

# Group influence



# What is conformity?

- One of the key ways that a society or culture passes down its values and behaviors to its members is through an **indirect** form of social influence called **conformity**.
- **Conformity** is the tendency to adjust one's thoughts, feelings, or behavior in ways that are in agreement with those of a particular individual or group, or with accepted standards about how a person should behave in specific situations (social norms).

# Types of Conformity

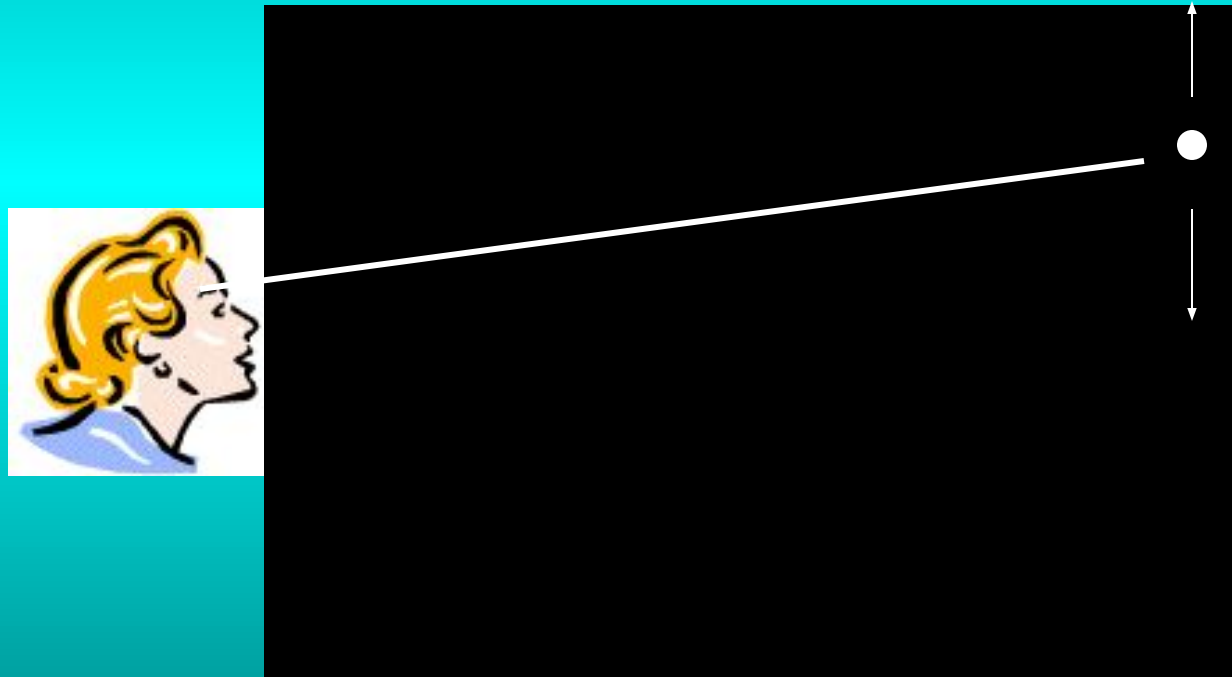
- Private Conformity: Changes in both overt behavior and beliefs.
  - Sherif autokinetic effect
- Public Conformity: Superficial change in overt behavior only.
  - Asch line-matching

**Jenness (1932)** was the first psychologist to study conformity. His experiment was an ambiguous situation involving a glass bottle filled with **beans**. He asked participants individually to estimate how many beans the bottle contained. Jenness then put the group in a room with the bottle, and asked them to provide a group estimate through discussion.

Participants were then asked to estimate the number on their own again to find whether their initial estimates had altered based on the influence of the majority. Jenness then interviewed the participants individually again, and asked if they would like to change their original estimates, or stay with the group's estimate. **Almost all changed their individual guesses to be closer to the group estimate.**



**Autokinetic Effect:** A perceptual phenomenon where a rather small and stationary dot of light in a dark environment **appears to move**. It is believed to happen because the perception of movement is made relative to a point of reference. In the dark, no point of reference is present. Consequently, the motion of a small point of light is not definable.



# Sherif Autokinetic Effect Experiment

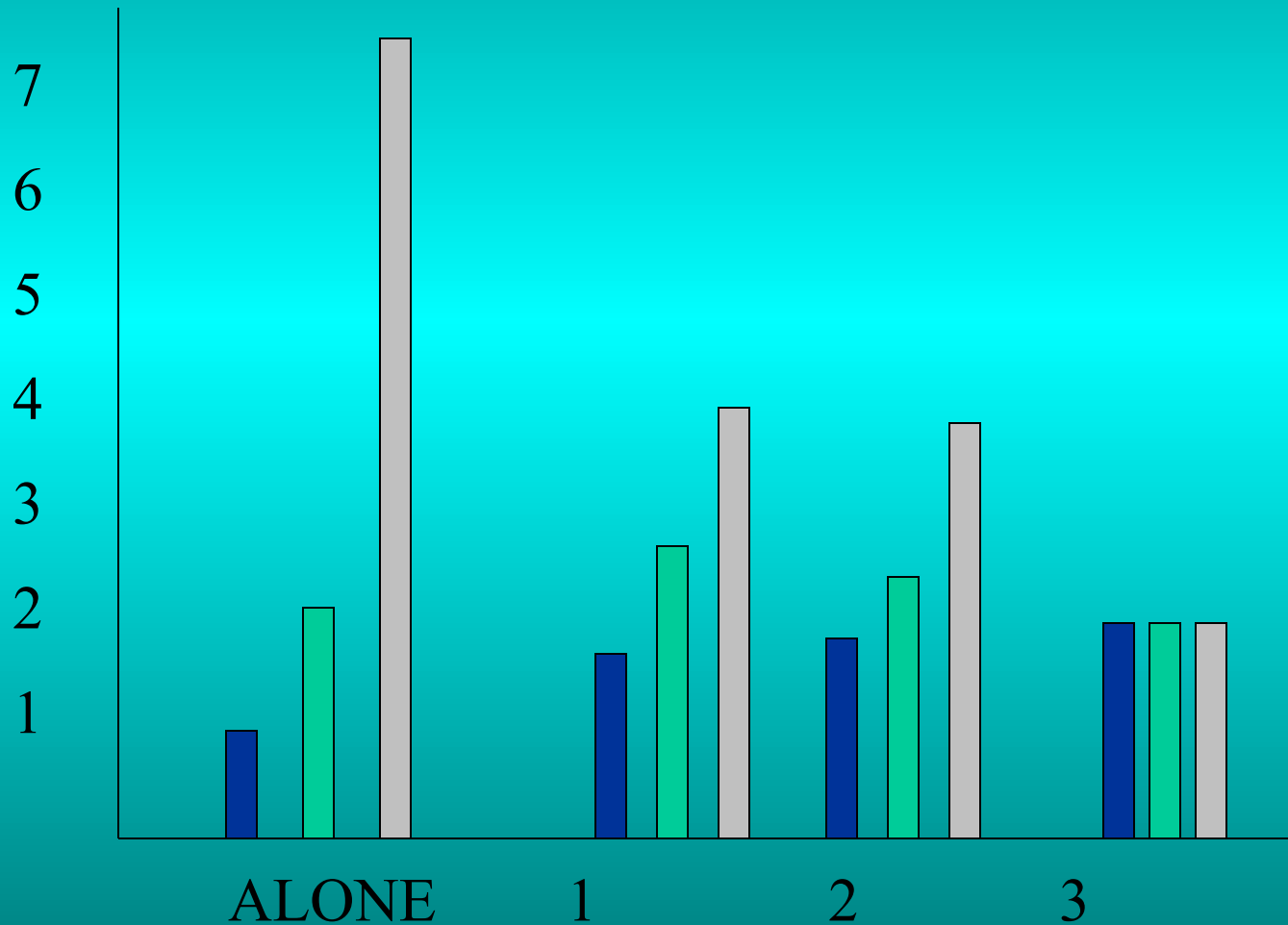
**Aim:** Sherif conducted an experiment with the aim of demonstrating that people conform to group norms when they are put in an ambiguous (i.e. unclear) situation.

**Method:** Sherif used a lab experiment to study conformity. He used the autokinetic effect – this is where a small spot of light (projected onto a screen) in a dark room will appear to move, even though it is still (i.e. it is a visual illusion).

