

## **Section IV**

### **How do you create a productive work environment?**

Managers need to create a work environment that allows workers to perform their jobs effectively. Poorly designed work environments can limit worker productivity regardless of how highly motivated and cooperative they are. When responsibilities are delegated to groups that are poorly organized, members can feel extremely frustrated and dissatisfied by their inability to function. When an organization is poorly structured, people can waste countless hours performing worthless activities. On the other hand, a productive work environment allows motivated and talented workers to efficiently perform their jobs like a well-oiled machine that runs flawlessly and without interruption.

Section IV identifies the characteristics of a productive work environment and explains how to create one. A productive work environment is characterized by effective groups and a carefully designed organization whose structure and culture match its strategy. Chapter 11 describes high performance work teams and explains why some groups are better at getting things done than others. Chapter 12 examines the relationships between groups and explains the causes and consequences of intergroup conflict. Conflict is not always bad; but it usually is, and it often occurs naturally because of innocent group processes, such as the development of group cohesiveness. Chapter 13 describes the design concepts that determine an organization's structure and explains how these concepts can be combined to form different structures that fit with the organization's environment. Chapter 14 explains the concept of organizational culture and describes how culture influences everything that occurs in organizations. Although group dynamics, organizational structure, and organizational culture are not physical objects that you can see and touch, they are important elements that have an enormous impact on organizational effectiveness.

- Chapter 11: Effective Groups
- Chapter 12: Intergroup Relations
- Chapter 13: Organizational Design
- Chapter 14: Organizational Culture

# Chapter 11

## Effective Groups

### Chapter Outline

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- Characteristics of Effective Groups

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## Characteristics of Effective Groups

Groups are a central part of our everyday lives, and at any given time we are members in many different groups, such as work groups, student clubs, church groups, professional associations, dormitory groups, political parties, and our family. At any one time the average individual belongs to five or six different groups. The study of group dynamics is important for two reasons:

1. Groups exert an enormous influence on the attitudes, values, and behaviors of individuals. Groups teach us how to behave and help us understand who we are. Unique behavior occurs within groups because of group roles and norms.
2. Groups have a powerful influence on other groups and organizations. Much of the work that gets done in organizations is done by groups, and the success of an organization is limited by the effectiveness of its groups. The collective action of a group of individuals can be much greater than the sum of individuals acting alone. Therefore, we need to know how to build effective teams.

## Group Development

A group consists of two or more people interacting interdependently to achieve a common goal or objective. The principal characteristics of this definition are people, face-to-face interaction, and at least one common goal. A collection of people who use the same copy machine is not a group even though they have face-to-face contact, because they are not interacting interdependently. Members of a group must think they belong together; they must see themselves as forming a single unit. This feeling of self-awareness usually results because the group members share common beliefs and attitudes and accept certain group norms.

**Why People Join Groups.** Formal groups, such as work teams and committees, are typically created to satisfy a particular organizational objective or to solve a specific problem. However, informal groups, such as friendship groups and reference groups, are created for personal reasons, and these reasons explain why people maintain their membership in them.

When individuals join a group, they voluntarily surrender part of their personal freedom, since they must be willing to accept the standards of the group and behave in prescribed ways that are sometimes very restrictive. Musical groups and athletic teams, for example, place heavy demands on members regarding attendance at practices and performances, dressing in the proper attire, and behaving in prescribed ways even outside the group. Although the loss of freedom varies from group to group, every individual voluntarily relinquishes at least some personal freedom as a member of a group. Why then do individuals want to join a group and sacrifice part of their personal freedom? Groups are formed for four primary reasons:

- 1 **Goal Accomplishment.** People work together in groups because they need the help of others to achieve important goals. Physical goals, such as building a high-rise tower, extinguishing a forest fire, and playing a basketball game, require the cooperative efforts of other group members. Intellectual goals may also require help from others, such as developing a new consumer product, restructuring the production process, and evaluating applications for college scholarships.
- 2 **Personal identity:** Membership in a group helps us know more about ourselves. The comments of peers generally have a great impact on our self-esteem because they come from people we respect; therefore, we have greater confidence in what they say. Their comments are also more credible because we assume they know us better and are concerned about our well-being.
- 3 **Affiliation.** Group members like to associate with other group members, particularly if they have something in common. The mere presence of others provides friendship, social stimulation, and personal acceptance. College students and factory workers alike form informal peer groups simply to avoid the discomfort of being alone.
- 4 **Emotional Support.** To handle the pressures of daily living, and especially when situations are threatening or uncertain, people rely on others for emotional support. People facing a stressful situation are comforted by the physical presence of another person facing the same stress.<sup>1</sup>

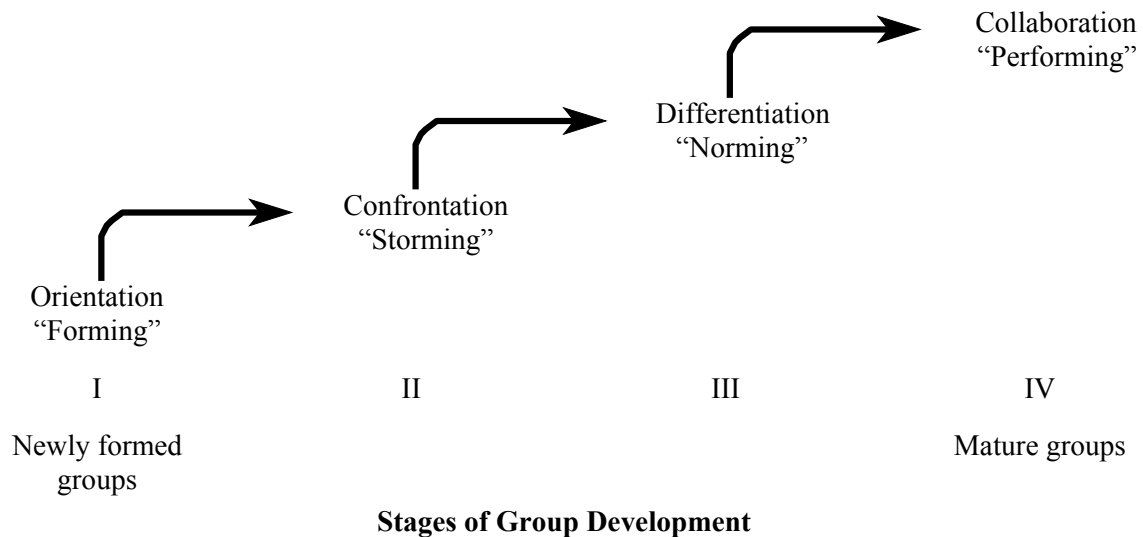
**Stages of Group Development.** Most groups experience similar conflicts and challenges that need to be resolved as they strive to become effective. New groups do not immediately function as highly effective teams until after they have gone through various stages of development and addressed the kinds of issues that separate effective from ineffective groups. Every work group, whether it is a surgical team, a quality

control circle, or a production crew, has to resolve similar issues, and the way these issues are resolved determines the group's effectiveness.

