# Group Interaction

## Psychology Journal

Think of the groups to which you belong—your family, your friends, the band, a sports team, and so on. What effect do these groups have on how you think, act, and feel? Pick one group to which you belong and, in your journal, describe any influences this group has over you. ■

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CONTENTS

# Group Behavior

## Reader's Guide

### ■ Main Idea

A group—a collection of people who interact, share common goals, and influence how members think and act—is unified by the attitudes and standards members share and by their commitment to those beliefs.

### ■ Vocabulary

- group
- task functions
- social functions
- norms
- ideology
- social facilitation
- social inhibition
- group polarization
- groupthink
- sociogram

### ■ Objectives

- Define and explain different types of groups.
- Describe the interactive patterns within groups.

### EXPLORING PSYCHOLOGY

#### Greasers Versus Socs

Anyway, I went on walking home, thinking about the movie, and then suddenly wishing I had some company. Greasers can't walk alone too much or they'll get jumped, or someone will come by and scream "Greaser!" at them, which doesn't make you feel too hot, if you know what I mean. We get jumped by the Socs. I'm not sure how you spell it, but it's the abbreviation for the Socials, the jet set, the West-side rich kids. It's like the term "greaser," which is used to class all us boys on the East Side.

—from *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton, 1967

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In the passage above, S.E. Hinton's character Ponyboy tells his story, a story marked by the rivalry between two groups—the Socs and the Greasers. The differentiation between these groups influences Ponyboy's life to a great degree. What groups influence your life? Why?

## WHAT ARE GROUPS?

What do the St. Stanislaus Parish Bowling Team, the AARP (American Association of Retired Persons), and country music's Dixie Chicks have in common? Each can be classified as a group. A **group** is a

**group:** a collection of people who have shared goals, a degree of interdependence, and some amount of communication

**CONTENTS**

Figure 19.1    Team Work

Whether or not the members of this surgical team get along outside the operating room does not matter. Their main purpose is to do a certain job. **What are the features that groups share?**

collection of people who interact, share common goals, and influence how members think and act. In general, members of a *group* are interdependent, have shared goals, and communicate with one another. People who congregate but do not interact are not considered a group but rather an *aggregate.* For example, a collection of people waiting to cross 4th Avenue at 33rd Street is not a group but just an aggregate. If the light refuses to change and enough people join, there is a common goal and there is interaction. When someone eventually starts across the street, the group will follow, exhibiting interdependence. *Interaction* is the key factor in forming a group.

## Interdependence

To be classified as a group, a collection of people must be interdependent. Interdependence occurs when any action by one member will affect or influence the other members. For instance, in groups of athletes or roommates, each member has a certain responsibility to the rest of the group, and if he or she does not fulfill it, the other members will be affected. For the athletes, the consequence may be losing the game; for the roommates, a messy apartment. A person may be the group leader, the decision maker, the one who is the listener, or so on. If any person does not fulfill his or her role, the rest of the group is affected.

In small groups, members usually have a direct influence on one another: one member communicates directly with another. In larger groups, the influence may be indirect. The interdependence between you and the president of the United States is not a result of personal contact. Nevertheless, one of the things that makes the people of the United States a group is that the president's actions affect you and your actions, together with those of many other Americans, affect the president.

## Communication

Whether it is boys or girls engaged in a neighborhood tug-of-war contest, a football team preparing for the big game, or a NASA launch team spread around the world, communication is crucial to the functions of a group. In some cases, the communication is directed outward as a declaration of group membership, such as when a member of the band wears a T-shirt or jacket with the school's logo or name.

In other instances, the communication is internal, intended for group members to discuss group activities and share common experiences. Direct communication aids members' feelings of belonging. It increases the likelihood that group members will respond differently to one another than to those who do not belong to the group. Communication encourages debate among members regarding individual goals and increases members' feelings of commitment to group goals.

CONTENTS

## Shared Goals

Group members become interdependent because they share common goals. Groups are usually created to perform tasks or to organize activities that no individual could handle alone. Members of a consumer group, for example, share the common goal of working for consumer protection. Members of ethnic and religious groups desire to perpetuate a common heritage or set of beliefs.

The purposes groups serve are of two general kinds: **task functions,** those directed toward getting some job done; and **social functions,** those directed toward filling the emotional needs of members. In most groups, task and social functions are combined naturally and cannot be separated easily, although one dominates in any given group.

Political parties, teams of surgeons, and crews of construction workers are all task-oriented groups. Although social interactions occur within each of these groups, their main purpose is to complete a project or achieve some change in the environment. Social functions are emphasized in more informal, temporary groups. When people take walks together, attend parties, or participate in conversations, they have formed a group to gain social rewards such as companionship and emotional support. Yet again, every group involves both task and social functions.

**task functions:** activities directed toward getting a job done

**social functions:** responses directed toward satisfying the emotional needs of members

## HOW GROUPS ARE HELD TOGETHER

The factors that work to hold a group together—that increase the group's *cohesiveness*—include shared attitudes and standards and the group's commitment to them.

**norms:** shared standards of behavior accepted by and expected from group members

## Norms

**Norms** are unwritten rules that govern the behavior and attitudes of group members. They include rules—shared beliefs about the correct way to behave and what to believe. For example, there are rules about how to behave at home, at school, and at an amusement park. There are rules about what to say and how to communicate with brothers, sisters, parents, and friends. Would you use the same words and expressions with both your friends and your parents? Most people would not. These rules are not necessarily like rigid laws. They may be more like tendencies or habits, but group members are expected to act in accordance with group norms and are punished in some way if they do not. If a student consistently sneaks to the front of the lunch line, her friends would not hesitate to say something about it. Strangers might point and grow angry—simply because she violated a norm that you wait in line

| Figure 19.2 | Why Do We Join Groups? |
|---|---|

Psychologists have proposed various reasons why we join groups. *For what reason would you join a task-oriented group?*

They satisfy our need to belong.

We must compare ourselves to others who are similar to us.

We must compare our experiences with those of others who are similar to us.

We use group members as standards against which to evaluate ourselves.

Groups reduce our uncertainty.

Group members may offer us support in trying times.

Groups provide us with companionship.

Groups provide comfort and lessen our anxiety.

Groups help us accomplish things that we could not do alone.

Social norms can be formal or informal. Formal norms are rules such as traffic laws. Informal norms are unwritten rules such as greeting friends and shaking your opponents' hands at the end of a game. *What norms might be important to a group organized to serve social functions?*

**ideology:** the set of principles, attitudes, and defined objectives for which a group stands

after the people who arrived before you. Thus, the punishment may take the form of coldness or criticism from other group members. If the norm is very important to the group, a member who violates it may endure a more severe social reaction or may be excluded from the group.

### Ideology

For a group to be cohesive, members must share the same values. In some cases, people are drawn together because they discover they have common ideas, attitudes, and goals—that is, a common **ideology.** In other instances, people are attracted to a group because its ideology provides them with a new way of looking at themselves and interpreting events, and a new set of goals and means for achieving them. The National Organization for Women (NOW), for example, has provided a focal point for resistance to discrimination on the basis of gender. The AARP (American Association of Retired Persons) lobbies for the rights of older people and retirees. Leaders, heroes and heroines, rallies, books and pamphlets, slogans, and symbols all help popularize an ideology, win converts, and create feelings of solidarity among group members.

### Commitment

One factor that increases individual commitment is the requirement of personal sacrifice. If a person is willing to pay money, endure hardship, or undergo humiliation to join a group, he or she is likely to continue with it. For example, some groups in high school require initiation rites in order to join the group. College students who undergo embarrassing initiation rites to join sororities or fraternities tend to develop a loyalty to the group that lasts well beyond their college years. During your first year of high school, you also go through initiation rites. Seniors may tell new students about elevators that do not exist, stairwells that are blocked, or directions that lead to the wrong place. These common ordeals bind people to others in the group.

Another factor that strengthens group commitment is participation. When people actively participate in group decisions and share the rewards of the group's accomplishments, their feeling of membership increases— they feel that they have helped make the group what it is. For example, social psychologists have compared groups of workers who participate in decisions that affect their jobs with other workers who elect representatives to decision-making committees or workers who are simply told what to do. Those who participate have higher morale and accept change more readily than do the other workers (Coch & French, 1948). Other studies have highlighted the importance of supportive managers in maintaining
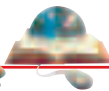
such worker involvement (Locke, Latham, & Erez, 1988).

The processes that hold a group together must work both ways. The individual must be responsive to the norms of the group, subscribe to its ideology, and be prepared to make sacrifices to be part of it. The group must also respond to the needs of its members. It cannot achieve cohesiveness if its norms are unenforceable, if its ideology is inconsistent with the beliefs of its members, or if the rewards it offers do not outweigh the sacrifices it requires.

## TYPES OF GROUPS

Social psychologists are interested in what happens between groups of people. Groups can be differentiated by in-groups and out-groups and primary and secondary groups. When a group's members identify with their group, they are referred to as the *in-group*. The *out-group* includes everyone who is not a member of the in-group. Members of the out-group will be rejected by and could be hostile to the in-group.

A *primary* group is a group of people who interact daily face-to-face. Because of the frequency of these interactions, some situations may become emotionally charged. For example, you see your family members every day. You eat, sleep, and have fun with them, and you also fight with them. A *secondary* group is a larger group of people with whom you might have more impersonal relationships. For example, your psychology class is a secondary group.

### Psychology and You — Social Norms

Visual behavior illustrates the effects of norms on our behavior. When you are passing someone in the hallway whom you do not know, you have two choices: to speak or not to speak. If you say hello, nod, or otherwise acknowledge the other person and he or she responds, then what? If you decide not to speak, then what?

