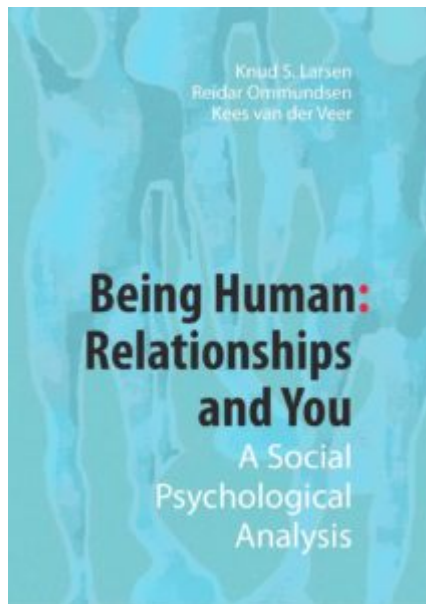# Being Human. Chapter 6: The Influences Of Group Membership

Social psychology is about the influence of others on our behavior. There are many influences on our behavior as represented by the varying chapters of this book, but group membership is central to social psychology. What is a group? A group consists of two people or more who interact directly. People in groups are to some degree interdependent because their needs and goals in life cause them to have influence on one another (Cartwright & Zander, 1968; Lewin, 1948). Groups are so central to our lives that we rarely give a thought as to why we join. Clearly groups have many benefits, some related to our very survival, which helps define why we join. Some researchers would even say group memberships reflect innate needs tied to survival and derived from our evolutionary past (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Life with others allows for many benefits that include (in our early history) protection from predators of either the animal or human variety. Other benefits may include assistance in child rearing, or hunting and gathering, or in collaborative agriculture that eventually freed human society from ever present hunger. In fact in all cultures people are motivated to seek memberships in a variety of groups, and often to maintain their affiliation at all costs There may be even an innate need for social contact people isolated long enough will as a consequence often display symptoms of mental disease or otherwise "lose" their minds (Gardner, Pickett & Brewer, 2000).

1. What are groups?

Researchers have observed that group structure is created almost immediately after a group is formed. For example Merei (1949) noted that after only a few meetings children began to differentiate roles and establish informal rules as to who would sit where in the room and who would play with certain toys. This differentiation of expected behavior is referred to as group structure (Levine & Moreland, 1998). Social norms are the behaviors and rules that are considered standard and appropriate for the group. In one study young teenage girls decided

what boys were considered eligible, and one accepted rule among the girls was to not pursue boys who were already attached to someone else (Simon, Eder, & Evans, 1992).

Groups also define the roles of group members; i.e., the division of labor specifying required behavior by each member. Role specification would define the responsibilities of the head of an organization, and the expected behaviors required by other members of the group? Also, the group determines the status of each member. What prestige does the individual have within the group, and therefore what potential or actual leadership position or authority is vested in each member. Even in groups where there is some formal equality, research indicates that some individuals emerge as more powerful than others. In the jury system, even though initially there is no difference in the selection of members, when deliberation begins some members quickly become more influential and one is voted to become the jury foreman or leader. Generally groups are formed to achieve certain goals, and those who are perceived to be effective toward that end are given high status. This is also called expectation theory (Berger, Webster, Ridgeway, & Rosenholtz, 1986).

A community wide organization is not a group. For example being a member of a university is not a group since one does not interact with all members of the student body. Being a member of the military or a church does not suggest group membership since again they offer no opportunity for all members to interact. Likewise being on an airplane with other passengers does not form a group since again people have few opportunities to interact. That of course could change if the plane underwent some emergency requiring passengers to interact to save their lives. Generally groups consist of two or three members to several dozen participants. To be a group the situation must allow for mutual interaction and interdependence.

Groups emerged out of our evolutionary past since they performed many important functions for the individual and society. Groups assist us in forming our identity, who are we and what are our values. This is easy to see among students who often wear clothes, e.g., t-shirts with some slogan identifying group membership such as being fans of musical groups, although a fan group like a group of university students as such is not to be considered a "group" automatically because interaction might not define large numbers of students.

So all groups have in common that the members interact and therefore influence one another. Groups also serve as a form of identification between those who are like-minded and those who are not. Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherrell (1987) would say that groups encourage the feeling of "us" versus "them" or those who think differently. People do not join groups to be challenged in their beliefs, or for alternative viewpoints. Generally people join groups to be reinforced in their already existing viewpoints (Levine & Moreland, 1998; George, 1990). Another feature of groups is the role they play in reinforcing social or group norms. These powerful determinants of our behavior shape our behavior, and groups encourage conformity. If we do not follow the group norms we may be shunned or asked to leave (Marques, Abrams, & Serodio, 2001).

1.1 Groups define our roles

A very important function of groups is specifying the roles played by members. The manager and worker play distinctly different roles in a work group. Roles specify how individuals occupying certain positions should behave. Role specification, depending on the values of the group, may be a positive factor leading to higher productivity or satisfaction, or alternatively role rigidity may lead to autocratic behavior leading to stagnation. Roles can be very helpful since they let people know what to expect from each other, thus making behavior more predictable and efficient in many cases. When the group operates with clearly defined roles, performance and satisfaction increases (Bettencourt & Sheldon, 2001).

At times social roles may be counterproductive and lead to anti-social behavior. We see through the experiences of war how some people get lost in their group identity, and under the cover of that identity commit brutal acts (Fiske, Harris & Cuddy, 2004). Zimbardo and his co-workers brought to our attention (Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973) how easy it is to have the role take over the identity of the individual. In their experiment students were assigned as either prisoners or guards in a simulated mock prison. The experiment had been designed to last for two weeks, but was stopped after 6 days, because the participants were clearly changing in a negative way as a result of their role-playing. The "guards" became brutal in their treatment, devising ways of humiliating their fellow students. Those playing the role of "prisoners" also changed and became more submissive and compliant in the face of the abuse. Clearly, roles can have even stronger effects in the real word, as in the case of real prisons. We need only to look at the

abuse in Iraq to see a disgusting example of behavior changed when "normal" citizens in the armed services play the role of guards, and when the norms of the US armed forces allow such abuse. The example of prisoner abuse in the US prison camp in Cuba, Guantanamo Bay, also comes to mind. The effect of roles on aggressiveness may also be exacerbated when people with aggressive personality dispositions feel attracted to roles as guards (Carnahan & McFarland, 2007).

1.2 Gender roles
Currently societies all over the world are experiencing many changes pertaining to sex roles. In the past women in a variety of cultures were expected to take on the role of wife and mother, and to be primarily responsible for the home. With emerging modern societies this gender role specification has largely changed. In socialist societies the change came about for ideological reasons favoring the equality of the sexes, and the needed productivity from women's intellectual and cultural contributions. In the case of capitalist societies the change came about as a consequence of long struggles by feminists and their supporters for equal opportunity and treatment. The First World War, 1914-1918, contributed to gender role changes. When the men went to fight during World War I the women started working at many of the men's jobs in factories and other locations. When the war ended, women did not accept the re-establishment of the traditional roles. In the 1920's women were granted voting rights in many European countries and in the US. The feminist movements of the 1960s, and onward also greatly changed the nature of gender roles.

The changes in role expectations of women caused, as might be expected, much conflict. Some of the conflict came as a result of women taking on increased burdens. In addition to now working outside jobs, she was also expected to maintain the traditional role of primary childcare provider, and provide for the general maintenance of the home. Some evidence would suggest that this expectation is still present in our modern world (Brislin, 1993).
One interesting aspect of role changes is that they also changed women's attitudes and personality traits. When women's status improved in society so did their assertiveness (Twenge, 2001). In other words gender roles are powerful determinants of our personalities, and how we generally feel about ourselves and our lives (Eagly, & Steffen, 2000).

1.3 Group cohesiveness
Groups vary. Some are very temporary where membership has only fleeting

importance. Student groups are of this type since membership ceases upon graduation. But in other cases the ties between group members may be very tenacious and enduring, in some cases for life. Of course the family comes to mind. But having common goals as found in political groups or those based on common religious beliefs may also create harmonious groups with great endurance. In these groups there are many qualities which bind the members to each other, and which serve to produce mutual liking and respect. The term group cohesiveness is generally used to describe such close-knit groups that have an enduring character and promote mutual liking and respect.