Although the developmental process is not highly standardized, most effective groups go through four stages: orientation, confrontation, differentiation, and collaboration, as shown in Exhibit 11.1.<sup>2</sup> A useful mnemonic for remembering these developmental stages is forming, storming, norming, and performing. Groups may not necessarily advance through each of these four stages; indeed, some groups never advance to the later stages, because of internal conflicts.

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### EXHIBIT 11.1 Stages of Group Development



**Orientation (“Forming”).** The first stage for almost every group is an orientation stage when members learn about the purposes of the group and the roles of each member. This stage is marked by caution, confusion, courtesy, and commonality. Individual members have to decide how the group will be structured and how much they are willing to commit themselves to the group. The formal leader, or someone who assumes the leadership role, typically exerts a great influence in structuring the group and shaping member expectations. Members strive to discover the rules of the game and the biases and motives of other group members. During this stage, members need to get acquainted with each other and share their expectations about the group's goals and objectives. Efforts to rush this process by expecting members to be fully open and express their real feelings can be very destructive, both to the individuals and to the group. The trust and openness necessary for members to feel willing to share intimate details of themselves comes in later stages of development.

**Confrontation (“Storming”).** Although conflict is not a necessary phase of group development, the purposes of the group and the expectations of group members are eventually challenged in most groups. This stage contains conflict, confrontation, concern, and criticism. Struggles for individual power and influence are common. Challenging the group's goals can be a healthy process if the conflict results in greater cohesiveness and acceptance. But if the conflict becomes extremely intense and dysfunctional, the group may dissolve or continue as an ineffective group that never advances to higher levels of group maturity.

**Differentiation (“Norming”).** The major issues at this stage of development are how the tasks and responsibilities will be divided among members and how members will evaluate each other's performance. Individual differences are recognized, and task assignments are based on skills and abilities. If a group can resolve its authority conflicts and create shared expectations regarding its goals and task assignments, it can become a cohesive group and achieve its goals. At this stage, the members often feel the group is successful as they pursue their group goals, and indeed their short-term effectiveness may look rather impressive. As unique situations arise that violate personal expectations, however, the long-term effectiveness of the group will require additional maturity in resolving conflicts and re-establishing shared expectations.

**Collaboration (“Performing”).** The highest level of group maturity is the stage of collaboration, where there is a feeling of cohesiveness and commitment to the group. Individual differences are accepted without being labeled as either good or bad. Conflict is neither eliminated nor squelched but is identified and resolved through group discussion. Conflict is real and concerns substantive issues relevant to the group task rather than emotional issues regarding group processes. Decisions are made through rational group discussion, and no attempts are made to force decisions or to present a false unanimity. The members of the group are aware of the group's processes and the extent of their own involvement in the group.

**Separation (“Adjourning”).** Some groups go through an “adjourning” stage by consciously deciding to disband, usually because the group has completed its tasks or because members choose to go their separate ways. This stage is typically characterized by feelings of closure and compromise as members prepare to leave, often with sentimental feelings.

### Characteristics of Effective Groups.

Some groups are considerably more successful than others in accomplishing their goals and satisfying the needs of their members. Douglas McGregor identified eleven dimensions of group functioning and argued that these dimensions made the difference between highly effective groups and ineffective groups.<sup>3</sup> Each dimension presents a continuum showing the differences between effective groups on the right and ineffective groups on the left.

- 1 *Atmosphere and relationships:* What kinds of relationships exist among group members?  
 Formal and reserved ←————→ Close and friendly
- 2 *Member participation:* Does everyone participate in the group?  
 Some participate more than others. ←————→ There is equal participation.
- 3 *Goal understanding and acceptance:* How well do members accept the objectives of the group and commit themselves to them?  
 No commitment ←————→ Total commitment
- 4 *Listening and sharing information:* Are people willing to listen to each other or are they afraid of looking foolish for suggesting creative ideas?  
 There is no listening or sharing. ←————→ People listen and share.

- 5 *Handling conflicts and disagreements:* Is conflict and disagreement tolerated and used to improve the group or is it avoided, brushed aside, or flamed into conflict?  
If it's not ignored, it results in hostility. ←————→ Conflict is dealt with and resolved.
- 6 *Decision making:* How are decisions made? Does everyone have an opportunity to provide input?  
Autocratically ←————→ By consensus
- 7 *Evaluation of member performance:* What kind of feedback do members receive about their performance?  
Criticism and personal attacks ←————→ Frank, frequent, and objective feedback
- 8 *Expressing feelings:* Do members feel free to express their feelings openly on more than just task issues?  
True feelings must remain hidden. ←————→ Open expression is welcomed.
- 9 *Division of labor:* Are task assignments clearly made and willingly accepted?  
Poorly structured job assignments ←————→ Effective job specialization
- 10 *Leadership:* How are the leaders selected, and are the leadership functions shared?  
Leadership is lacking or dominated by one person. ←————→ Leadership is shared and effective.
- 11 *Attention to process:* Is the group conscious of its own operations and can it monitor and improve its own processes?  
Unaware of group operations ←————→ Aware of operations and monitors them

Effective groups share several important characteristics: the atmosphere is close and friendly; all members participate in the group; all members are committed to the group's goals; members listen to each other and share information; decisions are made by consensus; conflict is dealt with openly and resolved; members receive frank and objective feedback and feel free to express their feelings openly; there is a division of labor with shared leadership; and the group is aware of its own operations and able to monitor itself.

