. These issues are examined below. It should be noted that this section is mainly relevant for groups with direct (usually face-to-face) interaction.

> **status** evaluation of a role by the group in which a role is contained or defined

Group development

Some groups are formed for a special reason and end after a certain time. Examples include therapy groups, project teams and the group of students in a psychology seminar. These groups will generally develop: the interaction patterns among group members
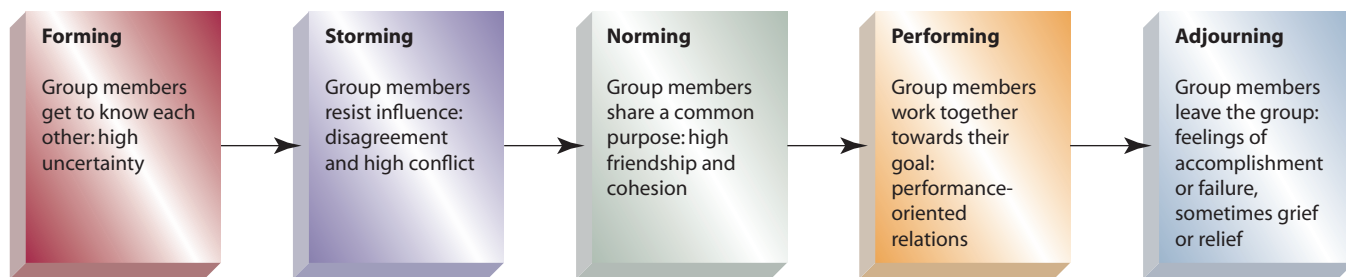
Forming	**Storming**	**Norming**	**Performing**	**Adjourning**
Group members get to know each other: high uncertainty	Group members resist influence: disagreement and high conflict	Group members share a common purpose: high friendship and cohesion	Group members work together towards their goal: performance-oriented relations	Group members leave the group: feelings of accomplishment or failure, sometimes grief or relief

Figure 12.4 *The five stages of group development (after Tuckman & Jensen, 1977).*

change over time. Further, there may be similarities in the way different groups develop. The basic idea is that every group faces certain challenges and has certain goals, and these challenges and goals change over time. This, in turn, has consequences for the way group members interact with each other, as well as for group performance and the rewardingness of the group to its members.

Tuckman (1965) and Tuckman and Jensen (1977) introduced a classic five-stage model of group development: forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning (see Figure 12.4). In the first stage, when the group is *forming*, group members feel insecure because they do not know each other and do not know what is expected of them. As a consequence, interactions are usually polite and inhibited. In this first stage, people get to know each other and develop a shared identity as members of the same group. This might happen at the beginning of a psychology seminar: students still feel insecure, engage in polite conversation, and the atmosphere is quite subdued. Once people have got to know each other, they enter the second stage (*storming*). The challenge in the second stage is to develop a group structure. Here issues of leadership and influence are at stake, and as group members may compete about different roles in the group, there may be conflicts and disagreements. Most groups will overcome this, and when a group structure and group roles have been established, they can move

on to the third stage. In the third stage, *norming*, group members develop close ties. In this stage, the group members come to agree upon the group's goals and develop norms that govern group interaction. Once this has been achieved, the group enters the *performing* stage. Because group structure and group norms have been established, the group's efforts can be directed towards achieving the group's task. Although it is probably still necessary to engage in behaviours to maintain a positive atmosphere in the group, most activities will be task-related. The final stage of group development is *adjourning*. When the task has been accomplished or is abandoned, the group will end. This might be associated either with feelings of accomplishment or with feelings of disappointment (dependent, of course, on task success).

According to the Tuckman and Jensen (1977) model, the different stages of group life should be characterized by different interaction patterns within the group. But how can we establish whether this really is true? To answer that question, it is necessary to code group interactions into certain categories and see whether certain types of behaviour are more frequent in the early or the later stages of group life. Probably the best-known coding system of group interaction is Bales's (1950) *interaction process analysis* (IPA; see also Bales & Slater, 1955, and Chapter 2, this volume). IPA makes the basic and important distinction between *task behaviours* (all behaviours directed at task completion) and *socio-emotional behaviours* (all behaviours directed at interpersonal relations within the group). In the socio-

> **task behaviour** behaviours during group interactions that are directed at task completion
>
> **socio-emotional behaviour** behaviours during group interactions that are directed at interpersonal relations

emotional domain it further distinguishes between positive and negative behaviours. According to Bales, task-related behaviour is necessary for task completion but can lead to conflicts when people disagree. In order not to disturb the functioning of the group, socio-emotional behaviour is necessary to restore group harmony. The coding system of IPA is shown in Figure 12.5. As can be seen in the figure, the scheme distinguishes between 12 different categories, divided into socio-emotional behaviours that are positive, task-related behaviours (which are emotionally neutral) and negative socio-emotional behaviours.

