

Psychology, Communication, and the Canadian Workplace

Psychology, Communication, and the Canadian Workplace

First Edition

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FANSHAWE COLLEGE PRESSBOOKS
LONDON



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Collaborators

This project was a collaboration between the author and the team in the OER Design Studio at Fanshawe. The following staff and students were involved in the creation of this project:

- Andrew Stracuzzi – *Faculty Lead, Instructional Design, and Quality Assurance*
- Shauna Roch – *Project Coordinator*
- Robert Armstrong – *Graphic Design*
- Davandra Earle – *Ancillary Developer*

Author's Preface

Introduction to Psychology, Communication, and the Canadian Workplace

This book has been created as a custom, companion resource for PSYC-6005: Communication Psychology. PSYC-6005 is a course offered by the [School of Language and Liberal Studies](#) at [Fanshawe College](#) and is a required course in the Advanced Communication for Professionals program.

In this Open Educational Resource (OER), students will learn about key topics related to professional communication using a psychological lens. Students will have the opportunity to examine how communication and workplace behaviours are influenced by individual differences in emotion motivation, learning, memory, decision-making behaviour, and personality. In the second half of the book, we explore how these individual differences impact our interactions with others in groups and how we lead. The final chapter of the book looks outward to society and discusses ethics from the perspective of individuals and organizations.

This resource also contains case studies that will allow students to hone their critical thinking skills and apply theory to real-world scenarios. In addition, students will have the opportunity to reflect on their own knowledge, skills, and abilities using self-assessments for each chapter.

Author Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the many authors who generously made their work available under a Creative Commons licence. It's been a privilege to adopt, adapt, and re-mix your work and to create a custom resource that fits the needs of my students.

I would like to give special thanks to Andrew Stracuzzi for his guidance, keen eye for aesthetic, and attention to detail throughout this project. I couldn't have done it without you! Thanks to Shauna Roch for her support and encouragement, especially during the initial stages of the OER process. Thanks to Davandra Earle for her work creating the ancillary resources. Thanks to Robert Armstrong for his work on graphic design. Thanks to the rest of the OER Design Studio Team at Fanshawe College for funding this project and for their support behind the scenes throughout this entire initiative. Thanks to Holly Tunstill in the School of Language and Liberal Studies for her support. Finally, thanks to the past and present students in the Advanced Communication Program who inspired me to learn more about Open Educational Resources. I hope this resource/course will start you on a lifelong path of mindful self-reflection and continuous professional growth.

Laura Westmaas, BA, MSc

Professor, Fanshawe College

Introduction: Chapter Overview

Chapter Overview

Below is a high-level overview of the topics and themes discussed in this book.

Chapter 1

Introduction to Psychology, Communication, and the Canadian Workplace – In this introductory chapter, students will receive a high-level overview of the field of organizational behavior (OB) including its goals, levels of analysis, and research methods. Students will be encouraged to explore how principles of psychology can be used to understand and develop interpersonal skills in the Canadian workplace.

[Go to Chapter 1](#)

Chapter 2

Communication – In this chapter, students will learn about the nature of language, the transactional theory of communication, and common channels of communication used in the workplace. In addition, students will explore the characteristics of competent communications and will be encouraged to engage in critical self-reflection about areas of strength and opportunity in their own communication repertoire.

[Go to Chapter 2](#)

Chapter 3

Emotions – In this chapter, students will learn about the nature of emotions. We will challenge the perception that the workplace should be void of emotions and discuss strategies for effectively communicating our emotions with others. In addition, we will discuss ineffective and effective the strategies for regulating strong emotions at work.

[Go to Chapter 3](#)

Chapter 4

Motivation – In this chapter, students will learn about popular theories of human motivation. We will explore how motivation impacts workplace behaviours, performance, and job satisfaction. In addition, we will learn about ways to set achievable goals and motivate ourselves and others.

[Go to Chapter 4](#)

Chapter 5

Learning – In this chapter, students will learn how theories of learning and principles of cognitive neuroscience can improve our ability to learn, remember, and solve problems in the workplace.

[Go to Chapter 5](#)

Chapter 6

Memory – In this chapter, students will learn the differences between the following forms of memory: working memory, episodic memory, semantic memory, and collective memory. In addition, we'll learn about the three stages in the process of learning and remembering and review strategies that can be used to enhance the original learning or encoding of information.

[Go to Chapter 6](#)

Chapter 7

Decision-making – In this chapter, students will learn about the process of decision-making and its various influences as well as common biases that can impact the decision-making process. In addition, we discuss the ways we can learn to make good personal decisions, and also good decisions in the workplace.

[Go to Chapter 7](#)

Chapter 8

Personality – In this chapter, we will explore several popular theories of personality. We will examine how personality is assessed, some of the the benefits and challenges of using personality inventories in hiring decisions, and the relationship between personality traits and workplace behaviours.

[Go to Chapter 8](#)

Chapter 9

Group Dynamics – In this chapter, we will explore the process of team-building. Students will learn about different structures of teams used in the workplace. Using principles of social psychology, we will identify factors related to group effectiveness and explore strategies for reducing conflict and loafing in team settings. Students will be encouraged to reflect on their own capabilities to be a good team member.

[Go to Chapter 9](#)

Chapter 10

Leadership – In this chapter, we will discuss several popular theories of leadership (e.g., trait, behavioral, contingency) and characteristics of effective leadership. Students will be challenged to reflect on their own leadership abilities, including their ability to effectively engage in self-management.

[Go to Chapter 10](#)

Chapter 11

Dimensions of Diversity and Intercultural Communication – In this chapter, we will explore some of the dimensions of diversity that you will likely encounter in your professional life. You'll then learn about why some of the benefits and challenges of diversity in Canadian workplaces. In order to understand how to communicate more effectively, we need to develop our abilities in better understanding ourselves and how culture influences our communication.

[Go to Chapter 11](#)

Chapter 12

Professionalism, Ethics, and Social Responsibility – In this chapter, we're going to explore some areas directly related to workplace interpersonal relationships, including professionalism and ethics. We will also look at how our ethical behaviour and the behaviours of the organizations that we work in can be placed in terms of responsibility to society. Students will also be provided with further information about their rights in the workplace and suggested resources that they can use if they encounter harassment, discrimination, or violence in their workplace.

[Go to Chapter 12](#)

Appendix A: Case Studies

This section contains case studies.

[*Go to Appendix A*](#)

Appendix B: Self-Assessments

This section contains self-assessments that can be used for critical self-reflection.

[*Go to Appendix B*](#)

Glossary

This section contains a list of key terms that appear throughout the book.

[*Go to Glossary*](#)

Ancillary Resources

This section contains a full list of H5P interactives, slide decks for each chapter, and links to APA referencing resources.

[*Go to Ancillary Resources*](#)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO PSYCHOLOGY, COMMUNICATION, AND THE CANADIAN WORKPLACE



Learning Objectives

In this chapter, we will:

1. **Define** psychology.
2. **Recognize** the diversity of study that exists within psychology as a discipline.
3. **Describe** the field of organizational behaviour, its goals, and research methods.
4. **Explain** the relationship between the study of OB, communication skills, and career success in the Canadian workplace.

In this chapter, we will outline key terms related to the study of psychology. Students will learn about an area of study called **organizational behaviour** and the methods researchers use to study behaviour in the workplace. In addition, we will explore how principles of psychology can be used to understand and improve interpersonal communication.

1.1 Psychology Defined

The word “psychology” comes from the Greek words “psyche,” meaning *life*, and “logos,” meaning *explanation*.

Formally defined, **psychology** is the *scientific study of mind and behaviour*

Psychology is a common area of study for students, a popular topic in the public media, and a part of our everyday lives. Since we are frequently exposed to the work of psychologists in our everyday lives, most of us have an idea about what psychology is and type of work that psychologists perform. Throughout the course, I expect that you may find that at least some of your preconceptions about psychology will be challenged and changed, and you will learn that psychology is a field that will provide you with new ways of thinking about your own thoughts, feelings, and actions.

For example, many people are unaware of the diversity within the field of psychology. Psychology is not one discipline, but rather a collection of many sub-disciplines that all share at least some common approaches and that work together and exchange knowledge (Yang & Chiu, 2009). Researchers use a variety of methods, including observation, questionnaires, interviews, and laboratory studies, to help them describe, explain, predict, and change human behaviours.

Many psychologists work in research laboratories at universities, hospitals, and other field settings (e.g., schools, businesses) where they study the behaviour of humans and animals. Despite the differences in their interests, areas of study, and approaches, all psychologists have one thing in common: they rely on scientific methods. **Research psychologists** use scientific methods to create new knowledge about the causes of behaviour, whereas **psychologist-practitioners**, such as clinical, counselling, industrial-organizational, and school psychologists, use existing research to enhance the everyday life of others. The science of psychology is important for both researchers and practitioners.

When it comes to understanding behaviour in the workplace, we will focus our attention on an area within psychology-practitioner area of psychology called **organizational behaviour** (OB). We will explore this area of study in more detail in the next section of this chapter.

References

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Yang, Y.-J., & Chiu, C.-Y. (2009). Mapping the structure and dynamics of psychological knowledge: Forty years of APA journal citations (1970–2009). *Review of General Psychology*, *13*(4), 349–356.

1.2 What is Organizational Behaviour?

Organizational behavior (OB) is defined as the systematic study and application of knowledge about how individuals and groups act within the organizations where they work.

Those who study organizational behavior—which now includes you—are interested in several outcomes such as work attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction and organizational commitment) as well as job performance (e.g., customer service and counterproductive work behaviors). A distinction is made in OB regarding which level of the organization is being studied at any given time.

There are three key levels of analysis in OB. They examine the following:

- the individual,
- the group, and
- the organization.



Here's an Example

If I want to understand my manager's personality, I would be examining the individual level of analysis. If I want to know about how my manager's personality affects my team, I am examining things at the group level. Now, if I want to understand how my organization's culture affects my manager's behavior, I would be interested in the organizational level of analysis.

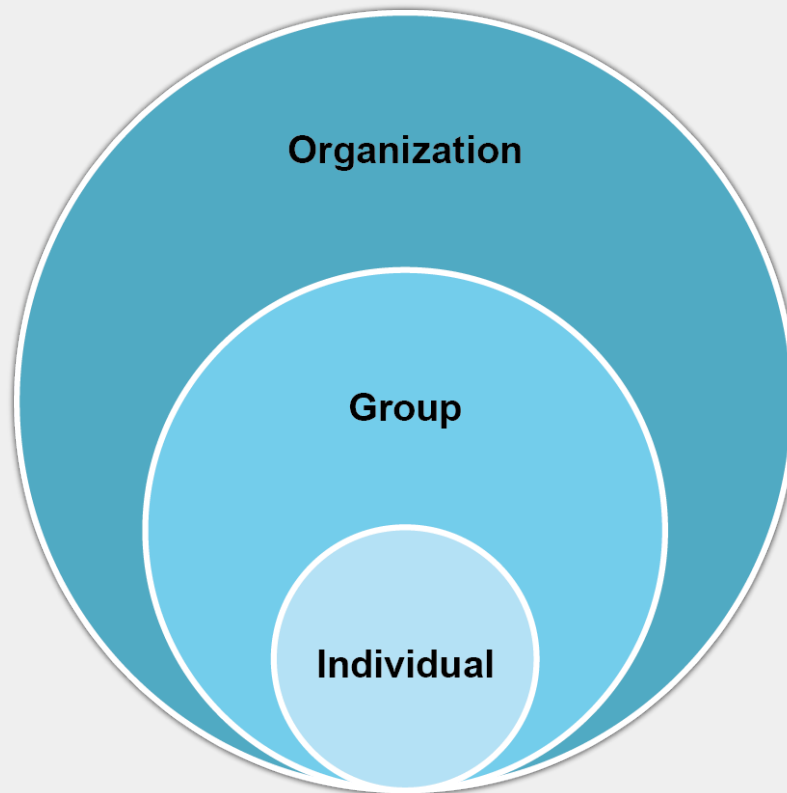


Fig. 1.1 – OB spans topics related from the individual to the organization. Adapted from Organizational Behavior by University of Minnesota via [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge]

While this book uses a psychological lens to examine communication and other behaviours in the workplace, it is also important to acknowledge that OB draws from other disciplines to create a unique field. As you read this book, you will most likely recognize OB's roots in other disciplines. For example, when we review topics such as personality and motivation, we will review studies from the field of psychology. The topic of team processes relies heavily on the field of sociology. In the chapter relating to decision making, you will come across the influence of economics. Even medical science contributes to the field of organizational behavior, particularly to the study of stress and its effects on individuals.

References

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1.3 OB Research Methods

OB Research Methods

OB researchers have many tools they use to discover how individuals, groups, and organizations behave. Researchers have working hypotheses based on their own observations, readings on the subject, and information from individuals within organizations. Based on these ideas, they set out to understand the relationships among different variables. There are a number of different research methods that researchers use, and we will discuss a few of these below. Imagine that your manager has asked you to find out if setting goals will help to make the employees at your company more productive. We will cover the different ways you could use research methods to answer this question, impress your boss, and hopefully get a promotion.

Surveys

Surveys are one of the primary methods management researchers use to learn about OB. A basic survey involves asking individuals to respond to a number of questions. The questions can be open-ended or close-ended. An example of an open-ended question that could be used to address your manager's question would be to ask employees how they feel about goal setting in relation to productivity, then summarize your findings. This might work if you have a small organization, but open-ended surveys can be time consuming to summarize and hard to interpret at a glance. You could get more specific by asking employees a series of close-ended questions in which you supply the response key, such as a rating of 1 to 5. Today it is easy to create online surveys that quickly compile the results automatically.

There are even several free survey tools available online such as [Free Online Surveys](#) and [Survey Gizmo](#), or you can use paper-and-pencil surveys.



Here's an Example

Sample Survey About the Effectiveness of Goal Setting

Instructions: We would like to gather your opinions about different aspects of work. Please answer the following three questions using the scale below:

Response Scale:

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly agree

Setting goals at work helps me to focus	1	2	3	4	5
Goal setting is effective in improving performance	1	2	3	4	5
I get more done when I use goal setting	1	2	3	4	5

Regardless of the method you choose to collect your information, the next step is to look at the average of the responses to the questions and see how the responses stack up. But this still wouldn't really answer the question your boss asked, which is whether using goal setting would help employees be more effective on the job. To do this, you would want to conduct a field study.

Field Studies

Field studies are also effective ways to learn about what is truly going on within organizations. There are survey field studies like the one above, but more compelling evidence comes from field studies that employ an experimental design. Here you would assign half the employees at your company to the goal setting condition and the other half to the control group condition. The control group wouldn't get any information on goal setting but the treatment group would. If you found that the

treatment group was more effective than the control group, you could tell your boss that goal setting works.

Laboratory Studies

OB researchers are often interested in basic research questions such as “Can we show that goal setting increases performance on a simple task?” This is how research on goal setting started, and it is also how we can establish the conditions under which it works more or less effectively. Again, to address this, researchers may conduct a lab study in which one group is assigned one condition and the other group is assigned the control condition (generally the control condition involves no change at all). One of the most important concepts to understand with lab studies is that they give the researcher a great deal of control over the environment they are studying but do so in a less “realistic” way, since they are not studying real employees in real work settings. For example, in a lab study, a researcher could simulate hiring and firing employees to see if firing some employees affected the goal-setting behavior of the remaining employees. While this wouldn’t be legal or ethical to do in a real organization, it could be a compelling lab study. At the same time, however, firing someone in a lab setting does not necessarily carry the same consequences as it would in real life.

Case Studies

Case studies are in-depth descriptions of a single industry or company. Case writers typically employ a systematic approach to gathering data and explaining an event or situation in great detail. The benefits of case studies are that they provide rich information for drawing conclusions about the circumstances and people involved in the topics studied. The downside is that it is sometimes difficult to generalize what worked in a single situation at a single organization to other situations and organizations.

Meta-Analysis

Meta-analysis is a technique used by researchers to summarize what other researchers have found on a given topic. This analysis is based on taking observed correlations from multiple studies, weighting them by the number of observations in each study, and finding out if, overall, the effect holds or not. For example, what is the average relationship between job satisfaction and performance? Research shows that, looking across 300 studies, the relationship is moderately strong (Judge et al., 2001). This is useful information because for years people had thought that the relationship did not exist, but when all the studies to date were examined together, the original beliefs about the satisfaction–performance relationship deteriorated. The advantage of meta-analysis is that it gives a more definitive answer to a question than a single study ever could. The

downside is that meta-analysis is only possible if sufficient research has been done on the topic in question.

References

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Judge, T. A., Thoresen, C. J., Bono, J. E., & Patton, G. K. (2001). The job satisfaction-job performance relationship: A qualitative and quantitative review. *Psychological Bulletin*, *127*(3), 376–407.

1.4 What's the Connection? OB and Communication in the Workplace

What's the Connection? OB, Communication, and the Canadian Workplace

Just like people, organizations come in many shapes and sizes. We understand that the career path you will take may include a variety of different organizations. In addition, we know that each student reading this book has a unique set of personal and work-related experiences, capabilities, and career goals. Research suggests that Canadians will hold, on average, 15 jobs over the course of their working career (Columbia College, 2019). In order to succeed in this type of career situation, individuals need to be armed with the tools necessary to be lifelong learners. So, this book will not be about giving you all the answers to every situation you may encounter when you start your first job or as you continue up the career ladder. Instead, this book will give you the vocabulary, framework, and critical thinking skills necessary for you to diagnose situations, ask tough questions, evaluate the answers you receive, and act in an effective and ethical manner regardless of situational characteristics.

Communication is key to your success—in relationships, in the workplace, as a citizen of your country, and across your lifetime. Your ability to communicate comes from experience, and experience can be an effective teacher, but this text and the related communication course will offer you an opportunity to understand your communication skills in relation to psychological principles.

Communication Influences Your Thinking about Yourself and Others

We all share a fundamental drive to communicate. Communication can be defined as “the process of understanding and sharing meaning” (Pearson & Nelson, 2000, p. 6). You share self-concept and meaning in what you say and how you say it, both in oral and written forms.

On the other side of the coin, your communications skills help you to understand others—not just their words, but also their tone of voice, their nonverbal gestures, or the format of their written documents provide you with clues about who they are and what their values and priorities may be. Active listening and reading are also part of being a successful communicator.

Communication Influences How You Learn

When you were an infant, you learned to talk over a period of many months. When you got older, you didn't learn to ride a bike, drive a car, or even text a message on your cell phone in one brief moment. You need to begin the process of improving your communication and interpersonal skills with the frame of mind that it will require effort, persistence, and self-correction.

You learn to speak in public by first having conversations, then by answering questions and expressing your opinions in class, and finally by preparing and delivering a "stand-up" speech. Similarly, you learn to write by first learning to read, then by writing and learning to think critically. Your speaking and writing are reflections of your thoughts, experience, and education. Part of that combination is your level of experience listening to other speakers, reading documents and styles of writing, and studying formats similar to what you aim to produce.

As you study communication, you may receive suggestions for improvement and clarification from speakers and writers more experienced than yourself. Take their suggestions as challenges to improve; don't give up when your first speech or first draft does not communicate the message you intend. Stick with it until you get it right. Your success in communicating is a skill that applies to almost every field of work, and it makes a difference in your relationships with others.



Effective communication skills are assets that will get you there. Image: reproduced from [Business Communication for Success](#) by Southern Alberta Institute of Technology via [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). [Click to enlarge]

Communication Represents You and Your Employer

You want to make a good first impression on your friends and family, instructors, and employer. They all want you to convey a positive image, as it reflects on them. In your career, you will represent your business or company in spoken and written form. Your professionalism and attention to detail will reflect positively on you and set you up for success.

In both oral and written situations, you will benefit from having the ability to communicate clearly. These are skills you will use for the rest of your life. Positive improvements in these skills will have a positive impact on your relationships, your prospects for employment, and your ability to make a difference in the world.

Communication Skills Are Desired by Business and Industry

Oral and written communication proficiencies are consistently ranked in the top ten desirable skills by employer surveys year after year. In fact, high-powered business executives sometimes hire consultants to coach them in sharpening their communication skills. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, the following are the top five personal qualities or skills potential employers seek:

1. **Communication skills** (verbal and written)
2. **Strong work ethic**
3. **Teamwork skills** (works well with others, group communication)
4. **Initiative**
5. **Analytical skills**

Knowing this, you can see that one way for you to be successful and increase your promotion potential is to increase your abilities to speak and write effectively.

An individual with excellent communication skills is an asset to every organization. No matter what career you plan to pursue, learning to express yourself professionally in speech and in writing will help you get there.



Let's Review

- **Communication forms a part of your self-concept**, and It helps you understand yourself and others, solve problems, learn new things, and build your career.

References

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1.5 Key Takeaways, Knowledge Check and Key Terms



Key Takeaways

In this chapter, we learned that:

- **Psychology is the scientific study** of mind and behaviour.
- **There are many sub-disciplines within psychology**, including organizational behaviour (OB).
- **OB is the systematic study and application of knowledge** about how individuals and groups act within the organizations where they work.
- **OB researchers study workplace behaviour using a variety of methods**, including surveys, field studies, laboratory studies, case studies, and meta-analysis.
- **The study of OB and communication can help student to develop communication skills** that are essential for success in the workplace.



Knowledge Check

Review your understanding of this chapter's key concepts by taking the interactive quiz below.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationpsychology/?p=41#h5p-13>



Key Terms

Key terms from this chapter include:

- **Psychology**
- **Research psychologist**
- **Psychologist-practitioner**
- **Organizational behaviour**
- **Surveys**
- **Field studies**
- **Case studies**
- **Meta-analysis**

CHAPTER 2: COMMUNICATION



Learning Objectives

In this chapter, we will

1. **Define** communication.
2. **Identify** characteristics of verbal, written, and nonverbal communication.
3. **Describe** the nature of communication using the transactional model.
4. **Compare** commonly used channels and directions of communication in the workplace.
5. **Recognize** the skills and abilities of a competent communicator.

In this chapter, students will learn about the nature of communication, the transactional theory of communication, and common channels of communication that are used in the workplace. In addition, students will explore the characteristics of competent communicators.

2.1 Communication Defined

Communication Defined

Before we explore different forms of communication, it is important that we have a shared understanding of what we mean by the word *communication*.

For our purposes in this book, we will define **communication** as the process of generating meaning by sending and receiving verbal and nonverbal symbols and signs that are influenced by multiple contexts.

This definition builds on other definitions of communication that have been rephrased and refined over many years. In fact, since the systematic study of communication began in colleges and universities a little over one hundred years ago, there have been more than 126 published definitions of communication (Dance & Larson, 1976).

Different Types of Communication

Communication can be categorized into three basic types:

1. [verbal communication](#), in which you listen to a person to understand their meaning;
2. [written communication](#), in which you read their meaning; and
3. [nonverbal communication](#), in which you observe a person and infer meaning.

Each of these forms of communication are important in the workplace and each has its own advantages, disadvantages, and even pitfalls.

1. Verbal Communication

Verbal communications in business take place over the phone or in person. In addition to routine phone calls and in-person conversations, verbal communication is an important tool for creating shared values within organization through storytelling and for communicating in crucial situations. Let's explore these two examples further.

Storytelling

Storytelling has been shown to be an effective form of verbal communication; it serves an important organizational function by helping to construct common meanings for individuals within the organization. Stories can help clarify key values and help demonstrate how things are done within an organization, and story frequency, strength, and tone are related to higher organizational commitment (McCarthy, 2008). The quality of the stories entrepreneurs tell is related to their ability to secure capital for their firms (Martens et. al., 2007). Stories can serve to reinforce and perpetuate an organization's culture.

Crucial Conversations

While the process may be the same, high-stakes communications require more planning, reflection, and skill than normal day-to-day interactions at work. Examples of high-stakes communication events include asking for a raise or presenting a business plan to a venture capitalist. In addition to these events, there are also many times in our professional lives when we have crucial conversations—discussions where not only the stakes are high but also where opinions vary and emotions run strong (Patterson et. al., 2002). One of the most consistent recommendations from communications experts is to work toward using “and” instead of “but” as you communicate under these circumstances. In addition, be aware of your communication style and practice flexibility; it is under stressful situations that communication styles can become the most rigid.

2. Written Communication

In contrast to verbal communications, written business communications are printed messages. Most jobs involve some degree of writing. Examples of written communications include memos, proposals, e-mails, letters, training manuals, and operating policies. They may be printed on paper, handwritten, or appear on the screen. Normally, a verbal communication takes place in real time. Written communication, by contrast, can be constructed over a longer period of time. Written communication is often **asynchronous** (occurring at different times). A written communication can also be read by many people (such as all employees in a department or all customers). It's a “one-to-many” communication, as opposed to a one-to-one verbal conversation. There are exceptions, of course: a voicemail is an oral message that is asynchronous. Conference calls and speeches are oral one-to-many communications, and e-mails may have only one recipient or many.

3. Nonverbal Communication

What you say is a vital part of any communication. But what you don't say can be even more

important. Research also shows that 55% of in-person communication comes from nonverbal cues like facial expressions, body stance, and tone of voice. According to one study, only 7% of comprehension is based on the the person's actual words; 38% is based on paralanguage (the tone, pace, and volume of speech), and 55% is based on nonverbal cues (body language) (Mehrabian, 1981).

Research shows that nonverbal cues can also affect whether you get a job offer. Judges examining videotapes of actual applicants were able to assess the social skills of job candidates with the sound turned off. They watched the rate of gesturing, time spent talking, and formality of dress to determine which candidates would be the most successful socially on the job (Gifford et. al., 1985). For this reason, it is important to consider how we appear in business as well as what we say. The muscles of our faces convey our emotions. We can send a silent message without saying a word. A change in facial expression can change our emotional state. Before an interview, for example, if we focus on feeling confident, our face will convey that confidence to an interviewer. Adopting a smile (even if we're feeling stressed) can reduce the body's stress levels.

To be effective communicators, we need to align our body language, appearance, and tone with the words we're trying to convey. Research shows that when individuals are lying, they are more likely to blink more frequently, shift their weight, and shrug (Siegman, 1985).

Another element of nonverbal communication is tone. A different tone can change the perceived meaning of a message demonstrates how clearly this can be true, whether in verbal or written communication. If we simply read these words without the added emphasis, we would be left to wonder, but the emphasis shows us how the **tone** conveys a great deal of information. Now you can see how changing one's tone of voice or writing can incite or defuse a misunderstanding.



Consider This

Don't Use That Tone with Me!

Examples of Tone. Changing your tone can dramatically change your meaning

Placement of the emphasis	What it means
I did not tell John you were late.	Someone else told John you were late.
I did not tell John you were late.	This did not happen.
I did not tell John you were late.	I may have implied it.
I did not tell John you were late.	But maybe I told Sharon and José.
I did not tell John you were late.	I was talking about someone else.
I did not tell John you were late.	I told him you still are late.
I did not tell John you were late .	I told him you were attending another meeting.

Source: Based on ideas in Kiely, M. (1993, October). When “no” means “yes.” *Marketing*, 7–9.

In addition to tone of voice, here are a few examples of nonverbal cues that can support or detract from a communicator’s message:

Body Language

A simple rule of thumb is that simplicity, directness, and warmth convey sincerity. And sincerity is key to effective communication. A firm handshake, given with a warm, dry hand, is a great way to establish trust. A weak, clammy handshake conveys a lack of trustworthiness. Gnawing one’s lip conveys uncertainty. A direct smile conveys confidence.

Eye Contact

In business, the style and duration of eye contact considered appropriate vary greatly across cultures. In North American, looking someone in the eye (for about a second) is considered a sign of trustworthiness.

Facial Expressions

The human face can produce thousands of different expressions. These expressions have been decoded by experts as corresponding to hundreds of different emotional states (Ekman et. al., 2008). Our faces convey basic information to the outside world. Happiness is associated with an upturned mouth and slightly closed eyes; fear with an open mouth and wide-eyed stare. Flitting (“shifty”) eyes and pursed lips convey a lack of trustworthiness. The effect of facial expressions in conversation is instantaneous. Our brains may register them as “a feeling” about someone’s character.

Posture

The position of our body relative to a chair or another person is another powerful silent messenger that conveys interest, aloofness, professionalism—or lack thereof. Head up, back straight (but not rigid) implies an upright character. In interview situations, experts advise mirroring an interviewer's tendency to lean in and settle back in her seat. The subtle repetition of the other person's posture conveys that we are listening and responding.

Touch

The meaning of a simple touch differs between individuals, genders, and cultures. In Mexico, when doing business, men may find themselves being grasped on the arm by another man. To pull away is seen as rude. In Indonesia, to touch anyone on the head or touch anything with one's foot is considered highly offensive. Canadians often place great value in a firm handshake. But handshaking as a competitive sport ("the bone-crusher") can come off as needlessly aggressive, at home and abroad.

Space

Anthropologist Edward T. Hall coined the term proxemics to denote the different kinds of distance that occur between people. These distances vary between cultures. The figure below outlines the basic proxemics of everyday life and their meaning (Hall, 1966):

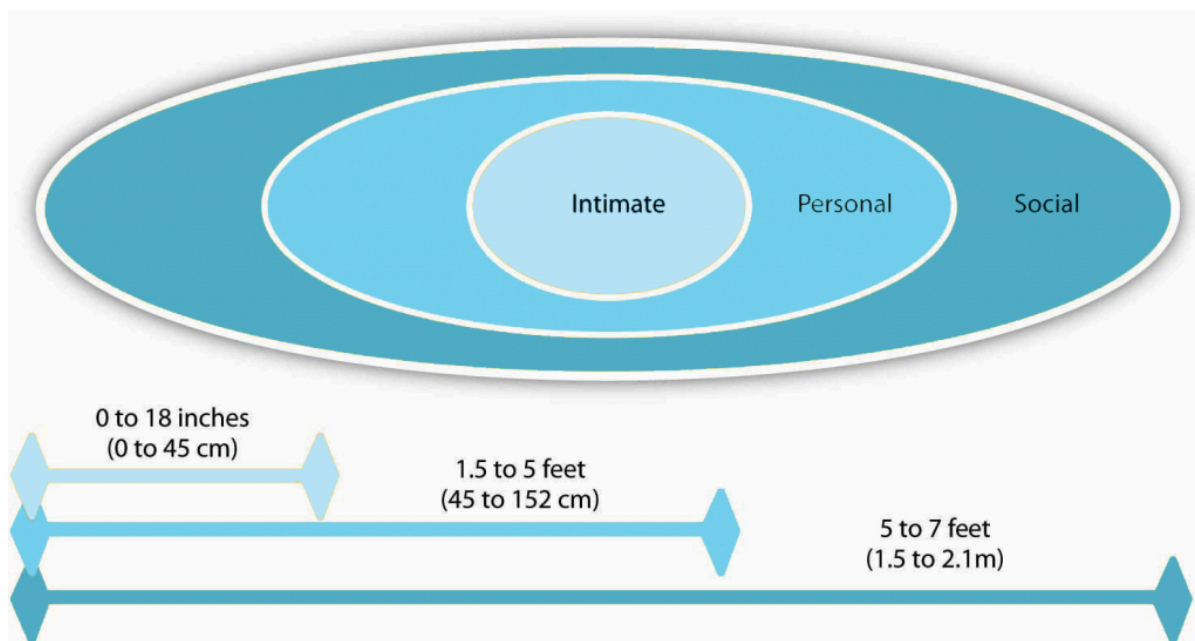


Figure 2.1 Interpersonal Distances. Image adapted from [Principles of Management for Leadership Communication](#) by University of Minnesota. [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge]

Standing too far away from a colleague (such as a public speaking distance of more than seven feet) or too close to a colleague (intimate distance for embracing) can thwart an effective verbal communication in business.



Let's Review

- **Types of communication include** verbal, written, and nonverbal.
- **Verbal communications have the advantage of** immediate feedback, are best for conveying emotions, and can involve storytelling and crucial conversations.
- **Written communications have the advantage of** asynchronicity, of reaching many readers, and are best for conveying information.
- **Both verbal and written communications convey nonverbal messages** through tone; verbal communications are also colored by body language, eye contact, facial expression, posture, touch, and space.



Exercises

1. When you see a memo or e-mail full of typos, poor grammar, or incomplete sentences, how do you react? Does it affect your perception of the sender? Why or why not?
2. How aware of your own body language are you? Has your body language ever gotten you into trouble when you were communicating with someone?
3. If the meaning behind verbal communication is only 7% words, what does this imply for written communication?

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2.2 The Communication Process

The Communication Process

The **transactional model of communication** describes communication as a process in which communicators generate social realities within social, relational, and cultural contexts. In this model, we don't just communicate to exchange messages; we communicate to create relationships, form intercultural alliances, shape our self-concepts, and engage with others in dialogue to create communities. In short, we don't communicate about our realities; communication helps to construct our realities.

The roles of sender and receiver in the transaction model of communication differ significantly from the other models. Instead of labeling participants as senders and receivers, the people in a communication encounter are referred to as *communicators*. The transaction model suggests that we are simultaneously senders and receivers. For example, in a job interview, as you send verbal messages about your interests and background, your potential employer reacts nonverbally. You don't wait until you are done sending your verbal message to start receiving and decoding the nonverbal messages. Instead, you are simultaneously sending your verbal message and receiving your potential employer's nonverbal messages. This is an important addition to the model because it allows us to understand how we are able to adapt our communication—for example, a verbal message—in the middle of sending it based on the communication we are simultaneously receiving from our communication partner.

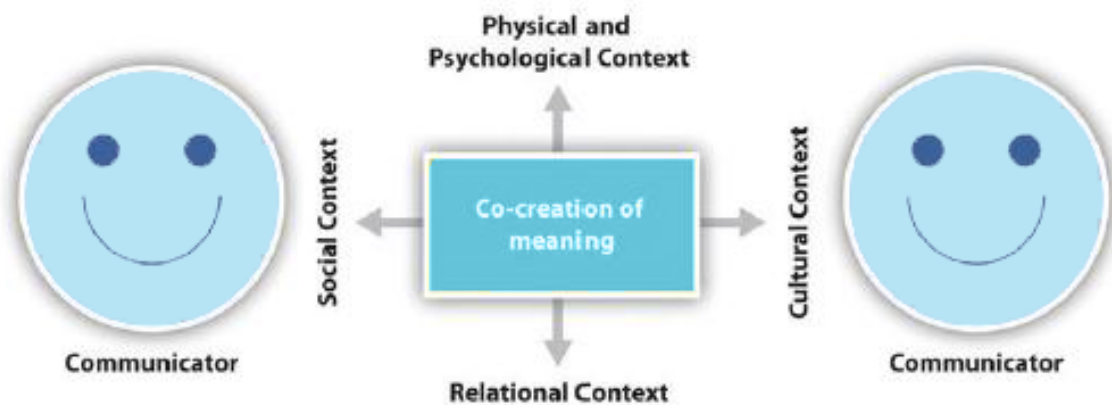


Figure 2.1 The Transaction Model of Communication. Image by Andy Schmitz, from [Process of Communication](#), CC BY-NC-SA 3.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge]

Idea Formation – The communication process begins when a communicator has an idea to be shared. The idea will be influenced by complex factors. The communicator must begin by clarifying

the idea and purpose. What exactly does the communicator want to achieve? How is the message likely to be perceived? Knowing this information provides a higher chance of successful communication

Message Encoding – The idea must be encoded into words, symbols, and gestures that will convey meaning. Because no two people interpret information in the exact same way, communicators must be careful to choose words, symbols and gestures that are commonly understood to reduce the chances of misunderstanding. Therefore, it is helpful to be aware of the other communicator’s attitudes, skills, experiences, and culture to ensure clear communication.

Message Transmission: Choosing the medium to transmit the message an important step in the communication process. Messages can be transmitted in a verbal, written, or visual manner (see [Table 2.1 below](#)). For clear communication to occur, the medium and message must match

Table 2.1: Message Transmission Mediums

Verbal	Written	Visual
In-person speech	Email	Drawings, paintings
Phone conversation	Text, instant message	Photos, graphic designs
Voice-over-internet protocol (VoIP)	Report, article, essay	Body language (e.g., eye contact, hand gestures)
Radio	Letter	Graphs
Podcast	Memo	Font types
Voicemail message	Blog	Semaphore
Intercom	Tweet	Architecture

As you can see, this whole process is easier done than said because you encode incredible masses of data to transmit to others all day long in multiple channels, often at once, and are likewise bombarded with a constant multi-channel stream of information in each of your five senses that you decode without being even consciously aware of this complex process. Anything that interferes with clear communication is called **noise**. Noise can interfere each step of the communication process. In professional situations, especially in important ones such as job interviews or meetings with clients where your success depends entirely on how well you communicate and it’s extremely important that you be in complete control of the communication process in order to present yourself as a detail-oriented *pro*—one that can be trusted to get the job done.

Context

The transaction model also includes a more complex understanding of context. The interaction model portrays **context** as physical and psychological influences that enhance or impede communication. While these contexts are important, they focus on message transmission and

reception. Since the transaction model of communication views communication as a force that shapes our realities before and after specific interactions occur, it must account for contextual influences outside of a single interaction. To do this, the transaction model considers how social, relational, and cultural contexts frame and influence our communication encounters.

Social context refers to the stated rules or unstated norms that guide communication. As we are socialized into our various communities, we learn rules and implicitly pick up on norms for communicating. Some common rules that influence social contexts include don't lie to people, don't interrupt people, don't pass people in line, greet people when they greet you, thank people when they pay you a compliment, and so on. Parents and teachers often explicitly convey these rules to their children or students. Rules may be stated over and over, and there may be punishment for not following them.

Norms are social conventions that we pick up on through observation, practice, and trial and error. We may not even know we are breaking a social norm until we notice people looking at us strangely or someone corrects or teases us. For example, as a new employee you may over- or underdress for the company's holiday party because you don't know the norm for formality. Although there probably isn't a stated rule about how to dress at the holiday party, you will notice your error without someone having to point it out, and you will likely not deviate from the norm again in order to save yourself any potential embarrassment. Even though breaking social norms doesn't result in the formal punishment that might be a consequence of breaking a social rule, the social awkwardness we feel when we violate social norms is usually enough to teach us that these norms are powerful even though they aren't made explicit like rules. Norms even have the power to override social rules in some situations. To go back to the examples of common social rules mentioned before, we may break the rule about not lying if the lie is meant to save someone from feeling hurt. We often interrupt close friends when we're having an exciting conversation, but we wouldn't be as likely to interrupt a professor while they are lecturing. Since norms and rules vary among people and cultures, relational and cultural contexts are also included in the transaction model in order to help us understand the multiple contexts that influence our communication.

Relational context includes the previous interpersonal history and type of relationship we have with a person. We communicate differently with someone we just met versus someone we've known for a long time. Initial interactions with people tend to be more highly scripted and governed by established norms and rules, but when we have an established relational context, we may be able to bend or break social norms and rules more easily. For example, you would likely follow social norms of politeness and attentiveness and might spend the whole day cleaning the house for the first time you invite your new neighbors to visit. Once the neighbors are in your house, you may also make them the center of your attention during their visit. If you end up becoming friends with your neighbors and establishing a relational context, you might not think as much about having everything cleaned and prepared or even giving them your whole attention during later visits. Since communication norms and rules also vary based on the type of relationship people have, relationship type is also included in relational context. For example, there are certain communication rules and norms that apply to a supervisor-supervisee relationship that don't apply to a brother-

sister relationship and vice versa. Just as social norms and relational history influence how we communicate, so does culture.

Cultural context includes various aspects of identities such as race, gender, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, and ability. We will learn more about these identities later in the book, but for now it is important for us to understand that whether we are aware of it or not, we all have multiple cultural identities that influence our communication. Some people, especially those with identities that have been historically marginalized, are regularly aware of how their cultural identities influence their communication and influence how others communicate with them. Conversely, people with identities that are dominant or in the majority may rarely, if ever, think about the role their cultural identities play in their communication.

When cultural context comes to the forefront of a communication encounter, it can be difficult to manage. Since intercultural communication creates uncertainty, it can deter people from communicating across cultures or lead people to view intercultural communication as negative. But if you avoid communicating across cultural identities, you will likely not get more comfortable or competent as a communicator. Intercultural communication has the potential to enrich various aspects of our lives. In order to communicate well within various cultural contexts, it is important to keep an open mind and avoid making assumptions about others' cultural identities. While you may be able to identify some aspects of the cultural context within a communication encounter, there may also be cultural influences that you can't see. A competent communicator shouldn't assume to know all the cultural contexts a person brings to an encounter, since not all cultural identities are visible. As with the other contexts, it requires skill to adapt to shifting contexts, and the best way to develop these skills is through practice and reflection.

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2.3 Common Channels of Communication in the Workplace

Common Channels of Communication in the Workplace

The channel, or medium, used to communicate a message affects how accurately the message will be received. Verbal, written, and nonverbal communications have different strengths and weaknesses. In business, the decision to communicate verbally or in written form can be a powerful one. In addition, a smart manager is aware of the nonverbal messages conveyed by either type of communication—as noted earlier, only 7% of verbal communication comes from the words themselves.

Information Richness

Channels vary in their information richness. Information-rich channels convey more nonverbal information. As you may be able to guess from our earlier discussion of verbal and written communications, verbal communications are richer than written ones. Research shows that effective managers tend to use more information-rich communication channels than less effective managers (Allen & Griffeth, 1997; Fulk & Boyd, 1991; Yates & Orlikowski, 1992). The table below illustrates the information richness of different information channels.

Table 2.2 Guide for When to Use Written Versus Verbal Communication

Information Channel	Information Riches
Face--to-face conversation	High
Videoconferencing	High
Telephone conversation	High
E-mails	Medium
Handheld devices	Medium
Blogs	Medium
Written letters and memos	Medium
Formal written documents	Low
Spreadsheets	Low

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Like face-to-face and telephone conversation, videoconferencing has high information richness because communicators can see or hear beyond just the words—they can see body language or hear the tone of their voice. Handheld devices, blogs, and written letters and memos offer medium-rich channels because they convey words and pictures/photos. Formal written documents, such as legal documents, and spreadsheets, such as the division's budget, convey the least richness because the format is often rigid and standardized. As a result, nuance is lost.

When determining whether to communicate verbally or in writing, ask yourself: Do I want to convey facts or feelings? Verbal communications are a better way to convey feelings. Written communications do a better job of conveying facts.

Picture a manager making a speech to a team of 20 employees. The manager is speaking at a normal pace. The employees appear interested. But how much information is being transmitted? Not as much as the speaker believes! Humans listen much faster than they speak. The average public speaker communicates at a speed of about 125 words a minute. And that pace sounds fine to the audience. (In fact, anything faster than that probably would sound weird. To put that figure in perspective, someone having an excited conversation speaks at about 150 words a minute.) On the basis of these numbers, we could assume that the employees have more than enough time to take in each word the manager delivers. And that's the problem. The average person in the audience can hear 400–500 words a minute (Lee & Hatesohl, 2008). The audience has more than enough time to hear. As a result, they will each be processing many thoughts of their own, on totally different subjects, while the manager is speaking. As this example demonstrates, oral communication is an inherently flawed medium for conveying specific facts. Listeners' minds wander! It's nothing personal—in fact, it's totally physical. In business, once we understand this fact, we can make more intelligent communication choices based on the kind of information we want to convey.

The key to effective communication is to match the communication channel with the goal of the communication (Barry & Fulmer, 2004). For example, written media may be a better choice when the communicator wants a record of the content, has less urgency for a response, is physically separated from the receiver, doesn't require a lot of feedback, or the message is complicated and may take some time to understand. Oral communication, however, makes more sense when conveying a sensitive or emotional message, needs feedback immediately, and does not need a permanent record of the conversation. Use the guide provided for deciding when to use written versus verbal communication.