It was discovered that when participants were individually tested their estimates on **how far the light moved varied considerably** (e.g. from 20cm to 80cm). The participants were then tested in groups of three. Sherif manipulated the composition of the group by putting together two people whose estimate of the light movement when alone was very similar, and one person whose estimate was very different. Each person in the group had to say aloud how far they thought the light had moved.

# Sherif's Conformity Studies Using the Autokinetic Effect

Movement in inches



SUBJECT 1  
SUBJECT 2  
SUBJECT 3

# Sherif Autokinetic Effect Experiment

**Results:** Sherif found that over numerous estimates (trials) of the movement of light, the group converged to a common estimate. The person whose estimate of movement was greatly different to the other two in the group conformed to the view of the other two.

Sherif said that this showed that people would always tend to conform. Rather than make individual judgments they tend to come to a group agreement.

**Conclusion:** The results show that when in an ambiguous situation (such as the autokinetic effect), a person will look to others (who know more / better) for guidance (i.e. adopt the group norm). They want to do the right thing, but may lack the appropriate information. **Observing others can provide this information. This is known as informational conformity.**

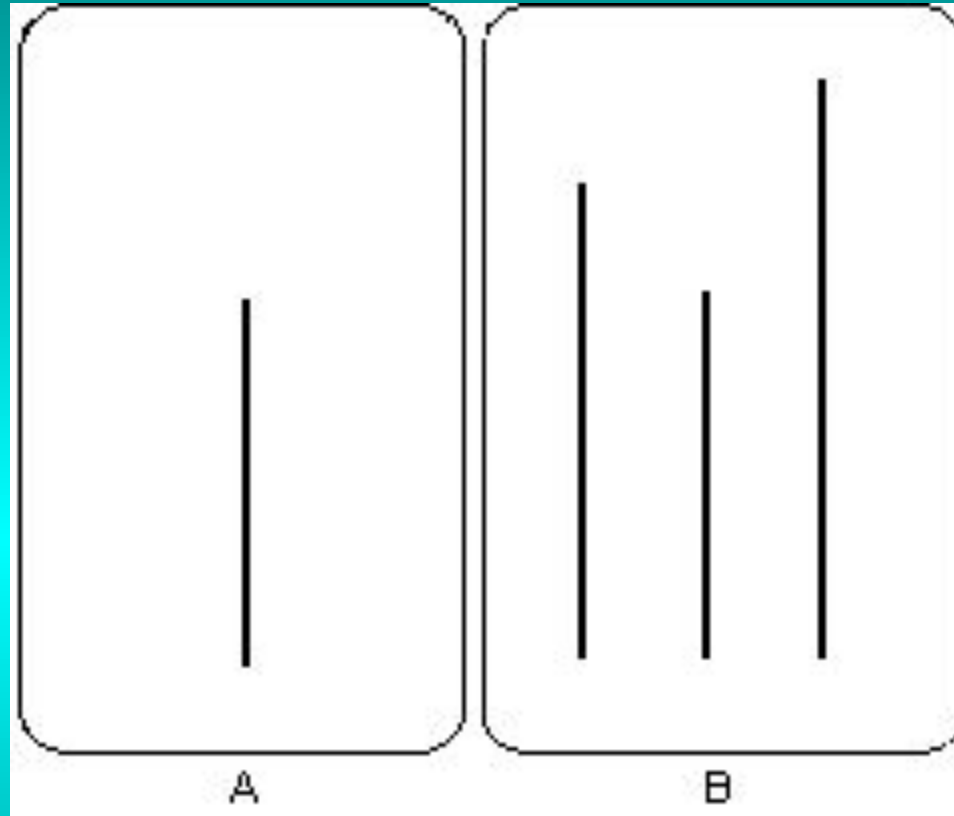


# Asch's Study of conformity (Majority influence)

- In his study, he wanted to find out (AIM) to what extent a person would conform to an incorrect answer on a test if the response from the other members of the group was unanimous.



## Example of Stimuli Used in Asch's Study



Solomon Asch

# Asch's Study of conformity (Majority influence)

- (FINDINGS) About 75 per cent of the participants agreed with the confederates' incorrect responses at least once during the trials.
- Asch found that a mean of 32 per cent of the participants agreed with incorrect responses in half or more of the trials.
- However, 24 per cent of the participants did not conform to any of the incorrect responses given by the confederates.

# Asch's Study of conformity (Majority influence)

- During the **debriefing** after the experiment, Asch asked the participants how they felt about the experiment.
- All reported experiencing some degree of self-doubt about their answers. Those participants who conformed said that they **knew their responses were incorrect**, but they went along with the group because they did not want to ruin the experimenter's results, and they **did not want to appear to be against the group**.

## **Informational Conformity**

This usually occurs when a person lacks knowledge and looks to the group for guidance.

Or when a person is in an ambiguous (i.e. unclear) situation and socially compares their behavior with the group.

This type of conformity usually **involves internalization** – where a person accepts the views of the groups and adopts them as an individual

## **Normative conformity**

Yielding to group pressure because a person wants to fit in with the group.

Conforming because the person is scared of being rejected by the group.

This type of conformity usually involves compliance – where a person publicly accepts the views of a group but privately rejects them.

## **Compliance**

Publicly changing behavior to fit in with the group while privately disagreeing.

In other words, conforming to the majority (publicly), in spite of not really agreeing with them (privately).

## **Internalization**

Publicly changing behavior to fit in with the group and also agreeing with them privately.

## **Ingratiational Conformity**

Where a person conforms to impress or gain favor/acceptance from other people.

It is similar to normative influence, but is motivated by the need for social rewards rather than the threat of rejection, i.e., group pressure does not enter the decision to conform.

# “The Asch paradigm”

- Out of those replications and variations, psychologists have found that the following factors influence the likelihood to conform to the group.

# Self-esteem:

- Stang (1973) found that participants with high self-esteem were less likely to conform to incorrect responses.



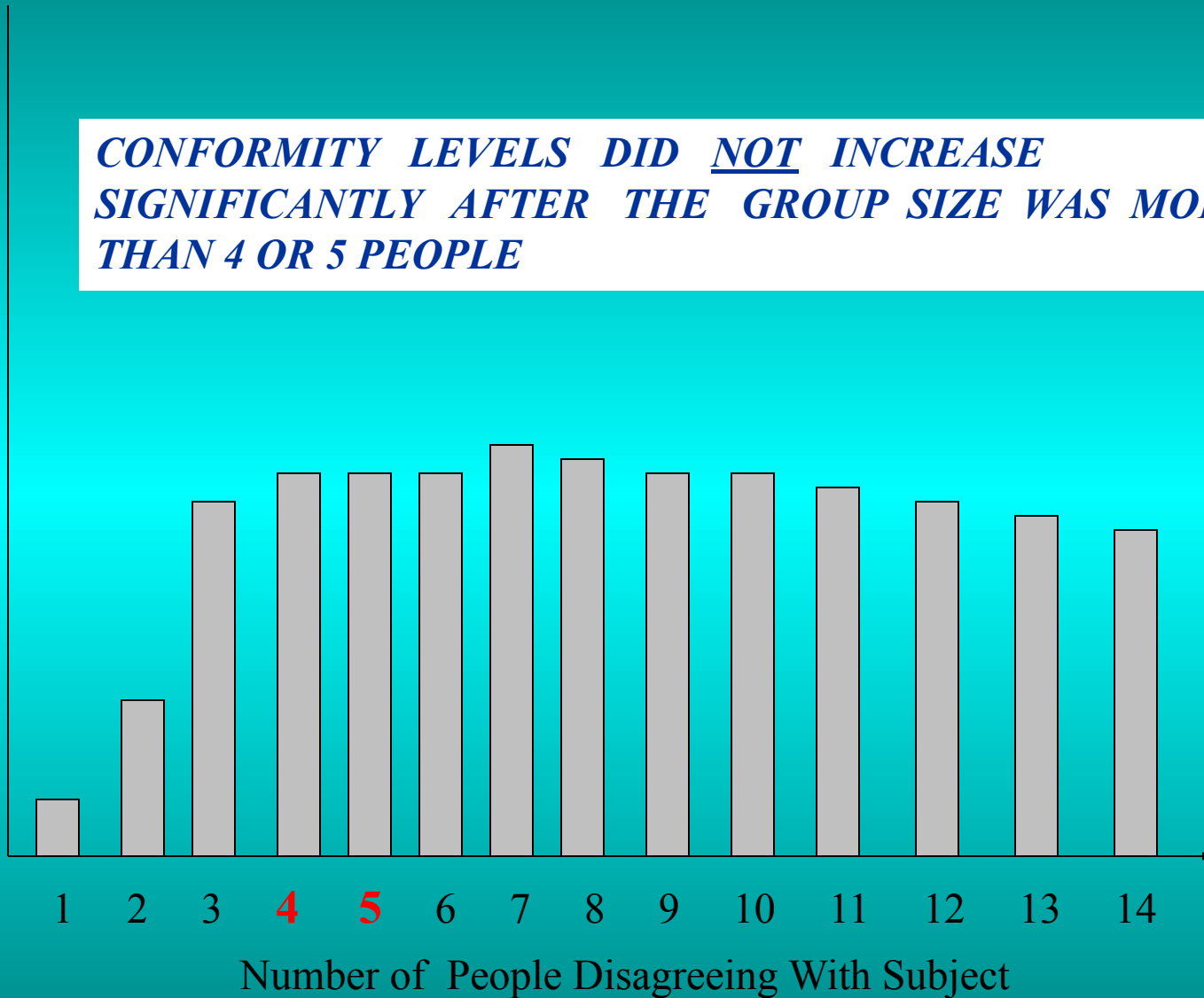
# Confidence:

- When individuals feel that they are more competent to make decisions with regard to a field of expertise, they are less likely to conform.
- Perrin and Spencer (1988) found that when they replicated Asch's study with engineers and medical students, conformity rates were almost nil.

% ERRORS

# Group Size and Conformity

*CONFORMITY LEVELS DID NOT INCREASE SIGNIFICANTLY AFTER THE GROUP SIZE WAS MORE THAN 4 OR 5 PEOPLE*



# Group size:

- Asch (1955) found that with only one confederate, just 3 per cent of the participants conformed;
- with two confederates, the rate rose to 14 per cent;
- and with three-four confederates, it rose to 32 per cent.
  
- Larger groups did not increase the rate of conformity. In some cases, very large groups even decreased the level of conformity.

# Acceptance By A Group

***CONFORMITY WAS GREATEST AMONG PEOPLE WHO BELIEVED THE GROUP RATED THEM AS AVERAGE IN DESIRABILITY***

# Do cultural norms affect conformity?

- Smith and Bond (1993) carried out a review of 31 conformity studies and found that levels of conformity—that is, the percentage of incorrect responses—ranged from 14 per cent among Belgian students to 58 per cent among Indian teachers in Fiji, with an average of 31.2 per cent.
- Conformity was lower among participants from individualist cultures—that is, North America and north-west Europe (25.3 per cent)—than from collectivist cultures—that is, Africa, Asia, Oceania, and South America (37.1 per cent).
- Bond and Smith (1996) found that people who score high on Hofstede's collectivism scale conform more than people who score lower.

# An evaluation of “the Asch Paradigm”

- Though the Asch paradigm has been successfully replicated in many variations, it is still important to take a critical look at the methodology of the study.
- First, there is the question of artificiality and **ecological validity**.
- Do these experiments accurately predict how people will react in real-life situations? In the original experiment, both the task and the use of strangers make this situation somewhat atypical.
- **Asch, however, argued that experiments *are* social situations in which participants feel like an outsider if they dissent.**

# An evaluation of “the Asch Paradigm”

- In the original study, **culture** could also have limited the validity of the study. Since only one culture was studied, and the group was not multicultural, the study is limited in its application.
- Since culture is dynamic, it is possible that the Asch paradigm is no longer valid today, even if it were to be studied in the same cultural groups as the original study.

# Minority influence....

- *A different way of looking at the Asch paradigm*  
*Can a minority opinion sway the majority to change its views?*
- Moscovici argues that when a minority maintains a consistent view, it is able to influence the majority.



# Moscovici and Lage (1976)...

- In a study carried out by Moscovici and Lage (1976), involving four participants and two confederates, the minority of two confederates described a blue color as **green**.

# Moscovici and Lage (1976)...

- They found that the minority was able to influence about 32 per cent of the participants to make at least one incorrect judgment about the color of slides they were shown.
- In addition, the participants continued to give their incorrect responses even after the two confederates had left the experiment.

# How do minorities influence others?

- Minorities influence others through their own **behavioural style**:
  - Make their proposition clear at the outset
  - Stick to their original proposition
  - Withstand the majority influence

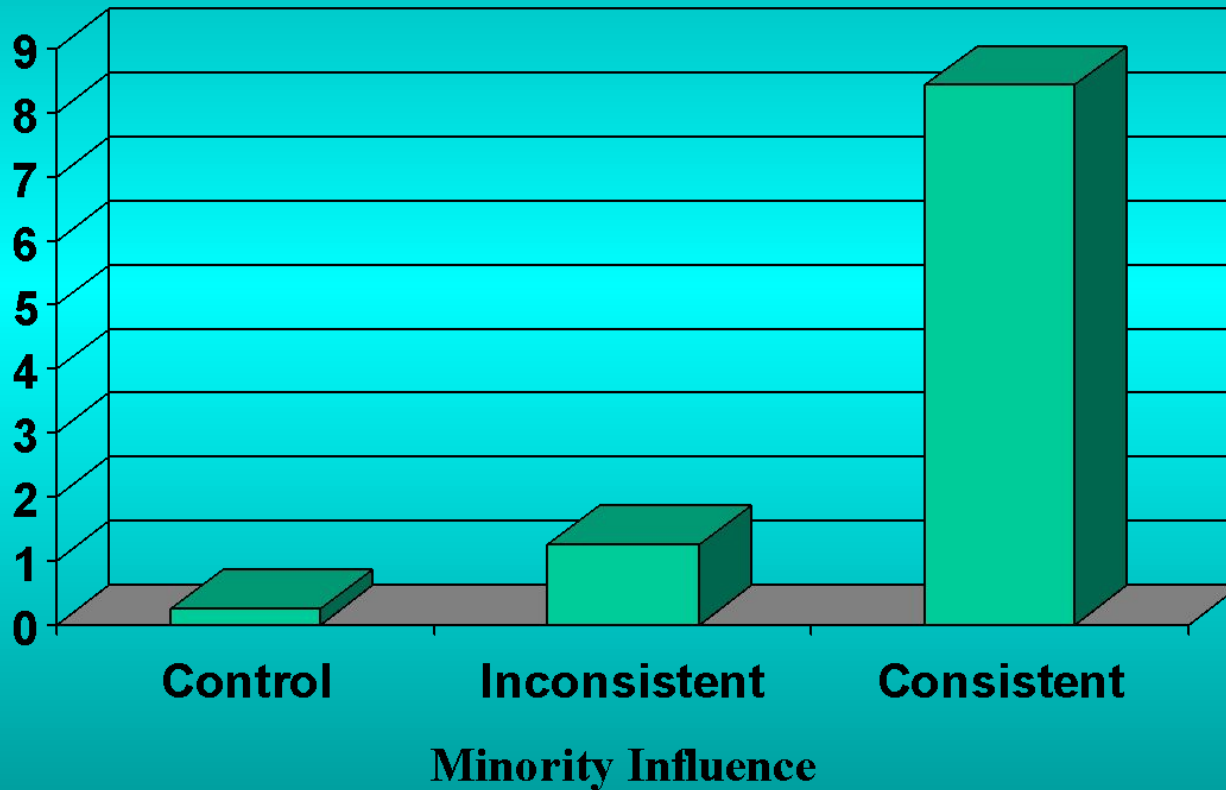
- Two types of consistency:

behavioral

time

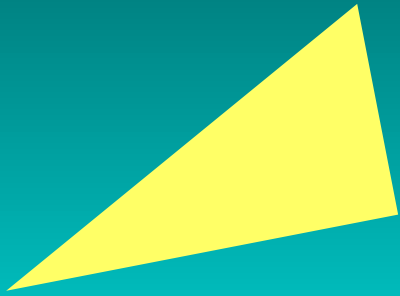
- **Inconsistent minority**
  - Sometimes said green in a random order, regardless of hue of the blue slide

# Percent of green responses given by majority





**Group Processes:  
Influence in Social Groups**

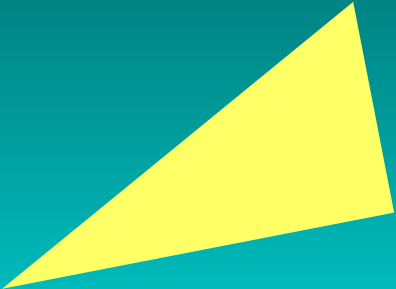


# **I. What Is a small group?**



# What is a small group?





A *small group* is 3-30 people who interact with each other and are interdependent, in the sense that their needs and goals cause them to influence each other.

