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GROUP DYNAMICS

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction to Group Dynamics

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Group dynamics are the influential actions, processes, and changes that occur within and between groups. Groups come in all shapes and sizes and their functions are many and varied, but their influence is universal. The tendency to join with others in groups is perhaps the single most important characteristic of humans, and the processes that unfold within these groups leave an indelible imprint on their members and on society. To understand people, one must understand groups and their dynamics.

- What is a group?
- What are some common characteristics of groups?
- Are there different types of groups, and do people distinguish between these groups?
- What assumptions guide researchers in their studies of groups and their dynamics?
- Why study groups and their dynamics?
- What topics are included in the scientific study of group dynamics?

CHAPTER OUTLINE

The Nature of Groups

Defining Groups

Describing Groups

Types of Groups

Perceiving Groups

The Nature of Group Dynamics

The Scientific Study of Groups

A Multilevel Approach to the Study of Groups

The Significance of Groups

Topics in Contemporary Group Dynamics

Group Dynamics is Dynamic

Chapter Review

Resources

Most people spend their entire lives in groups. Although some may bemoan the growing alienation of individuals from the small social groups that once linked them securely to society at large, the single man or woman who has no connection to other men and women is an extraordinarily rare human being (Silvia & Kwapil, 2011). People are in many respects individuals seeking personal, private objectives, yet they are also members of groups that constrain them, guide them, and sustain them. Members of the species *Homo sapiens* are capable of surviving alone, but few choose to, for virtually all human activities—working, learning, worshiping, relaxing, playing, and even sleeping—occur in groups. No one knows for certain how many groups exist at this moment, but given the number of people on the planet and their groupish proclivities, 30 billion is a conservative estimate.

Sages, scholars, and laypersons have been puzzling over **group dynamics**—the actions, processes, and changes that occur within groups and between groups—for centuries. Why, they asked, do humans so frequently join with others in groups? How do members coordinate their efforts and energies? What factors give rise to a sense of cohesion, esprit de corps, and a marked distrust for those outside the group? And how do groups and their leaders hold sway over members? Their inquiries provide the scientific basis for the field of group dynamics, which is the scientific discipline devoted to studying groups and group process.

This book unravels many of the mysteries of groups, beginning with two sets of essential questions. First, *what is a group?* What distinguishes a group from a mere collection of people? What features can we expect to find in most groups, and what kinds of processes provide the foundation for their dynamics? Second, *what is this field of study we are calling group dynamics?* What assumptions guide researchers as they describe, analyze, and compare the various groups that populate the planet?

group dynamics The influential actions, processes, and changes that occur within and between groups; also, the scientific study of those processes.

THE NATURE OF GROUPS

Fish swimming in synchronized unison are called a *school*. A gathering of kangaroos is a *mob*. A threesome of crows cawing from their perch on a telephone wire is a *murder*. A *gam* is a group of whales. A flock of larks in flight is an *exaltation* (Lipton, 1991). But what is a collection of human beings called? A *group*.

Defining Groups

Take a moment and make a mental list of all the groups of which you are a part. Did you include your family? The people you work or study with? How about your neighbors or people who used to be neighbors but moved away? Are all of the people you have friended on Facebook members of a group? How about people of your same sex, race, and citizenship and those who share your political beliefs? Are African American men, Canadians, and Republicans groups? Are you in a romantic relationship? Did you include you and your partner on your list of groups? Which collections of humans are groups and which are not?

As the sampling of definitions in Table 1.1 suggests, people who study groups are not conformists. Some of their definitions of the word *group* stress the importance of communication or mutual dependence. Still others suggest that a shared purpose or goal is what turns a mere aggregate of individuals into a bona fide group. Most, however, would agree that groups come into existence when people become linked together by some type of relationship. Three persons working on math problems in separate rooms can hardly be considered a group; they are not connected to each other in any way. If, however, we create relationships linking them—for example, we let them send notes to each other or we pick one person to distribute the problems to the others—then these three individuals can be considered a rudimentary group. Neither would we call people who share some superficial similarity, such as eye color, a favorite football team, or birthplace, group members for we expect them to be connected to each other in socially meaningful ways. A family is a group because the

TABLE 1.1 A Sampling of Definitions of the Word *Group*

Central Feature	Definition
Categorization	"Two or more individuals … [who] perceive themselves to be members of the same social category" (Turner, 1982, p. 15)
Communication	"Three or more people … who (a) think of themselves as a group, (b) are interdependent (e.g., with regard to shared goals or behaviors that affect one another), and (c) communicate (interact) with one another (via face-to-face or technological means)" (Frey & Konieczka, 2010, p. 317)
Face-to-face	"Any number of persons engaged in interaction with one another in a single face-to-face meeting or series of such meetings" (Bales, 1950, p. 33)
Influence	"Two or more persons who are interacting with one another in such a manner that each person influences and is influenced by each other person" (Shaw, 1981, p. 454)
Interaction	"Two or more interdependent individuals who influence one another through social interaction" (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2007, p. 419)
Interdependence	"A dynamic whole based on interdependence rather than similarity" (Lewin, 1948, p. 184)
Interrelations	"An aggregation of two or more people who are to some degree in dynamic interrelation with one another" (McGrath, 1984, p. 8)
Need satisfaction	"A collection of organisms in which the existence of all (in their given relationships) is necessary to the satisfaction of certain individual needs in each" (Cattell, 1951, p. 167)
Psychological significance	"A *psychological group* is any number of people who interact with each other, are psychologically aware of each other, and perceive themselves to be in a group" (Pennington, 2002, p. 3)
Relations	"Individuals who stand in certain relations to each other, for example, as sharing a common purpose or having a common intentionality, or acting together, or at least having a common interest" (Gould, 2004, p. 119)
Shared identity	"Two or more people possessing a common social identification and whose existence as a group is recognized by a third party" (R. Brown, 2000, p. 19)
Shared tasks and goals	"Three or more people who work together interdependently on an agreed-upon activity or goal" (Keyton, 2002, p. 5)
Size	"Two or more people" (Williams, 2010, p. 269)
Structure	"A social unit which consists of a number of individuals who stand in (more or less) definite status and role relationships to one another and which possesses a set of values or norms of its own regulating the behavior of individual members, at least in matters of consequence to the group" (Sherif & Sherif, 1956, p. 144)
Systems	"An intact social system, complete with boundaries, interdependence for some shared purpose, and differentiated member roles" (Hackman & Katz, 2010, p. 1210)
Unity	"A unit consisting of a plural number of separate organisms (agents) who have a collective perception of their unity and who have the ability to act and/or are acting in a unitary manner toward their environment" (Smith, 1945, p. 227)

members are connected, not just by genetic similarities but social and emotional relationships. People who work together are linked not only by the collaborative tasks that they must complete collectively but also by friendships, alliances, and inevitable antagonisms. Students in a class all recognize that they are members of a smaller subset within the larger educational community and that those who are not in their class are outsiders. A **group**, then, is *two or more individuals who are connected by and within social relationships.*

Two or More Individuals A group can range in size from two members to many thousands. Very small collectives, such as dyads (two members) and triads (three members) are groups, but so are large mobs, crowds, and congregations (Simmel, 1902). Most groups, however, tend to be small, including two to seven members.

Sociologist John James was so intrigued by the variation in the size of groups that he took to the streets of Eugene and Portland, Oregon to record the size of the 9,129 groups he encountered there. He defined a group to be two or more people in "face-to-face interaction as evidenced by the criteria of gesticulation, laughter, smiles, talk, play or work" (James, 1951, p. 475). He studied pedestrians walking down the city streets, people shopping, children on playgrounds, public gatherings at sports events and festivals, patrons during the intermissions at plays and entering movie theaters, and various types of work crews and teams. Most of these groups were small, usually with only two or three members, but groups that had been deliberately created for some specific purpose, such as the leadership team of a company, tended to be larger. His findings, and the results of studies conducted in other settings (cafeterias and businesses) are summarized in Figure 1.1. They suggest that groups tend to "gravitate to the smallest size, two" (Hare, 1976, p. 215).

A group's size influences its nature in many ways, for a group with only two or three members possesses many unique characteristics simply because it includes so few members. The dyad is so small that it ceases to exist when one member leaves, and it can never be broken down into subgroups. The members of dyads are also sometimes linked by a unique and powerful type of relationship—love—that makes their dynamics so intense that they belong in a category all their own (Levine & Moreland, 2012). Larger groups can also have unique qualities, for the members are rarely connected directly to all other members, subgroups are very likely to form, and one or more leaders may be needed to organize and guide the group. By definition, however, all are considered groups. [This issue is not, however, entirely settled. Moreland (2010), for example, offers a strong argument for excluding dyads from the group world, whereas Williams (2010) explains why, in his opinion, a group of two is still a group.]

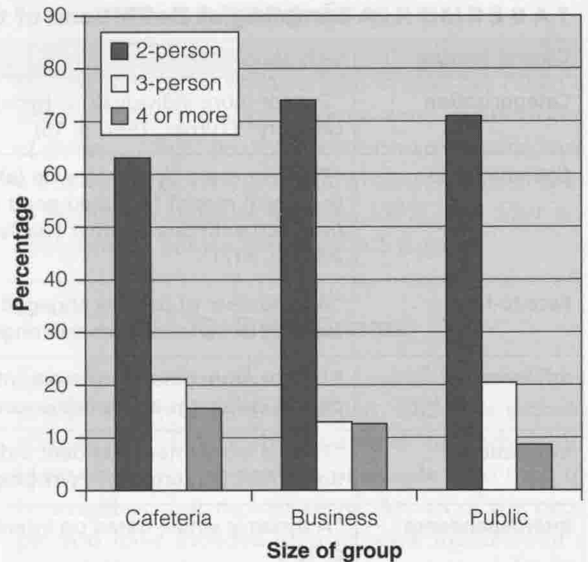

FIGURE 1.1 The percentage of groups of varying sizes (2, 3, and 4+) observed in cafeterias, business settings, and in various public places, such as parks and the lobbies of movie theaters.

SOURCES: Cafeteria data: "Deindividuation as a Function of Density and Group Members," by D. O Jorgenson and F. O. Dukes, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1976, *34*, 24–29. Business data: Ruef, M., Aldrich, H. E., & Carter, N. M. (2003). The structure of founding teams: Homophily, strong ties, and isolation among U.S. entrepreneurs. *American Sociological Review, 68*(2), 195–222. Public data: James, J. (1951). A preliminary study of the size determinant in small group interaction. *American Sociological Review, 16*, 474–477.

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group Two or more individuals who are connected by and within social relationships.

Who Are Connected The members of any given group are connected to each other like a series of networked computers. These connections, or social ties, are not of one type. In families, for example, the relationships are based on kinship, but in the workplace the relationships are based on task-related interdependencies. In some groups, members are friends of one another, but in others the members express little mutual attraction. Nor are the relationships linking members of different types of groups equally strong or enduring. Only some relationships, like the links between members of a family or a clique of close friends, are enduring ones that have developed over time and are based on a long history of mutual influence and exchange. Nor need all relationships be mutual ones. In a group of friends, for example, some members may be liked by all the group members but these members may like only a subset of the group members in return. But no matter what the nature of the relations, a group exists when individuals are connected to one another by some type of social tie.

The larger the group, the more ties are needed to join members to each other and to the group. The maximum number of ties within a group in which everyone is linked to everyone else is given by the equation $n(n-1)/2$, where n is the number of people in the group. Only one relationship is needed to create a dyad, but as Figure 1.2 illustrates, the number of ties needed to connect all members grows exponentially as the group gets larger: 10 ties would be needed to join each member of a 5-person group to every other member, 45 for a 10-person group, but over a thousand for a 50-person group. Even more ties are needed if the ties between members are directed rather than reciprocal ones. If knowing A is linked to B does not tell us that B is also linked to A, then twice as many ties are needed to completely link ever member to every other member with directed ties. Hence, in larger groups many group members link to other members only indirectly. Person A might, for example, talk directly to B, but B may talk only to C so that A is linked to C only through B. But even in large groups, members often feel connected to the group as a whole (Katz et al., 2005).