Table 2.3 Guide for When to Use Written Versus Verbal Communication

Use Written Communication When:

conveying facts
the messages needs to become part of a permanent file
there is little time urgency
you do not need immediate feedback
the ideas are complicated

Use Verbal Communication When:

conveying emotion and feelings
the message does not need to be permanent
there is time urgency
you need immediate feedback
the ideas are simple or can be made simple with explanations

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Business Use of E-Mail

The growth of e-mail has been spectacular, but it has also created challenges in managing information and an ever-increasing speed of doing business. Learning to be more effective in your e-mail communications is an important skill. To learn more, check out the business e-mail do's and don'ts.

Business E-Mail Do's and Don'ts

- DON'T send or forward chain e-mails.
- DON'T put anything in an e-mail that you don't want the world to see.
- DON'T write a message in capital letters—this is the equivalent of SHOUTING.
- DON'T routinely “cc” everyone all the time. Reducing inbox clutter is a great way to increase communication.
- DON'T hit Send until you spell-check your e-mail.
- DO use a subject line that summarizes your message, adjusting it as the message changes over time.
- DO make your request in the first line of your e-mail. (And if that's all you need to say, stop there!)
- DO end your e-mail with a brief sign-off such as, “Thank you,” followed by your name and contact information.

- DO think of a work e-mail as a binding communication.
- DO let others know if you've received an e-mail in error.

Source: Adapted from information in Leland, K., & Bailey, K. (2000). *Customer service for dummies*. Wiley; Information Technology Services. (1997). *Top 10 email dos and top ten email don'ts*. University of Illinois at Chicago Medical Center. <http://www.uic.edu/hsc/uicmc/its/customers/email-tips.htm>; Kawasaki, G. (2006, February 3). *The effective emailer*. How to Change the World. http://blog.guykawasaki.com/2006/02/the_effective_e.html.

An important, although often ignored, rule when communicating emotional information is that e-mail's lack of richness can be your loss. As we saw in the chart above, e-mail is a medium-rich channel. It can convey facts quickly. But when it comes to emotion, e-mail's flaws make it far less desirable a choice than oral communication—the 55% of nonverbal cues that make a conversation comprehensible to a listener are missing. E-mail readers don't pick up on sarcasm and other tonal aspects of writing as much as the writer believes they will, researchers note in a recent study (Kruger, 2005).

The sender may believe she has included these emotional signifiers in her message. But, with words alone, those signifiers are not there. This gap between the form and content of e-mail inspired the rise of emoticons—symbols that offer clues to the emotional side of the words in each Message. Generally speaking, however, emoticons are not considered professional in business communication.

You might feel uncomfortable conveying an emotionally laden message verbally, especially when the message contains unwanted news. Sending an e-mail to your staff that there will be no bonuses this year may seem easier than breaking the bad news face-to-face, but that doesn't mean that e-mail is an effective or appropriate way to deliver this kind of news. When the message is emotional, the sender should use verbal communication. Indeed, a good rule of thumb is that the more emotionally laden messages require more thought in the choice of channel and how they are communicated.

Direction of Communication Within Organizations

Information can move horizontally, from a Sender to a Receiver, as we've seen. It can also move vertically, down from top management or up from the front line. Information can also move diagonally between and among levels of an organization, such as a message from a customer service representative up to a manager in the manufacturing department, or a message from the chief financial officer sent down to all department heads.

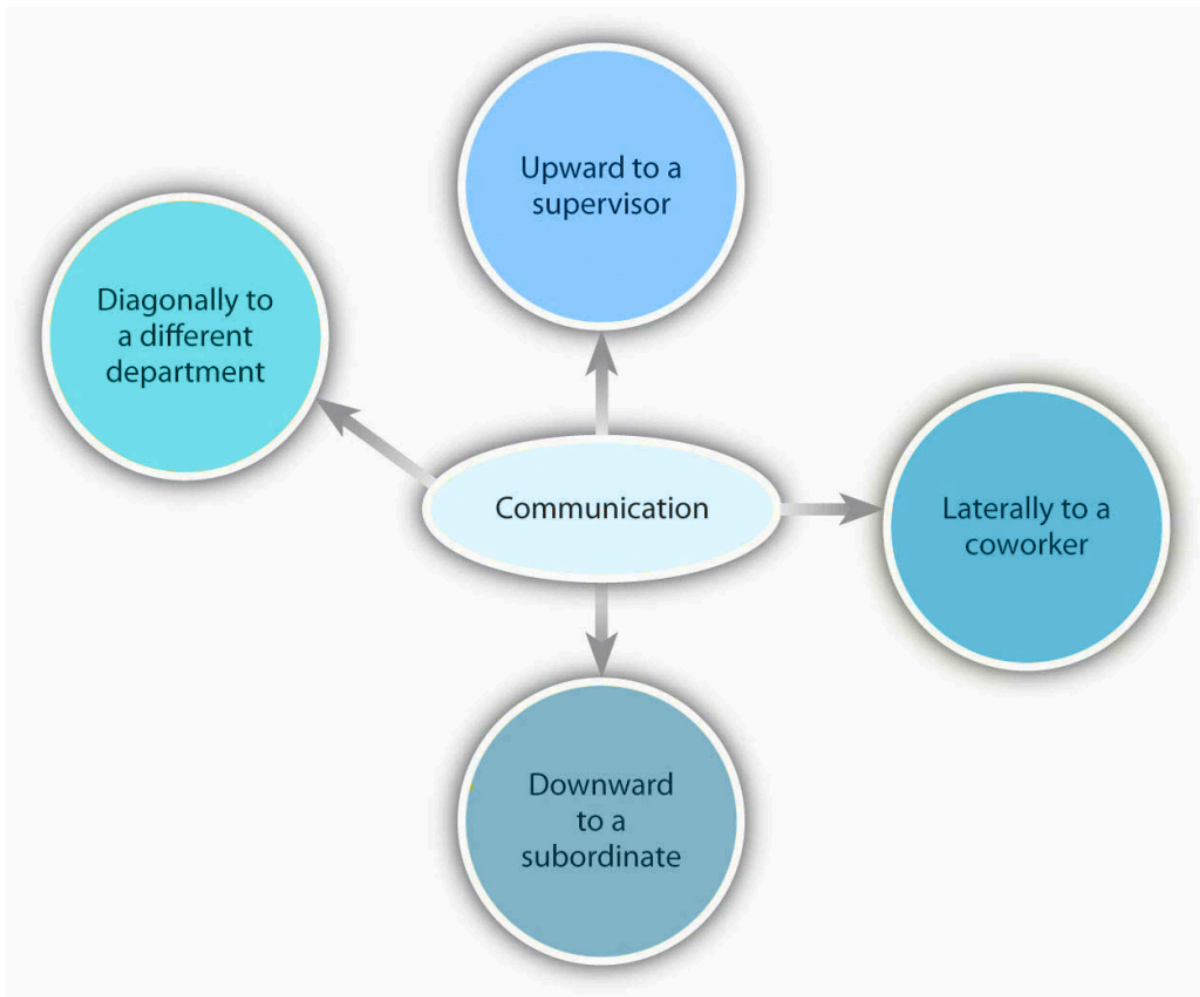


Figure 2.2 Communication flows in many different directions within an organization. Adapted from [Principles of Management for Leadership Communication](#) by University of Minnesota information . [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Color altered from original.[Click to enlarge]

There is a chance for these arrows to go awry, of course. As Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2004), author of best-selling books such as *Flow*, has noted, “In large organizations the dilution of information as it passes up and down the hierarchy, and horizontally across departments, can undermine the effort to focus on common goals” (p. 75). Managers need to keep this in mind when they make organization design decisions as part of the organizing function.

The organizational status of the sender can affect the receiver’s attentiveness to the message. For example, consider: a senior manager sends a memo to a production supervisor. The supervisor, who has a lower status within the organization, is likely to pay close attention to the message. The same information, conveyed in the opposite direction, however, might not get the attention it deserves. The message would be filtered by the senior manager’s perception of priorities and urgencies.

External Communications

External communications deliver specific business messages to individuals outside an organization. They may announce changes in staff or strategy, earnings, and more. The goal of an external communication is to create shared understanding. Examples of external communications include press releases, advertisements, webpages, and customer communications such as catalogs.



Exercises

1. How could you use your knowledge of communication richness to be more effective in your own communications?
2. What are the three biggest advantages and disadvantages you see regarding technology and communications?
3. Explain the difference between internal and external communications in an organization, giving examples of each.

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2.4 Communication Competence

Defining Competence

We have already defined *communication*, and you probably know that to be competent at something means you know what you're doing. When we combine these terms, we get the following definition: **communication competence** refers to the knowledge of effective and appropriate communication patterns and the ability to use and adapt that knowledge in various contexts (Cooley & Roach, 1984). To better understand this definition, let's break apart its components.

The first part of the definition we will unpack deals with **knowledge**. The cognitive elements of competence include knowing how to do something and understanding why things are done the way they are (Hargie, 2011). People can develop cognitive competence by observing and evaluating the actions of others. Cognitive competence can also be developed through instruction. Since you are currently taking a communication class, I encourage you to try to observe the communication concepts you are learning in the communication practices of others and yourself. This will help bring the concepts to life and also help you evaluate how communication in the real world matches up with communication concepts. As you build a repertoire of communication knowledge based on your experiential and classroom knowledge, you will also be developing behavioral competence.



Developing communication competence can bring many rewards, but it also requires time and effort. Paul Shanks – [Communication](#) – [CC BY-NC 2.0](#). [Click to enlarge]

The second part of the definition of communication competence that we will unpack is *the ability to use*. Individual factors affect our ability to do anything. Not everyone has the same athletic, musical, or intellectual ability. At the individual level, a person's physiological and psychological characteristics affect competence. In terms of physiology, age, maturity, and ability to communicate affect competence. In terms of psychology, a person's mood, stress level, personality, and level of communication apprehension (level of anxiety regarding communication) affect competence (Cooley & Roach, 1984). All these factors will either help or hinder you when you try to apply the knowledge you have learned to actual communication behaviors. For example, you might know strategies for being an effective speaker, but public speaking anxiety that kicks in when you get in front of the audience may prevent you from fully putting that knowledge into practice.

The third part of the definition we will unpack is ability to **adapt to various contexts**. What is competent or not varies based on social and cultural context, which makes it impossible to have

only one standard for what counts as communication competence (Cooley & Roach, 1984). Social variables such as status and power affect competence. In a social situation where one person—say, a supervisor—has more power than another—for example, his or her employee—then the supervisor is typically the one who sets the standard for competence. Although we have a clear definition of communication competence, there are not definitions for how to be competent in any given situation, since competence varies at the individual, social, and cultural level.

Developing Competence

Knowing the dimensions of competence is an important first step toward developing competence. Everyone reading this book already has some experience with and knowledge about communication. After all, you've spent many years explicitly and implicitly learning to communicate. For example, we are explicitly taught the verbal codes we use to communicate. On the other hand, although there are numerous rules and norms associated with nonverbal communication, we rarely receive explicit instruction on how to do it. Instead, we learn by observing others and through trial and error with our own nonverbal communication. Competence obviously involves verbal and nonverbal elements, but it also applies to many situations and contexts. Communication competence is needed in order to understand communication ethics, to develop cultural awareness, to use computer-mediated communication, and to think critically. Competence involves knowledge, motivation, and skills. It's not enough to know what good communication consists of; you must also have the motivation to reflect on and better your communication and the skills needed to do so.

In regards to competence, we all have areas where we are skilled and areas where we have deficiencies. In most cases, we can consciously decide to work on our deficiencies, which may take considerable effort. There are multiple stages of competence that I challenge you to assess as you communicate in your daily life: unconscious incompetence, conscious incompetence, conscious competence, and unconscious competence (Hargie, 2011). Before you have built up a rich cognitive knowledge base of communication concepts and practiced and reflected on skills in a particular area, you may exhibit unconscious incompetence, which means you are not even aware that you are communicating in an incompetent manner. Once you learn more about communication and have a vocabulary to identify concepts, you may find yourself exhibiting conscious incompetence. This is where you know what you should be doing, and you realize that you're not doing it as well as you could. However, as your skills increase you may advance to conscious competence, meaning that you know you are communicating well in the moment, which will add to your bank of experiences to draw from in future interactions. When you reach the stage of unconscious competence, you just communicate successfully without straining to be competent. Just because you reach the stage of unconscious competence in one area or with one person does not mean you will always stay there. We are faced with new communication encounters regularly, and although we may be able to draw on the communication skills we have learned about and developed, it may take a few instances of conscious incompetence before you can advance to later stages.

In many introductory communication classes that I teach, a student usually says something like

“You must be really good at this stuff since you study it and have been teaching it for a while.” At the same time students assume that I have a high level of communication competence, they are hard on themselves for being at the stage of conscious incompetence, where they catch themselves communicating poorly in regards to a concept we recently studied. In response to both of these comments, I say, “Just because I know the concepts and definitions doesn’t mean I always put them to good use. We’re all imperfect and fallible, and if we expect to be perfect communicators after studying this, then we’re setting ourselves up for failure. However, when I do mess up, I almost always make a mental note and reflect on it. And now you’re starting to do the same thing, which is to notice and reflect on your communication more. And that already puts you ahead of most people!”

One way to progress toward communication competence is to become a more mindful communicator. A **mindful communicator** actively and fluidly processes information, is sensitive to communication contexts and multiple perspectives, and is able to adapt to novel communication situations (Burgoon et al., 2000). Becoming a more mindful communicator has many benefits, including achieving communication goals, detecting deception, avoiding stereotypes, and reducing conflict. Whether or not we achieve our day-to-day communication goals depends on our communication competence. Various communication behaviors can signal that we are communicating mindfully. For example, asking an employee to paraphrase their understanding of the instructions you just gave them shows that you are aware that verbal messages are not always clear, that people do not always listen actively, and that people often do not speak up when they are unsure of instructions for fear of appearing incompetent or embarrassing themselves. Some communication behaviors indicate that we are not communicating mindfully, such as withdrawing from a romantic partner or engaging in passive-aggressive behavior during a period of interpersonal conflict. Most of us know that such behaviors lead to predictable and avoidable conflict cycles, yet we are all guilty of them. Our tendency to assume that people are telling us the truth can also lead to negative results. Therefore, a certain amount of tentativeness and mindful monitoring of a person’s nonverbal and verbal communication can help us detect deception. However, this is not the same thing as chronic suspicion, which would not indicate communication competence.



Becoming more mindful of your communication and the communication of others can contribute to your communication competence. [Free Stock Photos](#) – public domain. [Click to enlarge]



Let's Focus: Communications Spotlight

Many students note that some of what we learn in this class is “common sense.” I agree with this observation in some cases but disagree with it in others. As I’ve noted before, this class builds on knowledge that you have already gained, through experience and observation as a person with many years of communication under your belt. For example, a student might say that it is “common sense” that conflict avoidance can lead to built-up tensions that eventually hurt an interpersonal relationship. But many of us avoid confronting what is causing conflict in our relationships even though we know it’s better to talk about our problems than to let them build up. In order to put that “commonsense” knowledge to competent use, we must have a more nuanced understanding of how conflict and interpersonal communication relate and know some conflict management strategies.

Communication is common in that it is something that we spend most of our time doing, but the ability to make sense of and improve our communication takes competence that is learned through deliberate study and personal reflection. So, to get started on your road to competence, I am proposing that you do two things. First, challenge yourself to see the value in the study of communication. Apply the concepts we are learning to your life and find ways to make this class help you achieve your goals. Second, commit to using the knowledge you gain in this class to improve your communication and the communication of those around you. Become a higher **self-monitor**, which means start to notice your communication more. We all know areas where we could improve our communication, and taking this class will probably expose even more. But you have to be prepared to put in the time to improve; for example, it takes effort to become a better listener or to give better feedback.

1. What aspects of communication do you think are “common sense?” What aspects of communication do you think require more formal instruction and/or study?
2. What communication concept has appealed to you most so far? How can you see this concept applying to your life?
3. Do a communication self-assessment. What are your strengths as a communicator? What are your weaknesses? What can you do to start improving your communication competence?

Overcoming Anxiety

Many students face anxiety about communication in general or public speaking situations. Decades of research conducted by communication scholars shows that communication apprehension is common among college students (Priem & Solomon, 2009). **Communication apprehension (CA)** is fear or anxiety experienced by a person due to actual or imagined communication with another person or persons. CA includes multiple forms of communication, not just public speaking. Of college students, 15 to 20 percent experience high trait CA, meaning they are generally anxious about communication. Furthermore, 70 percent of college students experience some trait CA, which means that addressing communication anxiety in a class like the one you're taking now stands to benefit the majority of students (Priem & Solomon, 2009). Public speaking anxiety is type of CA that produces physiological, cognitive, and behavioral reactions in people when faced with a real or imagined presentation (Bodie, 2010). Research on public speaking anxiety has focused on three key ways to address this common issue: systematic desensitization, cognitive restructuring, and skills training (Bodie, 2010). Communication departments are typically the only departments that address communication apprehension explicitly, which is important as CA is "related to negative academic consequences such as negative attitudes toward school, lower over-all classroom achievement, lower final course grades, and higher college attrition rates" (Allen et al., 1989). Additionally, CA can lead others to make assumptions about your communication competence that may be unfavorable. Even if you are intelligent, prepared, and motivated, CA and public speaking anxiety can detract from your communication and lead others to perceive you in ways you did not intend. CA is a common issue faced by many people, so you are not alone. Below are ten tips for reducing speaking anxiety.



Communication apprehension and public speaking anxiety are common but can be managed productively. Ana C. – [day 339 butterflies](#) – [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#). [Click to enlarge]



Top Ten Ways to Reduce Speaking Anxiety

1. Remember, you are not alone. Public speaking anxiety is common, so don't ignore it—confront it.
2. You can't literally "die of embarrassment." Audiences are forgiving and understanding.
3. It always feels worse than it looks.
4. Take deep breaths. It releases endorphins, which naturally fight the adrenaline that causes anxiety.
5. Look the part. Dress professionally to enhance confidence.
6. Channel your nervousness into positive energy and motivation.
7. Start your outline and research early. Better information = higher confidence.
8. Practice and get feedback from a trusted source. (Don't just practice for your cat.)
9. Visualize success through positive thinking.
10. Prepare, prepare, prepare! Practice is a speaker's best friend.



Exercises

1. Evaluate your speaking and listening competencies. Which skill will be most useful for you in academic contexts? Professional contexts? Personal contexts? Civic contexts?
2. Think of a person you know who you think possesses a high level of communication competence. What makes you think this? What communication characteristics do they have that you might want to have yourself?
3. What anxieties do you have regarding communication and/or public speaking? Since communication and speaking are a necessary part of life, identify some strategies you can use to manage those anxieties.



Let's Review

- **Communication competence refers to the knowledge of effective and appropriate communication patterns** and the ability to use and adapt that knowledge in various contexts.
- **Levels of communication competence include** unconscious incompetence, conscious incompetence, conscious competence, and unconscious competence.
- **To be a competent communicator, you should have cognitive knowledge about communication based on** observation and instruction; understand that individual, social, and cultural contexts affect competence; and be able to adapt to those various contexts.
- **In order to develop communication competence**, you must become a more mindful communicator and a higher self-monitor.
- **Communication apprehension (CA) refers to fear or anxiety experienced by a person due to real or imagined communication with another person or persons.** Public speaking anxiety is a form of CA that more specifically focuses on anxiety about giving a public presentation. Both are commonly experienced by most people and can be managed using various strategies.



Self-Assessments

See Appendix B: Self-Assessments

- [Assessment: The Johari Window](#)
- [Assessment: What's My Attitude?](#)

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2.5 Key Takeaways, Knowledge Check and Key Terms



Key Takeaways

In this chapter, we learned that:

- **Communication** is defined as the process of generating meaning by sending and receiving verbal and nonverbal symbols and signs that are influenced by multiple contexts.
- **Communication can be categorized into three basic types** – verbal, written, and nonverbal.
- **The transactional model of communication** describes communication as a process in which communicators generate social realities within social, relational, and cultural contexts.
- **Different communication channels are more or less effective at transmitting different kinds of information.** In addition, communications flow in different directions within organizations.
- **Competent communicators have knowledge and skills about effective communication** that they employ in a mindful and flexible manner based on the characteristics of a situation.



Knowledge Check

Review your understanding of this chapter's key concepts by taking the interactive quiz below.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationpsychology/?p=153#h5p-12>



Key Terms

Key terms from this chapter include:

- **Communication**
- **Verbal communication**
- **Written communication**
- **Nonverbal communication**
- **Crucial conversations**
- **Transactional model of communication**
- **Social context**
- **Norms**
- **Relational context**
- **Cultural context**
- **Communication competence**
- **Communication apprehension**

CHAPTER 3: EMOTIONS



Learning Objectives

In this chapter, we will:

1. **Identify** the intrapersonal, interpersonal, social and cultural functions of emotions.
2. **Describe** different theories of emotion.
3. **Explain** the concept of emotional labor and the importance of emotional intelligence in the workplace.
4. **Identify** strategies for regulating negative emotions.

In this chapter, students will learn about the functions and nature of human emotions. We will explore theories of emotion including, Cannon-Bard theory, James-Lange theory, and two-factor theory. In addition, we will learn the role of **emotional intelligence** in workplace success and discuss strategies for regulating negative emotions.

3.1 Functions of Emotions

It is impossible to imagine life without emotion. We treasure our feelings—the joy at a ball game, the pleasure of the touch of a loved one, or the fun with friends on a night out. Even negative emotions are important, such as the sadness when a loved one dies, the anger when violated, the fear that overcomes us in a scary or unknown situation, or the guilt or shame toward others when our sins are made public. Emotions color life experiences and give those experiences meaning and flavor.

In fact, emotions play many important roles in people’s lives and have been the topic of scientific inquiry in psychology for well over a century (Cannon, 1927; Darwin, 1872; James, 1890). This section explores why we have emotions and why they are important. Doing so requires us to understand the function of emotions in three different contexts. The first



Emotions help us navigate the complex social landscape of our lives. Image: Gwenaël Piase, [March for Life, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](#). [Click to enlarge]

concerns the **intrapersonal functions of emotion**, which refer to the role that emotions play within each of us individually. The second concerns the **interpersonal functions of emotion**, which refer to the role emotions play between individuals within a group. The third concerns the **social and cultural functions of emotion**, which refer to the role that emotions play in the maintenance of social order within a society. All in all, we will see that emotions inform us of who we are, what our relationships with others are like, and how to behave in social interactions. Emotions give meaning to events; without emotions, those events would be mere facts. Emotions help coordinate interpersonal relationships. And emotions play an important role in the cultural functioning of keeping human societies together.

In this Section

The functions of emotions can be grouped in the following ways:

1. [Intrapersonal Functions of Emotion](#)
2. [Interpersonal Functions of Emotion](#)
3. [Social and Cultural Functions of Emotion](#)

1. Intrapersonal Functions of Emotion

Emotions Help us Act Quickly with Minimal Conscious Awareness

Emotions are rapid information-processing systems that help us act with minimal thinking (Tooby & Cosmides, 2008). Problems associated with birth, battle, death, and seduction have occurred throughout evolutionary history and emotions evolved to aid humans in adapting to those problems rapidly and with minimal conscious cognitive intervention. If we did not have emotions, we could not make rapid decisions concerning whether to attack, defend, flee, care for others, reject food, or approach something useful, all of which were functionally adaptive in our evolutionary history and helped us to survive. For instance, drinking spoiled milk or eating rotten eggs has negative consequences for our welfare. The emotion of disgust, however, helps us immediately take action by not ingesting them in the first place or by vomiting them out. This response is adaptive because it aids, ultimately, in our survival and allows us to act immediately without much thinking. In some instances, taking the time to sit and rationally think about what to do, calculating cost-benefit ratios in one's mind, is a luxury that might cost one one's life. Emotions evolved so that we can act without that depth of thinking.

Emotions Prepare the Body for Immediate Action

Emotions prepare us for behavior. When triggered, emotions orchestrate systems such as perception, attention, inference, learning, memory, goal choice, motivational priorities, physiological reactions, motor behaviors, and behavioral decision making (Cosmides & Tooby, 2000; Tooby & Cosmides, 2008). Emotions simultaneously activate certain systems and deactivate others in order to prevent the chaos of competing systems operating at the same time, allowing for coordinated responses to environmental stimuli (Levenson, 1999). For instance, when we are afraid, our bodies shut down temporarily unneeded digestive processes, resulting in saliva reduction (a dry mouth); blood flows disproportionately to the lower half of the body; the visual field expands; and air is breathed in, all preparing the body to flee. Emotions initiate a system of components that includes subjective experience, expressive behaviors, physiological reactions, action tendencies, and cognition, all for the purposes of specific actions; the term "emotion" is, in reality, a metaphor for these reactions.



The emotion of disgust serves to protect us from toxins and contamination, of the physical and moral variety. Image: by Runs with Scissors, [Gas Face After Visiting The Frick, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](#). [Click to enlarge]

One common misunderstanding many people have when thinking about emotions, however, is the belief that emotions must always directly produce action. This is not true. Emotion certainly *prepares* the body for action; but whether people actually engage in action is dependent on many factors, such as the context within which the emotion has occurred, the target of the emotion, the perceived consequences of one's actions, previous experiences, and so forth (Baumeister et al., 2007; Matsumoto & Wilson, 2008). Thus, emotions are just one of many determinants of behavior, albeit an important one.

Emotions Influence Thoughts

Emotions are also connected to thoughts and memories. Memories are not just facts that are encoded in our brains; they are colored with the emotions felt at those times the facts occurred (Wang & Ross, 2007). Thus, emotions serve as the neural glue that connects those disparate facts in our minds. That is why it is easier to remember happy thoughts when happy, and angry times when angry. Emotions serve as the affective basis of many attitudes, values, and beliefs that we have about the world and the people around us; without emotions those attitudes, values, and beliefs would be just statements without meaning, and emotions give those statements meaning. Emotions influence our thinking processes, sometimes in constructive ways, sometimes not. It is difficult to think critically and clearly when we feel intense emotions, but easier when we are not overwhelmed with emotions (Matsumoto et al., 2006).

Emotions Motivate Future Behaviors

Because emotions prepare our bodies for immediate action, influence thoughts, and can be felt, they are important motivators of future behavior. Many of us strive to experience the feelings of satisfaction, joy, pride, or triumph in our accomplishments and achievements. At the same time, we also work very hard to avoid strong negative feelings; for example, once we have felt the emotion of disgust when drinking the spoiled milk, we generally work very hard to avoid having those feelings again (e.g., checking the expiration date on the label before buying the milk, smelling the milk before drinking it, watching if the milk curdles in one's coffee before drinking it). Emotions, therefore, not only influence immediate actions but also serve as an important motivational basis for future behaviors.

2. Interpersonal Functions of Emotion

Emotions are expressed both verbally through words and nonverbally through facial expressions, voices, gestures, body postures, and movements. We are constantly expressing emotions when interacting with others, and others can reliably judge those emotional expressions (Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002; Matsumoto, 2001); thus, emotions have signal value to others and influence others and our social interactions. Emotions and their expressions communicate information to others about our feelings, intentions, relationship with the target of the emotions, and the environment. Because emotions have this communicative signal value, they help solve social problems by evoking responses from others, by signaling the nature of interpersonal relationships, and by providing incentives for desired social behavior (Keltner, 2003).



Emotions can act as signals to our friends and partners, conveying information about the quality of the relationship. Image: [Harsha K R, Us - Part Trois, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](#). [Click to enlarge]

Emotional Expressions Facilitate Specific Behaviors in Perceivers

Because facial expressions of emotion are universal social signals, they contain meaning not only about the expressor's psychological state but also about that person's intent and subsequent behavior. This information affects what the perceiver is likely to do. People observing fearful faces, for instance, are more likely to produce approach-related behaviors, whereas people who observe angry faces are more likely to produce avoidance-related behaviors (Marsh et al., 2005). Even subliminal presentation of smiles produces increases in how much beverage people pour and consume and how much they are willing to pay for it; presentation of angry faces decreases these behaviors (Winkielman et al., 2005). Also, emotional displays evoke specific, complementary emotional responses from observers; for example, anger evokes fear in others (Dimberg & Ohman, 1996; Esteves et al., 1994), whereas distress evokes sympathy and aid (Eisenberg et al., 1989).

Emotional Expressions Signal the Nature of Interpersonal Relationships

Emotional expressions provide information about the nature of the relationships among interactants. Some of the most important and provocative set of findings in this area come from studies involving married couples (Gottman & Levenson, 1992; Gottman et al., 2001). In this research, married couples visited a laboratory after having not seen each other for 24 hours, and then engaged

in intimate conversations about daily events or issues of conflict. Discrete expressions of contempt, especially by the men, and disgust, especially by the women, predicted later marital dissatisfaction and even divorce.

Emotional Expressions Provide Incentives for Desired Social Behavior

Facial expressions of emotion are important regulators of social interaction. In the developmental literature, this concept has been investigated under the concept of social referencing (Klennert et al., 1983); that is, the process whereby infants seek out information from others to clarify a situation and then use that information to act. To date, the strongest demonstration of social referencing comes from work on the visual cliff. In the first study to investigate this concept, Campos and colleagues (Sorce et al., 1985) placed mothers on the far end of the “cliff” from the infant. Mothers first smiled to the infants and placed a toy on top the safety glass to attract them; infants invariably began crawling to their mothers. When the infants were in the center of the table, however, the mother then posed an expression of fear, sadness, anger, interest, or joy. The results were clearly different for the different faces; no infant crossed the table when the mother showed fear; only 6% did when the mother posed anger, 33% crossed when the mother posed sadness, and approximately 75% of the infants crossed when the mother posed joy or interest.

Other studies provide similar support for facial expressions as regulators of social interaction. In one study (Bradshaw, 1986), experimenters posed facial expressions of neutral, anger, or disgust toward babies as they moved toward an object and measured the amount of inhibition the babies showed in touching the object. The results for 10- and 15-month olds were the same: anger produced the greatest inhibition, followed by disgust, with neutral the least. This study was later replicated (Hertenstein & Campos, 2004) using joy and disgust expressions, altering the method so that the infants were not allowed to touch the toy (compared with a distractor object) until one hour after exposure to the expression. At 14 months of age, significantly more infants touched the toy when they saw joyful expressions, but fewer touched the toy when the infants saw disgust.

3. Social and Cultural Functions of Emotion

If you stop to think about many things we take for granted in our daily lives, we cannot help but come to the conclusion that modern human life is a colorful tapestry of many groups and individual lives woven together in a complex yet functional way. For example, when you're hungry, you might go to the local grocery store and buy some food. Ever stop to think about how you're able to do that? You might buy a banana that was grown in a field in southeast Asia being raised by farmers there, where they planted the tree, cared for it, and picked the fruit. They probably handed that fruit off to a distribution chain that allowed multiple people somewhere to use tools such as cranes, trucks, cargo bins, ships or airplanes (that were also created by multiple people somewhere) to bring that banana to your store. The store had people to care for that banana until you came and got it and to barter with you for it (with your money). You may have gotten to the store riding a vehicle that was produced somewhere else in the world by others, and you were probably wearing clothes produced by some other people somewhere else.



Although there are cultural differences in the display of emotion, almost all infants start showing emotion such as smiling or reacting to their caretaker as early as 6 weeks after their birth. Image: vgm8383, [After bath](#), CC BY-NC-SA 2.0. [Click to enlarge]

Thus, human social life is complex. Individuals are members of multiple groups, with multiple social roles, norms, and expectations, and people move rapidly in and out of the multiple groups of which they are members. Moreover, much of human social life is unique because it revolves around cities, where many people of disparate backgrounds come together. This creates the enormous potential for social chaos, which can easily occur if individuals are not coordinated well and relationships not organized systematically.

One of the important functions of culture is to provide this necessary coordination and organization. Doing so allows individuals and groups to negotiate the social complexity of human social life, thereby maintaining social order and preventing social chaos. Culture does this by providing a meaning and information system to its members, which is shared by a group and transmitted across generations, that allows the group to meet basic needs of survival, pursue happiness and well-being, and derive meaning from life (Matsumoto & Juang, 2013). Culture is what allowed the banana from southeast Asia to appear on your table.

The Role of Emotions in the Function of Culture

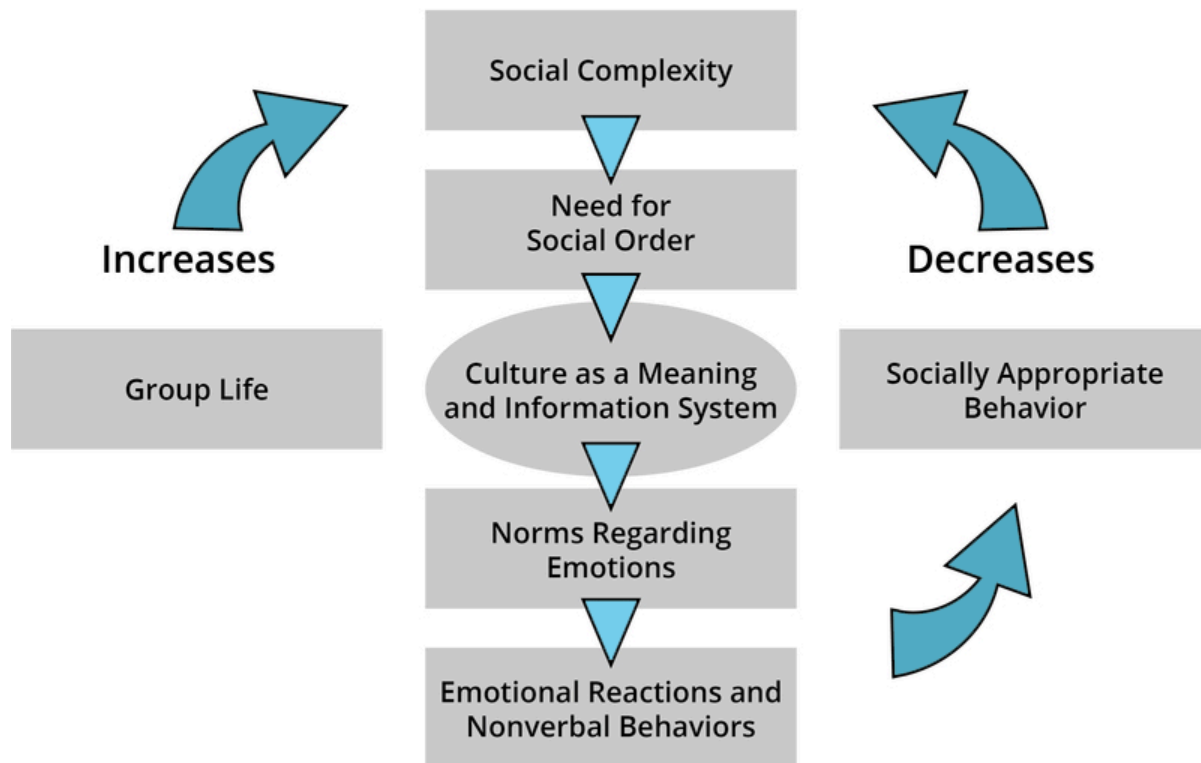


Figure 3.1 The Role of Emotions in the Function of Culture. Image: Hyeonung Hwang and David Matsumoto. [Functions of Emotions, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge]

Cultural transmission of the meaning and information system to its members is, therefore, a crucial aspect of culture. One of the ways this transmission occurs is through the development of worldviews (including attitudes, values, beliefs, and norms) related to emotions (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013; Matsumoto et al., 2008). Worldviews related to emotions provide guidelines for desirable emotions that facilitate norms for regulating individual behaviors and interpersonal relationships. Our cultural backgrounds tell us which emotions are ideal to have, and which are not (Tsai et al., 2006). The cultural transmission of information related to emotions occurs in many ways, from childrearing to children, as well as from the cultural products available in our world, such as books, movies, ads, and the like (Schönplugg, 2009; Tsai et al., 2007).

Cultures also inform us about what to do with our emotions—that is, how to manage or modify them—when we experience them. One of the ways in which this is done is through the management of our emotional expressions through **cultural display rules** (Friesen, 1972). These are rules that are learned early in life that specify the management and modification of our emotional expressions according to social circumstances. Thus, we learn that “big boys don’t cry” or to laugh at the boss’s jokes even though they’re not funny. By affecting how individuals express their emotions, culture also influences how people experience them as well.



Cultural display rules teach us how to manage our emotions. For example, in many Asian countries children are taught to mute their emotions, especially negative emotions like anger. Image: John Gillespie, [Todaiji Temple](#), CC BY-NC-SA 2.0. [Click to enlarge]

Because one of the major functions of culture is to maintain social order in order to ensure group efficiency and thus survival, cultures create worldviews, rules, guidelines, and norms concerning emotions because emotions have important intra- and interpersonal functions, as described above, and are important motivators of behavior. Norms concerning emotion and its regulation in all cultures serve the purpose of maintaining social order. Cultural worldviews and norms help us manage and modify our emotional reactions (and thus behaviors) by helping us to have certain kinds of emotional experiences in the first place and by managing our reactions and subsequent behaviors once we have them. By doing so, our culturally moderated emotions can help us engage in socially appropriate behaviors, as defined by our cultures, and thus reduce social complexity and increase social order, avoiding social chaos. All of this allows us to live relatively harmonious and constructive lives in groups. If cultural worldviews and norms about emotions did not exist, people would just run amok having all kinds of emotional experiences, expressing their emotions and then behaving in all sorts of unpredictable and potentially harmful ways. If that were the case, it would be very difficult for groups and societies to function effectively, and even for humans to survive as a species, if emotions were not regulated in culturally defined ways for the common, social good. Thus, emotions play a critical role in the successful functioning of any society and culture.



Learn More About This Topic

Additional Resources

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Exercises

Discussion Questions

1. When emotions occur, why do they simultaneously activate certain physiological and psychological systems in the body and deactivate others?
2. Why is it difficult for people to act rationally and think happy thoughts when they are angry? Conversely, why is it difficult to remember sad memories or have sad thoughts when people are happy?
3. You're walking down a deserted street when you come across a stranger who looks scared. What would you say? What would you do? Why?
4. You're walking down a deserted street when you come across a stranger who looks angry. What would you say? What would you do? Why?
5. Think about the messages children receive from their environment (such as from parents, mass media, the Internet, Hollywood movies, billboards, and storybooks). In what ways do these messages influence the kinds of emotions that children should and should not feel?

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3.2 The Experience of Emotion

The most fundamental emotions, known as the **basic emotions**, are those of anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, and surprise. The basic emotions have a long history in human evolution, and they have developed in large part to help us make rapid judgments about stimuli and to quickly guide appropriate behaviour (LeDoux, 2000). The basic emotions are determined in large part by one of the oldest parts of our brain, the limbic system, including the amygdala, the hypothalamus, and the thalamus. Because they are primarily evolutionarily determined, the basic emotions are experienced and displayed in much the same way across cultures (Ekman, 1992; Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002; Fridlund et al., 1987), and people are quite accurate at judging the facial expressions of people from different cultures.

Not all of our emotions come from the old parts of our brain; we also interpret our experiences to create a more complex array of emotional experiences. For instance, the amygdala may sense fear when it senses that the body is falling, but that fear may be interpreted completely differently, perhaps even as excitement, when we are falling on a roller-coaster ride than when we are falling from the sky in an airplane that has lost power. The cognitive interpretations that accompany emotions— known as **cognitive appraisal** — allow us to experience a much larger and more complex set of secondary emotions (see Figure 3.2). Although they are in large part cognitive, our experiences of the **secondary emotions** are determined in part by arousal, as seen on the vertical axis of Figure 3.2, and in part by their valence — that is, whether they are pleasant or unpleasant feelings — as seen on the horizontal axis of Figure 3.2.

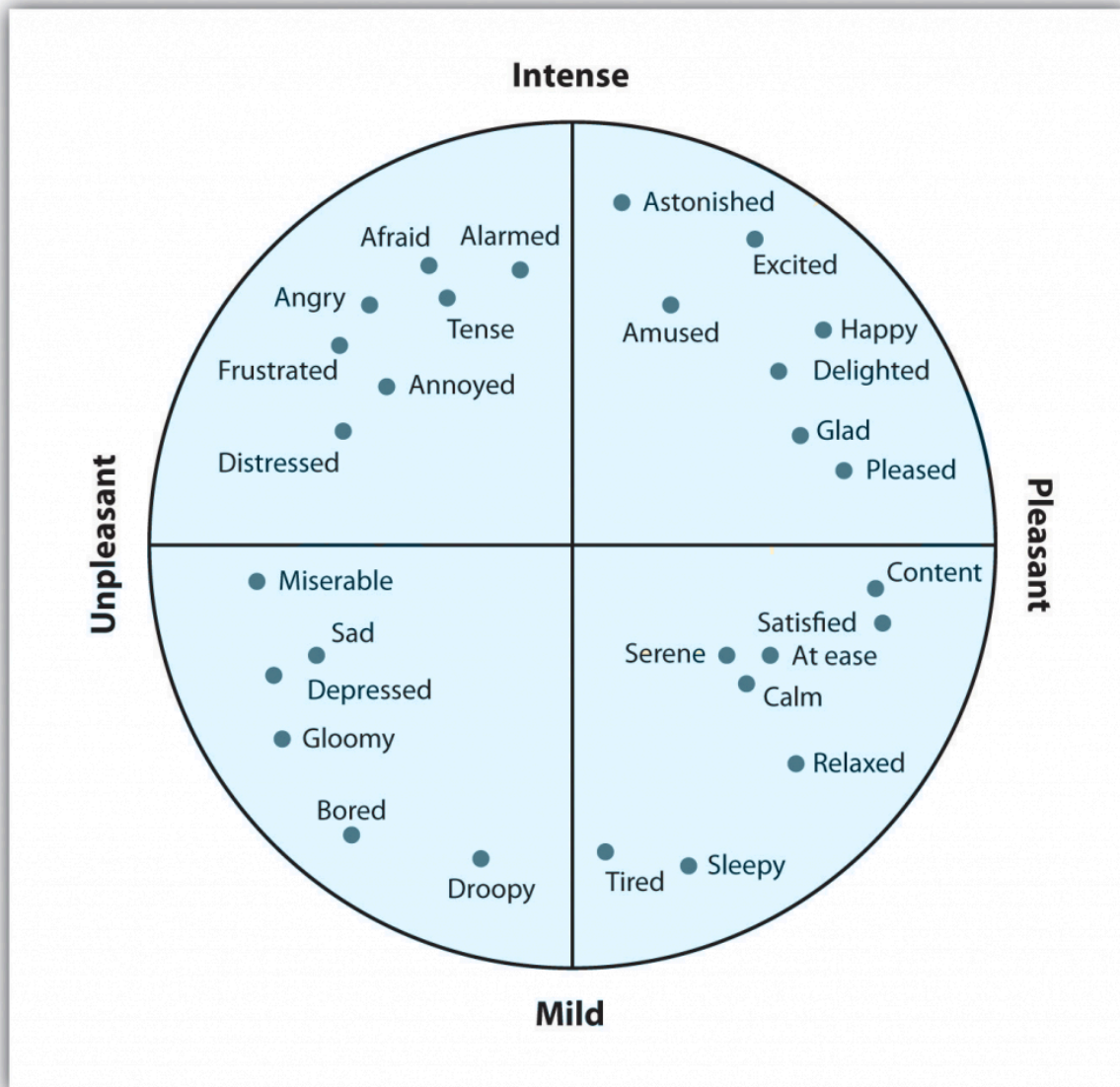


Figure 3.2 The secondary emotions are those that have a major cognitive component. They are determined by both their level of arousal, ranging from mild to intense, and their valence, ranging from pleasant to unpleasant (Russell, 1980). Image: [Psychology – 1st Canadian Ed.](#), Sally Walters, [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Color altered from original. View the [long description](#) for this figure. [Click to enlarge]

When you succeed in reaching an important goal, you might spend some time enjoying your secondary emotions, perhaps the experience of joy, satisfaction, and contentment, but when your close friend wins a prize that you thought you had deserved, you might also experience a variety of secondary emotions — in this case, the negative ones like feeling angry, sad, resentful, or ashamed. You might mull over the event for weeks or even months, experiencing these negative emotions each time you think about it (Martin & Tesser, 2006).