Now, according to the Tuckman and Jensen (1977) stage model, these 12 categories of behaviour should occur to differing degrees in the different stages of group life. The forming stage

Plate 12.3 *Some groups are formed for a special reason and also end after some time, e.g., a group of students in a psychology seminar.*

Socio-emotional behaviour, positive	1. Shows solidarity, raises other's status, gives help, reward.
	2. Shows tension release, jokes, laughs, shows satisfaction.
	3. Agrees, shows passive acceptance, understands, concurs, complies.
Task behaviour, neutral	4. Gives suggestions, directions, implying autonomy for other.
	5. Gives opinion, evaluates, analyses, expresses feelings and wishes.
	6. Gives orientation, information, repeats, clarifies, confirms.
	7. Asks for orientation, information, repetition, confirmation.
	8. Asks for opinion, evaluation, analysis, expression of feeling.
	9. Asks for suggestion, direction, possible ways of action.
Socio-emotional behaviour, negative	10. Disagrees, shows passive rejection, formality, withholds help.
	11. Shows tension, asks for help, withdraws out of the field.
	12. Shows antagonism, deflates other's status, defends or asserts self.

Figure 12.5 *The coding scheme of interaction process analysis (after Bales, 1950).*

PIONEER

Robert F. Bales (1916–2004), a pioneer in the development of systematic methods of group observation and measurement of interaction processes, received his BA and MS degrees in Sociology from the University of Oregon. He entered graduate study in sociology at Harvard in 1940 (with Talcott Parsons as his dissertation advisor), received his PhD in sociology in 1945, and was appointed Professor of Social Relations in 1957, retiring in 1986. During the 1944–45 academic year, Bales spent a formative year as Research Associate at the Section on Alcohol Studies at Yale University. His research on the interactions in therapeutic group settings for alcohol addicts formed the basis for his first and classic book, *Interaction process analysis: A method for the study of small groups*, published in 1950. Bales hoped that by studying the interaction of many such groups, he would discover recurring patterns that might help to understand and to predict the functioning of problem-solving groups. His interaction process analysis proved an extremely useful tool for studying group interaction, group member roles and group development. This research reflected his conception of social psychology as the scientific study of social interaction with the group and its activity, rather than the individuals, as the primary unit of analysis. With this research program he sought to integrate the psychological and sociological sources of social psychology.

should be characterized by much positive socio-emotional behaviour, whereas in the storming stage more negative socio-emotional behaviour should occur. In the norming stage, there should be both positive socio-emotional behaviour and task-related behaviour, and the performing stage should be dominated by task-related behaviour. Is this what really happens? At a general level, the answer seems to be yes. For example, Wheelan, Davidson and Tilin (2003) found time together to be related to socio-emotional behaviours (the longer the group was together, the *fewer* of these behaviours) as well as to task-related behaviours (the longer the group was together, the *more* of these behaviours).

On the other hand, stage models such as Tuckman and Jensen's can easily be criticized as an oversimplification of reality. Some groups, for example, may never have a storming stage, whereas other groups are in conflict continuously. Further, groups may sometimes return to a previous stage instead of progressing to the next (as the model would assume). Finally, it will often be impossible to establish which stage the group is in, and the assumption that the different stages are qualitatively different from each other is difficult to maintain. Rather, different activities occur in each stage, although they may vary in intensity. Most researchers would therefore argue that there are no abrupt changes in the way group members interact with each other, but rather that these changes occur gradually and that one can see this as a gradual development of groups over time.

On being similar: Norms, shared cognition and cohesion

Group norms Group norms are (unwritten) rules shared by the members of a group, which prescribe the attitudes, behaviour and beliefs that are, and are not, appropriate in the context of the group

(see Everyday Social Psychology 12.1). Because norms are prescriptive, they serve as guides for attitudes and behaviour and in that way perform an important regulatory function. Group members tend to conform to group norms (i.e., think and act in accordance with group norms), either because group norms are internalized, that is, become part of the individual's belief and value system (Turner, 1991), or because group norms are enforced by the (anticipated) reaction of other group members to normative and anti-normative behaviour (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). Because of this adherence to group norms, groups function more smoothly than without norms. For instance, if everybody adheres to group norms, other group members' behaviour becomes more predictable and therefore can be anticipated. In that sense, group norms help regulate group interaction. Group norms are also an important source of information about social reality. Often, people rely on what many people see as valid and true as an accurate reflection of (social) reality. Another important function of norms is that conformity to group norms illustrates one's commitment to the group – it shows that one is 'a good group member' (cf. Hollander, 1958).