2 people is dyad; incomplete small group

Optimal group is  $7 \pm 2$  (5-9) members

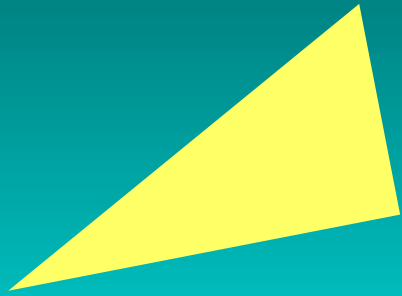
# What are some common characteristics of groups?

- Interaction: task and relationship
- Interdependence: sequential, reciprocal, mutual
- Structure: roles, norms
- Goals: generating, choosing, negotiating,

# Why do people join group?

The people often join groups since the groups give the members a stability and enhances their achievement capacity. The main reasons to join a group are:

- ✓ **Have a sense of security**
- ✓ **Have a status**
- ✓ **Develop Self-esteem**
- ✓ **Power**
- ✓ **Goal achievement**



## **II. Social facilitation & social loafing**

Enhancement and impairment performance effects resulting from the presence of one or more persons

Social facilitation:

- Performance enhancement

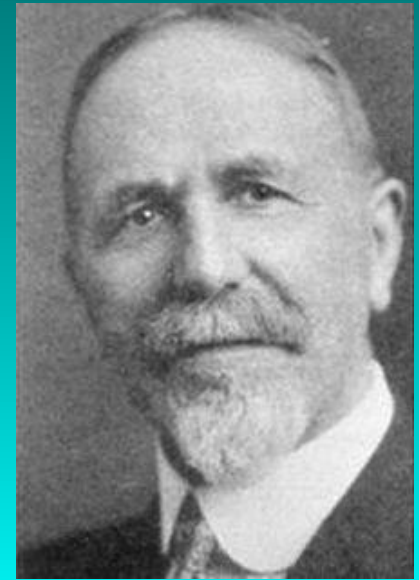
Social inhibition:

- Performance impairment

# Social Facilitation: When the Presence of Others Energizes Us

***Social facilitation*** is the tendency for people to do better on simple tasks and worse on complex tasks when they are in the presence of others and their individual performance can be evaluated.

# Social Facilitation



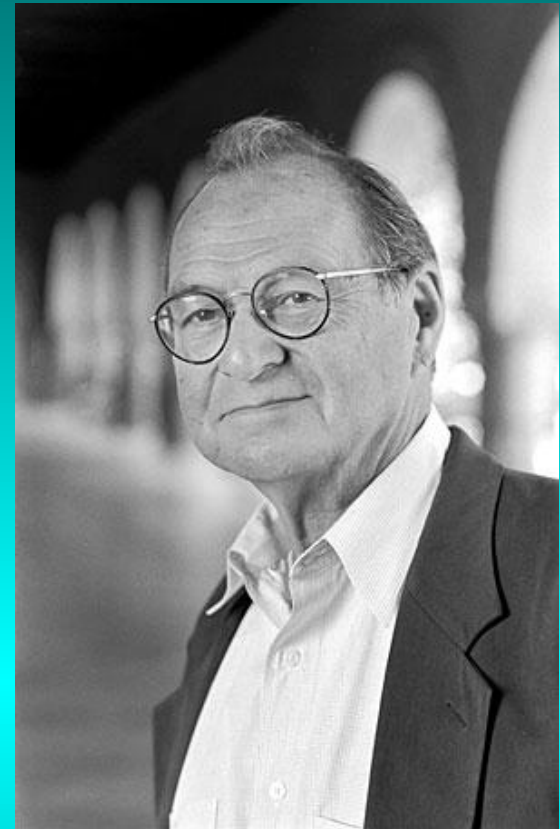
- How does the presence of others affect our behavior?

Norman Triplett's (1897-1898):

- 1) bicycle racing;
  - 2) fishing reel studies.
    - Children winding fishing reels alone or with others
- Later research found conflicting findings.
    - Sometimes the presence of others enhanced performance.
    - At other times, performance declined.
  - What was going on?



# Social Facilitation



**Zajonc and colleagues (1969) did a study with cockroaches that demonstrated that roaches run a simple maze (labyrinth) faster when they are in the presence of an audience of other roaches than when they are alone.**



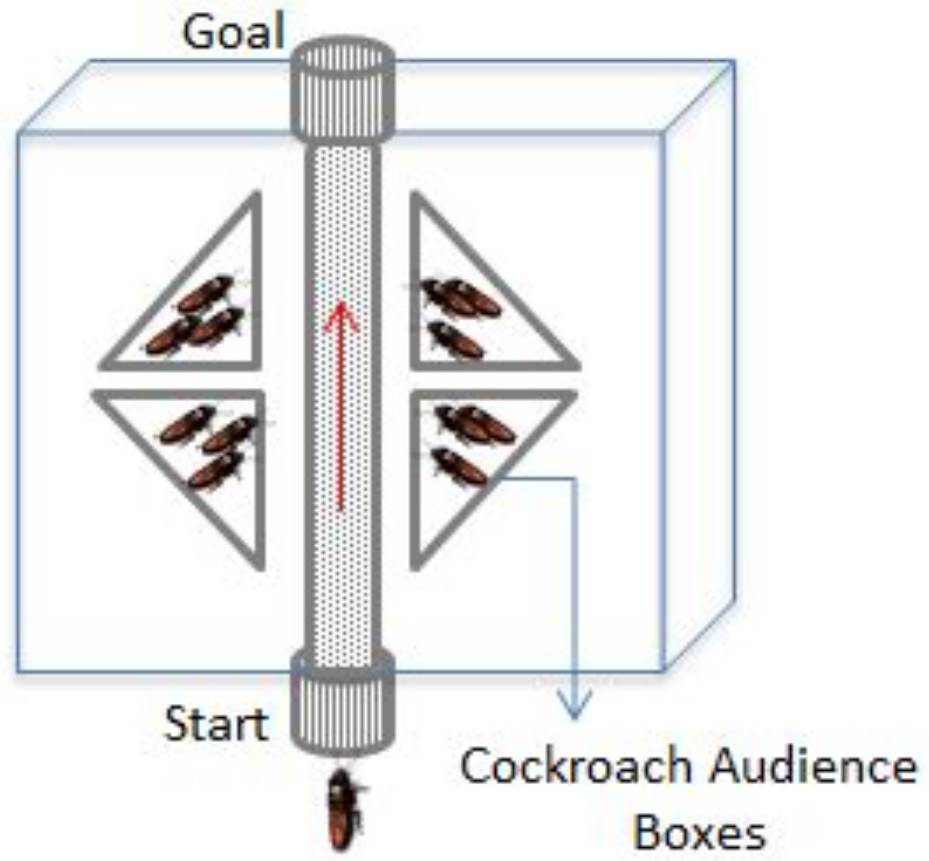
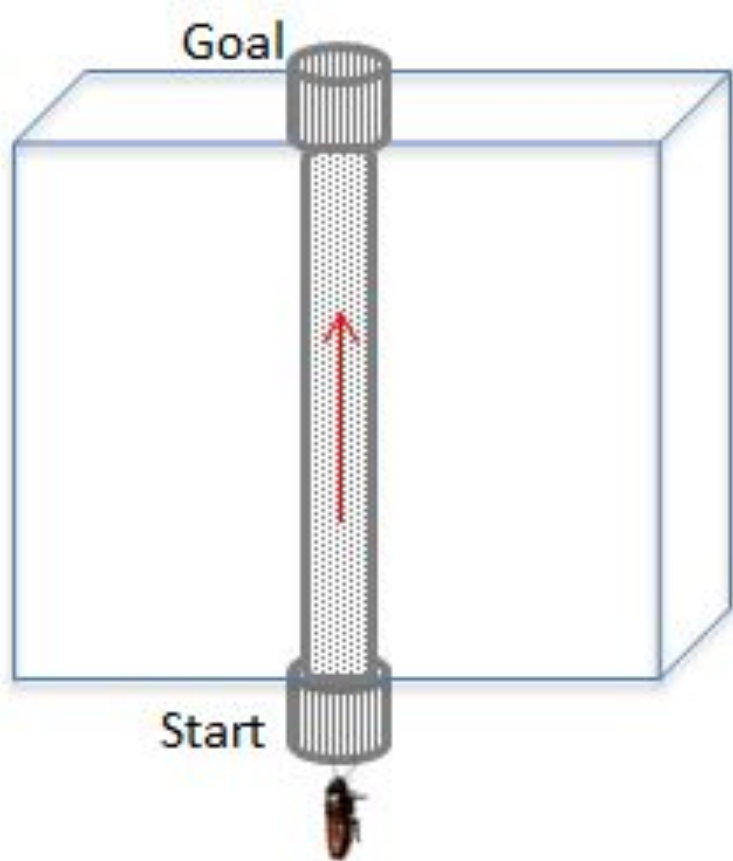
# Social Facilitation