In both instances, when you are between 10 and 18 feet in front of the person, accepted social rules are that you divert your eyes to the right. You might develop an interest in the bulletin board or simply look at the ceiling or floor. If you look at the person until your head is turned 90 degrees, it is considered pushy. If you turn and continue looking at the person as you walk down the hallway, it might be viewed as harassment or a challenge.

Similar norms operate in many different situations. For instance, it is customary for elevator riders to redistribute floor space more or less equally each time someone gets on or off. These norms are the unwritten rules that govern our social behavior.

*Reading Check*
Name a primary and a secondary group with which you are involved.

## SOCIAL FACILITATION VERSUS SOCIAL INHIBITION

Do you perform better or worse in front of a crowd? Have you heard of the "home team advantage"? This is another term for social facilitation. **Social facilitation** refers to the tendency to perform better in the presence of a group. At times, however, you may perform poorly in front of crowds. This is an example of **social inhibition.** Social facilitation and social inhibition may occur because the presence of a crowd increases one's drive or arousal.

Psychologist Robert Zajonc (1965) noticed that social facilitation seemed to occur when participants performed simple or well-learned tasks, whereas social inhibition occurred when participants performed more

**social facilitation:** an increase in performance in front of a crowd

**social inhibition:** a decrease in performance in front of a crowd

**Figure 19.4**   **Performance Factors**

Some people perform better in front of crowds, and others do not. Whether you show social facilitation or social inhibition depends on your past experience, the task at hand, and the crowd itself. *When might social inhibition occur?*

complex tasks or tasks that involved unfamiliar factors to the participants. So, in effect, how you perform in front of a crowd depends on what you are doing. For example, if you are an expert tennis player but a novice piano player, you may perform better in front of others while playing tennis but poorly in front of others when you are trying to play a rendition of "Heart and Soul."

The effect of a crowd on your behavior may also be a reflection of your concern about being evaluated. For example, you may play an excellent game of tennis in front of your friends and parents, but your performance may slip while playing in front of college recruiters.

## INTERACTIONS WITHIN GROUPS

Providing an individual with values and a sense of identity is only one aspect of the group's meaning to him or her. The particular role he or she plays in the group's activities is also important. Each group member has certain unique abilities and interests, and the group has a number of different tasks that need to be performed. The study of the roles various members play in the group and how these roles are interrelated is the study of *group structure*.

There are many aspects to group structure: the personal relationships between individual members, such as liking relationships and trusting relationships; the rank of each member on a particular dimension, such as power, popularity, status, or amount of resources; and the roles various members play. A *role* is behavior expected of an individual because of his or her membership in a particular group. Thus, when your class meets, someone has the role of teacher, and others have the role of students. Is someone a student leader in your class? Does someone always remain silent? Is another person always making jokes? Each of us has *multiple roles* that shift as we merge with different groups. Occasionally, we may find ourselves in *role conflict*, such as if you switch schools and your old school plays your new school in football.

### Decision Making

Most groups must make decisions. For example, you and your friends must decide what to do Saturday night. Jurors must decide whether a defendant is guilty or not guilty. A president's advisory committee must determine the proper solution to a company crisis. Group polarization and groupthink are two processes that affect group decision making.

**group polarization:** theory that group discussion reinforces the majority's point of view and shifts group members' opinions to a more extreme position

**Group Polarization**   Have you ever expressed an opinion and discussed it with a group of friends? How did the discussion affect the strength of your opinion? According to **group polarization,** if you discuss an

opinion with a group of people and a majority of the members argue for one side of the issue, the discussion typically pushes the majority to a more extreme view than they held before the discussion (see Figure 19.5). In this process, the majority's point of view is reinforced. The repetition of the same arguments results in stronger attitudes in support of the majority's view. If opinions of a group are equally split on an issue before a discussion, though, the group discussion usually results in compromise.

For example, say you think that bikers should wear helmets. One afternoon at lunch, the subject of bikers and helmets comes up. Most of your friends also believe that bikers should wear helmets. As your group discusses the issue, you and your friends use examples and your own reasoning to argue the point. You come away from the discussion feeling very strongly about the issue—much more strongly than before the discussion. You feel that it should be mandatory for bikers to wear helmets.

**Groupthink** Throughout history, government leaders have sometimes made poor decisions. When John F. Kennedy became president of the United States in 1961, he faced the problem of Fidel Castro, the Communist leader of Cuba. Castro formed a close alliance with the Soviet Union, and this alliance threatened the security of the United States. Kennedy ordered a secret invasion of Cuba to overthrow Castro. The invasion at the Bay of Pigs failed miserably, making Kennedy's administration look weak and bringing the world close to nuclear war. Why did Kennedy make this ill-fated decision? Kennedy and his administration were probably the victims of groupthink.

**groupthink:** poor group decision making that occurs as a result of a group emphasizing unity over critical thinking

When groups emphasize sticking together and fail to adequately appraise alternative courses of action, they are guilty of **groupthink.** When engaged in groupthink, groups do not make the best decisions. Group members may refrain from criticizing one another, and they may not discuss opposing viewpoints or evaluate the situation critically.
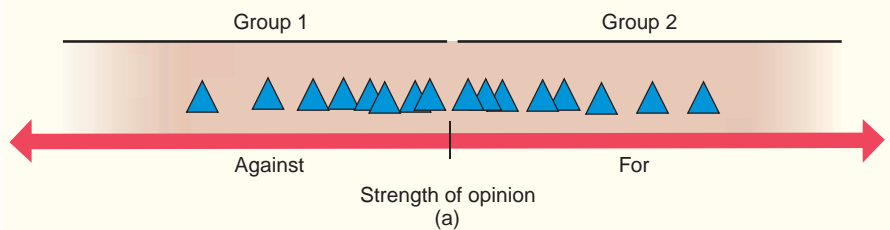
While discussing the Bay of Pigs invasion, Kennedy's advisers failed to critically examine Kennedy's decision to invade. Instead, they
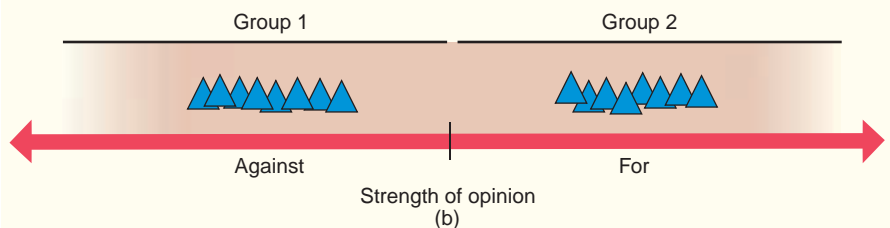


**Figure 19.5  Group Polarization**

Each triangle represents the opinion of one individual. Before the group discussion, individuals are divided in the content and strength of their opinions. After the group discussion, individuals' opinions move toward a more extreme version from their initial opinions. *Why do opinions become more extreme during group polarization?*

*Before group discussion*

Group 1          Group 2

Against                    For

Strength of opinion
(a)

*After group discussion*

Group 1          Group 2

Against                    For

Strength of opinion
(b)

Source: Peter Gray, *Psychology,* 1999.

**Figure 19.6** **The *Challenger* Explosion**

The decision to launch the *Challenger* U.S. space shuttle in below-freezing weather in January 1986 was the result of groupthink. Managers ignored the engineers' warnings about the dangers of launching. In full view of people on the ground and millions more on television, the space shuttle exploded just after its launch. *How can groups prevent groupthink?*

**sociogram:** a diagram that represents relationships within a group, especially likes and dislikes of members for other members

sought to please the president and present a unified front. Several hundred members of the invading force at the Bay of Pigs lost their lives as a result of the decision.

**How to Improve Group Decision Making**   Groups can avoid bad decision making and improve the quality of their decisions. Leaders should avoid strongly advocating their own views and, instead, encourage group discussion. During discussion, group members should hear all viewpoints and challenge one another's views. Minority viewpoints should be expressed and discussed. Also, group members should focus on the task—the issue to be discussed or the problem to be resolved. Group members should not focus on group unity when making decisions; however, they should focus on keeping the lines of communication open and gathering enough information to make an unbiased decision.

## Communication Patterns

When studying groups, social psychologists use a technique called the **sociogram** to analyze group structure. All members of a group are asked to name those people with whom they would like to interact, those they like best, and those with whom they'd rather not work. For example, the members may be asked with whom they would like to go to a party, to discuss politics, to spend a vacation, or to complete a task. Their choices can then be diagrammed, as shown in Figure 19.7. Sociograms can help psychologists predict how that individual is likely to communicate with other group members. Another way to discover the structure of a group is to examine the communication patterns in the group—who says what to whom and how often.

An experiment on communication patterns in problem solving was conducted by Harold Leavitt in 1951. He gave a card with several symbols on it to each person in a group of five and put each person in a separate room or booth. By allowing group members to communicate only by written messages in a certain configuration, he was able to create the networks shown in Figure 19.8. Each circle represents a person, and the lines represent open channels. Participants placed in each position could exchange messages only with the person to whom they were connected by channels.

The people who were organized into a "circle" were the slowest at solving the problem presented on the cards but the happiest at doing it. In this group everyone sent and received a large number of messages until someone solved the problem and passed the information on. In the "wheel," by contrast, everyone sent a few messages to one central person, who solved the puzzle and told the rest. These groups found the answer quickly, but the people on the outside of the wheel did not enjoy the job.

Following the experiment, the members in each group were asked to identify the leader of their group. In the centralized groups (wheel, Y, and chain), the person in the center was usually chosen as the group leader.

