

Chapter 10

Group Socialization: Theory and Research

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ABSTRACT

Moreland and Levine (1982) proposed a model of group socialization that describes and explains the passage of individuals through groups. In that model, the relationship between the group and the individual is assumed to change in systematic ways over time and both parties are viewed as active social influence agents. This chapter summarizes the group socialization model, discusses theoretical elaborations and extensions of the model, and reviews some empirical studies stimulated by the model.

INTRODUCTION

The research literature on small groups is extensive, containing thousands of studies on such diverse topics as the ecology of groups, group composition, the structure of groups, conflicts within groups, and group performance (see Levine & Moreland, 1990, for a review of contemporary work). In spite of all this research, relatively little attention has been devoted to the *socialization* process in small groups. This neglect is unfortunate, because a number of interesting questions about group socialization remain to be answered (Zander, 1977). For example, why do groups recruit certain people and not others, and why are individuals attracted to some groups and not others? How

do groups instill commitment in their members, and how does this commitment affect members' behavior within the group? Why do groups have so much trouble expelling problem members, and why are members sometimes reluctant to leave unrewarding groups?

Although group socialization has been a neglected research topic, some studies have produced information relevant to the socialization process. Most of these studies, however, can be criticized on two important grounds. First, researchers have generally taken a restricted *temporal perspective*, focusing on only one phase of the socialization process. Thus, while work has been done on such topics as entry into groups (e.g. Aronson & Mills, 1959; Gerard & Mathewson, 1966; Putallaz & Gottman, 1981), the experiences of new group members (e.g. Nash & Heiss, 1967; Zander & Cohen, 1955; Ziller & Behringer, 1960), and exit from groups (e.g. Sagi, Olmsted, & Atelsek, 1955; Zander, 1976; Zurcher, 1970), little effort has been made to investigate how relationships between groups and their members change over time. Second, researchers have generally taken a narrow *social perspective*, emphasizing the group's rather than the individual's viewpoint. For example, while many studies have investigated how groups produce changes in new members (e.g. Nash & Wolfe, 1957; Vaught & Smith, 1980; Zander & Cohen, 1955), few studies have investigated how new members alter the groups that they join (e.g. Fine, 1976; Merri, 1949; Ziller & Behringer, 1960). This bias is unfortunate given the evidence that, at least under certain circumstances, individuals can substantially influence the groups to which they belong (e.g. Kruglanski & Mackie, 1990; Levine, 1989; Moscovici, 1985; Mugny & Perez, 1991; Nemeth, 1986).

In an effort to conceptualize the temporal change and reciprocal influence that characterize relationships between groups and their members, we have developed a model of 'group socialization' that describes and explains the passage of individuals through groups (Moreland & Levine, 1982). The goal of the model is to clarify the changes (affective, cognitive, and behavioral) that groups and individuals produce in one another from the beginning to the end of their relationship. The model assumes that the relationship between the group and the individual changes in systematic ways over time and views both parties as potential influence agents. It is meant to apply primarily (but not exclusively) to small, autonomous, voluntary groups, whose members interact on a regular basis, have affective ties with one another, share a common frame of reference, and are behaviorally interdependent. Thus, the model is relevant to many different kinds of groups, including sports teams, work units, social clubs, and religious sects.

In this chapter we first summarize our model of group socialization. We then present theoretical elaborations of two key components of the model (commitment and role transition) and use the model to clarify several other aspects of group dynamics. Finally, we review some empirical studies stimulated by the model.

THE GROUP SOCIALIZATION MODEL

Three psychological processes are assumed to underlie group socialization—*evaluation, commitment, and role transition*. Evaluation involves efforts by the group and the individual to assess and maximize one another's rewardingness. Commitment, which depends on the outcome of the evaluation process, is based on the group's and the individual's beliefs about the rewardingness of their own and alternative relationships. Finally, role transitions, which occur when commitment reaches a critical level (decision criterion), involve re-labelling the individual's relationship to the group and thereby changing how the two parties evaluate one another. The relationships among these three processes are shown in Figure 10.1.

Before discussing these processes in more detail, it is important to clarify our use of the term *group*. When we state that a group evaluates a particular person, feels commitment as a result, or has a decision criterion regarding a

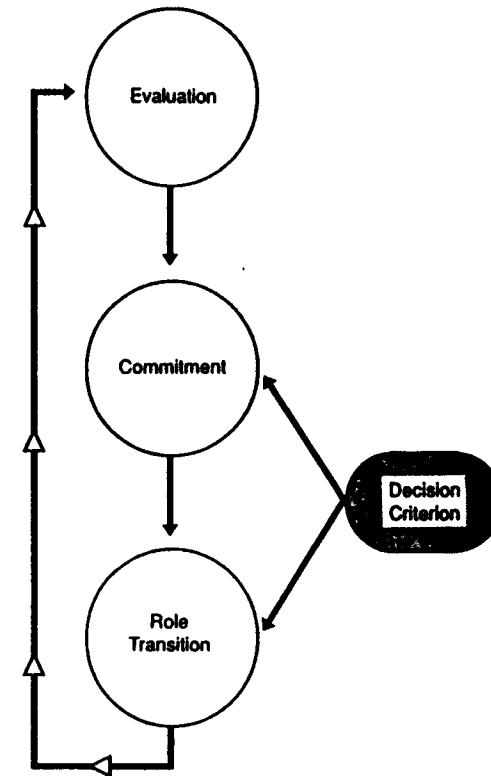


Figure 10.1 Psychological processes in group socialization

role transition, we do not mean to reify the group as an entity apart from its members. Rather, we view a 'group' response to an individual as a consensual response based on the shared views of the people who make up the group. When a faculty committee evaluating an assistant professor decides that her research accomplishments have been excellent and feels highly committed to her as a result, but believes that she should publish several more papers in order to be promoted, it makes sense to talk about group responses. This is not to say, of course, that groups always reach consensus easily or that all members have an equal impact on the group's responses. Nonetheless, most groups develop informal or formal mechanisms for reaching consensus about individual members.

Evaluation involves assessments of the rewardingness of relationships. Because every group has goals that it wants to accomplish, it evaluates individuals in terms of how much they contribute to goal attainment. This evaluation involves deciding which goals the person is expected to contribute to, determining the behavioral dimensions on which these contributions will be assessed, developing normative expectations for each dimension, and finally comparing this expected behavior against the person's actual behavior. If the individual fails to meet the group's expectations, the group may take some form of corrective action to reduce the discrepancy between expected and actual behavior. The individual engages in a similar evaluation process to determine how well the group satisfies his or her personal needs.

While evaluating the present rewardingness of their relationship, the group and the individual also may think back to how rewarding their relationship was in the past and think ahead to how rewarding it will be in the future. Both parties may also evaluate the past, present, and future rewardingness of their alternative relationships. These six evaluations combine to produce feelings of commitment on the part of the group and the individual. Commitment will be higher to the extent that both parties (1) remember their past relationship as more rewarding than previous alternative relationships, (2) view their present relationship as more rewarding than current alternative relationships, and (3) expect their future relationship to be more rewarding than future alternative relationships. A discussion of the complexities associated with combining evaluations of past, present, and future relationships can be found in Moreland and Levine (1982).

Commitment can have important consequences for the behavior of both the individual and the group. When an individual feels strong commitment toward a group, the person is likely to accept the group's goals and values, feel positive affect toward group members, work hard to fulfil group expectations and attain group goals, and seek to gain or maintain membership in the group. Similarly, a group that feels strong commitment toward an individual is likely to accept the individual's needs and values, feel positive affect toward the individual, work hard to fulfil the individual's expectations and satisfy his or

her needs, and seek to gain or retain the individual as a group member. Because relationships between groups and their members are smoother if the two parties feel equally committed to one another, they may 'test' one another's commitment from time to time (e.g. by mentioning attractive alternative relationships that they might enter).