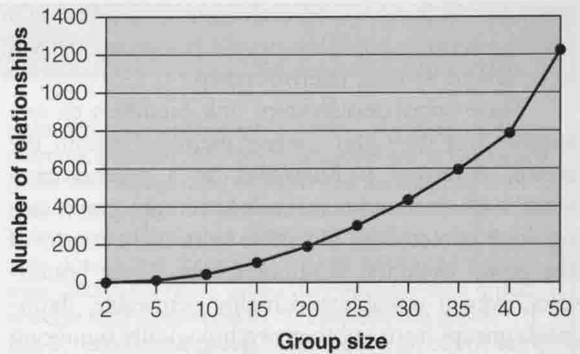

FIGURE 1.2 The number of relationships needed to connect all members to one another in groups ranging in size from 2 members to 50 members.
SOURCE: © Cengage Learning 2014

When the ties linking members are strong, the group is more enduring and its influence on members is more extensive. But weak ties are also essential to the long-term functioning of groups. When information diffuses throughout a group, it flows first along the strong ties, but to permeate the entire group it must also be shared among members who are linked by weaker ties. Individuals who are on the job market, for example, often learn of new openings from acquaintances rather than close friends, because whatever their close friends know, they probably know as well. Weak ties, in contrast, allow the group members to gain access to information that is common knowledge outside of their tight-knit social circles. Sociologist Mark S. Granovetter (1973) called this tendency the "strength of weak ties."

By and Within Social Relationships Definitions of the word *group* vary, but many stress one key consideration: social relationships among the members. When people are linked by a relationship they become interdependent, for they can influence one another's thoughts, actions, emotions, and outcomes. And a *social* relationship suggests that this interdependence is not caused by some impersonal factor, such as proximity or common origin, but by the "actual, imagined, or implied presence of other human beings" (Allport, 1968, p. 3). This type of relationship even has a name: *membership*. Just as people who are friends

are joined in *friendship*, or all the senior members of a law firm form a *partnership*, people in a group are said to be linked by their **membership**.

These social relationships link members to one another but they also enclose members within the group. A group is *boundaried*, in a psychological sense, with those who are included in the group recognized as members and those who are not part of the group excluded as nonmembers. These boundaries, even if unstable and highly permeable, distinguish groups from another psychologically significant aggregate: the **social network**. To become part of a social network, an individual need only establish a relationship of some sort with a person who is already part of the network. If persons A and B already know each other—they are linked by a social relationship—then person C can join their network by establishing a relationship with either A or B. But a group, unlike a network, is more than a chain of individuals joined in dyadic pairings. A group exists when members form a relationship with the group as a whole and when it is the group that sustains, at least in part, the relationships among each of the individual members.

This definition of a group, two or more individuals who are connected by and within social relationships, is consistent with most theoretical perspectives on groups, but it is one definition of many (Greenwood, 2004). The definition is also somewhat hopeful, for it suggests that collections of people can be easily classified into two categories—group and nongroup—when in actuality the line between group and nongroup is fuzzy rather than sharp. Some groups, such as work teams or families, easily meet the definition's "by and within social relationships" requirement, but others do not. For example, five strangers waiting on a city sidewalk for a bus may not seem to fit the definition of a group, but they may become a group when one passenger asks the others if they can change a dollar bill. And what about people playing a Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG) together on the Web? As Focus 1.1 asks, are people who are connected to one another by computer-based networks a group?

The definition is also limited by its brevity. It defines the barest requirements of a group, and so it leaves unanswered other questions about groups. If we want to understand a group, we need to ask many more questions: What do the people do in the group? Does the group have a leader? How unified is the group? How has the group changed over time? Deciding that a collection of people qualifies as a group is only the beginning of understanding that group.

Describing Groups

Each one of the billions of groups that exist at this moment is a unique configuration of individuals, processes, and relationships. A study group at a university library, for example, will differ in a hundred ways from a team on a soccer field, a rock band performing a well-loved song, or a board of directors selecting a new company CEO. But all groups, despite their distinctive characteristics, possess common properties and dynamics. When researchers study a group, they must go beyond its unique qualities to consider characteristics that appear with consistency in most groups. Some of these qualities, such as what the group members are doing and the tasks they are attempting, are relatively obvious ones. Other qualities, such as the degree of interdependence among members or the group's overall unity, are harder to discern. Here we start with a group's easily detectable qualities before turning to those that are often hidden from view.

Interaction Groups are the setting for an infinite variety of interpersonal actions. If you were to watch a group for even a few minutes, you would see people doing all sorts of things: talking over issues, getting into arguments, and making decisions. They would upset each other, give each other help and support, and take advantage of each other's weaknesses. They would likely work together to accomplish difficult tasks, find ways to not do their work, and even plot against the best interests of those who are not a part of their group.

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membership The state of belonging to, or being included in, a social group; also, the collective body of all members of a group.

social network A set of interpersonally interconnected individuals or groups.

Focus 1.1 E-groups: The Reality of Online Groups

When people think of a group, they tend to think of a gathering of individuals in some specific location. A family picnicking, a football team practicing, a team of workers assembling a machine, or a clique of friends gossiping about the weekend's events; these are groups. Some groups, however, do not fit people's intuitive conception of the typical group. Consider, for example, 10 people who never see each other face-to-face but only communicate with one another using computers connected to the Internet. Are these people members of a group?

The Internet has transformed people's lives, including their groups. All kinds of groups, from support groups, work teams, clubs, and gameplayers ("gamers") congregate via the Web. These groups go by various names—cybergroups, computer-mediated communication (CMC) groups, e-groups, virtual teams, and **online groups**—but they all rely on computer-based information technologies to build and sustain social relationships among the members (Brandon & Hollingshead, 2007). The unique, technology-mediated environment in which these groups meet undoubtedly influences their dynamics: members of an online group will not interact in the same way as will members of **offline groups**. Yet, in many cases, their dynamics are similar to those of more traditional, face-to-face groups. Such groups develop norms, admit new members, identify goals, and experience conflict. Members of such groups take the lead, offer suggestions, ask questions, and influence one another. New members must often suffer through a period of initiation; for example, members of many multiplayer game worlds are given the derisive label of *noob* and are ignored until they develop their skills. Members also identify with their online groups and react differently to those who are in their groups and those who are not (McKenna & Seidman, 2005). Members, when they describe their group, endorse such statements as "I really like this group," "I feel at home in this group," and "I get a lot out of being in this group" (Blanchard, 2007). These are the same sentiments that people express when talking about offline, traditional face-to-face groups.

Are online groups true groups? This question is, at core, an empirical one. As researchers explore the dynamics of these groups, they will likely identify aspects of these groups that are consistent with what is known about groups in general: how they form, how members interact with one another, and how they perform over time. But, given their unique setting, researchers will likely also discover these groups are unique in some ways. If their distinctiveness is so substantial that e-group dynamics cannot be explained by the principles that account for the processes studied in offline groups, then a case could be made to place Internet groups in their own category. However, until research suggests otherwise, we will consider e-groups to be groups and will present the latest findings on these groups in Focus sections in each chapter.

As the expression "it takes two to tango" suggests, many of the most interesting, influential, and entertaining forms of human action are possible only when people join with others in a group.

Sociologist Robert Freed Bales (1950, 1999), intrigued by the question "What do people do when they are in groups?" spent years watching and recording people in relatively small, face-to-face groups. He recognized the diversity of group interaction, but eventually concluded that the countless actions he had observed tend to be of two types: those that focused on the task the group was dealing with and those that sustained, strengthened, or weakened interpersonal relationships within the group. **Task interaction** includes all group behavior that is focused principally on the group's work, projects, plans, and goals. In most

online group (or e-group) Two or more individuals who interact with each other solely or primarily through computer-based information technologies (e.g., e-mail, instant messaging, social networking sites) rather than through face-to-face interactions.

offline group Two or more individuals whose interaction with each other occur primarily or solely in conventional, face-to-face situations and not via computer-based technology.

task interaction The conjointly adjusted actions of group members that pertain to the group's projects, tasks, and goals.

groups, members must coordinate their various skills, resources, and motivations so that the group can make a decision, generate a product, or achieve a victory. When a jury reviews each bit of testimony, a committee discusses the best course of action to take, or a family plans its summer vacation, the group's interaction is task focused.

But groups are not simply performance engines, for much of what happens in a group is **relationship interaction** (or *socioemotional interaction*). If group members falter and need support, others will buoy them up with kind words, suggestions, and other forms of help. When group members disagree with the others, they are often roundly criticized and made to feel foolish. When a coworker wears a new suit or outfit, others in his or her work unit notice it and offer compliments or criticisms. Such actions sustain or undermine the emotional bonds linking the members to one another and to the group. We will review the method that Bales developed for objectively recording these types of interactions, his *Interaction Process Analysis (IPA)*, in Chapter 2.

Goals Humans, as a species, seem to be genetically ready to set goals for themselves—"what natural selection has built into us is the *capacity* to strive, the capacity to seek, the capacity to set up short-term goals in the service of longer-term goals" (Dawkins, 1989, p. 142)—and that tendency is only amplified in groups. A team strives to take first place. A study group wants to help members get better grades. A jury makes a decision about guilt or innocence. The members of a congregation seek religious and spiritual experiences. In each case, the members of the group are united by their common goals. The groups Bales (1999) studied spent the majority of their time (63%) dealing with goal-related activities and tasks.

The goals groups pursue are many and varied. One approach to their classification suggests that a broad distinction can be made between intellectual and judgmental tasks (Laughlin, 1980). Another emphasizes three different categories: production, discussion, and problem-solving goals (Hackman & Morris, 1975). A third model, proposed by social psychologist Joseph E. McGrath (1984) and partially summarized in Table 1.2, distinguishes among four basic group goals: *generating* ideas, plans, or novel solutions, *choosing* between options, *negotiating* solutions to a conflict, and *executing* (performing) performance tasks. Some of these goals require groups to take action, but others require only rational analysis. Others require that group members work together in the pursuit of a group-level goal, but other goals are ones sought by specific group members rather than the group as a whole. As Chapter 10 explains, groups are sources of heightened motivation, for they increase members' commitment to their own personal goals and to the goals that the group has set for itself. In general, the most effective groups are the ones that are most conscientious when examining their purposes and procedures (Katzenbach & Smith, 2001).

Interdependence The acrobat on the trapeze will drop to the net unless her teammate catches her outstretched arms. The assembly line worker is unable to complete his work until he receives the unfinished product from a worker further up the line. The business executive's success and salary are determined by how well her staff completes its work; if her staff fails, then she fails as well. In such situations, members are obligated or responsible to other group members, for they provide each other with support and assistance. This **interdependence** means that members *depend* on one another; their outcomes, actions, thoughts, feelings, and experiences are partially determined by others in the group.

Some groups create only the potential for interdependence among members. The outcomes of people standing in a queue at a store's checkout

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relationship interaction (socioemotional interaction) The conjointly adjusted actions of group members that relate to or influence the nature and strength of the emotional and interpersonal bonds within the group, including both sustaining (social support, consideration) and undermining actions (criticism, conflict).

interdependence Mutual dependence, as when one's outcomes, actions, thoughts, feelings, and experiences are influenced, to some degree, by other people.