In the circle network, however, half the group members said they thought there was no real leader, and those who did say there was a leader disagreed on who that leader was. Thus a centralized organization seems more useful for task-oriented groups, whereas a decentralized network is more useful in socially oriented groups.

## Leadership

All groups, whether made up of students, workers, Girl Scouts, or politicians, have leaders. A leader embodies the norms and ideals of the group and represents the group to outsiders. Within the group, a leader initiates action, gives orders, makes decisions, and settles disputes. An effective leader has a great deal of influence on the other members.

Leadership may be defined in several ways. Most of us think of leadership as a *personality trait*. To an extent, this is true. One psychologist (Stogdill, 1974) identified leadership as being an aspect of personality—the ability to get people to comply. It can be thought of as skills in social influence or persuasion or simply as social power. It has been found that leaders tend to be better adjusted, more self-confident, more energetic and outgoing, and slightly more intelligent than other members of their group (Gibb, 1969). Other researchers (Blake & Mouton, 1985) proposed a different model. They argue that leaders are concerned to some degree with both output (that is, the task) and the welfare of the people. Each dimension is separate, and any leader can be at any level on either dimension. A leader deeply concerned with both output and welfare would likely develop a team management program so that workers contribute to the group's goals. A leader concerned solely with output would stress obedience, and a leader whose primary concern was the worker might create a stress-free atmosphere with a friendly organization. A leader who cared little for output or welfare might encourage workers to do the minimum to keep things functioning (Blake & McCanse, 1991).

Another way to think of leadership is as the *end product of the reinforcements of the group* being led (Berry & Houston, 1993). In this way, leadership is simply the center or focus of group action, an instrument for achieving the group's goal or a result of group interaction (Stogdill, 1974). In this sense, the nature of the group in part determines who will lead. Different circumstances call for different kinds of leaders. A group that is threatened by internal conflict requires a leader who is good at handling people, settling disputes, and soothing tempers. A group that has a complex task to perform needs a leader with special experience in setting goals and planning strategies to achieve them (Fiedler, 1969).

Another kind of leadership is called a *transformational leadership*. This leadership produces large-scale organizational change by changing the goals of group members and deepening their commitment. Transformational leaders are charismatic, they provide individualized attention to group members, and they are able to enthuse and intellectually stimulate group members. Charisma refers to a leader's persuasive powers. This, in turn, is based on the followers' perceptions of the leader's talents and expertise. When a leader is charismatic, followers trust the correctness

**Figure 19.7    Sociograms**

In these sociograms, the blue arrows indicate admiration that is not returned, and the black arrows indicate a two-way friendship. The more a person is liked, the higher in the pattern he or she appears. The pattern of the bottom group shows a hierarchical structure. *Who are the leaders in the bottom group?*
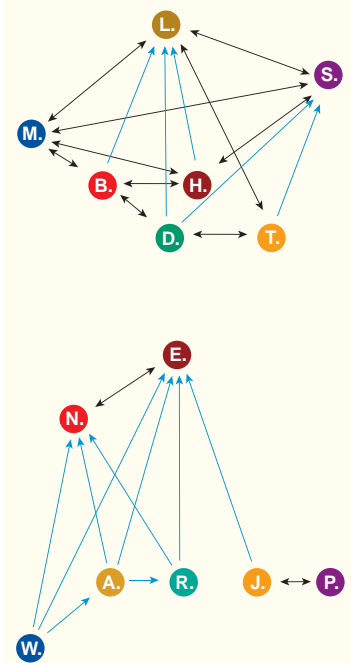
Figure 19.8 **Leavitt's Communication Network System**

Each dot represents a person. The lines represent open channels. Participants could exchange messages only with the person to whom they were connected by channels. *What were Leavitt's findings regarding centralized organizations?*

Chain

Y

Wheel          Circle
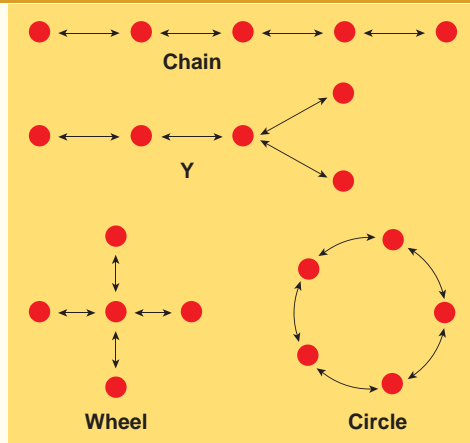
of the leader's views, obey the leader willingly, feel affection for the leader, and are motivated to perform at peak levels. Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy have been called charismatic leaders.

**Leadership Styles** The three leadership styles are authoritarian, laissez-faire, and democratic. An *authoritarian* leader makes all the decisions and assigns tasks to group members. These leaders are focused on completing tasks and compliance to group goals. Authoritarian leaders, such as Libyan leader Muammar al-Qaddhafi, tell other group members what to do and demand obedience. A *laissez-faire* leader is only minimally involved in a group's decision making. This leader encourages the group to make its own decisions. Under this type of leadership, it is the group's goals, not the leader's, that are pursued; group members make all the decisions. When leading a discussion, your teacher may be a good example of a laissez-faire leader—one who encourages group members to explore their own ideas. A *democratic* leader encourages group members to come to decisions through consensus. These leaders are often viewed as supportive but not good decision makers. Democratic leaders, such as those in the U.S. Congress, try to build a consensus among group members.

## SECTION 1 Assessment

1. **Review the Vocabulary** Explain how groups organized for task functions differ from those organized for social functions. Give an example of a task and social group to which you belong.

2. **Visualize the Main Idea** Using a graphic organizer similar to the one below, identify and describe the three styles of leadership.

| 1 | 2 | 3 |

Leadership Styles

3. **Recall Information** What is the difference between an in-group and an out-group? Give an example of each.

4. **Think Critically** When might a group benefit from a laissez-faire style of leadership? When might a group benefit from authoritarian leadership?
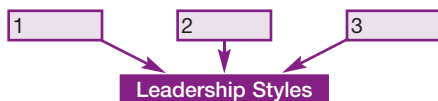
5. **Application Activity** Describe an activity that you did in the past month in front of a crowd. How did you perform? Analyze in a brief report why you performed this way.

CONTENTS

# Conformity and Obedience

## Reader's Guide

### ■ Main Idea
You may engage in behavior because of direct or indirect group pressure or in response to orders given by authorities.

### ■ Vocabulary
- conformity
- obedience

### ■ Objectives
- Identify ways that groups can influence an individual's behavior.
- Explain why most people tend to obey authority figures.

### EXPLORING PSYCHOLOGY

#### Why Are They Running?

Suddenly someone began to run. It may be that he had simply remembered, all of a moment, an engagement to meet his wife, for which he was now frightfully late. Whatever it was, he ran east on Broad Street (probably toward the Maramor Restaurant, a favorite place for a man to meet his wife). Somebody else began to run, perhaps a newsboy in high spirits. Another man, a portly gentleman of affairs, broke into a trot. Inside of ten minutes, everybody on High Street, from the Union Depot to the Courthouse was running. A loud mumble gradually crystallized into the dread word "dam." "The dam has broke!" The fear was put into words by a little old lady in an electric car, or by a traffic cop, or by a small boy: nobody knows who, nor does it now really matter.

—from **"The Day the Dam Broke"** in *My Life and Hard Times* by James Thurber, 1933

The above passage is a good example of people conforming to group pressures. Why did they run? They ran because everyone else was running. Most of these individuals did not make a decision based on their own reasoning; rather, they conformed to a group decision—to run.

# GROUP PRESSURE TO CONFORM

Have you ever come home and surprised your parents by wearing the latest fad in clothing? Possibly the conversation that followed went something like this:

"How can you go around looking like that?"

"But everyone dresses like this."

Psychologist Solomon Asch (1952) designed what has become a classic experiment to test conformity to pressure from one's peers. **Conformity** involves any behavior that you engage in because of direct or indirect group pressure. He found that people may conform to other people's ideas of the truth, even when they disagree. The following is what you would have experienced if you had been a participant in this experiment.

You and six other students meet in a classroom for an experiment on visual judgment. A line is projected on a screen in front of all seven participants. You are then shown another view of three lines and are asked to pick the one that is the same length as the first line. One of the three is exactly the same length. The other two lines are obviously different (see Figure 19.9). The experiment begins uneventfully. The participants announce their answers in the order in which they are seated in the room. You happen to be sixth, and one person follows you. On the first comparison, every person chooses the same matching line. The second set of lines is displayed, and once again the group is unanimous. The discriminations seem simple and easy, and you prepare for what you expect will be a rather boring experiment.

On the third trial, there is an unexpected disturbance. You are quite certain that line 2 is the one that matches the standard. Yet the first person in the group announces confidently that line 1 is the correct match. Then the second person follows suit, and he, too, declares that the answer is line 1; so do the third, fourth, and fifth participants. Now it is your turn. You are suddenly faced with two contradictory pieces of information; the evidence of your own senses tells you that one answer is clearly correct, but the unanimous and confident judgments of the five preceding participants tell you that you are wrong.

The dilemma persists through 18 trials. On 12 of the trials, the other group members unanimously give an answer that differs from what you clearly perceive to be correct. It is only at the end of the experimental session that you learn the explanation for the confusion. The six other participants were all actors, and they had been instructed to give incorrect answers on those 12 trials (see Figure 19.10).