One could say ideally all social groups would have such a character. Unfortunately other factors also play a role. For example in university departments, collegial groups that would benefit greatly from cohesiveness often do not because of professional jealousy or competitiveness. Environments that reward excelling at the expense of others produce conflict. Generally speaking, cohesiveness produces a better group atmosphere, and makes it more likely that members stay together and combine in their efforts to produce better group products, and seek to have new members join (Levine & Moreland, 1998).
While many factors may effect the cohesiveness of a group the liking relationship is probably most important. When people have strong feelings of friendship for one another, cohesiveness is high (Paxton & Moody, 2003). Liking improves the effectiveness of group performance as such groups will manifest less dysfunctional conflict, and interact more harmoniously. Groups, in some very significant ways, determine who we are, and our sense of identification with the group is important in feelings of group cohesiveness. Political and religious groups all help the individual connect with the larger world, and express deeply held attitudes and values (Van Vugt & Hart, 2004).

Some groups are important because they serve these or other instrumental needs. Satisfaction is not always guaranteed. Although in many cases our attraction to the group is based on anticipated positive consequences, at times a group stays cohesive because there are no alternatives apparent. People may stay in a job they despise because the salary is high, or there are no good alternatives. Many students stay in courses they have little enthusiasm for because these courses are required for graduation. However, when group members enjoy the company of each other and accept the goals of the group, satisfaction and morale tend to be high. Such cohesive groups are more likely to enhance productivity if the norms

of the group include hard work and dedication (McGrath, 1984).

2. Social influences
Hence we shall discuss three primary examples of group influences: social facilitation, social loafing, and deindividuation.

2.1 Social facilitation
The initial question addressed by social psychologists was, do people act differently when other people are around than they do when alone? Does the presence of others produce more energy in pursuing our tasks, or is it more likely we become lazy in the presence of others. These and many other questions have been addressed in early as well as very recent research. Triplet (1898) completed the first study on social facilitation. He conducted what is generally regarded as the first experiment in social psychology. He invited a group of children to his laboratory and asked them to cast and reel in fishing lines as fast as possible over six trials with rest periods between. In three of the trials the child performed by himself, in the other three there was another child present doing the same task. The children tended to reel in faster when they were in the presence of another child, a phenomena that Triplet called social facilitation. Later experiments confirmed these findings (Gates, 1924), and extended the social facilitation findings to animal species (Ross & Ross, 1949), however, this early research also included some contradictions. On more complex tasks the presence of others produced inhibition of performance, as for example in solving arithmetic problems (Dashiell, 1930). These different results suggested two possibilities. Sometimes the presence of others helps, and in other cases it hurts performance.

2.1.1 Social facilitation on simple and complex tasks
Karl Marx said in Das Kapital " Mere social contact begets...a stimulation of the animal spirit that heightens the efficiency of each workman". In other words he anticipated that social facilitation would serve as releaser of energy. The presence of others energizes people to perform at higher levels if the task is simple. Zajonc and his co-workers (Zajonc, Heingartner, & Herman, 1969) presented a theory that explained in an elegant manner when the presence of others helped facilitate performance. People do better on simple tasks in the presence of others, but do worse on complex tasks (Schmitt, Gilovich, Goore, & Joseph, 1986; Bond & Titus, 1983). Doing something simple like riding a bicycle leads to performance at higher levels when others including spectators are present. We see this heightened performance in the achievements during the Olympics when world

records are set in front of millions of fans present or watching on television.

However, if one is working on a difficult math problem, then the presence of others may be diverting and flustering as a solution is sought. The reason for the lower level of functioning is the psychological fact that we cannot easily attend to two things at the same time and the presence of others may divert our attention.

In addition people, as social animals, are always concerned about how people evaluate them. People are worried about doing poorly in the presence of others, and this evaluation apprehension causes us to do poorly on complex tasks. Evaluation apprehension has been verified in numerous studies (Geen, 1989; Thomas, Skitka, Christen, & Jurgena, 2002). One important question raised is: is it the mere presence of others that causes evaluation apprehension? The answer to that assertion is no. It is the possibility of being evaluated that causes the apprehension (Cottrell, Wack, Sekerak & Rittle, 1968). Cottrell et al show conclusively that it is our concern that others may evaluate us, and not just their presence, that produces the social facilitation affect.

So in summary, the presence of others may energize us on simple tasks if our individual efforts can be evaluated which produces alertness, but produces evaluation apprehension with complex tasks. Depending on the complexity of the task, distraction and attention conflict may hurt performance. From the perspective of Zajonc et. al. (1969) we respond to the presence of others with the most dominant response. In simple tasks the dominant response happens to be the correct response, but on complex tasks the dominant response of the individual is most frequently an incorrect response. On complex tasks what we have learned in the past is not a guide for a solution that presents novel challenges. Habituated responses do not solve the problems of science or society.

2.1.2 The effect of crowding

In the presence of others people are aroused manifested by physiological changes. People breathe faster, have a faster heart rate, perspire more, and have higher levels of blood pressure from the mere presence of others (Geen & Gange, 1983; Moore &Baron, 1983). In crowds the presence of others may intensify the already prevalent mood. People who are mourning feel grief more intensely at a eulogy and those who are excited at sporting events express more freely their fanatic expressions. Negative behaviors such as lynching are also more likely when a crowd is organized and prepped for hostile actions. In crowds friendly

people are seen as more friendly, and unfriendly people are disliked even more. Again task completion may be affected. Crowding has negative affects on complex tasks, but does not negatively affect simple or routine behaviors (Evans, 1979). Crowding is the subjective feeling of not having enough space. This experience is different from objective measures of population density, i.e., how many people occupy a given space. Crowding is the physical discomfort felt from being cramped, and desiring more space especially when with strangers. If one is with a loved one on the other hand, he/she may desire very little space as most of us are in fact happier with less space. However, in a location at the beach or in the mountains among the public even a few people can provide a feeling of crowdedness. Crowding is always experienced as unpleasant.

The individual experiences sensory overload when being crowded (Milgram, 1970; Baum & Paulus, 1987). In addition people in crowds feel less in control (Baron & Rodin, 1978). For example crowding produces less control in moving about, in maintaining privacy, or otherwise managing the environment. We attribute negative meaning to being crowded. On the other hand at a sporting event people are distracted by the action and do not feel the unpleasant consequences of high density. High density on a bus or train is less distracting, and people may feel stress.

Culture has a significant effect on whether a person feels crowded (Evans, Lepore, & Allen, 2000). People from more collectivist cultures prefer closer physical distances in conversation, and are less affected by high physical density as compared to those living in more individualistic cultures such as those in Western Europe or the United states.

2.2 Social loafing: Another consequence from the presence of others
At times the presence of others may not produce increased energy or task completion. This phenomenon is called social loafing. We have all met people who seek a free ride in life, and who do as little as possible to survive. When we become members of groups it often allows us anonymity, where the individual identity is merged into that of the group. The individual in the presence of others becomes less noticeable, and therefore less worried about evaluation. Social loafing occurs when the individual believes that individual performance will not be noticed, but rather the overall group product is evaluated. In a factory, for example workers may earn salary based on overall productivity rather than individual performance. In collectivist farming, the individual farmer has less

responsibility, but is judged as part of collective performance. Social loafing is therefore the tendency of people to perform worse on simple tasks in the presence of others, because of anonymity of individual contribution (Williams, Harkins, & Karau, 2003).

Performance in groups is affected by how important the individual perceives his contribution is to the outcome and how much the individual values the goal. If the individual's effort is getting lost in the crowd and cannot be identified that situation is likely to produce lower levels of performance. Social loafing refers to the relaxation in effort when the individual cannot be held responsible for his/her production, and his/her work cannot be identified.
Consequently the solution to social loafing is straightforward. Make sure that each individual's performance can be identified, and therefore evaluated. Social loafing is moreover greatest among strangers, but seems to disappear when the individual works with people he knows well, or works in a group that is highly valued by the company or by society. Social loafing is reduced when offering appreciation in the form of higher salaries or other social rewards (Shepperd & Wright, 1989). Also it is less likely to occur when the tasks required are complex, interesting, meaningful and identifiable. Among highly motivated workers there is also sometimes the tendency to compensate for the inadequate performance of others (Williams & Karau, 1991). This is known as social compensation and occurs when the individual believes that others do not work adequately, and the outcome or product is important.