TABLE 1.2 Four Types of Group Goals and Group Tasks

Goals	Tasks	Examples
Generating	Concocting strategies, producing new ideas, developing plans, creating novel solutions	A community group coming up with fund-raising ideas, a task force identifying new markets for a product, military commanders discussing ways to reduce the risk of causalities
Choosing	Selecting between alternatives, settling on a single option among many, making a choice	A legislative body voting, students completing a multiple-choice test as a group, a jury deciding a defendant's guilt, a committee selecting one of three candidates for an award
Negotiating	Managing differences of opinions, resolving conflicts and disputes, improving coordination	A team arguing about who is to blame for losing an account, a leader setting new requirements for attendance, a group taking action to expel one of its members
Executing	Taking action, carrying out a plan, making something, performing a task	A theater group performing a play, a military squad on the attack, a work crew building a house, sports teams in competition, protesters occupying a public park

SOURCE: McGrath, J. E., Groups: Interaction and Performance, 1st Edition, © 1984. Reprinted by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, NJ.

counter, audience members in a darkened theater, or the congregation of a large mega-church are hardly intertwined at all. The individuals within these groups can reach their goals on their own without making certain their actions mesh closely with the actions of those who are nearby. Other groups, such as gangs, families, sports teams, and military squads, create far higher levels of interdependency since members reliably and substantially influence one another's outcomes over a long period of time and in a variety of situations. But even the interdependencies in these tightly meshed groups are rarely invariant or undifferentiated. As Figure 1.3 suggests, in symmetric, "flat" groups, the influence among members is equal and reciprocated (Figure 1.3a). But more typically interdependencies are asymmetric, unequal, and hierarchical (Fiske, 2010). In a business, for example, the boss may determine how employees spend their time, what kind of rewards they experience, and even the duration of their membership in the group (Figure 1.3b). In other cases the employees may be able to influence their boss to a degree, but the boss influences them to a much greater extent (Figure 1.3c). Interdependency can also be ordered sequentially, as when C's outcomes are determined by B's actions, but B's actions are determined by A (Figure 1.3d).

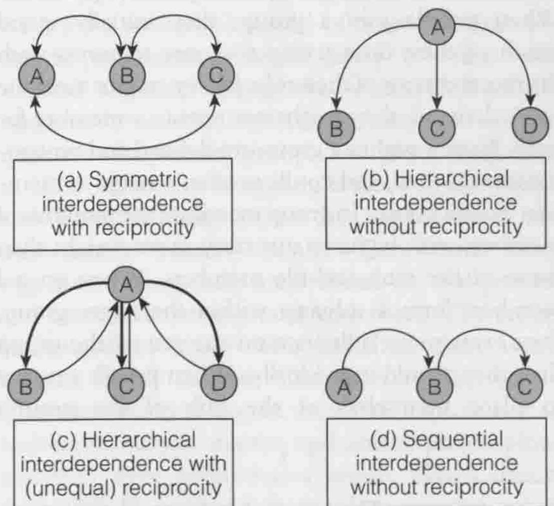

FIGURE 1.3 Examples of interdependence among group members.

SOURCE: © Cengage Learning 2014

Structure Group members are not connected to one another at random, but in organized and predictable patterns. In all but the most ephemeral groups, patterns and regularities emerge that determine the kinds of actions that are permitted or condemned: who talks to whom, who likes whom and

who dislikes whom, who can be counted on to perform particular tasks, and whom others look to for guidance and help. These regularities combine to generate **group structure**—the complex of roles, norms, and intermember relations that organizes the group. **Roles**, for example, specify the general behaviors expected of people who occupy different positions within the group. The roles of *leader* and *follower* are fundamental ones in many groups, but other roles—information seeker, information giver, and compromiser—may emerge in any group (Benne & Sheats, 1948). Group members' actions and interactions are also shaped by their group's **norms**—consensual standards that describe what behaviors should and should not be performed in a given context.

Roles, norms, and other structural aspects of groups, although unseen and often unnoticed, lie at the heart of their most dynamic processes. When people join a group, they initially spend much of their time trying to come to terms with the requirements of their role. If they cannot meet the role's demand, they might not remain a member for long. Norms within a group are defined and renegotiated over time, and conflicts often emerge as members violate norms. In group meetings, the opinions of members with higher status carry more weight than those of the rank-and-file members. When several members form a *subgroup* within the larger group, they exert more influence on the rest of the group than they would individually. When people manage to place themselves at the hub of the group's information-exchange patterns, their influence over others also increases. If you had to choose only one aspect of a group to study, you would probably learn the most by studying its structure.

Cohesiveness Just as a book is not just a set of sequenced pages or a cake just sugar, flour, and other ingredients mixed together and baked, so a group is not just the individual members. A group is an entity that forms when interpersonal forces bind the members together in a unit with boundaries that mark who is in the group and who is outside of it. In consequence, when we speak about groups, we refer to them as single objects: for example, a gang *is* menacing or the club *meets* tomorrow.

In physics, the molecular integrity of matter is known as *cohesiveness*. When matter is cohesive, the particles that constitute it bond together so tightly that they resist any competing attractions. But when matter is not cohesive, it tends to disintegrate over time as the particles drift away or adhere to some other nearby object. Similarly, **group cohesion** is the integrity, solidarity, social integration, unity, and groupiness of a group. All groups require a modicum of cohesiveness or else the group would disintegrate and cease to exist as a group (Dion, 2000).

Groups are so commonplace that their complexities are too often overlooked, but the qualities listed in Table 1.3—interaction, goals, interdependence, structure, and cohesion—provide a place to start when describing a group. The conversations between members that seem so capricious are actually social exchanges that move the task along toward its goals while keeping the group intact. Beneath the surface of the group are a set of structures that regulate actions and outcomes and create a complex web of interdependencies and influence. And even though often unnoticed, you intuitively size up each group you encounter, as you search for

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group structure The persistent and interrelated features of a group, such as roles and norms, that influence the functioning of the group as a whole and create regularities in the interactions of its members.

role A socially shared set of behaviors, characteristics, and responsibilities expected of people who occupy a particular position or type of position within a group; by enacting roles, individuals establish regular patterns of exchange with one another that increase predictability and social coordination.

norm A consensual and often implicit standard that describes what behaviors should and should not be performed in a given context.

group cohesion The solidarity or unity of a group resulting from the development of strong and mutual interpersonal bonds among members and group-level forces that unify the group, such as shared commitment to group goals and *esprit de corps*.

TABLE 1.3 Five Characteristics of Groups

Feature	Description
Interaction	Groups create, organize, and sustain relationship and task interactions among members
Goals	Groups have instrumental purposes, for they facilitate the achievement of aims or outcomes sought by the members
Interdependence	Group members depend on one another, in that each member influences and is influenced by each other member
Structure	Groups are organized, with each individual connected to others in a pattern of relationships, roles, and norms
Cohesion	Groups unite members in a bonded network of interpersonal relations recognized by both members of the group and those outside of it.

outward signs of unity. Even the most mundane group becomes fascinating when you examine its key qualities more closely.

Types of Groups

Groups come in a variety of shapes and sizes and they perform functions that are vast and varied, so the differences among them are as noteworthy as their similarities. Here we consider four basic types of groups, but admit this simple typology fails to do justice to the wondrous variety of groups.

Primary Groups Sociologist Charles Horton Cooley (1909) labeled the small, intimate clusters of close associates, such as families, good friends, or cliques of peers, **primary groups**. These groups profoundly influence the behavior, feelings, and judgments of their members, for members spend much of their time interacting with one another, usually in face-to-face settings with many of the other members present. Even when the group is dispersed, members nonetheless feel they are still "in" the group, and they consider the group to be a very important part of their lives.

In many cases, individuals become part of primary groups involuntarily: Most are born into a family that provides for their well-being until they can join other groups. Other primary groups form when people interact in significant, meaningful ways for a prolonged period of time. For example, the Impressionists, a small group of artists who worked together during the second half of the nineteenth century, exhibited many of the key qualities of a primary group. The group originated in 1860 when two struggling artists, Claude Monet and Camille Pissarro, met by happenstance and immediately became friends. They spent hours together sharing their ideas about art and politics, and soon other artists joined with them. The group, challenged by those who criticized their work, became highly unified. They met regularly, each Thursday and Sunday, in a café in Paris to discuss technique, subject matter, and artistic philosophies, and they even painted as a group. When one of them fell ill or faced financial crises, the others were there to provide support. They competed with one another for fame and notoriety, but throughout they worked together to change the public's attitudes about their work. As Chapter 4's more detailed analysis of this group explains, in time the group overcame their critics, and their approach was recognized as a new form of artistic expression (Farrell, 2001).

Cooley (1909) considered such groups to be primary because they so significantly influenced the lives of their members. Primary groups protect

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primary group A small, long-term group characterized by frequent interaction, solidarity, and high levels of interdependence among members that substantially influences the attitudes, values, and social outcomes of its members.

members from harm, care for them when they are ill, and provide them with shelter and sustenance, but as Cooley explained, they also create the connection between the individual and society at large:

> They are primary in several senses, but chiefly in that they are fundamental in forming the social nature and ideals of the individual. The result of intimate association, psychologically, is a certain fusion of individualities in a common whole, so that one's very self, for many purposes at least, is the common life and purpose of the group. Perhaps the simplest way of describing this wholeness is by saying that it is a "we." (Cooley, 1909, p. 23)

Social Groups In earlier eras *Homo sapiens* lived most of their lives in primary groups that were usually clustered together in relatively small tribes or communities. But, as societies became more complex, so did their groups. People began to associate with a wider range of people in less intimate, more public settings, and **social groups** emerged to structure these interactions. Social groups are larger and more formally organized than primary groups, and memberships tend to be shorter in duration and less emotionally involving. Their boundaries are also more permeable, so members can leave old groups behind and join new ones, for they do not demand the level of commitment that primary groups do. People can enjoy membership in a variety of social groups, but it would be unusual to belong to numerous primary groups. Various terms have been used to describe this category of groups, such as *secondary groups* (Cooley, 1909), *associations* (MacIver & Page, 1937), *task groups* (Lickel, Hamilton, & Sherman, 2001), and *Gesellschaften* (Toennies, 1887/1963).

Social groups create networks of interpersonal communication and influence between members, but often they are task-oriented: their primary purpose is the performance of tasks rather than enjoying relationships. Such groups as military squads, governing boards, construction workers, teams, crews, fraternities, sororities, dance troupes, orchestras, bands, ensembles, classes, clubs, secretarial pools, congregations, study groups, guilds, task forces, committees, and meetings are all social groups whose success at their tasks depends, in part, on the relationships that link members to one another and to the group itself. Consider, for example, the group of advisors newly elected U.S. President John F. Kennedy assembled in 1961. This group's members boasted years of experience in making monumentally important governmental decisions, and various warfare specialists from the CIA and the military attended all the meetings. The group met for many hours devising a plan to help a group of 1,400 Cuban exiles invade Cuba at a place called Bahia de Cochinos, the Bay of Pigs. They believed their plan was nearly perfect, but the attack was a disaster, and the members spent the following months wondering at their shortsightedness and cataloging all the blunders they had made (Janis, 1972, 1982, 1983). As with many social groups, the interpersonal dynamics that members failed to understand set the stage for the group's errors. We will review this particular group in detail in Chapter 11, when we examine how groups make decisions.

Collectives At exactly 1:30 in the afternoon on a sunny day outside the student union, two students—one dressed in white and another in green—bowed to each other before launching into a barrage of mock karate chops punctuated with shouts of "Wha-cha." At that moment, most of the people near them—30 to 40 fellow college students—also paired off in make-believe mêlées that lasted until one of the original combatants fell to the ground. When he collapsed, all the other fighters collapsed as well, leaving but one person standing. As he walked away, the students all stood up, picked up their knapsacks, and went their separate ways. It was a *flash mob*, organized by the use of cell phone technology and instant messaging (Rheingold, 2002; see Chapter 17).

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social group A relatively small number of individuals who interact with one another over an extended period of time, such as work groups, clubs, and congregations.