How do most participants react to this situation? Asch found that about 75 percent of his participants conformed some of the time. These conformers he called the "yielders." Most yielders explained to Asch afterward that they knew which line was correct but that they yielded to group pressure to not appear different from the others. Asch called those who did not conform "independents." About 25 percent of the participants were independents. They gave the correct answer despite group pressure. Why so much conformity? According to one

**conformity:** acting in accord with group norms or customs

| Figure 19.9 | Asch's Experiment |
| --- | --- |

These two cards were shown to participants in one trial of Asch's experiment on conformity. The participants' task was to determine whether the length of the standard line matches the length of the comparison lines. The actual discrimination is easy. *What was the purpose of Asch's experiment?*

Standard Line

A ———————

Comparison Lines

1 ————————

2 ————————

3 ————————

Figure 19.10    **Should He Conform?**
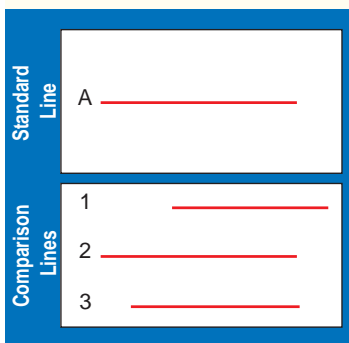
These photographs were taken during Asch's experiment on conformity. Participant 6 is the only real participant, and the others are collaborators with the experimenter. The participant listens to the others express identical judgments that differ from his own. He is in a dilemma: Does he express the judgment he knows to be correct and risk being different from the group, or does he conform to the group's judgment? *Why does Participant 6 find himself in a dilemma? What were Asch's findings?*



theory, most children are taught the overriding importance of being liked and of being accepted. Conformity is the standard means of gaining this approval.

**Reading Check**
Why did the yielders conform?

## Why Do People Conform?

One of the most important findings of Asch's experiment was that if even one person among the first five failed to conform to the group's judgment, the participant was able to stick to his own perceptions. It seems that it is hardest to stand alone. Later researchers have shown that under some conditions, a minority view can come to win over the larger group (Moscovici, 1985). By disagreeing with the majority view, a person can actually reduce the pressure that others feel to conform. A minority dissenter may also serve an informational purpose by making others question whether the majority view is actually right. When people hear a dissenting opinion, they are more likely to examine the issue more closely, which can lead to a better solution.

In Asch's experiment, participants conformed; they responded to match the other group members' responses, yet they might not have actually changed their beliefs. This contrast between public behavior and private belief often characterizes *compliance*. Compliance occurs when we respond to the request of another person without necessarily changing our beliefs.

A method of gaining compliance is the *foot-in-the-door technique*. This occurs when you get a person to agree to a relatively minor request. This minor request, which the participant is likely to agree with, is really a set-up for a major request. For example, a car salesperson might get you into the showroom by saying, "Just come in, and we'll run a few numbers—no obligation." Once you are in the showroom, though, you

**CONTENTS**

## How do we conform to group norms?

Norms are formalized rules for how members of groups should behave. They can exert strong influences on other members' behaviors. How do people react when group norms are not adhered to?

### Procedure
1. Think of a norm that regulates what an individual should or should not do in a given situation. (Examples include standing a certain distance from a person when talking, not talking during a movie, or wearing certain types of clothing for given situations.)
2. Design and act out an experiment in which you do not adhere to the norm.

### Analysis
1. What were the general reactions of other group members to you not adhering to the particular norm?
2. How did other people's reactions make you feel?
3. Do you think norms are always useful? Can they be harmful? Why do you think so?

See the **Skills Handbook,** page 622, for an explanation of designing an experiment.

**obedience:** a change in attitude or behavior brought about by social pressure to comply with people perceived to be authorities

are more likely to develop the attitude that you need a new car. Whereas initially, your commitment was minor, later you commit more intensely.

There are several factors that increase conforming behavior in people. The factors include:
- belonging to a group that emphasizes the role of groups rather than individuals
- the desire to be liked by other members of the group
- low self-esteem
- social shyness
- lack of familiarity with a task
- group size (Conformity increases as the size of the group grows to five or six people. After that, conformity levels off.)
- cultural influences

## OBEDIENCE TO AUTHORITY

The influence other people have on your attitudes and actions is considerable. Sometimes this influence is indirect and subtle, and at other times it is quite direct. People may simply tell you what to believe and what to do. Under what conditions do you obey them?

Everyone in this society has had experiences with various authorities, such as parents, teachers, police officers, managers, judges, clergy, and military officers. **Obedience,** or behavior in response to orders given by these authorities, can be either useful or destructive. For instance, obeying the orders of a doctor or firefighter in an emergency would be constructive. Psychologists are more interested, however, in the negative aspects of obedience. They know from cases in history such as German Nazism and American atrocities in Vietnam that individuals frequently obey irrational commands. In fact, people often obey authority even when obedience goes against their conscience and their whole system of morality.

### The Milgram Experiment

Psychologist Stanley Milgram conducted the most famous investigation of obedience in 1963 (see Figure 19.12). Milgram set up the experiment as follows. Two participants appeared for each session. They were told that they would be participating in an experiment to test the effects of punishment on memory. One of the participants was to be the "teacher" and the other, the "learner." In reality, the learner was not a volunteer participant; he was Milgram's accomplice. The teacher was to read into a microphone a list of words to be memorized by the learner, who would be

in a nearby room. If the learner failed to recite the list back correctly, the teacher was to administer an electric shock. The alleged purpose of the experiment was to test whether the shock would have any effect on learning. In actuality, however, Milgram wanted to discover how far the teacher would follow his instructions and how much shock the teacher would be willing to give another human being. Milgram surveyed a group of psychology students before the experiment. All respondents predicted that very few participants would be willing to shock the learner.

As the experiment began, the learner continually gave wrong answers, and the teacher began to administer the prescribed shocks from an impressive-looking shock generator. The generator had a dial that ranged from 15 volts, which was labeled "Slight Shock," to 450 volts, which was labeled "Danger: Severe Shock." After each of the learner's mistakes, the teacher was told to increase the voltage by one level. The teacher believed that the learner was receiving these shocks because he had experienced a mild sample shock, had seen the learner being strapped into a chair, and had watched electrodes being attached to the learner's hands. However, the learner received no shocks at all during the experiment.

As the experiment progressed, the learner made many mistakes, and the teacher was instructed to give increasingly severe shocks. At 300 volts the learner pounded on the wall in protest and refused to provide any further answers. At this point the experimenter instructed the participant to treat the absence of an answer as a wrong answer and to continue the procedure. The experiment ended either when the maximum

| Figure 19.11 | Going With the Group |
|---|---|

Conforming to a group has practical explanations. If you see people running out of a building, you may assume that they know something you do not—that the building is on fire, for example. *What are other reasons for conforming with a group?*

450 volts was administered or when the teacher refused to administer any more shocks. If at any point the teacher indicated a desire to stop, the experimenter calmly said, "Whether the learner likes it or not, you must go on until he has learned all the word pairs correctly."

Sixty-five percent of the participants delivered the full range of shocks. These participants were not sadists. Many of them showed signs of extreme tension and discomfort during the session, and they often told the experimenter that they would like to stop. Despite these feelings, most continued to obey the experimenter's commands. They were ordinary people—salespeople, engineers, and postal workers—placed in an unusual situation.

What accounts for this surprisingly high level of obedience? Part of the answer is that the experimenter represents a legitimate authority. People assume that such authorities know what they are doing, even when their instructions seem to run counter to standards of moral behavior.

(a) In Milgram's experiment on obedience, the "learner" is connected to the shock apparatus. (b) Milgram explains the procedure to the "teacher." (c) This participant refuses to administer shocks any further and angrily rises in protest. (d) Milgram explains the truth about the experiment. (© 1965 by Stanley Milgram. From the film *Obedience.* Distributed by New York University Film Library.) *Why did many participants continue to administer shocks to the learner?*

**a**

**b**

**c**

**d**
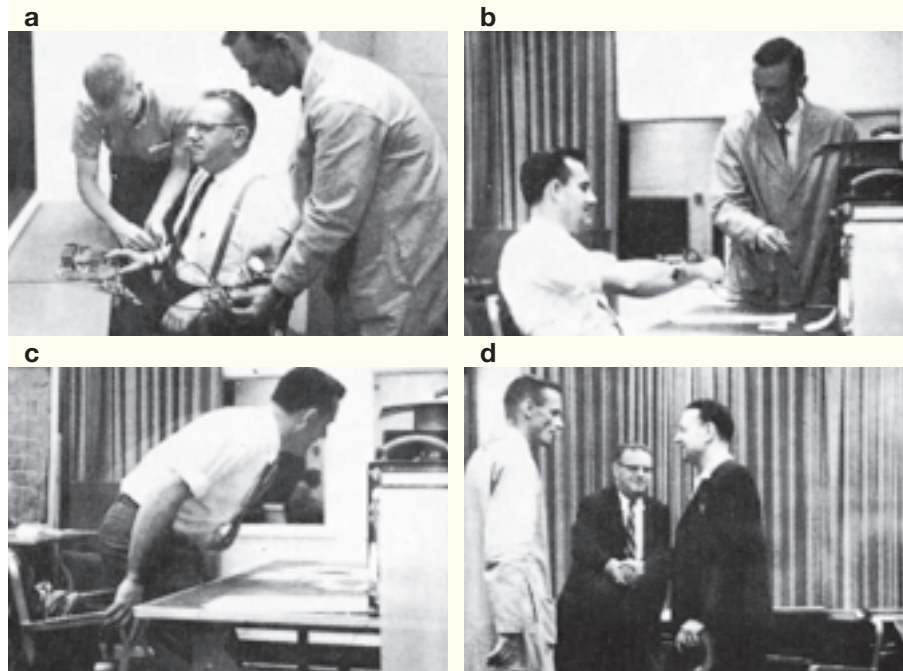
Milgram's participants could have walked out at any time; they had nothing to lose by leaving. Nevertheless, social conditioning for obeying legitimate authorities is so strongly ingrained that people often lack the words or the ways to do otherwise. Getting up and leaving would have violated powerful unwritten rules of acceptable social behavior.