## Group Structure

As a group develops, a structure emerges that influences what it does and how effectively it performs. Group structure is not an easy concept to explain because it does not refer to specific observable objects. Group structure is the stable pattern of relationships among group members that maintain the group and help it achieve its goal. The major variables defining group structure are group roles and group norms. *Group roles* are the task activities and responsibilities performed by the group members; and *group norms* are general expectations about how members ought to behave. Situational factors also influence group structure by influencing the relationships among group members. This section will examine three of these

situational factors: group size, social density, and nature of the task. Later sections examine group roles, group norms, and status in greater detail.

## Group Size

Perhaps the most visible factor influencing group structure is the size of the group. Groups vary enormously in size from as small as a dyad (two-person group) or a triad (three-person group) to as large as 400 to 500 members (such as the House of Representatives).

**Size and Participation.** Small groups provide each member with an opportunity to be actively involved in the group. As the group gets larger, however, participation declines rather rapidly. A small graduate seminar with four students, for example, allows each student to participate freely in the discussion. In large classes, however, students have limited opportunities to participate. Large informal groups must develop a method for allowing members to participate in an orderly manner so that everyone doesn't speak at once. When an informal group gets to be larger than eight to twelve individuals, a significant part of the time, called *process time*, can be wasted simply trying to decide who should participate next.

**Size and Satisfaction.** As the size of a group increases, the satisfaction of the group members with the group and their involvement in it tend to increase up to a point—"the more the merrier." A five-person group provides twice as many opportunities for friendly interaction as a three-person group. Beyond a certain point, however, which is probably less than ten to fifteen members, increasing size results in reduced satisfaction. Members of an extremely large group cannot identify with the group's accomplishments nor experience the same degree of cohesiveness and participation as members of a smaller group.<sup>4</sup>

**Size and Performance.** The relationship between group size and performance depends on whether the task is an additive task, conjunctive task, or disjunctive task.

On **additive tasks** the final group product is the sum of the individual contributions. Additive tasks are sometimes referred to as *pooled interdependence*, since the individual contribution of each member simply adds to the group product. Interviewing customers leaving a store as part of a consumer survey is an example of an additive task. In additive tasks, the group's performance will almost always be better than the performance of a single individual, even though the average performance of each individual may be less in the group. For example, three interviewers working together will survey more customers than one interviewer working alone, but the three working together in one location will probably not conduct as many interviews as if they were working alone in separate locations.

**Conjunctive tasks** are those that can be divided into interdependent subtasks and then assigned to various group members. The overall performance depends on the successful completion of each subtask. The group's maximum performance is limited by the capacities of the least capable member. A chain, for example, is only as strong as its weakest link. An example of a conjunctive task is a TV news team filming an event. A mistake by any member means failure for the whole group, whether it is a bad interview, a bad picture, or bad sound.

**Disjunctive tasks** are decision-making tasks that require the group to select the best solution. An early study on the performance of individuals and groups in performing a disjunctive task, asked individuals working alone or groups working together to arrive at a solution to the following problem: "On one side of a river are three wives and three very jealous husbands. All of the men but none of the women can

row. Get them all across the river in the smallest number of trips by means of a boat carrying no more than three people at one time. No man will allow his wife to be in the presence of another man unless he is also there.”<sup>5</sup>

Disjunctive tasks require at least one individual with sufficient insight to solve the problem. As a group gets larger, there is a greater probability that the group will contain at least one person with superior insight. In the study just mentioned, correct solutions to the problem of the three couples were produced by 60 percent of the groups, but only 14 percent of the individuals who worked alone.

On disjunctive tasks, therefore, the potential performance of the group depends on the performance of its best member. The term “potential performance” is used here instead of “actual performance” because the actual performance is usually something less than the potential performance. Although the potential performance of a group performing a disjunctive task increases with group size, the actual performance is typically less because the group suffers from process losses. **Process losses** are the inefficiencies that arise from having to organize and coordinate larger groups. Large groups tend to restrict communication, inhibit creative thought processes, and reduce the personal commitment of group members. Therefore, actual performance equals potential performance minus process losses.

## **Social Density**

The interactions among group members are influenced by the physical or spatial locations of group members—whether they are physically separated or close together. Consequently, considerable interest has been expressed in the effects of modern architectural arrangements. Many modern offices use an open office plan with many desks in a large open room or small cubicles separated by partitions rather than separate rooms connected by long hallways. The concentration of people within an area is called **social density**, which is measured by square feet per person or the number of group members within a certain walking distance. Walking distance is used rather than straight-line distance since it is the distance someone must go to have face-to-face contact that is important.

Some organizational studies have found that greater social density improves performance because of greater accessibility. In a research-and-development organization, for example, reducing the distance between desks tended to improve performance by increasing the flow of technical information. In another technical organization, engineers reported less stress and tension where colleagues and other authority figures were located in close proximity. Likewise, the employees of a petroleum company reported greater feedback, friendship opportunities, and satisfaction with work when their social density was increased because of a relocation.<sup>6</sup>

Obviously, the performance of a group will not endlessly increase as the level of social density increases. At some point, the conditions become too crowded and people get in each other’s way. The optimal social density depends on the nature of the task, the amount of feedback members need from each other, and their needs for privacy. Most studies of open office plans have found that employees generally dislike open office plans because of a lack of privacy. A large number of studies have shown that high levels of social density in organizations produce feelings of crowdedness, intentions to quit, high levels of stress, and low levels of satisfaction and performance. Although high social density normally has only a small effect on performance, the effects appear to be larger among employees who have a high need for privacy and for complex tasks that require intense concentration.<sup>7</sup>

## **Nature of the Task**



Since the interactions among group members are influenced by the nature of the task, the group structure needs to adapt to the demands of the task. Three types of tasks have already been described: additive, conjunctive, and disjunctive tasks. The need for coordination among group members is much greater for conjunctive tasks than for additive or disjunctive tasks. For example, if five students decided to sell tickets by telephone soliciting, they could divide the student directory into five sections and each one could call the students in one section. Since this is an additive task, the need for coordination is minimal, and the performance of the group would simply be the sum of each individual's sales. Deciding how to divide the student directory would be a disjunctive task and it, too, requires minimal coordination. With a conjunctive task, however, the need for coordination increases as the task becomes more complex. Organizing and presenting a new product development conference is a conjunctive task that would require the coordinated efforts of many people from several departments, including research, sales, training, production, and finance. Playing basketball, another conjunctive task, is an even more complex activity that requires team members to constantly coordinate their efforts and even anticipate each other's moves.