Sometimes an individual lacks information about the productivity of others. If he is highly motivated how does he handle this situation? Plaks & Higgins (2000) found that people rely on social stereotypes to assess productivity. Based on the stereotype that females do not perform as well as males on mathematics, the researchers found that males worked harder when paired with a female. When a colleague is unwilling or unable to produce at high levels, motivated workers seek to compensate and work harder.

2.2.1 Cross cultural differences in social loafing
Some studies have found evidence for social loafing in a variety of societies like Thailand, India and China (Karau & Williams, 1993). However, there is also evidence for cultural differences where social loafing is greater in individualistic cultures and occurs less in more collectivist societies (Gabrenya, Wang, & Latane, 1985).

On collective farms the Russian peasant was given small plots of land to produce for his own use and for sale. These plots constituted less than 1 percent of the total agricultural land, but produced 27 percent of the output in the nation. Similar results were found for Hungary where private plots accounted for 13 percent of the land, but approximately one third of the total production (Spivak, 1979). In China when farmers were allowed to sell food grown in excess of state requirements, food production increased by 8 percent each year after 1978 (Church, 1986). Are these improvements related to social facilitation or social loafing? When the individual feels he has no personal investment, and efforts are not individually appreciated, production is likely to decrease. However workers who grow up in a group-oriented society, where the individual is taught the importance of the welfare of the group, and may perform better working in groups.

The challenge in collective societies is not to give up the goal of a common and harmonious future, but to provide the individual with feelings of ownership of social production, and develop techniques of rewarding individual performance. This reward system must obviously go beyond the "heroes of labor" awards in the Soviet Union that likely were instituted in response to social loafing. Real feelings of ownership of social property and management must be encouraged. That is a high challenge, but critical to the future of societies that follow the socialist path.

Capitalist societies encourage individual goals and achievements that results in higher productivity levels. This makes it less likely that the individual worker identifies with group goals. As in all research any principles evolved on social loafing must be verified in cross-cultural research, particularly research that has significant effects for social policy. In some ways the ideals of a collectivist society must become internalized and accepted in a genuine manner, and not be based on threats. If the goal is compelling to the individual, then the team effort will increase. We are not speaking of empty promises of the distant future, but real gains for society that can be observed and measured. People loaf less when they are challenged, when the work is motivating or appealing (Brickner, Harkins & Ostrom, 1986). When people see their own individual efforts as indispensable, work productivity increases (Kerr, 1983). Therefore it is not the ideology of a society, whether individualistic or collectivist, that matters. What matters are the perceived individual incentives provided that gives the worker a stake in the future development of society. This is vividly demonstrated by the Kibbutz system

in Israel. This collective socialist farming system actually out produced Israel's private farms (Williams, 1981; Leon, 1969). Clearly the collective farmers in this socialist system felt that their individual efforts mattered and felt an ownership of management and social property.

2.2.2 Gender differences in social loafing

Women tend to be higher in what is called relation interdependence, i.e., they care more about personal relationships, tend to be more aware of these, and focus their attention on others. Do these traits have an effect on social loafing? As it turns out Karau & Williams (1993) found evidence for less social loafing in women as compared to men. Other evidence for less loafing in women is also found in other studies (Eagly, 1987; Wood, 1987). Women do of course engage in social loafing just like men, but they do so to lower levels. Likewise men in Asian cultures also loaf, just to a lower degree than men in western cultures.

In summary we need to know several conditions to determine whether the presence of others facilitates or hinders performance. First is the individual's efforts evaluated so there are personal consequences for the quality and quantity of performance? If the performance is evaluated, then the presence of others leads to higher levels of arousal and energy. But if performance cannot be evaluated, when the individual is just a number and anonymous in a large group, then social loafing is likely. Secondly, the complexity of the task makes a difference. Social facilitation research shows that people in general do better when confronted with a simple task when among others, but worse when performing on complex or difficult objectives.

2.2.3 General applications to work situations

For the management of workers doing simple tasks there should be ways to reward individual performance, or at least create individual evaluations of performance. In such circumstances evaluation anxiety produces better productivity. Social loafing also has implications for the physical arrangements of the work situation. On simple tasks workers perform better when directly observed by the supervisor since social loafing produces lower performance on simple tasks. On the other hand if the worker is required to perform complex tasks it is important to lower performance anxiety and place workers in situations where they are not observed in order to reduce anxiety and produce better solutions. In today's offices workers performing complex tasks are often placed in open office locales. This is done to create openness and make everyone feel even

the highest officers are assessable. Is that always the best working situation for those working on complex tasks? The research cited above would suggest that the physical arrangements of work situations should be tailored to the task performed, simple or complex. When the solution requires complex or novel responses and must be committed to memory it is best done without the arousal or distraction of others. Studying with fellow students can help maintain energy and motivation. However, preparing for a test that requires individual thinking and complex solutions is best done when working in some form of social isolation. Likewise in the work situation social facilitation would produce benefits for simple repetitive tasks, but as the difficulty level rises workers need the luxury of privacy.

2.3 Deindividuation
You probably recognize the fact that people do things in groups they would never do alone. For example, sometimes groups are transformed into vicious mobs bent on destruction and aggression. The football hooligans in Europe come to mind. In more serious cases we can see this effect also in the dismal history of lynching mobs in the United States who murdered thousands of slaves and free blacks during this dark time of history. Le Bon (1895) believed that groups became mobs through a process of social contagion where people lost their higher faculties of reason and moderation. In large mobs it is as if people descend to lowers levels of civilization where individual rational minds give way to an irrational "group mind". Something different happens when we become part of a group. The group is both more and also different from a collection of individual minds. Deindividuation refers to the loss of individual identity and self-regulation, and the lower influence of moral values that occur in group settings (Diener, 1980; Festinger, Pepitone, & Newcomb, 1952). As individuals we have an interest in our appearance and how our behavior may be evaluated whereas in crowds people often become barbarians.

Zimbardo (1970) suggested that people in a deindividuated state are less able to observe themselves, are less concerned with social evaluations, less aware of the self, and more focused on others. Being in such a state may lower the threshold for behaviors which otherwise would be inhibited in the individual. Deindividuated people may participate in impulsive behaviors including murder of innocents or the sacking of public property. Zimbardo argues that people in many societies live in mental straitjackets where they always have to keep their

impulses under control. Mob behavior may be liberating and allow for feelings of spontaneity. If we review cross-cultural societies we can see that nearly all national and cultural groups have events that allow some escape from the cognitive control. For example in Latin America during carnival people let go of their inhibitions. Other nations may have festivals of a similar kind. Sporting events also allow a similar release from our self-censorship. Society has an interest in allowing for venues that permit release from self-control whether through dancing or other cultural events. Such events permit the release of pent up feelings and frustrations.

A decidedly negative form of deindividuation is what is called suicide baiting. For some of us it is difficult to understand how anyone would encourage a suicidal person to jump from a tall building. Yet that is what frequently happens in the anonymity of large crowds gathered to view what for some is spectacle. Mann (1981) examined 15 years of newspaper accounts of suicidal jumps and found that nearly 50 percent included suicide baiting, where the suicidal person was encouraged to jump by some anonymous person in the crowd. Usually the baiting was associated with large crowds and darkness making individual identification less likely.

War is of course the ultimate form of antisocial behavior. The long and dark history of mankind is manifested by our determined efforts to kill one another in aggression and hostility. It is easier to kill in warfare because these conditions produce deindividuation. Soldiers feel excused from the usual prohibitions against barbarity when they cannot be held individually accountable, and when society places value on aggressive behavior. Watson (1973) investigated warfare in 23 non-western cultures to examine the effect of deindividuation on brutality. If the warriors were deindividuated before battle by wearing masks or painting their faces the likely outcome was more brutality found in the torture of enemies and the fight to death. It is instructive that in modern armies uniforms serve a similar function supported by attempts to stereotype and dehumanize the enemy before battle.