This is not to say, however, that all group members always conform to group norms. Individual group members may show deviant behaviour. If they do, however, they are likely to run into the negative responses of their fellow group members, even to the extent that they may be excluded from the group (Schachter, 1951). Because social exclusion is a highly unpleasant experience (Williams, 2001; see above), such pressures to conform to group

EVERYDAY SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY 12.1

Jonestown

On 18 November 1978, more than 900 men, women and children died in a mass suicide/murder in Jonestown, a jungle encampment in Guyana, South America. Most of them drank, or were forced to drink, a fruit punch that had been laced with cyanide and tranquillizers. Parents first gave it to their children, then they drank it themselves. How could this have happened? Why did a whole group of people resort to this desperate measure?

The people of Jonestown were members of a religious cult, called the People's Temple. The cult was founded in the USA by James Warren Jones and had moved to the jungle encampment in Guyana in the mid-1970s. There, the members of the cult had to work hard on the fields and lived in isolation from the outside world. Immediately before the tragedy, US Congressman Ryan had visited Jonestown with some journalists, investigating accusations that people were being held there against their will. Eighteen people indeed wanted to leave with Ryan. However, cult members attacked them at the airstrip as they were leaving, killing the congressman, three journalists and one defector, and wounding 12 others. Back in Jonestown, Jones proclaimed that the end had come, and that in this extreme situation 'revolutionary suicide' was their only option. The members of the People's Temple obeyed, committing mass suicide and killing those who were unable or unwilling to kill themselves (including children and the elderly).

To begin to understand why they chose death, one must firstly realize that the members of the People's Temple were socialized to accept the norms of the cult. One of the more important norms was loyalty to the group, a norm that was quite strictly enforced. Second, the members of the People's Temple lived in isolation from the outside world and had no contacts with relatives or others outside Jonestown. One implication of their isolation was that an end to Jonestown would imply a loss of all their current social ties. It also implied that they were only in contact with like-minded people. As this chapter shows, one function of groups is to provide us with knowledge of our social and physical world. In isolation, people may even begin to believe bizarre things, such as the concept of 'revolutionary suicide'. The members of the cult, for example, believed that an end to Jonestown would mean not only an end to the promised land they had believed in, but also torture and imprisonment by the US government. When faced with the grim prospect of losing all social ties, all hopes, everything they believed in, and torture and imprisonment, they saw no reason to live.

Although the Jonestown case is clearly extreme, and fortunately very rare, it does illustrate the power of the social group (and of an autocratic leader). It is one of social psychology's goals to understand these tragedies and hopefully prevent them in the future.

Plate 12.4 *Members of the People's Temple at Jonestown, Guyana, committed mass suicide in 1978. They were socialized to accept the cult's norms, especially group loyalty.*

norms tend to be quite effective in many situations. Thus, groups may enforce and maintain their group norms.

As already noted in the discussion of group development, groups develop group norms relatively early in their existence (Tuckman, 1965). This is not to say that group norms do not change. Norms may change over time. This change may occur because the environment of the group changes. It may also occur because the membership of the group changes. New members tend to be socialized into the group and its norms (Moreland & Levine, 1982), but they may also introduce changes to the group. Indeed, as research on minority influence shows (see Chapter 11, this volume), if the conditions are right, a deviant minority may convert a whole group towards a different way of thinking. Group norms should therefore be seen, on the one hand, as enforcing their own maintenance and, on the other hand, as subject to change over time and situations. Group norms are thus both an influence on group process and an outcome of group process.

Socially shared cognition and affect
An aspect of groups that is receiving more attention in recent years is shared cognition (Thompson, Levine & Messick, 1999; Tindale & Kameda, 2000). Over time, groups may develop a shared understanding of different aspects of group life, such as the tasks the group performs, the role of each member in the group, and each member's particular knowledge, skills and abilities. For each individual group member, such understanding is important, but when it is shared within the group it has the added advantage of setting the stage for smooth coordination, communication and cooperation, because all group members have a similar understanding of what they are supposed to do and who does what. Socially shared cognitions, when accurately reflecting the demands faced by the group, may therefore improve group functioning and performance (Mohammed & Dumville, 2001).

transactive memory a system of knowledge available to group members with shared awareness of each other's expertise, strengths and weaknesses

A nice illustration of the influence of shared cognition is found in work on *transactive memory*. Transactive memory refers to shared knowledge about how knowledge is distributed in the group. Rather than having all the information themselves, group members know who knows what and whom to ask for information about specific things (Wegner, 1986). Transactive memory makes it possible for groups to operate efficiently and adequately because it helps locate information and 'the right person for the job'.