The relationships between group structure, the nature of the task, and task difficulty help to determine the best organizational structure and this topic will be discussed again in Chapter 13. There we will see that the organizational structure needs to vary depending on the nature of the task and how much coordination is required to keep everyone working cooperatively together. Organizations that have highly specialized tasks require special efforts to coordinate the activities of employees, especially when the activities change frequently. The same general conclusion applies here in the study of groups. Groups that perform complex conjunctive tasks require greater coordination between group members than groups performing simple additive or disjunctive tasks. With a basketball team, for example, as the team develops more complex offensive and defensive plays and assigns team members to perform specialized activities, the need for constant coordination between team members during the game increases.

## Group Roles

A role refers to the expected behaviors attached to a position or job. In organizations, roles are briefly described by position titles and more extensively described by job descriptions. Group roles are usually not explicitly stated in informal groups; one group member may perform several roles or several members may alternate performing the same role. In formal groups, some roles are designated or assigned. These **assigned roles** are prescribed by the organization as a means of dividing the labor and assigning responsibility. **Emergent roles** develop naturally to meet the needs of group members or assist in achieving formal goals. The dynamics in many groups often results in emergent roles replacing assigned roles as people express their individuality and assertiveness.

### Work Roles and Maintenance Roles

Group members may be expected to perform a variety of different behaviors. Exhibit 11.2 makes a distinction between three major kinds of group roles: work roles, maintenance roles, and blocking roles.<sup>8</sup>

—**Work roles** are task-oriented activities involved in accomplishing the work and achieving the group objective. Work roles include such activities as clarifying the purpose of the group, developing a strategy for accomplishing the work, delegating job assignments, and evaluating progress.

—**Maintenance roles** are the social-emotional activities of group members that maintain their involvement and personal commitment to the group. These roles include encouraging other members to participate, praising and rewarding others for their contributions, reconciling arguments and disagreements, and maintaining a friendly group atmosphere.

—**Blocking roles** are activities that disrupt or destroy the group, such as dominating the discussion, attacking other group members, disagreeing unreasonably with other group members, and distracting the group by irrelevant issues or unnecessary humor. Deciding whether a group member is performing a blocking role is sometimes difficult because the behavior may not be intentional. For example, a member may question a conclusion to force the group to think more carefully about an issue. Other group members may feel that this person is stubbornly resisting the emerging consensus and simply trying to disrupt its progress. Likewise, a good joke may help to relieve tension and keep the group working cooperatively together, or it may disrupt the group discussion and prevent the group from returning to a crucial issue.

Both the work roles and maintenance roles are necessary for effective group functioning, and it appears, therefore, that they can be performed either as assigned roles by the designated leader or as emergent roles by someone else. These two group roles will be discussed again in Chapter 17, where they will be used to understand leader behaviors.

## **Role Episode**

Role expectations are communicated to individuals during a **role episode**, which is the interaction between role senders and the person receiving the role.<sup>9</sup> A role episode is diagramed in Exhibit 11.3. A *role sender* may be anyone attempting to change the behavior of another individual, called the **focal person**. In formal groups, the most legitimate role senders are generally supervisors, project directors, and other organizational leaders responsible for delegating assignments. In reality, however, every group member participates as a role sender to other group members. Even subordinates tend to communicate how they expect their superiors to behave.

Role senders typically communicate only a small percentage of their role expectations. Some expectations are so self-evident that they do not need to be communicated (such as answering your telephone when you hear it ring), while others are not communicated because of uncertainty on the part of the role sender (such as whether the supervisor should say anything to group members involved in horseplay).

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## EXHIBIT 11.2 Group Roles

Work Roles	Maintenance Roles	Blocking Roles
1. <i>Initiator</i> : Proposing tasks or actions; defining group problems; suggesting a procedure.	1. <i>Harmonizer</i> : Attempting to reconcile disagreements; reducing tension; getting people to explore differences.	1. <i>Aggressor</i> : Deflating other's status; attacking the group or its values; joking in a barbed or semi-concealed way.
2. <i>Informer</i> : Offering facts; giving expression of feeling; giving an opinion.	2. <i>Gatekeeper</i> : Helping to keep communication channels open; facilitating the participation of others; suggesting procedures that permit sharing remarks.	2. <i>Blocker</i> : Disagreeing and opposing beyond reason; resisting stubbornly the group's wish for personality oriented reasons; using hidden agenda to thwart the movement of a group.
3. <i>Clarifier</i> : Interpreting ideas or suggestions; defining terms; clarifying issues for the group.	3. <i>Consensus tester</i> : Asking to see if a group is nearing a decision; sending up a trial balloon to test a possible conclusion.	3. <i>Dominator</i> : Asserting authority or superiority to manipulate the group or certain of its members; interrupting contributions of others; controlling by means of flattery or other forms of patronizing behavior.
4. <i>Summarizer</i> : Pulling together related ideas; restating suggestions; offering a decision or conclusion for the group to consider.	4. <i>Encourager</i> : Being friendly, warm and responsive to others; indicating by facial expression or remark the acceptance of others' contributions.	4. <i>Comedian</i> : Making a display in comical fashion by one's lack of involvement; abandoning the group while remaining physically with it; seeking recognition in ways not relevant to group task.
5. <i>Reality tester</i> : Making a critical analysis of the idea; testing an idea against some data trying to see if the idea would work.	5. <i>Compromiser</i> : When his own idea or status is involved in a conflict, offering a compromise which yields status; admitting error; modifying an interest of group cohesion or growth.	5. <i>Avoidance behavior</i> : Pursuing special interests not related to task; staying off the subject to avoid commitment; preventing the group from facing controversy.

**Source:** Kenneth D. Benne and Paul Sheats, "Functional Roles of Group Members," *Journal of Social Issues*, 2 (1948), pp. 42-47.

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The focal person may or may not respond to the role sender. Communication problems may create a discrepancy between the sent role and the received role. But even if the expectations are accurately received, the focal person may not respond because of a lack of motivation or inadequate ability. The feedback loop, going from the focal person back to the role sender, illustrates the ongoing nature of a role episode. A role episode is a continuous process of people evaluating each other's behavior and communicating expectations, both overtly and covertly.

An important factor influencing how well the focal person will respond to a sent role is the focal person's state of role readiness. **Role readiness** concerns the focal person's ability and willingness to accept the responsibility associated with a new role. For example, a new employee who has had a broad background of relevant experience and is prepared to immediately perform a new job would have a high degree of role readiness. An illustration of a lack of role readiness is union stewards who resist promotions into

supervisory positions because they have difficulty changing their thinking from hourly wages, seniority, and job security to salary, merit pay, and raising productivity.