Zajonc hypothesized that the presence of others increases physiological arousal which facilitates dominant, **well-learned responses**, but **inhibits performance on more difficult tasks**.

By Zajonc, Robert B.; Heingartner, Alexander; Herman, Edward M.  
**Social enhancement and impairment of performance in the  
cockroach**

Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol 13(2), Oct 1969,  
83-92.

- Observed maze and runway performance of cockroaches under solitary and social conditions in an attempt to test the drive theory of social facilitation. In Exp. I, 72 adult female cockroaches (*Blatta orientalis*) were observed under 2 types of social treatments, coaction and audience. In both treatments maze performance was impaired while runway performance was facilitated when compared to performance of Ss in solitary conditions. In Exp. II, the effects of reduced presence on conspecifics on 180 female *Blatta orientalis* were investigated. Exp. I generated results that were in support of the hypothesis that the mere presence of conspecifics is a source of general arousal that enhances the emission of dominant responses. The results of Exp. II suggest that partial presence of conspecifics may have distracting effects.



**Figure 1. Simple maze**

# Cockroach study





# **Social Facilitation**

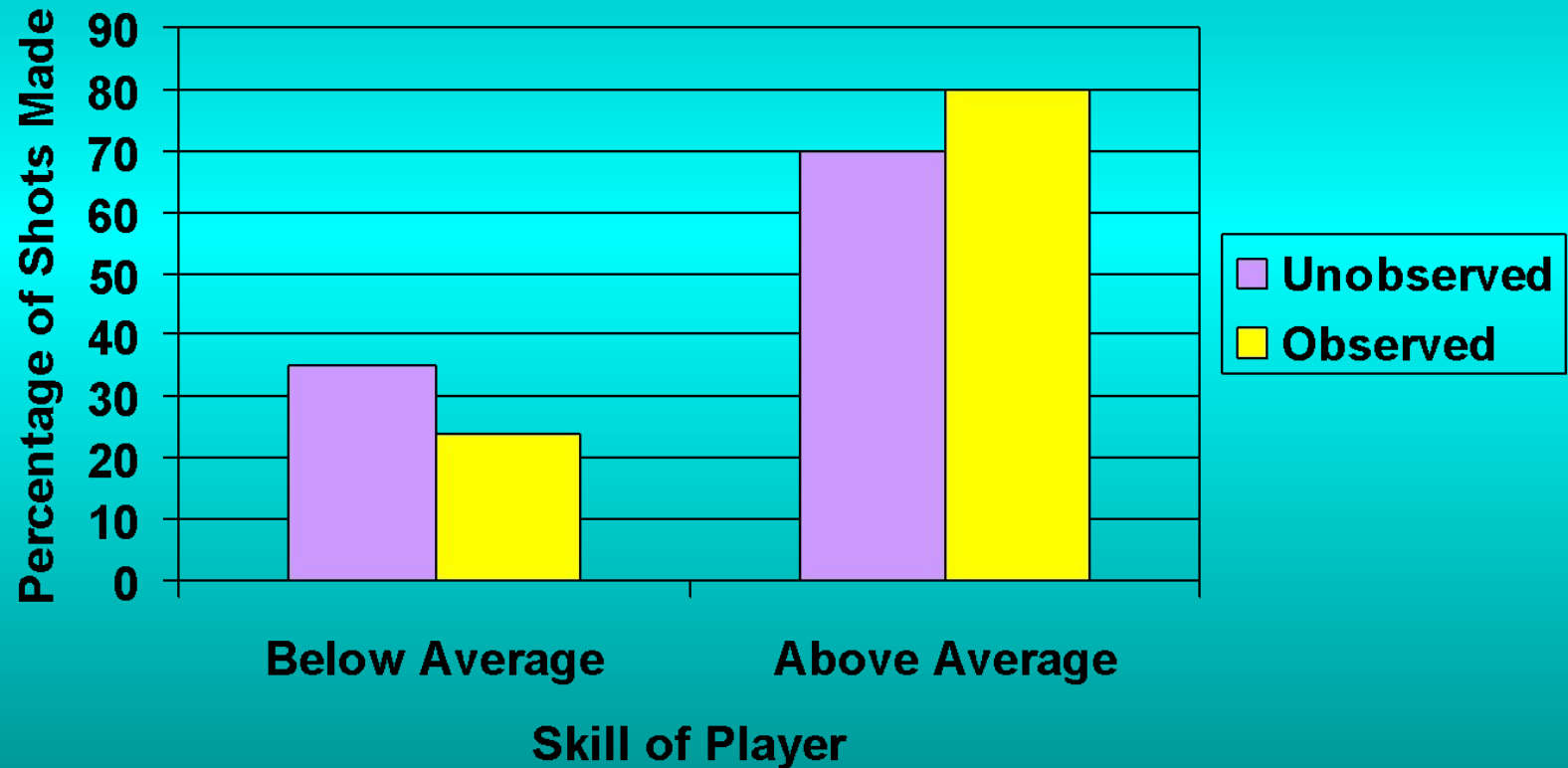
**Whether a task is simple versus difficult affects our performance in the presence of others.**

# Pool Hall Example (Michaels et al. (1982))



- Pool Hall Study
  - $\frac{1}{2}$  below-average players
  - $\frac{1}{2}$  above-average players
  - $\frac{1}{2}$  unobserved
  - $\frac{1}{2}$  observed

# Results of Michaels et al. (1982) Pool Hall Study





# Social Facilitation

- Zajonc suggested that we can understand the influence others on performance by considering three factors:
  - Arousal
  - Dominant response (how easy for somebody doing this activity; how much skilled somebody doing this activity)
  - Task difficulty

