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[Introduction to] Group Dynamics: Seventh Edition

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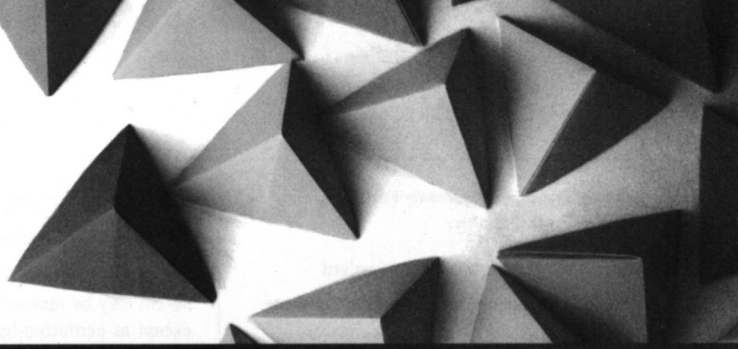
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GROUP DYNAMICS

SEVENTH EDITION

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Preface

Welcome to the study of groups and their dynamics. The theories, research findings, definitions, case studies, examples, tables, and figures that fill this book's pages have just one purpose: to describe and explain all things related to people and their groups. Why do we join groups? What holds a group together? Do our groups change over time? How do groups influence us and how do we influence them? When does a group become a team? Why do some groups get so little done? What causes conflict in and between groups? What are groups, and what are their essential qualities? These are just a few of the questions asked, explored, and answered in *Group Dynamics*.

Understanding people—why they think, feel, and act the way they do—requires understanding their groups. Human behavior is so often group behavior that people must be studied in context—embedded in their families, friendship cliques, teams, organizations, and so on—rather than in isolation. Understanding the social world—its politics, institutions, cultures, and conflicts—also requires understanding the intersecting and continually interacting groups that form society. Understanding yourself—why *you* think, feel, and act the way you do in any given situation—also requires understanding groups. In groups you define and confirm your values and beliefs and take on or refine your identity. When you face uncertain situations, you gain reassuring information about your problems and security in companionship in groups. You are most who you are when you are with others in groups.

Understanding groups is also eminently practical. Much of the world's work is done by groups and teams, so efficiency, achievement, and progress—success itself—depend on understanding the strengths and weaknesses of groups. Productivity in the workplace, problem-solving in the boardroom, learning in the classroom, and even therapeutic change—all depend on group-level processes. Groups, too, hold the key to solving such societal problems as racism, sexism, and international conflict. Any attempt to change society will succeed only if the groups within that society change.

FEATURES

This book is about groups, but it is not based on experts' opinions or common-sense assumptions. It offers, instead, a scientific analysis that draws on theory and research from any and all disciplines that study groups. The book reviews

hundreds of theories and thousands of empirical studies that test those theories, all in an attempt to better understand what makes groups tick.

- *Organization:* The chapters progress from basic issues and processes to the analysis of more specialized topics. The first two chapters consider questions of definition, history, and methods, and they are followed by chapters dealing with group formation, cohesion, development, and structure. The book then turns to issues of influence and productivity in groups and teams, before examining groups in specific contexts. The order of chapters, however, is somewhat arbitrary, and many may prefer a different sequence.
- *Cases:* Each chapter begins with a description of one specific group and its processes. These cases are not just mentioned at the start of the chapter and then forgotten, but are used throughout the chapter to illustrate theoretical concepts, define terms, and explore empirical implications. All the cases are or were real groups rather than hypothetical ones, and the incidents described are documented events that occurred within the group (although some literary license was taken for the case used to illustrate the dynamics of juries).
- *Citations and names:* This analysis is based on the work of thousands of researchers, scholars, and students who have explored intriguing but unexplained aspects of groups and their dynamics. Their influence is acknowledged by citations that include their names and the date of the publication of the research report or book. In some cases, too, the researcher or theorist is identified in the text itself, and those citations identify his or her discipline, first name, and last name.
- *Terms, outlines, summaries, and readings:* The text is reader-friendly and includes a number of pedagogical features, including a running glossary, chapter outline, detailed chapter summary, and suggested readings. The approximately 500 key concepts, when first introduced, are set in boldface type and defined at the bottom of the page. The first page of each chapter asks several questions examined in that chapter and also outlines the chapter's contents. Each chapter uses three levels of headings, and ends with an outline summary and a list of sources to consult for more information.

CHANGES FROM THE SIXTH EDITION

This book follows in the footsteps of such classic works as Marvin Shaw's *Group Dynamics: The Psychology of Groups* (1978), Paul Hare's *Handbook of Small Group Research* (1976), and Dorwin Cartwright and Alvin Zander's *Group Dynamics* (1968). But when those books were written, nearly all of the research on groups was conducted by psychologists and sociologists who mostly studied ad hoc groups working in laboratory settings. Now, nearly every science has something to say about groups, teams, and their dynamics. And not just anthropology, communication, education, management and organizational behavior, and political

science, but also legal studies, biology, and even physics offer insights into issues of group formation, process, and function. As the study of groups continues to thrive intellectually and scientifically, new findings are emerging to explain cohesion, conformity, development, identity, networks, justice, leadership, online groups, multicultural groups, negotiation, power, social comparison, hierarchy, and teams. This edition strives to summarize the current state of scientific research in the field.

Changes to this edition include the following:

- *Updating and clarification of the content:* The book remains a research-oriented examination of group-level processes, within the psychological and sociological traditions. Topics such as influence, leadership, and cohesion are examined in detail, but so are emerging areas of interest, such as multilevel analyses, group composition and diversity, multiteam systems, social networks, neural mechanisms, and new interpretations of classic studies (e.g., the Milgram experiments).
- *Depth of coverage and engagement:* To increase readability and engagement, each chapter has been revised to reduce its length, to improve the flow, and to increase clarity. High-interest material is presented in focus boxes, and each chapter includes self-assessment exercises that ask readers to apply chapter concepts to themselves and their groups.
- *Increased focus on interdisciplinary work in the study of groups:* Since many disciplines study groups and their processes, the text continues to expand its coverage to draw on all fields that investigate groups and teams (e.g., team science, behavioral economics, and social network analysis), but grounds newer findings in foundational theories and methods.
- *Both theory and application are amplified:* Research findings are examined in detail, but when possible these findings are organized by more general theoretical principles. Given the use of groups in organizational, political, military, and industrial settings, the text examines such applied topics as team performance, productivity, leadership, and conflict.