**Role Ambiguity.** Role ambiguity concerns the discrepancy between the sent role and the received role, as shown in Exhibit 11.3. Ambiguity frequently results from confusion surrounding the delegation of job responsibilities. Many jobs do not have a written job description and when employees are told what to do, their instructions are not clear. Supervisors may not understand how the job should be done, what the standards of acceptable performance are, how performance will be evaluated, or the limits of the employees' authority and responsibility. Even when supervisors know this information, the instructions usually overwhelm new employees.

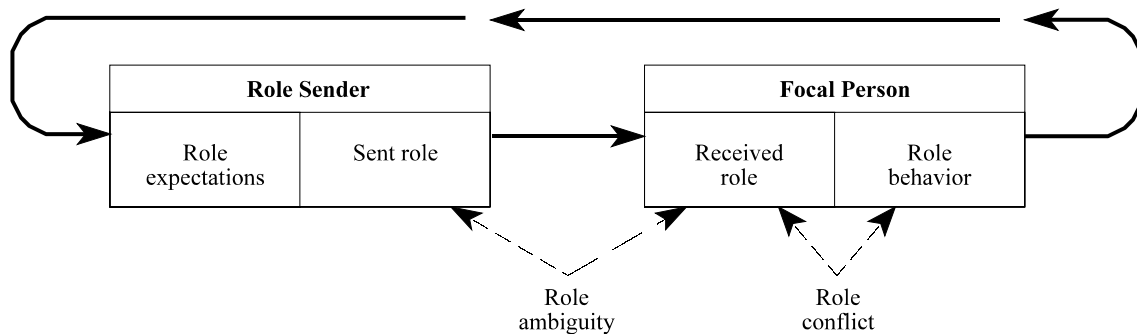
The consequences of role ambiguity are frustration, dissatisfaction, and evidences of stress. Moderate levels of ambiguity may be tolerable and even desirable, since some employees like to structure their own environment. However, extreme role ambiguity can create an unhealthy condition contributing to dissatisfaction and turnover.<sup>10</sup>

**Role Conflict.** Role conflict exists when someone faces inconsistency between the received role and role behavior, as shown in Exhibit 11.3. The conditions that create role conflict and role ambiguity are different for each person. Research efforts to develop standard measures of role conflict and role ambiguity have not been very successful because working conditions and other artifacts seem to influence the measurement of these constructs.<sup>11</sup>

Role conflict is not the same as role ambiguity, because the received role may be very clear and specific. In fact, additional communication often serves to intensify the role conflict rather than reduce it. The inconsistency between the received role and role behavior can produce four types of role conflict.<sup>12</sup>

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**EXHIBIT 11.3 The Role Episode: Role Ambiguity and Role Conflict**



*Source:* Adapted from Daniel Katz and Robert Kahn, *The Social Psychology of Organizations*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Wiley, 1978), p. 196.

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**Intrasender Role Conflict.** When a single role sender communicates incompatible role expectations to the focal person, the focal person experiences **intrasender role conflict**. For example, a manager could

tell the staff members that they are each expected to perform the role of critical evaluator and challenge every decision, but they are also expected to work together cooperatively and be team players.

**Intersender Role Conflict.** If two or more role senders communicate incompatible expectations to the focal person, **intersender role conflict** results. The first-line supervisors in most organizations typically experience rather intense intersender role conflict. Upper management expects them to tighten the controls to increase productivity, reduce errors, and eliminate wasted time. In contrast, their subordinates send messages that the supervisors need to loosen the controls and be less interested in productivity, quality, and wasted time. Boundary role occupants, those who straddle the boundary between the organization and its clients and customers, are also prone to experience intersender role conflict. Salespeople, schoolteachers, and purchasing agents, for example, often receive incompatible instructions from people within the organization and external clients or customers.

**Person-Role Conflict.** When people are asked to behave in ways that are inconsistent with their personal values, **person-role conflict** occurs. An administrative aide, for example, may be told that a report must be completed before going home, even if it means several hours of overtime. But working overtime would mean missing the school play, and the aide's daughter is the star of the play. Employees experience person-role conflict when they are asked to do something illegal or unethical, such as falsifying reports or lying to customers.

**Role Overload.** The conflicting demands of too many roles causes role overload, sometimes called **interrole conflict**. People fill a variety of roles, both within the organization and in their personal lives. We cannot be in two places at one time, and conflicting time schedules often create severe role overload, forcing us to reassess which role should take precedence. A personnel director, for example, may experience role overload because of the inconsistent demands accompanying numerous roles such as affirmative action officer, safety director, facilitator of a quality control circle, career development counselor, and manager of the human resource planning system. In addition to the roles she fills in the organization are her roles outside the organization as a wife, mother, and fund raiser for the United Way campaign. These multiple roles contain conflicts of time, interests, and loyalty, because they cannot all be filled simultaneously.

## Group Norms

Group norms are the commonly held beliefs of group members about appropriate conduct. As such, they represent general expectations or codes of conduct that imply a duty or obligation. Group norms identify the standards against which the behavior of group members will be evaluated and help group members know what they should or should not do. Group norms typically develop around the eleven issues presented earlier regarding group effectiveness.

Every group creates its own norms and standards for evaluating the appropriateness of individual behavior. To illustrate, the members of a fraternity created a group norm that it wasn't "cool" to act like dedicated students – a little studying was OK, but it should not interfere with social activities. To get good grades, several fraternity members had to lie about how they spent their time and not admit that their dates and weekend trips were actually to the library. Similarly, the members of an engineering firm created the norm that no one should leave until after the supervisor had left. None of the engineers actually accomplished very much after the regular quitting hours; but even though they quit working, they did not leave.

Group norms are essential to group effectiveness. Although norms limit individuality and restrict the creativity of individuals, they create greater predictability within the group by structuring its activities. In a typical classroom, for example, most students adhere to the norm of raising their hands when they want to comment. This hand-raising norm prevents some class members from making insightful comments, but it also provides for an orderly class discussion.