Deindividuation refers to the loosening of the normal restrictions we all feel when aware of personal values and societal constraints. When people are deindividuated they find it easier to perform both impulsive and deviant acts (Lea, Spears, & De Groot, 2001). In war we see many horrible acts committed by so-called "normal" people who would probably consider themselves upright moral

persons. The massacre at My Lai comes to mind as just one of thousands of brutal acts committed during the war. It is truly a question of getting lost in the crowd thus displacing responsibility for violent acts to the situation or authorities and thereby escaping personal guilt. Getting lost in the crowd is a useful metaphor.

Mullen (1986) found support for the idea that the larger the mob the more savage the behavior. In a content analysis of newspaper accounts of lynching in the United States he found that the larger the mob the more savage the people were in murdering their victims. The larger the number of people the less the individual responsibility felt by the participant.

Deindividuation also works through increasing conformist behavior found in obedience to the norms of the group (Postmes & Spears, 1998). If the norms of the group include the right to take life if the person is of another race or nationality, then being lost in the crowd is likely to produce obedience to this dominant norm. Other contrary norms may be present of a personal nature. The apparent moral conflict between personal and group norms are not felt by many people as the power of the group norm overcomes in most cases individual consciousness. It is the norm of the group that determines at that particular moment the behavior of the mob, whether positive or negative. For some groups the norms are vicious, in others they are more benign. Behavior obviously differs whether one is a member of a lynch mob or intends to get lost in a crowd at a rock concert.

In other words, deindividuation is enhanced if the group is large allowing for psychological and physical anonymity. This explains why uniforms are often part of the deindividuation process as we see historically in the fondness of the Nazi's for their uniforms and for uniformity. Why did the Ku Klux Klan wear sheets and hoods when performing their acts of terror against Black or progressive people in the United States? Why did the executioners in medieval times wear black and often were masked? Even today executions are deindividuated since the executioner is anonymous. Further, the act of killing is carried out by several participants diffusing responsibility. Anonymity is preserved and no individual needs to feel responsible.

Deindividuation occurs in the presence of distracting activities. If we yell at the referees at sporting events we do so because the norms permit us to do it, and we are anonymous. Later we may think more of what was said and feel chagrined at our uncouth behavior. In some cases we directly seek to be deindividuated to

release ourselves from personal responsibility. Examples are dances and religious worship experiences where the individual gives up rational behavior in favor of closeness with others and overcoming aloneness.

2.3.1 Moving toward self-awareness

If loosing ourselves in the crowd makes us more impulsive, then perhaps a greater focus on the self could produce opposite effects. When we look inward, we focus on the self and on our values, and we become more concerned with self-evaluation. Research shows that under these conditions we become more concerned with whether our behavior conforms to our most deeply held values (Duval & Wicklund, 1972). Few people meet such high standards of self awareness, but there are always inspiring examples of some, like those who go on true humanitarian missions even knowing they may be killed or tortured by the very people they are trying to help. Experiments (Duval & Lalwani, 1999; Beaman, Klentz, Diener, & Svanum, 1979) have shown that people do indeed act more consistently with their innermost values if first made self-conscious by being placed in front of a mirror or an attending audience. For some people such self-consciousness is painful, as they become aware of the discrepancy between their values and behavior. Some conflicted individuals seek to escape self-consciousness through alcoholism or other forms of escapist behavior.

Many people are self-conscious to a painful degree as demonstrated in what we call the spotlight effect. The spotlight effect occur when we believe that we are scrutinized by others, judged by others, noticed and remembered by others, to a much larger degree than is truly the case. We believe others attend to us, while we ourselves do not attend to others (Epley, Savitsky & Gilovich, 2002; Gillivich, Kruger, & Medvec, 2002).

In conclusion, we have seen that the relationship between self-consciousness and behavior takes two paths. In the case of deindividuation, the individual loses self-awareness when in large crowds, producing less self-awareness and behavior in the direction of conformity to the immediate group norms. The resulting behaviors often are impulsive and destructive as we observe in mob behavior. The opposite, the second path, takes place when self-awareness and the spotlight affect produce motivation to behave with more propriety and in accordance with personal values and beliefs.

2.3.2 Group versus individual decisions

Are group decisions more superior to those of individuals? Groups influence

behavior, sometimes for the better, sometimes with disastrous consequences depending on the norms of the group. Now let us address the issue of whether group decisions are better than the solitary decision. Intuitively we may think that the individual has only his own experience and knowledge of social reality so group decisions are better. A group would bring to the decision more experience, and an evaluative process that may, given the right circumstances, produce better decisions. What some research tells us is that more heads are better than one, if the group relies on those with the expertise (Davis & Harless, 1996). This, however, requires norms that encourage a focus on expertise and group goals rather than power or status seeking.

Group processes might however interfere with good decisions. Many group members exhibit streaks of stubbornness and an unwillingness to admit error, and therefore once committed to a goal are unwilling to change. Such ignorance of expertise is called process loss, i.e., when groups inhibit good decision making due to extraneous influences such as ego or dogma which are not relevant or useful to the decision being made (Steiner, 1972). Other forms of inhibition of the decision-making process occur as a consequence of communication problems, where people do not listen to each other, effectively tuning out important information. In yet other groups, some individuals are intellectual monopolizers who grab the limelight and dominate all the discussion. In some groups there is little trust and little communication. In these groups the important issues may never be discussed due to insecurity and fear of rejection.

2.3.3 When information is not shared

Sometimes there is insufficient information to provide a base for good decisions. It is a well established finding in social psychology that members in groups tend to focus on the information they have in common, and ignore information that each member may have separately and individually. Groups have a tendency to discuss only information that is shared by group members, and to exclude from the discussion information that is novel (Staser & Titus, 1985). Even if members of a group have useful, but novel information, chances are that this will not be discussed, or will be brought up so late in discussion that it has limited utility. In one study (Winquist & Larson, 1998), group discussions were coded for how much time was spent on each segment. The results showed the common knowledge effect; i.e., group members spend considerably more time discussing common information and little time on unshared information. This effect discounts the

major advantage of group decisions that of making better decisions when carried out from a broader knowledge base.

The reasons that this effect occurs are relatively clear. When common information is discussed all have a shared framework that in turn produces greater ease and comfort in the group process. Everyone can participate when common information is discussed, whereas only a few when the information is novel. It is the rare group member that has sufficient ego strength to bring up novel topics and information. In general, group members who bring up commonly shared information are also valued more positively as compared to those who bring up information that is unique. A wise group would be aware of this fact, and wanting to make the best decisions would ensure that meetings are long enough so that novel ideas, typically brought up late in the discussion, may have a full hearing. The idea of comfort being a factor in the type of discussions also explains why groups show a confirmation bias. Groups seek out information that will confirm already existing viewpoints, rather than information that might challenge the status quo. Group discussions aim at justifying initial decisions rather than critically examining new information that might challenge previous decisions (Schulz-Hardt, Frey, Luthgens, & Moscovici, 2000).

One way to overcome the common knowledge effect and confirmation bias is to ensure that group discussions build in sufficient time to share novel information, and time to challenge the status quo (Larson, Christensen, Franz, & Abbott, 1998). Another way may be to assign specific topics as the responsibility of individual group members so each participant is responsible for bringing up relevant information. One or several members could be assigned the task to specifically bring new or novel ideas to the group. In relationships couples sometimes assign each other different household tasks. One partner may be responsible for paying bills on time, the other for making the children's medical or dental appointments. Research has shown that such combined memory is superior and more efficient than the memory of either person alone (Hollingshead, 2001).

3. Groupthink: The outcome of faulty thinking produced in highly cohesive groups
In highly cohesive groups the decision-making outcome is sometimes disastrous. Generally this occurs when there is great stress, and groups are under social pressure to achieve consensus. In American foreign policy we see many examples of "group think" which has produced terrible consequences for the US and the

world (Janis, 1972; 1982). Among the many fiasco's that dominate the history of foreign policy in the US, we can mention several well-known to the world. The Kennedy administration, in its hostility to the Cuban revolution, sought to overthrow the Cuban government by sponsoring an invasion of about 1,400 counter revolutionaries trained by the CIA. Despite initial lies in the United Nations the role of the US soon became clear. The invasion force was decisively defeated and captured or killed after a couple of days combat. This event constituted a serious embarrassment to the US. History shows that the decision to attack Cuba was the outcome of conformity pressures in the council of the president that allowed the US to underestimate the popular support of the Cuban revolution, and demonize its leadership.