Liang, Moreland and Argote (1995) experimentally studied groups that had to assemble a radio. Before they assembled the radio as a group, participants received training to prepare them for the task. The critical manipulation was whether individuals received this training as a group or individually (after which they performed the task in newly formed groups). As predicted, groups that were trained together performed better than those who were trained alone. This effect could be explained because groups that were trained together had more accurate knowledge about who was good at which part of the task: they had thus formed a better transactive memory system (see also Chapter 13, this volume).

Groups may share not only cognition but also emotions (George, 1990). Research in group emotions is still in its infancy, but there is emerging evidence that groups may come to share emotions, and that these shared emotions affect group functioning. Barsade (2002), for instance, found that affect introduced by a confederate in an experiment spread within the whole group and affected group members' ratings of group functioning. In a similar vein, Sy, Coté and Saavedra (2005) showed that the affect displayed by a confederate leader of a group transferred to the members of the group and affected group performance: groups performed better when the leader displayed positive affect than when the leader displayed negative affect.

Group cohesion
Group *cohesion* (or 'cohesiveness') is the force that binds members to the group and induces them to stay with the group (Festinger, 1950). Group cohesion is assumed to be important to group functioning, because it helps keep the group together and motivates group members to exert themselves on behalf of the group. Evidence for this proposition is mixed, however, and research suggests that it is useful to distinguish between types of cohesion. *Task cohesion* refers

cohesion the force that binds members to the group

**task cohesion** cohesion based on attraction of group members to the group task

interpersonal cohesion cohesion based on liking of the group and its members

to the shared commitment to the group's tasks, while *interpersonal cohesion* refers to the attraction to the group. As a meta-analysis by Mullen and Copper (1994) shows, only task cohesion is (positively) related to group performance. Further, cohesion may not always improve performance, as can be seen in Research close-up 12.2.

On being different: Status and roles

Whereas norms make group members' behaviour more alike, there are also clear differences between group members in the way they behave and the position they have in the group. Take, for instance, a football team. Clearly, different players have different roles defined by their position in the field (goalkeeper, defender, forward). Besides these formal roles, there will also be informal roles. For example, a more experienced team member (even though not formally the team captain) may have more influence on the other players than a newcomer, and another team member may always take the initiative to reconcile people after an argument.

Earlier, we discussed Bales's (1950) interaction process analysis (IPA). It appears that IPA is a useful tool for looking at status and roles inside a group: it is possible to keep track of the 12 different types of behaviour (see Figure 12.5) for each group member, to see whether there are differences among group members. Research using IPA (or other coding systems) to code behaviour in freely interacting groups has revealed a number of important insights (see McGrath, 1984, for a summary of findings), two of which we will discuss now.
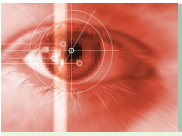
RESEARCH CLOSE-UP 12.2

Group cohesiveness leads to better performance when the group accepts performance goals

Podsakoff, P.M., MacKenzie, S.B. & Ahearne, M. (1997). Moderating effects of goal acceptance on the relation between group cohesiveness and productivity. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *82*, 974 – 983.

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Introduction

Podsakoff and colleagues argued that higher cohesion does not always lead to better performance. They argued that the relationship between cohesiveness and performance should be contingent on the group's acceptance of performance goals. If the group accepts the performance goals of the organization, cohesiveness should be positively related to group performance. If, however, the group does not accept performance goals, then cohesiveness is expected to be unrelated (or even negatively related) to performance.

Method

Participants
The study participants were 218 members of 40 work crews at a paper mill in the USA. Crews consisted of 5.25 members on average, most participants were male (96 per cent), and their average age was 39 years old.

Measures and procedure
Two measures were obtained through a questionnaire distributed among the crew members: group cohesiveness and acceptance of the performance goals of the company. Thus, all group members individually rated their perception of group cohesiveness and their acceptance of performance goals. Performance of each crew was obtained from company records. It consisted of the amount of paper produced as a percentage of total machine capacity.
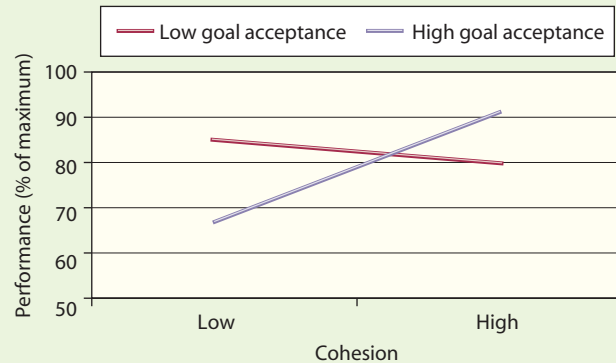

Figure 12.6 *The relation between cohesion and performance for crews high and low in goal acceptance (after Podsakoff et al., 1997).*

Results

Figure 12.6 shows the results. As predicted, group cohesion and group goal acceptance interacted in predicting task performance. When groups were relatively accepting of performance goals, the relationship between group cohesion and group performance was positive. However, when groups were not accepting of performance goals, the relationship between group cohesion and performance tended to be negative.