### **Development of Norms**

Over time, groups develop a variety of norms regarding many aspects of behavior. The most crucial group norms are those regarding issues of central concern to the group. In general, groups tolerate less deviation from norms regarding important group concerns. For the offensive unit of a football team, for example, a highly enforced norm is that no one talks in the huddle but the quarterback. Accuracy in listening to the quarterback's instructions is vital to the success of the team. Wearing wristbands and putting stickers on helmets, however, are not closely enforced norms because they are not as important to the team's success.

Group norms are typically created and enforced for four reasons: (1) they facilitate group survival, (2) they simplify the membership requirements and make the behavior of group members more predictable, (3) they help the group avoid embarrassing situations, and (4) they express the central values of the group and clarify what is distinctive about its identity.<sup>13</sup>

Two almost opposite theories are used to explain how group norms are developed.<sup>14</sup> In one explanation, norms are viewed as the product of the shared attitudes and beliefs of group members. These shared attitudes result from either a group consensus after the group discusses the issue or from a dominant group member who simply voices an opinion. If no one expresses a dissenting view, the group may adopt the dominant member's viewpoint. For example, a norm of no smoking during the weekly planning meetings was created when one of the division managers took the ashtray off the table, put it on the shelf behind her, and said, "There's no need to get lung cancer." Her action went uncontested and no one said anything; but thereafter, a no-smoking norm existed.

Another explanation for how group norms are created is that they are post-hoc justifications. After the group has been functioning for a while, we observe certain patterns of behavior explain them as being a group norm. Many performance norms are simply justifications for what has happened in the past, such as stopping the machines twenty minutes early to wash up and considering 38 pallets a full day's work. These standards were never part of a labor agreement; this was just how the employees behaved from the start.

### **Generally Accepted Norms**

Our day-to-day behavior is influenced by so many general social norms that we often fail to recognize them. Most people are members of numerous groups, and these multiple memberships generate a lengthy list of norms providing regularity and predictability to our behavior.

**Social Conduct.** Social conduct norms are designed to create a pleasant social atmosphere, such as smiling when you pass a friend in a hallway, answering the phone when it rings by saying hello, and saying goodbye before you hang up. When we are introduced, we shake hands and say, "I'm pleased to meet you," whether it's true or not. If someone asks, "How are you?" the norm is to say "Fine!" not to give a full medical report. Walking away while someone is talking to you is considered a norm violation, and leaving in the middle of a lecture or public address is generally considered impolite.

**Dress Codes.** Some organizations have formal dress standards for their members, such as the military, police, hospitals, restaurants, and hotels. The dress codes in other organizations may be more informal and unwritten, but just as powerful. Many organizations, especially banks and insurance companies, expect employees to wear conservative dresses, shirts, ties, and suits.

**Performance Norms.** How fast group members are expected to work and how much they should produce are important issues to most groups. Therefore, performance norms are created to guide individual efforts. Supervisors can become very frustrated with a group's performance norms when they are unreasonably low or inconsistent with the organization's goals. Sometimes they appear to be very irrational because they are not in the worker's best interests either. In the bank-wiring experiment of the Hawthorne Studies, for example, a group of men maintained an arbitrarily low production norm that restricted productivity even though the workers were paid according to how much work they did, and this study was conducted during the Depression when the workers needed additional income. In many work groups, productivity is determined more by the group's performance norms than by the ability and skill of the employees.

**Reward Allocation Norms.** Groups develop norms governing how rewards should be distributed to the group members. Three allocation norms have been investigated to determine which norm is the most widely accepted.<sup>15</sup>

The norm of *equality* suggests that everyone should be treated the same. Everyone shares equally in his or her status as a group member; therefore, the rewards that come to the group should be distributed equally to everyone.

The norm of *equity* suggests that the rewards should be allocated according to the contribution to the group product or on the basis of merit. According to the norm of equity, people who have contributed the greatest effort and made the largest contribution to the group product, either through effort, skill, or ability, should receive a larger share of the rewards.

The norm of *social responsibility* suggests that the rewards should be allocated on the basis of need. People who have special needs, especially those who are disadvantaged or disabled, should receive special consideration and receive a larger share of the rewards.

**Norm of Reciprocity.** The norm of reciprocity suggests that when people make an effort to help you, you should feel an obligation to help them at a later time. Among some people, this norm is a very firmly held expectation, and they keep track of favors and who owes whom. Although some people feel that service should be rendered specifically to those who have helped them, others have a much broader interpretation of whom they should help. For example, a mentor may be very happy to help a new employee, not because the mentor expects help from the new employee in the future, but because of the help that the mentor received as a new employee from someone else in the past.

## **Norm Violation**

Although group norms are a group product, they may not match the private beliefs of all members. Norms are accepted in various degrees by the group members. Some norms may be completely accepted by all group members, while other norms are only partially accepted. Norms vary according to their

inclusivity, or the number of people to whom they apply. Some norms are nearly universal in nature, such as the prohibition against theft, which applies to all members of society. Other norms, however, apply to only specific group members. Production norms, for example, may not apply to a lead worker who is expected to spend part of the time training other employees.

For a group norm to be created and maintained, a majority of the active members must agree that the norm specifies appropriate and required behavior. Furthermore, there must be a shared awareness that the group supports a given belief. Although some members may violate the norm, it will continue to survive as long as the majority uphold and accept it. If adherence to the norm continues to erode, it will eventually collapse and no longer serve as a standard for evaluating behavior. Most students have witnessed the disintegration of student conduct norms. One or two students may violate the norm of raising their hands without the norm being destroyed, but when three or four more students begin to violate the norm, the class dissolves into a shouting match where all the students are speaking at once rather than raising their hands and waiting to be acknowledged.

Conformity to the essential group norms is a requirement of sustained group membership. Group members who do not conform to important norms are punished by the group by being excluded, ignored, or ridiculed. The ultimate punishment is to be banished from membership in the group.

Because of their status, group leaders are in a better position to violate the norms than are other group members. Indeed, leaders sometimes deviate slightly from accepted group norms as a means of asserting their uniqueness or superiority over other group members. Group members must not come late to work, but managers think they can come when they want as a privilege of being a manager. Studies have shown that highly intelligent group members are also less likely to conform to group norms than less intelligent members. However, group members with a strong authoritarian personality are more likely to conform to group norms than nonauthoritarians.<sup>16</sup>

Group norms are difficult to change. Since they were created by the group, they need to be changed by the group. Organizational leaders are sometimes successful in helping groups change norms by communicating new expectations of behavior. They are successful to the extent that they can get the group to accept what they say as the new standard of behavior.