A **collective** is literally any aggregate of two or more individuals, but most theorists reserve the term for larger, more spontaneous, and looser forms of association among people (Blumer, 1951). A list of collectives would include a street crowd watching a building burn, an audience at a movie, a line *(queue)* of people waiting to purchase tickets, a peaceful but nonetheless pepper-sprayed gathering of college students protesting a government policy, and a panicked mob fleeing from danger. But the list would also include mass movements of individuals who, though dispersed over a wide area, display common shifts in opinion or actions. The members of collectives owe little allegiance to such groups, for in many cases such groups are created by happenstance, and the relations joining the group are so transitory that they dissolve as soon as the members separate.

Categories A **social category** is a collection of individuals who are similar to one another in some way. For example, people who live in New York City are *New Yorkers*, Americans whose ancestors were from Africa are *African Americans*, and those who routinely wager sums of money on games of chance are *gamblers*. If a category has no social implications, then it only describes individuals who share a feature in common. If, however, these categories set in motion personal or interpersonal processes—if two students in college become friends when they discover they grew up in the same town, if people respond to a person differently when they see he is an African American, or if a person begins to gamble even more of her earnings because she realizes that she is a *gambler*—then a category may be transformed into a highly influential group (Galinsky, Ku, & Wang, 2005).

Primary and social groups significantly influence people's conception of themselves, but social categories do as well. As social psychologist Henri Tajfel (1974) explained, members of the same social group or category often share a common identity with one another. They know who is in their category, who is not, and what qualities are typical of insiders and outsiders. This perception of themselves as members of the same group or social category—this **social identity**—is "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1974, p. 69).

When this sense of *we* and *us* is coupled with a sense of *them* and *they* conflict can erupt between people who belong to different categories (Abrams et al., 2005). Consider, for example, two individuals—Cuneo and his friend Boyle—who worked as bouncers at a local bar. While driving home after work, they stop by another car at a red light and begin shouting insults at the two men seated in it. At the next intersection, a savage fight breaks out between the two groups of men who use baseball bats, a bottle, a knife, a piece of a picket fence, jumper cables, and even a car to injure each other. Why? Were these old enemies who were settling a grudge? Gang members who had sworn a vow to defend their turf? Drug dealers fighting over territory? No. The two sets of men were strangers to one another. But Cuneo and Boyle were white, Wilson and Booker were black, and these categories instigated the conflict (Sedgwick, 1982; see Chapter 14).

Perceiving Groups

Group theorists are not the only ones who divide groups up into coherent clusters like those listed in

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collective A relatively large aggregation or group of individuals who display similarities in actions and outlook. A street crowd, a line of people (a queue), a panicked group escaping a fire are examples of collectives, as are more widely dispersed groups (e.g., listeners who respond similarly to a public service announcement).

social category A perceptual grouping of people who are assumed to be similar to one another in some ways but different in some ways from individuals who are not members of that grouping.

social identity An individual's sense of self derived from relationships and memberships in groups; also, those aspects of the self that are assumed to be common to most or all of the members of the same group or social category.

TABLE 1.4 Types of Groups

Type of Group	Characteristics	Examples
Primary groups	Small, long-term groups characterized by a high frequency of interaction (usually in face-to-face settings), cohesiveness, and member identification	Close friends, families, gangs, military squads
Social groups	Small groups of moderate duration and permeability characterized by moderate levels of interaction over an extended period of time, often in goal-focused situations	Coworkers, crews, expeditions, fraternities, teams, study groups, task forces
Collectives	Aggregations of individuals that form spontaneously, last only a brief period of time, and have very permeable boundaries	Audiences, bystanders, crowds, mobs, waiting lines (queues)
Categories	Aggregations of individuals who are similar to one another in some way, such as gender, ethnicity, religion, or nationality	Asian Americans, New Yorkers, physicians, U.S. citizens, women

Table 1.4. People not only recognize the difference between groups and nongroups, but they also intuitively draw distinctions between diverse types of groups.

Entitativity: Seeing Groups Social psychologist Donald Campbell (1958a) coined the term **entitativity** to describe the extent to which a group seems to be a single, unified entity—a real group. Campbell grounded his analysis of group entitativity in the principles of perception studied most closely by Gestalt psychologists (e.g., Köhler, 1959). These researchers identified these principles in their studies of the cues people rely on when perceptually organizing objects into unified, well-organized wholes (Gestalts). An automobile, for example, is not perceived to be 4 wheels, doors, a trunk, a hood, a windshield, and so on, but a single thing: a car. Similarly, a collection of individuals—say four young men walking down the street—might be perceived to be four unrelated individuals, but the observer may also conclude the individuals are a group. Entitativity, then, is the "groupiness" of a group, perceived rather than actual group unity or cohesion.

entitativity The apparent cohesiveness or unity of an assemblage of individuals; the quality of being a single entity rather than a set of independent, unrelated individuals (coined in Campbell, 1958).

Entitativity, according to Campbell, is substantially influenced by similarity, proximity, and common fate, as well as such perceptual cues as pragnanz (good form) and permeability. Say, for example, you are walking through a library and see a table occupied by four women. Is this a group—four friends or classmates studying together—or just four independent individuals? Campbell predicts that you would, intuitively, notice if the four have certain physical features in common, such as age, skin color, or clothing. You would also take note of the books they were reading, for if they were studying the same subject, you would assume they share a common goal—and hence are more likely to be a true group (Brewer, Hong, & Li, 2004; Ip, Chiu, & Wan, 2006). Their emotional displays would also provide you with information about their entitativity. If the women all seem to be happy or sad, then you would be more likely to think the group is responsible for their emotional state and that the group itself is a unified one (Magee & Tiedens, 2006). Proximity is also a signal of entitativity, for the smaller the distance separating individuals, the more likely perceivers will assume they are seeing a group rather than individuals who happen to be collocated (Knowles & Bassett, 1976). The principle of common fate also predicts perceived entitativity, for if all the members begin to act in similar ways, or move in a relatively coordinated fashion, then your confidence that this

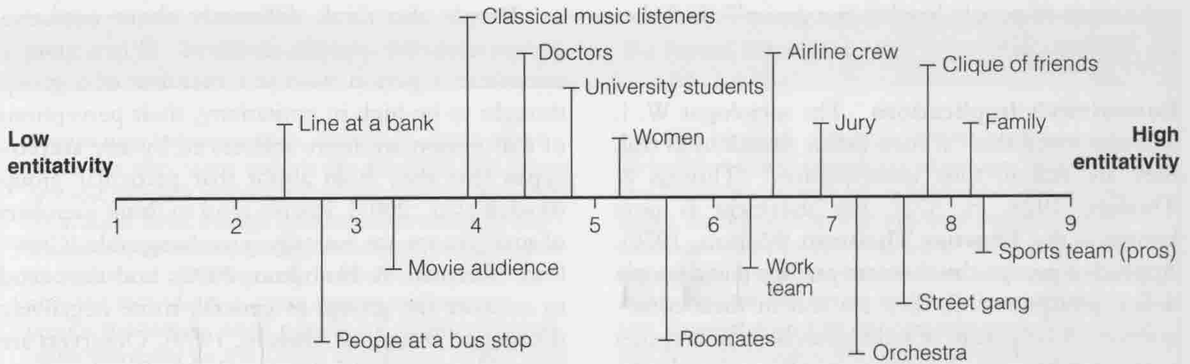

FIGURE 1.4 Entitativity ratings of 16 different groups (Data source: Lickel et al., 2000).

SOURCE: © Cengage Learning 2014

cluster is a unified group would be bolstered (Lakens, 2010).

Types of Groups and Entitativity When do social perceivers conclude the people they encounter are members of a group and when do they instead see them as many individuals? Social psychologist Brian Lickel and his colleagues (2000) examined this question by asking people to rate all sorts of human aggregations in terms of their size, duration, permeability, amount of interaction among members, importance to members, and so on. Lickel and his colleagues then used a statistical procedure called *cluster analysis* to determine if some of these aggregates were rated as more similar than others. These analyses, as they expected, yielded four natural groupings that were very similar to the ones that are listed in Table 1.4 (which they labeled intimacy groups, task groups, loose associations, and social categories). The researchers then asked people to sort the 40 aggregates into stacks. Again, analysis identified the same basic types of groups. They also asked people to list 12 groups that they belong to. When unbiased raters reviewed these lists, once again the four types were in evidence (Lickel et al., 2000).

The research team also asked the perceivers if they considered all these kinds of aggregations of individuals to be true groups. They did not force people to make an either/or decision about each one, however. Recognizing that the boundary between what is and what is not a group is perceptually fuzzy, they instead asked participants to rate the aggregations on a scale from 1 *(not at all a group)* to 9 *(very much a group)*. As Figure 1.4 indicates, primary groups, such as professional sports teams, families, and close friends, received the highest entitativity ratings, followed by social groups (e.g., a jury, an airline crew, a team in the workplace), categories (e.g., women, doctors, classical music listeners), and collectives (e.g., people waiting for a bus, a queue in a bank). These findings suggest that people are more likely to consider aggregations marked by strong bonds and frequent interactions among members to be groups, but that they are less certain that such aggregations as crowds, waiting lines, or categories qualify as groups (Lickel et al., 2000, Study 3). They also suggest that social categories—which include vast numbers of people whose only qualification for membership in the category may be a demographic quality, such as sex or nationality—were viewed as more group-like than such temporary gatherings as waiting lines and audiences and, in some cases, task-focused groups (Spencer-Rogers, Hamilton, & Sherman, 2007).

Lickel and his colleagues also point out that, even though they were studying entitativity, they could not use this word on their questionnaires, because people would have been baffled by this unusual term. Instead, they simply asked "participants to evaluate the degree to which different

collections of people 'qualify as a group'" (Lickel et al., 2000, p. 228).

Entitativity's Implications The sociologist W. I. Thomas stated that "if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas & Thomas, 1928, p. 572); this statement is now known as the **Thomas Theorem** (Merton, 1976). Applied to groups, this theorem predicts that if people define groups as real, they are real in their consequences. A collection of individuals literally becomes a group when the members, or others outside the group, construe the gathering to be a group.

This shift in thinking—seeing a gathering of people as a true group rather than single individuals—triggers a series of psychological and interpersonal changes for both members and nonmembers. Entitativity changes people's perceptions of their relationship to their group, for it causes members to identify with the group and its goals, value the importance of membership, and feel bonded to the group (Castano, Yzerbyt, & Bourguignon, 2003; Jans, Postmes, & Van der Zee, 2011). This tendency is particularly strong when people feel uncertain about themselves and the correctness of their beliefs (Hogg et al., 2007). When members feel they are part of a high entitativity group, they are more likely to think that they fit well within the group, they believe that they are similar to other group members in terms of values and beliefs, and they are more willing to accept the consequences of group-level outcomes as their own (Mullen, 1991). For example, when researchers repeatedly told women working in isolation that they were nonetheless members of a group, the women accepted this label and later rated themselves more negatively after the group failed—even though the group existed only in their perceptions (Zander, Stotland, & Wolfe, 1960).

People also think differently about entitative groups and the people in them. When people encounter a person who is a member of a group thought to be high in entitativity, their perceptions of that person are more influenced by any **stereotypes** that they hold about that particular group (Rydell et al., 2007). People tend to think members of such groups are basically interchangeable (Crawford, Sherman, & Hamilton, 2002), and they tend to evaluate the group, in general, more negatively (Dasgupta, Banaji, & Abelson, 1999). Observers are more likely to hold the members of such groups collectively responsible for the actions of one of the group members (Denson et al., 2006), and they assume the group has a relatively strong influence on its members (Waytz & Young, 2012). A sense of **essentialism** tends to permeate perceivers' beliefs about groups that are high in entitativity, for people think that such groups have deep, relatively unchanging essential qualities that give rise to their more surface-level characteristics (Haslam, Rothschild, & Ernst, 2002; Yzerbyt, Judd, & Corneille, 2004).When perceivers think an aggregate of individuals is a group they are more likely to treat it like a group, and this treatment increases the group's actual unity (Alter & Darley, 2009; see Focus 1.2).