Discussion

This study illustrates that group cohesion does not necessarily motivate performance. Rather, it motivates group members to exert themselves for causes that are seen as important to the group (see van Knippenberg & Ellemers, 2003). When group members do not accept the company's performance goals, higher cohesion will generally not improve performance.

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speaking hierarchy hierarchy within a group based on who talks most

First, some group members talk more than others, and the discrepancy increases with the size of the group. Thus, groups develop a *speaking hierarchy* (Bales, 1953) in which members higher in that hierarchy talk more than those lower in the hierarchy (see Figure 12.7). Further, people who talk more are usually seen as more influential. Later research has shown that group members do not distribute their participation evenly throughout the discussion, but rather that contributions are concentrated in periods of high activity (Dabbs & Ruback, 1987). Thus, if a person has recently spoken, he or she is more likely to speak again. Often this takes the form of a dyadic exchange, in which two group members alternate speaking turns. When this happens, we say that the group is in a *floor* position (i.e., two group members
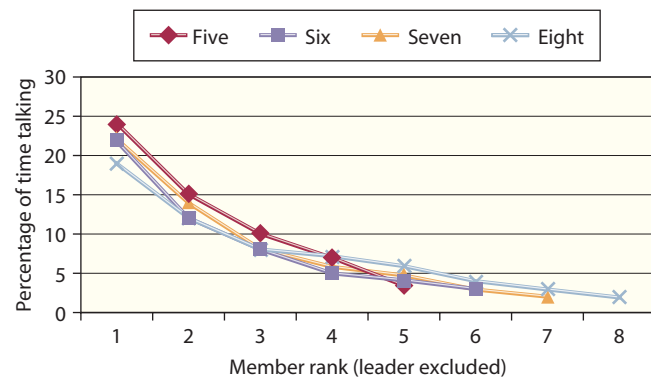

Figure 12.7 *Speaking hierarchy for groups of five, six, seven and eight members (taken from Stephan & Mischler, 1952).*
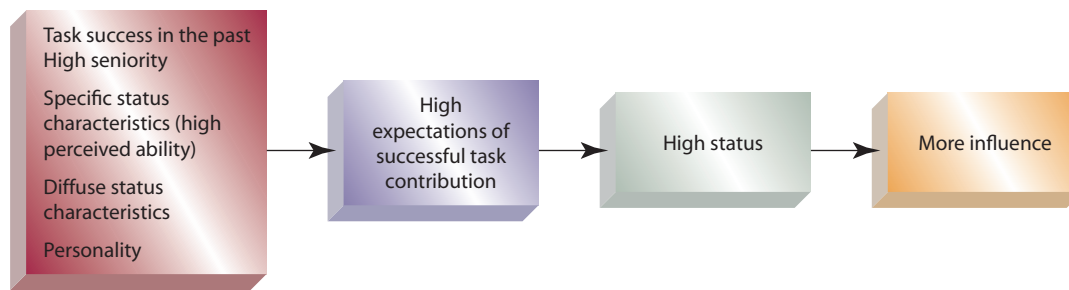
Figure 12.8 *Expectation states theory (Berger et al., 1980).*

'hold the floor'; Parker, 1988). Parker found that four-person groups were in a floor position no less than 61 per cent of their time, much more than would be expected if all group members contributed equally.

Second, research using IPA has found that some people are consistently more task-oriented (i.e., they engage mostly in task-related behaviours, categories 4–9 in Figure 12.5), whereas others are more relationship-oriented (i.e., they engage more in socio-emotional behaviours) (Slater, 1955). The former person has been labelled the task specialist, and the latter the socio-emotional specialist: clearly a case of (informal) role differentiation. It further appeared that these two group members interacted with each other quite frequently, and much more than would be expected according to chance (i.e., they were often in a floor position). Finally, the task specialist was seen as most influential, but he or she was liked less than the socio-emotional specialist.

Who talks most in the group and who takes which role is dependent on personality and individual abilities. For example, an extroverted person will probably talk more than an introverted person. However, this is not the whole story. There are other factors that determine who is more and who is less influential.