# Social Facilitation

**PRESENCE OF OTHERS**

**AROUSAL**

**DOMINANT RESPONSE**

**PERFORMANCE  
IMPROVES  
ON AN EASY TASK**

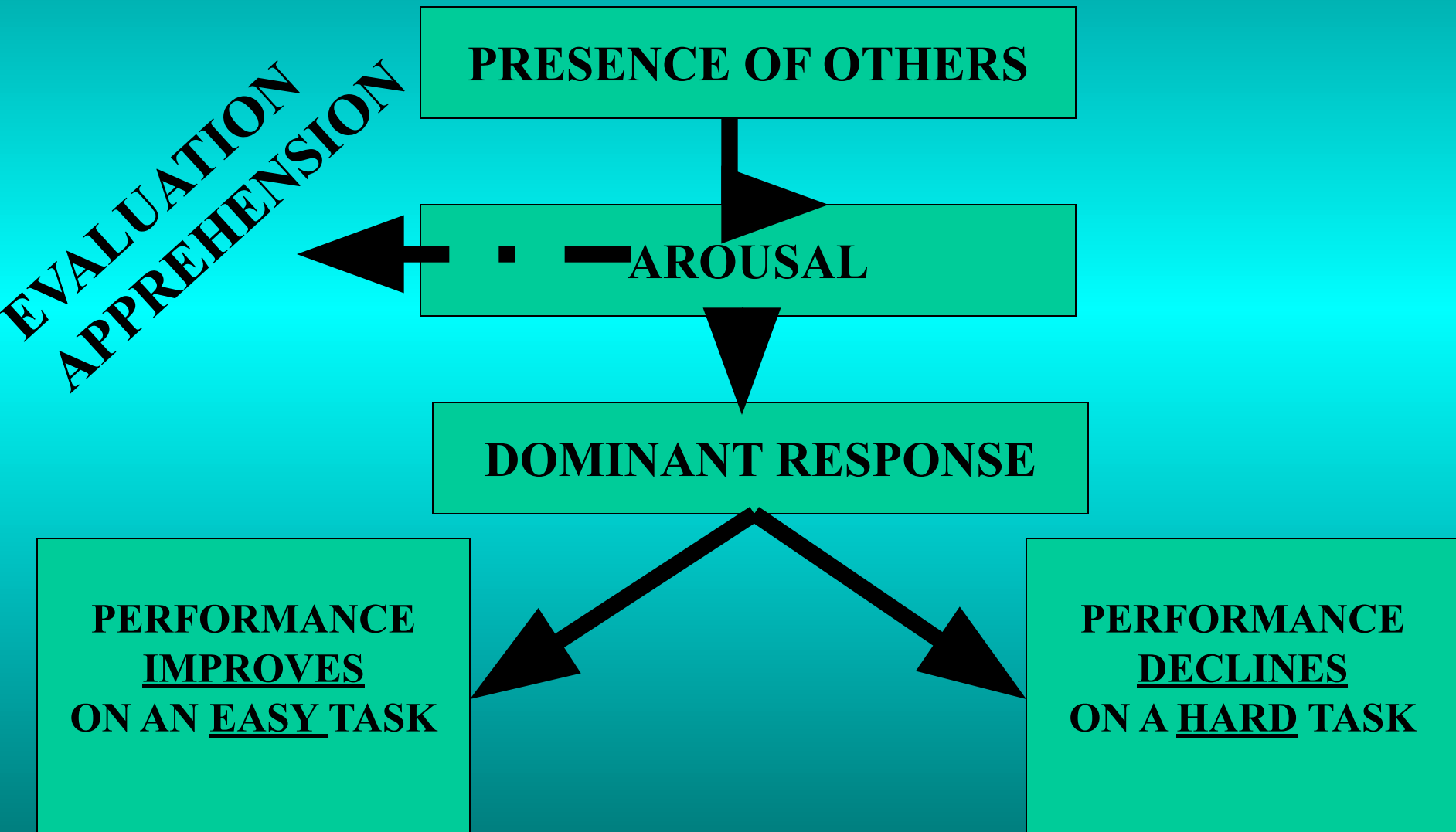
**PERFORMANCE  
DECLINES  
ON A HARD TASK**

# THE EVALUATION APPREHENSION EXPLANATION OF SOCIAL FACILITATION

- **Cottrell (1972)** suggests why the presence of others increases arousal. He believes we are concerned about what others are thinking about us. When performing a simple well learned task we are more likely to have the right amount of arousal (optimum) and so task performance will be enhanced. When, however the task is new or complex, **evaluation apprehension** increases arousal to a very high level and with the consequence being that performance is worse than when alone.

# Social Facilitation:

## EVALUATION APPREHENSION EXPLANATION



# Jackson and Williams (1986)

- Simple vs. complex mazes on computer
- Another participant worked on identical task in other room
- Researcher:
  - Each performance would be evaluated separately,  
or
  - Computer would average scores (no accountability)

Time to complete maze  
(long)

evaluation

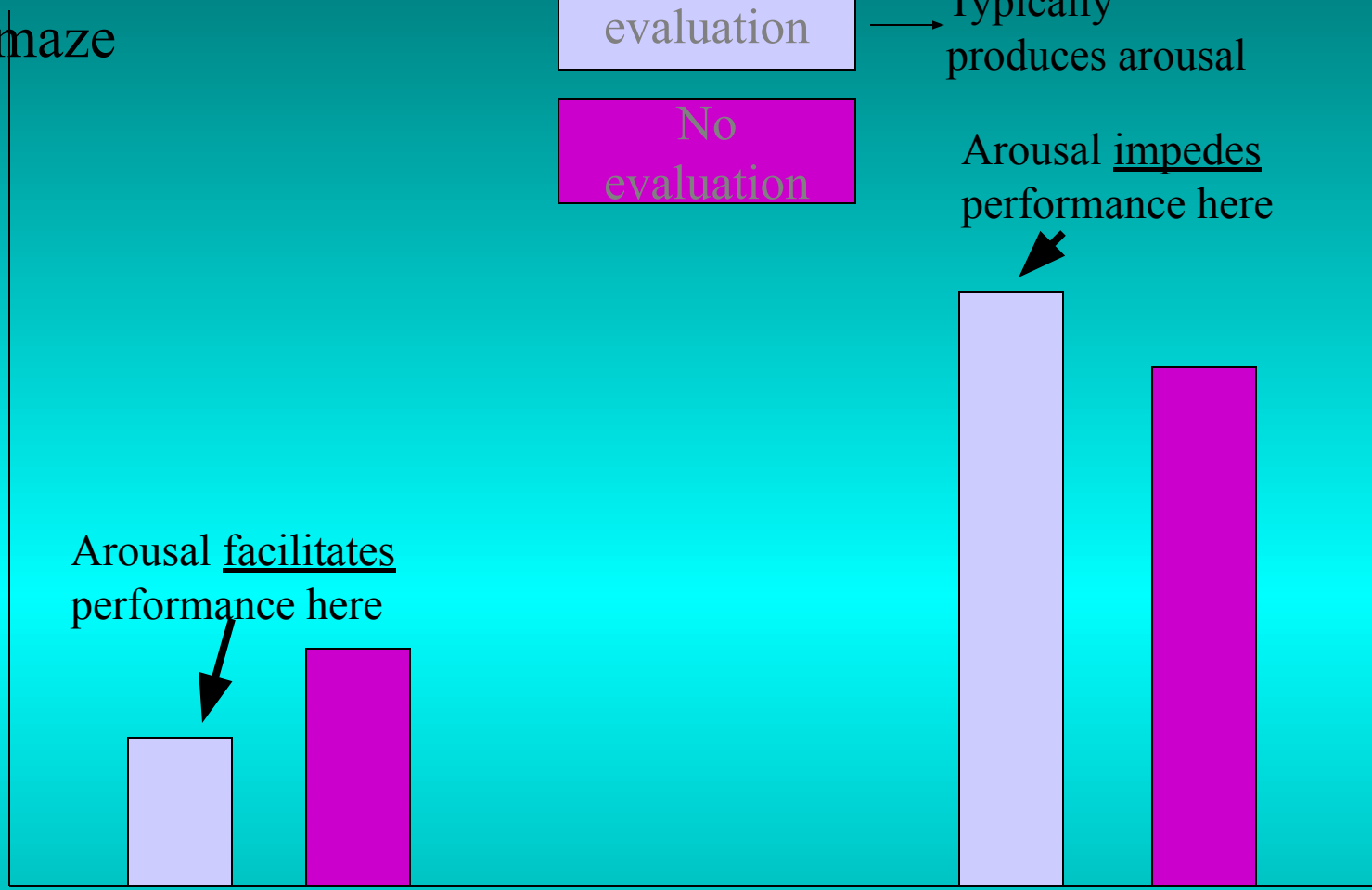
Typically produces arousal

No evaluation

Arousal impedes performance here

Arousal facilitates performance here

(fast)