THE NATURE OF GROUP DYNAMICS

Group dynamics describes both a subject matter and a scientific field of study. When psychologist Kurt Lewin (1951) described the way groups and

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Thomas Theorem The theoretical premise, put forward by W. I. Thomas, which maintains that people's understanding of a social situation, even if incorrect, will determine their reactions in the situation; "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas & Thomas, 1928, p. 572).

stereotype A socially shared set of qualities, characteristics, and behavioral expectations ascribed to a particular group or category of people.

essentialism The belief that all things, including individuals and groups, have a basic nature that makes them what they are and distinguishes them from other things; a thing's essence is usually inferred rather than directly observed and is generally assumed to be relatively unchanging.

Focus 1.2 Cross-Cultural Perspectives: Seeing the Forest (Groups) or the Trees (Individuals)

Groups may be everywhere, doing just about everything, but they stand outside the limelight that shines on most people's explanation of what makes the world go around. Even though people throw concepts like teamwork, networks, gangs, and cliques about in their discussions of contemporary issues, they tend to see only the individuals in these groups and not the groups themselves. Most people are intuitive psychologists searching for the causes of behavior within each person, and they resist explanations that talk about group-level influences (Heider, 1958).

Westerners, that is. This generalization about the perceptual prominence of individuals relative to groups is not a universal, for one's capacity to "see" groups varies depending on one's cultural and community background. People who grew up in non-Western societies, such as China and India, think of themselves as group members first and individuals second and so emphasize the unity of all people in their group rather than each person's individuality. In many cultures, social existence is centered on group relations, for groups create social obligations that form the basis of respect, trust, and community (Triandis & Suh, 2002).

People living in China, for example, resist making judgments of individuals if they do not know anything about the group to which the person belongs. The primary philosophical framework in that culture, Confucianism, takes as given the relatedness of all things, and this perspective is manifested interpersonally by the unrelenting and taken-for-granted emphasis on membership in closely knit collectives (Nisbett et al, 2001). Japanese people similarly begin with the group and only move to consider individual-level factors to account for unexpected, baffling events. This emphasis on the group is reflected in the rich vocabulary of group-level concepts in the Japanese language. Whereas English includes a smattering of words for groups, the Japanese language is rich with words for *group*: kumi, han, gurupu, shudan, kyudan, renchuu, dojo, nakama, kurabu, saakuru, renshukai, kenkyukai, keikokai, and shugyokai. Nor is there an English word that corresponds to the group-level concept of *amae* in Japanese. Amae means "to look to others for affection," but it underscores the strong, unbreakable, and deeply fulfilling bond that joins group members to one another (Niiya, Ellsworth & Yamaguchi, 2006). The Japanese emphasis on groups goes beyond kin relations, as work settings, schools, and social activities are all centered on groups (Yuki, 2003).

This emphasis on groups results in differences in perceptions of the entitativity of groups. People raised in a Western culture, such as England or the United States, do not shift to a group-level perceptual set unless provoked by some aspect of the group. Someone raised in an Asian culture, such as China or Korea, sees unity and connection first and separateness second. Researchers, when asking participants from China and America to judge the degree of entitativity of two fictitious groups discovered that those perceivers from China judged these groups to be higher in entitativity than did American participants. They also felt that changing from one group to another would be a more difficult task than did individuals raised in the West (Spencer-Rodgers et al., 2007). In another study, the participants raised in non-Western cultures differed from Americans in their perceptions of different types of groups—the Japanese perceivers considered task groups to be higher in entitativity than primary, intimate groups (Kurebayashi et al., 2012).

Individuals from Eastern cultures still recognize individuals as entities—they attribute personality characteristics to people, and they view people as possessing an essence that defines who they are—just as Westerners do. However, individuals from three East Asian cultures (Hong Kong, Japan, and Korea) were more likely than those from five Western cultures (Australia, United Kingdom, United States, Belgium, and Germany) to attribute cognitive and emotional states to both groups and individuals (Kashima et al., 2005). This difference in emphasis was apparent in the words used in newspaper articles that covered stories of illegal actions taken by corporate "rogue" traders. Japanese newspapers more frequently focused on the organization and its responsibility, whereas U.S. newspapers concentrated on the perpetrator and his actions (Menon et al., 1999).

These findings urge caution when making sweeping, cross-cultural conclusions about people. Each of the chapters of this book draws on research and theory to offer general conclusions about groups and human behavior in groups, but these generalities are in some cases culturally specific. Conclusions reached by studying the groups in one setting and one time may tell us little about groups in other places and in other eras. As a constant reminder of the dangers of cultural ethnocentrism, each chapter will include a "Focus" section that examines the cultural conditions that influence groups and their dynamics.

individuals act and react to changing circumstances, he named these processes *group dynamics*. But Lewin also used the phrase to describe the scientific discipline devoted to the study of these dynamics. Later, Dorwin Cartwright and Alvin Zander supplied a formal definition, calling it a "field of inquiry dedicated to advancing knowledge about the nature of groups, the laws of their development, and their interrelations with individuals, other groups, and larger institutions" (1968, p. 7).

Group dynamics is about a century old. Although scholars have long pondered the nature of groups, the first scientific studies of groups were not carried out until the 1900s. Cartwright and Zander (1968), in their review of the origins of group dynamics, suggest that its slow development stemmed in part from several unfounded assumptions about groups. Many felt that the dynamics of groups was a private affair, not something that scientists should lay open to public scrutiny. Others felt that human behavior was too complex to be studied scientifically and that this complexity was magnified enormously when groups of interacting individuals became the objects of interest. Still others believed that the causes of group behavior were so obvious that they were unworthy of scientific attention.

The field also developed slowly because theorists and researchers disagreed among themselves on many basic theoretical and methodological issues. The field was not established by a single theorist or researcher who laid down a set of clear-cut assumptions and principles. Rather, group dynamics resulted from group processes. One theorist would suggest an idea, another might disagree, and the debate would continue until consensus would be reached. Initially, researchers were uncertain how to investigate their ideas empirically, but through collaboration and, more often, spirited competition, researchers developed new methods for studying groups. World events also influenced the study of groups, for the use of groups in manufacturing, warfare, and therapeutic settings stimulated the need to understand and improve such groups.

These group processes shaped the field's **paradigm**. The philosopher of science, Thomas S. Kuhn (1970), used that term to describe scientists' shared assumptions about the phenomena they study. Kuhn maintained that when scientists learn their field, they master not only the content of the science—important discoveries, general principles, facts, and so on—but also a way of looking at the world that is passed on from one scientist to another. These shared beliefs and unstated assumptions give them a worldview—a way of looking at that part of the world that they find most interesting. The paradigm determines the questions they consider worth studying, using the methods that are most appropriate.

What are the core elements of the field's paradigm? What do researchers and theorists notice when they observe a group acting in a particular way? What kinds of group processes do they find fascinating, and which ones do they find less interesting? We begin to answer these questions by considering some of the basic assumptions of the field and tracing them back to their source in the work of early sociologists, psychologists, and social psychologists. We then shift from the historical to the contemporary and review current topics and trends in the field. Chapter 2 continues this analysis of the field's paradigm by considering practices and procedures used by researchers when they collect information about groups (Forsyth & Burnette, 2005).

The Scientific Study of Groups

When anthropology, psychology, sociology, and the other social sciences emerged as their own unique disciplines in the late 1800s, the dynamics of groups became a topic of critical concern for all of them. Sociologists studying religious, political, economic, and educational social systems highlighted the role groups played in maintaining social order. Anthropologists, as they studied one culture after another, discovered similarities and differences among the

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paradigm Scientists' shared assumptions about the phenomena they study; also, a set of research procedures.

world's small tribal groups. Political scientists' studies of voting, public engagement, and political parties led them to the study of small groups of closely networked individuals. In 1895, social theorist Gustave Le Bon, published *Psychologie des Foules* (*Psychology of Crowds*), which claimed that individuals are transformed when they join a group. The psychologist Wilhelm Wundt (1916), recognized as the founder of scientific psychology, also studied groups extensively. His book *Völkerpsychologie* is sometimes translated as "folk psychology," but another translation is "group psychology." It combined elements of anthropology and psychology by examining the conditions and changes displayed by elementary social aggregates and how group memberships influence virtually all cognitive and perceptual processes.

These works laid the basic groundwork for the scientific study of groups. But as the discipline's paradigm took shape, investigators often endorsed disparate sets of assumptions about humans and their groups. Must we study groups as a unit, or can we instead focus on the individuals only? Do groups have minds, just as individuals do? Are groups greater than the sum of their parts?

Which Level: Group or Individual? Almost immediately, theorists disagreed about the **level of analysis** to take when studying groups. Some favored a *group-level analysis*, for they recognized that humans are the constitutive elements of groups and that groups and their processes have a profound impact on their members. Others advocated for an *individual-level analysis* that focused on the person in the group. Researchers who took this approach sought to explain the behavior of each group member, and they ultimately wanted to know if such psychological processes as attitudes, motivations, or personality were the true determinants of social behavior (Steiner, 1974, 1983, 1986).

Sociological researchers tended to undertake group-level analyses, and psychological researchers favored the individual-level analysis. Sociologist Émile Durkheim (1897/1966), for example, traced a highly personal phenomenon—suicide—back to group-level processes. He concluded that individuals who are not members of friendship, family, or religious groups can lose their sense of identity and, as a result, are more likely to commit suicide. Durkheim strongly believed that widely shared beliefs—what he called *collective representations*—are the cornerstone of society. He wrote: "emotions and tendencies are generated not by certain states of individual consciousness, but by the conditions under which the social body as a whole exists" (Durkheim, 1892/2005, p. 76).

Other researchers questioned the need to go beyond the individual to explain group behavior. Psychologist Floyd Allport (1924), for example, chose the individual in the group, and not the group itself, as the unit of analysis when he wrote that "nervous systems are possessed by individuals; but there is no nervous system of the crowd" (p. 5). Because Allport believed that "the actions of all are nothing more than the sum of the actions of each taken separately" (p. 5), he thought that a full understanding of the behavior of individuals in groups could be achieved by studying the psychology of the individual group members. Groups, according to Allport, were not real entities and that people who used such phrasings as "the group felt confident" or "the group thought the proposal was a good idea" were falling prey to the **group fallacy**. "An individual can be said to 'think' or 'feel'; but to say that a group does these things has no ascertainable meaning beyond saying that so many individuals do them" (Allport, 1962, p. 4). He is reputed to have said, "You can't trip over a group."

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level of analysis The focus of study when examining a multilevel process or phenomenon, such as the micro-level (individuals in a group), the meso-level (the group), or the macro-level (the organization or society where the group is located).

group fallacy Explaining social phenomena in terms of the group as a whole instead of basing the explanation on the individual-level processes within the group; ascribing psychological qualities, such as will, intentionality, and mind, to a group rather than to the individuals within the group.

Do Groups Have Minds? The idea of **group mind** (or collective consciousness) brought the group- and individual-level perspectives into clear opposition (Jahoda, 2007). Groups that undertake extreme actions under the exhortation of charismatic leaders fascinate both laypeople and researchers alike. Although groups are so commonplace that they usually go unnoticed and unscrutinized, atypical groups—cults, violent mobs, terrorist cells, communes—invite extensive analysis. Some early commentators on the human condition went so far as to suggest that such groups may develop a collective consciousness that is greater than the sum of the psychological experiences of the members and that it can become so powerful that it can overwhelm the will of the individual. Le Bon (1895/1960, p. 23), for example, wrote "Under certain circumstances, and only under those circumstances, an agglomeration of men presents new characteristics very different from those of the individuals composing [the group]." Durkheim, too, suggested that groups, rather than being mere collections of individuals in a fixed pattern of relationships with one another, were linked by an "esprit de group" (group mind):

> individuals are all that society is made of … the mentality of groups is not that of individuals *(particuliers)*, precisely because it assumes a plurality of individual minds joined together. A collectivity has its own ways of thinking and feeling to which its members bend but which are different from those they would create if they were left to their own devices. (Durkheim, 1900/1973, pp. 16–17)

Durkheim may have been positing the existence of a metaphysical bond that joined members, but more likely he was using the phrase *group mind* metaphorically to suggest that many psychological processes are determined, in part, by interactions with other people, and those interactions are in turn shaped by the mental activities and actions of each individual in the collective. Even so, Durkheim believed that group-level forces were sometimes so strong that they dominated the will of the individual.