Because the group's and the individual's commitment levels change over time, the nature of their relationship changes as well. These changes are governed by decision criteria, or specific levels of commitment indicating that a qualitative change in the relationship between the two parties is warranted. When a group's commitment to an individual reaches its decision criterion, the group will try to initiate a role transition. An individual whose commitment to a group reaches a personal decision criterion will make a similar effort. When a role transition occurs, the individual's relationship with the group is jointly relabeled, and the parties alter their expectations for one another's behavior. Role transitions often involve special ceremonies (i.e. rites of passage) designed to clarify that an important change has taken place. Following a role transition, evaluation continues, producing further changes in commitment and subsequent role transitions. In this way, the individual can pass through five phases of group socialization (investigation, socialization, maintenance, resocialization, and remembrance), separated by four role transitions (entry, acceptance, divergence, and exit). Figure 10.2 illustrates how the relationship between a group and an individual might change over time.

Initially, the group and the individual go through an *investigation* phase. During investigation, when the individual is a prospective member, the group engages in recruitment, looking for people who might contribute to the attainment of group goals. Similarly, the individual engages in reconnaissance, looking for groups that might contribute to the satisfaction of personal needs. If the commitment levels of both parties rise to their respective entrance criteria (EC), then the role transition of *entry* occurs and the individual becomes a new member.

The second phase of group membership is *socialization*. During socialization, the group attempts to change the individual so that he or she can contribute more to the attainment of group goals. Insofar as the group is successful, the individual undergoes assimilation. At the same time, the individual attempts to change the group so that it can contribute more to the satisfaction of personal needs. Insofar as the individual is successful, the group undergoes accommodation. If the commitment levels of both parties rise to their respective acceptance criteria (AC), then the role transition of *acceptance* occurs and the individual becomes a full member.

During the *maintenance* phase, both the group and the individual engage in role negotiation. The group attempts to find a specialized role for the individual that maximizes his or her contributions to the attainment of group goals, while the individual attempts to find a specialized role that maximizes the satisfaction of his or her personal needs. If this role negotiation succeeds, then

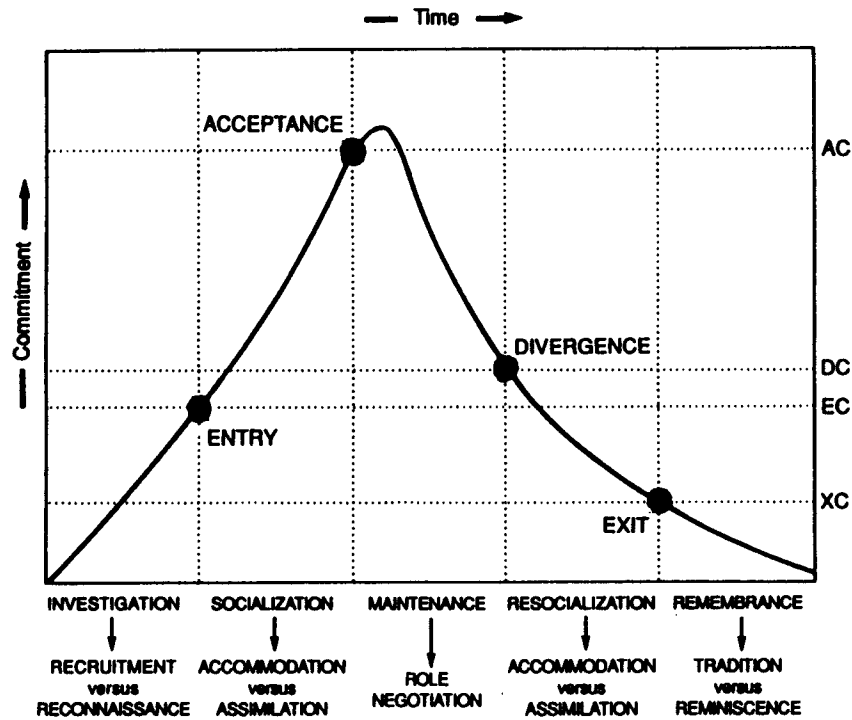


Figure 10.2 The passage of individuals through groups. (Note: Decision criteria include the entry criterion (EC), acceptance criterion (AC), divergence criterion (DC), and exit criterion (XC). Reproduced from Moreland & Levine (1982) by permission of Academic Press.

the commitment levels of both parties remain high. But if role negotiation fails and the commitment levels of both parties fall to their respective divergence criteria (DC), then the role transition of *divergence* occurs and the individual becomes a marginal member.

The fourth phase of group membership is *resocialization*. During resocialization, the group tries to restore the individual's contributions to the attainment of group goals, and the individual tries to restore the group's contributions to the satisfaction of personal needs. To the extent that both parties are successful, assimilation and accommodation again occur. If the group's and the individual's commitment levels rise to their respective divergence criteria, then the individual is returned to full membership. This special (and unusual) role transition might be called *convergence*. But if the commitment levels of both parties fall to their respective exit criteria (XC), then the role transition of *exit* occurs and the individual becomes an ex-member. This second and more common outcome of resocialization is shown in Figure 10.2.

Finally, the relationship between the group and the individual ends with a period of *remembrance*. During remembrance, the group recalls the individual's previous contributions to the attainment of group goals, and these memories become part of the group's tradition. Similarly, the individual engages in reminiscence about the group's contributions to the satisfaction of his or her personal needs. Both parties may also engage in an ongoing evaluation of their relationship, if they continue to influence one another's outcomes. Feelings of commitment between the group and the individual eventually stabilize at some level.

Figure 10.2 is an idealized representation of how the relationship between a group and an individual might change over time, and so it masks several complexities (see Moreland & Levine, 1982). For example, group and individual commitment levels may undergo sudden dramatic shifts, rather than changing gradually as the figure suggests. Group and individual decision criteria may not be stable over time, and changes in decision criteria can influence how long individuals spend in particular membership phases. If two adjacent decision criteria are quite similar, for example, the membership phase they demarcate will be very short. In contrast, if adjacent decision criteria are quite different, the membership phase they demarcate will be very long. Some decision criteria may vary in their positions relative to one another, which can produce variability in the number and order of role transitions that different individuals experience. For example, exit can occur during the investigation and socialization phases under certain circumstances. Finally, the figure assumes that the group and the individual share the same set of decision criteria and are equally committed to one another throughout their relationship. To the extent that this is not the case, conflict is likely to occur in the relationship.

ELABORATIONS AND EXTENSIONS OF THE MODEL

Commitment and role transition are key factors in group socialization. According to our model, an individual's commitment to a group and a group's commitment to an individual change as a function of the evaluation process, and a role transition occurs when both parties' commitment levels reach their respective decision criteria, which themselves are defined in terms of commitment. Since developing our original model of group socialization, we have explored the nature of commitment and role transition in more detail.

Commitment

In our initial formulation we adopted a *social exchange* view of commitment. We argued that the group and the individual evaluate the rewardingness of their past, present, and future relationship with one another, as well as their

past, present, and future relationships with other parties. According to this view, commitment between the group and the individual is high insofar as both parties view their relationship with one another as more rewarding than their alternative relationships. This social exchange approach suggests that feelings of commitment change over time for a variety of reasons, including the accumulation of memories about past relationships, ongoing developments in current relationships, and altered expectations about future relationships.