easy

difficult

Difficulty of mazes

## DISTRACTION CONFLICT THEORY EXPLANATION OF SOCIAL FACILITATION

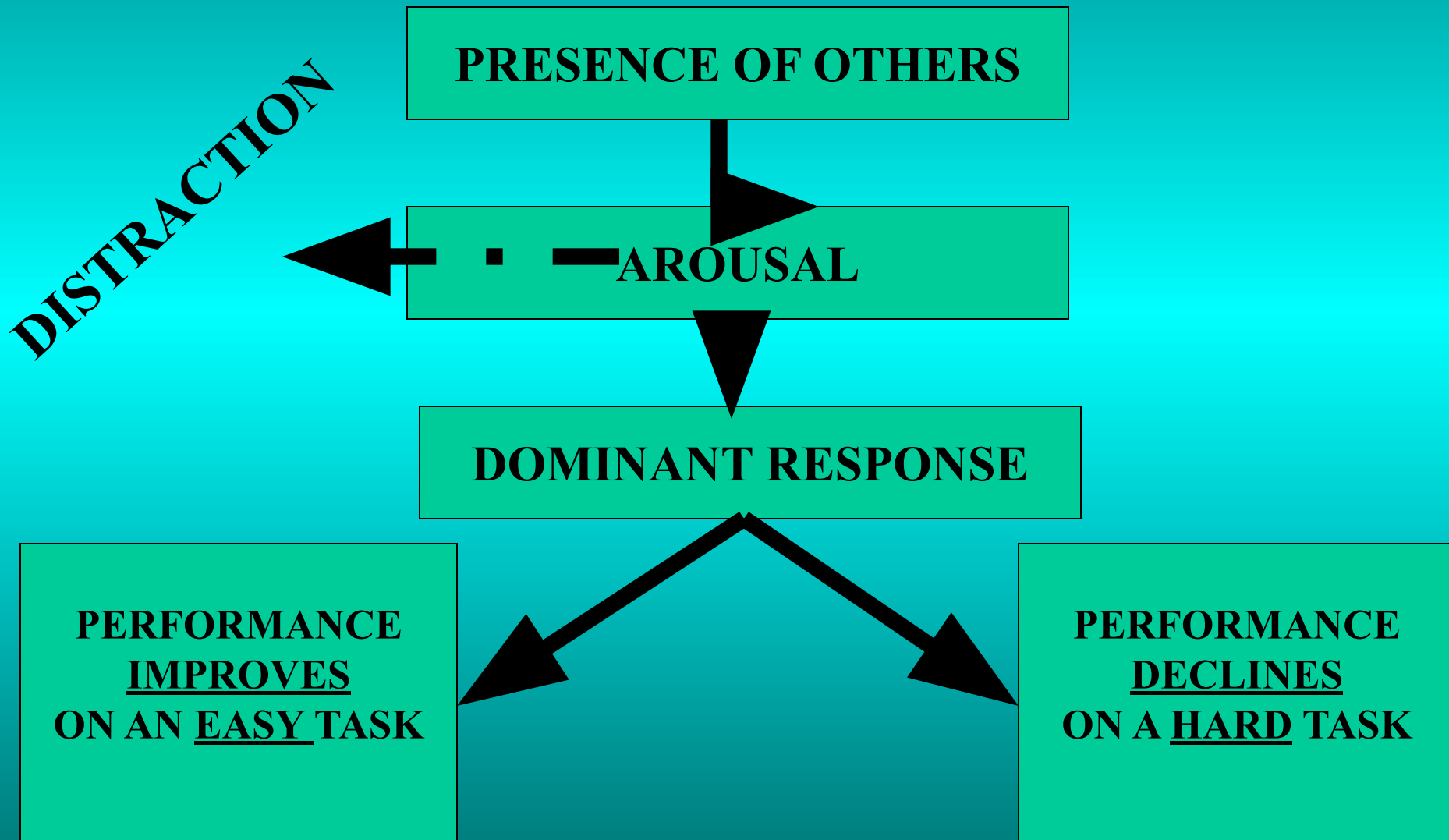
- **Saunders (1983)** proposed an explanation of social facilitation based on the idea that other people create a distraction to other people who are attempting to perform the task. This then interferes with their attention and conflicts with whether to attend to the task or to the audience. This conflict produces arousal thus facilitating performance on a simple or dominant (well learned) task or inhibiting performance on complex or non-dominant tasks.

# STUDY TO SUPPORT

- **Saunders et al (1978)** conducted a study to test *the distraction conflict theory*.
- They had participants perform a simple or difficult task. They would either perform the task in front of others performing the same task or a different task. The idea is that those co-actors (participants performing the same task) would cause a distraction to the participants as it would be a source of comparison to them. Participants in the high distraction condition (same task as co-actors) performed a higher level on the simple task but worse on the easier task.



# Social Facilitation: CONFLICT THEORY EXPLANATION





# **Social Facilitation**

**Three theories try to explain why the presence of others leads to arousal:**

- 1. The presence of others makes us more alert.**
- 2. The presence of others makes us concerned about what others think of us.**
- 3. The presence of others distracts us.**



# Social Loafing: When the Presence of Others Relaxes Us

In social facilitation research, the activities studied are ones where people are performing individually, and these individual efforts are easily observed.

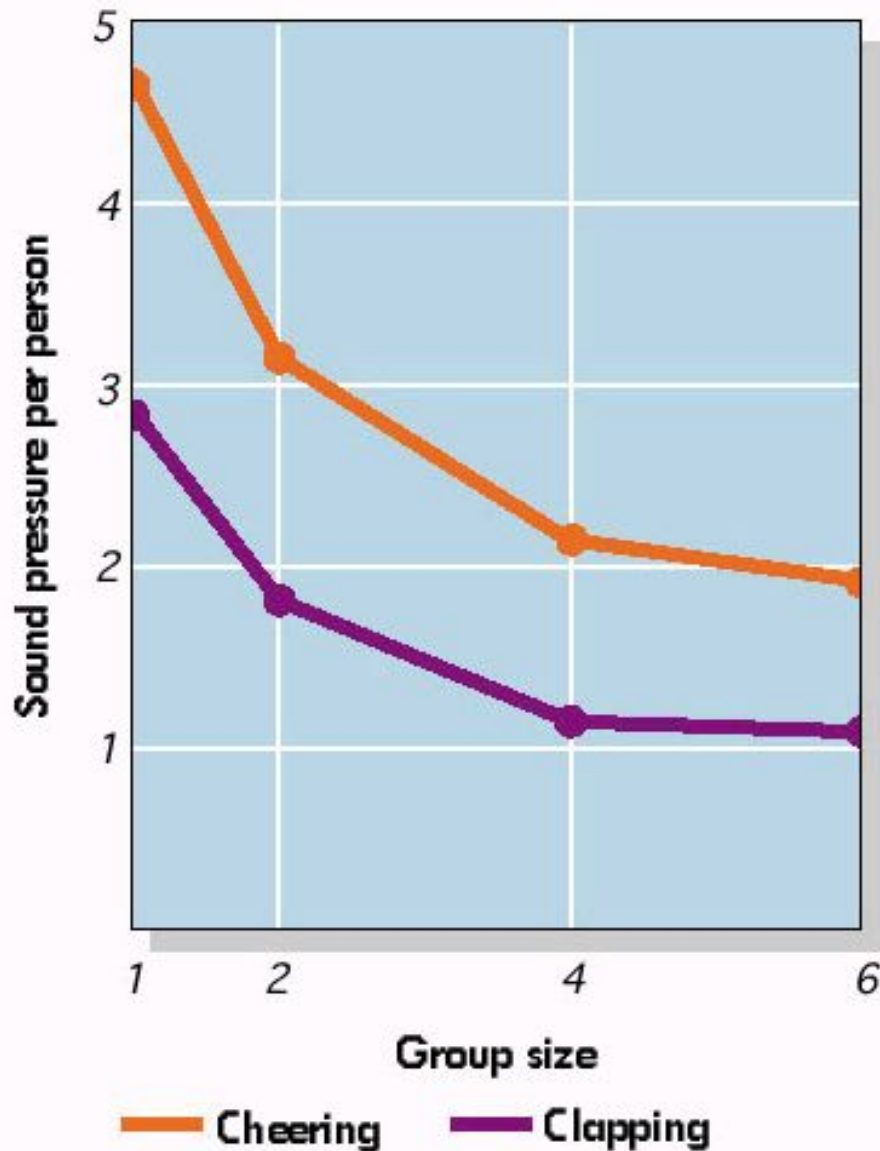
In other social situations, being around others means that our individual efforts are less easily observed and merge to be part of the group. In these situations, *social loafing* often occurs.

- Steiner (1972) proposed two possible causes for this performance decrement:
  - (a) reduced individual motivation or
  - (b) coordination loss.
  
- Steiner favored the latter cause, concluding that individuals may fail to synchronize their efforts in a maximally efficient manner (e.g., pulling a rope while others are pausing), thus evidencing less productivity, but not necessarily less effort.