The most comprehensive theory about status in groups is *expectation states theory* (Berger, Rosenholtz & Zelditch, 1980). It deals with the issue of how status structures emerge in groups, and how they are shaped by the outside status of group members (see Ridgeway, 2001, for an overview of the theory and the evidence for it). A simplified graphical depiction of the theory is presented in Figure 12.8.

expectation states theory argues that status differences within a group result from different expectations that group members have about each other

Expectation states theory is applicable to groups in which members strive for a common goal or perform a common task. It assumes that several inequalities within a group, such as inequalities in participation and influence, are highly correlated because they are all derived from *performance expectations*. That is, because of certain characteristics of group members, other group members form expectations about the usefulness of each group member's contributions. These expectations then serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy: the greater the expectations, the more likely a person is to speak up, offer suggestions and be evaluated positively by the others. The lower the expectations, the less likely it is that these

things happen. The important question, then, is: what determines these performance expectations?

The theory assumes that performance expectations are influenced by so-called *status characteristics*. The theory distinguishes between *diffuse* status characteristics (not necessarily related to the group task), including, for example, gender, age and race, and *specific* status characteristics, such as skills and abilities (i.e., characteristics that are necessary for the group task, previous task success). These characteristics carry certain cultural expectations about competencies. For example, women are generally seen as less competent than men (especially on tasks that are more 'masculine'; e.g., Pugh & Wahrman, 1983), and more senior people may be seen as more competent (up to a certain age) than younger people (Freese & Cohen, 1973). Similarly, higher expectations are formed for people who are more experienced, have a higher status in society more generally, or have a relevant area of expertise. Obviously, these expectations may sometimes be false (i.e., a woman may in fact be more competent than a man), but they nevertheless affect people's status in the group and the amount of influence they have. The reason is that expectations need to be explicitly falsified before they lose their influence, and as long as they are not, they continue to have their effect in a self-fulfilling way. There is extensive evidence supporting the theory. For example, Driskell and Mullen (1990) found that characteristics of group members affected their status and power through the expectations of other group members (for more evidence, see Ridgeway, 2001).

SUMMARY

Groups develop over time, in the sense that their interaction patterns change. Further, some processes cause group members to become more similar to each other, both in terms of their behaviour (as prescribed by group norms) and in terms of their cognitions and emotions. Finally, differences between group members may also emerge, for which expectation states theory offers a theoretical account. We now turn to the last level of analysis: the contextual or intergroup level.

GROUPS IN THEIR ENVIRONMENT: THE INTERGROUP LEVEL OF ANALYSIS

In what ways does the (intergroup) context affect intragroup behaviour?
How does behaviour in groups change when group membership is made salient?

Going back to our opening example of the football fans, it is clear that these people do not always behave in this way. They are also supporters of their team when the team is not playing, but it is the context of the match that draws them together and that brings out their behaviour in the subway station. Playing against another team renders these supporters' affiliation with their favourite team salient and evokes the quite uniform behaviour that clearly identifies them as a group.

What holds for these supporters holds for all groups. Groups do not live in isolation. Other groups are part of the environment in which groups function. Understanding the psychology of groups therefore requires studying the influence of the *intergroup context* on the thoughts, feelings and behaviour of group members. Part of this involves the study of intergroup relations – the way group members think, feel and act towards members of other groups (see Chapter 14, this volume). The intergroup context may, however, also affect intragroup processes, and that is an issue we deal with here.

The intergroup context and the salience of group membership

The fact that individuals are members of a certain group does not mean that this group membership is always at the forefront of their minds. Self-categorization as a group member needs to be cognitively activated, or rendered *salient*, for the group membership to exert its influence on people's self-definition (see Chapter 5, this volume). Group membership then influences group members' attitudes and behaviour via this self-definition (i.e., social identity; see Turner et al., 1987; see also Chapters 11 and 14, this volume). An important influence of the intergroup context is that of rendering group membership salient. Exposure to other groups in a sense 'reminds' us of our own group memberships. Especially in the context of an intergroup confrontation of some kind, this may work to render group membership a salient influence on group members' thoughts, feelings and behaviour. Such confrontations may involve explicit competition, as in sports or in the political arena, or competition for scarce goods (e.g., customers, funding), but may also involve more implicit forms of competition, such as competition for social status (e.g., which is the most important department within an organization? which street gang has the toughest reputation?).

These processes are well illustrated in a study by James and Greenberg (1989). They conducted two experiments in which they had students from their university work on a task solving anagrams. The task objective was to solve as many anagrams as possible and participants' performance on the task (i.e., the number of anagrams solved) was the main variable of interest. James and Greenberg argued that students would be more motivated, and therefore perform better, when their university membership was made salient in the context of a comparison between students from their university and students from another university.