Although social exchange theory provides a useful way to think about group and individual commitment, other theoretical perspectives are also relevant. Two of these are self-categorization theory and identity theory (Moreland, Levine, & Cini, 1993). *Self-categorization* theory, although not specifically developed to explain commitment (Hogg & McGarty, 1990; Turner, 1985; Turner *et al.*, 1987), suggests some interesting ideas about it. For example, Hogg (1987) argued that cohesion within a group depends on how well its members match a group prototype (i.e. a mental image of the type of person who embodies the characteristics that make the group unique). According to Hogg, cohesion is strong to the extent that group members view one another as matching the group prototype. This analysis has implications for commitment if we assume that group commitment toward an individual depends on the person's prototypicality (as judged by all the other members), whereas individual commitment toward a group depends on the person's judgment of his or her own prototypicality, or perhaps the perceived prototypicality of all the other members.

A self-categorization perspective suggests that feelings of commitment can change over time due to shifts in the group prototype. One source of prototype shift is change in the composition of the group (Moreland & Levine, 1992) due to the arrival of new members and/or the departure of old members. And, even if the group's composition remains fixed, prototype shift can occur because of change in the social categorization process that yields the group prototype (e.g. members might compare their own group to a different outgroup). Feelings of commitment can also change due to shifts in member characteristics. In some cases, members actually change over time (e.g. by acquiring new skills); in other cases, members gradually discover that their peers have different characteristics than they initially thought. Changes in either the group's prototype or the (real or perceived) characteristics of members can alter the perceived prototypicality of everyone in the group, which in turn influences the group's commitment to each individual and each individual's commitment to the group.

Identity theory provides another interesting perspective on commitment (Stryker, 1968, 1987; Stryker & Serpe, 1982; Wells & Stryker, 1988). According to this theory, people internalize their social roles (e.g. work group member) as *identities*, and their commitment to these identities depends on the

number, intensity, and value of the relationships that would be lost if they no longer played the corresponding roles. As the total damage associated with the loss of these relationships increases, a person should become more committed to his or her identity as a group member. Similarly, a group's commitment to a particular member depends on the number, intensity, and value of the relationships that would be lost by other members if the person no longer played his or her role. As the total damage associated with the loss of these relationships increases, the group should become more committed to the person's identity as a group member.

An identity perspective suggests that feelings of commitment change over time due to changes in the social network, such as the entry of new members and the exit of old members. These network changes are important because they alter the number, intensity, and value of the relationships among network members. Thus, as more network relationships become contingent on a person's membership and/or those relationships become more intense or valuable, the group's commitment to the individual and the individual's commitment to the group should rise.

All three theories raise interesting questions about the commitment process. In the case of social exchange theory, which suggests that commitment depends on judgments about the past, present, and future value of group membership, questions arise regarding (1) the relative weight given to each of the three types of judgments in determining commitment and (2) the extent to which the different types of judgments are independent of one another. In the case of self-categorization theory, which suggests that commitment depends on judgments about the degree to which individual characteristics match a group prototype, questions can be asked about the extent to which prototypes are based on (1) negative, as well as positive, characteristics and (2) typical or ideal, as well as distinctive, characteristics. Finally, in the case of identity theory, which suggests that commitment depends on judgments about how relationships would change if individuals ceased playing particular roles, questions arise concerning the degree to which (1) relationships within social networks are really contingent on one another and (2) individuals try to manipulate one another's perceptions of those contingencies.

Role Transition

When the group and the individual feel equally committed to one another during all phases of their relationship and share the same decision criteria, role transitions proceed smoothly. Unfortunately, this happy state of affairs does not always prevail, and when it does not, the relationship between the group and the individual becomes strained.

To understand the sources and consequences of this strain, it is important to recognize that role transitions are influenced by six factors (Moreland &

Levine, 1984). These are the group's and the individual's commitment levels; their decision criteria; and their readiness for a role transition (defined as whether or not commitment has crossed the relevant decision criterion). As noted earlier, Figure 10.2 illustrates the simplest case, in which the group and the individual are always equally committed to one another, share the same set of decision criteria, and are (therefore) always mutually ready or unready for role transition. More complex cases can also arise, however. The six factors mentioned above can be conceptualized as three dimensions that reflect similarities and differences between the group and the individual. Thus, the group and the individual may (1) feel the same versus different commitment to one another, (2) hold the same versus different decision criteria, and (3) be mutually unready, differentially ready, or mutually ready for a role transition.

Figure 10.3 contains a 2 (decision criteria) \times 2 (levels of commitment) \times 3 (readiness for role transition) matrix based on these three dimensions. Each cell in the figure (with one exception) contains two diagrams, one above the diagonal and one below. Diagrams above the diagonals refer to role transitions (entry, acceptance) in which commitment must *rise* in order for the transition to occur. Diagrams below the diagonals refer to role transitions (divergence, exit) in which commitment must *fall* in order for the transition to occur. In all of the diagrams, dots represent group or individual commitment levels, and lines represent group or individual decision criteria. When only one dot or line appears in a diagram, the group and the individual share the same commitment level or decision criterion. When two dots or lines appear, the two parties have different commitment levels or decision criteria. It does not matter (for present purposes) which dot or line represents the group and which represents the individual. Note that one cell contains no diagrams; if the individual and the group are equally committed to one another and share the same decision criterion, then they cannot (by definition) be differentially ready for a role transition. It is also worth noting that additional diagrams could have been drawn for the cells in the far-right column of the figure.

This three-dimensional model is helpful in analyzing how groups and individuals anticipate, schedule, produce, and adjust to role transitions. The top row of Figure 10.3 illustrates cases in which *neither* the group nor the individual is ready for a role transition to occur. Nevertheless, the two parties may anticipate a future role transition, which can affect their current relations with one another. Anticipation of a role transition can involve expectancies about the probability that the role transition will actually occur, how and when the role transition will take place, and whether the new role relationship will be pleasant or unpleasant. We suggest that all these expectancies depend on the distance between each party's current level of commitment and its decision criterion. As that distance decreases, there should be a tendency to view the role transition as more probable, make more concrete plans for its production, and be more enthusiastic about its occurrence. This analysis suggests that

Readiness for Role Transition	Decision Criteria			
	Same		Different	
	Levels of Commitment			
	Same	Different	Same	Different
Mutual Unreadiness				
Differential Readiness				
Mutual Readiness				

Figure 10.3 Sources of strain associated with role transitions. (Note: In the diagrams, lines represent group or individual decision criteria and dots represent group or individual commitment levels. Diagrams above the diagonals refer to the role transitions of entry and acceptance; diagrams below the diagonals refer to the role transitions of divergence and exit). Reproduced from Moreland & Levine (1984) by permission of Plenum Publishing Corp.

the group and the individual should experience strain in their relationship as the distances between their respective commitment levels and decision criteria become increasingly unequal.

The middle row of Figure 10.3 illustrates cases in which *either* the group or the individual (but not both) is ready for a role transition to occur. As a result, the party whose commitment level has crossed its decision criterion will try to initiate a role transition, whereas the party whose commitment level has not crossed its decision criterion will resist that transition. We suggest that this situation will instigate a period of negotiation regarding the scheduling of the role transition. Negotiation involves the use of social influence tactics designed to hasten or delay the role transition. Such negotiation tactics will be successful to the extent that they raise or lower the commitment level or decision criterion of the party to which they are directed. As the distance between a party's commitment level and decision criterion increases, it should negotiate more forcefully. And, the relationship between the group and

individual should become strained as the sum of the distances between the two parties' commitment levels and decision criteria grows larger.