At another time in history Hitler and his group of cronies made a similar mistake in attacking the Soviet Union. Perhaps China also made such a mistake in attacking Vietnam. Another disastrous decision was the American war in Vietnam, and in particular the decision by the Johnson administration to send more troops to Vietnam. The outcome of that decision significantly increased the number of lives lost among American soldiers, and among the Vietnamese population. Other outcomes of groupthink include the decision by NASA to go ahead with the launch of the shuttle Challenger after being warned by the engineers that the O-ring seals might fail. This catastrophic failure happened and the rocket exploded killing all aboard. Probably you can think of many other examples from history in various European countries. The current foreign policy intervention of the Bush administration continues this pattern of foolish and disastrous decisions through its effort to "spread democracy" by invading sovereign nations. The Neocons responsible for current US policy (and their supporters elsewhere in the world) again seriously underestimated the will of their opponents to resist and inflict damage. As of this writing there is no solution to the bloodshed unleashed.

3.1 What is groupthink: antecedents, symptoms, and decisions
Groupthink refers to delusionary thinking that occur in highly cohesive groups where the pressure to reach consensus subverts critical thinking. Janis (1982) suggested that groupthink typically occurs in a highly cohesive group that is about to make an important decision for which it is not fully prepared. The group is excessively optimistic; it believes it is moral in decision-making and in full control of all important events, and therefore invulnerable. Within the group there is a strong desire for consensus that is achieved by suppressing dissenting

information and discouraging the consideration of alternatives or the evaluation of undesired consequences. The group convinces itself that since it is morally superior there is no need to search for other relevant information. Further, since the group has no built-in procedure for evaluating alternatives to the one suggested or demanded at the start by the strong leader who chairs the group and strictly directs the deliberations.

Discussion within the group is limited and contributes to the unanimity with regard to the decision made. The group furthermore puts pressure on individual group members to conform. Dissenting group members are too fearful of rejection to object, and may even convince themselves that their doubts are not worth entertaining. There are no contingency plans made if things go wrong, because group members are convinced they are right. Moreover, portraying the opponent in demonic terms assists this process of delusion as stereotypes always fall short of reality. The stereotyping of historical enemies in European history led to some of the greatest policy failures in wartime. Groupthink results in shallowness in decision making due to the lack of information and the narrow or non-existent consideration of alternatives for action.

Groupthink as a concept has intuitive appeal and utility in examining many important historical decisions. The empirical evidence from the social psychological laboratory is more complex (Esser; 1998; Paulus, 1998). Tetlock, Peterson, McGuire, Chang, & Field (1992) found empirical support for the concept in 12 different political decisions. The factors suggested by Janis do not all find support in the laboratory, but the delusion effect of dynamic and controlling leadership is by and large confirmed. Janis' work points to the obvious problems that derive from self-censorship, and from decisions in the group to withhold information inconsistent with the one proposed. We also know that strong leaders can and do stifle discussion. If groups want to prevent fiascoes there are steps they can take, which will improve the decision making process.

If anything, groupthink illustrates the processes that encourage the use of discussion to justify preconceived ideas. Groups have a tendency to focus on single solutions, when complex problems demand multiple reactions to difficult problems. Concurrence seeking produces groups that are robotic and "strain toward uniformity" rather than include the required complexity (Nemeth & Staw, 1989). Once the most influential individuals in the group opt for a course of action competing ideas have little chance of emerging. Arguments tend to become more

one-sided as discussion proceeds, and since group members hear only one side, the discussion also tends to breed overconfidence.

It is not just cohesiveness that produces groupthink. Many marriages are very cohesive, but have built into their relationship acceptance of disagreement. This of course is also possible for other relationships and groups, regardless of their function or purpose.

3.2 The prevention of groupthink

If a group wants to come to decisions that are useful, effective, and correspond to the real world, there are steps to be taken to achieve that goal. Obviously a freer discussion in the group allowing for all opinions to be heard might avoid some of the disasters that have occurred in our past history. It would also be helpful if the leader did not state a strong opinion at the very beginning of the deliberation, but is helpful by welcoming all information and viewpoints. The group as a whole must also make sure that outside information is welcome and desired, and must provide room for critique. To prevent rash action the group could assign one or several people to play the "devil's advocate", i.e., to argue the contrary point at every step of the process. In that manner some of the weaknesses of the proposed action may be illuminated before action is taken. The leader could also divide the group into subgroups with different responsibilities, and then bring them together to confront their separate recommendations. Finally, the group could seek anonymous opinion that would offer no risk of rejection.

These points are summarized by Janis (1982) to for leaders to prevent encouraging groupthink:

1. Tell the individual members what groupthink is, and tell them about the major antecedents and consequent faulty decisions. Be open-minded, do not favor any position at the beginning of deliberations.
2. Encourage group members to be critical and skeptical, encourage doubts about any proposed solution.
3. Ask specific members to play the role of "devil's advocate" i.e., questioning and arguing the opposite side of every issue.
4. Subdivide the group to evaluate the decision separately, then join the members together to compare evaluations.
5. In decisions affecting rival groups seek to understand all possible reactions by these groups. Is the proposed decision good for the group in the long run?
6. After the decision is made schedule a second "last chance" meeting to review,

once more, any final doubts.

7. Invite experts, not members of the group to evaluate decisions, and have these experts attend separate meetings.

8. Encourage group members to consult with knowledgeable associates and have them report back their reactions.

9. Encourage groups that are independent from each other to work on the problem and to come up with their independent recommendations.

These are recommendations that should be adopted by decision makers at any level of society. Obviously the more critical the problem and consequences, the more important it is for the leader to prevent groupthink.

3.3 The power of the minority

History is replete with examples of the power of minorities on social practice and debate. While group influence is overpowering for most individuals, a minority can, by following certain principles, change group opinion. Think for a moment about all the social movements in history, where a minority, even a minority of one, swayed the powerful majority and caused a rupture with the past. The Copernicus revolution removing the earth from the central role in our planetary system is one example. Galileo was another minority of one who proposed the correct dimensions of the earth despite grave threats by the establishment. The right to vote for women was not a free gift by men, but occurred as a result of very brave women and men who in the minority fought for decades against all odds. The abolitionists who struggled to end slavery were long a despised minority in the US, but eventually their view won in a terrible civil war.

Minorities can have great influence when they follow several research-based behaviors. Moscovici et al. (1969; 1985) showed that three principles are of primary importance for success. The first is consistence. If the minority is consistent and does not waver in its proposed course of action, the consistency is likely to produce change in others. When the minority follows the majority it is most likely due to conformity pressures. However, when the majority changes its mind in the direction of the minority, it is because the majority has been encouraged to do so and to reflect more carefully its decisions by the consistency of minority opposition. When dissent occurs within a group, people sometimes become aware of new information, and think of new and novel ways to solve problems. A consistent minority may encourage creative thinking on task solutions. In the jury system a minority may sway the majority by being persistent

and consistent (Nemeth, 1979).

Self-confidence shows that the minority believes in the validity of its arguments. If the minority does not consistently display self-confidence it raises red flags in the minds of the majority. A timid minority creates the impression that its objections are not valid and that the minority is incompetent. The self-confidence by which the minority addresses issues, on the other hand, influence and change positions (Nemeth & Wachtler, 1974). When the minority confidently and continually puts forward its point of view, it disrupts the conception of unanimity that the majority relies on for conformity. As the discussion proceeds in the group those in the majority who have censored themselves in pursuit of unanimity may begin to speak out more freely. Once such defection occurs, it starts a process of self-evaluation within the majority that causes more defections as a defecting person begins to have more credibility with the majority (Levine, 1989). Defection to the minority matters for both the minority and the majority by assuring the minority and casting doubt on the majority position. Conversely, the minority would also be influenced if one of their members joined the majority (Wolf, 1987).
Since practically any worthwhile position was once a minority position it is toward social minorities we must place our hope for improvement in society and groups. The majority will always conform or sit on the fence. Only the minority possesses the fortitude to continue working toward the cause they believe is right, whether to improve education, science or other facets of community life.