The distinction between the primary and the secondary emotions is paralleled by two brain pathways: a fast pathway and a slow pathway (Damasio, 2000; LeDoux, 2000; Ochsner et al., 2002).

The thalamus acts as the major gatekeeper in this process (see Figure 3.3). Our response to the basic emotion of fear, for instance, is primarily determined by the fast pathway through the limbic system. When a car pulls out in front of us on the highway, the thalamus activates and sends an immediate message to the amygdala. We quickly move our foot to the brake pedal. Secondary emotions are more determined by the slow pathway through the frontal lobes in the cortex. When we stew in jealousy over the loss of a partner to a rival or recollect our win in the big tennis match, the process is more complex. Information moves from the thalamus to the frontal lobes for cognitive analysis and integration, and then from there to the amygdala. We experience the arousal of emotion, but it is accompanied by a more complex cognitive appraisal, producing more refined emotions and behavioural responses.

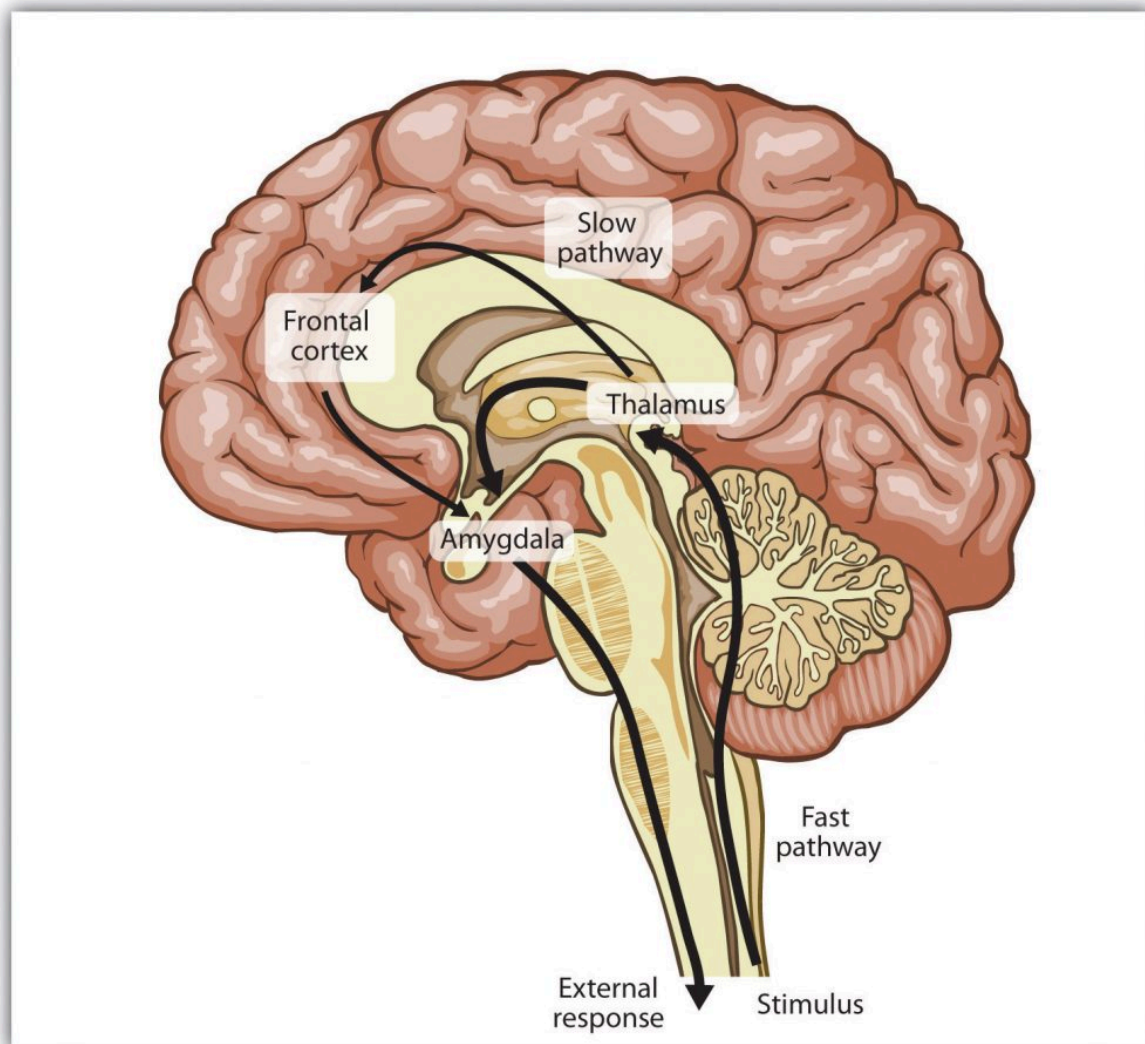


Figure 3.3. There are two emotional pathways in the brain — one slow and the other fast — both of which are controlled by the thalamus. Image: [Psychology – 1st Canadian Ed.](#), Sally Walters, [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). [Click to enlarge]

Although emotions might seem to you to be more frivolous or less important in comparison to

our more rational cognitive processes, both emotions and cognitions can help us make effective decisions. In some cases, we take action after rationally processing the costs and benefits of different choices, but in other cases, we rely on our emotions. Emotions become particularly important in guiding decisions when the alternatives between many complex and conflicting alternatives present us with a high degree of uncertainty and ambiguity, making a complete cognitive analysis difficult. In these cases, we often rely on our emotions to make decisions, and these decisions may in many cases be more accurate than those produced by cognitive processing (Damasio, 1994; Dijksterhuis et al., 2006; Nordgren & Dijksterhuis, 2009; Wilson & Schooler, 1991).

The Cannon-Bard and James-Lange theories of emotion

Recall for a moment a situation in which you have experienced an intense emotional response. Perhaps you woke up in the middle of the night in a panic because you heard a noise that made you think that someone had broken into your house or apartment, or maybe you were calmly cruising down a street in your neighbourhood when another car suddenly pulled out in front of you, forcing you to slam on your brakes to avoid an accident. Maybe you remember that your emotional reaction was in large part physical, and you remember being flushed, your heart pounding, feeling sick to your stomach, or having trouble breathing. You were experiencing the physiological part of emotion (i.e., arousal), and you have likely had similar feelings in other situations, perhaps when you were in love, angry, embarrassed, frustrated, or very sad.

If you think back to a strong emotional experience, you might wonder about the order of the events that occurred. Certainly you experienced arousal, but did the arousal come before, after, or along with the experience of the emotion? Psychologists have proposed three different theories of emotion, which differ in terms of the hypothesized role of arousal in emotion (see Figure 3.4).

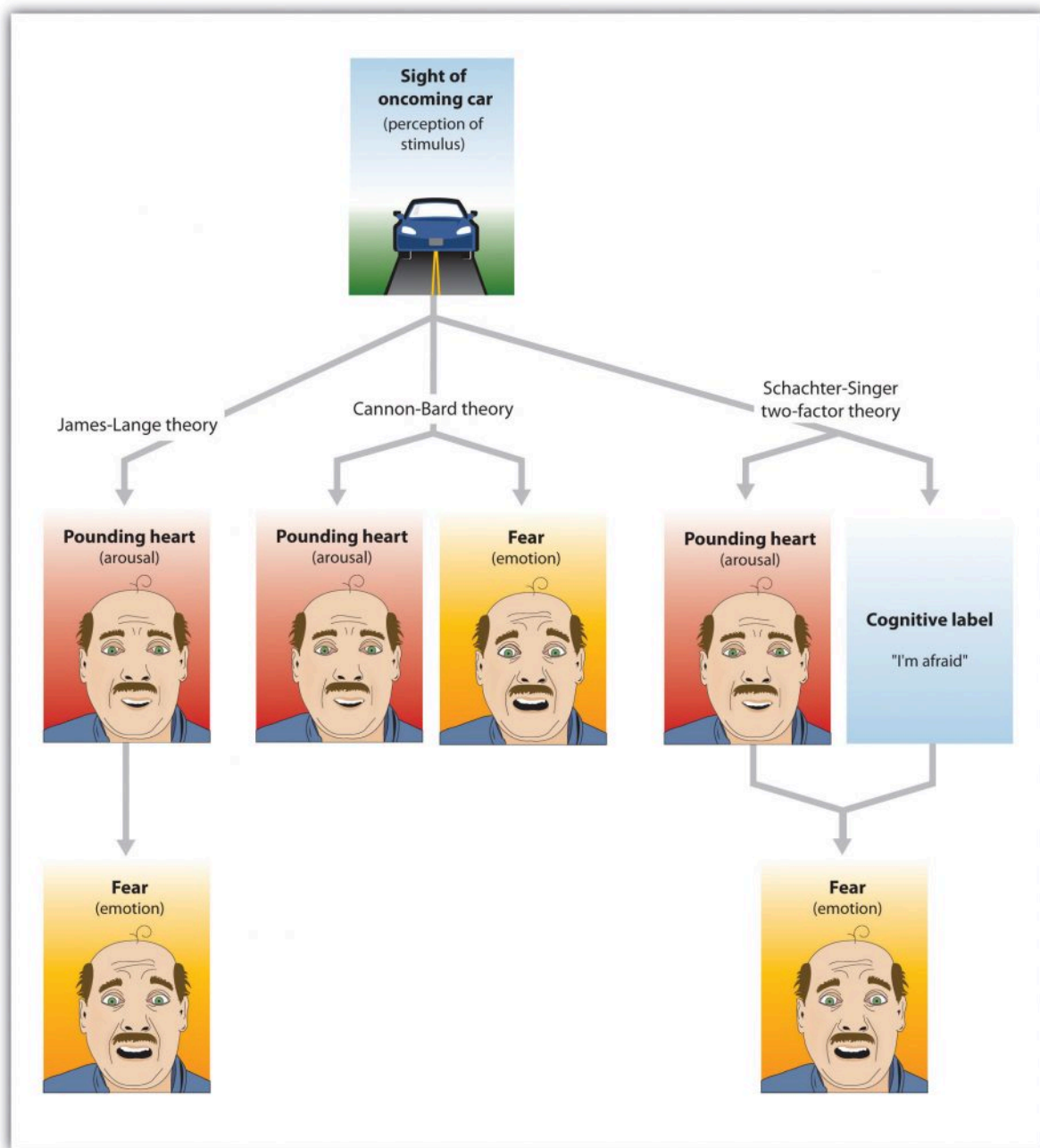


Figure 3.4. The Cannon-Bard theory proposes that emotions and arousal occur at the same time. The James-Lange theory proposes the emotion is the result of arousal. Schachter and Singer's two-factor model proposes that arousal and cognition combine to create emotion. Image: [Psychology – 1st Canadian Ed., Sally Walters, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). [Click to enlarge]

If your experiences are like mine, as you reflected on the arousal that you have experienced in strong emotional situations, you probably thought something like, "I was afraid and my heart started beating quickly." At least some psychologists agree with this interpretation. According to the theory of emotion proposed by Walter Cannon and then graduate student Philip Bard (Cannon, 1927), the experience of the emotion (e.g., "I'm afraid") occurs alongside the experience of the arousal (e.g.,

“my heart is beating fast”). According to the **Cannon-Bard theory of emotion**, the experience of an emotion is accompanied by physiological arousal. Thus, according to this model of emotion, as we become aware of danger, our heart rate also increases.

Although the idea that the experience of an emotion occurs alongside the accompanying arousal seems intuitive to our everyday experiences, the psychologists William James and Carl Lange had another idea about the role of arousal. According to the **James-Lange theory of emotion**, our experience of an emotion is the result of the arousal that we experience. This approach proposes that the arousal and the emotion are not independent, but rather that the emotion depends on the arousal. The fear does not occur along with the racing heart but occurs because of the racing heart. As William James put it, “We feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble” (James, 1884, p. 190). A fundamental aspect of the James-Lange theory is that different patterns of arousal may create different emotional experiences.

There is research evidence to support each of these theories. The operation of the fast emotional pathway (see Figure 3.3) supports the idea that arousal and emotions occur together. The emotional circuits in the limbic system are activated when an emotional stimulus is experienced, and these circuits quickly create corresponding physical reactions (LeDoux, 2000). The process happens so quickly that it may feel to us as if emotion is simultaneous with our physical arousal.

On the other hand, and as predicted by the James-Lange theory, our experiences of emotion are weaker without arousal. Patients who have spinal injuries that reduce their experience of arousal also report decreases in emotional responses (Hohmann, 1966). There is also at least some support for the idea that different emotions are produced by different patterns of arousal. People who view fearful faces show more amygdala activation than those who watch angry or joyful faces (Whalen et al., 2001; Witvliet & Vrana, 1995), we experience a red face and flushing when we are embarrassed but not when we experience other emotions (Leary et al., 1992), and different hormones are released when we experience compassion than when we experience other emotions (Oatley et al., 2006).

The two-factor theory of emotion

Whereas the James-Lange theory proposes that each emotion has a different pattern of arousal, the two-factor theory of emotion takes the opposite approach, arguing that the arousal that we experience is basically the same in every emotion, and that all emotions, including the basic emotions, are differentiated only by our cognitive appraisal of the source of the arousal. The **two-factor theory of emotion** asserts that the experience of emotion is determined by the intensity of the arousal we are experiencing but that the cognitive appraisal of the situation determines what the emotion will be. Because both arousal and appraisal are necessary, we can say that emotions have two factors, both an arousal factor and a cognitive factor (Schachter & Singer, 1962). This may be represented as follows:

Emotion = arousal cognition

In some cases, it may be difficult for a person who is experiencing a high level of arousal to accurately determine which emotion they are experiencing. That is, the person may be certain that they are feeling arousal, but the meaning of the arousal (i.e., the cognitive factor) may be less clear. Some romantic relationships, for instance, have a very high level of arousal, and the partners alternatively experience extreme highs and lows in the relationship. One day, they are madly in love with each other, and the next, they are in a huge fight. In situations that are accompanied by high arousal, people may be unsure what emotion they are experiencing. In the high arousal relationship, for instance, the partners may be uncertain whether the emotion they are feeling is love, hate, or both at the same time. The tendency for people to incorrectly label the source of the arousal that they are experiencing is known as the **misattribution of arousal**.



Here's an Example

In one interesting field study by Donald Dutton and Arthur Aron (1974), an attractive young woman approached individual young men as they crossed a wobbly, long suspension walkway hanging more than 200 feet above a river in British Columbia (see Figure 3.5). The woman asked each man to help her fill out a class questionnaire. When he had finished, she wrote her name and phone number on a piece of paper, and invited him to call if he wanted to hear more about the project. More than half of the men who had been interviewed on the bridge later called the woman. In contrast, men approached by the same woman on a low, solid bridge, or who were interviewed on the suspension bridge by men, called significantly less frequently. The idea of misattribution of arousal can explain this result — the men were feeling arousal from the height of the bridge, but they misattributed it as romantic or sexual attraction to the woman, making them more likely to call her.



Figure 3.5 Arousal caused by the height of the Capilano Suspension Bridge was misattributed as attraction by the men who were interviewed by an attractive woman as they crossed it. Image: [Capilano Suspension Bridge 01](#) by [goobieilly](#), [CC BY 2.0](#). [Click to enlarge]



Let's Focus

Misattributing arousal

If you think a bit about your own experiences of different emotions and you consider the equation that suggests that emotions are represented by both arousal and cognition, you might start to wonder how much was determined by each. That is, do we know what emotion we are experiencing by monitoring our feelings (i.e., arousal) or by monitoring our thoughts (i.e., cognition)? The bridge study you just read about might begin to provide you with an answer. The men seemed to be more influenced by their perceptions of how they should be feeling, by their cognition, rather than by how they actually were feeling, by their arousal.

Stanley Schachter and Jerome Singer (1962) directly tested this prediction of the two-factor theory of emotion in a well-known experiment. Schachter and Singer believed that the cognitive part of the emotion was critical — in fact, they believed that the arousal that we experience could be interpreted as any emotion, provided we had the right label for it. Thus, they hypothesized that if an individual is experiencing arousal for which there is no immediate explanation, that individual will “label” this state in terms of the cognitions that are created in their environment. On the other hand, they argued that people who already have a clear label for their arousal would have no need to search for a relevant label and, therefore, should not experience an emotion.

In the research, male participants were told that they would be participating in a study on the effects of a new drug, called “suproxin,” on vision. On the basis of this cover story, the men were injected with a shot of the neurotransmitter epinephrine, a drug that normally creates feelings of tremors, flushing, and accelerated breathing in people. The idea was to give all the participants the experience of arousal.

Then, according to random assignment to conditions, the men were told that the drug would make them feel certain ways. The men in the epinephrine-informed condition were told the truth about the effects of the drug — that they would likely experience tremors, their hands would start to shake, their hearts would start to pound, and their faces might get warm and flushed. The participants in the epinephrine-uninformed condition, however, were told something untrue — that their feet would feel numb, they would have an itching sensation over parts of their body, and they might get a slight headache. The idea was to make some of the men think that the arousal they were experiencing was caused by the drug, like those in the informed condition, whereas others would be unsure where the arousal came from, like those in the uninformed condition.

Next, the men were left alone with a confederate who they thought had received the same injection. While they were waiting for the experiment to begin, which was supposedly about vision, the confederate behaved in a wild and crazy manner that Schachter and Singer called a “euphoric” manner. This confederate wadded up spitballs, flew paper airplanes, and played with a hula-hoop. He kept trying to get the participant to join in with his games. Then, right before the vision experiment was to begin, the participants were asked to indicate their current emotional states on a number of scales. One of the emotions they were asked about was euphoria.

If you are following the story, you will realize what was expected. The men who had a label for their arousal (i.e., the informed group) would not be experiencing much emotion because they already had a label available for their arousal. On the other hand, the men without a label for their arousal (i.e., the misinformed group), were expected to be unsure about the source of the arousal. They needed to find an explanation for their arousal, and the confederate provided one. This is just what they found (see the left side of Figure 3.6). The participants in the misinformed condition were more likely to experience euphoria, as measured by their behavioural responses with the confederate, than were those in the informed condition.

Schachter and Singer went on to conduct another part of the study, using new participants. Everything was exactly the same except for the behaviour of the confederate. Rather than being euphoric, he acted angry. He complained about having to complete the questionnaire he had been asked to do, indicating that the questions were stupid and too personal. He ended up tearing up the questionnaire that he was working on, yelling, "I don't have to tell them that!" Then, he grabbed his books and stormed out of the room.

What do you think happened in this condition? The answer is the same thing: the misinformed participants experienced more anger, again as measured by the participant's behaviours during the waiting period, than did the informed participants (see the right side of Figure 3.6). The idea is that because cognitions are such strong determinants of emotional states, the same state of physiological arousal could be labelled in many different ways, depending entirely on the label provided by the social situation. As Schachter and Singer put it: "Given a state of physiological arousal for which an individual has no immediate explanation, he will 'label' this state and describe his feelings in terms of the cognitions available to him" (Schachter & Singer, 1962, p. 381).

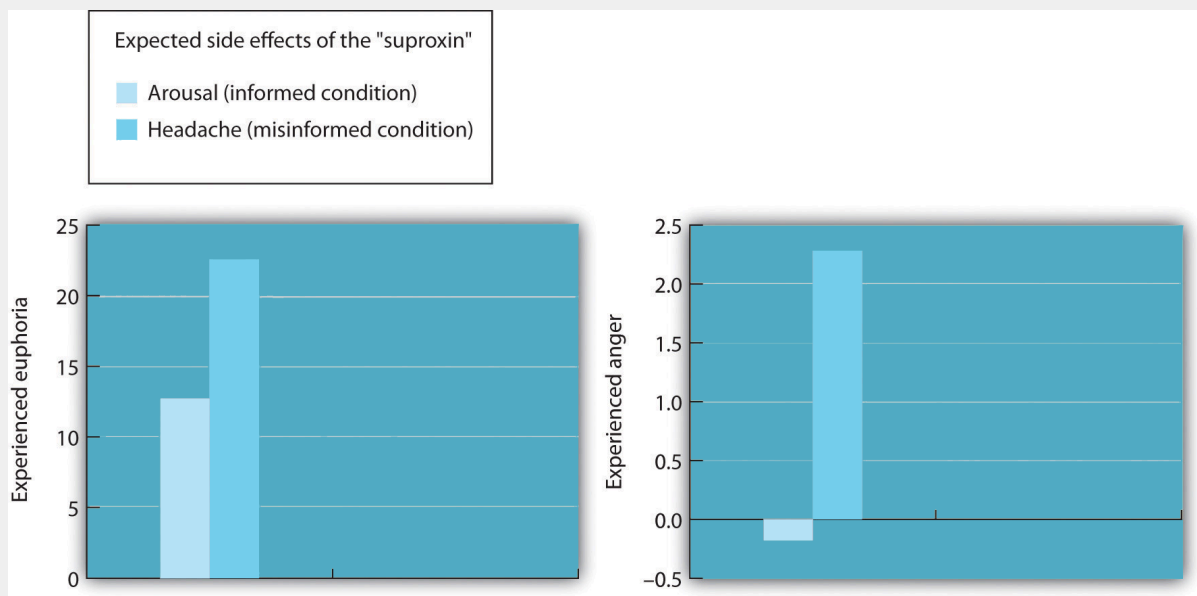


Figure 3.6. Results of the study by Schachter and Singer (1962) support the two-factor theory of emotion. The participants who did not have a clear label for their arousal took on the emotion of the confederate. Image: [Psychology – 1st Canadian Ed.](#), Sally Walters, [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge]

Because it assumes that arousal is constant across emotions, the two-factor theory also predicts that emotions may transfer or spill over from one highly arousing event to another. My university basketball team recently won a basketball championship, but after the final victory some students rioted in the streets near the campus, lighting fires and burning cars. This seems to be a very strange reaction to such a positive outcome for the university and the students, but it can be explained through the spillover of the arousal caused by happiness to destructive behaviours. The principle of **excitation transfer** refers to the phenomenon that occurs when people who are already experiencing arousal from one event tend to also experience unrelated emotions more strongly.

In sum, each of the three theories of emotion has something to support it. In terms of Cannon-Bard, emotions and arousal generally are subjectively experienced together, and the spread is very fast. In support of the James-Lange theory, there is at least some evidence that arousal is necessary for the experience of emotion, and that the patterns of arousal are different for different emotions. In line with the two-factor model, there is also evidence that we may interpret the same patterns of arousal differently in different situations.

Communicating Emotion

In addition to experiencing emotions internally, we also express our emotions to others, and we learn about the emotions of others by observing them. This communication process has evolved over time and is highly adaptive. One way that we perceive the emotions of others is through their **nonverbal communication** — that is, communication, primarily of liking or disliking, that does not involve words (Ambady & Weisbuch, 2010; Andersen, 2007). Nonverbal communication includes our tone of voice, gait, posture, touch, and facial expressions, and we can often accurately detect the emotions that other people are experiencing through these channels. The table below shows some of the important nonverbal behaviours that we use to express emotion and some other information, particularly liking or disliking and dominance or submission.

Table 3.1 Nonverbal Communicators

Some common nonverbal communicators (Schachter & Singer, 1962)

Nonverbal Cue	Description	Examples
Proxemics	Rules about the appropriate use of personal space	Standing nearer to someone can express liking or dominance.
Body appearance	Expressions based on alterations to our body	Body building, breast augmentation, weight loss, piercings, and tattoos are often used to appear more attractive to others.
Body positioning and movement	Expressions based on how our body appears	A more open body position can denote liking; a faster walking speed can communicate dominance.
Gestures	Behaviours and signs made with our hands or faces	A “thumbs up” communicates liking; the “finger” communicates disrespect.
Facial expressions	The variety of emotions that we express, or attempt to hide, through our face	Smiling or frowning and staring or avoiding looking at the other can express liking or disliking, as well as dominance or submission.
Paralanguage	Clues to identity or emotions contained in our voices	Pronunciation, accents, and dialect can be used to communicate identity and liking.

Just as there is no universal spoken language, there is no universal nonverbal language. For instance,

in Canada we express disrespect by showing the middle finger, also known as giving the finger or the bird; however, in Britain, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand, the V sign — made with back of the hand facing the recipient — serves a similar purpose. In countries where Spanish, Portuguese, or French are spoken, a gesture in which a fist is raised and the arm is slapped on the bicep is equivalent to the finger, and in Russia, Indonesia, Turkey, and China, a sign in which the hand and fingers are curled and the thumb is thrust between the middle and index fingers is used for the same purpose of disrespect.

The most important communicator of emotion is the face. The face contains 43 different muscles that allow it to make more than 10,000 unique configurations and to express a wide variety of emotions. For example, happiness is expressed by smiles, which are created by two of the major muscles surrounding the mouth and the eyes, and anger is created by lowered brows and firmly pressed lips.

In addition to helping us express our emotions, the face also helps us feel emotion. The **facial feedback hypothesis** proposes that the movement of our facial muscles can trigger corresponding emotions. Fritz Strack, Leonard Martin, and Sabine Stepper (1988) asked their research participants to hold a pen in their teeth, mimicking the facial action of a smile, or between their lips, similar to a frown, and then had them rate the funniness of a cartoon. They found that the cartoons were rated as more amusing when the pen was held in the smiling position; the subjective experience of emotion was intensified by the action of the facial muscles.

These results, and others like them, show that our behaviours, including our facial expressions, both influence and are influenced by our affect. We may smile because we are happy, but we are also happy because we are smiling; we may stand up straight because we are proud, but we are proud because we are standing up straight (Stepper & Strack, 1993).



Let's Review

- **Emotions are** the normally adaptive mental and physiological feeling states that direct our attention and guide our behaviour.
- **Emotional states are accompanied by** arousal in which our experiences of the bodily responses are created by the sympathetic division of the autonomic nervous system.
- **The most fundamental emotions, known as the basic emotions,** are those of anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, and surprise.

- **Cognitive appraisal** also allows us to experience a variety of secondary emotions.
- **According to the Cannon-Bard theory of emotion**, the experience of an emotion is accompanied by physiological arousal.
- **According to the James-Lange theory of emotion**, our experience of an emotion is the result of the arousal that we experience.
- **According to the two-factor theory of emotion**, the experience of emotion is determined by the intensity of the arousal we are experiencing and the cognitive appraisal of the situation determines what the emotion will be.
- **When people incorrectly label the source of the arousal that they are experiencing**, we say that they have misattributed their arousal.
- **We express our emotions to others through nonverbal behaviours**, and we learn about the emotions of others by observing them.



Exercises

1. Consider the three theories of emotion that we have discussed, and provide an example of a situation in which a person might experience each of the three proposed patterns of arousal and emotion.
2. Describe a time when you used nonverbal behaviours to express your emotions or to detect the emotions of others. What specific nonverbal techniques did you use to communicate

Long Descriptions

Figure 3.2

Long description for the secondary emotions that have a major cognitive component.

Level of Arousal	Unpleasant	Pleasant
Mild	Miserable, Sad, Depressed, Gloomy, Bored, Droopy	Content, Satisfied, At ease, Serene, Calm, Relaxed, Sleepy, Tired
Intense	Alarmed, Afraid, Angry, Intense, Annoyed, Frustrated, Distressed	Astonished, Excited, Amused, Happy, Delighted, Glad, Pleased

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3.3 Emotions at Work

Emotions shape an individual's beliefs about the value of a job, a company, or a team. Emotions also affect behaviours at work.

So, what is the connection between emotions, attitudes, and behaviours at work? This connection may be explained using a theory named **Affective Events Theory (AET)**. Researchers Howard Weiss and Russell Cropanzano (1996) studied the effect of six major kinds of emotions in the workplace: anger, fear, joy, love, sadness, and surprise. Their theory argues that specific events on the job cause different kinds of people to feel different emotions. These emotions, in turn, inspire actions that can benefit or impede others at work (Fisher, 2002).



Figure 3.7 According to Affective Events Theory, six emotions are affected by events at work. Image: University of Minnesota and NSCC, [NSCC Organizational Behaviour. CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge]

For example, imagine that a coworker unexpectedly delivers your morning coffee to your desk. As a result of this pleasant, if unexpected experience, you may feel happy and surprised. If that coworker is your boss, you might feel proud as well. Studies have found that the positive feelings resulting from work experience may inspire you to do something you hadn't planned to do before. For instance, you might volunteer to help a colleague on a project you weren't planning to work on before. Your action would be an affect-driven behaviour (Fisher, 2002). Alternatively, if you were unfairly reprimanded by your manager, the negative emotions you experience may cause you to withdraw from work or to act mean toward a coworker. Over time, these tiny moments of emotion on the job can influence a person's job satisfaction. Although company perks and promotions

can contribute to a person's happiness at work, satisfaction is not simply a result of this kind of "outside-in" reward system. Job satisfaction in the AET model comes from the inside-in—from the combination of an individual's personality, small emotional experiences at work over time, beliefs, and affect-driven behaviours.

Jobs that are high in negative emotion can lead to frustration and burnout—an ongoing negative emotional state resulting from dissatisfaction (Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Maslach, 1982; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Depression, anxiety, anger, physical illness, increased drug and alcohol use, and insomnia can result from frustration and burnout, with frustration being somewhat more active and burnout more passive. The effects of both conditions can impact coworkers, customers, and clients as anger boils over and is expressed in one's interactions with others (Lewandowski, 2003).

Emotional Labor

Negative emotions are common among workers in service industries. Individuals who work in manufacturing rarely meet their customers face-to-face. If they're in a bad mood, the customer would not know. Service jobs are just the opposite. Part of a service employee's job is appearing a certain way in the eyes of the public. Individuals in service industries are professional helpers. As such, they are expected to be upbeat, friendly, and polite at all times, which can be exhausting to accomplish in the long run.

Humans are emotional creatures by nature. In the course of a day, we experience many emotions. Think about your day thus far. Can you identify times when you were happy to deal with other people and times that you wanted to be left alone? Now imagine trying to hide all the emotions you've felt today for 8 hours or more at work. That's what cashiers, school teachers, massage therapists, fire fighters, and librarians, among other professionals, are asked to do. As individuals, they may be feeling sad, angry, or fearful, but at work, their job title trumps their individual identity. The result is a persona—a professional role that involves acting out feelings that may not be real as part of their job.

Emotional labor refers to the regulation of feelings and expressions for organizational purposes (Grandey, 2000).

Three major levels of emotional labor have been identified (Hochschild, 1983).

1. **Surface acting** requires an individual to exhibit physical signs, such as smiling, that reflect emotions customers want to experience. A children's hairdresser cutting the hair of a crying toddler may smile and act sympathetic without actually feeling so. In this case, the person is engaged in surface acting.
2. **Deep acting** takes surface acting one step further. This time, instead of faking an emotion that

a customer may want to see, an employee will actively try to experience the emotion they are displaying. This genuine attempt at empathy helps align the emotions one is experiencing with the emotions one is displaying. The children's hairdresser may empathize with the toddler by imagining how stressful it must be for one so little to be constrained in a chair and be in an unfamiliar environment, and the hairdresser may genuinely begin to feel sad for the child.

3. **Genuine acting** occurs when individuals are asked to display emotions that are aligned with their own. If a job requires genuine acting, less emotional labor is required because the actions are consistent with true feelings.

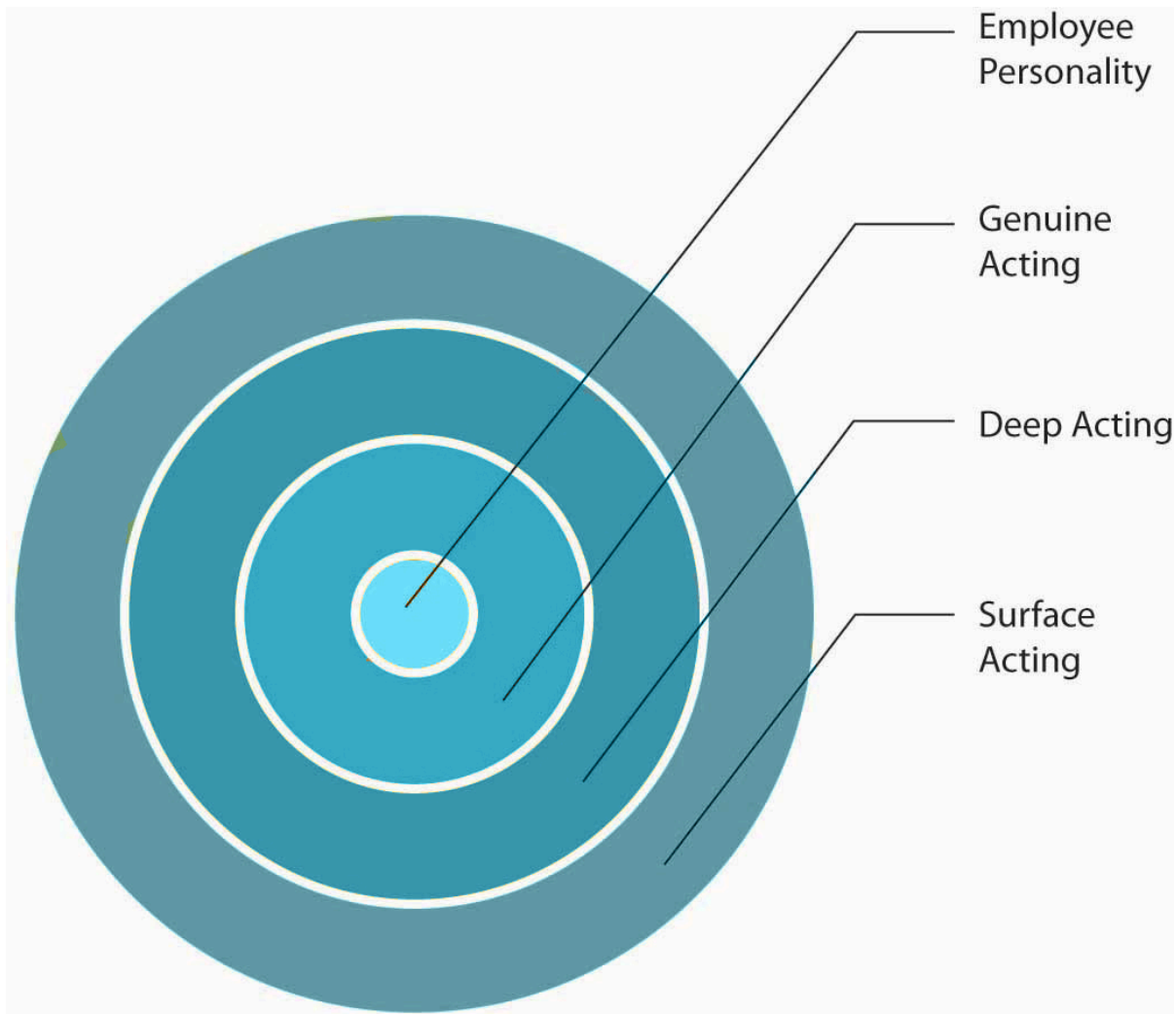


Figure 3.8 When it comes to acting, the closer to the middle of the circle that your actions are, the less emotional labor your job demands. The further away, the more emotional labor the job demands. Image: University of Minnesota and NSCC, [NSCC Organizational Behaviour](#). CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge]

When it comes to acting, the closer to the middle of the circle that your actions are, the less emotional labor your job demands. The further away, the more emotional labor the job demands.

Research shows that surface acting is related to higher levels of stress and fewer felt positive emotions, while deep acting may lead to less stress (Beal et al., 2006; Grandey, 2003). Emotional labor is particularly common in service industries that are also characterized by relatively low pay, which creates the added potentials for stress and feelings of being treated unfairly (Glomb et al., 2004; Rupp & Sharmin, 2006). In a study of 285 hotel employees, researchers found that emotional labor was vital because so many employee-customer interactions involve individuals dealing with emotionally charged issues (Chu, 2002). Emotional laborers are required to display specific emotions as part of their jobs. Sometimes, these are emotions that the worker already feels. In that case, the strain of the emotional labor is minimal. For example, a funeral director is generally expected to display sympathy for a family's loss, and in the case of a family member suffering an untimely death, this emotion may be genuine. But for people whose jobs require them to be professionally polite and cheerful, such as flight attendants, or to be serious and authoritative, such as police officers, the work of wearing one's "game face" can have effects that outlast the working day. To combat this, taking breaks can help surface actors to cope more effectively (Beal et al., 2008). In addition, researchers have found that greater autonomy is related to less strain for service workers in the United States as well as France (Grandey et al., 2005).

Cognitive dissonance is a term that refers to a mismatch among emotions, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour, for example, believing that you should always be polite to a customer regardless of personal feelings, yet having just been rude to one. You'll experience discomfort or stress unless you find a way to alleviate the dissonance. You can reduce the personal conflict by changing your behaviour (trying harder to act polite), changing your belief (maybe it's OK to be a little less polite sometimes), or by adding a new fact that changes the importance of the previous facts (such as you will otherwise be laid off the next day). Although acting positive can make a person feel positive, emotional labor that involves a large degree of emotional or cognitive dissonance can be grueling, sometimes leading to negative health effects (Zapf, 2006).

Emotional Intelligence

One way to manage the effects of emotional labor is by increasing your awareness of the gaps between real emotions and emotions that are required by your professional persona. "What am I feeling? And what do others feel?" These questions form the heart of **emotional intelligence**. Emotional intelligence looks at how people can understand each other more completely by developing an increased awareness of their own and others' emotions (Carmeli, 2003).

There are four building blocks involved in developing a high level of emotional intelligence. **Self-awareness** exists when you are able to accurately perceive, evaluate, and display appropriate emotions. **Self-management** exists when you are able to direct your emotions in a positive way when needed. **Social awareness** exists when you are able to understand how others feel. **Relationship management** exists when you are able to help others manage their own emotions and truly establish supportive relationships with others (Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002; Weisinger, 1998).

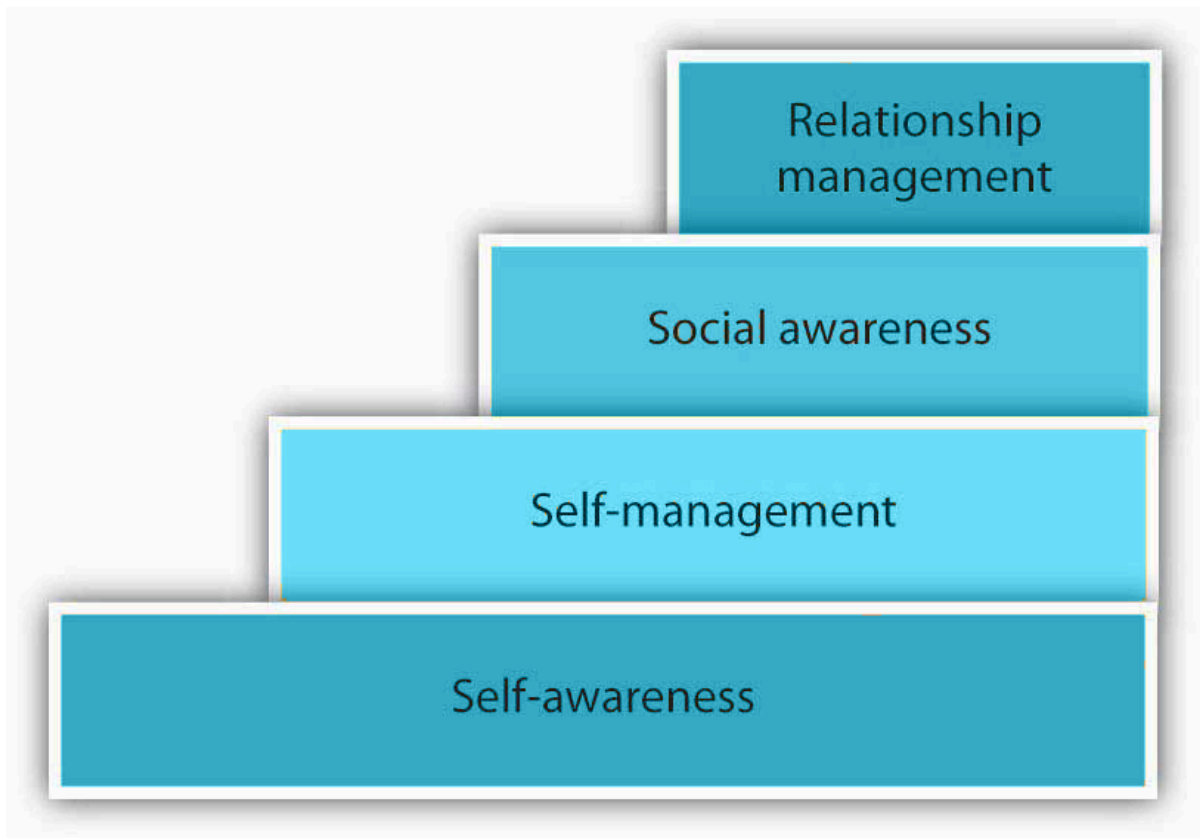


Figure 3.9 The four steps of emotional intelligence build upon one another. Image: University of Minnesota and NSCC, [NSCC Organizational Behaviour](#). CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge]

In the workplace, emotional intelligence can be used to form harmonious teams by taking advantage of the talents of every member. To accomplish this, colleagues well versed in emotional intelligence can look for opportunities to motivate themselves and inspire others to work together (Goleman, 1995). Chief among the emotions that helped create a successful team, Goleman learned, was **empathy**—the ability to put oneself in another’s shoes, whether that individual has achieved a major triumph or fallen short of personal goals (Goleman, 1998). Those high in emotional intelligence have been found to have higher self-efficacy in coping with adversity, perceive situations as challenges rather than threats, and have higher life satisfaction, which can all help lower stress levels (Law et al., 2004; Mikolajczak & Luminet, 2008).



Let's Review

- **Emotions** affect attitudes and behaviours at work.
- **Affective Events Theory** can help explain these relationships.
- **Emotional labor** is higher when one is asked to act in a way that is inconsistent with personal feelings.
- **Surface acting** requires a high level of emotional labor.
- **Emotional intelligence** refers to understanding how others are reacting to our emotions.



Case Study

See Appendix A – [Getting Emotional: The Case of American Express](#)



Exercises

1. What is the worst job you have ever had (or class project if you haven't worked)? Did the job require emotional labor? If so, how did you deal with it?
2. Research shows that acting "happy" when you are not can be exhausting. Why do you think that is? Have you ever felt that way? What can you do to lessen these feelings?
3. How important do you think emotional intelligence is at work? Why?

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3.4 How to Feel Better: Coping With Negative Emotions

No matter how healthy and happy we are in our everyday lives, there are going to be times when we experience stress, depression, and anxiety. Some of these experiences will be major and some will be minor, and some of us will experience these emotions more than others. Sometimes these feelings will be the result of clear difficulties that pose direct threats to us: We or those we care about may be ill or injured; we may lose our job or have academic difficulties. At other times, these feelings may seem to develop for no apparent reason.

Although it is not possible to prevent the experience of negative emotions entirely (in fact, given their importance in helping us understand and respond to threats, we would not really want to if we could), we can nevertheless learn to respond to and cope with them in the most productive possible ways. We do not need to throw up our hands in despair when things go wrong—rather, we can bring our personal and social resources to bear to help us. We have at our disposal many techniques that we can use to help us deal with negative emotions.