Milgram's experiment is important because it questions so many different aspects of human behavior. The experiment also raised questions about the ethics of some psychological experiments. How would you feel if you had been one of Milgram's participants? How would you feel if you had been deceived into engaging in hurtful behavior? Since the experiment, the APA has changed its ethical standards for experiments. Today all experiments, especially those that have potential to cause psychological harm, are carefully screened by research committees. Informed consent prior to the experiment and complete disclosure of all design details after an experiment are absolute rights of participants in modern-day psychological studies.

## The Zimbardo Experiment

One Sunday summer morning, a siren shattered the silence, awakening Tommy Whitlow. As Tommy opened his eyes, a police cruiser pulled up, screeching its tires to a halt. The police arrested Tommy, charging him with a felony. They informed him of his rights, frisked and handcuffed him, and placed him in the police vehicle. At the station, police fingerprinted and booked Tommy. They then blindfolded him and led him to the Stanford County Prison. Once he was there, guards stripped him naked and sprayed him down with a disinfectant. He was ordered to wear a beige smock uniform with his identification number patched on the front. Police arrested eight other students that morning as well.

Tommy and the other students were actually participants in another experiment that caused ordinary people to act in extraordinary ways. Philip Zimbardo and his colleagues (Haney & Zimbardo, 1975) performed the experiment. Tommy and the other volunteers had answered a newspaper ad; they had no idea that the experiment involved a staged arrest.

Zimbardo randomly divided the male volunteers into two groups—prisoners and prison guards. He sent both groups to live in a simulated prison set up in the basement of a Stanford University building. He gave the guards instructions to maintain order. Within two days, most of the guards had become intoxicated with power, and they acted cruelly toward the prisoners, often without reason. The guards expected the prisoners to follow the rules without question. If the prisoners did not follow the rules, they lost the privilege to read or write letters. As the prisoners disobeyed more rules, the punishments increased. Sometimes the guards subjected the prisoners to embarrassment, humiliation, and mindless tasks such as push-ups and washing toilets with their bare hands.

At the same time, the prisoners began showing signs of extreme stress, often acting subdued and depressed. Sometimes the prisoners refused to follow the rules. They yelled back at the guards, made negative comments about the jail, and later became passive from defeat. Some of the prisoners became angry and disillusioned, while others developed psychological

## More About...

### Collectivism

Many Americans value individualism—a focus on defining oneself in individual terms and giving priority to personal goals. Other societies, though, focus on collectivism—defining oneself in terms of the groups to which one belongs and giving priority to the groups' goals. Individuals in collective societies, such as those in Africa, Asia, and Central and South America, work to control their behaviors and maintain harmonious relationships with others. These individuals are encouraged to be dependent on and submissive to the values of the group. People from collectivist cultures have different priorities and thus have different strategies in how they resolve conflicts and deal with others.

### Figure 19.13    Other Cultures

Some cultures, such as the Mexican culture, place greater emphasis on the group rather than the individual. Individuals are viewed as part of the family and society and must work hard to maintain harmonious relationships with others. *How do you think the American culture views individuals' roles in groups?*

Figure 19.14    **Obeying Orders**

Military pilots do not witness the consequences of their actions. They identify and kill their enemies simply by targeting a blip on a radar screen. *Why might it be easier to obey if you are shielded from the consequences of your actions?*

illnesses and rashes. The emotional reactions were so extreme that experimenters ended the planned two-week experiment after only six days. It seems that the prison environment was much stronger than individual personalities. Although the participants in this experiment were emotionally mature and stable (according to tests administered before the experiment), the roles these individuals adopted changed the way they acted. There may be other situations in everyday life that cause us and those around us to act in ways we do not expect.

In follow-up interviews, none of the participants reported any lasting effects. Some of the participants had difficulty understanding how powerful the experiment had become. The experiment not only changed the ethical standards of experimentation in psychology but it also demonstrated the power that situations can have in changing how we feel, think, and behave. The social situation of being in the prison changed the rules, roles, and expectations of the students (Zimbardo, 1975).

**Why Do People Obey?**    Why did the Germans obey Adolf Hitler's commands to commit genocide during World War II? Why do cult members sometimes consent to their leaders' orders to commit suicide? After all, these leaders' commands are clearly unreasonable, right? Psychologists have proposed that people learn to obey authority figures. Throughout our lives, we obey parents, doctors, teachers, and religious leaders. Throughout our lives, we also have learned to follow orders. We follow traffic rules, school rules, and parental rules. However, we are more likely to follow these rules when the authority figure is actually present.

## SECTION 2    Assessment

1. **Review the Vocabulary**    Give an example of a way you show conformity.

2. **Visualize the Main Idea**    Duplicate and complete the chart below, describing the Asch experiment.

    **The Asch Experiment**

    | |
    |---|
    | Hypothesis: |
    | Method: |
    | Results: |

3. **Recall Information**    How is compliance related to conformity? Explain.

4. **Think Critically**    Do you think that conforming to a group is always a negative thing to do? Explain.

5. **Application Activity**    Try this experiment with your family or group of friends. Stare at the ceiling continuously for a time. Do other people start to look up at the ceiling also? Why or why not? Explain the principles behind this experiment.

# Case Studies

## Your Stripes or Your Morality

**Period of Study:** 1994

**Introduction:** Lawrence Rockwood, a captain in the United States Army, had served in the army for close to 20 years when he was ordered to lead a force of troops into Haiti. (A military government had come to power in Haiti. U.S. troops provided stability while the democratically elected government regained power.) Through the mission, President William J. Clinton intended to stop brutal crimes imposed on the Haitian people. Confident and eager about his mission, Rockwood strongly advocated human rights for people all over the world. Rockwood did not know, however, that his mission would clash intensely with his morals.

**Hypothesis:** Similar to the studies conducted by Asch and Milgram, the hypothesis was that when faced with pressure to conform, an individual would conform to the group or an authority.

**Method:** Immediately upon arrival in Haiti, U.S. leaders changed the mission from "stopping brutal crimes" to "forced protection," or keeping American troops safe from harm. Commanders ordered Captain Rockwood to survey local Haitian prisons and report on the conditions there. Rockwood found and reported horrible conditions in these prisons. Guards mistreated and tortured prisoners. Rockwood discovered that one of the prisons had about 30 inmates housed in one small cell and that one man had been confined in a position so long that portions of his skin had rotted off.

Outraged at these conditions, Captain Rockwood petitioned for special operations units to enter the prisons and enforce the rules and regulations involving prisoners of war. A senior officer listened to Rockwood's pleas. The officer recommended that special operations investigate the prisons. Special operations turned down the request.

This refusal prompted Rockwood to take matters into his own hands. Knowing his military career would be put on the line by way of court-martial, Rockwood disobeyed direct orders, climbed the outer fence of his base, and proceeded to a Haitian prison where he demanded to evaluate each prisoner. Four hours later, a United States major arrived at the prison and ordered Rockwood to leave. When Rockwood resisted, troops forced him out of the prison. Army psychiatrists evaluated Rockwood twice and found him sane. The army then charged him with disobeying direct orders. In Rockwood's own defense, he stated, "I am more sensitive to human rights concerns than the average officer."

**Results:** In 1995 the Army court-martialed Rockwood for his actions. The Army sentenced Rockwood to dismissal—equal to a dishonorable discharge—despite his perfect military record and stripped him of some pay and allowances. All of this occurred because Rockwood chose not to conform to the extreme pressures placed upon him by the military. He made the moral decision to come to the aid of his fellow human beings. Many people question the power the United States military possesses in making each and every soldier conform to and obey the ideology of each armed forces branch, no matter what the cost. The case of Captain Lawrence Rockwood and his squashed crusade for human rights demonstrates the power of an individual to resist conformity.

### Analyzing the Case Study

**1.** Why did Rockwood refuse to conform to group pressure?

**2.** Does this case study support the findings of Milgram and Asch? Explain.

**3.** **Critical Thinking** Under what circumstances might Rockwood have obeyed his orders? Do you think that conformity depends upon the situation or the person? Or both? Explain your answer.

# Conflict and Cooperation

## Reader's Guide

### ■ Main Idea
Conflicts between groups are a fact of everyday life. Individuals perceive and respond to situations differently in a group, sometimes giving up responsibility for their actions.

### ■ Vocabulary
- aggression
- catharsis
- altruism
- diffusion of responsibility
- bystander effect
- social loafing
- deindividuation

### ■ Objectives
- Explain causes of group conflict and cooperation.
- Summarize how group dynamics promote or restrain altruism and aggression.

### EXPLORING PSYCHOLOGY

#### Watching From Above

This was the evening of April 29, 1992. The Los Angeles Riots were erupting below us. . . .

I peered though my side-window as the copter continued to circle in a steep bank. I could see the traffic was moving through the intersection below us. I watched as various cars whipped in a U-turn around to avoid the ominous chaos ahead. There were clusters of people milling around. They were throwing rocks and bottles at passing cars. There were no police officers around, just an unruly mob venting hate on innocent motorists who happened to find themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time.

—**from** *News at Ten: Fifty Years With Stan Chambers* **by Stan Chambers, 1994**

In April 1992, the media released footage of four white police officers beating an African American motorist. When jurors found the officers not guilty of charges including assault and excessive use of force, mob violence erupted in South Central Los Angeles. That violence continued for several days and fed on itself, resulting in 55 deaths and $1 billion in damage.