3.4 The cultural view: The phenomena of groupthink in other nations
Is groupthink primarily a phenomenon of extreme conformity processes in Western cultures? We have seen how critical situations (Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba and the war in Vietnam) caused US decision makers to make faulty decisions with terrible consequences for millions of people. Are other cultures equally affected by groupthink? Do we have any reasons to believe they are not, or are other cultures perhaps even more conformist? Eastern cultures often stress harmony at the expense of individuality. Might the drive for harmony elicit even more efforts toward group cohesion at the expense of reality-based decisions? Nisbett (2003) found evidence in his study that groupthink is very significant in East Asian cultures. Every effort is made so participants in decisions and meetings do not "lose face" through unexpected conflict. Often there is no true debate in the group context. In Japan groupthink is so powerful, even in scientific meetings, that there is rarely any real debate that might be considered

confrontational. In fact, Japanese science is under performing given the large amount of resources dedicated to research and knowledge (French, 2001).

How can we then explain the apparent contradiction that many Japanese companies do extremely well in international markets, and even dominate some sectors? Japanese managers have found a different way as they meet individually with decision-making participants prior to the meeting to obtain consensus. The meeting is not for decision-making, but to articulate the already obtained consensus. Decision-making in other cultures is obviously a complex matter. In recent years Western managers were employed by Japanese companies like Sony, supposedly to shake up management, to get rid of unwanted employees, and to make the company more competitive. Is there a change in Japanese employment philosophy? Whereas before a worker had essentially a job for life, this system of patronage is disappearing in the face of global competition, and the American model that simply states that profit is all that matters is adopted.

4. Leadership in groups
Effective leadership would include the idea of minority influence. Real minority influence is absent in many present day parliamentary democracies. In many European countries manipulation of voter opinion ensures electoral victories, and getting elected and reelected seems the only goal. However, to guide and mobilize groups toward worthwhile goals requires individuals who are willing to go against the grain, and set new goals outside the current social frame. To act otherwise is to act in favor of social stagnation.

Many studies have shown that when leaders work with a democratic style it provides group satisfaction and improves productivity (Spector, 1986). People tend to thrive and take pride in achievements under democratic leadership. This has led some societies to experiment with participative management (Naylor, 1990). However, if such management styles are just adopted to increase productivity as a form of manipulation, and do not involve real power sharing, benefits will likely prove temporary and dependent on surveillance.

4.1 The role of gender in leadership
Women have had to deal with special gender based prejudice when they seek or exercise leadership positions. There is much research that supports the contention that male and female leaders are perceived and treated differently. If a woman acts like a male, i.e. displays an authoritarian or forceful style of

leadership, this is negatively evaluated (Eagly, Makhijani, Klonsky, 1992). While the negatively evaluation of female leaders is found in both sexes it is especially present in males. Males react more negatively to "bossy" styles that run counter to traditional female roles in society.

Gender roles have been in great flux over the past decades as more and more women enter the work force, and as gender equality is being sought in all arenas of economic and social life. In universities there are now more women graduates than men, and they make up 46 percent of the work force in the US. Still less than 1 percent of top managers (CEO's) of the Fortune 500 (largest) companies are women, and only 4 percent of other top management positions are held by women (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

We can observe two kinds of prejudice against women. If women behave in a communal fashion, i.e. show they are concerned about the welfare of others, are warm and affectionate, then they are perceived as weak in leadership. On the other hand if a woman claws her way to leadership by behaving like men in similar positions, she is evaluated negatively since these behaviors are perceived to be contrary to how women are expected to behave. So how can a woman win? If she acts consistent to expectations she is perceived to be weak. If she is more agentic, i.e., is more assertive and controlling, she is acting contrary to societal expectations (Carli & Eagly, 1999; Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Acceptance of changes in gender roles does not occur overnight. Many of the perceptions are very complex and nurtured by all the agents of society, in education, in the political system, in sub conscious culture. They affect self-concepts and self-esteem in many ways. The prejudice against women leaders seems to be receding (Twenge, 1997), as the percentage of men and women who prefer male bosses is decreasing. There is also a growing acceptance of the idea that good leaders should have the traditional characteristics of both genders. Those who are most effective in leadership may well be those who are both communal (affectionate) and also possess agentic (assertive) qualities.

5. Are risky decisions more likely made in groups?
In a series of experiments Stoner (1961) learned that groups, as a collective, are more likely to produce risky decisions as compared to individually made decisions. The participants in the experiment were asked to give advise to others on various courses of action which varied in risk to the individuals. For example, should a person stay with a company that is secure, but only pays a modest salary

or should he move to a company that is a risky venture, but might potentially have of a great pay off in the future? This decision is a problem that many face, and people vary greatly in their tolerance for risk.

But in addition to these individual differences Stoner also found a new phenomena of group behavior that he called the "risky shift". Generally when people made decisions in groups they are more likely to recommend riskier decisions compared to when they evaluated the decision individually (Wallach, Kogan, & Bem, 1962). These studies revealed that the risky shift occurs when the group is seeking consensus after a relative brief discussion. Dissenting group members will often change their minds toward greater risk after such a brief discussion that perhaps does not allow for a consideration of all the consequences or an understanding of the risk.

The risky shift has serious implications for many group decisions. When the outcome is of great importance, perhaps it is best to follow the Japanese model and have people make individual decisions in pursuit of consensus. That is, when consensus really is not just another word for conformity sought in the individual consultation. However, as we frequently see in social psychology matters are not as simple as the earlier researchers thought.

5.1 Group polarization
Science is always self-correcting. It soon became apparent that the risky shift was not as simple as initially thought. Further research showed that groups did not make more risky decisions all of the time, it all depended on the initial views in the group. The group process produced more extreme decisions, i.e. groups tend to accentuate the already existing opinions. If these initial opinions tend toward more risk then the group process increases the risk level. If, however, the group predominantly expresses conservative opinions in the pre-decision phase, then the resulting decision would become even more conservative (Moscovice & Zavalloni, 1969; Myers & Bishop, 1971; Zuber, Crott & Werner, 1992).

Does polarization emerge in naturally occurring groups in society? Observe the conflict in the world where people from the same ethnic community, and with largely similar beliefs, are killing each other over dogma about ancient historical events. Terrorism does not occur suddenly without any antecedents. It occurs when people having grievances come together as is happening in ethnic communities throughout the world. As people with grievances interact

moderating voices get lost since everyone wants to articulate these long suppressed hurts, and opinions become gradually more extreme (McCauley & Segal, 1987). Individuals isolated from facilitating groups would never commit the terrible acts of terrorism that we now see on a daily basis.

This group polarization effect has now been well established. In decisions and discussions the group favors more extreme viewpoints whether cautious or risky. Why is that the case? The literature provides us with several explanations. Group discussion elicits a pooling of ideas, which may include persuasive arguments not previously considered by group members (Stasser,1991).When people hear relevant arguments not previously considered, they sometimes shift their positions. So arguments or relevant information is important. Other times we change because we compare our viewpoint to that of others in the group. People will often not speak out until they can compare their views to that of others. This could be called ignorance of group opinion or "pluralistic ignorance" (Miller & McFarland,1987). Sometimes just hearing the opinions of others will produce a shift in the more cautious or risky direction.

The group is gathered in order to make a decision. Therefore the different arguments in favor of each course of action will have a hearing. However, since each side of the argument will present its viewpoint, more arguments will be heard from the side that had most of the initial support. Hearing more of a given side in an argument leads to the likelihood of others concurring, and since those presenting the arguments tend to have more extreme views, the majority in a group follows this polarization. To put it in other terms, the group discussion exposes the average member of the group to more arguments in favor of the position he already favored. Exposures to more arguments, and more extreme arguments by partisans of a given viewpoint, serve to strengthen the individual's initial inclinations, and we therefore observe group polarization.

Does the mere exposure to a pool of arguments produce more extreme viewpoints in the direction of the initial preferred course of action? Support for this contention is found in a number of studies (Burnstein & Vinokur, 1973; Clark, Crockett, & Archer, 1971). Group polarization is defined as the tendency for group decisions to be more extreme than those made by individuals in the direction of the group's initial positions. Results show that groups make more "extreme" positions than do individuals alone.