In this Section

- [What Doesn't Work: Distorting and Suppressing Negative Outcomes](#)
- [A Better Approach: Self-Regulation](#)
- [The Power of Positive Emotions](#)
- [Finding Satisfaction Through Our Connections With Others](#)
- [Regulating Emotions to Improve Our Health](#)

What Doesn't Work: Distorting and Suppressing Negative Outcomes

Perhaps the most common approach to dealing with negative affect is to attempt to suppress, avoid, or deny it. You probably know people who seem to you to be stressed, depressed, or anxious but who cannot or will not see it in themselves. Perhaps you tried to talk to them about it, to get them to open up to you, but were rebuffed. They seem to act as if there is no problem at all, simply moving on with life without admitting or even trying to deal with the negative feelings. Or perhaps you have taken a similar approach yourself: Have you ever had an important test to study for or an important

job interview coming up, and rather than planning and preparing for it, you simply tried put it out of your mind entirely?

Research has found that there are clear difficulties with an approach to negative events and feelings that involves simply trying to ignore them. For one, ignoring our problems does not make them go away. Not being able to get our work done because we are depressed, being too anxious to develop good relationships with others, or experiencing so much stress that we get sick will be detrimental to our life even if we cannot admit that it is occurring.

Suppressing our emotions is also not a very good option, at least in the long run, because it tends to fail (Gross & Levenson, 1997). If we know that we have a big exam coming up, we have to focus on the exam itself in order to suppress it. We can't really suppress or deny our thoughts because we actually have to recall and face the event in order to make the attempt to not think about it. Furthermore, we may continually worry that our attempts to suppress will fail. Suppressing our emotions might work out for a short while, but when we run out of energy, the negative emotions may shoot back up into consciousness, causing us to reexperience the negative feelings that we had been trying to avoid.

Daniel Wegner and his colleagues (1987) directly tested whether people would be able to effectively suppress a simple thought. They asked participants in a study to not think about a white bear for 5 minutes but to ring a bell in case they did. (Try it yourself—can you do it?) The participants were unable to suppress the thought as instructed—the white bear kept popping into mind, even when they were instructed to avoid thinking about it. You might have had a similar experience when you were dieting or staying home to study—the chocolate bar in the kitchen cabinet or the fun time you were missing by staying home kept popping into mind, disrupting your work.

Another poor approach to attempting to escape from our problems is to engage in behaviors designed to distract us from them. Sometimes this approach will be successful in the short term—we might try distracting ourselves from our troubles by going for a run, watching TV, or reading a book, and perhaps this might be useful. But sometimes people go to extremes to avoid self-awareness when it might be better that they face their troubles directly. If we experience discrepancies between our ideal selves and our important self-concepts, if we feel that we cannot ever live up to our or others' expectations for us, or if we are just really depressed or anxious, we may attempt to escape ourselves entirely. Roy Baumeister (1991) has speculated that maladaptive behaviors such as drug abuse, sexual masochism, spiritual ecstasy, binge eating, and even suicide are all mechanisms by which people may attempt to escape the self.

Not only does research show that attempting to suppress our negative thoughts does not work, there is even evidence that the opposite is true—that when we are faced with troubles, it is healthy to let the negative thoughts and feelings out by expressing them, either to ourselves or to others. James Pennebaker and his colleagues (Pennebaker et al., 1990; Watson & Pennebaker, 1989) have conducted many correlational and experimental studies that demonstrate the advantages to our mental and physical health of opening up versus bottling our feelings. This research team has found that simply talking about or writing about our emotions or our reactions to negative events provides substantial health benefits.

Pennebaker and Beall (1986) randomly assigned students to write about either the most traumatic and stressful event of their lives or to write about a trivial topic. Although the students who wrote about the traumas had higher blood pressure and more negative moods immediately after they wrote their essays, they were also less likely to visit the student health center for illnesses during the following 6 months in comparison to those who wrote about more minor issues. Something positive evidently occurred as a result of confronting their negative experiences. Other research studied individuals whose spouses had died in the previous year, finding that the more they talked about the death with others, the less likely they were to become ill during the subsequent year. Daily writing about one's emotional states has also been found to increase immune system functioning (Petrie et al., 2004), and Uysal and Lu (2011) found that self-expression was associated with experiencing less physical pain.

Opening up probably helps in various ways. For one, expressing our problems allows us to gain information from others and may also bring support from them. And writing or thinking about one's experiences also seems to help people make sense of the events and may give them a feeling of control over their lives (Pennebaker & Stone, 2004).

A Better Approach: Self-Regulation

As we have seen, emotions are useful in warning us about potential danger and in helping us to make judgments quickly, so it is a good thing that we have them. However, we also need to learn how to control our emotions, to prevent our emotions from letting our behavior get out of control. *The process of setting goals and using our cognitive and affective capacities to reach those goals* is known as self-regulation, and a good part of self-regulation involves regulating our emotions.

To be the best people that we possibly can, we have to work hard at it. Succeeding at school, at work, and at our relationships with others takes a lot of effort. When we are successful at self-regulation, we are able to move toward or meet the goals that we set for ourselves. When we fail at self-regulation, we are not able to meet those goals. People who are better able to regulate their behaviors and emotions are more successful in their personal and social encounters (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1992), and thus self-regulation is a skill we should seek to master.

Being able to exert self-control has some important positive outcomes. Consider, for instance, research by Walter Mischel and his colleagues (Mischel et al., 1989). In their studies, they had 4- and 5-year-old children sit at a table in front of a yummy snack, such as a chocolate chip cookie or a marshmallow. The children were told that they could eat the snack right away if they wanted to. However, they were also told that if they could wait for just a couple of minutes, they'd be able to have two snacks—both the one in front of them and another just like it. However, if they ate the one that was in front of them before the time was up, they would not get a second.

Mischel found that some children were able to self-regulate—they were able to override the impulse to seek immediate gratification in order to obtain a greater reward at a later time. Other children,

of course, were not—they just ate the first snack right away. Furthermore, the inability to delay gratification seemed to occur in a spontaneous and emotional manner, without much thought. The children who could not resist simply grabbed the cookie because it looked so yummy, without being able to cognitively stop themselves (Metcalf & Mischel, 1999; Strack & Deutsch, 2007). It turns out that these emotional responses are determined in part by particular brain patterns that are influenced by body chemicals. For instance, preferences for small immediate rewards over large later rewards have been linked to low levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin in animals (Bizot et al., 1999; Lui et al., 2004), and low levels of serotonin are tied to violence, impulsiveness, and even suicide (Asberg et al., 1976).

The ability to self-regulate in childhood has important consequences later in life. When Mischel followed up on the children in his original study, he found that those who had been able to self-regulate as children grew up to have some highly positive characteristics—they got better SAT scores, were rated by their friends as more socially adept, and were found to cope with frustration and stress better than those children who could not resist the tempting first cookie at a young age. Effective self-regulation is therefore an important key to success in life (Ayduk et al., 2000; Eigsti et al., 2006; Mischel et al., 2003).



Let's Focus

Emotion Regulation Takes Effort

Self-regulation is particularly difficult when we are tired, depressed, or anxious, and it is under these conditions that we more easily lose our self-control and fail to live up to our goals (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). If you are tired and worried about an upcoming exam, you may find yourself getting angry and taking it out on your roommate, even though she really hasn't done anything to deserve it and you don't really want to be angry at her. It is no secret that we are more likely to fail at our diets when we are under a lot of stress or at night when we are tired.

Muraven et al. (1998) conducted a study to demonstrate that emotion regulation—that is, either increasing or decreasing our emotional responses—takes work. They speculated that self-control was like a muscle—it just gets tired when it is used too much. In their experiment, they asked their participants to watch a short movie about environmental disasters involving radioactive waste and their negative effects on wildlife. The scenes included sick and dying animals, which were very

upsetting. According to random assignment to conditions, one group (the increase-emotional-response condition) was told to really get into the movie and to express emotions in response to it, a second group was to hold back and decrease emotional responses (the decrease-emotional-response condition), and a third (control) group received no instructions on emotion regulation.

Both before and after the movie, the experimenter asked the participants to engage in a measure of physical strength by squeezing as hard as they could on a hand-grip exerciser, a device used for building up hand muscles. The experimenter put a piece of paper in the grip and timed how long the participants could hold the grip together before the paper fell out. The following table shows the results of this study. It seems that emotion regulation does indeed take effort because the participants who had been asked to control their emotions showed significantly less ability to squeeze the hand grip after the movie than before. Thus the effort to regulate emotional responses seems to have consumed resources, leaving the participants less capacity to make use of in performing the hand-grip task.

Table 3.2 Self-Control Takes Effort

Condition	Handgrip strength before movie	Handgrip strength after movie	Change
Increase emotional response	78.73	54.53	-25.1
No emotional control	60.09	58.52	-1.75
Decrease emotional response	70.74	52.25	-18.49

Participants who had been required to either express or refrain from expressing their emotions had less strength to squeeze a hand grip after doing so. Data are from Muraven et al. (1998).

In other studies, people who had to resist the temptation to eat chocolates and cookies, who made important decisions, or who were forced to conform to others all performed more poorly on subsequent tasks that took energy in comparison to people who had not been emotionally taxed. After controlling their emotions, they gave up on subsequent tasks sooner and failed to resist new temptations (Vohs & Heatherton, 2000).

Can we improve our emotion regulation? It turns out that training in self-regulation—just like physical training—can help. Students who practiced doing difficult tasks, such as exercising, avoiding swearing, or maintaining good posture, were later found to perform better in laboratory tests of self-regulation (Baumeister et al., 2006; Baumeister et al., 2007; Oaten & Cheng, 2006), such as maintaining a diet or completing a puzzle. And we are also stronger when we are in good moods—people who had watched a funny video clip were better at subsequent self-regulation tasks (Tice et al., 2007).

The Power of Positive Emotions

Stress is an emotional response that can kill us, but other emotions can help us cope with and protect ourselves from stress. The stress of the Monday through Friday grind can be offset by the fun

that we can have on the weekend, and the concerns that we have about our upcoming chemistry exam can be offset by a positive attitude toward school, life, and other people. Put simply, the best antidote for stress is a happy one: Think positively, have fun, and enjoy the company of others.

You have probably heard about “the power of positive thinking”—the idea that thinking positively helps people meet their goals and keeps them healthy, happy, and able to effectively cope with the negative events that they experience. It turns out that positive thinking really works. People who think positively about their future, who believe that they can control their outcomes, and who are willing to open up and share with others are healthier people (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

The power of positive thinking comes in different forms, but they are all helpful. Some researchers have focused on **optimism**, *a general tendency to expect positive outcomes*, and have found that optimists are happier and have less stress (Carver & Scheier, 2009). Others have focused on **self-efficacy**, *the belief in our ability to carry out actions that produce desired outcomes*. People with high self-efficacy respond to environmental and other threats in an active, constructive way—by getting information, talking to friends, and attempting to face and reduce the difficulties they are experiencing. These people, too, are better able to ward off their stresses in comparison with people with less self-efficacy (Thompson, 2009). Self-efficacy helps in part because it leads us to perceive that we can control the potential stressors that may affect us. Workers who have control over their work environment (e.g., by being able to move furniture and control distractions) experience less stress, as do patients in nursing homes who are able to choose their everyday activities (Rodin, 1986). Glass et al. (1971) found in a study that participants who believed they could stop a loud noise experienced less stress than those who did not think they could, even though the people who had the option never actually used it. The ability to control our outcomes may help explain why animals and people who have higher social status live longer (Sapolsky, 2005).

Suzanne Kobasa and her colleagues (1982) have argued that the tendency to be less affected by life’s stressors can be characterized as an individual-difference measure that has a relationship to both optimism and self-efficacy—a measure known as **hardiness**. Hardy individuals are those who are more positive overall about potentially stressful life events, who take more direct action to understand the causes of negative events, and who attempt to learn from them what may be of value for the future. Hardy individuals use effective coping strategies, and they take better care of themselves.

Taken together, these various coping skills, including optimism, self-efficacy, perceived control, and hardiness, have been shown to have a wide variety of positive effects on our health. Optimists make faster recoveries from illnesses and surgeries (Carver et al., 2005). People with high self-efficacy have been found to be better able to quit smoking and lose weight and are more likely to exercise regularly (Cohen & Pressman, 2006). And hardy individuals seem to cope better with stress and other negative life events (Dolbier et al., 2007). The positive effects of positive thinking are particularly important when stress is high. Baker (2007) found that in periods of low stress, positive thinking made little difference in responses to stress, but that during stressful periods, optimists were less likely to smoke on a day-to-day basis and to respond to stress in more productive ways, such as by exercising.

It is possible to learn to think more positively, and doing so can be beneficial. Antoni et al. (2001) found that pessimistic cancer patients who were given training in optimism reported more optimistic outlooks after the training and were less fatigued after their treatments. And Maddi et al. (1998) found that a program of “hardiness training” that included focusing on ways to effectively cope with stress was effective in increasing satisfaction and decreasing self-reported stress.

The benefits of taking positive approaches to stress can last a lifetime. Christopher Peterson and his colleagues (1998) found that the level of optimism reported by people who had first been interviewed when they were in college during the years between 1936 and 1940 predicted their health over the next 50 years. Students who had a more positive outlook on life in college were less likely to have died up to 50 years later of all causes, and they were particularly likely to have experienced fewer accidental and violent deaths, in comparison with students who were less optimistic. Similar findings were found for older adults. After controlling for loneliness, marital status, economic status, and other correlates of health, Levy and Myers found that older adults with positive attitudes and higher self-efficacy had better health and lived on average almost 8 years longer than their more negative peers (Levy & Myers, 2005; Levy et al., 2002). And Diener et al. (2002) found that people who had cheerier dispositions earlier in life had higher income levels and less unemployment when they were assessed 19 years later.

Finding Satisfaction Through Our Connections With Others

Well-being is determined in part by genetic factors, such that some people are naturally happier than others (Braungart et al., 1992; Lykken, 2000), but also in part by the situations that we create for ourselves. Psychologists have studied hundreds of variables that influence happiness, but there is one that is by far the most important, and it is one that is particularly social psychological in nature: People who report that they *have positive social relationships with others*—the perception of *social support*—also report being happier than those who report having less social support (Diener et al., 1999; Diener et al., 2006). Married people report being happier than unmarried people (Pew, 2006), and people who are connected with and accepted by others suffer less depression, higher self-esteem, and less social anxiety and jealousy than those who feel more isolated and rejected (Leary, 1990).

Social support also helps us better cope with stressors. Koopman et al. (1998) found that women who reported higher social support experienced less depression when adjusting to a diagnosis of cancer, and Ashton et al. (2005) found a similar buffering effect of social support for AIDS patients. People with social support are less depressed overall, recover faster from negative events, and are less likely to commit suicide (Au et al., 2009; Bertera, 2007; Compton et al., 2005; Skärsäter et al., 2005).



Let's Focus

Cultural Differences in Seeking Social Support

Social support buffers us against stress both *directly* and *emotionally*. The *direct effects* of social support occur, for instance, when one person helps another to better understand and determine how to deal with a stressor or when the other provides direct help or financial assistance. On the other hand, the *emotional effects* of social support occur simply because we know that others are available if we might need them. Gençöz and Özlale (2004) found that students with more friends felt less stress and reported that their friends helped them, but they also reported that just having friends made them feel better about themselves.

In some cases, emotional support may be more effective than direct support, in part because the actual seeking of support may itself serve as an additional cause of stress. Asking for help may reduce our own self-esteem and may be seen as unfair to the other (Bolger et al., 2000; Wethington & Kessler, 1986).

We have seen that, on average, Westerners tend to view people as independent and separate from others, whereas Easterners tend to view people as fundamentally connected with others. This difference might lead to the prediction that using others for direct social support would be especially common among Easterners, who focus primarily on other-concern. But asking for social support from others to solve one's problems may be a particularly Western approach. In Eastern cultures, asking others for help in solving one's personal problems may be seen as too self-concerned and as making inappropriate demands on the others (Kim et al., 2008).

To test this idea, Shelley Taylor and her colleagues (Taylor et al., 2004) compared the use of different coping strategies between Korean college students (studying in Seoul, South Korea) and American college students (studying in California). In the first study, the students were all asked the same question—"What are the kind of things you do to relieve stress?"—and the answers were coded into different categories. As you can see in the following table, the American students were significantly more likely to rely on exercise to reduce stress and were also significantly more likely to report using social support. No other coping approaches differed significantly between cultures.

Table 3.4 Percentage of Students Using Stress-Coping Strategies

Coping Strategy	American Students (%)	Korean Students (%)
Social support (e.g., talking with others, being with friends)	57.1	39.3
Exercise	42.9	23.2
Entertainment (e.g., going to a movie)	51.8	50.9
Self-care (e.g., eating, relaxing)	44.6	40.0
Organizing (e.g., cleaning)	10.7	10.9

To assess the reasons for these differences, Taylor and her colleagues (2004) then asked a second sample of Korean and American students to indicate, for each of the concerns show in Table 3.5 “Cultural Differences in Perceptions About Social Support”, “How important would each of the following concerns be for you in deciding whether or not to seek or use social support or help from others in dealing with a stressor?”

As you can see in the following table, compared with American students, Korean students were significantly more likely to report that seeking social support would disrupt group harmony, make one’s problems worse, elicit criticism, and cause one to lose face.

Table 3.5 Cultural Differences in Perceptions About Social Support

Asking for help would...	American students	Korean students
Decrease group harmony	2.05	2.65
Make my problems worse	1.88	2.26
Lead others to criticize me	1.82	2.29
Lead me to lose face with others	2.03	2.51

Although these results may seem counterintuitive to you, they do make sense given our understanding of the differences between people from Eastern and Western cultures. In individualist cultures, relationships are used in part to promote our individual goals, and it is appropriate to ask for help from those in one’s social networks in order to help one do better. In collectivist cultures, individual goals are more likely to be seen as a means for promoting relationships, and pursuing the goals of self-concern may risk straining relationships if one calls on his or her social support network for aid (Markus et al., 1997).

Regulating Emotions to Improve Our Health

Although smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, using recreational drugs, engaging in unsafe sex, and eating too much may produce enjoyable positive emotions in the short term, they are some of

the leading causes of negative health outcomes and even death in the long term (Mokdad et al., 2004).

To avoid these negative outcomes, we must use our cognitive resources to plan, guide, and restrain our behaviors. And we can also use our emotion regulation skills to help us do better. Even in an age where the addictive and detrimental health effects of cigarette smoking are well understood, more than 60% of children try smoking before they are 18 years old, and more than half who have smoked have tried and failed to quit (Fryar et al., 2009). Although smoking is depicted in movies as sexy and alluring, it is highly addictive and probably the most dangerous thing we can do to our body.

Poor diet and physical inactivity combine to make up the second greatest threat to our health. But we can improve our diet by eating more natural and less processed food and by monitoring our food intake. And we can start and maintain an exercise program. Exercise keeps us happier, improves fitness, and leads to better health and lower mortality (Fogelholm, 2010; Galper et al., 2006; Hassmén et al., 2000). Exercise also has a variety of positive influences on our cognitive processes, including academic performance (Hillman et al., 2008).

Alcohol abuse, and particularly binge drinking (i.e., having five or more drinks in one sitting), is often the norm among high school and college students, but it has severe negative health consequences. Bingeing leads to deaths from car crashes, drowning, falls, gunshots, and alcohol poisoning (Valencia-Martín et al., 2008). Binge-drinking students are also more likely to be involved in other risky behaviors, such as smoking, drug use, dating violence, or attempted suicide (Miller et al., 2007). Binge drinking may damage neural pathways in the brain (McQueeney et al., 2009) and lead to lifelong alcohol abuse and dependency (Kim et al., 2008). Illicit drug use has also been increasing and is linked to the spread of infectious diseases such as HIV, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C (Monteiro, 2001).

Some teens abstain from sex entirely, particularly those who are very religious, but most experiment with it. About half of U.S. children under 18 report having had intercourse, a rate much higher than in other parts of the world. Although sex is fun, it can also kill us if we are not careful. Sexual activity can lead to guilt about having engaged in the act itself and may also lead to unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV infection. Alcohol consumption also leads to risky sexual behavior. Sex partners who have been drinking are less likely to practice safe sex and have an increased risk of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV infection (Hutton et al., 2008; Raj et al., 2009).

It takes some work to improve and maintain our health and happiness, and our desire for the positive emotional experiences that come from engaging in dangerous behaviors can get in the way of this work. But being aware of the dangers, working to control our emotions, and using our resources to engage in healthy behaviors and avoid unhealthy ones are the best things we can do for ourselves.



Let's Review

- **Suppressing or ignoring our problems** is usually not successful because it takes effort and does not make them go away. It is healthier to express our negative thoughts and feelings, either to ourselves or to others.
- **Being able to effectively regulate our emotions** is a skill that has important and positive consequences.
- **Positive thinking, including optimism, hardiness, and self-efficacy, is** associated with a wide variety of positive effects on our health.
- **Building effective lives requires us to use our cognitive resources** to avoid engaging in pleasurable but health-threatening behaviors.



Exercises

1. Think about your own well-being. What things make you happy and unhappy?
2. Do you think you are able to regulate your own emotions well?? What strategies might you use to do better?
3. Do you know people who do not effectively regulate their emotions? What are the outcomes for them of this failure to regulate?
4. Review the things you do or should do and the things you don't do or shouldn't do for yourself to help keep yourself happy and healthy.

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3.5 Key Takeaways, Knowledge Check and Key Terms



Key Takeaways

In this chapter, we learned that:

- **Emotions serve several important intrapersonal, interpersonal, social and cultural** functions.
- **Emotions include several components:** physiological arousal, our interpretation of a situation, and how we communicate emotions to the people around us.
- **Affective events theory (AET)** helps us to understand how emotions can help us to understand behaviour at work. Many jobs involve **emotional labour** and a mismatch between how we feel and the emotions that employees are expected to show can produce a stressful state of **cognitive dissonance**.
- **Emotional intelligence** involves a set of interrelated skills that can help us have awareness of and manage the emotions of ourselves and our relationships.
- **Using self-regulation techniques** and engaging in healthy lifestyle behaviours can help us to deal effectively with negative emotions.



Knowledge Check

Review your understanding of this chapter's key concepts by taking the interactive quiz below.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationpsychology/?p=210#h5p-11>



Key Terms

Key terms from this chapter include:

- **Intrapersonal functions of emotions**
- **Interpersonal functions of emotions**
- **Social and cultural functions of emotions**
- **Cultural display rules**
- **Social referencing**
- **Basic emotions**
- **Secondary emotions**
- **Cognitive appraisal**
- **Cannon-Bard theory**

- James-Lange theory
- Two-factor theory of emotion
- Misattribution of arousal
- Excitation transfer
- Facial feedback hypothesis
- Affective events theory
- Emotional labour
- Surface acting
- Deep acting
- Genuine acting
- Cognitive dissonance
- Emotional intelligence
- Self-awareness
- Self-management
- Social awareness
- Relationship management
- Empathy
- Optimism
- Self-efficacy
- Hardiness

CHAPTER 4: MOTIVATION



Learning Objectives

In this chapter, we will:

[4.1 Objectives](#)

1. **Define** motivation.
2. **Understand** the role of motivation in determining employee performance.
3. **Compare** needs and process theories of motivation.
4. **Recognize** how fairness perceptions are determined and consequences of these perceptions on motivation in the workplace.
5. **Identify** ways to increase motivation in the workplace.

[4.2 Objectives](#)

1. **Explain** how employees are motivated according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs.
2. **Explain** how the ERG (existence, relatedness, growth) theory addresses the limitations of Maslow's hierarchy.
3. **Describe** the differences among factors contributing to employee motivation and how these differ from factors contributing to dissatisfaction.
4. **Describe** need for achievement, power, and affiliation, and identify how these acquired needs affect work behaviour.
5. **Describe** how intrinsic and extrinsic factors influence motivation at work.

[4.3 Objectives](#)

1. **Explain** how goal-setting influences motivation.
2. **Describe** the three types of fairness that affect employee attitudes and behaviours.
3. **List** the three questions individuals consider when deciding whether to put forth effort at work.
4. **Describe** how managers can use learning and reinforcement principles to motivate employees.

In this chapter, students will learn about needs-based and process-based theories of human motivation. We will explore how motivation impacts workplace behaviours and performance. In addition, we will learn about common methods used to increase motivation in the workplace.

4.1 Motivation

What inspires employees to provide excellent service, market a company's products effectively, or achieve the goals set for them? Answering this question is of utmost importance if we are to understand and manage the work behaviour of our peers, subordinates, and even supervisors. Put a different way, if someone is not performing well, what could be the reason?



Figure 4.1 Performance is a function of the interaction between an individual's motivation, ability, and environment. Image: NSCC. [NSCC Organizational Behaviour, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). [Click to enlarge]

Job performance is viewed as a function of three factors and is expressed with the equation above (Mitchell, 1982; Porter & Lawler, 1968). According to this equation, motivation, ability, and environment are the major influences over employee performance.

Motivation is defined as the desire to achieve a goal or a certain performance level, leading to goal-directed behaviour. Motivation is one of the forces that lead to performance. When we refer to someone as being motivated, we mean that the person is trying hard to accomplish a certain task. Motivation is clearly important if someone is to perform well; however, it is not sufficient.

Ability—or having the skills and knowledge required to perform the job—is also important and is sometimes the key determinant of effectiveness.

Finally, **environmental factors** such as having the resources, information, and support one needs to perform well are critical to determine performance.

At different times, one of these three factors may be the key to high performance. For example, for an employee sweeping the floor, motivation may be the most important factor that determines performance. In contrast, even the most motivated individual would not be able to successfully design a house without the necessary talent involved in building quality homes. Being motivated is not the same as being a high performer and is not the sole reason why people perform well, but it is nevertheless a key influence over our performance level.

So what motivates people? Why do some employees try to reach their targets and pursue excellence while others merely show up at work and count the hours? As with many questions involving human

beings, the answer is anything but simple. Instead, there are several theories explaining the concept of motivation. We will discuss motivation theories under two categories: need-based theories and process theories.

Simply stated, work motivation is the amount of effort a person exerts to achieve a certain level of job performance. Some people try very hard to perform their jobs well. They work long hours, even if it interferes with their family life. Highly motivated people go the “extra mile.” High scorers on an exam make sure they know the examination material to the best of their ability, no matter how much midnight oil they have to burn. Other students who don’t do as well may just want to get by—football games and parties are a lot more fun, after all.

Motivation is of great interest to employers: *All* employers want their people to perform to the best of their abilities. They take great pains to screen applicants to make sure they have the necessary abilities and motivation to perform well. They endeavor to supply all the necessary resources and a good work environment. Yet motivation remains a difficult factor to manage. As a result, it receives the most attention from organizations and researchers alike, who ask the perennial question “What motivates people to perform well?”

Motivation has two major components: direction and intensity. **Direction** is *what* a person wants to achieve, what they intend to do. It implies a target that motivated people try to “hit.” That target may be to do well on a test. Or it may be to perform better than anyone else in a work group. Intensity is *how hard* people try to achieve their targets. **Intensity** is what we think of as effort. It represents the energy we expend to accomplish something. If our efforts are getting nowhere, will we try different strategies to succeed? (High-intensity-motivated people are persistent!)

It is important to distinguish the direction and intensity aspects of motivation. If *either* is lacking, performance will suffer. A person who knows what they want to accomplish (direction) but doesn’t exert much effort (intensity) will not succeed. (Scoring 100 percent on an exam—your target—won’t happen unless you study!) Conversely, people who don’t have a direction (what they want to accomplish) probably won’t succeed either. (At some point you have to decide on a major if you want to graduate, even if you do have straight As.)

Employees’ targets are sometimes contrary to their employers’—sometimes due to different motivations. Other times because employers do not ensure that employees understand what the employer wants. Employees can have great intensity but poor direction. It is management’s job to provide direction: Should we stress quality as well as quantity? Work independently or as a team? Meet deadlines at the expense of costs? Employees flounder without direction. Clarifying direction results in accurate *role perceptions*, the behaviors employees think they are expected to perform as members of an organization. Employees with accurate role perceptions understand their purpose in the organization and how the performance of their job duties contributes to organizational objectives. Some motivation theorists assume that employees know the correct direction for their jobs. Others do not. These differences are highlighted in the discussion of motivation theories discussed later in this chapter

At this point, as we begin our discussion of the various motivation theories, it is reasonable to

ask “Why isn’t there just one motivation theory?” The answer is that the different theories are driven by different philosophies of motivation. Some theorists assume that humans are propelled more by needs and instincts than by reasoned actions. These needs-based motivation theories focus on *what* motivates people. Other theorists focus on the process by which people are motivated. Process motivation theories address *how* people become motivated—that is, how people perceive and think about a situation. Needs and process theories endeavor to predict motivation in a variety of situations. However, none of these theories can predict what will motivate an individual in a given situation 100 percent of the time. Given the complexity of human behavior, a “grand theory” of motivation will probably never be developed.

A second reasonable question at this point is “Which theory is best?” If that question could be easily answered, this chapter would be quite short. The simple answer is that there is no “one best theory.” All have been supported by organizational behavior research. All have strengths and weaknesses. However, understanding something about each theory is a major step toward effective management practices.

References

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4.2 Need-Based Theories of Motivation

The earliest studies of motivation involved an examination of individual needs. Specifically, early researchers thought that employees try hard and demonstrate goal-driven behaviour in order to satisfy needs. For example, an employee who is always walking around the office talking to people may have a need for companionship, and his behaviour may be a way of satisfying this need. At the time, researchers developed theories to understand what people need. Four theories may be placed under this category: Maslow's hierarchy of needs, ERG theory, Herzberg's two-factor theory, and McClelland's acquired-needs theory.

In this section:

- [Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs](#)
- [ERG Theory](#)
- [Two-factor Theory](#)
- [McClelland's Acquired Needs](#)
- [Self-determination Theory](#)

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Abraham Maslow is among the most prominent psychologists of the twentieth century. His **hierarchy of needs** is an image familiar to most business students and managers. The theory is based on a simple premise: Human beings have needs that are hierarchically ranked (Maslow, 1943; Maslow, 1954). There are some needs that are basic to all human beings, and in their absence nothing else matters. As we satisfy these basic needs, we start looking to satisfy higher order needs. In other words, once a lower level need is satisfied, it no longer serves as a motivator.

The most basic of Maslow's needs are physiological needs. Physiological needs refer to the need for food, water, and other biological needs. These needs are basic because when they are lacking, the search for them may overpower all other urges. Imagine being very hungry. At that point, all your behaviour may be directed at finding food. Once you eat, though, the search for food ceases and the promise of food no longer serves as a motivator. Once physiological needs are satisfied, people tend to become concerned about safety needs. Are they free from the threat of danger, pain, or an uncertain future? On the next level up, social needs refer to the need to bond with other human beings, be loved, and form lasting



Figure 4.2 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Image: NSCC. [NSCC Organizational Behaviour, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge]

attachments with others. In fact, attachments, or lack of them, are associated with our health and well-being (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The satisfaction of social needs makes esteem needs more salient. Esteem need refers to the desire to be respected by one's peers, feel important, and be appreciated. Finally, at the highest level of the hierarchy, the need for self-actualization refers to "becoming all you are capable of becoming." This need manifests itself by the desire to acquire new skills, take on new challenges, and behave in a way that will lead to the attainment of one's life goals.

Maslow was a clinical psychologist, and his theory was not originally designed for work settings. In fact, his theory was based on his observations of individuals in clinical settings; some of the individual components of the theory found little empirical support. One criticism relates to the order in which the needs are ranked. It is possible to imagine that individuals who go hungry and are in fear of their lives might retain strong bonds to others, suggesting a different order of needs. Moreover, researchers failed to support the arguments that once a need is satisfied it no longer serves as a motivator and that only one need is dominant at a given time (Neher, 1991; Rauschenberger et al., 1980).

Despite the lack of strong research support, Maslow's theory found obvious applications in business settings. Understanding what people need gives us clues to understanding them. The hierarchy is a systematic way of thinking about the different needs employees may have at any given point and explains different reactions they may have to similar treatment. An employee who is trying to satisfy esteem needs may feel gratified when her supervisor praises an accomplishment. However, another employee who is trying to satisfy social needs may resent being praised by upper management in front of peers if the praise sets the individual apart from the rest of the group.

How can an organization satisfy its employees' various needs? In the long run, physiological needs may be satisfied by the person's paycheck, but it is important to remember that pay may satisfy other needs such as safety and esteem as well. Providing generous benefits that include health insurance and company-sponsored retirement plans, as well as offering a measure of job security,

will help satisfy safety needs. Social needs may be satisfied by having a friendly environment and providing a workplace conducive to collaboration and communication with others. Company picnics and other social get-togethers may also be helpful if the majority of employees are motivated primarily by social needs (but may cause resentment if they are not and if they have to sacrifice a Sunday afternoon for a company picnic). Providing promotion opportunities at work, recognizing a person's accomplishments verbally or through more formal reward systems, and conferring job titles that communicate to the employee that one has achieved high status within the organization are among the ways of satisfying esteem needs. Finally, self-actualization needs may be satisfied by the provision of development and growth opportunities on or off the job, as well as by work that is interesting and challenging. By making the effort to satisfy the different needs of each employee, organizations may ensure a highly motivated workforce.

ERG Theory

ERG theory, developed by Clayton Alderfer, is a modification of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Alderfer, 1969). Instead of the five needs that are hierarchically organized, Alderfer proposed that basic human needs may be grouped under three categories, namely, existence, relatedness, and growth. Existence corresponds to Maslow's physiological and safety needs, relatedness corresponds to social needs, and growth refers to Maslow's esteem and self-actualization.

- **Existence needs** include physiological and material safety needs. These needs are satisfied by material conditions and not through interpersonal relations or personal involvement in the work setting.
- **Relatedness needs** include all of Maslow's social needs, plus social safety and social esteem needs. These needs are satisfied through the exchange of thoughts and feelings with other people.
- **Growth needs** include self-esteem and self-actualization needs. These needs tend to be satisfied through one's full involvement in work and the work setting.

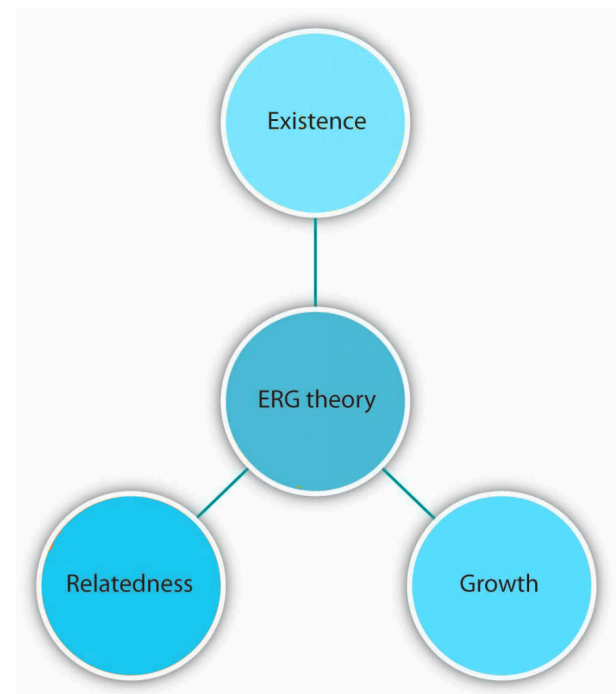


Figure 4.3 ERG theory includes existence, relatedness, and growth. Image: NSCC. [NSCC Organizational Behaviour, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge]

Figure 4.4 below identifies a number of ways in which organizations can help their members satisfy these three needs:



Figure 4.4 Satisfying Existence, Relatedness, and Growth Needs . Image: Rice University. [Organizational Behavior, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge]

Four components—satisfaction progression, frustration, frustration regression, and aspiration—are key to understanding Alderfer’s ERG theory. The first of these, *satisfaction progression*, is in basic agreement with Maslow’s process of moving through the needs. As we increasingly satisfy our existence needs, we direct energy toward relatedness needs. As these needs are satisfied, our

growth needs become more active. The second component, *frustration*, occurs when we attempt but fail to satisfy a particular need. The resulting frustration may make satisfying the unmet need even more important to us—unless we repeatedly fail to satisfy that need. In this case, Alderfer's third component, *frustration regression*, can cause us to shift our attention to a previously satisfied, more concrete, and verifiable need. Lastly, the *aspiration* component of the ERG model notes that, by its very nature, growth is intrinsically satisfying. The more we grow, the more we want to grow. Therefore, the more we satisfy our growth need, the more important it becomes and the more strongly we are motivated to satisfy it.

ERG theory's main contribution to the literature is its relaxation of Maslow's assumptions. ERG theory does not rank needs in any particular order and explicitly recognizes that more than one need may operate at a given time. For example, it is difficult for researchers to ascertain when interaction with others satisfies our need for acceptance and when it satisfies our need for recognition. ERG also focuses attention explicitly on movement through the set of needs in both directions. Further, evidence in support of the three need categories and their order tends to be stronger than evidence for Maslow's five need categories and their relative order. Moreover, the theory discusses frustration, whereas Maslow's theory does not. For example, someone who is frustrated by the growth opportunities in his job and progress toward career goals may regress to relatedness need and start spending more time socializing with coworkers. The implication of this theory is that we need to recognize the multiple needs that may be driving individuals at a given point to understand their behaviour and properly motivate them.

Two-factor Theory

Frederick Herzberg approached the question of motivation in a different way. By asking individuals what satisfies them on the job and what dissatisfies them, Herzberg came to the conclusion that aspects of the work environment that satisfy employees are very different from aspects that dissatisfy them (Herzberg et al., 1959; Herzberg, 1965). Herzberg labeled factors causing dissatisfaction of workers as **"hygiene" factors** because these factors were part of the context in which the job was performed, as opposed to the job itself. Hygiene factors included company policies, supervision, working conditions, salary, safety, and security on the job. To illustrate, imagine that you are working in an unpleasant work environment. Your office is too hot in the summer and too cold in the winter. You are being harassed and mistreated. You would certainly be miserable in such a work environment. However, if these problems were solved (your office temperature is just right and you are not harassed at all), would you be motivated? Most likely, you would take the situation for granted. In fact, many factors in our work environment are things that we miss when they are absent but take for granted if they are present.

In contrast, **motivators** are factors that are intrinsic to the job, such as achievement, recognition, interesting work, increased responsibilities, advancement, and growth opportunities. According to Herzberg's research, motivators are the conditions that truly encourage employees to try harder.

Table 4.1: The Two-factor Theory

Hygiene Factors	Motivators
Company policy	Achievement
Supervision and relationships	Recognition
Working conditions	Interesting work
Salary	Increased responsibility
Security	Advancement and growth

The two-factor theory of motivation includes hygiene factors and motivators. Based on Herzberg, F., Mausner, B., & Snyderman, B. (1959).

Herzberg's research is far from being universally accepted (Cummings & Elsalmi, 1968; House & Wigdor, 1967). One criticism relates to the primary research methodology employed when arriving at hygiene versus motivators. When people are asked why they are satisfied, they may attribute the causes of satisfaction to themselves, whereas when explaining what dissatisfies them, they may blame the situation. The classification of the factors as hygiene or motivator is not that simple either. For example, the theory views pay as a hygiene factor. However, pay may have symbolic value by showing employees that they are being recognized for their contributions as well as communicating that they are advancing within the company. Similarly, the quality of supervision or the types of relationships employees form with their supervisors may determine whether they are assigned interesting work, whether they are recognized for their potential, and whether they take on more responsibilities.

Despite its limitations, the theory can be a valuable aid to managers because it points out that improving the environment in which the job is performed goes only so far in motivating employees. Undoubtedly, contextual factors matter because their absence causes dissatisfaction. However, solely focusing on hygiene factors will not be enough, and managers should also enrich jobs by giving employees opportunities for challenging work, greater responsibilities, advancement opportunities, and a job in which their subordinates can feel successful.

Acquired Needs Theory

Among the need-based approaches to motivation, David McClelland's **acquired-needs theory** is the one that has received the greatest amount of support. According to this theory, individuals acquire three types of needs as a result of their life experiences. These needs are the **need for achievement, the need for affiliation, and the need for power**. All individuals possess a combination of these needs, and the dominant needs are thought to drive employee behaviour. McClelland believes that these three needs are learned, primarily in childhood. But he also believes that each need can be taught, especially nAch. McClelland's research is important because much of current thinking about organizational behavior is based on it.

Need for Achievement

The need for achievement (nAch) is how much people are motivated to excel at the tasks they are performing, especially tasks that are difficult. Of the three needs studied by McClelland, nAch has the greatest impact. The need for achievement varies in intensity across individuals. This makes nAch a personality trait as well as a statement about motivation. When nAch is being expressed, making it a manifest need, people try hard to succeed at whatever task they're doing. We say these people have a high achievement motive. A motive is a source of motivation; it is the need that a person is attempting to satisfy. Achievement needs become manifest when individuals experience certain types of situations.

To better understand the nAch motive, it's helpful to describe high-nAch people. You probably know a few of them. They're constantly trying to accomplish something. One of your authors has a father-in-law who would much rather spend his weekends digging holes (for various home projects) than going fishing. Why? Because when he digs a hole, he gets results. In contrast, he can exert a lot of effort and still not catch a fish. A lot of fishing, no fish, and no results equal failure!

McClelland describes three major characteristics of high-nAch people:

1. **They feel personally responsible for completing whatever tasks they are assigned.** They accept credit for success and blame for failure.
2. **They like situations where the probability of success is moderate.** High-nAch people are not motivated by tasks that are too easy or extremely difficult. Instead, they prefer situations where the outcome is uncertain, but in which they believe they can succeed if they exert enough effort. They avoid both simple and impossible situations.
3. **They have very strong desires for feedback about how well they are doing.** They actively seek out performance feedback. It doesn't matter whether the information implies success or failure. They want to know whether they have achieved or not. They constantly ask how they are doing, sometimes to the point of being a nuisance.

Why is nAch important to organizational behavior? The answer is, the success of many organizations is dependent on the nAch levels of their employees. This is especially true for jobs that require self-motivation and managing others. Employees who continuously have to be told how to do their jobs require an overly large management team, and too many layers of management spell trouble in the current marketplace. Today's flexible, cost-conscious organizations have no room for top-heavy structures; their high-nAch employees perform their jobs well with minimal supervision.

Many organizations manage the achievement needs of their employees poorly. A common perception about people who perform unskilled jobs is that they are unmotivated and content doing what they are doing. But, if they have achievement needs, the job itself creates little motivation to perform. It is too easy. There are not enough workers who feel personal satisfaction for having the cleanest floors in a building. Designing jobs that are neither too challenging nor too boring is key to

managing motivation. Job enrichment is one effective strategy; this frequently entails training and rotating employees through different jobs, or adding new challenges.

New York Metro workers carrying a sign The New York City Metropolitan Transit Authority undertook a new approach to how they perform critical inspection and maintenance of subway components that are necessary to providing reliable service. Rather than schedule these inspections during regular hours, they consulted with the maintenance workers, who suggested doing the inspections while sections of the subway were closed to trains for seven consecutive hours. This process was adopted and provided a safer and more efficient way to maintain and clean New York City's sprawling subway. With no trains running, MTA employees are able to inspect signals, replace rails and crossties, scrape track floors, clean stations, and paint areas that are not reachable during normal train operation. Workers also took the opportunity to clean lighting fixtures, change bulbs, and repair platform edges while performing high-intensity station cleaning.



New York Metro workers carrying a sign. Image: NYCT_3412 by Patrick Cashin, [Flickr](#), [CC BY 2.0](#). [Click to enlarge]

Need for Affiliation

This need is the second of McClelland's learned needs. The need for affiliation (nAff) reflects a desire to establish and maintain warm and friendly relationships with other people. As with nAch, nAff varies in intensity across individuals. As you would expect, high-nAff people are very sociable. They're more likely to go bowling with friends after work than to go home and watch television. Other people have lower affiliation needs. This doesn't mean that they avoid other people, or that they dislike others. They simply don't exert as much effort in this area as high-nAff people do.