Finally, the bottom row of Figure 10.3 illustrates cases in which *both* the group and the individual are ready for a role transition to occur. Despite their mutual readiness for this change, the group and the individual may disagree about the production of the role transition. In particular, they may disagree about how quick, easy, and permanent the transition should be. Strain regarding the production of a role transition should increase as the distances between the group's and the individual's respective commitment levels and decision criteria become increasingly unequal. After a role transition has occurred, one or both parties may also have difficulty in adjusting to their new relationship. These difficulties arise from disagreements about how the two parties should behave toward one another now that their relationship has changed. Like strain associated with the production of a role transition, strain associated with adjustment to a new role relationship should increase as the distances between the group's and the individual's respective commitment levels and decision criteria become increasingly unequal.

In addition to exploring certain aspects of the group socialization model, such as commitment and role transition, we have used the model to analyze a variety of group phenomena, including group development, innovation in groups, and group culture. In each case, the group socialization perspective has clarified these phenomena and suggested a number of intriguing hypotheses.

Group Development

It is important to distinguish group socialization, which involves changes over time in the relationship between a group and its members, from group development, which involves changes over time in the group as a whole. The best-known theory of group development, proposed by Tuckman (1965; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977), posits that groups pass through five stages of development. During *forming*, members are anxious and uncertain about belonging to the group and behave cautiously as a result. During *storming*, members become more assertive and experience conflict while trying to change the group to satisfy their personal needs. During *norming*, members try to resolve their conflicts by negotiating rules for behavior. During *performing*, members work together co-operatively to achieve mutual goals. Finally, during *adjourning*, members disengage from both social/emotional and task activities within the group.

Work on group development has failed to recognize that individuals pass through several distinct phases of group membership (investigation, socialization, maintenance, resocialization, and remembrance), that members of the same group can be in different membership phases at any given time, and that the process of group development is likely to vary as a function of these

phases (Moreland & Levine, 1988). For example, the need to socialize new members and resocialize marginal members may often retard group development (Kaplan & Roman, 1961), because the resources and time devoted to socialization and resocialization are not available for activities that facilitate development. However, the impact of socialization and resocialization efforts on group development probably depends on how easily the group can assimilate new and marginal members. The easier it is for the group to produce assimilation, the less its development should suffer. New and marginal members who manage to produce accommodation in the group could also affect its development, either positively (by facilitating the group's transitions from one stage to another) or negatively (by inhibiting these transitions). Of course, it is not only new and marginal members who can affect group development. Prospective members could facilitate development by demanding improvements in the group before they join, whereas ex-members could inhibit development by demanding that the group remain as it was when they belonged.

The relationship between group socialization and group development is not a one-way street. Just as socialization can affect development, so development can affect socialization. Some kinds of group socialization activities rarely if ever occur during certain stages of group development. For example, during the forming stage of group development, investigation activities are common. However, because group norms have not evolved during this stage, socialization, maintenance, and resocialization activities cannot occur. And, if a person leaves the group during forming, neither that person nor the rest of the group is likely to engage in many remembrance activities. Group socialization activities that occur in more than one stage of group development also may operate differently in those stages. For example, socialization activities may differ in the performing and adjourning stages of group membership. Because groups in the adjourning stage feel more threatened than do groups in the performing stage, the former groups may view new members as more valuable and work harder to make them happy. Compared to groups in the performing stage, groups in the adjourning stage thus may put less pressure on new members to assimilate, lower their acceptance criteria for these people, and show more accommodation to them.

Innovation in Groups

Stimulated by the research of Moscovici and his colleagues, considerable attention has been given to innovation in groups. However, this work has failed to consider long-term temporal changes in the relationships between groups and their members. Our group socialization model suggests that such changes could affect both the process and outcome of innovation, which we define as any significant change that an individual produces in the structure, dynamics, or performance of a group (Levine & Moreland, 1985).

The three psychological processes (evaluation, commitment, and role transition) embodied in our model all suggest some general ways in which an individual might influence a group. Taking commitment as an example, the ability of a person to influence a group should be positively related to the level of commitment that he or she elicits from it. Innovation should also be related to the degree of 'commitment disequilibrium' between the group and the individual. Insofar as the group feels more committed to the individual than he or she feels toward the group, the group is more likely to allow innovation to occur. Finally, the individual's commitment toward the group should affect his or her motivation to make an innovation attempt. People whose commitment to a group is higher are probably less motivated to change the group than are those whose commitment is lower (although people with very low commitment may simply give up on the group).

Specific forms of innovation can also arise during each of the five phases of group membership, and so predictions about how individuals alter groups must take into account the relationship between them. Examples from three phases of group socialization can be used to illustrate this point.

During investigation, prospective members can often produce innovation in a group, even though they have not yet entered it. Such innovation may be unintentional, as when prospective members ask questions about the group that stimulate oldtimers to think about and change some aspect of the group's structure or dynamics (Sutton & Louis, 1987). In other cases, innovation may be intentional, as when prospective members demand changes ('anticipatory accommodation') by the group as incentives for joining. These changes might involve current alterations in the group and/or promises that alterations will occur after the individual becomes a member. Anticipatory accommodation could have important consequences above and beyond attracting new members. These include weakening the group's power to retain new members once they join (by making promises that cannot be kept) and alienating oldtimers (by 'overrewarding' new members).

During maintenance, full members frequently have high status and occupy leadership positions in the group, which should enhance their ability to produce innovation. Although full members can sometimes force innovations on the rest of the group, the consent and co-operation of others are usually required. In such cases, full members must build coalitions that support their desired innovations (Miller & Komorita, 1986). Building successful coalitions requires full members to consider the vulnerability of other members to social influence pressures. Full members should find it hardest to gain the support of other full members, somewhat easier to gain the support of new members and marginal members, and easiest to gain the support of prospective members. Ex-members may or may not be susceptible to influence, depending on how much full members can reward or punish them. Of course, the level of support that a coalition partner provides also varies as a function of his or her mem-

bership status. Full members typically strengthen a coalition more than do new and marginal members, who in turn are more valuable than prospective and ex-members.

During remembrance, ex-members can often produce innovation in the group even though they have already left it. Such innovation may reflect the ex-member's behavior before he or she departed, as when an ex-member who evokes especially positive memories raises the group's normative expectations and decision criteria for current members. An ex-member's behavior since leaving may also affect innovation, as when someone who has become quite successful since leaving the group is invited to help resolve group problems. Finally, the mere departure of a member may produce both positive changes (e.g. higher average levels of group performance, reductions in intra-group conflict) and negative changes (e.g. costs associated with replacing the ex-member, disruptions in the group's activities) within the group (Staw, 1980).

Group Culture

Socialization is particularly important in work groups, where members' outcomes often depend on their coworkers' performance. In such groups, oldtimers are highly motivated to assimilate newcomers quickly and effectively. Although a good deal of attention has been devoted to worker *training*, or the formal mechanisms that professional trainers use to transmit the specific task knowledge that workers need to perform their jobs, relatively little attention has been devoted to worker *socialization*, or the informal mechanisms that group members use to transmit the broad task and social knowledge that workers need to participate fully in the life of the group (cf. Feldman, 1989).

Much of what newcomers must learn during socialization is embodied in the group's *culture*, which includes a set of *shared thoughts* and a related set of *customs*. Shared thoughts involve knowledge about the group (e.g. what are the norms of our group?), knowledge about group members (e.g. what are the relationships among various people?), and knowledge about the group's task (e.g. what criteria are used to evaluate our work?). Customs, which are behavioral expressions of culture, involve routines (everyday procedures used by group members), accounts (stories about issues that concern group members), jargon (words and gestures that only group members understand), rituals (ceremonies that mark important group events), and symbols (objects that possess special meaning for group members).