5.2 Group polarization and social comparison theory
The social comparison theory first advocated by Festinger (1954) suggests that we try to understand our world by comparing how we stand in relation to others (see also chapter 2). Such comparisons may have consequences for our identity and behavior (Stapel & Blanton, 2004; Suls & Wheeler, 2000). How do comparisons lead to group polarization? Most people think of themselves as favoring the more extreme "correct" position when compared to others. For example, if the socially valued course of action is to be cautious you may take an even more cautious position, whereas when the preferred action is risky you may advocate an even riskier position. People would be more cautious with the money of loved ones as that is considered the "correct" position, but perhaps more risky with money of their own.

The group context therefore becomes somewhat more risky for issues where a risky course is favored initially and somewhat more conservative on issues for which initial caution is considered the right decision. In the desire to be different from others we adopt more polarized viewpoints, but always in the "right" direction, that position which is favored initially by the group (Brown 1965; Ohtsubo, Masuchi, & Nakanishi, 2002; Rodrigo & Ato, 2002). This result is explained by the commonly accepted idea that people like to be liked and we want to be accepted. In the process of striving for acceptance we learn the values of our group. To be accepted and liked and viewed in a positive light, we support group values and show our leadership in the direction of the accepted opinion (Blaskovich, Ginsburg, & Veach, 1975, Zuber, Crott, & Werner, 1992).

5.3 The cultural view: Do some societies value risk more than others?
The initial studies on group polarization were carried out on US students, and the majority of results displayed the risky shift described above. But do all cultures favor risk? Western societies find risk taking is behavior to be admired (Madaras & Bem, 1968). For example, risk takers are seen as possessing more favorable positive traits. In one study risk takers were seen to be more creative, more intelligent, more socially confident, as compared to the cautious (Jellison & Riskind, 1970). The appreciation of risk taking comes from the broader capitalist culture that dominates thinking in Western societies. Such a culture actively encourages risk taking, and views as necessary the possibility of failure and loss. This may explain why we find more risk taking behavior in Western cultures (Gologor, 1977).

Whereas risk taking is admired in Western societies (Madaras & Bem, 1968) and risk takers are perceived in these cultures as more competent (Jellison & Riskind, 1970), cross-cultural studies of risk taking show that Africans value caution more as compared to Western respondents (Carlson & Davis, 1971;Gologor, 1977). These findings demonstrate again the importance of checking out all research results from a cultural perspective since we know cultural values to be of fundamental importance in any decision-making.

5.4 Polarization today

There are so many events that can be used as examples of the polarization effect. The most recent to come to mind is the furor throughout the Islamic world over the cartoons published in a Danish newspaper depicting the prophet Muhammad. None reacted to these cartoons for months, except for a small group of Danish Muslims. They got together, discussed the cartoons and eventually held a protest rally in Copenhagen. When that did not have the desired impact they decided to take the case to the Islamic world meeting with religious figures from Egypt to Saudi Arabia. This course of action inflamed opinions further. Only then did extreme opinions really begin to take over the debate with Danish embassies being closed down in Syria and elsewhere, the Danish flag burned, and a boycott of Danish products being enacted in the Arab world. This was followed by further riots and the death of scores of people.

This all started with cartoons that were initially thought to be very funny by the majority of Danes, and that were intended to attack the self-censorship thought to exist in Danish newspapers. The riots probably reinforced this censorship by reinforcing taboos, although the extremity of these taboos was a product of polarization. The gap between civilizations was not decreased as a result of this process in group polarization as moderate voices were drowned out by the clamor of extreme opinions. Modern means of communication like the Internet are not moderating voices since people will primarily select the information they agree with, and ignore other perspectives. Hate groups make good use of the Internet, and the group polarization effect represented there simply feed extremist views.

A dialogue between varying viewpoints may help, but not if it is confrontational or argumentative. Nothing but polarization occurs as a result of argumentative interaction. A truly multiethnic worldview would accept not only that differences exist, but also that these are desirable (Van der Veer, 2003). The absolute truth is not present in any viewpoint, hence respect for sincerity, and honesty and a

complete right to differ on any topic within broad humanitarian values is required.

6. Conflict or cooperation in groups

Whenever two or more people gather there is an opportunity for conflict. That is true for groups as small as couples, as well as nations. Often our goals and needs clash, and at times goals are totally incompatible. If we examine the world just in our lifetime, or even the past few decades, we see everywhere the distressing results of conflict and destruction. At the smallest group level of marriage the divorce rate in the Western world is distressingly high approaching 50 percent. Perhaps that has something to do with the changing gender roles and the inability of people to adjust.

The murder rate in the US has justified it being called the murder capital of the civilized world. When we examine violence at the level of nations, warfare has not only increased in severity and brutality, but also in frequency during the 20th century (Levy & Morgan, 1984). There is nothing to encourage us to think that this pattern of violence is changing in the future, only the combatants change. Social psychologists, along with specialists in other fields, have been involved in research that aims at addressing these problems and learning how to resolve conflicts peacefully.

Game theory, as exemplified in the prisoners' dilemma game, has been used extensively as a framework for the study of conflict in the social psychological laboratory to understand how we can increase cooperation and trust.

Competitive actions increase the level of distrust until conflict ensues (Batson & Ahmad, 2001). When two systems are locked into an arms race the dominating fear is that the other side will take advantage of any weakness. Consequently arms are stockpiled to the point of absurdity. We now have in the world enough nuclear weapons not only to destroy the world once, but many times over. The arms race is a loss for everyone as is any conflict. This monster, which dominates the economies of most nations, eats up massive resources that could be used for the betterment of the world.

Some research has suggested the efficacy of a "tit for tat " strategy in order to encourage cooperation (Axelrod, 1984; Parks & Rumble, 2001;Van Lange, Ouwerkerk, & Tazelaar, 2002). This strategy of conflict management involves a group taking the initial step toward cooperation and thereby inviting

reciprocation. Tit for tat requires us to respond to the opponent's reaction. If a cooperative reaction is elicited then 'tit for tat" calls for rewarding the opponent with more cooperation, and thereby build more trust. If the response is not cooperative then the option remains to escalate the competition. One can only wonder where the world would be if such a conciliatory strategy had been employed in the past. Cuba has made many conciliatory gestures toward the United States over the past decades, but each has been received with disdain and more conflict. However, a strategy based on threats has been shown to be totally ineffective (Deutsch & Kraus, 1960; 1962; & Turner & Horvitz, 2001).

6.1 Negotiating and bargaining toward a solution to conflict
To end any conflict it is necessary to negotiate. Unless both parties come to an agreement there is no way to end the conflict. That is one reason why unilateral decisions by a powerful actor will not work in the long run. The state of Israel is in longstanding conflict with the Palestinian people who inhabited the space upon which Israel is now located. Israel has decided to withdraw from some, but not all of the territory that belonged to the Palestinian people prior to the 1967 war. In support of this they are building a wall the length of the country to effectively partition what they want to leave to the Palestinians. This wall not only places many Palestinians in second-class citizenship within the state of Israel, but also makes a viable state for the Palestinians almost impossible. Unilateral decision-making will probably result in a conflict that will be with us for decades to come.

Negotiations require people to communicate with opponents directly, and are based on the idea that there are solutions that are acceptable to all parties to the conflict. The ideal form of negotiation or bargaining will take into account the most and least important issues to each party. In that way each party compromises more on issues of less importance but still of some importance to the opposing side. For example, for the Palestinians the return of refugees and the status of East Jerusalem as a capital of Palestine are probably among the most important issues in the conflict. A viable peace would seem most important to Israel. Giving up territory in exchange for peace is then the only viable option. The devil is in the details. When we distrust the other side we develop biased perceptions of the opponent, distrust their proposals, and overlook the obvious interests that they all have in common (O'Connor & Carnvale, 1997).

However, it is not always easy to identify such integrative solutions. Distrust makes it nearly impossible for people to see communalities in search for

solutions. Intractability calls for the services of mediators trusted by both sides whose role is to identify integrative solutions beneficial to both sides for a negotiated end to conflict. Such mediators have been at work in nearly all past international conflicts since war rarely results in any decisive victory. The mediations have had varying success. Some conflicts like a union's request for pay raises can be bargained since both management and workers can identify solutions that would benefit both sides. Conflicts based on deeply held values are much more difficult to mediate.