The nAff has important implications for organizational behavior. High-nAff people like to be around other people, including other people at work. As a result, they perform better in jobs that require teamwork. Maintaining good relationships with their coworkers is important to them, so they go to great lengths to make the work group succeed because they fear rejection. So, high-nAff employees will be especially motivated to perform well if others depend on them. In contrast, if high-nAff people perform jobs in isolation from other people, they will be less motivated to perform well. Performing well on this job won't satisfy their need to be around other people.

Effective managers carefully assess the degree to which people have high or low nAff. Employees high in nAff should be placed in jobs that require or allow interactions with other employees. Jobs that are best performed alone are more appropriate for low-nAff employees, who are less likely to be frustrated.

Need for Power

The third of McClelland's learned needs, the need for power (nPow), is the need to control things, especially other people. It reflects a motivation to influence and be responsible for other people. An employee who is often talkative, gives orders, and argues a lot is motivated by the need for power over others.

Employees with high nPow can be beneficial to organizations. High-nPow people do have effective employee behaviors, but at times they're disruptive. A high-nPow person may try to convince others to do things that are detrimental to the organization. So, when is this need good, and when is it bad? Again, there are no easy answers. McClelland calls this the "two faces of power." A *personal power seeker* endeavors to control others mostly for the sake of dominating them. They want others to respond to their wishes whether or not it is good for the organization. They "build empires," and they protect them.

McClelland's other power seeker is the *social power seeker*. A high social power seeker satisfies needs for power by influencing others, like the personal power seeker. They differ in that they feel best when they have influenced a work group to achieve the group's goals, and not some personal agenda. High social power seekers are concerned with goals that a work group has set for itself, and they are motivated to influence others to achieve the goal. This need is oriented toward fulfilling responsibilities to the employer, not to the self.

McClelland has argued that the high need for social power is the most important motivator for successful managers. Successful managers tend to be high in this type of nPow. High need for achievement can also be important, but it sometimes results in too much concern for personal success and not enough for the employer's success. The need for affiliation contributes to managerial success only in those situations where the maintenance of warm group relations is as important as getting others to work toward group goals.

The implication of McClelland's research is that organizations should try to place people with high needs for social power in managerial jobs. It is critical, however, that those managerial jobs allow the employee to satisfy the nPow through social power acquisition. Otherwise, a manager high in nPow may satisfy this need through acquisition of personal power, to the detriment of the organization.

McClelland used a unique method called the **Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)** to assess the dominant need (Spangler, 1992). This method entails presenting research subjects an ambiguous picture asking them to write a story based on it. Take a look at the following picture. Who is this person? What is he doing? Why is he doing it? The story you tell about the men in the picture would then be analyzed by trained experts. The idea is that the stories the photo evokes would reflect how the mind works and what motivates the person.

If the story you come up with contains themes of success, meeting deadlines, or coming up with brilliant ideas, you may be high in need for achievement. Those who have high need for achievement have a strong need to be successful. As children, they may be praised for their hard work, which forms the foundations of their persistence (Mueller & Dweck, 1998). As adults, they are preoccupied with doing things better than they did in the past. These individuals are constantly striving to improve their performance. They relentlessly focus on goals, particularly stretch goals that are challenging in nature (Campbell, 1982). They are particularly suited to positions such as sales, where there are explicit goals, feedback is immediately available, and their effort often leads to success. In fact, they are more attracted to organizations that are merit-based and reward performance rather than seniority. They also do particularly well as entrepreneurs, scientists, and engineers (Harrell & Stahl, 1981; Trevis & Certo, 2005; Turban & Keon, 1993).

Are individuals who are high in need for achievement effective managers? Because of their success in lower level jobs where their individual contributions matter the most, those with high need for achievement are often promoted to higher level positions (McClelland & Boyatzis, 1982). However, a high need for achievement has significant disadvantages in management positions. Management involves getting work done by motivating others. When a salesperson is promoted to be a sales manager, the job description changes from actively selling to recruiting, motivating, and training salespeople. Those who are high in need for achievement may view managerial activities such as coaching, communicating, and meeting with subordinates as a waste of time and may neglect these aspects of their jobs. Moreover, those high in need for achievement enjoy doing things themselves and may find it difficult to delegate any meaningful authority to their subordinates. These individuals often micromanage, expecting others to approach tasks a particular way, and may become overbearing bosses by expecting everyone to display high levels of dedication (McClelland & Burnham, 1976).

If the story you created in relation to the picture you are analyzing contains elements of making plans to be with friends or family, you may have a high need for affiliation. Individuals who have a high need for affiliation want to be liked and accepted by others. When given a choice, they prefer to interact with others and be with friends (Wong & Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). Their emphasis on harmonious interpersonal relationships may be an advantage in jobs and occupations requiring



The type of story you tell by looking at this picture may give away the dominant need that motivates you. Image: Image: President Barack Obama looks at a portrait of John F. Kennedy, Official White House Photo by Pete Souza, [Flickr](#), CC BY 2.0. [Click to enlarge]

frequent interpersonal interaction, such as a social worker or teacher. In managerial positions, a high need for affiliation may again serve as a disadvantage because these individuals tend to be overly concerned about how they are perceived by others. They may find it difficult to perform some aspects of a manager's job such as giving employees critical feedback or disciplining poor performers. Thus, the work environment may be characterized by mediocrity and may even lead to high performers leaving the team.

Finally, if your story contains elements of getting work done by influencing other people or desiring to make an impact on the organization, you may have a high need for power. Those with a high need for power want to influence others and control their environment. A need for power may in fact be a destructive element in relationships with colleagues if it takes the form of seeking and using power for one's own good and prestige. However, when it manifests itself in more altruistic forms such as changing the way things are done so that the work environment is more positive, or negotiating more resources for one's department, it tends to lead to positive outcomes. In fact, the need for power is viewed as an important trait for effectiveness in managerial and leadership positions (McClelland & Burnham, 1976; Spangler & House, 1991; Spreier, 2006).

McClelland's theory of acquired needs has important implications for the motivation of employees. Managers need to understand the dominant needs of their employees to be able to motivate them. While people who have a high need for achievement may respond to goals, those with a high need for power may attempt to gain influence over those they work with, and individuals high in their need for affiliation may be motivated to gain the approval of their peers and supervisors. Finally, those who have a high drive for success may experience difficulties in managerial positions, and making them aware of common pitfalls may increase their effectiveness.

Self-Determination Theory

One major implication of Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory is the somewhat counterintuitive idea that managers should focus more on motivators than on hygienes. (After all, doesn't everyone want to be paid well? Organizations have held this out as a chief motivator for decades!) Why might concentrating on motivators give better results? To answer this question, we must examine types of motivation. Organizational behavior researchers often classify motivation in terms of what stimulates it. In the case of extrinsic motivation, we endeavor to acquire something that satisfies a lower-order need. Jobs that pay well and that are performed in safe, clean working conditions with adequate supervision and resources directly or indirectly satisfy these lower-order needs. These "outside the person" factors are *extrinsic rewards*.

Factors "inside" the person that cause people to perform tasks, intrinsic motivation, arise out of performing a task in and of itself, because it is interesting or "fun" to do. The task is enjoyable, so we continue to do it *even in the absence* of extrinsic rewards. That is, we are motivated by *intrinsic rewards*, rewards that we more or less give ourselves. Intrinsic rewards satisfy higher-order needs like relatedness and growth in ERG theory. When we sense that we are valuable contributors, are

achieving something important, or are getting better at some skill, we like this feeling and strive to maintain it.

Self-determination theory (SDT) seeks to explain not only what causes motivation, but also how extrinsic rewards affect intrinsic motivation. In SDT, extrinsic motivation refers to the performance of an activity in order to attain some valued outcome, while intrinsic motivation refers to performing an activity for the inherent satisfaction of the activity itself. SDT specifies when an activity will be intrinsically motivating and when it will not. Considerable numbers of studies have demonstrated that tasks are intrinsically motivating when they satisfy at least one of three higher-order needs: competence, autonomy, and relatedness. These precepts from SDT are entirely consistent with earlier discussions of theories by McClelland, Maslow, Alderfer, and Herzberg.

SDT takes the concepts of extrinsic rewards and intrinsic motivation further than the other need theories. SDT researchers have consistently found that as the level of extrinsic rewards increases, the amount of intrinsic motivation *decreases*. That is, SDT posits that extrinsic rewards not only do not provide intrinsic motivation, they diminish it. Think of this in terms of hobbies. Some people like to knit, others like to carve wood. They do it because it is intrinsically motivating; the hobby satisfies needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. But what happens if these hobbyists start getting paid well for their sweaters and carvings? Over time the hobby becomes less fun and is done in order to receive extrinsic rewards (money). Extrinsic motivation increases as intrinsic motivation decreases! When extrinsic rewards are present, people do not feel like what they do builds competence, is self-determined, or enhances relationships with others.

SDT theory has interesting implications for the management of organizational behavior. Some jobs are by their very nature uninteresting and unlikely to be made interesting. Automation has eliminated many such jobs, but they are still numerous. SDT would suggest that the primary way to motivate high performance for such jobs is to make performance contingent on extrinsic rewards. Relatively high pay is necessary to sustain performance on certain low-skill jobs. On the other hand, SDT would suggest that to enhance intrinsic motivation on jobs that are interesting, don't focus only on increasing extrinsic rewards (like large pay bonuses). Instead, create even more opportunities for employees to satisfy their needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. That means giving them opportunities to learn new skills, to perform their jobs without interference, and to develop meaningful relationships with other customers and employees in other departments. Such actions enhance intrinsic rewards.

You may have noticed that content theories are somewhat quiet about what determines the intensity of motivation. For example, some people steal to satisfy their lower-order needs (they have high intensity). But most of us don't steal. Why is this? Process theories of motivation attempt to explain this aspect of motivation by focusing on the intensity of motivation as well as its direction. According to self-determination theory, skilled workers who are given a chance to hone their skills and the freedom to practice their craft will be intrinsically motivated.



Let's Review

- **Need-based theories describe** motivated behaviour as individuals' efforts to meet their needs. According to this perspective, the manager's job is to identify what people need and make the work environment a means of satisfying these needs.
- **Maslow's hierarchy describes** five categories of basic human needs, including physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization needs. These needs are hierarchically ranked, and as a lower level need is satisfied, it no longer serves as a motivator.
- **ERG theory is a modification of Maslow's hierarchy**, in which the five needs are collapsed into three categories (existence, relatedness, and growth). The theory recognizes that when employees are frustrated while attempting to satisfy higher level needs, they may regress.
- **The two-factor theory differentiates between** factors that make people dissatisfied on the job (hygiene factors) and factors that truly motivate employees (motivators).
- **Acquired-needs theory argues that** individuals possess stable and dominant motives to achieve, acquire power, or affiliate with others. The type of need that is dominant will drive behaviour.
- **Finally, self-determination theory explores how** motivation can come from external or internal factors. Each of these theories explains characteristics of a work environment that motivates employees. These theories paved the way to process-based theories that explain the mental calculations employees make to decide how to behave.



Exercises

1. Many managers assume that if an employee is not performing well, the reason must be a lack of motivation. Do you think this reasoning is accurate? What is the problem with the assumption?

2. Review Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Do you agree with the particular ranking of employee needs?
3. How can an organization satisfy employee needs that are included in Maslow's hierarchy?
4. Which motivation theory have you found to be most useful in explaining why people behave in a certain way? Why?
5. Review the hygiene and motivators in the two-factor theory of motivation. Do you agree with the distinction between hygiene factors and motivators? Are there any hygiene factors that you would consider to be motivators?
6. A friend of yours demonstrates the traits of achievement motivation: This person is competitive, requires frequent and immediate feedback, and enjoys accomplishing things and doing things better than she did before. She has recently been promoted to a managerial position and seeks your advice. What would you tell her?
7. Describe an activity that you find intrinsically motivating compared to one that you perform for external rewards.

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4.3 Process-Based Theories

A separate stream of research views motivation as something more than action aimed at satisfying a need. Instead, process-based theories view motivation as a rational process. Individuals analyze their environment, develop thoughts and feelings, and react in certain ways. Process theories attempt to explain the thought processes of individuals who demonstrate motivated behaviour. Under this category, we will review goal theory, equity theory, expectancy theory, and reinforcement theory.

In this Section

- [The Basic Goal-Setting Model](#)
- [Equity Theory](#)
- [Expectancy Theory](#)
- [Reinforcement Theory](#)

The Basic Goal-Setting Model

Goal theory states that people will perform better if they have difficult, specific, accepted performance goals or objectives¹. The first and most basic premise of goal theory is that people will attempt to achieve those goals that they *intend* to achieve. Thus, if we intend to do something (like get an A on an exam), we will exert effort to accomplish it. Without such goals, our effort at the task (studying) required to achieve the goal is less. Students whose goals are to get As study harder than students who don't have this goal—we all know this. This doesn't mean that people without goals

1. Locke, E. L. (1978). The ubiquity of the technique of goal setting in theories of and approaches to employee motivation. *Academy of Management Review*, 3, 594–601; Taylor, F. W. (1911). *The principles of scientific management*. Norton; Lewin, K. (1935). *A dynamic theory of personality*. McGraw-Hill; Lewin, K. (1938). *The conceptual representation and the measurement of psychological forces*. Duke University Press; Lewin, K., Dembo, T., Festinger, L., & Sears, P. S. (1944). Level of aspiration. In J. McVicker Hunt (ed.), *Personality and behavior disorders* (pp. 333–378). Ronald Press; Drucker, P. (1954). *The practice of management*. Wiley; McGregor, D. (1957). An uneasy look at performance appraisal. *Harvard Business Review*, 35, 89–94; Locke, E. A. (1968). Toward a theory of task motivation and incentives. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance* 3, 157–189; Locke, E. A., Shaw, K. N., Saari, L. M., & Latham, G. P. (1981). Goal setting and task performance: 1969–1980. *Psychological Bulletin*, 90, 125–152; Latham, G. P., & Locke, E. A. (1984). *Goal setting: A motivational technique that works!* Prentice Hall.; Pinder, C. C. (1984). *Work motivation: Theory, issues, and applications*. Scott, Foresman.

are unmotivated. It simply means that people with goals are more motivated. The intensity of their motivation is greater, and they are more directed.

The second basic premise is that *difficult* goals result in better performance than easy goals. This does not mean that difficult goals are always achieved, but our performance will usually be better when we intend to achieve harder goals. Your goal of an A in Classical Mechanics at Cal Tech may not get you your A, but it may earn you a B+, which you wouldn't have gotten otherwise. Difficult goals cause us to exert more effort, and this almost always results in better performance.

Another premise of goal theory is that *specific* goals are better than vague goals. We often wonder what we need to do to be successful. Have you ever asked a professor "What do I need to do to get an A in this course?" If she responded "Do well on the exams," you weren't much better off for having asked. This is a vague response. Goal theory says that we perform better when we have specific goals. Had your professor told you the key thrust of the course, to turn in *all* the problem sets, to pay close attention to the essay questions on exams, and to aim for scores in the 90s, you would have something concrete on which to build a strategy.

A key premise of goal theory is that people must *accept* the goal. Usually we set our own goals. But sometimes others set goals for us. Your professor telling you your goal is to "score at least a 90 percent on your exams" doesn't mean that you'll accept this goal. Maybe you don't feel you can achieve scores in the 90s. Or, you've heard that 90 isn't good enough for an A in this class. This happens in work organizations quite often. Supervisors give orders that something must be done by a certain time. The employees may fully understand what is wanted, yet if they feel the order is unreasonable or impossible, they may not exert much effort to accomplish it. Thus, it is important for people to accept the goal. They need to feel that it is also their goal. If they do not, goal theory predicts that they won't try as hard to achieve it.

Goal theory also states that people need to *commit* to a goal in addition to accepting it. Goal commitment is the degree to which we dedicate ourselves to achieving a goal. Goal commitment is about setting priorities. We can accept many goals (go to all classes, stay awake during classes, take lecture notes), but we often end up doing only some of them. In other words, some goals are more important than others. And we exert more effort for certain goals. This also happens frequently at work. A software analyst's major goal may be to write a new program. Her minor goal may be to maintain previously written programs. It is minor because maintaining old programs is boring, while writing new ones is fun. Goal theory predicts that her commitment, and thus her intensity, to the major goal will be greater.

Allowing people to participate in the goal-setting process often results in higher goal commitment. This has to do with ownership. And when people participate in the process, they tend to incorporate factors they think will make the goal more interesting, challenging, and attainable. Thus, it is advisable to allow people some input into the goal-setting process. Imposing goals on them from the outside usually results in less commitment (and acceptance).

The basic goal-setting model is shown in Figure 4.6 The process starts with our values. Values are our beliefs about how the world should be or act, and often include words like "should" or "ought."

We compare our present conditions against these values. For example, Randi holds the value that everyone should be a hard worker. After measuring her current work against this value, Randi concludes that she doesn't measure up to her own value. Following this, her goal-setting process begins. Randi will set a goal that affirms her status as a hard worker. Figure 4.6 lists the four types of goals. Some goals are self-set. (Randi decides to word process at least 70 pages per day.) Participative goals are jointly set. (Randi goes to her supervisor, and together they set some appropriate goals for her.) In still other cases, goals are assigned. (Her boss tells her that she must word process at least 60 pages per day.) The fourth type of goal, which can be self-set, jointly determined, or assigned, is a "do your best" goal. But note this goal is vague, so it usually doesn't result in the best performance.



Figure 4.6 The Goal-Setting Process Image: Rice University. [Organizational Behavior, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Color altered from original. [click to enlarge]

Depending on the characteristics of Randi's goals, she may or may not exert a lot of effort. For maximum effort to result, her goals should be difficult, specific, accepted, and committed to. Then, if she has sufficient ability and lack of constraints, maximum performance should occur. Examples of constraints could be that her old computer frequently breaks down or her supervisor constantly interferes.

The consequence of endeavoring to reach her goal will be that Randi will be satisfied with herself. Her behavior is consistent with her values. She'll be even more satisfied if her supervisor praises her performance and gives her a pay increase!

In Randi's case, her goal achievement resulted in several benefits. However, this doesn't always happen. If goals are not achieved, people may be unhappy with themselves, and their employer may be dissatisfied as well. Such an experience can make a person reluctant to accept goals in the future. Thus, setting difficult yet attainable goals cannot be stressed enough.

Goal theory can be a tremendous motivational tool. In fact, many organizations practice effective management by using a technique called "**management by objectives**" (MBO). MBO is based on goal theory and is quite effective when implemented consistently with goal theory's basic premises.

Despite its many strengths, several cautions about goal theory are appropriate. Locke has identified most of them (Gardner & Pierce, 1998). First, setting goals in one area can lead people to neglect

other areas. (Randi may word process 70 pages per day, but neglect her proofreading responsibilities.) It is important that goals be set for most major duties. Second, goal setting sometimes has unintended consequences. For example, employees set easy goals so that they look good when they achieve them. Or it causes unhealthy competition between employees. Or an employee sabotages the work of others so that only she has goal achievement.

Some managers use goal setting in unethical ways. They may manipulate employees by setting impossible goals. This enables them to criticize employees even when the employees are doing superior work and, of course, causes much stress. Goal setting should never be abused. Perhaps the key caution about goal setting is that it often results in too much focus on quantified measures of performance. Qualitative aspects of a job or task may be neglected because they aren't easily measured. Managers must keep employees focused on the qualitative aspects of their jobs as well as the quantitative ones. Finally, setting individual goals in a teamwork environment can be counterproductive (Mitchell & Silver, 1990). Where possible, it is preferable to have group goals in situations where employees depend on one another in the performance of their jobs.

The cautions noted here are not intended to deter you from using goal theory. We note them so that you can avoid the pitfalls. Remember, employees have a right to reasonable performance expectations and the rewards that result from performance, and organizations have a right to expect high performance levels from employees. Goal theory should be used to optimize the employment relationship. Goal theory holds that people will exert effort to accomplish goals if those goals are difficult to achieve, accepted by the individual, and specific in nature.

Equity Theory

Imagine that you are paid \$16 an hour working as an office assistant. You have held this job for 6 months. You are very good at what you do, you come up with creative ways to make things easier around you, and you are a good colleague who is willing to help others. You stay late when necessary and are flexible if requested to change hours. Now imagine that you found out they are hiring another employee who is going to work with you, who will hold the same job title, and who will perform the same type of tasks. This particular person has more advanced computer skills, but it is unclear whether these will be used on the job. The starting pay for this person will be \$20 an hour. How would you feel? Would you be as motivated as before, going above and beyond your duties? How would you describe what you would be feeling?

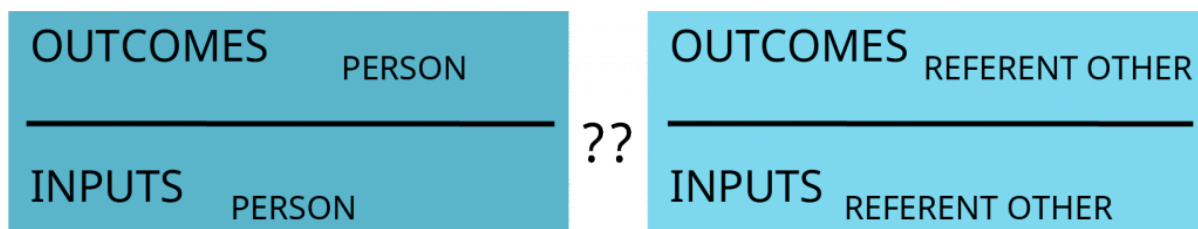


Figure 4.7 The Equity Theory Comparison. Figure 4.5 The Goal-Setting Process Image: Rice University. [Organizational Behavior](#), CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color altered from original. [click to enlarge]

If your reaction to this scenario is along the lines of “this would be unfair,” your behaviour may be explained using equity theory (Adams, 1965). According to this theory, individuals are motivated by a sense of fairness in their interactions. Moreover, our sense of fairness is a result of the social comparisons we make. Specifically, we compare our inputs and outcomes with other people’s inputs and outcomes. We perceive fairness if we believe that the input-to-outcome ratio we are bringing into the situation is similar to the input-to-outcome ratio of a comparison person, or a referent. Perceptions of inequity create tension within us and drive us to action that will reduce perceived inequity.

What Are Inputs and Outcomes?

Inputs are the contributions people feel they are making to the environment. In the previous example, the person’s hard work; loyalty to the organization; amount of time with the organization; and level of education, training, and skills may have been relevant inputs. **Outcomes** are the perceived rewards someone can receive from the situation. For the hourly wage employee in our example, the \$16 an hour pay rate was a core outcome. There may also be other, more peripheral outcomes, such as acknowledgment or preferential treatment from a manager. In the prior example, however, the person may reason as follows: I have been working here for 6 months. I am loyal, and I perform well (inputs). I am paid \$16 an hour for this (outcomes). The new person does not have any experience here (referent’s inputs) but will be paid \$20 an hour. This situation is unfair.

We should emphasize that equity perceptions develop as a result of a subjective process. Different people may look at the same situation and perceive different levels of equity. For example, another person may look at the same scenario and decide that the situation is fair because the newcomer has computer skills and the company is paying extra for those skills.

Who Is the Referent?

The **referent** other may be a specific person as well as a category of people. Referents should be comparable to us—otherwise the comparison is not meaningful. It would be pointless for a student worker to compare himself to the CEO of the company, given the differences in the nature of inputs and outcomes. Instead, individuals may compare themselves to someone performing similar tasks within the same organization or, in the case of a CEO, a different organization.

Reactions to Unfairness

The theory outlines several potential reactions to perceived inequity. Oftentimes, the situation may be dealt with perceptually by *altering our perceptions of our own or the referent’s inputs and outcomes*. For example, we may justify the situation by downplaying our own inputs (I don’t really

work very hard on this job), valuing our outcomes more highly (I am gaining valuable work experience, so the situation is not that bad), distorting the other person's inputs (the new hire really is more competent than I am and deserves to be paid more), or distorting the other person's outcomes (she gets \$20 an hour but will have to work with a lousy manager, so the situation is not unfair). Another option would be to *have the referent increase inputs*. If the other person brings more to the situation, getting more out of the situation would be fair. If that person can be made to work harder or work on more complicated tasks, equity would be achieved. The person experiencing a perceived inequity may also *reduce inputs or attempt to increase outcomes*. If the lower paid person puts forth less effort, the perceived inequity would be reduced. Research shows that people who perceive inequity reduce their work performance or reduce the quality of their inputs (Carrell & Dittrich, 1978; Goodman & Friedman, 1971). Increasing one's outcomes can be achieved through legitimate means such as negotiating a pay raise. At the same time, research shows that those feeling inequity sometimes resort to stealing to balance the scales (Greenberg, 1993). Other options include *changing the comparison person* (e.g., others doing similar work in different organizations are paid only minimum wage) and *leaving the situation* by quitting (Schmidt & Marwell, 1972). Sometimes it may be necessary to consider taking legal action as a potential outcome of perceived inequity. For example, if an employee finds out the main reason behind a pay gap is gender related, the person may react to the situation by taking legal action because sex discrimination in pay is illegal in Canada.

Table 4.2 Potential Responses to Inequity

Reactions to inequity	Example
Distort perceptions	Changing one's thinking to believe that the referent actually is more skilled than previously thought
Increase referent's inputs	Encouraging the referent to work harder
Reduce own input	Deliberately putting forth less effort at work. Reducing the quality of one's work
Increase own outcomes	Negotiating a raise for oneself or using unethical ways of increasing rewards such as stealing from the company
Change referent	Comparing oneself to someone who is worse off
Leave the situation	Quitting one's job
Seek legal action	Suing the company or filing a complaint if the unfairness in question is under legal protection

Overpayment Inequity

What would you do if you felt you were over-rewarded? In other words, how would you feel if you were the new employee in our student-worker scenario? Originally, equity theory proposed that over-rewarded individuals would experience guilt and would increase their effort to restore

perceptions of equity. However, research does not provide support for this argument. Instead, it seems that individuals experience less distress as a result of being over-rewarded (Austin & Walster, 1974). It is not hard to imagine that individuals find perceptual ways to deal with a situation like this, such as believing they have more skills and bring more to the situation compared to the referent person. Therefore, research does not support equity theory's predictions with respect to people who are overpaid (Evan & Simmons, 1969).

Individual Differences in Reactions to Inequity

So far, we have assumed that once people feel a situation is inequitable, they will be motivated to react. However, does inequity disturb everyone equally? Researchers have identified a personality trait that explains different reactions to inequity and named this trait as equity sensitivity (Huseman et al., 1987). Equity-sensitive individuals expect to maintain equitable relationships, and they experience distress when they feel they are over-rewarded or under-rewarded. At the same time, there are some individuals who are benevolents, those who give without waiting to receive much in return, and entitlements, who expect to receive substantial compensation for relatively little input. Therefore, the theory is more useful in explaining the behaviour of equity-sensitive individuals, and organizations will need to pay particular attention to how these individuals view their relationships.

Fairness Beyond Equity: Procedural and Interactional Justice

Equity theory looks at perceived fairness as a motivator. However, the way equity theory defines fairness is limited to fairness of rewards. Starting in the 1970s, research on workplace fairness began taking a broader view of justice. Equity theory deals with outcome fairness, and therefore it is considered to be a distributive justice theory. **Distributive justice** refers to the degree to which the outcomes received from the organization are perceived to be fair. Two other types of fairness have been identified: **procedural justice and interactional justice**.

Let's assume that you just found out you are getting a promotion. Clearly, this is an exciting outcome and comes with a pay raise, increased responsibilities, and prestige. If you feel you deserve to be promoted, you would perceive high distributive justice (your getting the promotion is fair). However, you later found out upper management picked your name out of a hat! What would you feel? You might still like the outcome but feel that the decision-making process was unfair. If so, you are describing feelings of procedural justice. **Procedural justice** refers to the degree to which fair decision-making procedures are used to arrive at a decision. People do not care only about reward fairness. They also expect decision-making processes to be fair. In fact, research shows that employees care about the procedural justice of many organizational decisions, including layoffs, employee selection,

surveillance of employees, performance appraisals, and pay decisions (Alge, 2001; Bauer et al., 1998; Kidwell, 1995). People also tend to care more about procedural justice in situations in which they do not get the outcome they feel they deserve (Brockner & Wisenfeld, 1996). If you did not get the promotion and later discovered that management chose the candidate by picking names out of a hat, how would you feel? This may be viewed as adding insult to injury. When people do not get the rewards they want, they tend to hold management responsible if procedures are not fair (Brockner et al., 2007).

Why do employees care about procedural justice? There are three potential reasons (Cropanzano et al., 2007; Tyler, 1994; Tyler et al., 1996). First, people tend to believe that fairness is an end in itself and it is the right thing to do. Second, fair processes guarantee future rewards. If your name was picked out of a hat, you have no control over the process, and there is no guarantee that you will get future promotions. If the procedures are fair, you are more likely to believe that things will work out in the future. Third, fairness communicates that the organization values its employees and cares about their well-being.

Research has identified many ways of achieving procedural justice. For example, giving employees *advance notice* before laying them off, firing them, or disciplining them is perceived as fair (Kidwell, 1995). Advance notice helps employees get ready for the changes facing them or gives them an opportunity to change their behaviour before it is too late. *Allowing employees voice in decision making* is also important (Alge, 2001; Kernan & Hanges, 2002; Lind et al., 1990). When designing a performance-appraisal system or implementing a reorganization, it may be a good idea to ask people for their input because it increases perceptions of fairness. Even when it is not possible to have employees participate, providing *explanations* to employees is helpful in fostering

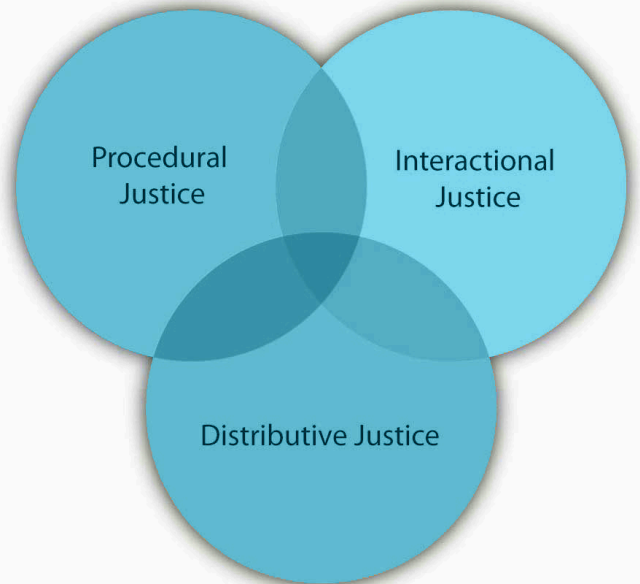


Figure 4.8 Dimensions of Organizational Justice. Image: NSCC. [NSCC Organizational Behaviour, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge]

procedural justice (Schaubroeck et al., 1994). Finally, people expect *consistency* in treatment (Bauer et al., 1998). If one person is given extra time when taking a test while another is not, individuals would perceive decision making as unfair.

Now let's imagine the moment your boss told you that you are getting a promotion. Your manager's exact words were, "Yes, we are giving you the promotion. The job is so simple that we thought even you can handle it." Now what is your reaction? The feeling of unfairness you may now feel is explained by interactional justice. **Interactional justice** refers to the degree to which people are treated with respect, kindness, and dignity in interpersonal interactions. We expect to be treated with dignity by our peers, supervisors, and customers. When the opposite happens, we feel angry. Even when faced with negative outcomes such as a pay cut, being treated with dignity and respect serves as a buffer and alleviates our stress (Greenberg, 2006).



Consider This

Be a Fair Person!

- ***When distributing rewards, make sure you pay attention to different contribution levels of employees.*** Treating everyone equally could be unfair if they participated and contributed at different levels. People who are more qualified, skilled, or those who did more than others expect to receive a greater share of rewards.
- ***Sometimes you may have to disregard people's contributions to distribute certain rewards.*** Some rewards or privileges may be better distributed equally (e.g., health insurance) or based on the particular employee's needs (such as unpaid leave for health reasons).
- ***Pay attention to how you make decisions.*** Before making a decision, ask people to give you their opinions if possible. Explain your decisions to people who are affected by it. Before implementing a change, give people advance notice. Enforce rules consistently among employees.
- ***Pay attention to how you talk to people.*** Treat others the way you want to be treated. Be kind, courteous, and considerate of their feelings.
- ***Remember that justice is in the eye of the beholder.*** Even when you feel you are being fair, others may not feel the same way, and it is *their* perception that counts. Therefore, pay attention to being perceived as fair.
- ***People do not care only about their own justice level.*** They also pay attention to how others are treated as well. Therefore, in addition to paying attention to how specific employees feel, creating

a sense of justice in the entire organization is important.

Source: Adapted from ideas in Colquitt, J. A. (2004). Does the justice of the one interact with the justice of the many? Reactions to procedural justice in teams. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 89(4), 633–646; Cropanzano, R., Bowen, D. E., & Gilliland, S. W. (2007). The management of organizational justice. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 21, 34–48.

Employers would benefit from paying attention to all three types of justice perceptions. In addition to being the right thing to do, paying attention to justice perceptions leads to outcomes companies care about. Injustice is directly harmful to employees' psychological health and well-being and contributes to stress (Greenberg, 2004; Tepper, 2001). High levels of justice create higher levels of employee commitment to organizations, and they are related to higher job performance, higher levels of organizational citizenship (behaviours that are not part of one's job description but help the organization in other ways, such as speaking positively about the company and helping others), and higher levels of customer satisfaction. Conversely, low levels of justice lead to retaliation and support of unionization (Blader, 2007; Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001; Cropanzano et al., 2007; Masterson, 2001; Masterson et al., 2000; Moorman, 1991; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997).

Expectancy Theory

According to **expectancy theory**, individual motivation to put forth more or less effort is determined by a rational calculation in which individuals evaluate their situation (Porter & Lawler, 1968; Vroom, 1964). According to this theory, individuals ask themselves three questions.

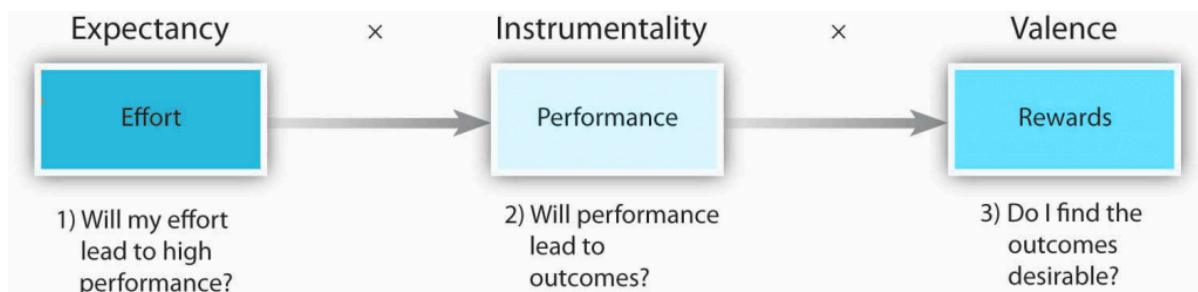


Figure 4.9 Summary of Expectancy Theory. Based on Porter, L. W., & Lawler, E. E. (1968) and Vroom, V. H. (1964). *Work and motivation*. New York: Wiley. Image: NSCC. [NSCC Organizational Behaviour, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge]

The first question is whether the person believes that high levels of effort will lead to outcomes of interest, such as performance or success. This perception is labeled expectancy. For example, do you believe that the effort you put forth in a class is related to performing well in that class? If you do, you are more likely to put forth effort.

The second question is the degree to which the person believes that performance is related to subsequent outcomes, such as rewards. This perception is labeled instrumentality. For example, do you believe that getting a good grade in the class is related to rewards such as getting a better job, or gaining approval from your instructor, or from your friends or parents? If you do, you are more likely to put forth effort.

Finally, individuals are also concerned about the value of the rewards awaiting them as a result of performance. The anticipated satisfaction that will result from an outcome is labeled valence. For example, do you value getting a better job, or gaining approval from your instructor, friends, or parents? If these outcomes are desirable to you, your expectancy and instrumentality is high, and you are more likely to put forth effort.

Expectancy theory is a well-accepted theory that has received a lot of research attention (Heneman & Schwab, 1972; Van Eerde & Thierry, 1996). It is simple and intuitive. Consider the following example. Let's assume that you are working in the concession stand of a movie theater. You have been selling an average of 100 combos of popcorn and soft drinks a day. Now your manager asks you to increase this number to 300 combos a day. Would you be motivated to try to increase your numbers? Here is what you may be thinking:

- **Expectancy:** Can I do it? If I try harder, can I really achieve this number? Is there a link between how hard I try and whether I reach this goal or not? If you feel that you can achieve this number if you try, you have high expectancy.
- **Instrumentality:** What is in it for me? What is going to happen if I reach 300? What are the outcomes that will follow? Are they going to give me a 2% pay raise? Am I going to be named the salesperson of the month? Am I going to receive verbal praise from my manager? If you believe that performing well is related to certain outcomes, instrumentality is high.
- **Valence:** How do I feel about the outcomes in question? Do I feel that a 2% pay raise is desirable? Do I find being named the salesperson of the month attractive? Do I think that being praised by my manager is desirable? If your answers are yes, valence is positive. In contrast, if you find the outcomes undesirable (you definitely do not want to be named the salesperson of the month because your friends would make fun of you), valence is negative.

If your answers to all three questions are affirmative—you feel that you can do it, you will get an outcome if you do it, and you value the reward—you are more likely to be motivated to put forth more effort toward selling more combos.

As a manager, how can you motivate employees? In fact, managers can influence all three perceptions (Cook, 1980).

Influencing Expectancy Perceptions

Employees may not believe that their effort leads to high performance for a multitude of reasons. First, they may not have the skills, knowledge, or abilities to successfully perform their jobs. The

answer to this problem may be training employees or hiring people who are qualified for the jobs in question. Second, low levels of expectancy may be because employees may feel that something other than effort predicts performance, such as political behaviours on the part of employees. If employees believe that the work environment is not conducive to performing well (resources are lacking or roles are unclear), expectancy will also suffer. Therefore, clearing the path to performance and creating an environment in which employees do not feel restricted will be helpful. Finally, some employees may perceive little connection between their effort and performance level because they have an external locus of control, low self-esteem, or other personality traits that condition them to believe that their effort will not make a difference. In such cases, providing positive feedback and encouragement may help motivate employees.

Influencing Instrumentality Perceptions

Showing employees that their performance is rewarded is going to increase instrumentality perceptions. Therefore, the first step in influencing instrumentality is to connect pay and other rewards to performance using bonuses, award systems, and merit pay. However, this is not always sufficient, because people may not be aware of some of the rewards awaiting high performers. Publicizing any contests or award programs is needed to bring rewards to the awareness of employees. It is also important to highlight that performance, not something else, is being rewarded. For example, if a company has an employee of the month award that is rotated among employees, employees are unlikely to believe that performance is being rewarded. This type of meritless reward system may actually hamper the motivation of the highest performing employees by eroding instrumentality.

Influencing Valence

Employees are more likely to be motivated if they find the reward to be attractive. This process involves managers finding what their employees value. Desirable rewards tend to be fair and satisfy different employees' diverging needs. Ensuring high valence involves getting to know a company's employees. Talking to employees and surveying them about what rewards they find valuable are some methods to gain understanding. Finally, giving employees a choice between multiple rewards may be a good idea to increase valence.

Table 4.3: Managerial Influence

Ways in Which Managers Can Influence Expectancy, Instrumentality, and Valence

Expectancy

Make sure employees have proper skills, abilities, and knowledge

Ensure that the environment facilitates performance

Provide encouragement to make people believe that their effort makes a difference

Instrumentality

Reward employee performance

Inform people in advance about the rewards

Try to eliminate non-performance influence over rewards

Valence

Find rewards that are desirable to employees

Make sure that the rewards are viewed as fair

Give employees choice over rewards

Reinforcement Theory

Reinforcement theory is based on the work of Ivan Pavlov on behavioural conditioning and the later work of B. F. Skinner on operant conditioning (Skinner, 1953). According to **reinforcement theory**, behaviour is a function of its outcomes. Imagine that even though no one asked you to, you stayed late and drafted a report. When the manager found out, she was ecstatic and took you out to lunch and thanked you genuinely. The consequences following your good deed were favorable, and therefore you are more likely to demonstrate similar behaviours in the future. In other words, your taking initiative was reinforced. Instead, if your manager had said nothing about it and everyone ignored the sacrifice you made, you are less likely to demonstrate similar behaviours in the future.

Reinforcement theory is based on a simple idea that may be viewed as common sense. Beginning at infancy we learn through reinforcement. If you have observed a small child discovering the environment, you will see reinforcement theory in action. When the child discovers manipulating a faucet leads to water coming out and finds this outcome pleasant, he is more likely to repeat the behaviour. If he burns his hand while playing with hot water, the child is likely to stay away from the faucet in the future.

Despite the simplicity of reinforcement, how many times have you seen positive behaviour ignored, or worse, negative behaviour rewarded? In many organizations, this is a familiar scenario. People go above and beyond the call of duty, yet their actions are ignored or criticized. People with disruptive habits may receive no punishments because the manager is afraid of the reaction the person will give when confronted. Problem employees may even receive rewards such as promotions so they will be transferred to a different location and become someone else's problem. Moreover, it is common for people to be rewarded for the wrong kind of behaviour. Steven Kerr has labeled this phenomenon "the folly of rewarding A while hoping for B" (Kerr, 1995). For example, a company may make public statements about the importance of quality. Yet, if they choose to reward shipments on time regardless of the amount of defects contained in the shipments, employees are more likely to ignore quality and focus on hurrying the delivery process. Because people learn to repeat their behaviours based on the consequences following their prior activities, managers will need to systematically examine the consequences of employee behaviour and make interventions when needed. We will learn more about reinforcement and theories of learning in Chapter 5.



Let's Review

- **Process-based theories use** the mental processes of employees as the key to understanding employee motivation.
- **According to equity theory**, employees are demotivated when they view reward distribution as unfair. Perceptions of fairness are shaped by the comparisons they make between their inputs and outcomes with respect to a referent's inputs and outcomes. Following equity theory, research identified two other types of fairness (procedural and interactional) that also affect worker reactions and motivation.
- **According to expectancy theory**, employees are motivated when they believe that their effort will lead to high performance (expectancy), when they believe that their performance will lead to outcomes (instrumentality), and when they find the outcomes following performance to be desirable (valence).
- **Reinforcement theory argues that** behaviour is a function of its consequences. By properly tying rewards to positive behaviours, eliminating rewards following negative behaviours, and punishing negative behaviours, leaders can increase the frequency of desired behaviours. These theories are particularly useful in designing reward systems within a company.



Exercises

1. Your manager tells you that the best way of ensuring fairness in reward distribution is to keep the pay a secret. How would you respond to this assertion?
2. When distributing bonuses or pay, how would you ensure perceptions of fairness?
3. What are the differences between procedural, interactional, and distributive justice? List ways in

which you could increase each of these justice perceptions.

4. Using examples, explain the concepts of expectancy, instrumentality, and valence.
5. Some practitioners and researchers consider OB Mod unethical because it may be viewed as a way of manipulation. What would be your reaction to such a criticism?

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4.4 Influencing Motivation at Work

Do you know why you do the things you do? **The emotional intelligence skill of self-awareness is the key to understanding your own motivations.** It isn't until we understand our own emotions that we can begin to understand what we need to do to motivate ourselves personally and professionally.