Four classes of variables are likely to affect cultural transmission in work groups (Levine & Moreland, 1991; Moreland & Levine, 1989). First, cultural transmission can be affected by *newcomers' characteristics*. Newcomers often have knowledge about a group before entering it, because of prior memberships in similar groups, contacts with previous and current members, and so

on. This information can vary in favorability and accuracy, which in turn should affect newcomers' adaptation to the group. After entry occurs, newcomers' motivation and ability to acquire cultural information also might be influenced by their desire for acceptance (which is based on their commitment to the group) and by their existing task and social skills. These skills could have both direct and indirect effects on cultural learning. That is, newcomers who possess task skills should find it easier to understand the group task (a direct effect) and should also elicit more commitment and assistance from oldtimers (an indirect effect).

Second, cultural transmission can be affected by *newcomers' socialization tactics*. One such tactic is simply to fulfil oldtimers' expectations. Typically, newcomers are expected to be anxious, reserved, dependent, and conforming. Oldtimers are often more committed to newcomers who behave in these ways and hence more inclined to share information with them (cf. Putallaz & Gottman, 1981). Another newcomer tactic for acquiring cultural knowledge is to utilize patrons within the group. Such patrons include trainers (who are assigned to transmit information to newcomers), sponsors (who bring newcomers into the group), and mentors (who provide career development help and psychosocial support). Finally, newcomers can collaborate with one another in acquiring cultural knowledge (Kram & Isabella, 1985). The assistance that newcomers provide to one another can be either indirect (e.g. imitation and social comparison) or direct (e.g. provision of advice and joint problem solving).

Third, cultural transmission can be affected by *oldtimers' characteristics*. Because of their status and power, oldtimers typically have substantial control over the quantity and quality of cultural information that newcomers receive. The motivation and ability of oldtimers to transmit this information is likely to be influenced by their characteristics and experiences before newcomers enter the group. For example, oldtimers' motivation to transmit cultural knowledge may be higher when the group is currently failing (Fromkin, Klimoski, & Flanagan, 1972) and lower when they want to enhance their own status by possessing 'secret' information. And, oldtimers' ability to enculturate newcomers may be higher when the group has a strong culture and lower when the group has little experience with newcomers.

Finally, cultural transmission can be affected by *oldtimers' socialization tactics*. One such tactic is the use of harsh initiation ceremonies (see Aronson & Mills, 1959; Gerard & Mathewson, 1966), which increase newcomers' commitment to the group (perhaps via cognitive dissonance) and thus strengthen their motivation to learn about the group. Another tactic is 'encapsulating' new members within the social milieu of the group, thereby increasing their exposure to oldtimers and decreasing their exposure to outsiders. A third tactic is training new members in a consistent manner, so that different cohorts share the same knowledge and values and hence can work easily to-

gether. Finally, groups can periodically assess newcomers' knowledge about group culture and deliver appropriate sanctions contingent on the amount and accuracy of this knowledge.

RESEARCH ON THE INITIAL PHASES OF GROUP SOCIALIZATION

Our group socialization model suggests many hypotheses about a range of small group phenomena, including group development, innovation in groups, and group culture. Our own program of research, however, has focused on the investigation and socialization phases of group membership. Below we describe three studies that clarify how individuals and groups behave during investigation. Investigation is the initial phase of group membership and involves reconnaissance of groups by individuals and recruitment of individuals by groups. These studies were not generally designed as formal tests of the group socialization model, but rather as efforts to obtain basic information about one of the membership phases identified in that model. This strategy was dictated by the paucity of research on investigation and the importance of this phase for the subsequent relationship between a group and its members.

Why has so little attention been paid to investigation? One reason is methodological. Most researchers investigate laboratory groups, in which several strangers are brought together for a brief period of real or simulated interaction. Under these conditions, issues of joining simply do not arise. A second reason for the failure to study investigation is theoretical. Most group theories are static rather than dynamic, ignoring temporal changes in the relations among group members. As a result, researchers tend to neglect issues of joining, even in natural groups where they are relevant.

This lack of attention to investigation is unfortunate, because the initial phase of group socialization is critical to the long-term success of both groups and individuals. Groups that do not engage in effective recruitment of new members have difficulty accomplishing their goals, and individuals who do not engage in effective reconnaissance of new groups have difficulty satisfying their needs. Unsuccessful investigation, particularly if prolonged, can have serious consequences for both parties.

Individual Reconnaissance

In order for reconnaissance to proceed successfully, the individual must do three things. First, the person must identify potentially desirable groups. This involves deciding what kinds of groups he or she wants to join and then determining the availability of these groups in the environment. Second, the person must evaluate the degree to which membership in available groups will

satisfy his or her personal needs. This involves acquiring information about the probable rewardingness of memberships in these groups. Finally, assuming that commitment to a particular group exceeds the individual's entry criterion, he or she must take steps to enter that group. For this role transition to occur, the person must often convince the group to accept him or her as a member.

Many factors can influence the reconnaissance process, including a prospective member's acquaintance with group members, attraction to group activities, and prior experience in other groups. This last factor is particularly interesting, because although prior experience has been found to predict later group participation (Hanks, 1981; Hanks & Eckland, 1978), the psychological mechanisms underlying this relationship have not been investigated. Specifically, no attention has been given to how prior group memberships affect the subsequent reconnaissance activities of former members.

In one study (Pavelchak, Moreland, & Levine, 1986), we explored the impact of high school group experiences on the reconnaissance activities of freshmen at a large university. Prior to the fall semester, 1550 freshmen completed an orientation questionnaire assessing their experiences in high school groups and expectations about college groups. On the evening before the first day of class, many new students attended a university-sponsored Activities Fair, which was designed to introduce them to campus groups. On the two evenings following the Fair, a representative sample of 220 students who had completed the orientation questionnaire were interviewed by telephone about their behavior at the Fair.

Reconnaissance begins when the individual attempts to identify potentially desirable groups. We predicted that students whose experiences in high school groups were more positive would try harder to identify potentially desirable college groups and that this activity would be mediated by the belief that memberships in such groups were useful for achieving personal goals. Several questions in the orientation questionnaire were used to test these hypotheses. First, we measured students' perceptions of the enjoyableness and importance of their high school group memberships. Next, we assessed students' beliefs about the value of college group memberships for achieving important personal goals. Finally, we asked students to list campus groups that they had already considered joining and to name which group (if any) they were most likely to join. Students who named such a group were labeled 'joiners'; those who did not were labeled 'loners'. We estimated each student's efforts to identify potentially desirable groups by counting the number of prospective groups mentioned and noting whether the person was a loner or a joiner.

Complete data were provided by 1134 students. We used structural equations analyses to test our hypotheses about the determinants of reconnaissance activity. Figure 10.4 shows the standardized solution for a model based on our hypotheses. Underlying constructs are drawn as circles; measures of

those constructs are drawn as boxes. Parameter values linking circles to boxes represent the estimated validities of construct measures; parameter values linking constructs to one another represent the estimated strengths of particular causal relationships. Some parameters (in parentheses) were set to 1.00 either for scaling purposes or to ensure that the variance in all the constructs could be identified. All parameter estimates were statistically significant. As the causal model in the figure indicates, the paths that we expected emerged quite clearly, although there was also an unexpected direct path linking high school group experiences to college reconnaissance activity. The overall chi-square for the model was nonsignificant, which is remarkable for so large a sample, and the ratio of the chi-square to its degrees of freedom was small. In addition, all of the model's residuals were small and showed no clear pattern. Consistent with predictions, students whose experiences in high school groups were more positive (i.e. important and enjoyable) tried harder to identify potentially desirable college groups, primarily because of their belief that memberships in such groups would be useful for achieving personal goals.