## Conformity

Group norms provide regularity and predictability to the behavior of group members, but only if members conform to the group norms. Norms do not exist without conformity. Unless the members create pressure to enforce the group norms, these norms will disappear and be replaced by other norms. Conformity means yielding to group influence by doing or saying something you might otherwise choose not to do. To say you have conformed means you have succumbed to social influence and behaved differently from how you would have behaved in the absence of the influence.

Why do people conform? Organizations have been criticized for needless pressures that force people to conform in their thinking, dress, and living habits. Although conformity does reduce variability in the ways people behave, it also increases individual freedom by providing greater predictability and regularity of behavior. Group norms help groups achieve their goals and as conformity increases, the likelihood of success also increases. Therefore, conformity reduces individuality and personal autonomy, but it also contributes to greater success for both the group and its members.



## Pressures to Conform

Two major social influence processes are used by groups to obtain conformity: reward dependence and information dependence.<sup>17</sup>

**Reward Dependence.** Groups have the capacity to reward or punish their members. In formal groups, leaders can use organizational rewards and punishments to induce conformity, such as promotions, pay increases, performance evaluations, and job assignments. Informal groups also have powerful rewards for inducing conformity among group members, such as praise, recognition, and social approval for good behavior or criticism, ridicule, and harassment for deviant behavior.

**Information Dependence.** Individuals also conform to group pressure because they depend on others for information about the appropriateness of their thoughts, feelings, and behavior. We are particularly dependent on others in novel situations. We rely heavily on others know how to behave, to interpret our feelings, and to help us understand our emotions.

## Levels of Conformity

People conform to social pressure at different levels of conformity, and the level depends on the motive for conforming. Writing your name and address on a check so you can cash it is a different level of conformity from refusing to accept a bribe from a client because it violates company policy. When driving an automobile, you are expected to obey speed limits, stop at stop signs, and yield the right of way to pedestrians. When you follow these accepted norms, what are your motives? Conforming to group norms occurs for three significantly different motives: compliance, identification, and internalization.<sup>18</sup>

**Compliance.** At the lowest level of conformity, people comply with social pressure either to obtain rewards or to avoid punishment. Peer pressure and the fear of harassment or criticism induce group members to comply. **Compliance**, however, is usually quite temporary and limited to the specific situation. If a police officer is parked at an intersection, the fear of being ticketed will probably induce compliance to stop for the stop sign. If the fines for overdue library books are exorbitantly high, students will probably return them on time. If supervisors receive a \$50 bonus for a good safety rating, they will probably conduct periodic safety inspections simply to obtain the reward.

**Identification.** The second level of conformity is called **identification** because the motive is to be accepted by others who are perceived as important and respected individuals. Identification is the process of behaving like “significant others” and adopting their characteristics and personal attributes. Not only do we want to be like them and acquire their attributes, we also want them to think well of us and to approve of our attitudes and actions. Through imitative learning, we tend to model their behavior and accept what they say and how they behave. People who identify with a significant other will stop at stop signs, return library books, and work independently on a take-home exam if that is the way they think the significant other expects them to behave.

**Internalization.** At the highest level of conformity, the standards of behavior are internalized and become part of the person’s basic character. At the **internalization** level of conformity norms are followed because the person accepts the beliefs, attitudes, and values supporting the norms. Conformity does not occur because it achieves rewards, avoids punishments, or pleases others; it occurs because the behavior is perceived as morally right and proper. At this level you stop for stop signs, return library

books, and avoid cheating on exams not to avoid punishment nor to receive the praise of others, but because you personally believe it is right and you are committed to abide by your own personal standards of right and wrong.

### **Factors Influencing Conformity**

Whether group pressures influence behavior depends on many factors. Research has shown that conformity is influenced by the nature of the group influence, the individual being influenced, and the specific issue at hand.<sup>19</sup>

**Group Size.** In general, group pressure tends to increase as the size of the majority arrayed against the individual increases. Beyond a certain point, however, additional members do not add appreciably to the effectiveness of the pressure.

**Group Composition.** The qualifications of other group members influence the likelihood of conformity. Group members who are perceived as experts or as highly qualified or experienced people exert greater pressures to conform. Minority group members tend to be highly influenced by group pressure. People belonging to ethnic and racial minorities are more likely to conform to group pressures, especially when the person is the only minority member in the group.

**Unanimity of Group Consensus.** A united group exerts much greater pressure to conform than a group divided by dissension. In some cases, the presence of a single dissenter is enough to destroy the influence of the group.

**Ambiguity.** Conformity increases as the situation becomes more ambiguous. Group members can create greater ambiguity as an intentional strategy for inducing conformity by raising irrelevant questions and suggesting immaterial facts to confuse the situation. When people do not know what is expected of them, they become increasingly dependent on the available norms.

**Goal Achievement.** The pressure to adhere to a social norm increases when conformity is essential to the group's success. As a group gets closer and closer to achieving its goal, the anticipation of success increases the pressure to conform and makes nonconformity less acceptable. During the playoff games at the end of a season, team members experience particularly strong pressures to abide by the group norms. As the probability of a strike increases, unions demand greater conformity among union members as a show of strength to management. Deviation from the group norm becomes absolutely unacceptable at crucial times.

**Self-confidence.** Individuals who are highly confident of their skills and abilities are less susceptible to group pressures. When individuals are faced with a discrepant judgement by a unanimous majority, their first step in seeking to reconcile the difference is to blame their own judgments and perceptions. Individuals who are high in self-confidence, however, generally resist blaming themselves and prefer instead to blame the group for the discrepant judgments.

## **The Effect of the Group on Individual Behavior**

How does the presence of a group influence an individual's performance? Suppose you were laying bricks with four other bricklayers. Would more bricks get laid if the five of you worked together as a

group along one side of a wall, or would it be better to assign each of you to different walls on the construction site? Two contrasting processes have been identified to explain the effects of the group on individual performance: social facilitation and social loafing. Another concept, called *deindividuation*, also explains the effects of a group on individual behavior.