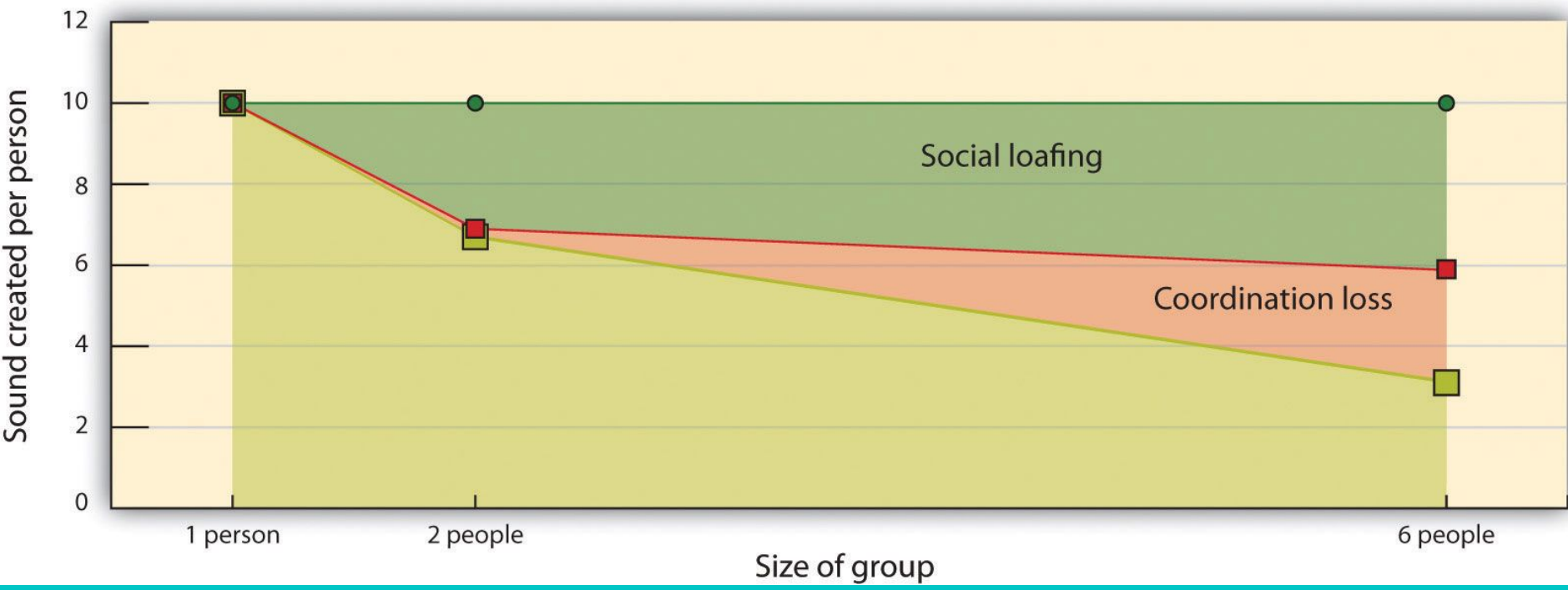
# Social Loafing

- Latane et al. (1979) demonstrated that a substantial portion of the decreased performance of groups was attributable to **reduced individual effort, distinct from coordination loss**, and that audience size did not account for these results.
- They also coined the term *social loafing* for the *demotivating* effects of working in groups.

# Social Loafing: When Many Produce Less



**Latané et al.  
(1979): Many  
hands make  
light the work**



# Social Loafing

- Since 1974, nearly 80 studies on social loafing have been conducted in which individuals' efforts were compared with collective efforts. These studies have used a wide variety of tasks, including physical tasks (e.g., shouting, rope-pulling, and swimming), cognitive tasks (e.g., generating ideas), evaluative tasks (e.g., quality ratings of poems, editorials, and clinical therapists), and perceptual tasks (e.g., maze performance and vigilance tasks on a computer screen).
- Both laboratory experiments and field studies have been conducted using a range of subject populations varying in age, gender, and culture.



## Social facilitation

## Social loafing

Presence of others

Efforts *can* be evaluated

Efforts *cannot* be evaluated

Alertness  
Evaluation apprehension  
Distraction

No evaluation apprehension

Arousal

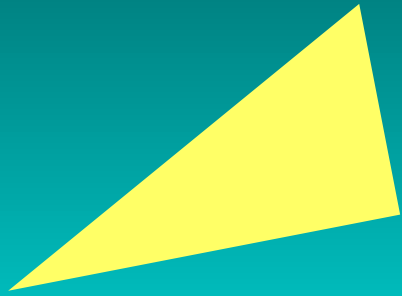
Relaxation

Simple tasks:  
Enhanced  
performance

Complex tasks:  
Impaired  
performance

Simple tasks:  
Impaired  
performance

Complex tasks:  
Enhanced  
performance



## **Gender and Cultural Differences in Social Loafing**

**Karau and Williams (1993) found that the tendency to loaf is stronger in men than in women.**

**Similarly, the tendency to loaf is stronger in Western than in Asian cultures.**

## How to reduce social loafing.

People believe their performance is identifiable.

Task is important to the individual.

Group anticipates punishment for poor performance.

High group cohesiveness.

# Theory of group performance

Theoretical framework (Steiner, 1972)

- Performance is dependant upon 3 classes of variables:
  1. Task demands
  2. Resources
  3. Process

# 1. Task demands

- **The procedures necessary to perform a task.**

## 2. Resources

- **Relevant possessions of people in group**
  - knowledge
  - abilities
  - skills
  - tools

# 3.Processes

- What the group does
  - ‘Process’ refers to the actual steps taken when confronted with a task
  - The extent that the total sequence of behaviours corresponds to the pattern demanded by the task

# Two forms of faulty processes

(Steiner, 1972)

Steiner identified 2 forms of faulty process:

## 1. Coordination loss

- **Lack of synchronisation** to take maximum advantage of one another's efforts (e.g. tug-of-war: ineffective unless everybody pull together)

## 2. Motivation loss

- **Lack of recognition** (When individuals feel either unrecognised for their effort)
- **Lack of benefit** (When they feel they won't benefit from it)



**Actual productivity = potential productivity - losses  
due to faulty processes**

- Task demands are **initial determinants** of both *potential* and *actual* production.
  - Differences in faulty processes may vary:
    - Groups may be more productive than individuals, or..
    - **Individuals may be more productive than a group**
      - So, necessary to have some kind of **typology of task.**

## Three types of tasks (Steiner, 1972)

- Additive: Product is the sum of all members' contributions (harvesting; territory cleaning; pulling on rope).
- Conjunctive: Product is determined by weakest member (relay race, climbing rock).
- Disjunctive: Product is determined by strongest member often (task solution; quiz; brainstorming).

# Additive tasks

## Early experimental evidence

RINGLEMANN (1913)

1, 2, 3, or 8 people pulling on rope

- Device measured the exact amount of force exerted on the rope
  - 63 kilo (1 person)
  - 118 kilo (2 people)
  - 160 kilo (3 people)
  - 248 kilo (8 people)

**The more people in the group, the less effort each person**

## Disjunctive task: Brainstorming Osborn (1957)

- Special kind of group process
  - This is *creative*
  - Increased numbers of people disproportionately increase number of ideas generated
- Rules of brainstorming
  - Free the individual from self-criticism and criticism of others
  - The more ideas the better
  - Can adapt others ideas
  - Can combine ideas
  - Should not be critical...

## Empirical evidence (MULLEN et al. 1991)

### Meta-analysis of 20 studies of brainstorming

- Compared face-to-face groups operating under brainstorming conditions against ‘nominal groups’
  - Nominal groups were individuals who were working alone but their ideas were subsequently pooled.
  - Productivity was measured in two different ways:
    - Quantity: the number of non-redundant ideas
    - Quality: involved rating of the ideas

## **Results** (MULLEN et al. 1991)

### Meta-analysis of 20 studies of brainstorming

- Individuals generated more ideas than face-to-face groups
- Productivity LOSSES increase with the size of the group
- Both individuals and groups work best without an ‘expert’ giving guidance
- Most ideas were generated when responses were written down and not publicly shared

# Brainstorming Problems & Solutions

1. **Production blocking-** (waiting turn - forget or lose idea) - write down ideas.
2. **Free riding-** (let others do the thinking)- keep track of each members input.
3. **Evaluation apprehension-** (fear of ridicule for ideas) - anonymous idea suggestion.



Brainstorming groups often create fewer ideas than individuals because:

- social loafing
- **blocking** (because of waiting turns, ppl forget ideas or decide not to share)
- evaluation apprehension
- **social matching** (lower standards of performance are matched).