Of course, the more motivated we are, the more likely we are to experience career success. Most, if not all, managers want to hire and promote people who show extensive motivation in their job. This is impossible to do if we do not first identify what actually motivates us as individuals. If you are motivated by intrinsic rewards, such as feeling good about your job, you are more likely to be better at your job because you enjoy it! Not only will we be better at our job if we like it, but it is highly likely we will be happier. **When we are happier we tend to show better human relations skills**, and this happiness can come in part from understanding our own motivations and making sure we choose a career path that matches with our motivations.

Theories on Job Dissatisfaction

There are a number of theories that attempt to describe what makes a satisfied employee versus a dissatisfied employee. Knowing what motivates us—and what doesn't—is the key to choosing the right career path. It may be surprising, but much of what makes us satisfied or dissatisfied at work has little to do with money.

Progression of Job Withdrawal

Have you ever felt unhappy at a job? If you have, consider how you went through the process of being unhappy—because for most of us, we start out happy but then gradually become unhappy. One of the basic theories is the progression of job withdrawal theory, developed by Dan Farrell and James Petersen. It says that people develop a set of behaviors in order to avoid their work situation. These behaviors include behavior change, physical withdrawal, and psychological withdrawal.

Within the behavior change area, an employee will first try to change the situation that is causing the dissatisfaction. For example, if the employee is unhappy with the management style, he or she might consider asking for a department move. In the physical withdrawal phase, the employee does one of the following:

- Leaves the job

- Takes an internal transfer
- Starts to become absent or tardy

If an employee is unable to leave the job situation, he or she will experience psychological withdrawal. They will become disengaged and may show less job involvement and commitment to the organization, which can create large costs to the organization, such as dissatisfied customers, not to mention the cost to employee and his or her unhappiness in the job.

Often, our process of job withdrawal has to do with our lack of motivation.



Figure 4.10 Process of Job Withdrawal. Image: Saylor Academy. [Human Relations, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Color altered from original. [click to enlarge]

Hawthorne Studies

Between 1927 and 1932, a series of experiments were conducted by Elton Mayo in the Western Electric Hawthorne Works company in Illinois. Mayo developed these experiments to see how the physical and environmental factors of the workplace, such as lighting and break times, would affect employee motivation.

This was some of the first research performed that looked at human motivation at work. His results

were surprising, as he found that no matter which experiments were performed, worker output improved. His conclusion and explanation for this was the simple fact the workers were happy to receive attention from researchers who expressed interest in them. As a result, these experiments, scheduled to last one year, extended to five years to increase the knowledge base about human motivation.

The implication of this research applies to us as employees, even today. It tells us that our supervisors and managers should try to do things that make us feel valued. If not, we need to find ways to feel we add value to the organization.

Strategies Used to Increase Motivation

As we have addressed so far in this chapter, human motivation is an important aspect to understanding what makes us happy or unhappy at our jobs. Companies implement many strategies to keep us motivated at work. This section will discuss some of those specific strategies.

Salaries and Benefits

As we know from our earlier section, our paycheck can be a motivator to a certain extent. It is important to note that when we look at compensation, it is much more than only pay but things such as health benefits and paid time off.

Some of the considerations companies use surrounding pay can include the following:

- **Instituting a standard process.** Many organizations do not have set pay plans, which can result in unfairness when onboarding (the process of bringing someone “on board” with the company, including discussion and negotiation of compensation) or offering pay increases. Companies should make sure the process for receiving pay raises is fair and defensible, so as not to appear to be discriminatory.
- **A pay communication strategy.** Many companies work hard to make sure the fair pay process is communicated to employees. Transparency in the process of how raises are given and then communicated can help companies retain good employees (LeBlanc Group, 2010)
- **Paid time off (PTO).** Companies pay us not only with our salary but also from the time off we receive. Paid holidays and vacation time might be an example.

Training and Development

To meet our higher-level needs, we need to experience self-growth. As a result, many companies and managers offer training programs within the organization and pay for employees to attend career skill seminars and programs. It is a great idea to take advantage of these types of self-growth

opportunities in your current or future organization. In addition, many companies offer tuition reimbursement programs to help you earn a degree. Dick's Drive-In, a local fast food restaurant in Seattle, Washington, offers \$28,000 in scholarships over four years to employees working twenty hours per week (Dick's Drive-In, 2022). In a high turnover industry, Dick's Drive-In boasts one of the highest employee retention rates around.

Performance Appraisals

The **performance appraisal** is a formalized process to assess how well an employee does his or her job. The effectiveness of this process can contribute to employee retention, in that we can gain constructive feedback on our job performance, and it can be an opportunity for the manager to work with us to set goals within the organization. This process can help ensure our upper-level self-actualization needs are met, but it also can address some of the motivational factors discussed by Herzberg, such as achievement, recognition, and responsibility.

Succession Planning

Succession planning is a process of identifying and developing internal people who have the potential for filling positions. As we know, many people leave organizations because they do not see career growth or potential. Companies can combat this by having a clear career path for us to follow. For example, perhaps you start as a sales associate, become assistant manager, and then become manager. Proper succession planning shows what we must accomplish at each level in order to attain a higher-level position. This type of clear career path can help with our motivation at work. If your current or future organization does not have a succession plan, consider speaking with your manager about your own career path and potential. The performance appraisal process might be a good time to have this discussion.

Flextime, Telecommuting, and Sabbaticals

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many employees transitioned to remote work to comply with public health protocols. Moving forward, a flexible and remote work policy has been cited as an important strategy for employee retention (Wilson, 2021). According to a Salary.com survey, the ability to work from home and flexible work schedules are benefits that would entice us to stay in our job. In addition, some companies offer paid sabbaticals. The ability to implement this type of retention strategy might be difficult, depending on the type of business. For example, a retailer may not be able to implement this, since the sales associate must be in the store to assist customers. However, for many professions, it is a viable option, worth including in the retention plan and part of work-life balance.

Management Training

In a survey by the staffing firm, Robert Half in 2019 showed that 39% of Canadians interviewed for this study left their job because of behaviour from their managers. Micromanaging and taking a “hands-off” approach were common sources of frustration. Too much or too little involvement left employees feeling underappreciated and dissatisfied. Training of managers to be better communicators and motivators is a way to increase employee satisfaction and retention.

Conflict Management and Fairness

Perceptions on fairness and how organizations handle conflict can be a contributing factor to our motivation at work. Outcome fairness refers to the judgment that we make with respect to the outcomes we receive versus the outcomes received by others with whom we associate with. When we are deciding if something is fair, we will likely look at procedural justice, or the process used to determine the outcomes received. There are six main areas we use to determine the outcome fairness of a conflict:

- **Consistency.** We will determine if the procedures are applied consistently to other persons and throughout periods of time.
- **Bias suppression.** We perceive the person making the decision does not have bias or vested interest in the outcome.
- **Information accuracy.** The decision made is based on correct information.
- **Correctability.** The decision is able to be appealed and mistakes in the decision process can be corrected.
- **Representativeness.** We feel the concerns of all stakeholders involved have been taken into account.
- **Ethicality.** The decision is in line with moral societal standards.

For example, let's suppose JoAnn just received a bonus and recognition at the company party for her contributions to an important company project. However, you might compare your inputs and outputs and determine it was unfair that JoAnn was recognized because you had worked on bigger projects and not received the same recognition or bonus. As you know from the last section, this type of unfairness can result in being unmotivated at work. Excellent communication with your manager when dealing with these types of situations would be imperative.

Job Design, Job Enlargement, and Empowerment

As we have discussed previously, one of the reasons for job dissatisfaction is the job itself. Ensuring our skills set and what we enjoy doing matches with the job is important. Some companies will use a change in job design, enlarge the job or empower employees to motivate them.

Job enrichment means to enhance a job by adding more meaningful tasks to make our work more rewarding. For example, if we as retail salespersons are good at creating eye-catching displays, allowing us to practice these skills and assignment of tasks around this could be considered job enrichment. Job enrichment can fulfill our higher level of human needs while creating job satisfaction at the same time. In fact, research in this area by Richard Hackman and Greg Oldham found that we, as employees, need the following to achieve job satisfaction:

- Skill variety, or many different activities as part of the job
- Task identity, or being able to complete one task from beginning to end
- Task significance, or the degree to which the job has impact on others, internally or externally
- Autonomy, or freedom to make decisions within the job
- Feedback, or clear information about performance

In addition, **job enlargement**, defined as the adding of new challenges or responsibilities to a current job, can create job satisfaction. Assigning us to a special project or task is an example of job enlargement.

Employee empowerment involves management allowing us to make decisions and act upon those decisions, with the support of the organization. When we are not micromanaged and have the power to determine the sequence of our own work day, we tend to be more satisfied than those employees who are not empowered. Empowerment can include the following:

- Encourage innovation or new ways of doing things.
- Make sure we, as employees, have the information we need to do our jobs; for example, we are not dependent on managers for information in decision making.
- Management styles that allow for participation, feedback, and ideas from employees.

Pay-for-Performance Strategies

Some organizations have a pay-for-performance strategy, which means that we are rewarded for meeting preset objectives within the organization. For example, in a merit-based pay system, we might be rewarded for meeting or exceeding performance during a given time period. Rather than a set pay increase every year, the increase is based on performance. Some organizations offer bonuses to employees for meeting objectives, while some organizations offer team incentive pay if a team achieves a specific, predetermined outcome.

Gain sharing, different from profit sharing, focuses on improvement of productivity within the organization. For example, the city of Loveland in Colorado implemented a gain-sharing program that defined three criteria that needed to be met for employees to be given extra compensation. The city revenues had to exceed expenses, expenses had to be equal to or less than the previous year's expenses, and a citizen satisfaction survey had to meet minimum requirements.

As we have already addressed, pay isn't everything, but it certainly can be an important part of feeling motivated in our jobs.



Let's Focus

Other Ways to Motivate Employees

According to *Fortune's* "100 Best Companies to Work For" (CNN Money, 2011) things that companies do to motivate us may be more unusual. For example, the list includes the following:

- On-site daycare or daycare assistance
- Gym memberships or on-site gyms
- Concierge service to assist in party planning or dog grooming, for example
- On-site dry cleaning drop-off and pickup
- Car care, such as oil changes, on-site once a week
- On-site doggie daycare
- On-site yoga or other fitness classes
- "Summer Fridays," when all employees work half days on Fridays during the summer
- Various support groups for cancer survivors, weight loss, or support in caring for aging parents
- On-site life coaches
- Peer-to-peer employee recognition programs
- Management recognition programs

While some of these options may not be options in the companies we work for, the important thing to remember is often our own motivation comes from us internally. As a result, we need to be aware of our changing motivations and ask for those things that could make us more motivated at work.



Let's Review

- **Salary and benefits are a major component of what employers do to motivate us.** Consistent pay systems and transparent processes are important considerations.
- **Many companies offer paid tuition programs, reimbursement programs, and in-house training** to increase our skills and knowledge.
- **Performance appraisals provide an avenue for feedback and goal setting.** They also allow for us to be recognized for our contributions.
- **Succession plans allow us, as employees, the ability to see how we can continue our career with the organization,** and they clearly detail what we need to do to achieve career growth.
- **Flextime and telecommuting are options some companies use as motivators.** These types of plans allow us flexibility when developing our schedule and some control of our work. Some companies also offer paid or unpaid sabbaticals to pursue personal interests after a certain number of years with the company.
- **Since one of the reasons people are dissatisfied at their job is because of the relationship with their manager, many companies require management training and communication training** to ensure managers are able to establish good relationships with employees.
- **Some companies may change the job through *empowerment* or *job enlargement*** to help grow our skills.
- **Other, more unique ways companies try to retain employees might include offering services to make the employee's life easier,** such as dry cleaning, daycare services, or on-site yoga classes.



Case Study

See Appendix A – [Motivating Employees: The Case of Canada's Shopify](#)



Exercise

1. Research two different companies you might be interested in working for. When reviewing their list of benefits, which ones are offered that might motivate you to stay with the organization?

References

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4.5 Key Takeaways, Knowledge Check and Key Terms



Key Takeaways

In this chapter, we learned that:

- **Motivation can be understood in terms of the direction and intensity** of our efforts.
- **Our performance in the workplace can be understood by examining** not only **motivation**, but also **ability** and **environmental** factors.
- **Several theories view motivated behaviour as attempts to satisfy needs.** Based on this approach, managers would benefit from understanding what people need so that the actions of employees can be understood and managed.
- **Other theories explain motivated behaviour using the cognitive processes of employees.** Employees respond to unfairness in their environment, they learn from the consequences of their actions and repeat the behaviours that lead to positive results, and they are motivated to exert effort if they see their actions will lead to outcomes that would get them desired rewards.
- **None of these theories are complete on their own, but each theory provides us with a framework we can use to analyze, interpret, and manage employee behaviours** in the workplace and design strategies to increase motivation in the workplace.
- **A variety of strategies are used in the workplace to increase motivation** including pay, training, job design, empowerment, and “perks”.



Knowledge Checks

Review your understanding of this chapter's key concepts by taking the interactive quiz below.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationpsychology/?p=406#h5p-10>



Key Terms

Key terms from this chapter include:

- **Motivation**
- **Maslows' heirarchy**
- **ERG theory**
- **Two-factor theory**
- **Hygiene factors and motivators**
- **Acquired needs theory**
- **Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)**
- **Goal theory**
- **Management by objective**

- Equity theory
- Inputs
- Outcomes
- Referent
- Distributive justice
- Procedural justice
- Interactional justice
- Expectancy theory
- Expectancy
- Instrumentality
- Valence
- Reinforcement theory
- Job enrichment
- Employee empowerment

CHAPTER 5: LEARNING



Learning Objectives

In this chapter, we will:

1. **Define** learning.
2. **Describe** different theories of learning, including classical conditioning, operant conditioning, and social learning.
3. **Explain** ways in which learning theories influence behaviour management in the workplace.

In this chapter, students will learn learning using a traditional behavioural psychology lens. We will unpack well-known theories of learning, including principles of classical and operant conditioning. We will also explore social learning theory. Finally, we will discuss ways in which behavioural principles can help us to understand and influence behaviour in the workplace.

5.1 Learning

Learning may be defined, for our purposes, as a relatively permanent change in behavior that occurs as a result of experience.

That is, a person is said to have learned something when they consistently exhibit a new behavior over time. Several aspects of this definition are noteworthy (Spielman et al., 2015). First, learning involves a change in an attitude or behavior. This change does not necessarily have to be an improvement, however, and can include such things as learning bad habits or forming prejudices. In order for learning to occur, the change that takes place must be relatively permanent. So changes in behavior that result from fatigue or temporary adaptation to a unique situation would not be considered examples of learning. Next, learning typically involves some form of practice or experience. For example, the change that results from physical maturation, as when a baby develops the physical strength to walk, is in itself not considered learning. Third, this practice or experience must be reinforced over time for learning to take place. Where reinforcement does not follow practice or experience, the behavior will eventually diminish and disappear (“extinction”). Finally, learning is an inferred process; we cannot observe learning directly. Instead, we must infer the existence of learning from observing changes in overt behavior.

We can best understand the learning process by looking at four stages in the development of research on learning (see Figure 5.1). Scientific interest in learning dates from the early experiments of Pavlov and others around the turn of the century. The focus of this research was on stimulus-response relationships and the environmental determinants of observable behaviors. This was followed by the discovery of the law of effect, experiments in operant conditioning, and, finally, the formulation of social learning theory. In this chapter, we will learn about each of these approaches to learning and how principles of learning can be used to explain and change behaviour in the workplace.

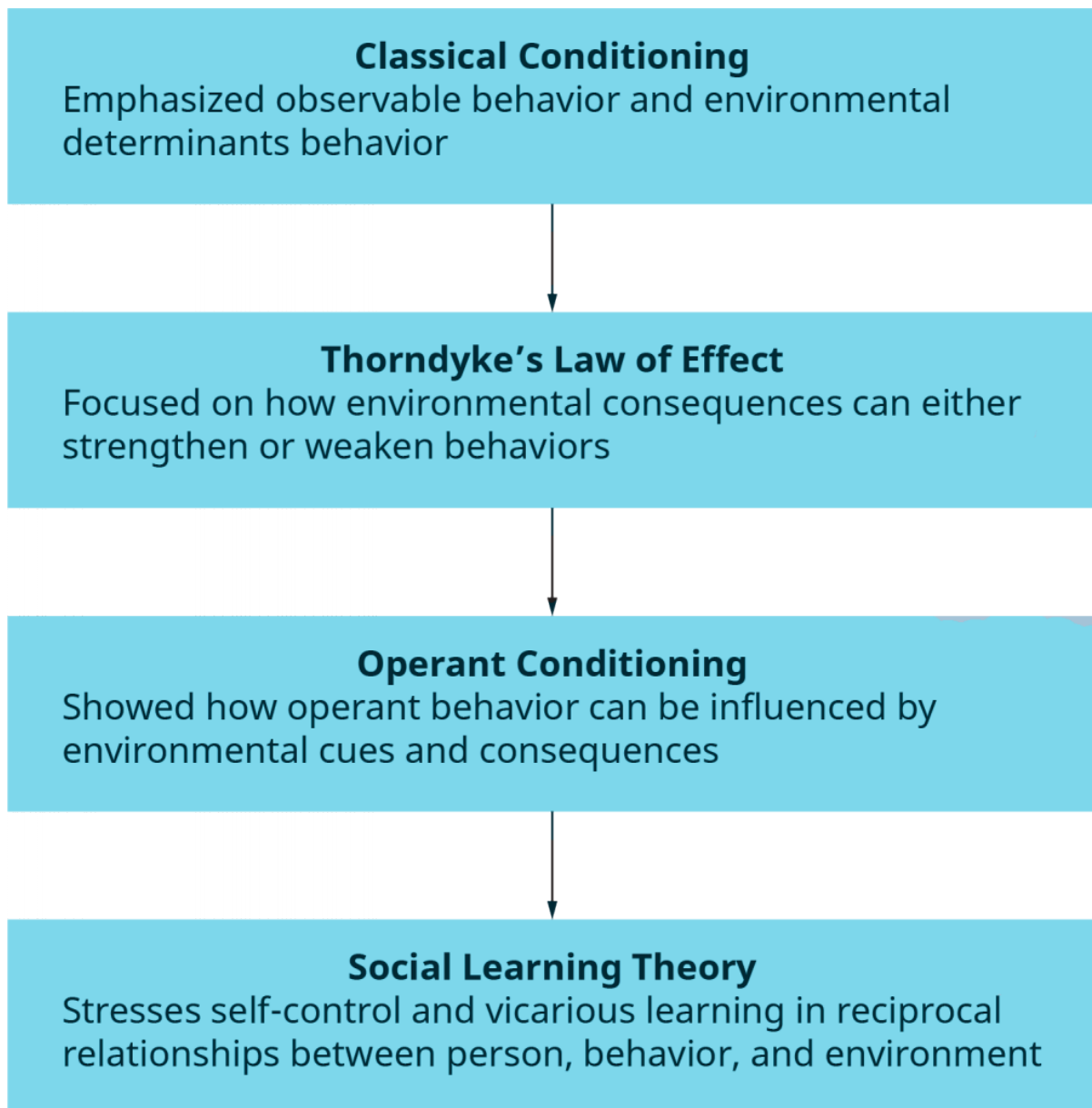


Figure 5.1 The Development of Modern Behavioral Learning Theory, Image: Rice University. [Organizational Behavior, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Color altered from original. [click to enlarge]

References

This section is adapted from:

[4.2 Basic Models of Learning in Organizational Behaviour](#) in Organizational Behaviour, OpenStax, Rice University under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#).

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5.2 Classical Conditioning

Although Ivan Pavlov won a Nobel Prize for studying digestion, he is much more famous for something else: working with a dog, a bell, and a bowl of saliva. Many people are familiar with the classic study of “Pavlov’s dog,” but rarely do they understand the significance of its discovery.

Although classical conditioning may seem “old” or “too simple” a theory, it is still widely studied today for at least two reasons: First, it is a straightforward test of associative learning that can be used to study other, more complex behaviors. Second, because classical conditioning is always occurring in our lives, its effects on behavior have important implications for understanding normal and disordered behavior in humans. In fact, Pavlov’s work helps explain why some people get anxious just looking at a crowded bus, why the sound of a morning alarm is so hated, and even why we swear off certain foods we’ve only tried once. Classical (or Pavlovian) conditioning is one of the fundamental ways we learn about the world around us. But it is far more than just a theory of learning; it is also arguably a theory of identity. For, once you understand classical conditioning, you’ll recognize that your favorite music, clothes, even political candidate, might all be a result of the same process that makes a dog drool at the sound of bell.

Classical conditioning is the process whereby a stimulus-response (S-R) bond is developed between a conditioned stimulus and a **conditioned response** through the repeated linking of a conditioned stimulus with an unconditioned stimulus. This process is shown in Figure 5.1 below. The classic example of Pavlov’s experiments illustrates the process. Pavlov was initially interested in the digestive processes of dogs but noticed that the dogs started to salivate at the first signal of approaching food. On the basis of this discovery, he shifted his attention to the question of whether animals could be trained to draw a causal relationship between previously unconnected factors. Specifically, using the dogs as subjects, he examined the extent to which the dogs could learn to associate the ringing of a bell with the act of salivation. The experiment began with unlearned, or *unconditioned*, stimulus-response relationships. When a dog was presented with meat (**unconditioned stimulus**), the dog salivated (unconditioned response). No learning was necessary here, as this relationship represented a natural physiological process.

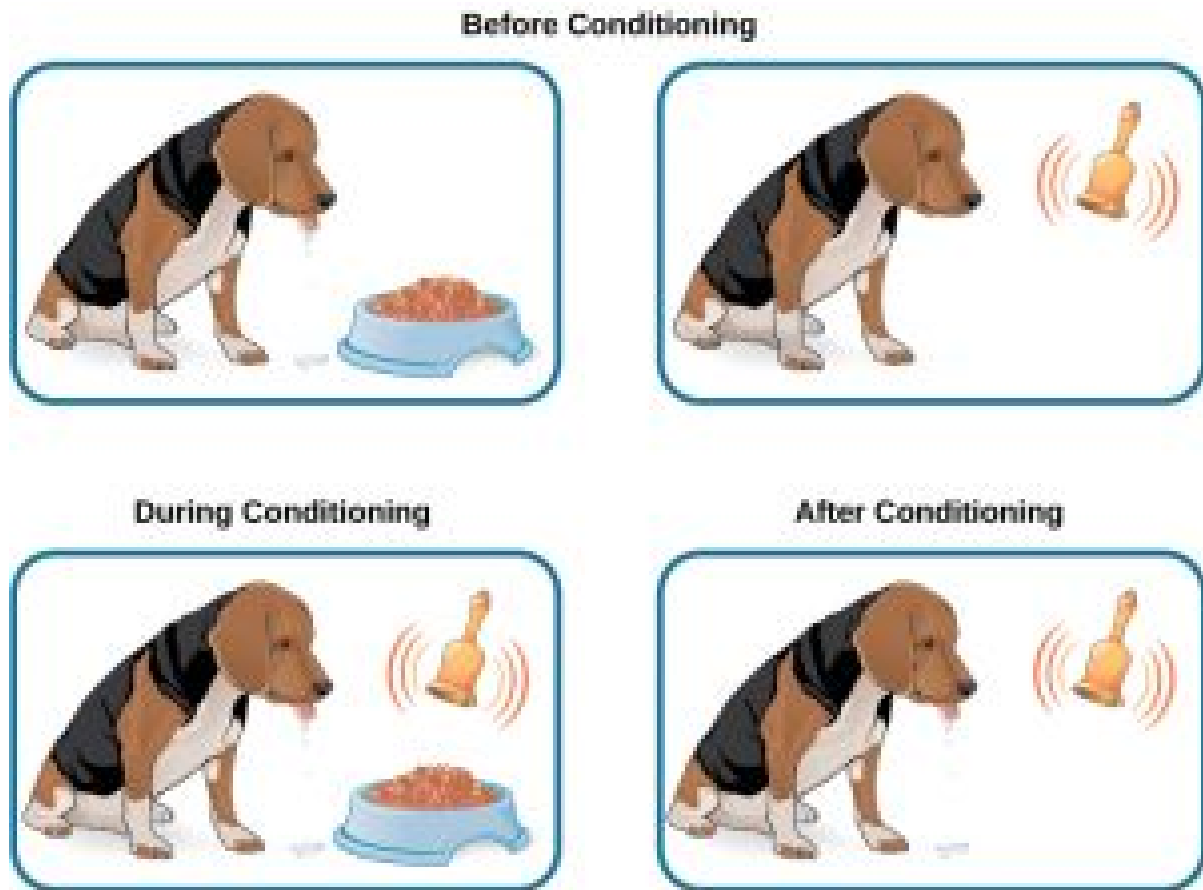


Figure 5.1 Before conditioning, an unconditioned stimulus (food) produces an unconditioned response (salivation), and a neutral stimulus (bell) does not produce a response. During conditioning, the unconditioned stimulus (food) is presented repeatedly just after the presentation of the neutral stimulus (bell). After conditioning, the neutral stimulus alone produces a conditioned response (salivation), thus becoming a conditioned stimulus. Image: A project created by ISKME. [Classical Conditioning, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). [click to enlarge]

Next, Pavlov paired the unconditioned stimulus (meat) with a neutral one (the ringing of a bell). Normally, the ringing of the bell by itself would not be expected to elicit salivation. However, over time, a learned linkage developed for the dog between the bell and meat, ultimately resulting in an S-R bond between the conditioned stimulus (the bell) and the response (salivation) without the presence of the unconditioned stimulus (the meat). Evidence emerged that learning had occurred and that this learning resulted from conditioning the dogs to associate two normally unrelated objects, the bell and the meat.

Another example you are probably very familiar with involves your alarm clock. If you're like most people, waking up early usually makes you unhappy. In this case, waking up early (US) produces a natural sensation of grumpiness (UR). Rather than waking up early on your own, though, you likely have an alarm clock that plays a tone to wake you. Before setting your alarm to that particular tone, let's imagine you had neutral feelings about it (i.e., the tone had no prior meaning for you). However, now that you use it to wake up every morning, you psychologically "pair" that tone (CS) with your

feelings of grumpiness in the morning (UR). After enough pairings, this tone (CS) will automatically produce your natural response of grumpiness (CR). Thus, this linkage between the unconditioned stimulus (US; waking up early) and the conditioned stimulus (CS; the tone) is so strong that the unconditioned response (UR; being grumpy) will become a conditioned response (CR; e.g., hearing the tone at any point in the day—whether waking up or walking down the street—will make you grumpy). Modern studies of classical conditioning use a very wide range of CSs and USs and measure a wide range of conditioned responses.

Although Pavlov's experiments are widely cited as evidence of the existence of classical conditioning, it is necessary from the perspective of organizational behavior to ask how this process relates to people at work. Ivancevich et al. (1977) provide one such work-related example of classical conditioning:

An illustration of classical conditioning in a work setting would be an airplane pilot learning how to use a newly installed warning system. In this case the behavior to be learned is to respond to a warning light that indicates that the plane has dropped below a critical altitude on an assigned glide path. The proper response is to increase the plane's altitude. The pilot already knows how to appropriately respond to the trainer's warning to increase altitude (in this case we would say the trainer's warning is an unconditioned stimulus and the corrective action of increasing altitude is an **unconditioned response**). The training session consists of the trainer warning the pilot to increase altitude every time the warning light goes on. Through repeated pairings of the warning light with the trainer's warning, the pilot eventually learns to adjust the plane's altitude in response to the warning light even though the trainer is not present. Again, the unit of learning is a new S-R connection, or habit (Ivancevich et al., 1977).

Although classical conditioning clearly has applications to work situations, particularly in the area of training and development, it has been criticized as explaining only a limited part of total human learning. Psychologist B. F. Skinner (1963) argues that classical conditioning focuses on respondent, or reflexive, behaviors; that is, it concentrates on explaining largely involuntary responses that result from stimuli. More complex learning cannot be explained solely by classical conditioning. As an alternative explanation, Skinner and others have proposed the operant conditioning model of learning which will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

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This section is adapted from:

[4.1 Basic Models of Learning](#) in [Organizational Behaviour](#), OpenStax and is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#), unless otherwise noted.

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5.3 Operant Conditioning

Operant conditioning theory is the simplest of the motivation theories. It basically states that people will do those things for which they are rewarded and will avoid doing things for which they are punished. This premise is based on Thorndyke's "**law of effect**," which states that behavior that is positively reinforced tends to be repeated, whereas behavior that is not reinforced will tend not to be repeated. However, if this were the sum total of conditioning theory, we would not be discussing it here. Operant conditioning theory does offer greater insights than "reward what you want and punish what you don't," and knowledge of its principles can lead to effective management practices.

Operant conditioning focuses on the learning of voluntary behaviors (Skinner, 1953; Skinner, 1959; Skinner, 1971). The term operant conditioning indicates that learning results from our "operating on" the environment. After we "operate on the environment" (that is, behave in a certain fashion), consequences result. These consequences determine the likelihood of similar behavior in the future. Learning occurs because we do something to the environment. The environment then reacts to our action, and our subsequent behavior is influenced by this reaction.

In this Section:

- [The Basic Operant Model](#)
- [Reinforcement Interventions](#)
- [Schedules of Reinforcement](#)

The Basic Operant Model

According to operant conditioning theory, we learn to behave in a particular fashion because of consequences that resulted from our past behaviors (Skinner, 1953). The learning process involves three distinct steps (see **Table 5.1**). The first step involves a *stimulus* (S). The stimulus is any situation or event we perceive that we then respond to. A homework assignment is a stimulus. The second step involves a *response* (R), that is, any behavior or action we take in reaction to the stimulus. Staying up late to get your homework assignment in on time is a response. (We use the words response and behavior interchangeably here.) Finally, a *consequence* (C) is any event that follows our response and that makes the response more or less likely to occur in the future. If Colleen Sullivan receives praise from her professor for working hard, and if getting that praise is a pleasurable event, then it is likely that Colleen will work hard again in the future. If, on the other hand, the professor ignores or criticizes Colleen's response (working hard), this consequence is likely to make

Colleen avoid working hard in the future. It is the experienced consequence (positive or negative) that influences whether a response will be repeated the next time the stimulus is presented.

General Operant Model: Stimulus → Response → Consequence

Reinforcement Interventions

Reinforcement theory can be applied to modify employee behaviour.

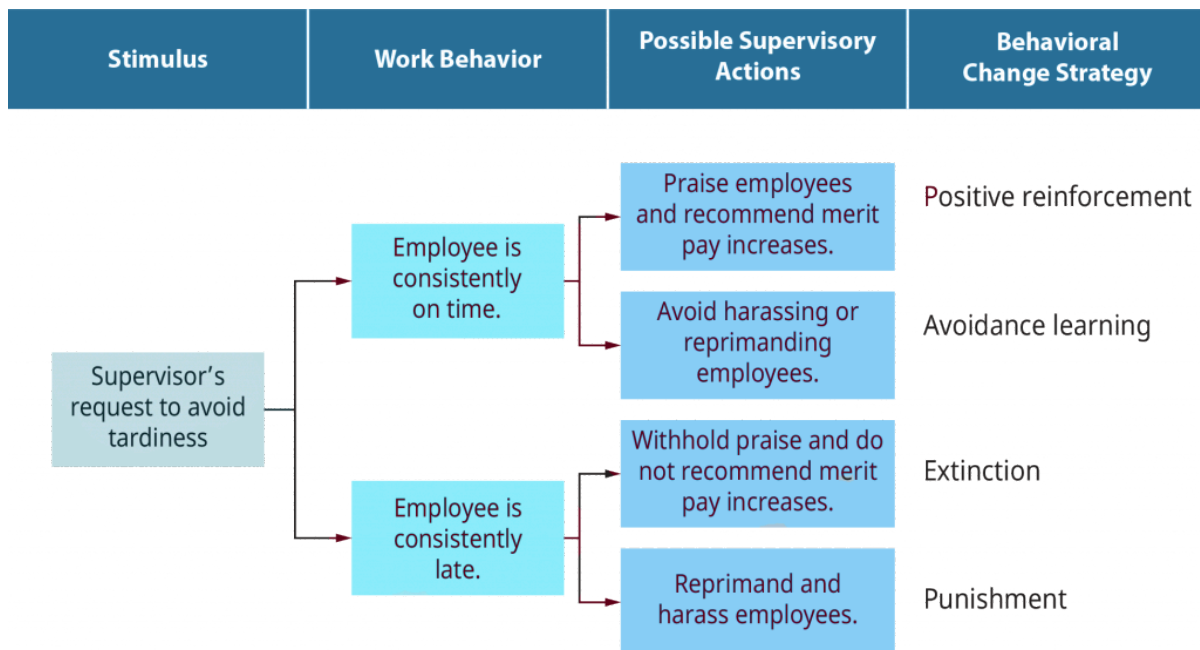


Figure 5.2 Strategies for Behavioural Change. Image: Rice University. [Organizational Behavior, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Color altered from original. [click to enlarge]

Positive reinforcement is a method of increasing the desired behaviour (Beatty & Schneier, 1975). Positive reinforcement involves making sure that behaviour is met with positive consequences. For example, praising an employee for treating a customer respectfully is an example of positive reinforcement. If the praise immediately follows the positive behaviour, the employee will see a link between the behaviour and positive consequences and will be motivated to repeat similar behaviours.

Negative reinforcement is also used to increase the desired behaviour. Negative reinforcement involves removal of unpleasant outcomes once desired behaviour is demonstrated. Nagging an employee to complete a report is an example of negative reinforcement. The negative stimulus in the environment will remain present until positive behaviour is demonstrated. The problem with

negative reinforcement is that the negative stimulus may lead to unexpected behaviours and may fail to stimulate the desired behaviour. For example, the person may start avoiding the manager to avoid being nagged.

Extinction is used to decrease the frequency of negative behaviours. Extinction is the removal of rewards following negative behaviour. Sometimes, negative behaviours are demonstrated because they are being inadvertently rewarded. For example, it has been shown that when people are rewarded for their unethical behaviours, they tend to demonstrate higher levels of unethical behaviours (Harvey & Sims, 1978). Thus, when the rewards following unwanted behaviours are removed, the frequency of future negative behaviours may be reduced. For example, if a coworker is forwarding unsolicited e-mail messages containing jokes, commenting and laughing at these jokes may be encouraging the person to keep forwarding these messages. Completely ignoring such messages may reduce their frequency.

Punishment is another method of reducing the frequency of undesirable behaviours. Punishment involves presenting negative consequences following unwanted behaviours. Giving an employee a warning for consistently being late to work is an example of punishment.

The most frequently used punishments (along with the most frequently used rewards) are shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Frequently Used Rewards and Punishments

Rewards	Punishments
Pay raise	Oral reprimands
Bonus	Written reprimands
Promotion	Ostracism
Praise and recognition	Criticism from superiors
Awards	Suspension
Self-recognition	Demotion
Sense of accomplishment	Reduced authority
Increased responsibility	Undesired transfer
Time off	Termination

[Source](#)

The use of punishment is indeed one of the most controversial issues of behavior change strategies. Although punishment can have positive work outcomes—especially if it is administered in an impersonal way and as soon as possible after the transgression—negative repercussions can also result when employees either resent the action or feel they are being treated unfairly. These negative outcomes from punishment are shown in Figure 5.3. Thus, although punishment represents a potent force in corrective learning, its use must be carefully considered and implemented. In

general, for punishment to be effective the punishment should “fit the crime” in severity, should be given in private, and should be explained to the employee.

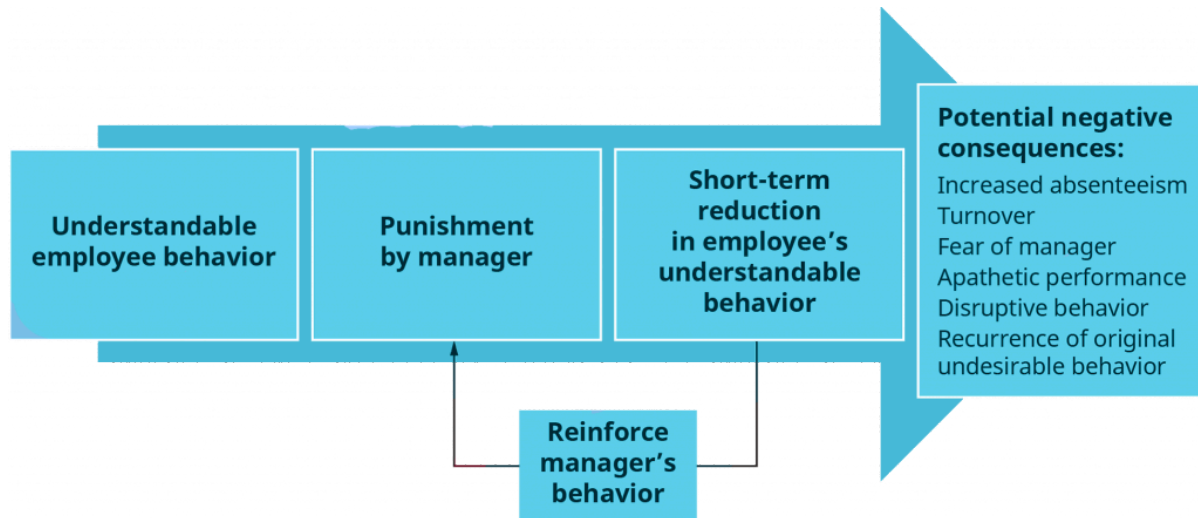


Figure 5.3 Potential Negative Consequences of Punishment. Image: Rice University. [Organizational Behavior, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Color altered from original. [click to enlarge]



Let's Focus

Be Effective in Your Use of Discipline

As a manager, sometimes you may have to discipline an employee to eliminate unwanted behaviour. Here are some tips to make this process more effective.

- **Consider whether punishment is the most effective way to modify behaviour.** Sometimes catching people in the act of doing good things and praising or rewarding them is preferable to punishing negative behaviour. Instead of criticizing them for being late, consider praising them when they are on time. Carrots may be more effective than sticks. You can also make the behaviour extinct by removing any rewards that follow undesirable behaviour.
- **Be sure that the punishment fits the crime.** If a punishment is too harsh, both the employee in

question and coworkers who will learn about the punishment will feel it is unfair. Unfair punishment may not change unwanted behaviour.

- **Be consistent in your treatment of employees.** Have disciplinary procedures and apply them in the same way to everyone. It is unfair to enforce a rule for one particular employee but then give others a free pass.
- **Document the behaviour in question.** If an employee is going to be disciplined, the evidence must go beyond hearsay.
- **Be timely with discipline.** When a long period of time passes between behaviour and punishment, it is less effective in reducing undesired behaviour because the connection between the behaviour and punishment is weaker.

Adapted from ideas in Ambrose, M. L., & Kulik, C. T. (1999). Old friends, new faces: Motivation research in the 1990s. Journal of Management, 25(3), 231–292; Guffey, C. J., & Helms, M. M. (2001). Effective employee discipline: A case of the Internal Revenue Service. Public Personnel Management, 30(1), 111-127.

In summary, positive reinforcement and avoidance learning focus on bringing about the *desired* response from the employee. With positive reinforcement the employee behaves in a certain way in order to gain desired rewards, whereas with avoidance learning the employee behaves in order to avoid certain unpleasant outcomes. In both cases, however, the behavior desired by the supervisor is enhanced. In contrast, extinction and punishment focus on supervisory attempts to reduce the incidence of *undesired* behavior. That is, extinction and punishment are typically used to get someone to stop doing something the supervisor doesn't like. It does not necessarily follow that the individual will begin acting in the most desired, or correct, manner.

Often students have difficulty seeing the distinction between avoidance and extinction or in understanding how either could have a significant impact on behavior. Two factors are important to keep in mind. The first we will simply call the “history effect.” Not being harassed could reinforce an employee's prompt arrival at work if in the past the employee had been harassed for being late. Arriving on time and thereby avoiding the past harassment would reinforce arriving on time. This same dynamic would hold true for extinction. If the employee had been praised in the past for arriving on time, then arrived late and was not praised, this would serve to weaken the tendency to arrive late. The second factor we will call the “social effect.” For example, if you see others harassed when they arrive late and then you are not harassed when you arrive on time, this could reinforce your arriving at work on time. Again, this same dynamic would hold true for extinction. If you had observed others being praised for arriving on time, then not receiving praise when you arrived late would serve to weaken the tendency to arrive late.

From a managerial perspective, questions arise about which strategy of behavioral change is most effective. Advocates of behavioral change strategies, such as Skinner, answer that positive reinforcement combined with extinction is the most suitable way to bring about desired behavior. There are several reasons for this focus on the positive approach to reinforcement. First, although punishment can inhibit or eliminate undesired behavior, it often does not provide information to the individual about how or in which direction to change. Also, the application of punishment may cause

the individual to become alienated from the work situation, thereby reducing the chances that useful change can be effected. Similarly, avoidance learning tends to emphasize the negative; that is, people are taught to stay clear of certain behaviors, such as tardiness, for fear of repercussions. In contrast, it is felt that combining positive reinforcement with the use of extinction has the fewest undesirable side effects and allows individuals to receive the rewards they desire. A positive approach to reinforcement is believed by some to be the most effective tool management has to bring about favorable changes in organizations.

Schedules of Reinforcement

Having examined four distinct strategies for behavioral change, we now turn to an examination of the various ways, or *schedules*, of administering these techniques. As noted by Costello and Zalkind (1963), “The speed with which learning takes place and also how lasting its effects will be is determined by the timing of reinforcement” (p. 193). Thus, a knowledge of the types of schedules of reinforcement is essential to managers if they are to know how to choose rewards that will have maximum impact on employee performance. Although there are a variety of ways in which rewards can be administered, most approaches can be categorized into two groups: continuous and partial (or intermittent) reinforcement schedules. A **continuous reinforcement** schedule rewards desired behavior every time it occurs. For example, a manager could praise (or pay) employees every time they perform properly. With the time and resource constraints most managers work under, this is often difficult, if not impossible. So, most managerial reward strategies operate on a partial schedule. A **partial reinforcement** schedule rewards desired behavior at specific intervals, not every time desired behavior is exhibited. Compared to continuous schedules, partial reinforcement schedules lead to slower learning but stronger retention. Thus, learning is generally more permanent. Four kinds of partial reinforcement schedules can be identified: (1) fixed interval, (2) fixed ratio, (3) variable interval, and (4) variable ratio (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2: Schedules of Partial Reinforcement

Schedule of Reinforcement	Nature of Reinforcement	Effects on Behavior When Applied	Effects on Behavior When Terminated	Example
Fixed interval	Reward on fixed time basis	Leads to average and irregular performance	Quick extinction of behavior	Weekly paycheck
Fixed ratio	Reward consistently tied to output	Leads quickly to very high and stable performance	Quick extinction of behavior	Piece-rate pay system
Variable interval	Reward given at variable intervals around some average time	Leads to moderately high and stable performance	Slow extinction of behavior	Monthly performance appraisal and reward at random times each month
Variable ratio	Reward given at variable output levels around some average output	Leads to very high performance	Slow extinction of behavior	Sales bonus tied to selling X accounts, but X constantly changes around some mean

[Source](#)

Fixed-Interval Schedule. A fixed-interval reinforcement schedule rewards individuals at specified intervals for their performance, as with a biweekly paycheck. If employees perform even minimally, they are paid. This technique generally does not result in high or sustained levels of performance because employees know that marginal performance usually leads to the same level of reward as high performance. Thus, there is little incentive for high effort and performance. Also, when rewards are withheld or suspended, extinction of desired behavior occurs quickly. Many of the recent job redesign efforts in organizations were prompted by recognition of the need for alternate strategies of motivation rather than paying people on fixed-interval schedules.