James and Greenberg experimentally manipulated the extent to which students' affiliation to their university was salient. In their first experiment, they manipulated group membership salience by letting participants work in a room that was painted either white (low salience condition) or red and blue (the colours of the university: high salience condition). All participants were led to believe that the experiment was part of a larger study comparing the performance of students from their university with that of students from a 'rival' university. As expected, participants in the high group membership salience condition solved more anagrams than did participants in the low group membership salience condition.

In their second experiment, James and Greenberg aimed to show that this effect would only be found in the presence of intergroup comparison and not in the absence of this intergroup comparison. In order to demonstrate this, they manipulated not only group membership salience but also the presence or absence of the comparison with the other university. Intergroup comparison was manipulated by telling half of the participants that their performance would be compared with that of the rival university, whereas the other half did not receive this instruction. This time, salience was manipulated by giving participants a practice anagram that solved either as *wildcats*, which referred to their university mascot (high salience condition), or as *beavers*, which had no relevance for university membership (low salience condition). Results indicated that group salience had no effect when the intergroup comparison was absent, but that group salience led to higher (and the highest) performance when intergroup comparison was present (see Figure 12.9).
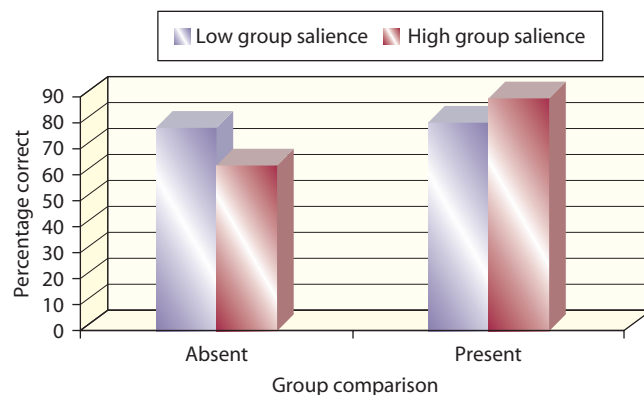

Figure 12.9 *Percentage of anagrams solved correctly as a function of ingroup salience and comparison condition (after James & Greenberg, 1989).*

What this study shows is that group membership needs to be salient to affect behaviour, but that the context in which it is rendered salient affects whether and how group membership salience translates into behaviour (for more on this issue, see Haslam, 2001; van Knippenberg, 2000). In the intergroup context created by James and Greenberg, performing well could help establish that one's own group was superior to the comparison group. Because salient group memberships reflect on how we see ourselves, the relative standing of our group vis-à-vis other groups (i.e., are we 'better'?) reflects on how good or bad we can feel about ourselves. Obviously, then, we prefer our groups to compare favourably to other groups, and are willing to contribute actively to our group achieving such a favourable comparison (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In the situation created by James and Greenberg, this led individuals for whom group membership was made salient in the context of intergroup comparison to work harder.

An important influence of the intergroup context on group members is, thus, that it may render group membership salient, and may inform the translation of this salient self-categorization into attitudes and behaviour. The intergroup context may also affect group members' perceptions of their own group, and by doing so may affect attitudes and behaviour that are contingent on these perceptions. This is an issue that is addressed next.

The intergroup context, group perceptions and social influence

Part of what defines a group is the distinction between who is 'in' and who is 'out'. Groups exist by virtue of their members, but also by the fact that there are some people who are *not* members of the group and may indeed be members of *other* groups. Accordingly, people's perceptions of their membership groups are affected by the comparison between their own group and other groups, and group members' perceptions of their group are also contingent on what differentiates their group from other groups (Turner et al., 1987). Put differently, we ascribe characteristics to ourselves and to our groups on the basis of our perception that we possess these characteristics to a greater degree than others. For example, we will only come to the conclusion that the members of our group are intelligent if we perceive our group to be more intelligent than certain other groups. Indeed, such social comparison processes evaluating ourselves permeate social life (see Chapter 14 for further detail on intergroup social comparison). The important point for our present discussion is that if the intergroup context changes, comparison groups may change and as a consequence our perceptions of our group may change.

Take, for instance, the case of political parties. Members of a party that is the most conservative party within a country's political spectrum will probably think of their party as conservative. However, when a new party emerges that is perceived to be more conservative, the attribute conservative may become less suited to distinguish the party from other parties, and party members' perceptions of their party may change to emphasize other characteristics of their party. Or consider, for example, the discussion about Turkey's prospective membership of the European Union.

In contrast to the other countries of the European Union, the largest religious denomination in Turkey is Islam rather than Christianity. This fact seems to have highlighted the shared roots in Christianity of the current EU countries in the perception of many parties partaking in the discussion – an attribute that until now never really seemed at the forefront of perception within the European Union.