What causes group violence? Why did some people in Los Angeles harm others? Would they have committed those same lawless acts in a different and calmer atmosphere?

CONTENTS

# AGGRESSION

Any behavior that is intended to cause physical or psychological harm is called **aggression.** It seems that our society is being torn apart by increasing violence and aggression. What causes humans to act in ways that harm others? Psychologists have proposed several theories to explain aggression.

## Biological Influences

Some animals are naturally aggressive. For instance, you might know that when injured, some otherwise friendly dogs become vicious. This violent response is an innate biological reaction. Psychologists have proposed that humans also have innate biological factors that cause aggression. Neurotransmitters, such as serotonin, influence a person's aggressive behavior. When a person has diminished serotonin levels in the brain, he or she may experience violent outbursts.

Studies on mice indicate that mice whose genes have been altered so that their brains lack serotonin receptors attack other mice quicker and with more intensity than other mice (Shih, 1996). Psychologists, though, warn against labeling aggression as caused by only biological factors.

## Cognitive Factors

Psychologist Albert Bandura proposes that children learn aggressive behavior by observing and imitating their parents. Bandura suggested that we watch models perform and then imitate the models' behavior. His social learning theory also proposes that aggressive behavior may be reinforced in several ways. Parents who use aggression to discipline their children may be teaching their children to use aggression.
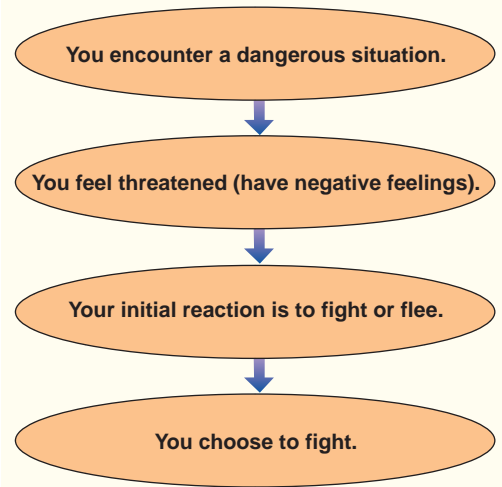
The media—television, movies, video games, and music—may also be teaching aggressive behavior to children. By 18 years of age, the average American has witnessed an estimated 200,000 acts of violence on television (American Academy of Pediatrics, 1995). As children witness media violence, they grow immune to the horror of violence, gradually accept violence as a way to solve problems, imitate the violence they observe, and identify with certain characters whether they are victims or victimizers.

## Personality Factors

Certain personality traits, such as impulsiveness and having little empathy, combined with favoring domination can turn a person into a bully. Aggressive people also may be arrogant and egotistical. People often strike out at others to affirm their sense of superiority (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996). Can psychologists predict violent behavior based on personality factors? Usually, past experience is the best predictor. An aggressive child tends to become an aggressive adult.

| Figure 19.15 | A Model of Aggression |

This is just one model of aggression. Psychologists have proposed various biological, cognitive, and environmental factors that influence a person's response to the fight-or-flight dilemma. *What leads to aggression in this model?*

You encounter a dangerous situation.

↓

You feel threatened (have negative feelings).

↓

Your initial reaction is to fight or flee.

↓

You choose to fight.

**aggression:** behavior intended to do physical or psychological harm to others

### Environmental Factors

Sometimes something provokes you and you become violent. Maybe your friend borrowed something without telling you. Maybe another driver refused to let you merge into traffic. Psychologists explain acts of violence that arise from such situations with the *frustration-aggression hypothesis*. This is the idea that frustration or a failure to obtain something expected leads to aggression. The hypothesis, though, fails to note that frustration does not always lead to aggressive behavior. For instance, if your friend trips and falls into you, knocking a soda out of your hands, you may not feel angry once you realize that it was an accident.

Leonard Berkowitz (1989) proposed a modified frustration-aggression hypothesis. Berkowitz proposes that frustration leads to aggression only in certain instances. For example, when a stranger bumps into you, you may strike that person if you have done so before or if the person does not intimidate you. However, you will probably not strike that person if you have never been in a fight or have had bad experiences with fighting.

## CONTROLLING AGGRESSION

**catharsis:** releasing anger or aggression by letting out powerful negative emotions

Aggression, then, is a combination of biological, cognitive, personality, and environmental factors. Knowing this, how do we limit and control aggression? One method is through catharsis. **Catharsis** involves releasing anger or aggression by expressing powerful negative emotions. For instance, when you are angry, you should "get it off your chest." This might mean talking to a friend, playing a tough game of soccer, or hitting a punching bag for a while. Unfortunately, critics of catharsis believe that any expression of aggression is negative. They point out that expressing your aggression may lead to more aggression.

Other strategies of controlling aggression include punishing children for violent behavior and cutting down on the violence they observe. Excessive punishment, though, may trigger aggressive behavior. People can also be taught to control their aggression. Aggressive behavior can be controlled by teaching people to accept frustrations and move on and to react to disappointments in ways other than violence. If people do not view violence as an option, then they will not resort to violence.

## GROUP CONFLICT VERSUS COOPERATION

Conflicts between groups are a fact of everyday life: some level of hostility does exist between women and men, young and old, workers and bosses, African Americans and whites, Catholics and Protestants, and students and teachers. Why do these conflicts exist, and why do they persist? Let us consider the findings of a group of psychologists (Sherif & Hovland, 1961) who

### Did You Know?

**American Violence** Social psychologists blame our culture for the increasing amount of violence. They say that social changes have left people feeling isolated and disconnected. The American culture encourages self-centeredness and violence. Arnold Goldstein of the Center for Research on Aggression at Syracuse University commented, "We are a nation whose role models, presidents, and leaders on Wall Street have set the tone for the country—I'm going to get mine" (Benson & Roehlkepartain, 1993).

CONTENTS

created a boys' camp to study intergroup relations. The camp at Robber's Cave offered all the usual activities, and the boys had no idea that they were part of an experiment.

From the beginning of the experiment, the boys were divided into two groups. The boys hiked, swam, and played baseball only with members of their own group, and friendships and group spirit soon developed. After a while the experimenters (working as counselors) brought the groups together for a tournament. The psychologists had hypothesized that when these two groups of boys were placed in competitive situations, where one group could achieve its goals only at the expense of the other, hostility would develop. They were right.

Although the games began in a spirit of good sportsmanship, tension mounted as the tournament continued. Friendly competition gave way to name calling, fistfights, and raids on enemy cabins. The psychologists had demonstrated the ease with which they could produce unity within the two boys' groups and hatred between them. The experimenters then tried to see what might end the conflict and create harmony between the two groups. They tried to bring the groups together for enjoyable activities, such as a movie and a good meal. This approach failed. The campers shoved and pushed each other, threw food and insults, and generally used the opportunity to continue their attacks.

Next, the psychologists deliberately staged a series of emergencies in which the boys either would have to help one another or lose the chance to do or get something they all wanted. For instance, one morning someone reported that the water line to the camp had broken. The boys were told that unless they worked together to find the break and fix it, they would all have to leave camp. By afternoon, they had jointly found and fixed the damage. Gradually, through such cooperative activities, intergroup hostility and tensions lessened. Friendships began to develop between individuals of the opposing groups, and eventually the groups began to seek out occasions to mingle. At the end of the camp period, members of both groups requested that they ride home together on the same bus.

The results of this experiment were striking. Two groups of boys from identical backgrounds had developed considerable hostility toward each other simply because they were placed in competition. The crucial factor in eliminating group hostility was cooperation.

The question of conflict is not confined just to small groups. It applies to large communities, too, but then the possibility of a *social trap* is greater. A social trap occurs when individuals in a group decide not to cooperate. Instead, they act selfishly and create a bad situation for all. An

## More About...

### Gangs

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) estimates that there are 400,000 active gang members in the United States. In about 700 cities across the nation, these gangs are harming the communities in which they operate (Office of International Criminal Justice, 1999). Police departments have identified three types of gangs.

*Social gangs* are relatively permanent groups that hang out in a specific location. Members often engage in organized group activities. Members may hold the norms and values of society in general. *Delinquent gangs* are organized around the principle of monetary gain. Members depend on one another to carry out planned activities. The leader is usually the member most skilled at stealing. *Violent gangs* are organized to obtain emotional gratification from violent activities. Members spend their time carrying out violent acts. Leaders are usually emotionally unstable—they have a need to control others. Group members overestimate the importance and power of their group, and there may be violence within the group (Austin Police Department Gang Suppression Unit, 1999).

Anyone may become a victim of gang violence. Gang members are constantly recruiting members, focusing on younger and younger recruits. Many delinquent and violent gang members become career criminals. How do we stop the spread of gangs? We must teach children self-control and how to deal appropriately with problems. Citizens should get involved in and promote community gang resistance programs.

illustration of the social trap can be seen in the way Americans have responded to the problems of pollution. We know that automobile exhaust pollutes the air. We know that one way to reduce air pollution is to carpool or use public transportation. Yet the driver who commutes 30 miles a day alone and who knows that he or she is polluting the air thinks: "Yes, I know my car exhaust is bad, but I am only one person. If I stop driving, it won't make any difference." As long as we fall into that social trap, we continue to destroy our environment.

Psychologists have been exploring ways to overcome social traps such as this one. One approach is to use laws to bring about behavior changes, such as the law requiring special exhaust systems in cars. Other ways to change people's behavior include educating them concerning the issues and communicating the idea that "Yes, you do make a difference." By publicizing the problems and solutions and organizing groups to act, individuals begin to believe that what they do does have an impact, and their actions are reinforced by the group. In this way, people find it more beneficial to cooperate than to act in a purely selfish manner.