The idea of group mind was a controversial one and contributed to a continuing disunity within the developing field of group dynamics. Allport, for example, never backed down from his anti-group position. Even though he conducted extensive studies of such group phenomena as rumors and morale during wartime (Allport & Lepkin, 1943) and conformity to standards (the J-curve hypothesis; Allport, 1934, 1961), he continued to question the scientific value of the term *group*. He did, however, eventually conclude that individuals are often bound together in "one inclusive *collective* structure" but he could not bring himself to use the word *group* to describe such collectives (Allport, 1962, p. 17, italics in original). He also believed that "only through social psychology as a science of the individual can we avoid the superficialities of the crowdmind and collective mind theories" (p. 8).

Allport's reluctance to accept such dubious concepts as group mind into social psychology helped ensure the field's scientific status, but most people recognize that groups are capable of some forms of collective thinking, reasoning, and feeling, so that, in a sense, groups have minds. The researchers in one study, for example, simply asked people if groups have minds. They did this by presenting people with a long list of various types of groups and asking them if each group on the list had a mind: "the capacity to make plans, have intentions, and think for itself" (Waytz & Young, 2012, p. 78). When they examined people's ratings, they discovered that general categories of people, such as all blondes or Facebook users, were not thought to have minds, but that smaller, more cohesive aggregates—such as organizations (e.g., Bank of America), teams (e.g., Boston Red Sox), and decision-making groups (e.g., the Supreme Court)—received higher ratings of mind. Interestingly, they also discovered a trade-off between the group- and individual-level conceptions of mind: as judgments of group mind went up, estimates of individual mind went down. Those who were members of groups that the perceiver thought had mind-like

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group mind (or collective consciousness) A hypothetical unifying mental force linking group members together; the fusion of individual consciousness or mind into a transcendent consciousness.

qualities were viewed as less mindful individuals, whereas those individuals who were members of groups that did not seem to have group minds were viewed as having minds of their own. Because attributions of mind to groups increased along with perceptions of the group's cohesiveness (entitativity), members of low-cohesive groups were held more accountable for their group's actions, whereas members of highly cohesive groups were given less personal responsibility. Here, the group was held accountable, since it was thought to have a "mind."

Are Group Processes Real? Allport was correct in rejecting the concept of a group mind. Researchers have never found any evidence that group members are linked by a psychic, telepathic connection that creates a single group mind. But just because this group-level concept has little foundation in fact does not mean that other group-level concepts are equally unreasonable. Consider, for example, the concept of a group norm. As noted earlier, a *norm* is a standard that describes what behaviors should and should not be performed in a group. Norms are not just individual members' personal standards, for they are shared among group members. Only when members agree on a particular standard does it function as a norm, so this concept is embedded at the level of the group rather than at the level of the individual.

The idea that a norm is more than just the sum of the individual beliefs of all the members of a group was verified by Muzafer Sherif in 1936. Sherif, a social psychologist, literally created norms by asking groups of men to state aloud their estimates of the distance that a dot of light had moved. He found that the men gradually accepted a standard estimate in place of their own idiosyncratic judgments. He also found, however, that even when the men were later given the opportunity to make judgments alone, they still based their estimates on the group's norm. Moreover, once the group's norm had developed, Sherif removed members one at a time and replaced them with fresh members. Each new member changed his behavior until it matched the group's norm. If the individuals in the group are completely replaceable, then where does the group norm "exist"? It exists at the group level rather than the individual level (MacNeil & Sherif, 1976).

Are Groups More Than the Sum of Their Parts? The debate between individual-level and group-level approaches waned, in time, as theorists developed stronger models for understanding group-level process. Lewin's (1951) theoretical analyses of groups were particularly influential. His *field theory* is premised on the principle of *interactionism*, which assumes that the behavior of people in groups is determined by the interaction of the person and the environment. The formula $B = f(P, E)$ summarizes this assumption. In a group context, this formula implies that the behavior (B) of group members is a function (f) of the interaction of their personal characteristics (P) with environmental factors (E), which include features of the group, the group members, and the situation. Lewin believed that, because of interactionism, a group is a Gestalt—a unified system with emergent properties that cannot be fully understood by piecemeal examination. Adopting the dictum, "The whole is greater than the sum of the parts," he maintained that when individuals merged into a group something new was created and that the new product itself had to be the object of study.

Many group phenomena are consistent with Lewin's belief that a group is more than the sum of the individual members. A group's cohesiveness, for example, goes beyond the mere attraction of each individual member for one another (Hogg, 1992). Individuals may not like each other a great deal and yet, when they join together, they experience powerful feelings of unity and esprit de corps. Groups sometimes perform tasks far better—and far worse—than might be expected, given the talents of their individual members. When individuals combine synergistically in a group, they sometimes accomplish incredible feats and make horrible decisions that no single individual could ever conceive (Larson, 2010). Such a group seems to possess supervening qualities "that cannot be reduced

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$B = f(P,E)$ The law of interactionism that states each person's behavior (B) is a function of his or her personal qualities (P), the social environment (E), and the interaction of these personal qualities with factors present in the social setting (proposed by Kurt Lewin).

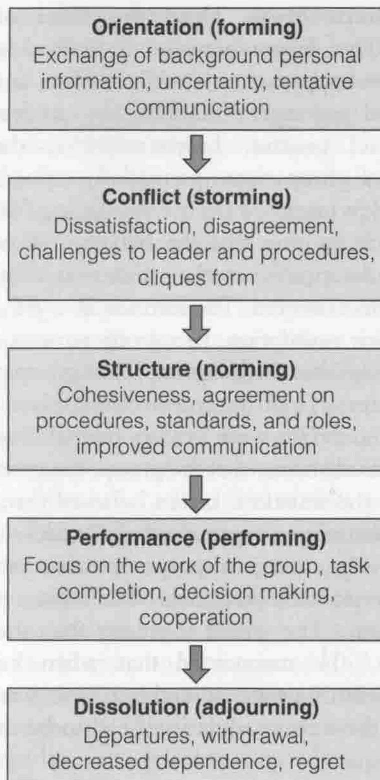

FIGURE 1.5 Stages of group development. Tuckman's theory of group development suggests that groups typically pass through five stages during their development: orientation (forming), conflict (storming), structure (norming), performance (performing), and dissolution (adjourning).

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to or described as qualities of its participants" (Sandelands & St. Clair, 1993, p. 443).

Groups also become more Gestalt-like as they mature from newly formed, fledgling assemblies of individuals into highly structured, well-developed groups. Educational psychologist Bruce Tuckman's theory of **group development**, for example, assumes that most groups move through the five stages summarized in Figure 1.5 (Tuckman, 1965; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). In the orientation (*forming*) phase, the group members become oriented toward one another. In the conflict (*storming*) phase, conflicts surface in the group as members vie for status and the group sets its goals. These conflicts subside when the group becomes more structured and standards emerge in the structure (*norming*) phase. In the performance (*performing*) phase, the group moves beyond disagreement and organizational matters to concentrate on the work to be done. The group continues to function at this stage until it reaches the dissolution (*adjourning*) stage. As Chapter 5 explains in more detail, groups also tend to cycle repeatedly through some of these stages as group members strive to maintain a balance between task-oriented actions and emotionally expressive behaviors (Bales, 1965).

A Multilevel Approach to the Study of Groups

In time, the rift between individual-level and group-level researchers closed as the unique contributions of each perspective were integrated in a **multilevel perspective** on groups. This perspective does not favor a specific level of analysis when examining human behavior, for it argues for examining processes that range along the micro–meso–macro continuum (see Figure 1.6). *Micro-level* factors include the qualities, characteristics, and actions of the individual members. *Meso-level* factors are group-level qualities of the groups themselves, such as their cohesiveness, their size, their composition, and their structure. *Macro-level* factors are the qualities and processes of the larger collectives that enfold the groups, such as communities, organizations, or societies. Groups, then, are nested at the meso-level, where the bottom-up

group development Patterns of change in a group's structure and interactions that occur over the course of the group's existence.

multilevel perspective The view that recognizes that a complete explanation of group processes and phenomena requires multiple levels of analysis, including individual (micro), group (meso), and organizational or societal (macro) level.

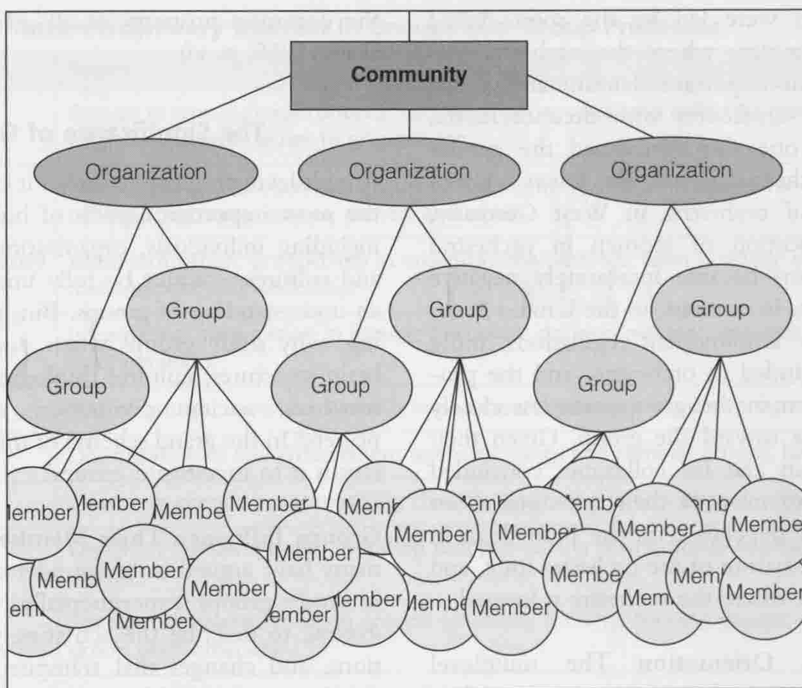

FIGURE 1.6 A multilevel perspective on groups. Researchers who study groups recognize that individuals (micro-level) are nested in groups (meso-level), but that these groups are themselves nested in larger social units, such as organizations, communities, tribes, nations, and societies (the macro-level). Researchers may focus on one level in this multilevel system, such as the group level, but they must be aware that these groups are embedded in a complex of other relationships.

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micro-level variables meet the top-down macro-level variables.

Crossing Levels Social psychologist Richard Hackman and his colleagues' studies of performing orchestras illustrate the value of a multilevel approach (Allmendinger, Hackman, & Lehman, 1996; Hackman, 2003). In their quest to understand why some professional orchestras outperformed others, they measured an array of micro-, meso-, and macro-level variables. At the micro-level, they studied the individual musicians: Were they well-trained and highly skilled? Were they satisfied with their work and highly motivated? Did they like each other and feel that they played well together? At the group-level (meso-level), they considered the gender composition of the group (number of men and women players), the quality of the music the orchestra produced, and the financial resources available to the group. They also took note of one key macro-level variable: the location of the orchestras in one of four different countries (United States, England, East Germany, or West Germany).