## Social Facilitation

Early studies in social psychology noted that people performed better as members of a group than when performing alone. It was observed, for example, that cyclists rode more rapidly if they raced in head-to-head competition than when they raced alone to beat the clock. Subsequent research showed that the presence of an audience or crowd or simply the presence of other co-workers facilitated the performance of well-learned responses such as crossing out letters and words, doing multiplication problems, and other simple tasks. This process, called the **social facilitation effect**, is caused by the mere presence of others rather than direct competition between individuals, since a number of studies found that subjects performed better even in front of a passive audience. The social facilitation effect has been observed not only on people, both adults and children, but also on an unusual assortment of other animals including ants, fish, chickens, rats, and cockroaches.<sup>20</sup>

One explanation for the social facilitation effect is called **evaluation apprehension**. According to this explanation, the presence of others creates a higher level of arousal and motivation because we expect others to evaluate our performance and their opinions matter to us. When others are watching we want to look good, if for no other reason than that we want others to think well of us.

Although the presence of others may improve performance, it can also inhibit performance on some tasks. This process, called **social inhibition effect**, has been observed on complex learning tasks such as learning a maze or a list of nonsense syllables. Since the social inhibition effect is the opposite of the social facilitation effect, it is important to know when the presence of others will inhibit and when it will facilitate an individual's performance.

Perhaps the best explanation of the contradictory results relies on an important distinction between learning a new task and performing a well-learned task. The presence of others increases our level of arousal and motivation, which helps us perform well-learned responses.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the presence of others tends to improve our performance on well-learned responses such as walking, running, bicycling, or playing the piano (for a highly skilled pianist). However, if the response has not been well learned, which is the case with all new learning situations, then the presence of others will inhibit performance. Therefore, according to social facilitation the learning of complex new tasks is best accomplished in isolation, but the performance of well-learned tasks will be facilitated by an audience.

## Social Loafing

**Social loafing** occurs when the members of a group exert less effort while working as a group than when working as individuals. Social loafing is the opposite of social facilitation but it is different from social inhibition. The social inhibition effect is typically ascribed to a reduction in the individual's ability to perform because of the presence of others. Social loafing, in contrast, is not attributed to a decline in ability but a decline in motivation or the amount of effort. One of the earliest studies in social loafing examined how much effort individuals exerted in pulling on a rope, either individually or in a group. The average pressure exerted by each individual was 63 kilograms, which was more than double the average pressure exerted by a group of eight people pulling together (248 kilograms per group, or 31 kilograms

per person).<sup>22</sup> Later studies have shown that social loafing also occurs in decision-making groups with cognitive tasks: people in groups exert less effort and less concentration, and they also use less complex judgment strategies than single judges or judges working in pairs.<sup>23</sup>

Subsequent research has concluded that social loafing occurs because being in a group reduces the individual's identifiability.<sup>24</sup> As members of a group, individuals know their efforts cannot be identified; therefore, they display only mediocre effort. The social loafing effect becomes increasingly apparent in larger groups because of reduced personal identifiability. When individuals cannot be identified, there is no relationship between their efforts and their outcomes; therefore, they cannot be rewarded for good effort or punished for poor performance.

## **Deindividuation**

The issue of identifiability is related to another process of group dynamics: **deindividuation**. Individuals often become lost in crowds and perform acts they would not perform if they were alone. Unruly crowds at rock concerts have produced hysterical screaming and uncontrolled emotions, angry fans at athletic contests have thrown objects at athletes and assaulted referees, and groups of union picketers have destroyed property and committed acts of violence. Stories of lynch mobs illustrate how individuals in a group get carried away and do things they would not have done without the presence of the group. Crowds have the capacity to create a mental homogeneity, referred to as a *collective mind*, that is frequently irrational and often functions at an intellectual level below that of the isolated individual.

Three mechanisms have been proposed to explain the process of deindividuation in groups. First, the individual is anonymous because he or she loses a sense of individual identification. Second, the contagion of the group causes people to act differently by reducing their inhibitions and allowing them to behave as other group members. Third, people become more suggestible in groups where they feel greater pressures to conform.

The loss of individuality has often been associated with rather undesirable social consequences. In a study of the warfare patterns of many cultures, for example, it was found that in cultures where warriors deindividuated themselves by wearing masks and paint, there was a greater tendency to torture captives than in cultures whose warriors were not deindividuated. Another study of trick-or-treaters on Halloween found that they were more likely to steal when they wore masks and remained anonymous than when they were clearly identifiable.<sup>25</sup>

Perhaps the most shocking study of deindividuation was the Stanford Prison study, conducted by Phillip Zimbardo.<sup>26</sup> In this study, twenty-four male students who were described as mature, emotionally stable, normal, intelligent students were randomly assigned to play the roles of guards or prisoners. Both the prisoners and the guards were given appropriate uniforms, and the prisoners were placed in three-man cells for the duration of the experiment, which was to be two weeks. The guards were instructed to run the prison, and the experimenter served only as a warden. Silver reflector sunglasses were worn by the guards, which served to increase the level of deindividuation. The prisoners made only meager attempts to escape, and their behavior was described as that of servile, dehumanized robots. The behavior of the guards became tyrannical and brutal, and the situation became so ugly and repressive that the experiment had to be terminated after only 6 days instead of the two weeks originally planned.

Deindividuation does not necessarily create undesirable social behavior; it can also be positive. Although they don't attract as much attention, many groups have noble purposes and worthwhile social goals that

sweep people along in productive activities. Schools, charitable foundations, religious groups, and even business organizations frequently create groups where individuals lose a sense of their own personal identity and are carried along as part of the group in activities that contribute to their own growth and development and to the betterment of society.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, although groups can be destructive and nasty, they don't necessarily need to be that way. Anyone who has enjoyed the exhilaration of wildly cheering in a large crowd for a favorite football team knows how much fun being "lost in the crowd" can be.

## Discussion Questions

1. List some examples of additive, conjunctive, and disjunctive tasks. What type of tasks would the following groups most likely have: (a) a semi-autonomous work team in an electronics manufacturing firm, (b) a group of students working on a research project for an organizational behavior class, (c) an executive search committee trying to hire a new manager, (d) a swimming team, and (e) a fraternity.
2. What are the different kinds of role conflict? List some specific instances of role conflict you have experienced recently.
3. What are some of the most important norms regulating your behavior at your residence? How did these norms develop? What forms of social pressure are used to enforce compliance with these norms?
4. Identify at least two examples illustrating the three levels of conformity: compliance, identification, and internalization.
5. How does a study group influence individual learning? If you formed a study group with some of your classmates, would you expect the effects of studying together to produce social facilitation, social inhibition, or social loafing?

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