Once new students have identified potentially desirable campus groups, they must next evaluate the probable rewardingness of belonging to those groups. These evaluations require information about the rewards and costs associated with membership in each group. Because such information is often difficult to obtain, prospective members may not have an accurate picture of what lies in store for them after they join the group. In fact, research on reconnaissance in business settings suggests that people are frequently

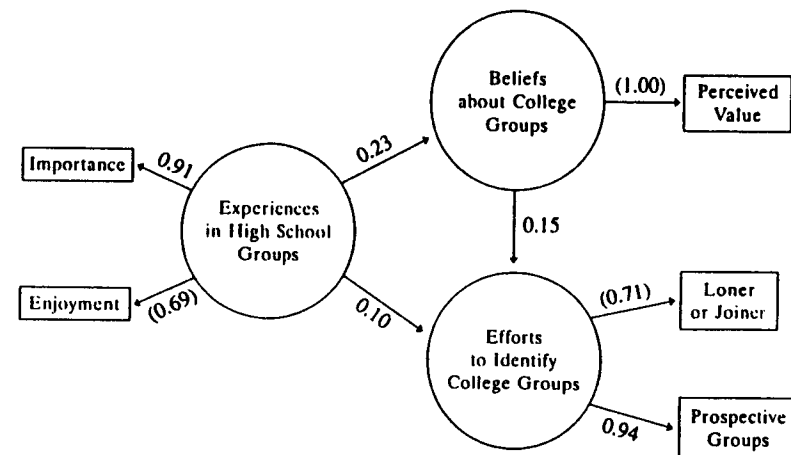


Figure 10.4 Causal model relating students' experiences in high school groups, beliefs about the usefulness of college groups for achieving personal goals, and efforts to identify potentially desirable college groups. Reproduced from Pavelchak, Moreland & Levine (1986) by permission. © 1986 American Psychological Association

inaccurate in evaluating prospective groups (Louis, 1980; Van Maanen, 1977; Wanous, 1980). They tend to be overly optimistic, focusing on the rewards rather than the costs of group membership. This optimism has negative consequences for new members after they join the group, producing anger and resentment when the group is not as rewarding as they expected it to be.

Although students should make relatively positive evaluations of campus groups they are considering joining, we expected this optimism to be tempered by previous experience in relevant high school groups. Compared to inexperienced students, experienced students (i.e. those who belonged to high school groups that were similar to the college groups they considered joining) should be familiar with both the rewards *and* the costs of membership and hence should make more balanced evaluations of the college groups. We also expected that experienced students' evaluations of college groups would be influenced by the kinds of experiences they had in relevant high school groups. Specifically, we predicted that the more positive a student's experiences in a high school group, the more optimistic he or she would be about belonging to a similar group in college.

These hypotheses were tested using data from 499 joiners. These students had listed the rewards and costs they expected to experience in their chosen college group, rated the strength and probability of each reward and cost (on 10-point scales), and indicated their overall commitment to their chosen group on a special 'feeling thermometer'. We determined if the joiners had prior experience in a relevant group by comparing the campus group they expected to join with the groups they had belonged to in high school. To qualify as relevant, a high school group had to have the same name as its college analogue (e.g. the marching band). Using this criterion, we found 229 students with and 270 students without prior experience in a relevant high school group.

Looking at the data for all the joiners, we found that the students were indeed optimistic about the group they had chosen. They believed they would experience significantly more rewards than costs in their chosen group ($M_s = 2.53$ and 1.22). They also expected the rewards of group membership to be significantly stronger than the costs ($M_s = 9.14$ and 3.55) and believed that the rewards were significantly more likely to occur than were the costs ($M_s = 8.85$ and 5.05). As predicted, however, this optimism was tempered by prior group experiences. Compared to the inexperienced joiners, the experienced joiners listed significantly more rewards ($M_s = 2.68$ and 2.41) *and* significantly more costs ($M_s = 1.39$ and 1.09) associated with college group membership. In addition, they assigned significantly higher likelihoods to the costs they listed ($M_s = 5.46$ and 4.71).

Next, we examined the responses of joiners who belonged to a relevant high school group to see if their evaluations of college groups reflected their prior experiences. We correlated the enjoyment and importance ratings that these

students made of their relevant high school group with the evaluations that they made of the college group they had chosen. Consistent with our hypothesis, students whose experiences in a relevant high school group were more positive were indeed more optimistic about belonging to a similar college group. Specifically, students whose high school group membership was more enjoyable and important expected the rewards of membership in their prospective college group to be significantly more positive and felt significantly more committed to that group on the feeling thermometer.

Our group socialization model suggests that when a prospective member's commitment to a group rises to his or her entry criterion, that person will attempt to join the group. One factor that may stimulate prospective members to join desirable college groups is previous experience in relevant high school groups. Our hypothesis about the role of previous experience was based on Fazio and Zanna's (1981) discovery that attitudes formed on the basis of direct experience are more predictive of subsequent behavior than are attitudes formed by indirect means. Membership in a relevant high school group can be viewed as a form of direct experience with its college analogue. This experience should strengthen the linkage between students' feelings of commitment toward that college group and their attempts to join it. We therefore predicted that subjects who wanted to join a campus group would be more likely to approach that group if they belonged to a relevant high school group than if they did not.

Our sample for testing this hypothesis was restricted to members of the telephone interview sample who were joiners, who attended the Activities Fair, and whose chosen group was represented at the Fair. Thirty students (14 with and 16 without prior experience in a relevant high school group) met these criteria. During their interview, these students were asked questions about their behavior toward groups at the Activities Fair, including which groups they wanted to visit, which groups they actually visited, and which groups they registered with. In spite of our small sample size and the difficulty some students had contacting groups at the Fair (because the Fair was crowded and group representatives came and left at different times), we obtained evidence for our hypothesis. Students who belonged to a relevant high school group were more likely than those who did not belong to (1) want to visit their chosen group (64% versus 31%), (2) actually visit that group (50% versus 25%), and (3) leave their name with the group (43% versus 19%). As we predicted, then, subjects who wanted to join a campus group were more likely to approach that group if they belonged to a relevant high school group than if they did not. Additional analyses indicated that this effect did *not* extend to campus groups that were similar to the student's chosen group. In fact, students were *less* likely to approach such groups if they belonged to a relevant high school group than if they did not. Apparently, previous experience caused students to be very selective in their choice of new groups.

The findings of this study suggest that prior membership in a group can indeed affect the behavior of ex-members of that group. People who had positive experiences in one group setting were more optimistic about their probable group experiences in a second setting and more likely to seek membership in groups they found desirable. These results raise several interesting questions. For example, how does prior experience in a high school group affect a person's later adjustment to a similar college group? Given that 'realistic job previews' can avert new employees' disappointment about negative aspects of their jobs (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1985), perhaps experience in a high school group facilitates adjustment to a similar college group. In addition, *why* were students who belonged to a relevant high school group more likely than others to approach their chosen college group? Attitudes acquired through direct experience may have stronger effects on behavior for several reasons, such as a larger informational base, greater accessibility, and so on (Fazio & Zanna, 1981).

In a second reconnaissance study (Brinthaup, Moreland, & Levine, 1991), we investigated three possible sources of optimism about future experiences in groups. First, prospective members' optimism may reflect the recruitment efforts of the groups that they plan to join. Because most groups attempt to foster a positive public image, particularly when recruiting new members, the information that prospective members receive may be positively biased. Prospective members may thus be optimistic because they have been given more information during their recruitment about the rewards than about the costs of group membership. Second, prospective members' optimism may reflect their efforts to cope with feelings of dissonance about the group that they plan to join. Although prospective members do not yet belong to the group, they may express their commitment to it in several ways, such as attending the group's meetings or praising the group to friends and relatives. These behavioral manifestations of commitment may produce dissonance when costs associated with group membership are discovered. The desire to reduce such dissonance may cause prospective members to seek and remember positive information about the group, while avoiding, discounting, or forgetting negative information. Finally, the optimism of prospective members may arise from a general need for self-enhancement. There is substantial evidence that people (at least non-depressed people) want to view themselves in a positive light. One way to achieve this goal is to harbor self-serving illusions (Taylor & Brown, 1988). These illusions include overly positive self-evaluations, an exaggerated sense of personal control, and unrealistic optimism about the future. The last illusion is especially intriguing. There is evidence that the average person believes he or she is more likely than others to experience positive events and less likely to experience negative events in such domains as health, marriage, and career (Alloy & Ahrens, 1987; Hoorens, 1993; Weinstein, 1980, 1987). Perhaps this illusion affects expectations about group membership as well.