## ALTRUISM

**altruism:** helping others, often at a cost or risk, for reasons other than rewards

**Altruism** means helping another, often with a risk to oneself, for reasons other than the expectation of a reward. Consider the following scene: You are walking on a crowded street and suddenly hear a scuffle off to the side. You turn to see a man trying to rip a woman's purse from her grasp. Everyone else just keeps on walking past the scuffle. What do you do? Whether you help or not may depend on the diffusion of responsibility.

### Figure 19.16    Us Versus Them

Intergroup conflict results when a group no longer sees the enemy as individual humans and thus can treat them indecently. This occurred in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the late 1990s. *How does intergroup hostility develop?*



### Diffusion of Responsibility

Sometimes when several people are faced with a common problem and there is no opponent, they may not even see themselves as a group. There have been many famous examples of muggings, rapes, and murders that were committed in public while a large group of people watched without intervening or calling for help.

By studying artificial crises, psychologists have tried to find out why these people did not act. In one experiment, college students were asked to participate in a discussion of personal problems. They were asked to wait in separate rooms. Some were told that they would be communicating with only one other person, and others were given the impression that they would be talking with as many as five other people. All communication, the psychologist told each student, was to take place over microphones so that everyone would remain anonymous and thus would be able

CONTENTS

to speak more freely. Each person was to talk in turn.

In reality, there were no other people—all the voices the participants heard were on tape. As the discussion progressed, the participant heard one of the other participants go into what sounded like an epileptic seizure. The victim began to call for help and make choking sounds. The experimenters found that 85 percent of the people who thought they were alone with the victim came out of their room to help him. Of those who believed there were four other people nearby, however, only 31 percent did anything to help.

The experimenters suggested that this behavior was the result of **diffusion of responsibility.** In other words, because several people were present, each participant assumed someone else would help. The researchers found that in experiments where people could see the other participants, the same pattern emerged. In addition, bystanders reassured one another that it would not be a good idea to interfere. The **bystander effect** occurs when a person refrains from taking action because of the presence of others. These findings on diffusion of responsibility suggest that the larger the crowd or group of bystanders, the more likely any given individual is to feel that he or she is not responsible for trying to alter whatever is going on (Darley & Latané, 1968).

Another influence that inhibits action is the tendency to minimize the need for any response. To act, you must admit that an emergency exists. You may not know exactly what is going on when you hear screams or loud thumps upstairs. You are likely to wait before risking the embarrassment of rushing to help where help is not needed or wanted. It is easier to persuade yourself that nothing needs to be done if you look around and see other people behaving calmly. Not only can you see that they think nothing is wrong but you also can see that not doing anything is entirely proper. You are able to minimize the need to act and shift any responsibility to those around you. Both the presence of a leader and being familiar with the person needing help, however, increase the likelihood and speed of help being offered. The same is true of knowing what kind of help is required, seeing the correct form of assistance being modeled, or expecting future interactions with the person needing help. These situations increase the chances that assistance will be offered when it is most needed (Baron & Byrne, 1991).

**Social Loafing**    Your evaluations of a situation also may lead to social loafing. **Social loafing** occurs when you allow your contributions to the group to slack off because you realize that individual contributions

**Figure 19.17**    **Would You Help Someone in Need?**

Whether we offer assistance to someone in need depends on several factors, including what other witnesses are doing. *How does diffusion of responsibility affect our behavior in such situations?*

**diffusion of responsibility:** the presence of others lessens an individual's feelings of responsibility for his or her actions or failure to act

**bystander effect:** an individual does not take action because of the presence of others

**social loafing:** the tendency to work less hard when sharing the workload with others

CONTENTS

are not as apparent and easily measured in a group setting. When you are a member of a large group, for example, you may feel a reduced sense of accountability.

**deindividuation:** individuals behave irrationally when there is less chance of being personally identified

**Deindividuation**   When people act as individuals, obey their consciences, and are concerned with self-evaluation, we think of them as *individualistic*. When **deindividuation** occurs, people lose their sense of self and follow group behaviors. The deindividuated person acts without thinking about self and goes along with the group. Why did normally pleasant people violently throw bottles and rocks at innocent people during the Los Angeles riots? Researchers believe that being in a crowd may reduce feelings of guilt or self-awareness that one ordinarily feels. People in crowds are anonymous—there is little chance of pinpointing who threw the rock and of being identified.

Social pressure can affect us in positive ways, too. Most people care deeply about what others think of them. This can be a powerful source of pressure for individuals to do what others believe they should do. Have you ever refrained from saying or doing something mean because you wanted others to think highly of you? Maybe you went out of your way to act compassionately while others witnessed your actions. In 1999 Microsoft Corporation Chairman Bill Gates made the largest private charitable contribution in history by donating $3.3 billion to two of his foundations. The money will support initiatives in education and world public health and will provide computer technology to libraries in low-income communities. In 1997 CNN founder Ted Turner gave a $1 billion charitable donation to the United Nations. It is difficult to say whether these charitable acts resulted from social pressure, but social influence may have played a role.

SECTION **3** **Assessment**

1. **Review the Vocabulary**   How does diffusion of responsibility affect individuals in a group?

2. **Visualize the Main Idea**   Using a graphic organizer similar to the one below, compare and contrast aggression and altruism.

Aggression       Altruism

3. **Recall Information**   What is deindividuation, and how does it occur?

4. **Think Critically**   Do you think that most students work harder on projects they must complete alone for a grade or on team projects in which no individual grades are given? Explain your reasoning.

5. **Application Activity**   Keep an anger diary for a week. In it include descriptions of several fight-or-flight situations that you experience or observe. Did any of the episodes lead to violence? Why or why not?

CONTENTS

# Summary and Vocabulary

**People belong to many groups for a variety of reasons. Groups can affect the way individuals behave in different situations.**

## Section 1 — Group Behavior

**Main Idea:** A group—a collection of people who interact, share common goals, and influence how members think and act—is unified by the attitudes and standards members share and by their commitment to those beliefs.

- To be classified as a group, a collection of people must demonstrate interdependence, communication, and common goals.
- Groups serve two general purposes—task functions and social functions.
- To be part of a group, an individual must be responsive to the norms of the group, subscribe to its ideology, and be prepared to make sacrifices in order to be part of it.
- Groups can be differentiated by in-groups and out-groups and primary and secondary groups.
- Research has shown that social facilitation seems to occur when participants perform simple tasks, whereas social inhibition seems to occur when participants perform more complex tasks.
- Group polarization and groupthink are two processes of group decision making.

## Section 2 — Conformity and Obedience

**Main Idea:** You may engage in behavior because of direct or indirect group pressure or in response to orders given by authorities.

- Psychologists believe that people conform to gain approval.
- Compliance occurs when an individual gives in to social pressure in his or her public behavior but does not actually change private beliefs.
- Psychologists believe that people learn to obey authority figures and to follow orders and rules.

## Section 3 — Conflict and Cooperation

**Main Idea:** Conflicts between groups are a fact of everyday life. Individuals often give up responsibility for their actions by perceiving and responding to situations as a group.

- Aggression is a combination of biological, cognitive, personality, and environmental factors.
- Psychologists have found that the larger the crowd or group of bystanders, the more likely any given individual is to feel that he or she is not responsible for whatever is going on.
- Social loafing occurs when people allow their contributions to the group to slack off because they realize that individual contributions are not as apparent and easily measured in a group setting.
- When deindividuation occurs, people lose their sense of self and follow group behaviors.

## Chapter Vocabulary

group (p. 545)
task functions (p. 547)
social functions (p. 547)
norms (p. 547)
ideology (p. 548)
social facilitation (p. 549)
social inhibition (p. 549)
group polarization (p. 550)
groupthink (p. 551)
sociogram (p. 552)
conformity (p. 556)
obedience (p. 558)
aggression (p. 565)
catharsis (p. 566)
altruism (p. 568)
diffusion of responsibility (p. 569)
bystander effect (p. 569)
social loafing (p. 569)
deindividuation (p. 570)

**CONTENTS**
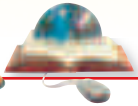
## Reviewing Vocabulary

**Choose the letter of the correct term or concept
below to complete the sentence.**

**a.** ideology
**b.** social facilitation
**c.** social inhibition
**d.** group polarization
**e.** conformity
**f.** obedience
**g.** aggression
**h.** catharsis
**i.** bystander effect
**j.** deindividuation

1. _____ occurs when the majority's point of view is reinforced and an extreme view dominates.
2. A behavior that is intended to cause physical or psychological harm is called _____.
3. A group with a common _____ shares a set of principles, attitudes, and defined objectives for which the group stands.
4. _____ involves any behavior that an individual engages in because of direct or indirect group pressure.
5. The tendency to perform poorly in front of a group is known as _____.
6. _____ occurs when people lose their sense of self and follow group behaviors.
7. Punching a pillow to release anger is a form of _____.
8. The tendency to perform better in the presence of a group is known as _____.
9. _____ is behaving according to the authority of group norms or customs.
10. The _____ occurs when a person refrains from taking action because of the presence of others.

## Recalling Facts

1. Using a diagram similar to the one below, identify the characteristics of a group.

| Characteristics of a Group |
| --- |
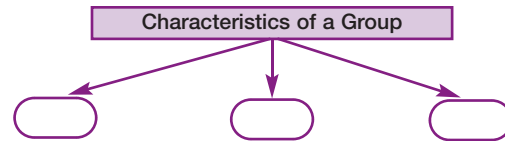
2. What factors work to hold a group together? What factors increase the commitment of a person to the group?
3. Why do people conform?
4. How does the cognitive theory explain aggression?
5. What are two factors that inhibit individual action within a group setting?