Their work uncovered complex interrelations among these three sets of variables. As might be expected, one micro-level variable—the skill of the individual players—substantially influenced the quality of the performance of the group. However, one critical determinant of the talent of individual players was the financial health of the orchestra; better-funded orchestras could afford to hire better performers. Affluent orchestras could also afford music directors who worked more closely with the performers, and orchestras who performed better than expected given the caliber of their

individual players were led by the most skilled directors. The country where the orchestra was based was also an important determinant of the group members' satisfaction with their orchestra, but only when one also considered the gender composition of the orchestras. Far fewer women were members of orchestras in West Germany, but as the proportion of women in orchestras increased, members became increasingly negative about their group. In contrast, in the United States with its directive employment regulations, more women were included in orchestras, and the proportion of women in the groups was less closely related to attitude toward the group. Given their findings, Hackman and his colleagues concluded that the answer to most of their questions about orchestras was "it depends": on the individuals in the group, on the nature of the orchestra itself, and the social context where the orchestra is located.

Interdisciplinary Orientation The multilevel perspective gives group dynamics an interdisciplinary character. For example, researchers who prefer to study individuals may find themselves wondering what impact group participation will have on individuals' cognitions, attitudes, and behavior. Those who study organizations may find that these larger social entities actually depend on the dynamics of small subgroups within the organization. Social scientists examining such global issues as the development and maintenance of culture may find themselves turning their attention toward small groups as the unit of cultural transmission. Political scientists who study national and international leaders may discover that such leaders are centers of a small network of advisors and that their political actions cannot be understood without taking into account the dynamics of these advisory councils. Although the listing of disciplines that study group dynamics in Table 1.5 is far from comprehensive, it does convey the idea that the study of groups is not limited to any one field. As A. Paul Hare and his colleagues once noted, "This field of research does not 'belong' to any one of the recognized social sciences alone. It is the common property of all" (Hare, Borgatta, & Bales, 1955, p. vi).

The Significance of Groups

A multilevel perspective makes it clear that many of the most important aspects of human existence—including individuals, organizations, communities, and cultures—cannot be fully understood without an understanding of groups. But, practically speaking, why study groups when one can investigate brain structures, cultures, biological diseases, organizations, ancient civilizations, or even other planets? In the grand scheme of things, how important is it to investigate groups?

Groups Influence Their Members Lewin, who many have argued is the founder of the movement to study groups experimentally, chose the word *dynamic* to describe the activities, processes, operations, and changes that transpire in groups. This word suggests that groups have a profound impact on individuals; they shape actions, thoughts, and feelings (Lewin, 1943, 1948, 1951).

Some of these changes are subtle ones. Moving from isolation to a group context can reduce our sense of uniqueness, but at the same time it can enhance our ability to perform simple tasks rapidly. In one of the earliest experimental studies in the field, Norman Triplett (1898) verified the discontinuity between people's responses when they are isolated rather than integrated, and this shift has been documented time and again in studies of motivation, emotion, and performance. (Many have suggested that Triplett's study marks the start of the scientific investigation of interpersonal processes, but in all likelihood the field's roots reach even further back in time; see Stroebe, 2012.) Groups can also change their members by prompting them to change their attitudes and values as they come to agree with the overall consensus of the group (Newcomb, 1943). As Cooley (1909) explained, people acquire their attitudes, values, identities, skills, and principles in groups and become practiced at modifying their behavior

TABLE 1.5 Interdisciplinary Interest in Groups and Group Processes

Discipline	Topics
Anthropology	Groups in cross-cultural contexts; societal change; social and collective identities; evolutionary approaches to group living
Architecture and Design	Planning spaces to maximize group–environment fit; design of spaces for groups, including offices, classrooms, venues, arenas, and so on
Business and Industry	Work motivation; productivity in organizational settings; team building; goal setting; management and leadership
Communication	Information transmission in groups; discussion; decision making; problems in communication; networks
Computer Science	Virtual groups, computer-based groups support systems, computer programming in groups
Criminal Justice	Organization of law enforcement agencies; gangs and criminal groups; jury deliberations
Education	Classroom groups; team teaching; class composition and educational outcomes
Engineering	Design of human systems, including problem-solving teams; group approaches to software design
Mental Health	Therapeutic change through groups; sensitivity training; training groups; self-help groups; group psychotherapy
Political Science	Leadership; intergroup and international relations; political influence; power
Psychology	Personality and group behavior; problem solving; perceptions of other people; motivation; conflict
Social Work	Team approaches to treatment; community groups; family counseling; groups and adjustment
Sociology	Self and society; influence of norms on behavior; role relations; deviance
Sports and Recreation	Team performance; effects of victory and failure; cohesion and performance

in response to social norms and others' requirements. As children grow older, their peers replace the family as the source of social values (Harris, 1995), and when they become adults, actions and outlooks are then shaped by an even larger network of interconnected groups (Barabási, 2003).

But groups also change people in ways that are not subtle at all. The earliest group psychologists were struck by the apparent madness of people when immersed in crowds, and many concluded that the behavior of a person in a group may have no connection to that person's behavior when alone. Social psychologist Stanley Milgram's (1963) classic studies of obedience offered further confirmation of the dramatic power of groups over their members, for Milgram found that most people placed in a powerful group would obey the orders of a malevolent authority to harm another person. Individuals who join religious or political groups that stress secrecy, obedience to leaders, and dogmatic acceptance of unusual or atypical beliefs (*cults*) often display fundamental and unusual changes in belief and behavior.

Theories about groups have also proven to be particularly resilient, scientifically speaking, when put to an empirical test. In the last 100 years,

researchers have conducted more than 25,000 studies involving over 8 million participants. A review of these studies suggests that much can be learned by studying people's attitudes, cognitions, personalities, and relationships, but one area of study surpassed all others in terms of providing an explanation for human social behavior. Leading the way, across all 18 topics examined in the review, was the scientific study of groups and their dynamics (Richard, Bond, & Stokes-Zoota, 2003).

Groups Influence Society Societies of all types, from the hunter/gatherers through to the postindustrial, are defined by the small groups that create them. Groups are niched at the meso-level, between individuals and society at large, so they are the intermediary through which culture and custom influences the individual. Just as characteristics of the specific individuals who belong to a group shape that group's basic nature, so the groups that belong to society determine that society's culture and institutions. Legal and political systems, religious institutions, and educational and economic systems are based, at core, on small groups and subgroups of connected individuals. For example, individuals often endorse a specific religion, such as Christianity or Islam, but their connection to their religion occurs in smaller groups and congregations. Groups are also the means by which individuals, through their united action, transform society. Single individuals and large, dispersed populations cannot leverage the resources needed to promote social change, but groups can. The ideology of a social movement may initially attract individuals, but it takes a group to sustain their sense of community, identity, and engagement. Groups provide the microstructure "through which individuals mobilize to create social transformation" (Harrington & Fine, 2000, p. 315).

The Usefulness of Groups Groups are supremely useful forms of social organization. These days much of the work of the world is done by people working in teams, which are, of course, groups that are uniquely task-focused (see Chapter 12). Social workers have also found themselves dealing with such groups as social clubs, gangs, neighborhoods, and family clusters, and an awareness of group processes helps them crystallize their understanding of group life. Educators also must understand group dynamics, for most learning still takes place in small classes of collocated students. Groups, too, are often used by those in mental health fields to help individuals find the motivation to change their thoughts and behaviors (see Chapter 16).

The application of group dynamics to practical problems is consistent with Lewin's call for **action research**. Lewin argued in favor of the intertwining of basic and applied research, for he firmly believed that there "is no hope of creating a better world without a deeper scientific insight into the function of leadership, of culture, and of the other essentials of group life" (1943, p. 114). To achieve this goal, he assured practitioners that "there is nothing so practical as a good theory" (1951, p. 169) and charged researchers with the task of developing theories that can be applied to important social problems (Bargal, 2008). Understanding groups offers the means to solve many of the most basic problems people face as individuals and as a species: prejudice, personal adjustment and well-being, conflict, intergroup aggression, and abuses of power and influence.

The Dark Side of Groups Groups offer their members many of the resources they need to prosper, but groups are not all plus with no minus. They are often the arena for profound interpersonal conflicts that end in violence and aggression. Even though group members may cooperate with one another, they may also engage in competition as they strive to outdo one another. When individuals are members of very large groups, such as crowds, they sometimes engage in behaviors that they would never undertake if they were acting individually. Many of the most misguided decisions have

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action research Scientific inquiry that both expands basic theoretical knowledge and identifies solutions to significant social problems.

not been made by lone individuals but by groups of people who, despite working together, still managed to make a disastrous decision. Even though people tend to work together in groups, in many cases these groups are far less productive than they should be, given the talents and energies of the individuals in them. Given these problems, psychologist and historian Christian Buys whimsically suggested that all groups be eliminated because "humans would do better without groups" (1978a, p. 123).

Although Buys' suggestion is a satirical one, it does make the point that groups are neither all good nor all bad. Groups are so "beneficial, if not essential, to humans" that "it seems nonsensical to search for alternatives to human groups" (Buys, 1978b, p. 568), but groups can generate negative outcomes for their members. Researchers, however, are more often drawn to studying negative rather than positive processes with the result that theory and research in the field tend to stress conflict, rejection, dysfunction, and obedience to malevolent authorities and to neglect cooperation, acceptance, well-being, and collaboration. This negative bias, Buys suggested, has led to an unfair underestimation of the positive impact of groups on people.

Buys' comments, by the way, have prompted a number of rejoinders by other group researchers. One group-authored response (Kravitz et al., 1978) suggested that Buys wrongly assigned responsibility for the problems; its authors argued that humans would do better without other humans rather than without any groups. Another proposed that groups would do better without humans (Anderson, 1978), whereas a third simply argued that groups would do better without social psychologists (Green & Mack, 1978).

Topics in Contemporary Group Dynamics

Throughout the history of group dynamics, some approaches that initially seemed promising have been abandoned after they contributed relatively little or failed to stimulate consistent lines of research. The idea of group mind, for example, was discarded when researchers identified more likely causes of crowd behavior. Similarly, such concepts as syntality (any effects that the group has as a functioning unit; Cattell, 1948), groupality (the personality of the group; Bogardus, 1954), and life space (all factors that define an individual's psychological reality; Lewin, 1951), initially attracted considerable interest but stimulated little research.

In contrast, researchers have studied other topics continuously since they were first broached (Berdahl & Henry, 2005). Table 1.6 samples the topics that currently interest group experts, and it foreshadows the topics considered in the remainder of this book. Chapters 1 and 2 explore the foundations of the field by reviewing the group dynamics perspective (Chapter 1) and the methods and theories of the field (Chapter 2).

Chapters 3 through 6 focus on group formation and development—how groups come into existence and how they change and evolve over time. Chapters 3 and 4 consider the demands and opportunities of a life in a group rather than alone, including the personal and situational forces that prompt people to join groups or remain apart from them. Chapter 5 focuses more fully on group development by considering the factors that increase the unity of a group and the way those factors wax and wane as the group changes over time. Chapter 6 turns to the topic of group structure—how groups develop systems of roles and relationships—with a particular focus on how structure emerges as groups mature.

A group is a complex social system—a microcosm of powerful interpersonal forces that significantly shape members' actions—and Chapters 7 through 9 examine the flow of information, influence, and interaction in that microcosm. Chapter 7 looks at the way group members sometimes change their opinions, judgments, or actions so that they match the opinions, judgments, or actions of the rest of the group (*conformity*). Chapter 8 extends this topic by considering how group members make use of social power to influence others and how people respond to such influence. Chapter 9 considers issues of leadership in groups.