Changes in the intergroup context may occur because old groups disappear from the scene (e.g., a competitor goes bankrupt) or new groups emerge, or because an existing group becomes more relevant as a comparison group (as in the example of Turkey and the European Union) or less relevant as a comparison group (e.g., because a competing firm focuses more on other markets than one's own firm). Such changes may affect which attributes of the group are salient (i.e., what differentiates the group from relevant other groups), but they may also alter our perception of a given attribute of the group. Take the example of a group of psychology students who think of themselves as intelligent. Within the larger context of society, this probably makes a lot of sense. Imagine, however, that this group finds itself in a context where comparison with a group of the proverbial rocket scientists becomes relevant. Intelligence may not be seen as the most relevant dimension of comparison, but if it were, the attribute intelligent would likely be ascribed not to one's own group but to the other group.

SUMMARY

In sum, the intergroup context may both affect the salience of group membership and inform group members' behaviour within this context (cf. the intergroup comparison in the James & Greenberg 1989 study), and influence perceptions of group norms that may feed into attitudes and behaviour.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Let us return to the example we began with: the Ajax fans in the subway. The individual Ajax fan is probably looking for an entertaining and enjoyable game of football. However, there is more than that. As you will probably agree, 'real' football fans identify very much with their teams: they are proud of the team when the team wins, and feel sad and depressed when the team loses. Being an Ajax fan is thus part of an individual's identity, and self-esteem is derived from the team's success. When an individual Ajax fan now enters the subway, he or she will know what to expect: watching a game of football implies singing and shouting. Because most of the other people in the subway are Ajax fans, and because they have similar expectations, the behaviour becomes normative: it is seen as appropriate. However, the only reason why this behaviour is seen as appropriate (or at least acceptable) is because of

the context: Ajax is about to play another team, and this both makes group membership salient and affects the perception of group norms. Thus, the behaviour in the subway is caused by individual expectations (individual level), which are shared among the fans and constitute behavioural norms (group level), and arise in a context that makes group membership salient (context level).

- A group exists when two or more people define themselves as members of a group.

- The reasons why people form, join and distinguish groups are sociobiological (evolutionarily built in), cognitive (understanding our world) and utilitarian (gaining benefits).

- Different types of groups, such as task groups, intimacy groups, social categories and loose associations, differ on a number of important dimensions such as group entitativity, importance and shared objectives.

- Group members move through the different stages of group membership (prospective member, new member, full member, marginal member and ex-member) separated from each other by role transitions, and these different stages are characterized by different levels of commitment.

- The role transition of entry can be marked by a harsh transition ritual. A classic explanation for these rituals is given by dissonance theory, which argues that such rituals increase commitment to the group.

- An important determinant of group openness is staffing level: it is easier to become a full member of an understaffed as compared to an overstaffed group.

- Social exclusion from groups can lead to quite severe anger and depression.

- Groups develop over time, because the challenges they face and the goals they have change. Tuckman's classic theory distinguishes five stages: forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning.

- Interaction process analysis is a useful coding scheme for group interactions and makes a basic distinction between socio-emotional and task behaviours.

- Groups develop shared cognitions, such as transactive memory systems (i.e., knowing who knows what) and shared emotions.

- Cohesion can be based on attractiveness of the group (interpersonal cohesion) or on attractiveness of the group task (task cohesion). In general, cohesion motivates group members to exert effort for causes that are important to the group.

- Groups develop status and role differences. Expectation states theory explains the emergence of a status structure in a group. It argues that certain status characteristics lead to performance expectations that subsequently lead to differences in status and influence.

- The presence of other groups can make group membership salient. As a consequence, group members will be more strongly influenced by their group membership.

Suggestions for further reading

Haslam, S.A. (2001). *Psychology in organisations: The social identity approach*. London: Sage. A detailed review of the influence of group norms and intergroup context on attitudes and behaviour in groups.

Lickel, B., Hamilton, D.L. & Sherman, S.J. (2001). Elements of a lay theory of groups: Types of groups, relational styles, and the perception of group entitativity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *5*, 129–140. An in-depth discussion of types of groups and 'lay theories' about them (i.e., how lay people look at groups).

Moreland, R.L. & Levine, J.M. (1982). Socialization in small groups: Temporal changes in individual–group relations. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 15, pp. 137–192). New York: Academic Press. An extensive discussion of group socialization.

Ridgeway, C.L. (2001). Social status and group structure. In M.A. Hogg & S. Tindale (Eds.), *Blackwell handbook of social psychology: Group processes* (pp. 352–375). Oxford: Blackwell. A good summary of the research on expectation states theory.

Wheelan, S.A. (1994). *Group process: A developmental perspective*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. A discussion of group development that examines different stages of group life.