## Critical Thinking

1. **Evaluating Information** Choose a person in your community whom you consider to be a leader. What qualities does this person have that make him or her a leader? How does the person demonstrate the characteristics of leadership?
2. **Analyzing Concepts** Do you think it is possible for an individual to never have to conform to a group? Explain your answer.
3. **Demonstrating Reasoned Judgment** Which psychological theory discussed in the chapter do you think best explains the reasons for aggression? Provide reasons for your opinion.
4. **Applying Concepts** Do you think knowing the causes of aggression is important in finding ways to help reduce violence in society? Explain your answer.
5. **Synthesizing Information** Think about what you have learned from your reading and classroom discussions about altruistic or helping behavior. How might it be possible to increase altruistic behavior in people? What factors might prevent this from occurring?

CONTENTS

## Psychology Projects

1. **Group Behavior** Groupthink occurs when group discussions stress agreement rather than critical thinking. The Bay of Pigs invasion was one example of groupthink. Research other historical events that were the result of groupthink, such as Watergate or the *Challenger* disaster. Find out the background of these events and how groupthink contributed to the outcomes. Present your findings in an oral report.

2. **Conformity and Obedience** Research examples of extreme group conformity and obedience. You might find out about David Koresh and the Branch Davidians or Jimmy Jones and the Jonestown cult. Research the general characteristics of the people who joined the groups and the reasons given for the leaders' ability to command such obedience. Share your findings in a documentary report or presentation.

3. **Conflict and Cooperation** Create an illustrated, captioned poster that provides strategies for teenagers to use to control aggression. Display your poster in the classroom.

## Technology Activity

Think of a cause or an issue about which you feel strongly. Use the library and the Internet to find task-oriented groups that address this cause or issue. Find the E-mail address of the organization and send an E-mail to find out more about the group's goals and the ways that you might become involved. Share the information you collected, your sources, and any E-mail responses with the class.

## Psychology Journal

Reread the journal entry you wrote at the beginning of the chapter. Using what you have learned, select one group to which you belong and describe it. Answer the following questions: What is the purpose of the group? What kind of group is it? Why do you belong to it? Do you conform to any ideals of the group? Why? What might happen if you did not conform to the group's ideals or norms?
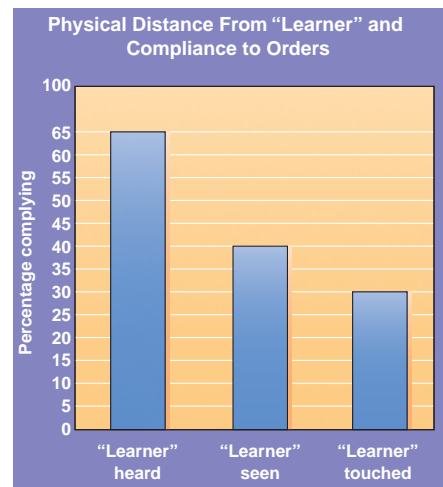
## Building Skills

**Interpreting a Graph** Milgram was upset about the willingness of his participants to obey an authority. In later experiments, he tried to find ways to reduce obedience. He found that distance between the teacher and the learner had an effect. The graph at right shows the percentage of "teachers" who obeyed orders at three different physical distances. Review the graph, then answer the questions below.

1. What percentage of teachers obeyed orders when they could only hear the learner?

2. What happened to the percentage of teachers who obeyed orders when they were in the same room and could see the learner? When they were asked to touch the learner?

3. What reasons can you give for the differences in the percentage of participants obeying authority in the three physical distances illustrated in the graph?

**Practice** and **assess** key social studies skills with **Glencoe Skillbuilder Interactive Workbook CD-ROM, Level 2.**

**Physical Distance From "Learner" and Compliance to Orders**

*Percentage complying*

| "Learner" heard | "Learner" seen | "Learner" touched |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 65 | 40 | 30 |

See the **Skills Handbook,** page 628, for an explanation of interpreting graphs.

**Todd Strasser's *The Wave* is based on a true incident that occurred in 1969 in a California classroom. Read this excerpt from the book to find out what happened when teacher Ben Ross took an unusual approach to teaching his class about the control of the Nazi party.**

## Reader's Dictionary

**punctual:** prompt; arriving on time
**precise:** exact; definite; strictly following rules

# THE WAVE

### BY TODD STRASSER

For the next twenty minutes the class practiced getting out of their seats, wandering around in apparent disorganization and then, at their teacher's command, quickly returning to their seats and the correct seated posture. Ben shouted orders more like a drill sergeant than a teacher. Once they seemed to have mastered quick and correct seating, he threw in a new twist. They would still leave their seats and return. But now they would return from the hallway and Ross would time them with a stopwatch.

On the first try, it took forty-eight seconds. The second time they were able to do it in half a minute. Before the last attempt, David had an idea.

"Listen," he told his classmates as they stood outside in the hall waiting for Mr. Ross's signal. "Let's line up in the order of who has to go the farthest to reach their desks inside. That way we won't have to bump into each other."

The rest of the class agreed. As they got into the correct order, they couldn't help noticing that Robert was at the head of the line. "The new head of the class," someone whispered as they waited nervously for their teacher to give them the sign. Ben snapped his fingers and the column of students moved quickly and quietly into the room. As the last student reached his seat, Ben clicked the stop-watch off. He was smiling. "Sixteen seconds."

The class cheered.

"All right, all right, quiet down," their teacher said, returning to the front of the room. To his surprise, the students calmed down quickly. The silence that suddenly filled the room was almost eerie. Normally the only time the room was that still, Ross thought, was when it was empty.

"Now, there are three more rules that you must obey," he told them. "One. Everybody must have pencils and note paper for note-taking. Two. When asking or answering a question, you must stand at the side of your seats. And three. The first words you say when answering or asking a question are, 'Mr. Ross.' All right?"

Around the room, heads nodded.

"All right," Mr. Ross said. "Brad, who was the British Prime Minister before Churchill?"

Still sitting at his seat, Brad chewed nervously on a fingernail. "Uh, wasn't it—"

But before he could say more, Mr. Ross quickly cut him off. "Wrong, Brad, you already forgot the rules I just told you." He looked across the room at Robert. "Robert, show Brad the proper procedure for answering a question."

Instantly Robert stood up next to his desk at attention. "Mr. Ross."

"Correct," Mr. Ross said. "Thank you, Robert."

"Aw, this is dumb," Brad mumbled.

"Just because you couldn't do it right," someone said.

"Brad," Mr. Ross said, "who was the Prime Minister before Churchill?"

This time Brad rose and stood beside his desk. "Mr. Ross, it was, uh, Prime Minister, uh."

"You're still too slow, Brad," Mr. Ross said. "From now on, everyone make your answers as short as possible, and spit them out when asked. Now, Brad, try again."

This time Brad snapped up beside his seat. "Mr. Ross, Chamberlain."

Ben nodded approvingly. "Now that's the way to answer a question. Punctual, precise, with punch. Andrea, what country did Hitler invade in September of 1939?"

Andrea, the ballet dancer, stood stiffly by her desk. "Mr. Ross, I don't know."

Mr. Ross smiled. "Still, a good response because you used proper form. Amy, do you know the answer?"

Amy hopped up beside her desk. "Mr. Ross, Poland."

"Excellent," Mr. Ross said. "Brian, what was the name of Hitler's political party?"

Brian quickly got out of his chair. "Mr. Ross, the Nazis."

Mr. Ross nodded. "That's good, Brian. Very quick. Now, does anyone know the official name of the party? Laurie?"

Laurie Sanders stood up beside her desk. "The National Socialist—"

"No!" There was a sharp bang as Mr. Ross struck his desktop with a ruler. "Now do it again correctly."

Laurie sat down, a confused look on her face. What had she done wrong? David leaned over and whispered in her ear. Oh, right. She stood up again. "Mr. Ross, the National Socialist German Workers Party."

"Correct," Mr. Ross replied.

Mr. Ross kept asking questions, and around the room students jumped to attention, eager to show that they knew both the answer and the correct form with which to give it. It was a far cry from the normally casual atmosphere of the classroom, but neither Ben nor his students reflected on that fact. They were too caught up in this new game. The speed and precision of each question and answer were exhilarating. Soon Ben was perspiring as he shouted each question out and another student rose sharply beside his or her desk to shout back a terse reply.

"Peter, who proposed the Lend-Lease Act?"

"Mr. Ross, Roosevelt."

"Right. Eric, who died in the death camps?"

"Mr. Ross, the Jews."

"Anyone else, Brad?"

"Mr. Ross, gypsies, homosexuals, and the feeble-minded."

"Good. Amy, why were they murdered?"

"Mr. Ross, because they weren't part of the superior race."

"Correct. David, who ran the death camps?"

"Mr. Ross, the S.S."

"Excellent."

Out in the hall, the bells were ringing, but no one in the classroom moved from their seats. Still carried by the momentum of the class's progress that period, Ben stood at the front of the room and issued the final order of the day. "Tonight, finish reading chapter seven and read the first half of chapter eight. That's all, class dismissed." Before him the class rose in what seemed like a single movement and rushed out into the hall.

"Wow, that was weird, man, it was like a rush," Brian gasped in uncharacteristic enthusiasm. He and some of the students from Mr. Ross's class were standing in a tight pack in the corridor, still riding on the energy they'd felt in the classroom.

## Analyzing the Reading

1. How is student participation different during this class?
2. What are the students' attitudes toward the new rules?
3. **Critical Thinking** Why do you think the students participated in the new system? Did pressure from the rest of the class have any influence on participation? Explain.