We conducted a study to investigate these three sources of optimism among prospective group members. Two hundred college freshmen were asked to list, for both themselves and the average student, the rewards and costs of membership in a campus group that they were interested in joining. They were also asked to rate the strength and probability of each reward and cost (on 10-point scales). Students then answered five questions about the recruitment activities of the group (e.g. 'Has the information that you received from these group members been primarily positive or negative?', 'How much time and energy have group members spent trying to convince you to join this group?') and five questions about possible reasons for feeling dissonant about their chosen groups (e.g. 'How much time and effort have you put into finding out information about the group?', 'To what extent are people outside of the group, such as your friends or relatives, aware of your interest in joining this group?').

As we found previously (Pavelchak, Moreland, & Levine, 1986), subjects were optimistic about membership in their chosen groups (see Figure 10.5). Subjects expected to experience significantly more rewards than costs in their chosen group. They also viewed these rewards as significantly stronger than the costs and as significantly more likely to occur.

To simplify subsequent analyses we constructed a composite index of optimism that reflected the difference between the expected overall rewardingness and costliness of group membership for each subject. We also

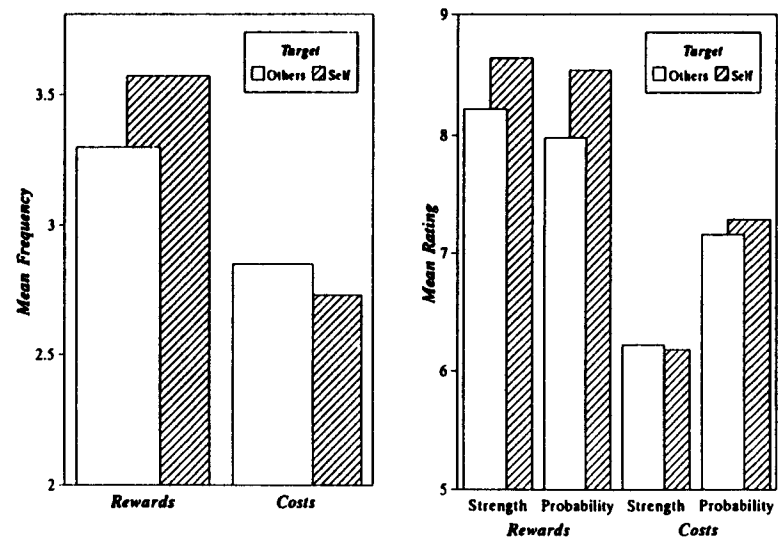


Figure 10.5 Expectations about the rewards and costs of group membership for self and other. (Note: Strength and probability ratings could range from 1 to 10)

constructed separate recruitment and dissonance scales by combining subjects' responses on the relevant questions. In both cases, subjects' responses on the various questions were highly correlated, and coefficient alphas were high (0.78 and 0.80). To assess the effects of recruitment and dissonance on optimism, we performed two kinds of analyses. First, we regressed the optimism index on the recruitment and dissonance scale scores. Second, we carried out extreme groups analyses comparing the optimism scores of subjects in the top and bottom quartiles of the recruitment and dissonance scale distributions. These analyses indicated that neither group recruitment effort nor dissonance was an important determinant of prospective members' optimism.

Next, we examined the impact of self-enhancement on optimism (see Figure 10.5). We have already seen that subjects were optimistic about how they would fare in their chosen groups. As the figure shows, subjects were also optimistic about how others would fare in these groups. Of course, the critical test of self-enhancement as a source of optimism rests on the *difference* between subjects' expectations for themselves versus others. Comparisons of the reward measures indicated that subjects expected significantly more rewards for themselves than for others, regarded their own rewards as significantly more positive than the rewards of others, and believed that their own rewards were significantly more likely to occur than those of others. Comparisons regarding costs indicated that subjects expected significantly more costs for others than for themselves. Finally, the mean optimism index score based on subjects' expectations for themselves (140.40) was significantly greater than a similar score based on subjects' expectations for others (91.14). Taken as a whole, these data suggest that self-enhancement is indeed an important source of optimism among prospective group members.

Were subjects especially optimistic for themselves because they expected to experience *different* rewards and costs than others would experience, even within the same groups? To explore this issue, we compared the various rewards and costs that each subject listed for himself or herself and for others. Each reward and cost was classified as either 'shared' (experienced by both oneself and others) or 'unique' (experienced by either oneself or others, but not both). When we compared the shared and unique outcomes of group membership, we found similar patterns in the two cases. Subjects were more optimistic for themselves than for others on *both* shared outcomes and unique outcomes. For example, someone who expected everyone in a group to make new friends still believed that he or she would make more and better friends than others would. This optimism about shared outcomes is especially strong evidence for self-enhancement.

Finally, we investigated whether the type of campus group that subjects wished to join influenced their sources of optimism. We focused on the four types of groups that were most popular in our sample: fine arts and media groups, sports and recreation groups, student governance groups, and fratern-

nities and sororities. Fraternities and sororities were perceived as making stronger recruitment efforts than the other types of groups, and they also elicited stronger feelings of dissonance. Separate regression analyses were conducted for each type of group using recruitment scale scores or dissonance scale scores to predict scores on the self-optimism index. Only one regression equation was significant: dissonance predicted optimism for students planning to join fraternities and sororities. These data suggest that dissonance, if aroused, can indeed influence optimism. Finally, self-enhancement was consistently associated with optimism. For all four kinds of groups, subjects' scores on the self-optimism index were significantly higher than their scores on the other-optimism index, and the size of this effect did not vary as a function of group type.

These results led us to attribute students' optimism about campus groups to a general need for self-enhancement, but cognitive as well as motivational forces could lead people to assume that the future will be better for themselves than for others. Perhaps it is easier for people to imagine how *they themselves* would cope with the rewards and costs of group membership than to imagine how *others* would do so. It would be useful, therefore, to know *why* prospective members expect campus groups to be more enjoyable for themselves than for others. Another unresolved issue is whether our students were really *overly* optimistic about their chosen groups. To what extent do the expectations of students who plan to join a campus group match the actual rewards and costs experienced by those same students after they become group members? Finally, little is known about the kinds of expectations that groups have for their prospective members. Are groups, like individuals, optimistic about their future relationships?

Group Recruitment

The two studies reviewed thus far dealt with a neglected aspect of group process, namely the reconnaissance activities of prospective members during the investigation phase of group membership. More research attention also needs to be devoted to the other side of investigation, namely the recruitment activities of groups.

One potentially important determinant of a group's recruitment activities is its staffing level. The staffing level of a group is defined as the difference between how many people actually belong to the group and how many people are needed for optimal performance. Research suggests that, compared to members of adequately and overstaffed groups, members of understaffed groups work harder, engage in a wider variety of tasks, assume more responsibility for the group's performance, and feel more involved in the group and important to it (e.g. Arnold & Greenberg, 1980; Perkins, 1982; Petty & Wicker, 1974; Wicker *et al.*, 1976; Wicker & Mehler, 1971).