TABLE 1.6 Major Topics in the Field of Group Dynamics

Chapter and Topic	Issues
	Foundations
1. Introduction to group dynamics	What are groups, and what are their key features? What do we want to know about groups and their dynamics? What assumptions guide researchers in their studies of groups and the processes within groups?
2. Studying groups	How do researchers measure group processes? How do researchers search for and test their hypotheses about groups? What general theoretical perspectives guide researchers' studies of groups and the people in them?
	Formation and Development
3. Inclusion and identity	Do humans, as a species, prefer inclusion to exclusion and group membership to isolation? What demands does a shift from individuality to collectivity make on people? How do group experiences and memberships influence individuals' identities?
4. Formation	Who joins groups, and who remains apart? When and why do people seek out others? Why do people deliberately create groups or join existing groups? What factors influence feelings of liking for others?
5. Cohesion and development	What factors promote the increasing solidarity of a group over time? What is cohesion? As groups become more unified, do they develop a shared climate and culture? How do groups develop over time? What are the positive and negative consequences of cohesion and commitment?
6. Structure	What are norms and roles, and how do they structure interactions in groups? How and why do social networks develop in groups, and what are the interpersonal consequences of relational networks in groups?
	Influence and Interaction
7. Influence	When will people conform to a group's standards, and when will they remain independent? How do norms develop, and why do people obey them? Do nonconformists ever succeed in influencing the rest of the group?
8. Power	Why are some members of groups more powerful than others? What types of power tactics are most effective in influencing others? Does power corrupt? Why do people obey authorities?
9. Leadership	What is leadership? Who do groups prefer for leaders? Should a leader be task-focused or relationship-focused? Is democratic leadership superior to autocratic leadership? Can leaders transform their followers?
	Working in Groups
10. Performance	Do people perform tasks more effectively in groups or when they are alone? Why do people sometimes expend so little effort when they are in groups? When does a group outperform an individual? Are groups creative?
11. Decision making	What steps do groups take when making decisions? Why do some highly cohesive groups make disastrous decisions? Why do groups sometimes make riskier decisions than individuals?
12. Teams	What is the difference between a group and a team? What types of teams are currently in use? Does team building improve team work? How can leaders intervene to improve the performance of their teams?

TABLE 1.6 Major Topics in the Field of Group Dynamics (Continued)

Chapter and Topic	Issues
	Conflict
13. Conflict in groups	What causes disputes between group members? When will a small disagreement escalate into a conflict? Why do groups sometimes splinter into subgroups? How can disputes in groups be resolved?
14. Intergroup relations	What causes disputes between groups? What changes take place as a consequence of intergroup conflict? What factors exacerbate conflict? How can intergroup conflict be resolved?
	Contexts and Applications
15. Groups in context	What impact does the social and physical setting have on an interacting group? Are groups territorial? What happens when groups are overcrowded? How do groups cope with severe environments?
16. Groups and change	How can groups be used to improve personal adjustment and health? What is the difference between a therapy group and a support group? Are group approaches to treatment effective? Why do they work?
17. Crowds and collective behavior	What types of crowds are common? Why do crowds and collectives form? Do people lose their sense of self when they join crowds? When is a crowd likely to become unruly?

Questions of group performance form the focus in Chapters 10 through 12, for people work in groups across a range of contexts and settings. Chapter 10 examines basic questions of group productivity, including brainstorming, Chapter 11 decision-making groups, and Chapter 12 teams.

The next two chapters examine conflict and cooperation in groups. Groups are sources of stability and support for members, but in some cases conflicts erupt within groups (Chapter 13) and between groups (Chapter 14).

The final chapters deal with groups in specific settings. All groups are embedded in a social and environmental context, and Chapter 15 considers how the context in which groups exist affects their dynamics. Chapter 16 reviews groups in therapeutic contexts—helping, supportive, and change-promoting groups. Chapter 17 concludes our analysis by considering groups in public and societal contexts, including such relatively large groups as mobs, crowds, and social movements.

Group Dynamics Is Dynamic

The field of group dynamics emerged in the twentieth century as theorists and researchers concluded that groups are real and that they should be subjected to scientific analysis. In the 1950s and 1960s, in particular, the field grew rapidly as theorists and researchers studied more and more topics, the field became more interdisciplinary, and the accumulated knowledge was applied to practical problems.

This rapid expansion slowed once the study of groups gained acceptance in both sociology and psychology, but even today the field remains vibrant. Groups are studied by a range of investigators in a host of different disciplines. Although these researchers have very different goals, pursuits, and paradigms, they all recognize that groups are essential to human life. Through membership in groups, we define and confirm our values and beliefs and take on or refine our social identity. When we face uncertain situations, we join groups to gain reassuring information about our problems and security in companionship. Even though we must sometimes bend to the will of a group and its leaders, through groups we can reach goals that would elude us if we attempted them as individuals. Our groups are sometimes filled with conflict, but by resolving this conflict, we learn how to relate with others more effectively. Groups are the bedrock of humans' social existence, and we must accept the charge of understanding them (Harrod, Welch, & Kushkowski, 2009; Randsley de Moura et al., 2008).

CHAPTER REVIEW

What is a group?

1. No two groups are identical to each other, but a *group*, by definition, is two or more individuals who are connected by and within social relationships.
   - Groups vary in size from dyads and triads to very large aggregations, such as mobs and audiences. Studies of naturally forming groups, like those conducted by James, indicate that most groups include two or three members.
   - The number of possible relations in a group increases exponentially as groups increase in size, but both strong and weak relations are essential to group functioning (Granovetter's "strength of weak ties" hypothesis).
   - Group-based relations are *memberships*. Unlike *networks*, groups usually have boundaries that define who is in the group.
   - Members of groups that use computer-based technologies—e-groups or *online groups*—possess many unique qualities, but they nonetheless have many of the same characteristics and processes of *offline groups*.

What are some common characteristics of groups?

1. People in groups interact with one another. Bales' Interaction Process Analysis (IPA) system distinguishes between *task interaction* and *relationship interaction*.
2. Groups seek a variety of goals, such as those specified by McGrath: generating, choosing, negotiating, and executing.
3. Groups create *interdependence* among the group members (unilateral, reciprocal, etc.).
4. Interaction is patterned by *group structure*, including *roles, norms*, and interpersonal relations.
5. *Group cohesion*, or cohesiveness, is the unity of a group.

Are there different types of groups, and do people distinguish between these groups?

1. A number of different types of groups have been identified.
   - *Primary groups* are relatively small, personally meaningful groups that are highly unified. Cooley suggested such groups are primary agents of socialization.
   - Members of *social groups*, such as work groups, clubs, and congregations, interact with one another over an extended period of time.
   - *Collectives* are relatively large aggregations or groups of individuals who display similarities in actions and outlook.
   - Members of a *social category* share some common attribute or are related in some way. Such categories, even though based on similarity rather than interaction, often influence members' *social identity*, defined by Tajfel and his colleagues as an aspect of the self based on membership in a group or category.
2. Social perceivers also distinguish between groups and nongroups, and they draw distinctions among different types of groups.
   - The perception of *entitativity* (groupness), according to Campbell, is substantially influenced by common fate, similarity, and proximity cues within an aggregation.
   - Research conducted by Lickel, Hamilton, Sherman, and their colleagues suggests that people spontaneously draw distinctions among primary groups, social groups, collectives, and more general social categories.
   - The *Thomas Theorem*, applied to groups, suggests that if individuals think an aggregate is a true group then the group will have important interpersonal consequences for those in the group and for those who are observing it.

- Groups that are high in entitativity are assumed to have a basic essence that defines the nature of their members (*essentialism*).
- Individuals in Eastern cultures tend to take more notice of groups, whereas those living in Western cultures focus more on individuals.

What assumptions guide researchers in their studies of groups and their dynamics?

1. Lewin first used the phrase *group dynamics* to describe the powerful processes that take place in groups, but group dynamics also refers to the "field of inquiry dedicated to advancing knowledge about the nature of groups" (Cartwright and Zander, 1968, p. 7).
2. The field's basic assumptions and procedures, termed a *paradigm* by Kuhn, were shaped by such early researchers as:
    - Le Bon, a social theorist best known for his book on the psychology of crowds and mobs, *Psychologie des Foules*.
    - Wundt, a psychologist who wrote *Völkerpsychologie*.
    - Durkheim, a sociologist who argued that society is made possible by the collective representations of individuals.
    - Allport, a psychologist who avoided holistic approaches to groups.
3. Early researchers disagreed in both their theorizing about groups and the methods they used to study them.
    - Sociological investigators, such as Durkheim, tended to adopt a group *level of analysis*, whereas psychologists focused on individuals. Allport, for example, objected to such group-level concepts as the *group mind* and collective conscious as examples of the *group fallacy*.
    - Research studies have yet to confirm the existence of a group mind, but Sherif s study of norm formation indicated that such group-level processes as norms can be studied through experimentation.
    - Lewin's field theory suggested that in some cases the characteristics of groups cannot be deduced from the individual members' characteristics. Lewin maintained that behavior is a function of both the person and the environment, expressed as the law of interactionism, $B = f(P, E)$.
    - Tuckman's theory of *group development* assumes that over time most groups move through the five stages of forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning.
4. The study of groups requires a multilevel, interdisciplinary analysis.
    - A *multilevel perspective* to groups recognizes that individuals are nested in groups, and these groups are usually nested in larger social aggregations, such as communities and organizations. Hackman's studies of orchestras illustrate the importance of examining micro-, meso-, and macro-level factors when investigating group dynamics.
    - Groups and their dynamics are the focus of study in a wide variety of fields.

Why study groups and their dynamics?

1. Groups are influential.
    - Groups alter their members' attitudes, values, and perceptions. Triplett's early study of group performance demonstrated the impact of one person on another.
    - Milgram's work demonstrated that a group situation can powerfully influence members to cause harm to others.
    - A review of 25,000 studies indicated that hypotheses about groups yielded clearer findings than studies of other social psychological topics.
2. Groups influence society. Groups mediate the connection between individuals and society-at-large.
3. Applied studies of groups and their dynamics, such as *action research*, yields solutions to a number of practical problems.

4. Despite the many problems caused by groups (competition, conflict, poor decisions), Buys notes that humans could not survive without groups.

What topics are included in the scientific study of group dynamics?

1. Contemporary group research examines both classic topics dealing with group structure and performance, as well as newer topics, such as e-groups and diversity.
2. Topics in the field include group formation, cohesion, group development, structure, influence, power, performance, conflict, and groups in specific settings.

RESOURCES

Introduction to Groups

- *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Group Processes*, edited by Michael A. Hogg and Scott Tindale in 2001, remains one of the most comprehensive collections of in-depth analyses of critically important topics in the field of group dynamics.
- *Encyclopedia of Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, edited by John M. Levine and Michael A. Hogg (2010) is a 2-volume, 998-page compendium of current knowledge about groups and their relations, with over 300 entries ranging from *action research* to *xenophobia.*
- *Group Dynamics: Research and Theory*, edited by Dorwin Cartwright and Alvin Zander (1968), is a classic in the scientific field of groups, with chapters dealing with such topics as group membership, conformity, power, leadership, and motivation.

Group Dynamics: History and Issues

- *A History of Social Psychology: From the Eighteenth-Century Enlightenment to the Second World War*, by Gustav Jahoda (2007), is a fascinating history of the early emergence of social psychology in general and group dynamics in particular.
- "A History of Small Group Research," by John M. Levine and Richard L. Moreland (2012), provides a careful, detailed review of the development of the field of group dynamics, divided into the following eras: first 50 years, 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, and 1980s and beyond.
- "The Historical Background of Modern Social Psychology," by Gordon W. Allport (1968), reviews with extraordinary care the first scholarly studies of mobs, groups, and crowds.

Contemporary Group Dynamics

- "Learning More by Crossing Levels: Evidence from Airplanes, Hospitals, and Orchestras," by J. Richard Hackman (2003), provides one lucid example after another of the advantages of a multilevel approach to understanding group behavior.
- "Prospects for Group Processes and Intergroup Relations Research: A Review of 70 Years' Progress," by Georginia Randsley de Moura, Tirza Leader, Joseph Pelletier, and Dominic Abrams (2008), documents the growing interest in group-level analyses of interpersonal behavior across a range of disciplines.