Fixed-Ratio Schedule. The second fixed schedule is the fixed-ratio schedule. Here the reward is administered only upon the completion of a given number of desired responses. In other words, rewards are tied to performance in a ratio of rewards to results. A common example of the fixed-ratio schedule is a piece-rate pay system, whereby employees are paid for each unit of output they produce. Under this system, performance rapidly reaches high levels. In fact, according to Hamner (1977), “the response level here is significantly higher than that obtained under any of the interval (time-based) schedules” (p. 105). On the negative side, however, performance declines sharply when the rewards are withheld, as with fixed-interval schedules.

Variable-Interval Schedule. Using variable reinforcement schedules, both variable-interval and variable-ratio reinforcements are administered at random times that cannot be predicted by the employee. The employee is generally not aware of when the next evaluation and reward period will be. Under a variable-interval schedule, rewards are administered at intervals of time that are based on an average. For example, an employee may know that *on the average* her performance is evaluated and rewarded about once a month, but she does not know when this event will occur. She does know, however, that it will occur sometime during the interval of a month. Under this schedule,

effort and performance will generally be high and fairly stable over time because employees never know when the evaluation will take place.

Variable-Ratio Schedule. Finally, a variable-ratio schedule is one in which rewards are administered only after an employee has performed the desired behavior a number of times, with the number changing from the administration of one reward to the next but averaging over time to a certain *ratio* of number of performances to rewards. For example, a manager may determine that a salesperson will receive a bonus for every 15th new account sold. However, instead of administering the bonus every 15th sale (as in a fixed-interval schedule), the manager may vary the number of sales that is necessary for the bonus, from perhaps 10 sales for the first bonus to 20 for the second. On the average, however, the 15:1 ratio prevails. If the employee understands the parameters, then the “safe” level of sales, or the level of sales most likely to result in a bonus, is in excess of 15. Consequently, the variable-ratio schedule typically leads to high and stable performance. Moreover, extinction of desired behavior is slow.

Which of these four schedules of reinforcement is superior? In a review of several studies comparing the various techniques, Hamner concludes:

The necessity for arranging appropriate reinforcement contingencies is dramatically illustrated by several studies in which rewards were shifted from a response-contingent (ratio) to a time-contingent (interval) basis. During the period in which rewards were made conditional upon occurrence of the desired behavior, the appropriate response patterns were exhibited at a consistently high level. When the same rewards were given based on time and independent of the worker's behavior, there was a marked drop in the desired behavior. The reinstatements of the performance-contingent reward schedule promptly restored the high level of responsiveness.

In other words, the performance-contingent (or ratio) reward schedules generally lead to better performance than the time-contingent (or interval) schedules, regardless of whether such schedules are fixed or variable.



Two additional approaches to learning are found in the work of David Kolb (2015) and Mel Silberman and colleagues (2016). Kolb's experiential learning style theory is typically represented by a four-stage learning cycle in which the learner 'touches all the bases'. The Four stages are achieved when a person progresses through a cycle of four stages: of **(1)** having a concrete experience followed by **(2)** observation of and reflection on that experience which leads to **(3)** the formation of abstract concepts (analysis) and generalizations (conclusions) which are then **(4)** used to test hypothesis in future situations, resulting in new experiences.

Silberman in his book *Active Training*, identified eight qualities of an effective and active learning experience. The eight qualities are as follows:

1. a moderate level of content;
2. a balance between affective, behavioral, and cognitive learning,

3. a variety of learning approaches,
4. opportunities for group participation,
5. encouraging participants to share their expertise,
6. recycling concepts and skills learned earlier,
7. advocating real-life problem solving, and
8. allowing time for re-entry.



Here's an Example

Shaping a Salesperson's Behavior

Sharon Johnson worked for a publishing company based in Nashville, Tennessee, that sold a line of children's books directly to the public through a door-to-door sales force. Sharon had been a very successful salesperson and was promoted first to district and then to regional sales manager after just four years with the company. Sales bonuses were fixed, and a fixed-dollar bonus was tied to every \$1,000 in sales over a specific minimum quota. However, there was a wide variety of rewards, from praise to gift certificates, that were left to Sharon's discretion.

Sharon knew from her organizational behavior class that giving out praise to those who liked it and gifts to those who preferred them was an important means of reinforcing desired behavior, and she had been quite successful in implementing this principle. She also knew that if you reinforced a behavior that was "on the right track" to the ideal behavior you wanted out of a salesperson, eventually you could shape their behavior, almost without their realizing it.

Sharon had one particular salesperson, Lyle, that she thought had great potential, yet his weekly sales were somewhat inconsistent and often lower than she thought possible. When Lyle was questioned about his performance, he indicated that sometimes he felt that the families he approached could not afford the books he was selling and so he did not think it was right to push the sale too hard. Although Sharon argued that it was not Lyle's place to decide for others what they could or could not afford, Lyle still felt uncomfortable about utilizing his normal sales approach with these families.

Sharon believed that through subtle reinforcement of certain behaviors she could shape Lyle's behavior and that over time he would increasingly use his typical sales approach with the families he thought could not afford the books. For example, she knew that in the cases of families Lyle thought could not afford the books, he spent only 3.5 minutes in the house compared to 12.7 minutes in homes of families he judged able to afford the books. Sharon believed that if she praised Lyle when the average time he

spent in each family's home was quite similar that Lyle would increase the time he spent in the homes of families he judged unable to afford the books. She believed that the longer he spent in these homes, the more likely Lyle was to utilize his typical sales approach. This was just one of several ways Sharon thought she could shape Lyle's behavior without trying to change his mind about pushing books onto people he thought could not afford them.

Sharon saw no ethical issues in this case until she told a friend about it and the friend questioned whether it was ethical to utilize learning and reinforcement techniques to change people's behavior "against their will" even if they did not realize that this was happening.

Source: This ethical challenge is based on a true but disguised case observed by author J. Stewart Black.



Let's Review

- Reinforcement theory argues that behaviour is a function of its consequences.
- By properly tying rewards to positive behaviours, eliminating rewards following negative behaviours, and punishing negative behaviours, leaders can increase the frequency of desired behaviours.
- These three theories are particularly useful in designing reward systems within a company.

References

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5.4 Social Learning Theory

The last model of learning we will examine is noted psychologist Albert Bandura's social learning theory. **Social learning theory** is defined as the process of molding behavior through the reciprocal interaction of a person's cognitions, behavior, and environment (Bandura, 1977). This is done through a process that Bandura calls **reciprocal determinism**. This concept implies that people control their own environment (for example, by quitting one's job) as much as the environment controls people (for example, being laid off). Thus, learning is seen as a more active, interactive process in which the learner has at least some control.

Social learning theory shares many of the same roots as operant conditioning. Like Skinner, Bandura argues that behavior is at least in part controlled by environmental cues and consequences, and Bandura uses observable behavior (as opposed to attitudes, feelings, etc.) as the primary unit of analysis. However, unlike operant conditioning, social learning theory posits that cognitive or mental processes affect our response to the environmental cues.

Social learning theory has four central elements: attention, retention, reproduction, and incentives. Before someone can learn something, they must notice or pay attention to the thing that is to be learned. For example, you probably would not learn much as a student in any class unless you paid attention to information conveyed by the text or instructor. Retention is the process by which what you have noticed is encoded into your memory. Reproduction involves the translation of what was recorded in your mind into overt actions or behaviors. Obviously, the higher the level of attention and the greater the retention, the better the reproduction of what was learned. Finally, incentives can influence all three processes. For example, if you are rewarded (say, praised) for paying attention, you will pay more attention. If you are rewarded for remembering what you studied (say, good grades), you will retain more. If you are rewarded for reproducing what you learned (say, a promotion for effectively motivating your subordinates), you will produce that behavior more.

Central to this theory is the concept of **vicarious learning**. Vicarious learning is learning that takes place through the imitation of other role models. That is, we observe and analyze what another person does and the resulting consequences. As a result, we learn without having to experience the phenomenon firsthand. Thus, if we see a fellow employee being disciplined or fired for being disruptive in the workplace, we might learn not to be disruptive ourselves.

A model of social learning processes is shown in Figure 5.4 As can be seen, three factors—the person, the environment, and the behavior—interact through such processes as vicarious learning, symbolic representations, and self-control to cause actual learned behaviors.

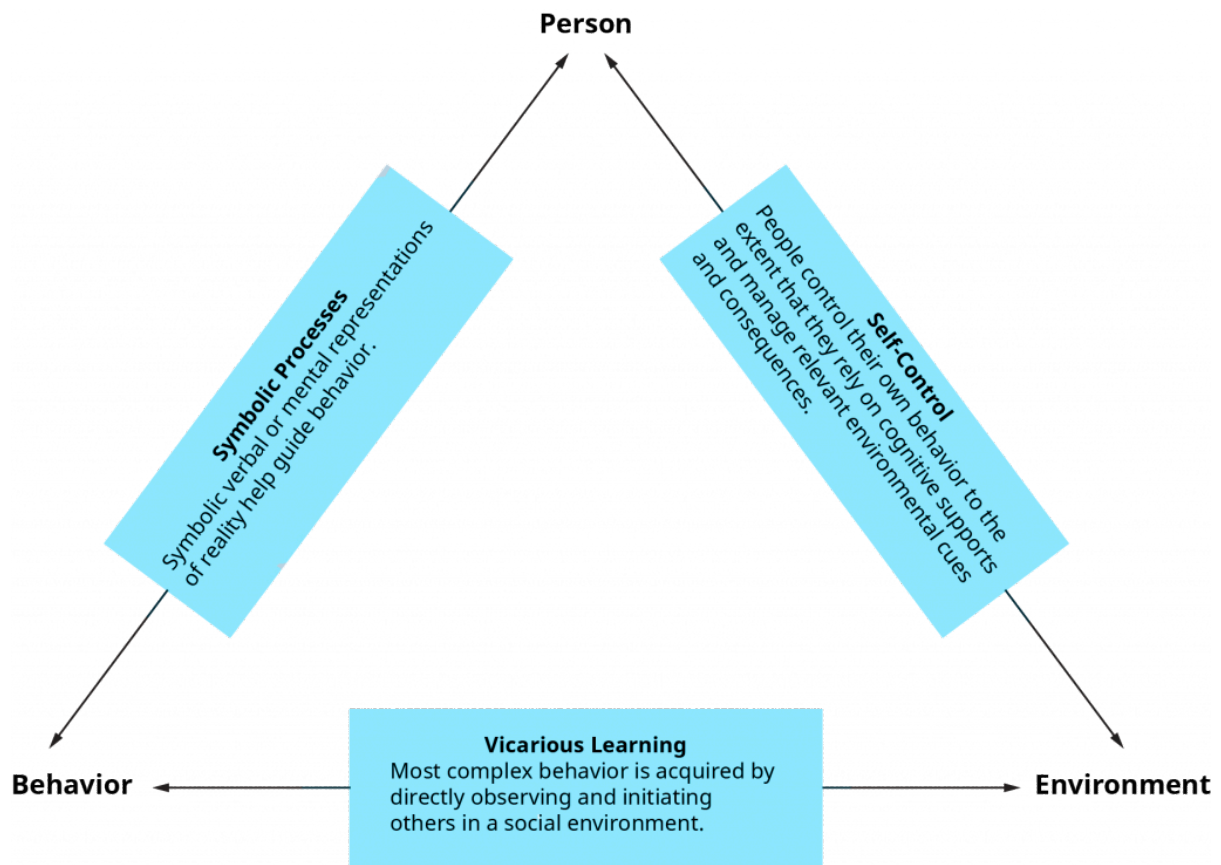


Figure 5.4 A Basic Model of Social Learning Theory. Adapted from "A Social Learning Approach to Behavioral Management: Radical Behaviorists 'Mellowing Out,'" by Robert Kreitner et al. *Organizational Dynamics*. Image: Rice University. [Organizational Behavior, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Color altered from original. [click to enlarge]

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[4.1 Basic Models of Learning in Organizational Behaviour](#), Rice University. OpenStax which is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#), unless otherwise noted.

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5.5 Learning at Work

Major Influences on Learning

It is possible by way of summary to identify several general factors that can enhance our learning processes. An individual's desire to learn, background knowledge of a subject, and the length of the learning period are some of the components of a learning environment. Filley et al. (1975) identify five major influences on learning effectiveness.

Drawn largely from behavioral science and psychology literature, substantial research indicates that learning effectiveness is increased considerably when individuals have high *motivation to learn*. We sometimes encounter students who work day and night to complete a term paper that is of interest to them, whereas writing an uninteresting term paper may be postponed until the last possible minute. Maximum transfer of knowledge is achieved when a student or employee is motivated to learn by a high need to know.

Considerable evidence also demonstrates that we can facilitate learning by providing individuals with feedback on their performance. A *knowledge of results* serves a gyroscopic function, showing individuals where they are correct or incorrect and furnishing them with the perspective to improve. Feedback also serves as an important positive reinforcer that can enhance an individual's willingness or desire to learn. Students who are told by their professor how they performed on an exam and what they could do to improve next time are likely to study harder.

In many cases, *prior learning* can increase the ability to learn new materials or tasks by providing needed background or foundation materials. In math, multiplication is easier to learn if addition has been mastered. These beneficial effects of prior learning on present learning tend to be greatest when the prior tasks and the present tasks exhibit similar stimulus-response connections. For instance, most of the astronauts selected for the space program have had years of previous experience flying airplanes. It is assumed that their prior experience and developed skill will facilitate learning to fly the highly technical, though somewhat similar, vehicles.

Another influence on learning concerns whether the materials to be learned are presented in their entirety or in parts—*whole versus part learning* (McCormick & Illgen, 1984). Available evidence suggests that when a task consists of several distinct and unrelated duties, part learning is more effective. Each task should be learned separately. However, when a task consists of several integrated and related parts (such as learning the components of a small machine), whole learning is more appropriate, because it ensures that major relationship among parts, as well as proper sequencing of parts, is not overlooked or underemphasized.

The final major influence on learning highlights the advantages and disadvantages of concentrated as opposed to distributed training sessions. Research suggests that *distribution of practice*—short learning periods at set intervals—is more effective for learning motor skills than for learning verbal

or cognitive skills (Bass & Vaughn, 1966; Latham, 1966; Wexley & Latham, 2002). Distributed practice also seems to facilitate learning of very difficult, voluminous, or tedious material. It should be noted, however, that concentrated practice appears to work well where insight is required for task completion. Apparently, concentrated effort over short durations provides a more synergistic approach to problem-solving.

Although there is general agreement that these influences are important (and are under the control of management in many cases), they cannot substitute for the lack of an adequate reinforcement system. In fact, reinforcement is widely recognized as the key to effective learning. If managers are concerned with eliciting desired behaviors from their subordinates, a knowledge of reinforcement techniques is essential.

Applying Theory to the Workplace

When the above principles and techniques of learning are applied to the workplace, we generally see one of two approaches: behavior modification or behavioral self-management. Both approaches rest firmly on the principles of learning described above. Because both of these techniques have wide followings in corporations, we shall review them here. First, we look at the positive and negative sides of behavior modification.

Behavior modification is the use of operant conditioning principles to shape human behavior to conform to desired standards defined by superiors. In recent years, behavior modification has been applied in a wide variety of organizations. In most cases, positive results are claimed. There is interest in the technique as a management tool to improve performance and reduce costs.

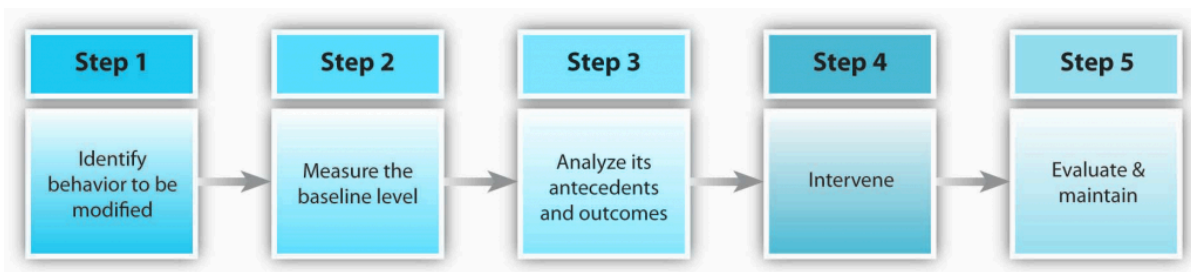
Because of its emphasis on shaping behavior, it is more appropriate to think of behavior modification as a technique for motivating employees rather than as a theory of work motivation. It does not attempt to provide a comprehensive model of the various personal and job-related variables that contribute to motivation. Instead, its managerial thrust is how to motivate, and it is probably this emphasis that has led to its current popularity among some managers. Even so, we should be cautioned against the unquestioned acceptance of any technique until we understand the assumptions underlying the model. If the underlying assumptions of a model appear to be uncertain or inappropriate in a particular situation or organization, its use is clearly questionable.

Organizational Behaviour Management

A systematic way in which reinforcement theory principles are applied is called **Organizational Behaviour Modification** (or OB Mod) (Luthans & Stajkovic, 1999). This is a systematic application of reinforcement theory to modify employee behaviours in the workplace. The model consists of

five stages. The process starts with identifying the behaviour that will be modified. Let's assume that we are interested in reducing absenteeism among employees. In step 2, we need to measure the baseline level of absenteeism. How many times a month is a particular employee absent? In step 3, the behaviour's antecedents and consequences are determined. Why is this employee absent? More importantly, what is happening when the employee is absent? If the behaviour is being unintentionally rewarded (e.g., the person is still getting paid or is able to avoid unpleasant assignments because someone else is doing them), we may expect these positive consequences to reinforce the absenteeism. Instead, to reduce the frequency of absenteeism, it will be necessary to think of financial or social incentives to follow positive behaviour and negative consequences to follow negative behaviour. In step 4, an intervention is implemented. Removing the positive consequences of negative behaviour may be an effective way of dealing with the situation, or, in persistent situations, punishments may be used. Finally, in step 5 the behaviour is measured periodically and maintained.

Studies examining the effectiveness of OB Mod have been supportive of the model in general. A review of the literature found that OB Mod interventions resulted in 17% improvement in performance (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1997). Particularly in manufacturing settings, OB Mod was an effective way of increasing performance, although positive effects were observed in service organizations as well.



5.5 Organizational Behaviour Management. Based on information presented in Stajkovic, A. D., & Luthans, F. (1997). Image: Rice University. [Organizational Behavior](#), CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Color altered from original. [click to enlarge]

The second managerial technique for shaping learned behavior in the workplace is **behavioral self-management (or BSM)**. Behavioral self-management is the process of modifying one's own behavior by systematically managing cues, cognitive processes, and contingent consequences (Luthans & Davis, 1979; Luthans & Kreitner, 1985).

BSM is an approach to learning and behavioral change that relies on the individual to take the initiative in controlling the change process. The emphasis here is on "behavior" (because our focus is on changing behaviors), not attitudes, values, or personality. Although similar to behavior modification, BSM differs in one important respect: there is a heavy emphasis on cognitive processes, reflecting the influence of Bandura's social learning theory.

The Self-Regulation Process

Underlying BSM is a firm belief that individuals are capable of self-control; if they want to change their behavior (whether it is to come to work on time, quit smoking, lose weight, etc.), it is possible through a process called self-regulation, as depicted in Figure 5.7. According to the model, people tend to go about their day's activities fairly routinely until something unusual or unexpected occurs. At this point, the individual initiates the self-regulation process by entering into **self-monitoring** (Stage 1). In this stage, the individual tries to identify the problem. For example, if your supervisor told you that your choice of clothing was unsuitable for the office, you would more than likely focus your attention on your clothes.



Figure 5.6 Kanfer's Model of Self-Regulation. Image: Rice University. [Organizational Behavior, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Color altered from original. [click to enlarge]

Next, in Stage 2, or **self-evaluation**, you would consider what you should be wearing. Here, you would compare what you have on to acceptable standards that you learned from colleagues, other relevant role models, and advertising, for example. Finally, after evaluating the situation and taking corrective action if necessary, you would assure yourself that the disruptive influence had passed and everything was now fine. This phase (Stage 3) is called self-reinforcement. You are now able to return to your normal routine. This self-regulation process forms the foundation for BSM.

Self-Management in Practice

When we combine the above self-regulation model with social learning theory (discussed earlier), we can see how the self-management process works. As shown in **Figure 5.7** four interactive factors must be considered. These are *situational cues*, *the person*, *behaviors*, and *consequences* (Neck & Manz, 2013). (Note that the arrows in this diagram go in both directions to reflect the two-way process among these four factors.)

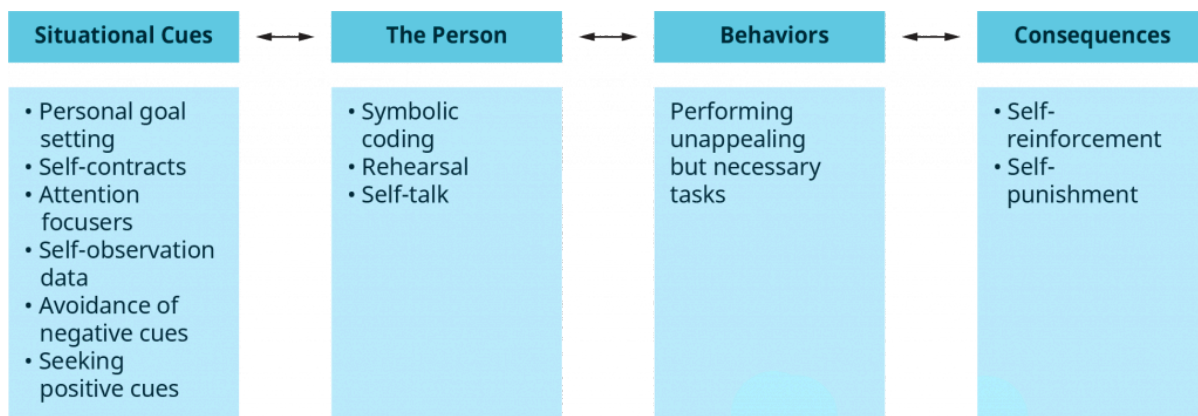


Figure 5.7 A Social Learning Theory Model of Self-Management. Image: Rice University. [Organizational Behavior, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Color altered from original. [click to enlarge]

Situational Cues. In attempting to change any behavior, people respond to the cues surrounding them. One reason it is so hard for some people to give up smoking is the constant barrage of triggers. There are too many cues reminding people to smoke. However, situational cues can be turned to our advantage when using BSM. That is, through the use of six kinds of cue (shown in Figure 5.8 column 1), people can set forth a series of positive reminders and goals concerning the desired behaviors. These reminders serve to focus our attention on what we are trying to accomplish. Hence, a person who is trying to quit smoking would (1) avoid any contact with smokers or other triggers, (2) seek information on the hazards of smoking, (3) set a personal goal of quitting, and (4) keep track of cigarette consumption. These activities are aimed at providing the right situational cues to guide behavior.

Cognitive Supports. Next, the person makes use of three types of cognitive support to assist with the self-management process. Cognitive supports represent psychological (as opposed to environmental) cues. Three such supports can be identified:

1. **Symbolic Coding.** First, people may use symbolic coding, whereby they try to associate verbal or visual stimuli with the problem. For example, we may create a picture in our mind of a smoker who is coughing and obviously sick. Thus, every time we think of cigarettes, we would associate it with illness.
2. **Rehearsal.** Second, people may mentally rehearse the solution to the problem. For example, we may imagine how we would behave in a social situation without cigarettes. By doing so, we develop a self-image of how it would be under the desired condition.
3. **Self-Talk.** Finally, people can give themselves “pep talks” to continue their positive behavior. We know from behavioral research that people who take a negative view of things (“I can’t do this”) tend to fail more than people who take a more positive view (“Yes, I can do this”). Thus, through self-talk, we can help convince ourselves that the desired outcome is indeed possible.

Behavioral Dilemmas. Obviously, self-management is used almost exclusively to get people to do things that may be unappealing; we need little incentive to do things that are fun. Hence, we use

self-management to get individuals to stop procrastinating on a job, attend to a job that may lack challenge, assert themselves, and so forth. These are the “behavioral dilemmas” referred to in the model (Figure 5.8). In short, the challenge is to get people to substitute what have been called low-probability behaviors (e.g., adhering to a schedule or forgoing the immediate gratification from one cigarette) for high-probability behaviors (e.g., procrastinating or contracting lung cancer). In the long run, it is better for the individual—and her career—to shift behaviors, because failure to do so may lead to punishment or worse. As a result, people often use self-management to change their short-term dysfunctional behaviors into long-range beneficial ones. This short-term versus long-term conflict is referred to as a behavioral dilemma.

Self-Reinforcement. Finally, the individual can provide **self-reinforcement**. People can, in effect, pat themselves on the back and recognize that they accomplished what they set out to do. According to Bandura, self-reinforcement requires three conditions if it is to be effective: (1) clear performance standards must be set to establish both the quantity and quality of the targeted behavior, (2) the person must have control over the desired reinforcers, and (3) the reinforcers must be administered only on a conditional basis—that is, failure to meet the performance standard must lead to denial of the reward (Bandura, 1976). Thus, through a process of working to change one’s environment and taking charge of one’s own behavior, self-management techniques allow individuals to improve their behavior in a way that can help them and those around them.



Let's Focus

Reducing Absenteeism through Self-Management

In a well-known study, efforts were made to reduce employee absenteeism using some of the techniques found in behavioral self-management. The employees were unionized state government workers with a history of absenteeism. Self-management training was given to these workers. Training was carried out over eight one-hour sessions for each group, along with eight 30-minute one-on-one sessions with each participant.

Included in these sessions were efforts to (1) teach the participants how to describe problem behaviors (e.g., disagreements with coworkers) that led to absences, (2) identify the causes creating and maintaining the behaviors, and (3) develop coping strategies. Participants set both short-term and long-term goals with respect to modifying their behaviors. In addition, they were shown how to record

their own absences in reports including their frequency and the reasons for and consequences of them. Finally, participants identified potential reinforcers and punishments that could be self-administered contingent upon goal attainment or failure.

When, after nine months, the study was concluded, results showed that the self-management approach had led to a significant reduction in absences (compared to a control group). The researchers concluded that such an approach has important applications to a wide array of behavioral problems in the workplace (Lathan & Fayne, 1989).



Exercises

1. Your manager tells you that the best way of ensuring fairness in reward distribution is to keep the pay a secret. How would you respond to this assertion?
2. When distributing bonuses or pay, how would you ensure perceptions of fairness?
3. What are the differences between procedural, interactional, and distributive justice? List ways in which you could increase each of these justice perceptions.
4. Using examples, explain the concepts of expectancy, instrumentality, and valence.
5. Some practitioners and researchers consider OB Mod unethical because it may be viewed as a way of manipulation. What would be your reaction to such a criticism?

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5.6 Key Takeaways, Knowledge Check and Key Terms



Key Takeaways

In this chapter, we learned that:

- **Learning is a relatively permanent change in behavior** that occurs as a result of experience.
- **Principles of classical conditioning can help us to understand stimulus-response associations** that form in the workplace.
- **Reinforcement, punishment, avoidance learning, and extinction can all be used in the workplace** to change behaviour.
- **Schedules of reinforcement can be used in the workplace** to modify behaviour.
- **According to social learning theory, we can also learn behaviours through interaction with your thoughts, actions, and environment.** We can also observe rewards and consequences from others and model this behaviour in a process called vicarious learning.
- **Our motivation, previous experiences, and other factors can help us to better understand** how and why we learn.
- **Organizational behaviour management and behavioural self-management can be used to change behaviours** in the workplace setting.



Knowledge Check

Review your understanding of this chapter's key concepts by taking the interactive quiz below.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationpsychology/?p=636#h5p-9>



Key Terms

Key terms from this chapter include:

- **Learning**
- **Classical conditioning**
- **Unconditioned stimulus**
- **Unconditioned response**
- **Conditioned stimulus**
- **Conditioned response**
- **Law of effect**
- **Operant conditioning**
- **Reinforcement**

- **Positive reinforcement**
- **Negative reinforcement**
- **Extinction**
- **Punishment**
- **Reinforcement schedule**
- **Variable ratio**
- **Fixed ratio**
- **Social learning theory**
- **Reciprocal determinism**
- **Vicarious learning**
- **Organizational behaviour modification**
- **Behavioural self-management**
- **Self-monitoring**
- **Self-reinforcement**

CHAPTER 6: MEMORY



Learning Objectives

In this chapter, we will:

1. **Define and note** differences between the following forms of memory: working memory, episodic memory, semantic memory, collective memory.
2. **Describe** the three stages in the process of learning and remembering.
3. **Describe** strategies that can be used to enhance the original learning or encoding of information.
4. **Describe** strategies that can improve the process of retrieval.
5. **Describe** why the classic mnemonic device, the method of loci, works so well.

In this chapter, will learn the differences between the following forms of memory: working memory, episodic memory, semantic memory, and collective memory. In addition, we'll learn about the three stages in the process of learning and remembering and review strategies that can be used to enhance the original learning or encoding of information.

6.1 Introduction



Let's Focus

Washington University in St. Louis

In 2013, Simon Reinhard sat in front of 60 people in a room at Washington University, where he memorized an increasingly long series of digits. On the first round, a computer generated 10 random digits—6 1 9 4 8 5 6 3 7 1—on a screen for 10 seconds. After the series disappeared, Simon typed them into his computer. His recollection was perfect.

In the next phase, 20 digits appeared on the screen for 20 seconds. Again, Simon got them all correct. No one in the audience (mostly professors, graduate students, and undergraduate students) could recall the 20 digits perfectly. Then came 30 digits, studied for 30 seconds; once again, Simon didn't misplace even a single digit.

For a final trial, 50 digits appeared on the screen for 50 seconds, and again, Simon got them all right. In fact, Simon would have been happy to keep going. His record in this task—called “forward digit span”—is 240 digits!

When most of us witness a performance like that of Simon Reinhard, we think one of two things: First, maybe he's cheating somehow. (No, he is not.) Second, Simon must have abilities more advanced than the rest of humankind. After all, psychologists established many years ago that the normal memory span for adults is about 7 digits, with some of us able to recall a few more and others a few less (Miller, 1956). That is why the first phone numbers were limited to 7 digits—psychologists determined that many errors occurred (costing the phone company money) when the number was increased to even 8 digits. But in normal testing, no one gets 50 digits correct in a row, much less 240. So, does Simon Reinhard simply have a photographic memory? He does not. Instead, Simon has taught himself simple strategies for remembering that have greatly increased his capacity for remembering virtually any type of material—digits, words, faces and names, poetry, historical dates, and so on. Twelve years earlier, before he started training his memory abilities, he had a digit span of 7, just like most of us. Simon has been training his abilities for about 10 years as of this writing, and has risen to be in the top two of “memory athletes.” In 2012, he came in second place in the World Memory Championships (composed of 11 tasks), held in London. He currently ranks second in the world, behind another German competitor, Johannes Mallow. In this module, we reveal what psychologists and others have learned about memory, and we also explain the general principles by which you can improve your own memory for factual material.



In some ways memory is like file drawers where you store mental information. Memory is also a series of processes: how does that information get filed to begin with and how does it get retrieved when needed? Image: [M Cruz. Memory \(Encoding, Storage, Retrieval\), CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.](#) [click to enlarge]

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6.2 Varieties of Memory

“Memory” is a single term that reflects a number of different abilities: holding information briefly while working with it (***working memory***), remembering episodes of one’s life (***episodic memory***), and our general knowledge of facts of the world (***semantic memory***), among other types.

Remembering episodes involves three processes:

1. **encoding information** (*learning it, by perceiving it and relating it to past knowledge*),
2. **storing it** (*maintaining it over time*), and then
3. **retrieving it** (*accessing the information when needed*).

Failures can occur at any stage, leading to forgetting or to having false memories. The key to improving one’s memory is to improve processes of encoding and to use techniques that guarantee effective retrieval. Good encoding techniques include relating new information to what one already knows, forming mental images, and creating associations among information that needs to be remembered. The key to good retrieval is developing effective cues that will lead the rememberer back to the encoded information. Classic mnemonic systems, known since the time of the ancient Greeks and still used by some today, can greatly improve one’s memory abilities.

Varieties of Memory

For most of us, remembering digits relies on *short-term memory*, or *working memory*—the ability to hold information in our minds for a brief time and work with it (e.g., multiplying 24 x 17 without using paper would rely on working memory). Another type of memory is **episodic memory**—the ability to remember the episodes of our lives. If you were given the task of recalling everything you did 2 days ago, that would be a test of episodic memory; you would be required to mentally travel through the day in your mind and note the main events. **Semantic memory** is our storehouse of more-or-less permanent knowledge, such as the meanings of words in a language (e.g., the meaning of “parasol”) and the huge collection of facts about the world (e.g., there are 196 countries in the world, and 206 bones in your body). **Collective memory** refers to the kind of memory that people in a group share (whether family, community, schoolmates, or citizens of a state or a country). For example, residents of small towns often strongly identify with those towns, remembering the local customs and historical events in a unique way. That is, the community’s collective memory passes stories and recollections between neighbors and to future generations, forming a memory system unto itself. Psychologists continue to debate the classification of types of memory, as well as which types rely on others (Tulving, 2007), but for this module we will focus on episodic memory. Episodic memory is usually what people think of when they hear the word “memory.” For example, when people say that an older relative is “losing her memory” due to Alzheimer’s disease, the type of memory-loss they are referring to is the inability to recall events, or episodic memory. (Semantic memory is actually preserved in early-stage Alzheimer’s disease.) Although remembering specific events that have happened over the course of one’s entire life (e.g., your experiences in sixth grade) can be referred to as **autobiographical memory**, we will focus primarily on the episodic memories of more recent events.



To be a good chess player you have to learn to increase working memory so you can plan ahead for several offensive moves while simultaneously anticipating – through use of memory – how the other player could counter each of your planned moves. [Image: karpidis, Image: by Andreas Kontokanis. [Eljanov Pavel](#), in [Memory \(Encoding, Storage, Retrieval\)](#), CC BY-NC-SA 2.0. [\[click to enlarge\]](#)]

Three Stages of the Learning/Memory Process

Psychologists distinguish between three necessary stages in the learning and memory process: encoding, storage, and retrieval (Melton, 1963). **Encoding** is defined as the initial learning of information; **storage** refers to maintaining information over time; **retrieval** is the ability to access

information when you need it. If you meet someone for the first time at a party, you need to encode her name (Lyn Goff) while you associate her name with her face. Then you need to maintain the information over time. If you see her a week later, you need to recognize her face and have it serve as a cue to retrieve her name. Any successful act of remembering requires that all three stages be intact. However, two types of errors can also occur. **Forgetting** is one type: you see the person you met at the party and you cannot recall her name. The other error is misremembering (false recall or false recognition): you see someone who looks like Lyn Goff and call the person by that name (false recognition of the face). Or, you might see the real Lyn Goff, recognize her face, but then call her by the name of another woman you met at the party (misrecall of her name).

Whenever forgetting or misremembering occurs, we can ask, at which stage in the learning/memory process was there a failure?—though it is often difficult to answer this question with precision. One reason for this inaccuracy is that the three stages are not as discrete as our description implies. Rather, all three stages depend on one another. How we encode information determines how it will be stored and what cues will be effective when we try to retrieve it. And too, the act of retrieval itself also changes the way information is subsequently remembered, usually aiding later recall of the retrieved information. The central point for now is that the three stages—encoding, storage, and retrieval—affect one another, and are inextricably bound together.

In this Section:

- [Encoding](#)
- [Storage](#)
- [Retrieval](#)

Encoding

Encoding refers to the initial experience of perceiving and learning information. Psychologists often study recall by having participants study a list of pictures or words. Encoding in these situations is fairly straightforward. However, “real life” encoding is much more challenging. When you walk across campus, for example, you encounter countless sights and sounds—friends passing by, people playing Frisbee, music in the air. The physical and mental environments are much too rich for you to encode all the happenings around you or the internal thoughts you have in response to them. So, an important first principle of encoding is that it is selective: we attend to some events in our environment and we ignore others. A second point about encoding is that it is prolific; we are always encoding the events of our lives—attending to the world, trying to understand it. Normally this presents no problem, as our days are filled with routine occurrences, so we don’t need to pay

attention to everything. But if something does happen that seems strange—during your daily walk across campus, you see a giraffe—then we pay close attention and try to understand why we are seeing what we are seeing.



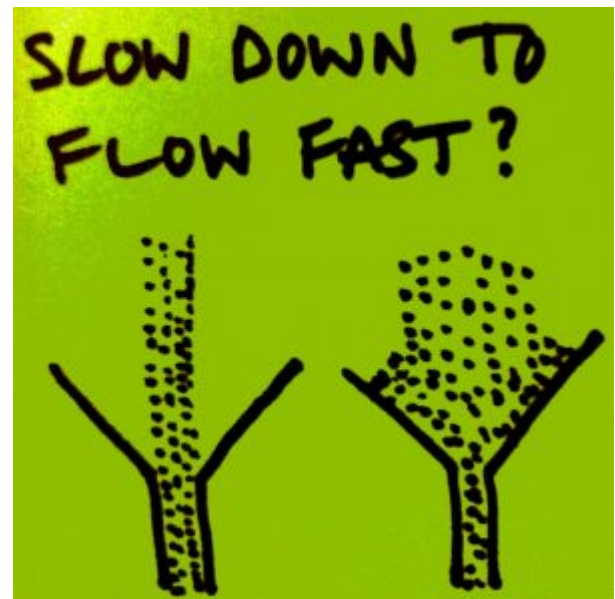
A giraffe in the context of a zoo or its natural habitat may register as nothing more than ordinary, but put it in another setting – in the middle of a campus or a busy city – and its level of distinctiveness increases dramatically. Distinctiveness is a key attribute to remembering events. Image: by Colin J. Babb. [Lego Giraffe](#), in [Memory \(Encoding, Storage, Retrieval\)](#), CC BY-NC-SA 2.0. [\[click to enlarge\]](#)

Right after your typical walk across campus (one without the appearance of a giraffe), you would be able to remember the events reasonably well if you were asked. You could say whom you bumped into, what song was playing from a radio, and so on. However, suppose someone asked you to recall the same walk a month later. You wouldn't stand a chance. You would likely be able to recount the basics of a typical walk across campus, but not the precise details of that particular walk. Yet, if you had seen a giraffe during that walk, the event would have been fixed in your mind for a long time, probably for the rest of your life. You would tell your friends about it, and, on later occasions when you saw a giraffe, you might be reminded of the day you saw one on campus. Psychologists have long pinpointed **distinctiveness**—having an event stand out as quite different from a background of similar events—as a key to remembering events (Hunt, 2003). In addition, when vivid memories are tinged with strong emotional content, they often seem to leave a permanent mark on us. Public tragedies,

such as terrorist attacks, often create vivid memories in those who witnessed them. But even those of us not directly involved in such events may have vivid memories of them, including memories of first hearing about them. For example, many people are able to recall their exact physical location when they first learned about the assassination or accidental death of a national figure. The term **flashbulb memory** was originally coined by Brown and Kulik (1977) to describe this sort of vivid memory of finding out an important piece of news. The name refers to how some memories seem to be captured in the mind like a flash photograph; because of the distinctiveness and emotionality of the news, they seem to become permanently etched in the mind with exceptional clarity compared to other memories. Take a moment and think back on your own life. Is there a particular memory that seems sharper than others? A memory where you can recall unusual details, like the colors of mundane things around you, or the exact positions of surrounding objects? Although people have great confidence in flashbulb memories like these, the truth is, our objective accuracy with them is far from perfect (Talarico & Rubin, 2003). That is, even though people may have great confidence in what they recall, their memories are not as accurate (e.g., what the actual colors were; where objects were truly placed) as they tend to imagine. Nonetheless, all other things being equal, distinctive and emotional events are well-remembered. Details do not leap perfectly from the world into a person's mind. We might say that we went to a party and remember it, but what we

remember is (at best) what we encoded. As noted above, the process of encoding is selective, and in complex situations, relatively few of many possible details are noticed and encoded. The process of encoding always involves **recoding**—that is, taking the information from the form it is delivered to us and then converting it in a way that we can make sense of it. For example, you might try to remember the colors of a rainbow by using the acronym ROY G BIV (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet). The process of recoding the colors into a name can help us to remember. However, recoding can also introduce errors—when we accidentally add information during encoding, then remember that *new* material as if it had been part of the actual experience (as discussed below).

Psychologists have studied many recoding strategies that can be used during study to improve retention. First, research advises that, as we study, we should think of the meaning of the events (Craik & Lockhart, 1972), and we should try to relate new events to information we already know. This helps us form associations that we can use to retrieve information later. Second, imagining events also makes them more memorable; creating vivid images out of information (even verbal information) can greatly improve later recall (Bower & Reitman, 1972). Creating imagery is part of the technique Simon Reinhard uses to remember huge numbers of digits, but we can all use images to encode information more effectively. The basic concept behind good encoding strategies is to form distinctive memories (ones that stand out), and to form links or associations among memories to help later retrieval (Hunt & McDaniel, 1993). Using study strategies such as the ones described here is challenging, but the effort is well worth the benefits of enhanced learning and retention.



Although it requires more effort, using images and associations can improve the process of recoding. Image: by Paul Downey. [Flow](#), in [Memory \(Encoding, Storage, Retrieval\)](#), CC BY-NC-SA 2.0. [\[click to enlarge\]](#)

We emphasized earlier that encoding is selective: people cannot encode all information they are exposed to. However, recoding can add information that was not even seen or heard during the initial encoding phase. Several of the recoding processes, like forming associations between memories, can happen without our awareness. This is one reason people can sometimes remember events that did not actually happen—because during the process of recoding, details got added. One common way of inducing false memories in the laboratory employs a word-list technique (Deese, 1959; Roediger & McDermott, 1995). Participants hear lists of 15 words, like *door, glass, pane, shade, ledge, sill, house, open, curtain, frame, view, breeze, sash, screen, and shutter*. Later, participants are given a test in which they are shown a list of words and asked to pick out the ones they'd heard earlier. This second list contains some words from the first list (e.g., *door, pane, frame*) and some words not from the list (e.g., *arm, phone, bottle*). In this example, one of the words on the test is *window*, which—importantly—does not appear in the first list, but which is related to other words in that list. When subjects were tested, they were reasonably accurate with

the studied words (*door*, etc.), recognizing them 72% of the time. However, when *window* was on the test, they falsely recognized it as having been on the list 84% of the time (Stadler et al., 1999). The same thing happened with many other lists the authors used. This phenomenon is referred to as the DRM (for Deese-Roediger-McDermott) effect. One explanation for such results is that, while students listened to items in the list, the words triggered the students to think about *window*, even though *window* was never presented. In this way, people seem to encode events that are not actually part of their experience.

Because humans are creative, we are always going beyond the information we are given: we automatically make associations and infer from them what is happening. But, as with the word association mix-up above, sometimes we make false memories from our inferences—remembering the inferences themselves as if they were actual experiences. To illustrate this, Brewer (1977) gave people sentences to remember that were designed to elicit *pragmatic inferences*. Inferences, in general, refer to instances when something is not explicitly stated, but we are still able to guess the undisclosed intention. For example, if your friend told you that she didn't want to go out to eat, you may infer that she doesn't have the money to go out, or that she's too tired. With *pragmatic inferences*, there is usually *one* particular inference you're likely to make. Consider the statement Brewer (1977) gave her participants: "The karate champion hit the cinder block." After hearing or seeing this sentence, participants who were given a memory test tended to remember the statement as having been, "The karate champion *broke* the cinder block." This remembered statement is not necessarily a *logical* inference (i.e., it is perfectly reasonable that a karate champion could hit a cinder block without breaking it). Nevertheless, the *pragmatic* conclusion from hearing such a sentence is that the block was likely broken. The participants remembered this inference they made while hearing the sentence in place of the actual words that were in the sentence (see also McDermott & Chan, 2006).

