Groups, relationships and intergroup processes

Supported GRE teaching and original transfer practice

Groups, relationships and intergroup processes

- Predict how other people's presence changes performance.
- Explain the **bystander effect** by its two mechanisms.
- Describe what predicts attraction and how relationships are evaluated.
- Separate **stereotype** , **prejudice** and **discrimination** , and say what reduces conflict between groups.

Groups and performance

- Social facilitation: other people's presence strengthens the dominant (most practised) response. It helps on easy, well-learned tasks and hurts on new, hard ones.
- **Social loafing** : people put in less effort when their contributions are pooled and cannot be identified.
- Deindividuation: anonymity in a crowd lowers self-restraint.

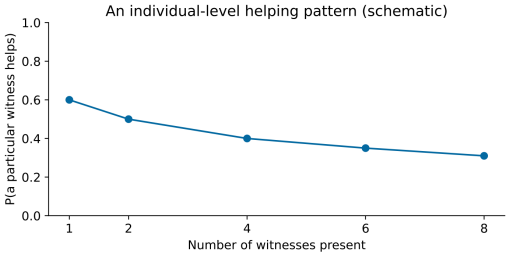
Groups and performance (2)

- Group polarisation: discussion pushes a group further in the direction it already leaned.
- **Groupthink** : a close group under pressure silences doubts and makes a poor decision. Janis studied the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion as an example.

Helping

- Diffusion of responsibility: each witness feels less personally responsible because others could act.
- Pluralistic ignorance: each witness sees others staying calm and decides there is no emergency.
- Helping is more likely when one person is clearly asked ("You in the red coat, call an ambulance").

Figure: Helping



- Diffusion of responsibility: each witness is less likely to help as the crowd grows
- Read the axes and units first.

Attraction and relationships

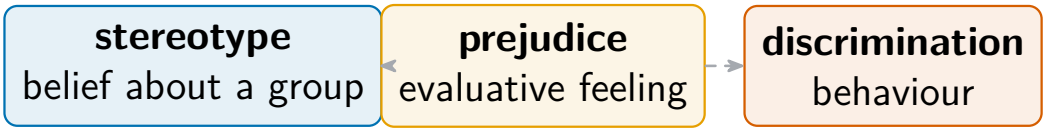
- Proximity is the first predictor: people become friends with those they meet often, such as neighbours on the same floor.
- Mere exposure: repeated contact usually increases liking.
- Similarity and reciprocal liking (liking those who like us) also predict attraction.
- Social exchange theory: people judge a relationship by its rewards minus its costs, compared with what they expect and with the alternatives.

Intergroup processes

- A **stereotype** is a belief about a group (thinking), prejudice is a feeling about it (feeling), **discrimination** is action toward its members (doing). One can occur without the others.
- Minimal groups: in Henri Tajfel's studies, people favoured their own group even when groups were assigned by a trivial task.
- Realistic conflict: competition for scarce resources raises hostility, as in Sherif's 1954 Robbers Cave camp study.
- The contact hypothesis: contact reduces prejudice when the groups have equal status, shared goals, cooperation and support from authorities. Contact alone is not enough.

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Figure: Intergroup processes



links are possible, not automatic: each needs its own evidence

- Thinks, feels, does: three different claims.
- Match each part of the diagram to the text.

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Worked example: a crowded platform

- If each person thinks someone else, perhaps staff, will act: diffusion of responsibility.
- If each person reads the others' calm as a sign that he is only resting: pluralistic ignorance.
- To tell them apart, ask witnesses whether they thought it was an emergency. Crowd size alone cannot decide.

Worked example: naming the process

- A rowing crew's times fall when each rower's effort is measured separately: this reduces **social loafing**.
- A skilled pianist plays better with an audience, a beginner worse: social facilitation.
- After discussion, a cautious committee becomes even more cautious: group polarisation.

Common errors

- Using **stereotype**, prejudice and **discrimination** as synonyms.
- Claiming that any contact reduces prejudice.
- Mixing up **groupthink** (silenced doubts) with polarisation (a more extreme position).

Common errors (2)

- Predicting that an audience always improves performance.
- Thinking a larger crowd makes help more likely because there are more possible helpers.

Key terms

- **bystander effect**: The fall in helping by each person as the number of witnesses grows.
- **social loafing**: Reduced effort when individual contributions are pooled and cannot be identified.
- **groupthink**: Poor decision-making in a close group that silences doubts.
- **stereotype**: A belief about the characteristics of a group's members.

Check yourself

- A student refuses to hire anyone from another town but says nothing negative about them. Which of the three is this?
- Why might a student sing worse in front of the class than alone, if the song is new?
- Name two conditions that make contact between groups reduce prejudice.