Summary

Membership in groups is central to our lives, and therefore also to the discipline of social psychology. People join groups because membership entails many benefits related to survival and other social needs. There are those who would propose an evolutionary need for groups, as people in isolation often experience severe psychological stress.

A group is two or more people who are in a state of interaction. Crowds are not groups, nor are other gatherings that do not have the inherent property of interaction. Group structure follows quickly upon formation of a group as leader roles, group norms, and status of members are swiftly identified. Generally people seek out like-minded people when joining groups. Most people want reinforcement of their beliefs and attitudes and do not seek challenges to their deeply held worldviews.

Groups define the roles we play. In work groups these are often specified to a degree that allows for little ambiguity. Clearly defined roles produce satisfaction and improved production. Unfortunately, sometimes roles take over the identity of the individual as we see in the Zimbardo study. In that study on prison simulation, and in real life, guards became brutal and prisoners submissive in response to the roles imposed.

Gender roles are in a state of constant change. In recent decades we have observed some improvement in women's struggle for equality, but the process is slow (Eurostat 2007)∗. That of course does not of itself overcome the long-term effects of culture. In capitalist societies progress in women's rights has followed major social changes, and the struggles of brave women and men. Gender conflict remains in all societies due in part to the greater demands made on women who work outside the home, and the strain to adjust to changing roles and demands at

home.

A strong feeling of friendship is the most important characteristic of cohesive groups. Such groups tend to be more effective and less dysfunctional than groups manifesting conflict. Some groups are only temporary; others are for life especially those that have common purposes and goals. When members accept goals and like each other the group is likely to be cohesive.

Group membership is important because people at times act different when in groups. The research on social facilitation shows that groups energize people on simple tasks leading to higher performance levels, but hurts performance on complex tasks. On complex tasks evaluation anxiety may be diverting or distracting the individual away from task solutions.

Crowding is experienced as stressful and therefore different from physical density. At sporting events crowding may intensify feelings leading to hooligan behavior on the part of fans, and in other situations to lynching in the US. Crowding is therefore a subjective feeling of not having sufficient space, which can produce sensory overloads and feelings of loss of control. However, if one is distracted as perhaps when watching a favored sport team, the physical density of the fans may not be stressful or experienced as crowding. On the other hand a long trip on a bus may produce the feeling of not having sufficient space although among fewer people. The research indicates that in some cultures physical density experienced as crowding in Western societies is not experienced as such in Asia. The Asian cultures have developed elaborate cultures of courtesy that allows people to live with high density and still maintain necessary distance and privacy.

We all know those in our task groups that loaf. Social loafing is manifested when individuals give minimal efforts. It occurs mostly in situations where individual efforts cannot be identified, or the task has little meaning. When the individual is submerged in the group, task behavior may suffer as a consequence. Social loafing is greatest among strangers, least among friends and family where there is a sense of shared responsibility. When the task is meaningful some individuals will compensate for others inadequacy, and step up individual contributions.

Life has demonstrated cultural differences in social loafing. In all cases examined, collective farming in the former socialist societies did poorly as compared to

private farming. At the same time we have the example of the socialist Kibbutz system in Israel that out produced private farming. Clearly it is not social production that leads to loafing, but rather the feeling of lack of ownership of production and management. Differences within society reveal that women, who have more communal feelings, are also less likely to loaf.

Overall, when individual efforts are appreciated, known and rewarded, when the task is challenging, and the group goals accepted, social loafing is less an obstruction in society. These findings can be applied to work situations by ensuring sufficient surveillance of work on simple tasks, and individual evaluations. Open spaces are encouraged for work on simple tasks. On complex tasks open spaces may be distracting as such work requires more privacy. Deindividuation is where the individual experiences a loss of identity, and the normal restraints that come from having acquired personal values. People do things in groups they would never do when alone. Le Bon referred to this phenomenon as a form of social contagion where impulsive and destructive behavior takes the place of rational evaluations. When in a situation of deindividuation people are less concerned about the evaluations of others, partly from the anonymity afforded by large crowds. Many negative behaviors may result from deindividuation including suicide baiting, lynching, and war.

In large crowds deindividuation is more likely, and conformity greater. If the norms are violent we observe the destructive consequences. In war the controlling parties do all that is possible to deindividuate individual combatants. In some societies paint is worn to reduce individuality and evaluation. In modern societies uniforms play a similar role of reducing normal restraint toward brutality. Therefore, if we are interested in reducing deindividuation we have to find some way to have the combatants focus inward and become more self-conscious. In the process of individuation and self-consciousness, personal values will play a larger role in restraining unethical behavior.

One important area in the social psychology of groups involves an understanding of group decisions. Are these superior to individual decisions; are two heads better than one? If we rely on expert opinion we may avert process loss, and the kinds of communication problems that interfere with good decisions. However, under some circumstances group decisions are worse than individual opinion, worse than making no decision at all.

One problem of the group process is that generally only information known to all group members is shared in making the decision, and novel viewpoints are held back. It is easier to discuss commonly shared information, but perhaps the novel idea is key to a competent decision. One way to avoid the problem is to ensure that the group has sufficient time, as novel solutions would generally come after the common information is shared.

Groupthink has had great impact on some disastrous foreign policy decisions in the West, and perhaps similar decisions can be identified in other countries. Groupthink occurs in highly cohesive groups when they are under stress to achieve consensus. It involves faulty thinking based in part on stereotypes of opponents, feelings of moral superiority and invulnerability. The prevention of groupthink involves good leadership that not only allows, but also seeks complete free discussion, and is open to all points of view. Groupthink is mindless conformity that seeks to justify preconceived ideas.

However, minorities make history. Research has shown that when minorities display consistency in holding to a course of action, when they display self-confidence, and when they can elicit defections from the majority, they can indeed change history. Effective leadership comes from those who are willing to go against the grain. Also research shows pretty conclusively that democratic leadership not only is most satisfying to followers, but also is most effective in task completion.

Women's roles have changed drastically in the last decades from being homemakers to winning a place in the larger industrial society. The world is changing, but women often find themselves in a double bind. If they act in more traditional communal ways they are perceived as weak in leadership, if they act in more masculine agentic ways they are perceived as less feminine. Some research indicates that the best leadership in society comes from those who can combine these traits.

Can we find examples of groupthink in other cultures and nations? There is great evidence of the existence groupthink in Asian cultures. It is thought by some that there is no value in holding decision-making meetings in collectivist cultures as decisions are made prior to any meeting. On the other hand there is more evidence of pre meeting consultation in for example Japanese companies, so the actual meeting is just to make formal the consensus already established. The real question is: is the process of consultation just another way of seeking conformity

and agreement with the preconceived ideas of the leadership? Perhaps globalization makes cultural differences less relevant. As more nations adapt to globalization where the profit motive is the overriding concern, cultural differences become less important.

Are group decisions more risky? Yes, when groups seek consensus the risky shift in the direction of more risky decisions occurs, at least in the US. However, later research on group polarization shows that for most interaction the group decision will be primarily more extreme in the direction of the already dominant opinion whether risky or cautious. The reasons include the persuasion argument that shows that exposure to the quantity and persuasiveness of dominant arguments moves group members toward more extreme views. Also the social comparison argument shows that we like to compare ourselves to others, and to be ahead of others toward the "correct" position. There are some cultural differences with Western societies producing more risky responses and less so in some other cultures examined. Again globalization works toward more uniformity of values that may erase any cultural differences in the long run.

The world shows many examples of the devastating polarization occurring in attitudes and opinions prior to our wars and conflicts. Social psychologists have tried to address these issues in laboratory simulations utilizing game theory. These simulations support the strategy of taking initial cooperative steps, followed by rewarding cooperation by opponents. The initial cooperative strategy is most successful since threats have no useful function. For conflict to end the parties must find ways to communicate. Finding integrative solutions, which benefit both parties, is at times both difficult and complex. When the issue is about land or deeply held values, compromises through negotiation are not a likely outcome. On other matters like economic disputes, negotiation may bring about settlements that end conflict and provide mutually acceptable solutions.