Apart from altering their effort and involvement in the group, members of under- and overstaffed groups could also respond to staffing problems by trying to alter group composition. That is, understaffed groups could decide to become more 'open' to new members, whereas overstaffed groups could decide to become more 'closed' (see Ziller, 1965). Both strategies would affect the number of full members who belonged to the group and thereby alter its staffing level. Efforts by understaffed groups to obtain more full members seem quite consistent with our group socialization model—understaffed groups are probably more committed to their members than are overstaffed groups, because members of understaffed groups work harder to achieve group goals and are more difficult to replace. As a group becomes more understaffed, it thus becomes more likely to (1) seek many recruits during the investigation phase of membership, (2) adopt a relatively low entry criterion for the role transition from prospective member to new member, (3) emphasize accommodation rather than assimilation during the socialization phase of membership, and (4) adopt a relatively low acceptance criterion for the role transition from new member to full member.

We recently conducted a study designed to identify the problems associated with under- and overstaffing and to test the above hypotheses regarding the impact of staffing levels on group recruitment and socialization practices (Cini, Moreland, & Levine, 1993). Our data came from interviews with the leaders of 93 campus groups, ranging from social clubs to honoraries. Leaders were asked about the actual and ideal staffing levels of their group, how small or large the group would have to become before staffing problems arose and what kinds of problems would develop, and the group's recruitment activities toward prospective members and socialization activities toward new members.

Some interesting differences between leaders' perceptions of under- and overstaffing were observed. When asked whether their groups could ever become too small or too large, 87% of the leaders agreed that understaffing was possible, whereas only 62% agreed that overstaffing was possible, a statistically significant difference. To determine how small or large a group must become to seem understaffed or overstaffed, we divided the number of members that each leader regarded as too few or too many by the actual size of his or her group. The results are summarized in Figure 10.6.

The figure contains two cumulative frequency distributions, one for understaffing and the other for overstaffing. The horizontal axis shows a range of potential group sizes, expressed as percentages of actual group sizes. The vertical axis shows the cumulative proportion of leaders who would regard their groups as under- or overstaffed at each potential size. As indicated by the steeper slope for under- than for overstaffing, groups were much more sensitive to having 'too few' members than 'too many'.

Leaders mentioned about the same number of problems for under- and overstaffing, but they described different problems and different solutions in

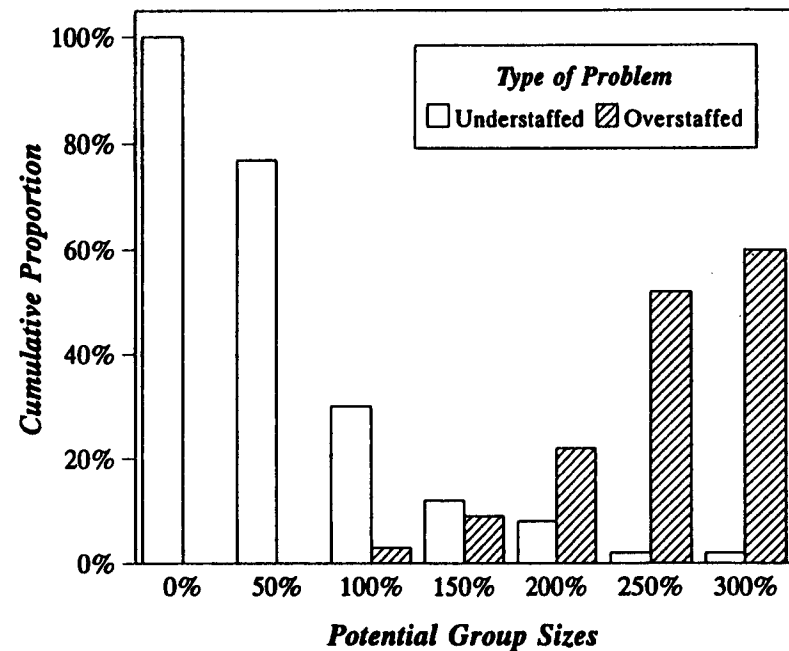


Figure 10.6 Sensitivity to under- and over-staffing. Reproduced from Cini, Moreland & Levine (1993) by permission. © 1993 American Psychological Association

the two cases. The most common problems arising from understaffing were poor group performance, fatigue and burnout, loss of resources, and member homogeneity. The most common solutions for these problems were to recruit more members or reorganize the group. The most common problems arising from overstaffing were apathy and boredom, alienation, disorganization, strained resources, and clique formation. The most common solutions for these problems were to encourage current members to work hard, restrict membership in the group, punish deviates more harshly, or divide the group into subgroups. We were surprised to find that, even though under- and overstaffing produced about the same number of problems, more solutions were proposed for under- than for overstaffing. Perhaps the problems produced by understaffing are more difficult to solve, or the solutions applied to those problems are less effective. We did find that the solutions proposed for understaffing were more 'generic', in the sense that they could be applied to a broader range of problems. Because they were less closely linked to specific problems, these solutions may have been less effective.

Analyses of the relationships between group staffing level (defined as ideal group size divided by actual size) and investigation and socialization practices indicated, as predicted, that understaffed groups were relatively open to

prospective and new members. Regarding prospective members, groups that were more understaffed wanted significantly more recruits, had significantly lower entry criteria, sought significantly fewer special qualities in recruits, and were significantly more likely to allow members to enter the group at any time. Regarding new members, groups that were more understaffed gave new members significantly fewer special duties, evaluated the behavior of new members significantly less often and used significantly fewer evaluation methods, were significantly more lenient with new members who caused problems, and had significantly lower acceptance criteria. These results were quite robust—effects of staffing level on the recruitment of prospective members and socialization of new members were similar across different types of campus groups and different levels of leader experience.

Many intriguing questions remain about the impact of group staffing levels on recruitment and socialization practices. For example, when staffing problems arise in a group, do all members respond in similar ways or are there individual differences in responses to under- and overstaffing? And what role do people outside the group, such as authorities, play in detecting a group's staffing problems and shaping its responses to them? Finally, can the same group be understaffed for some tasks and overstaffed for others, and how could its recruitment and socialization practices be altered to cope with such diverse problems?

CONCLUSION

Several commentators (e.g. Steiner, 1986) have lamented the decline of social psychological research on small groups during the last 20 years. This decline may be attributable, at least in part, to the fact that most investigators have been content to study artificial laboratory groups that have neither a past nor a future. This reliance on short-term groups of strangers is unfortunate, because it has inhibited research on some of the most interesting features of natural groups.

Most natural groups are very different from the pallid laboratory creations of social psychologists. Rather than existing for a short period of time, natural groups often endure for months or years. Members move in and out of the group at different times, rather than all entering and exiting together. The group seeks to ensure its viability by recruiting promising new members and expelling troublesome old members. A group's expectations and behaviors regarding an individual, and an individual's expectations and behaviors regarding a group, often differ as a function of how long the individual has been a group member. These aspects of group life are fascinating, but in order to understand them researchers must develop more dynamic theories that can account for temporal changes in the relations between groups and their members.

Our model of group socialization represents one promising effort in this direction. In the present chapter we discussed three psychological processes assumed to underlie group socialization (evaluation, commitment, and role transition), as well as five phases of group membership (investigation, socialization, maintenance, resocialization, and remembrance) and the four role transitions separating these phases (entrance, acceptance, divergence, and exit). Next, we presented more detailed analyses of commitment and role transition and used the group socialization model to clarify several other aspects of group dynamics, including group development, innovation in groups, and group culture. Finally, we described three studies dealing with the investigation phase of group membership, two involving individual reconnaissance and one involving group recruitment. These studies, together with others we are completing on the socialization phase of group membership, demonstrate the feasibility and utility of investigating how the relations between groups and their members change over time.

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