Encoding—the initial registration of information—is essential in the learning and memory process. Unless an event is encoded in some fashion, it will not be successfully remembered later. However, just because an event is encoded (even if it is encoded well), there's no guarantee that it will be remembered later.

Storage



Memory traces, or engrams, are NOT perfectly preserved recordings of past experiences. The traces are combined with current knowledge to reconstruct what we think happened in the past. Image: by Simon Bierdwald. [casi05](#), in [Memory \(Encoding, Storage, Retrieval\)](#), CC BY-NC-SA 2.0. [click to enlarge]

Every experience we have changes our brains. That may seem like a bold, even strange, claim at first, but it's true. We encode each of our experiences within the structures of the nervous system, making new impressions in the process—and each of those impressions involves changes in the brain. Psychologists (and neurobiologists) say that experiences leave **memory traces, or engrams** (the two terms are synonyms). Memories have to be stored somewhere in the brain, so in order to do so, the brain biochemically alters itself and its neural tissue. Just like you might write yourself a note to remind you of something, the brain “writes” a memory trace, changing its own physical composition to do so. The basic idea is that events (occurrences in our environment) create engrams through a process of **consolidation**: the neural changes that occur after learning to create the

memory trace of an experience. Although neurobiologists are concerned with exactly what neural processes change when memories are created, for psychologists, the term *memory trace* simply refers to the physical change in the nervous system (whatever that may be, exactly) that represents our experience. Although the concept of engram or memory trace is extremely useful, we shouldn't take the term too literally. It is important to understand that memory traces are not perfect little packets of information that lie dormant in the brain, waiting to be called forward to give an accurate report of past experience. Memory traces are not like video or audio recordings, capturing experience with great accuracy; as discussed earlier, we often have errors in our memory, which would not exist if memory traces were perfect packets of information. Thus, it is wrong to think that remembering involves simply “reading out” a faithful record of past experience. Rather, when we remember past events, we reconstruct them with the aid of our memory traces—but also with our current belief of what happened. For example, if you were trying to recall for the police who started a fight at a bar, you may not have a memory trace of who pushed whom first. However, let's say you remember that one of the guys held the door open for you. When thinking back to the start of the fight, this knowledge (of how one guy was friendly to you) may unconsciously influence your memory of what happened in favor of the nice guy. Thus, memory is a construction of what you actually recall and what you believe happened. In a phrase, remembering is reconstructive (we reconstruct our past with the aid of memory traces) not reproductive (a perfect reproduction or recreation of the past). Psychologists refer to the time between learning and testing as the retention interval. Memories can consolidate during that time, aiding retention. However, experiences can also occur that undermine the memory. For example, think of what you had for lunch yesterday—a pretty easy task. However, if you had to recall what you had for lunch 17 days ago, you may well fail (assuming you don't eat the same thing every day). The 16 lunches you've had since that one have created **retroactive interference**. Retroactive interference refers to new activities (i.e., the subsequent lunches) during the retention interval (i.e., the time between the lunch 17 days ago and

now) that interfere with retrieving the specific, older memory (i.e., the lunch details from 17 days ago). But just as newer things can interfere with remembering older things, so can the opposite happen. **Proactive interference** is when past memories interfere with the encoding of new ones. For example, if you have ever studied a second language, often times the grammar and vocabulary of your native language will pop into your head, impairing your fluency in the foreign language.

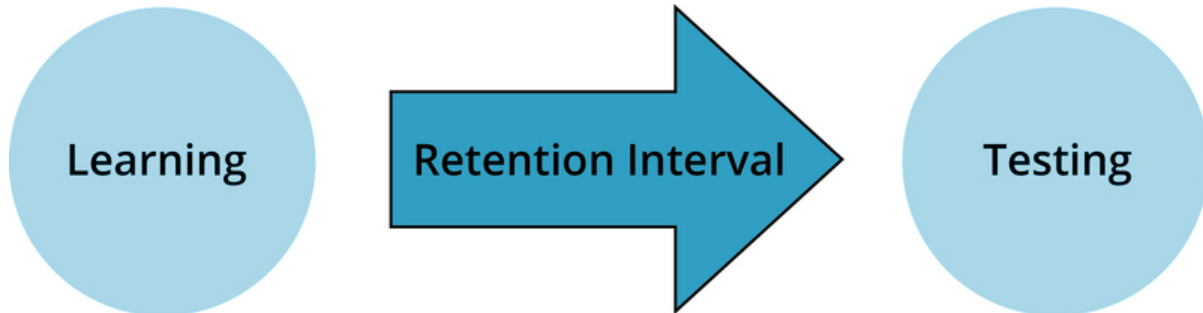


Image: by Kathleen B. McDermott and Henry L. Roediger in [Memory \(Encoding, Storage, Retrieval\)](#), [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). [click to enlarge]

Retroactive interference is one of the main causes of forgetting (McGeoch, 1932). In the module [Eyewitness Testimony and Memory Biases](#), Elizabeth Loftus describes her fascinating work on eyewitness memory, in which she shows how memory for an event can be changed via misinformation supplied during the retention interval. For example, if you witnessed a car crash but subsequently heard people describing it from their own perspective, this new information may interfere with or disrupt your own personal recollection of the crash. In fact, you may even come to remember the event happening exactly as the others described it! This **misinformation effect in eyewitness memory** represents a type of retroactive interference that can occur during the retention interval (see Loftus [2005] for a review). Of course, if correct information is given during the retention interval, the witness's memory will usually be improved. Although interference may arise between the occurrence of an event and the attempt to recall it, *the effect itself is always expressed when we retrieve memories*, the topic to which we turn next.

Retrieval

Endel Tulving (1991) argued that “the key process in memory is retrieval” (p. 91). Why should retrieval be given more prominence than encoding or storage? For one thing, if information were encoded and stored but could not be retrieved, it would be useless. As discussed previously in this module, we encode and store thousands of events—conversations, sights and sounds—every day, creating memory traces. However, we later access only a tiny portion of what we've taken in. Most of our memories will never be used—in the sense of being brought back to mind, consciously. This fact seems so obvious that we rarely reflect on it. All those events that happened to you in the fourth grade that seemed so important then? Now, many years later, you would struggle to remember even

a few. You may wonder if the traces of those memories still exist in some latent form. Unfortunately, with currently available methods, it is impossible to know.

Psychologists distinguish information that is available in memory from that which is accessible (Tulving & Pearlstone, 1966). *Available* information is the information that is stored in memory—but precisely how much and what types are stored cannot be known. That is, all we can know is what information we can retrieve—*accessible* information. The assumption is that accessible information represents only a tiny slice of the information available in our brains. Most of us have had the experience of trying to remember some fact or event, giving up, and then—all of a sudden!—it comes to us at a later time, even after we've stopped trying to remember it. Similarly, we all know the experience of failing to recall a fact, but then, if we are given several choices (as in a multiple-choice test), we are easily able to recognize it.

What factors determine what information can be retrieved from memory? One critical factor is the type of hints, or *cues*, in the environment. You may hear a song on the radio that suddenly evokes memories of an earlier time in your life, even if you were not trying to remember it when the song came on. Nevertheless, the song is closely associated with that time, so it brings the experience to mind. The general principle that underlies the effectiveness of retrieval cues is the **encoding specificity principle** (Tulving & Thomson, 1973): when people encode information, they do so in specific ways. For example, take the song on the radio: perhaps you heard it while you were at a terrific party, having a great, philosophical conversation with a friend. Thus, the song became part of that whole complex experience. Years later, even though you haven't thought about that party in ages, when you hear the song on the radio, the whole experience rushes back to you.

In general, the encoding specificity principle states that, to the extent a retrieval cue (the song) matches or overlaps the memory trace of an experience (the party, the conversation), it will be effective in evoking the memory. A classic experiment on the encoding specificity principle had participants memorize a set of words in a unique setting. Later, the participants were tested on the word sets, either in the same location they learned the words or a different one. As a result of encoding specificity, the students who took the test in the same place they learned the words were actually able to recall more words (Godden & Baddeley, 1975) than the students who took the test in a new setting. One caution with this principle, though, is that, for the cue to work, it can't match too many other experiences (Nairne, 2002; Watkins, 1975). Consider a lab experiment. Suppose you study 100 items; 99 are words, and one is a picture—of a penguin, item 50 in the list. Afterwards, the cue “recall the picture” would evoke “penguin” perfectly. No one would miss it. However, if the *word* “penguin” were placed in the same spot among the other 99 words, its memorability would



We can't know the entirety of what is in our memory, but only that portion we can actually retrieve. Something that cannot be retrieved now and which is seemingly gone from memory may, with different cues applied, reemerge. Image: by ores2k. [Thinking, in Memory \(Encoding, Storage, Retrieval\)](#), CC BY-NC-SA 2.0. [click to enlarge]

be exceptionally worse. This outcome shows the power of distinctiveness that we discussed in the section on encoding: one picture is perfectly recalled from among 99 words because it stands out. Now consider what would happen if the experiment were repeated, but there were 25 pictures distributed within the 100-item list. Although the picture of the penguin would still be there, the probability that the cue “recall the picture” (at item 50) would be useful for the penguin would drop correspondingly. Watkins (1975) referred to this outcome as demonstrating the **cue overload principle**. That is, to be effective, a retrieval cue cannot be overloaded with too many memories. For the cue “recall the picture” to be effective, it should only match one item in the target set (as in the one-picture, 99-word case).

To sum up how memory cues function: for a retrieval cue to be effective, a match must exist between the cue and the desired target memory; furthermore, to produce the best retrieval, the cue-target relationship should be distinctive. Next, we will see how the encoding specificity principle can work in practice.

Psychologists measure memory performance by using production tests (involving recall) or recognition tests (involving the selection of correct from incorrect information, e.g., a multiple-choice test). For example, with our list of 100 words, one group of people might be asked to recall the list in any order (a free recall test), while a different group might be asked to circle the 100 studied words out of a mix with another 100, unstudied words (a recognition test). In this situation, the recognition test would likely produce better performance from participants than the recall test.

We usually think of recognition tests as being quite easy, because the cue for retrieval is a copy of the actual event that was presented for study. After all, what could be a better cue than the exact target (memory) the person is trying to access? In most cases, this line of reasoning is true; nevertheless, recognition tests do not provide perfect indexes of what is stored in memory. That is, you can fail to recognize a target staring you right in the face, yet be able to recall it later with a different set of cues (Watkins & Tulving, 1975). For example, suppose you had the task of recognizing the surnames of famous authors. At first, you might think that being given the actual last name would always be the best cue. However, research has shown this not necessarily to be true (Muter, 1984). When given names such as Tolstoy, Shaw, Shakespeare, and Lee, subjects might well say that Tolstoy and Shakespeare are famous authors, whereas Shaw and Lee are not. But, when given a cued recall test using first names, people often recall items (produce them) that they had failed to recognize before. For example, in this instance, a cue like *George Bernard* _____ often leads to a recall of “Shaw,” even though people initially failed to recognize *Shaw* as a famous author’s name. Yet, when given the cue “William,” people may not come up with Shakespeare, because William is a common name that matches many people (the cue overload principle at work). This strange fact—that recall can sometimes lead to better performance than recognition—can be explained by the encoding specificity principle. As a cue, *George Bernard* _____ matches the way the famous writer is stored in memory better than does his surname, Shaw, does (even though it is the target). Further, the match is quite distinctive with *George Bernard* _____, but the cue *William* _____ is much more overloaded (Prince William, William Yeats, William Faulkner, will.i.am).

The phenomenon we have been describing is called the *recognition failure of recallable words*, which highlights the point that a cue will be most effective depending on how the information has been encoded (Tulving & Thomson, 1973). The point is, the cues that work best to evoke retrieval are those that recreate the event or name to be remembered, whereas sometimes even the target itself, such as *Shaw* in the above example, is not the best cue. Which cue will be most effective depends on how the information has been encoded.

Whenever we think about our past, we engage in the act of retrieval. We usually think that retrieval is an objective act because we tend to imagine that retrieving a memory is like pulling a book from a shelf, and after we are done with it, we return the book to the shelf just as it was. However, research shows this assumption to be false; far from being a static repository of data, the memory is constantly changing. In fact, every time we retrieve a memory, it is altered. For example, the act of retrieval itself (of a fact, concept, or event) makes the retrieved memory much more likely to be retrieved again, a phenomenon called the *testing effect* or the *retrieval practice effect* (Pyc & Rawson, 2009; Roediger & Karpicke, 2006). However, retrieving some information can actually cause us to forget other information related to it, a phenomenon called *retrieval-induced forgetting* (Anderson et al., 1994). Thus the act of retrieval can be a double-edged sword—strengthening the memory just retrieved (usually by a large amount) but harming related information (though this effect is often relatively small).

As discussed earlier, retrieval of distant memories is reconstructive. We weave the concrete bits and pieces of events in with assumptions and preferences to form a coherent story (Bartlett, 1932). For example, if during your 10th birthday, your dog got to your cake before you did, you would likely tell that story for years afterward. Say, then, in later years you misremember where the dog actually found the cake, but repeat that error over and over during subsequent retellings of the story. Over time, that inaccuracy would become a basic fact of the event in your mind. Just as retrieval practice (repetition) enhances accurate memories, so will it strengthen errors or false memories (McDermott, 2006). Sometimes memories can even be manufactured just from hearing a vivid story. Consider the following episode, recounted by Jean Piaget, the famous developmental psychologist, from his childhood:

One of my first memories would date, if it were true, from my second year. I can still see, most clearly, the following scene, in which I believed until I was about 15. I was sitting in my pram . . . when a man tried to kidnap me. I was held in by the strap fastened round me while my nurse bravely tried to stand between me and the thief. She received various scratches, and I can still vaguely see those on her face. . . . When I was about 15, my parents received a letter from my former nurse saying that she had been converted to the Salvation Army. She wanted to confess her past faults, and in particular to return the watch she had been given as a reward on this occasion. She had made up the whole story, faking the scratches. I therefore must have heard, as a child, this story, which my parents believed, and projected it into the past in the form of a visual memory. . . . Many real memories are doubtless of the same order. (Norman & Schacter, 1997, pp. 187–188)

Piaget's vivid account represents a case of a pure reconstructive memory. He heard the tale told

repeatedly, and doubtless told it (and thought about it) himself. The repeated telling cemented the events as though they had really happened, just as we are all open to the possibility of having “many real memories ... of the same order.” The fact that one can remember precise details (the location, the scratches) does not necessarily indicate that the memory is true, a point that has been confirmed in laboratory studies, too (e.g., Norman & Schacter, 1997).

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6.3 Putting it All Together: Improving Your Memory

Putting It All Together: Improving Your Memory

A central theme of this chapter has been the importance of the encoding and retrieval processes, and their interaction. To recap: to improve learning and memory, we need to encode information in conjunction with excellent cues that will bring back the remembered events when we need them. But how do we do this? Keep in mind the two critical principles we have discussed: to maximize retrieval, we should construct *meaningful* cues that remind us of the original experience, and those cues should be *distinctive* and *not associated with other memories*. These two conditions are critical in maximizing cue effectiveness (Nairne, 2002).

So, how can these principles be adapted for use in many situations? Let's go back to how we started the module, with Simon Reinhard's ability to memorize huge numbers of digits. Although it was not obvious, he applied these same general memory principles, but in a more deliberate way. In fact, all **mnemonic devices**, or memory aids/tricks, rely on these fundamental principles. In a typical case, the person learns a set of cues and then applies these cues to learn and remember information.

Consider the set of 20 items below that are easy to learn and remember (Bower & Reitman, 1972).

1. is a gun. 11 is penny-one, hot dog bun.
2. is a shoe. 12 is penny-two, airplane glue.
3. is a tree. 13 is penny-three, bumble bee.
4. is a door. 14 is penny-four, grocery store.
5. is knives. 15 is penny-five, big beehive.
6. is sticks. 16 is penny-six, magic tricks.
7. is oven. 17 is penny-seven, go to heaven.
8. is plate. 18 is penny-eight, golden gate.
9. is wine. 19 is penny-nine, ball of twine.
10. is hen. 20 is penny-ten, ballpoint pen.

It would probably take you less than 10 minutes to learn this list and practice recalling it several times (remember to use retrieval practice!). If you were to do so, you would have a set of peg words on which you could “hang” memories.



In fact, this mnemonic device is called the *peg word technique*. If you then needed to remember some discrete items—say a grocery list, or points you wanted to make in a speech—this method

would let you do so in a very precise yet flexible way. Suppose you had to remember bread, peanut butter, bananas, lettuce, and so on. The way to use the method is to form a vivid image of what you want to remember and imagine it interacting with your peg words (as many as you need). For example, for these items, you might imagine a large gun (the first peg word) shooting a loaf of bread, then a jar of peanut butter inside a shoe, then large bunches of bananas hanging from a tree, then a door slamming on a head of lettuce with leaves flying everywhere. The idea is to provide good, distinctive cues (the weirder the better!) for the information you need to remember while you are learning it. If you do this, then retrieving it later is relatively easy. You know your cues perfectly (one is gun, etc.), so you simply go through your cue word list and “look” in your mind’s eye at the image stored there (bread, in this case).



On Old Olympus' Towering Top, A
Finn And German Viewed Some Hops

Example of a mnemonic system created by a student to study cranial nerves. Image: by [Kelidimari](#) in [Memory \(Encoding, Storage, Retrieval\)](#), CC BY-NC-SA 3.0. [click to enlarge]

This peg word method may sound strange at first, but it works quite well, even with little training (Roediger, 1980). One word of warning, though, is that the items to be remembered need to be presented relatively slowly at first, until you have practice associating each with its cue word. People get faster with time. Another interesting aspect of this technique is that it's just as easy to recall the

items in backwards order as forwards. This is because the peg words provide direct access to the memorized items, regardless of order.

How did Simon Reinhard remember those digits? Essentially he has a much more complex system based on these same principles. In his case, he uses “memory palaces” (elaborate scenes with discrete places) combined with huge sets of images for digits. For example, imagine mentally walking through the home where you grew up and identifying as many distinct areas and objects as possible. Simon has hundreds of such memory palaces that he uses. Next, for remembering digits, he has memorized a set of 10,000 images. Every four-digit number for him immediately brings forth a mental image. So, for example, 6187 might recall Michael Jackson. When Simon hears all the numbers coming at him, he places an image for every four digits into locations in his memory palace. He can do this at an incredibly rapid rate, faster than 4 digits per 4 seconds when they are flashed visually, as in the demonstration at the beginning of the module. As noted, his record is 240 digits, recalled in exact order. Simon also holds the world record in an event called “speed cards,” which involves memorizing the precise order of a shuffled deck of cards. Simon was able to do this in 21.19 seconds! Again, he uses his memory palaces, and he encodes groups of cards as single images.

Many books exist on how to improve memory using mnemonic devices, but all involve forming distinctive encoding operations and then having an infallible set of memory cues. We should add that to develop and use these memory systems beyond the basic peg system outlined above takes a great amount of time and concentration. The World Memory Championships are held every year and the records keep improving. However, for most common purposes, just keep in mind that to remember well you need to encode information in a distinctive way and to have good cues for retrieval. You can adapt a system that will meet most any purpose.



Exercises

1. Mnemonists like Simon Reinhard develop mental “journeys,” which enable them to use the method of loci. Develop your own journey, which contains 20 places, in order, that you know well. One example might be: the front walkway to your parents’ apartment; their doorbell; the couch in their living room; etc. Be sure to use a set of places that you know well and that have a natural order to them (e.g., the walkway comes before the doorbell). Now you are more than halfway toward being able to memorize a set of 20 nouns, in order, rather quickly. As an optional second step, have a friend make a list of 20 such nouns and read them to you, slowly (e.g., one every 5 seconds). Use the method to attempt to remember the 20 items.

2. Recall a recent argument or misunderstanding you have had about memory (e.g., a debate over whether your girlfriend/boyfriend had agreed to something). In light of what you have just learned about memory, how do you think about it? Is it possible that the disagreement can be understood by one of you making a pragmatic inference?
3. Think about what you've learned in this module and about how you study for tests. On the basis of what you have learned, is there something you want to try that might help your study habits?

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6.4 Key Takeaways, Knowledge Check and Key Terms



Key Takeaways

In this chapter, we learned that:

- **The human memory is capable of astounding feats.**
- **There are different types of memory** including our memory for events (episodic memory) and facts (semantic memory).
- **There are three stages of the memory/learning process:** encoding, storage, and retrieval. Failure to encode and forgetting prevent us from accessing information.
- **Using memory strategies such as mnemonics can help to improve our ability to encode and retrieve** information.



Knowledge Check

Review your understanding of this chapter's key concepts by taking the interactive quiz below.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationpsychology/?p=673#h5p-8>



Key Terms

Key terms from this chapter include:

- **Episodic memory**
- **Semantic memory**
- **Autobiographical memory**
- **Encoding**
- **Storage**
- **Retrieval**
- **Distinctiveness**
- **Flashbulb memory**
- **Recoding**
- **Engrams**
- **Memory traces**
- **Consolidation**
- **Retroactive interference**
- **Misinformation effect**
- **Encoding specificity principle**
- **Cue overload principle**
- **Mnemonic device**

CHAPTER 7: DECISION-MAKING



Learning Objectives

In this chapter, we will:

1. **Define** decision making.
2. **Describe** influences on decision-making.
3. **Identify** common biases that impact the decision-making process
4. **Understand** the different types of decisions you may make in your career and personal life.



Let's Focus

Too Many Choices

Andi graduated from Fanshawe College two weeks ago with her degree in Business Management. She is anxious to put her knowledge to good use at a job she enjoys.

Andi has an idea of her perfect job and begins work to apply to those organizations that meet her criteria. Using social media and traditional approaches to job searching, Andi gets three interviews at well-known companies in the London-Middlesex area.

After what seems like a week interviewing, Andi receives two job offers! She is thrilled but isn't sure which one to choose. One of the offers is for a higher salary than she expected but requires one week of travel per month. The other job is a lower salary and position, but the possibilities to grow with the company seem better. Andi isn't sure which job to choose.

Big decisions, such as career choices, take a lot of planning and thought. This chapter will discuss the ways we can learn to make good personal decisions, and also good decisions in the workplace.

References

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7.1 Understanding Decision-making

Decision-making is the action or process of thinking through possible options and selecting one.

Individuals throughout organizations use the information they gather to make a wide range of decisions. These decisions may affect the lives of others and change the course of an organization. It is important to recognize that employees and managers alike are continually making decisions, and that the quality of their decision-making has an impact—sometimes quite significant—on the effectiveness of the organization and its stakeholders. **Stakeholders** are all the individuals or groups that are affected by an organization (such as customers, employees, shareholders, etc.).

Members of the top management team regularly make decisions that affect the future of the organization and all its stakeholders, such as deciding whether to pursue a new technology or product line. A good decision can enable the organization to thrive and survive long-term, while a poor decision can lead a business into bankruptcy. Managers at lower levels of the organization generally have a smaller impact on the organization's survival, but can still have a tremendous impact on their department and its workers. Consider, for example, a first-line supervisor who is charged with scheduling workers and ordering raw materials for her department. Poor decision-making by lower-level managers is unlikely to drive the entire firm out of existence, but it can lead to many adverse outcomes such as:

- **reduced productivity** if there are too few workers or insufficient supplies,
- **increased expenses** if there are too many workers or too many supplies, particularly if the supplies have a limited shelf life or are costly to store, and
- **frustration among employees, reduced morale, and increased turnover** (which can be costly for the organization) if the decisions involve managing and training workers.

While it can be argued that management is decision making, half of the decisions made by managers within organizations ultimately fail (Ireland & Miller, 2004; Nutt, 2002; Nutt, 1999). Therefore, increasing effectiveness in decision making is an important part of maximizing your effectiveness at work. This chapter will help you understand how to make decisions alone or in a group while avoiding common decision-making pitfalls.

Types of Decisions

Because managers have limited time and must use that time wisely to be effective, it is important for them to distinguish between decisions that can have structure and routine applied to them

(called programmed decisions) and decisions that are novel and require thought and attention (nonprogrammed decisions).

Programmed Decisions

Programmed decisions are those that are repeated over time and for which an existing set of rules can be developed to guide the process. These decisions might be simple, or they could be fairly complex, but the criteria that go into making the decision are all known or can at least be estimated with a reasonable degree of accuracy. For example, consider a retail store manager developing the weekly work schedule for part-time employees. The manager must consider how busy the store is likely to be, taking into account seasonal fluctuations in business. Then, they must consider the availability of the workers by taking into account requests for vacation and for other obligations that employees might have (such as school). Establishing the schedule might be complex, but it is still a programmed decision: it is made on a regular basis based on well-understood criteria, so structure can be applied to the process.

For programmed decisions, managers often develop **heuristics**, or mental shortcuts, to help reach a decision. For example, the retail store manager may not know how busy the store will be the week of a big sale, but might routinely increase staff by 30% every time there is a big sale (because this has been fairly effective in the past). Heuristics are efficient—they save time for the decision maker by generating an adequate solution quickly. Heuristics don't necessarily yield the optimal solution—deeper cognitive processing may be required for that. However, they generally yield a good solution. Heuristics are often used for programmed decisions, because experience in making the decision over and over helps the decision maker know what to expect and how to react. Programmed decision-making can also be taught fairly easily to another person. The rules and criteria, and how they relate to outcomes, can be clearly laid out so that a good decision can be reached by the new decision maker. Programmed decisions are also sometimes referred to as *routine* or *low-involvement* decisions because they don't require in-depth mental processing to reach a decision. High- and low-involvement decisions are illustrated in Figure 7.1

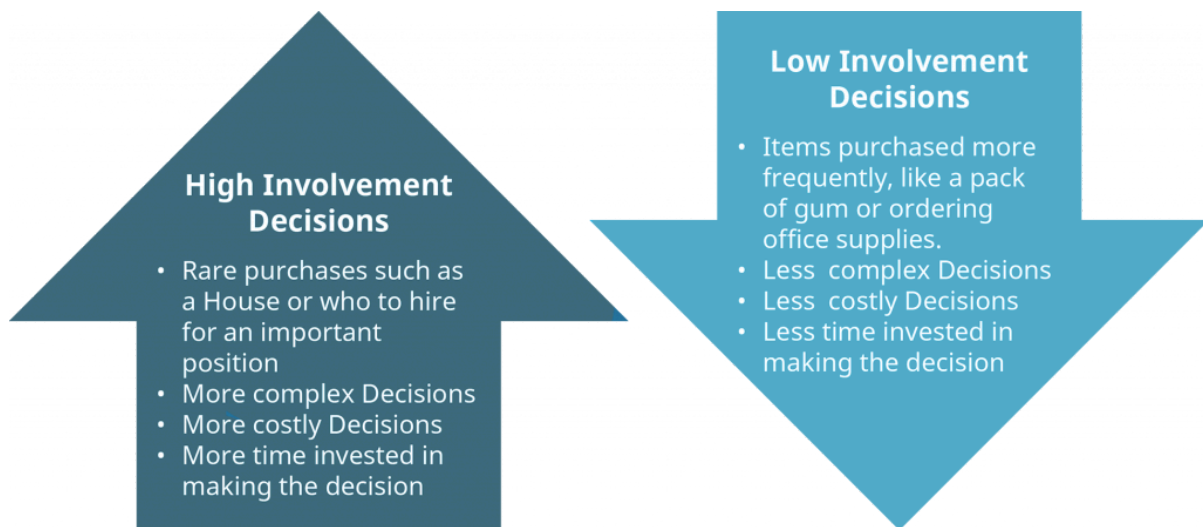


Figure 7.1 High-Involvement and Low-Involvement Decisions. Image: Rice University. [Organizational Behavior, CC BY 4.0](#). Color altered from original. [click to enlarge]

Nonprogrammed Decisions

In contrast, **nonprogrammed decisions** are novel, unstructured decisions that are generally based on criteria that are not well-defined. With nonprogrammed decisions, information is more likely to be ambiguous or incomplete, and the decision maker may need to exercise some thoughtful judgment and creative thinking to reach a good solution. These are also sometimes referred to as *nonroutine* decisions or as *high-involvement* decisions because they require greater involvement and thought on the part of the decision maker. For example, consider a manager trying to decide whether or not to adopt a new technology. There will always be unknowns in situations of this nature. Will the new technology really be better than the existing technology? Will it become widely accepted over time, or will some other technology become the standard? The best the manager can do in this situation is to gather as much relevant information as possible and make an educated guess as to whether the new technology will be worthwhile. Clearly, nonprogrammed decisions present the greater challenge.

Levels of Decision-making

Decisions can be classified into three categories based on the level at which they occur. **Strategic decisions** set the course of an organization. **Tactical decisions** are decisions about how things will get done. Finally, **operational decisions** refer to decisions that employees make each day to make the organization run. Oftentimes, these decisions follow the organizational hierarchy with CEOs and shareholders setting the tone via strategic mandates, managers deciding how the work should be done via tactical decisions, and employees making the day-to-day operational decisions that keep the organization running smoothly. These categories of decisions are depicted below in Table 7.1



Here's an Example

Think about the restaurant that routinely offers a free dessert when a customer complaint is received. The owner of the restaurant made a strategic decision to have great customer service. The manager of the restaurant implemented the free dessert policy as a way to handle customer complaints, which is a tactical decision. Finally, the servers at the restaurant are making individual decisions each day by evaluating whether each customer complaint received is legitimate and warrants a free dessert.

Table 7.1 Examples of Decisions Commonly Made within Organizations

Level of Decision	Examples of Decision	Who Typically Makes Decisions
Strategic Decisions	Should we Merge with another company?	Top management teams, CEOs, and Boards of Directors
	Should we pursue a new product line?	
	Should we Downside our organization?	
Technical Decisions	What should be do to help facilitate replies from the two companies working together?	Managers
	How should we market the new product line?	
	Who should we let go when we downsize?	
Operational Decisions	How often should I communicate with my new coworker?	Employees throughout the organization
	What should I say to customers about our new product?	
	Who will I balance my new work demands?	

[Source](#) (Converted from an image in original)

Deciding When to Decide

While some decisions are simple, a manager's decisions are often complex ones that involve a range of options and uncertain outcomes. When deciding among various options and uncertain outcomes, managers need to gather information, which leads them to another necessary decision: how much information is needed to make a good decision? Managers frequently make decisions without complete information; indeed, one of the hallmarks of an effective leader is the ability to determine when to hold off on a decision and gather more information, and when to make a decision with the information at hand. Waiting too long to make a decision can be as harmful for the organization as reaching a decision too quickly. Failing to react quickly enough can lead to missed opportunities, yet acting too quickly can lead to organizational resources being poorly allocated to projects with no chance of success. Effective managers must decide when they have gathered enough information and must be prepared to change course if additional information becomes available that makes it clear that the original decision was a poor one. For individuals with fragile egos, changing course can be challenging because admitting to a mistake can be harder than forging ahead with a bad plan. Effective managers recognize that given the complexity of many tasks, some failures are inevitable. They also realize that it's better to minimize a bad decision's impact on the organization and its stakeholders by recognizing it quickly and correcting it.

What's the Right (Correct) Answer?

It's also worth noting that making decisions as a manager is not at all like taking a multiple-choice test: with a multiple-choice test there is always one right answer. This is rarely the case with management decisions. Sometimes a manager is choosing between multiple good options, and it's not clear which will be the best. Other times there are multiple bad options, and the task is to minimize harm. Often there are individuals in the organization with competing interests, and the manager must make decisions knowing that someone will be upset no matter what decision is reached.

What's the Right (Ethical) Answer?

Sometimes managers are asked to make decisions that go beyond just upsetting someone—they may be asked to make decisions in which harm could be caused to others. These decisions have ethical or moral implications. Ethics and morals refer to our beliefs about what is right vs. wrong, good vs. evil, virtuous vs. corrupt. Implicitly, ethics and morals relate to our interactions with and impact on others—if we never had to interact with another creature, we would not have to think about how our behaviors affected other individuals or groups. All managers, however, make decisions that impact others. It is therefore important to be mindful about whether our decisions have a positive or a negative impact. “Maximizing shareholder wealth” is often used as a rationalization for placing the importance of short-term profits over the needs of others who will

be affected by a decision—such as employees, customers, or local citizens (who might be affected, for example, by environmental decisions). Maximizing shareholder wealth is often a short-sighted decision, however, because it can harm the organization's financial viability in the future (Stout, 2012). Bad publicity, customers boycotting the organization, and government fines are all possible long-term outcomes when managers make choices that cause harm in order to maximize shareholder wealth. More importantly, increasing the wealth of shareholders is not an acceptable reason for causing harm to others. We will talk more about ethics in a future chapter.

Decision-making Systems in the Human Brain

The human brain processes information for decision-making using one of two routes: a reflective system and a reactive (or reflexive) system (Facione & Facione, 2007; Lieberman, 2003). The **reflective system** is logical, analytical, deliberate, and methodical, while the **reactive system** is quick, impulsive, and intuitive, relying on emotions or habits to provide cues for what to do next. Research in neuropsychology suggests that the brain can only use one system at a time for processing information (Darlow & Sloman, 2010) and that the two systems are directed by different parts of the brain. The prefrontal cortex is more involved in the reflective system, and the basal ganglia and amygdala (more primitive parts of the brain, from an evolutionary perspective) are more involved in the reactive system (Darlow & Sloman, 2010).

Reactive Decision-Making

We tend to assume that the logical, analytical route leads to superior decisions, but whether this is accurate depends on the situation. The quick, intuitive route can be lifesaving; when we suddenly feel intense fear, a fight-or-flight response kicks in that leads to immediate action without methodically weighing all possible options and their consequences. Additionally, experienced managers can often make decisions very quickly because experience or expertise has taught them what to do in a given situation. These managers might not be able to explain the logic behind their decision, and will instead say they just went with their “gut,” or did what “felt” right. Because the manager has faced a similar situation in the past and has figured out how to deal with it, the brain shifts immediately to the quick, intuitive decision-making system (Gladwell, 2005).

Reflective Decision-Making

The quick route is not always the best decision-making path to take, however. When faced with novel and complex situations, it is better to process available information logically, analytically, and methodically. As a manager, you need to think about whether a situation requires not a fast, “gut” reaction, but some serious thought prior to making a decision. It is especially important to pay attention to your emotions, because strong emotions can make it difficult to process information rationally. Successful managers recognize the effects of emotions and know to wait and address a volatile situation after their emotions have calmed down. Intense emotions—whether positive or negative—tend to pull us toward the quick, reactive route of decision-making. Have you ever made a large “impulse” purchase that you were excited about, only to regret it later? This speaks to the power our emotions exert on our decision-making. Big decisions should generally not be made impulsively, but reflectively.

The Role of Emotions

Being aware of the role emotions play in decision-making does not mean that we should ignore them. Emotions can serve as powerful signals about what we should do, especially in situations with ethical implications. Thinking through how we feel about the possible options, and why we feel that way, can greatly enhance our decision-making (George, 2000). Effective decision-making, then, relies on both logic *and* emotions. For this reason, the concept of emotional intelligence has become popular as a characteristic of effective managers.

Recall, **emotional intelligence** is the ability to recognize, understand, pay attention to, and manage one’s own emotions and the emotions of others. It involves self-awareness and self-regulation—essentially, this is a toggling back and forth between emotions and logic so that we analyze and understand our own emotions and then exert the necessary control to manage them as appropriate for the situation. Emotional intelligence also involves **empathy**—the ability to understand other peoples’ emotions (and an interest in doing so). Finally, emotional intelligence involves social skills to manage the emotional aspects of relationships with others. Managers who are aware of their own emotions can think through what their emotions mean in a given situation and use that information to guide their decision-making. Managers who are aware of the emotions of others can also utilize that information to help groups function more effectively and engage in better group decision-making. While emotional intelligence seems to come easily to some people, it is something that we can develop and improve on with practice.

Let's Reflect

Sometimes when we are faced with making a hard decision, we can be overly emotional and therefore make the wrong one. **By developing self-awareness skills (I am feeling xx way) and then managing our emotions once we recognize them, we can learn to make healthy, wise decisions.** As you read later in this chapter about the Debono decision-making model, this model specifically asks that you look at your own emotions and the emotions of others. This is part of self-awareness and social awareness in emotional intelligence. Without these skills, it can be difficult to make good decisions.



The ability to make good decisions can help us become happier people, thus better at communicating and maintaining our interpersonal relationships in our work and personal lives.

When we understand how we feel about a certain decision we have to make, we can look realistically at all possible solutions from a cognitive level, which allows us to also make better decisions. These emotional intelligence skills, specifically self-awareness and self-management, can help us make thoughtful, sound decisions that improve our productivity, happiness, and satisfaction.



Let's Review

- **Decision making is choosing among alternative courses of action.**
- **At various levels in an organization employees and managers make decisions.** Strategic decisions offer big picture ideas, tactical decisions offer solutions to how to accomplish these goals, and operational decisions are the day-to-day decisions made by employees.
- **There are different types of decisions** ranging from automatic, programmed decisions to more intensive nonprogrammed decisions.
- **Our brain's reactive system makes quick and intuitive decisions.** The reflective system is slower, more deliberate and logical.
- **Our emotions impact our ability to make good decisions.** Developing our emotional intelligence skills can help us to understand our emotions and also consider other points of view. Ultimately, this can lead to better decision-making in the workplace.



Exercises

1. What do you see as the main difference between a successful and an unsuccessful decision? How much does luck versus skill have to do with it? How much time needs to pass to know if a decision is successful or not?
2. Research has shown that over half of the decisions made within organizations fail. Does this surprise you? Why or why not?
3. Provide an example of a time that you used a decision rule and a time that you made a nonprogrammed decision.
4. How can recognizing strong emotions help you to make better decisions at work?

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7.2 Decision-making Models

Decision-making Models

In this section, we are going to discuss different decision-making models designed to understand and evaluate the effectiveness of nonprogrammed decisions. We will cover four decision-making approaches, starting with the rational decision-making model, moving to the bounded rationality decision-making model, the intuitive decision-making model, and ending with the creative decision-making model. The importance of making good decisions relates to our ability to manage our emotional intelligence to make sure we make the right decisions. These models will help us make better decisions, which results in better human relations.

In this Section:

- [Rational Decision-making](#)
- [Bounded Rationality](#)
- [Intuitive Decision-making](#)
- [Creative Decision-making](#)

Rational Decision-Making

The rational decision-making model describes a series of steps that decision makers should consider if their goal is to maximize the quality of their outcomes. In other words, if you want to make sure that you make the best choice, going through the formal steps of the rational decision-making model may make sense.



Let's Focus: Rational Decision-making Model

Buying Your First Car

Let's imagine that your old, clunky car has broken down, and you have enough money saved for a substantial down payment on a new car. It will be the first major purchase of your life, and you want to make the right choice.

The first step, therefore, has already been completed—we know that you want to buy a new car. Next, in step 2, you'll need to decide which factors are important to you. How many passengers do you want to accommodate? How important is fuel economy to you? Is safety a major concern? You only have a certain amount of money saved, and you don't want to take on too much debt, so price range is an important factor as well. If you know you want to have room for at least five adults, get at least twenty miles per gallon, drive a car with a strong safety rating, not spend more than \$22,000 on the purchase, and like how it looks, you have identified the **decision criteria**. All the potential options for purchasing your car will be evaluated against these criteria.

Before we can move too much further, you need to decide how important each factor is to your decision in step 3. If each is equally important, then there is no need to weigh them, but if you know that price and mpg are key factors, you might weigh them heavily and keep the other criteria with medium importance. Step 4 requires you to generate all **alternatives** about your options. Then, in step 5, you need to use this information to evaluate each alternative against the criteria you have established. You choose the best alternative (step 6), and then you would go out and buy your new car (step 7).

Of course, the outcome of this decision will influence the next decision made. That is where step 8 comes in. For example, if you purchase a car and have nothing but problems with it, you will be less likely to consider the same make and model when purchasing a car the next time.

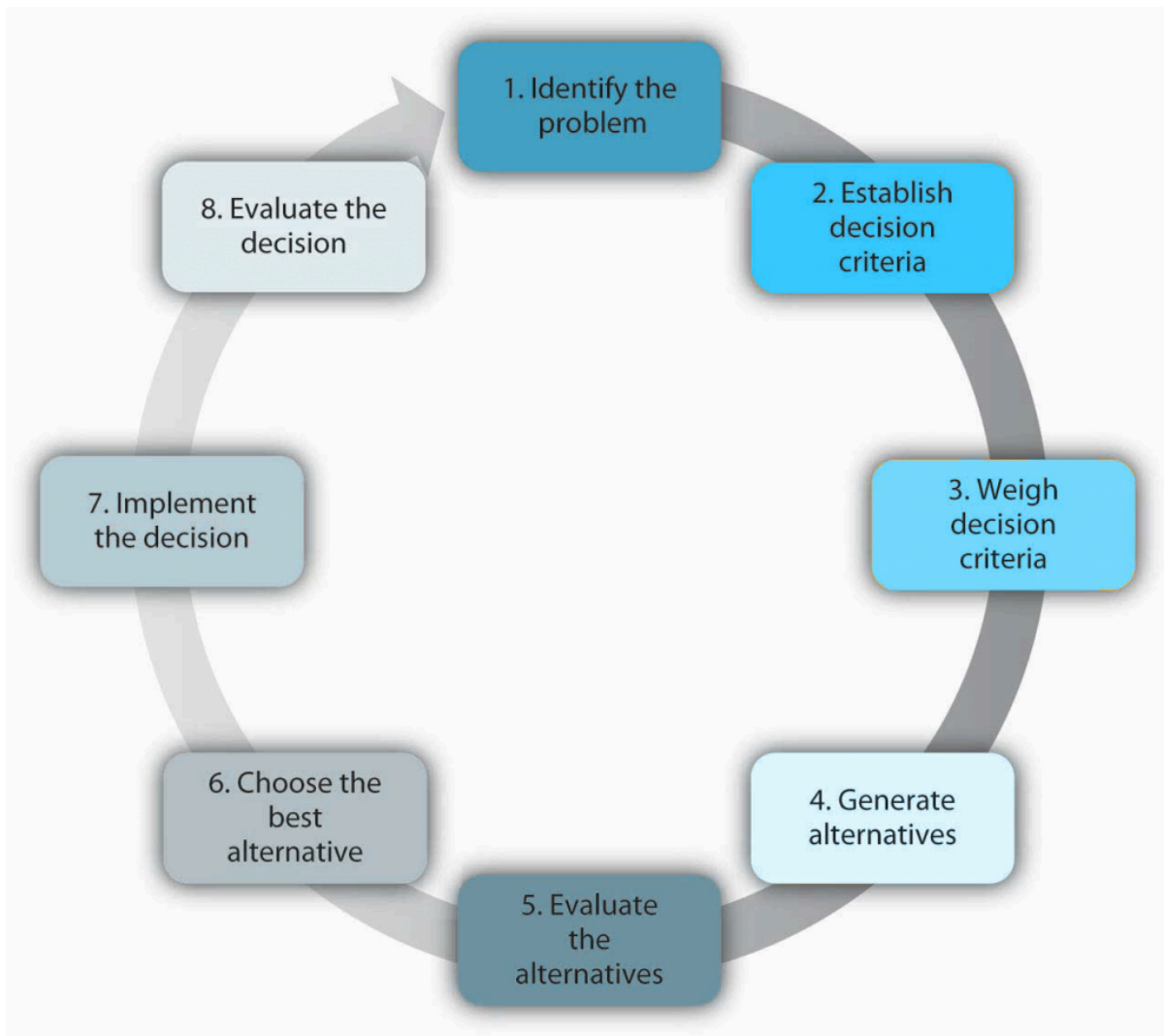


Figure 7.2. Steps in the Rational Decision-making Model. While decision makers can get off track during any of these steps, research shows that searching for alternatives in the fourth step can be the most challenging and often leads to failure. In fact, one researcher found that no alternative generation occurred in 85 percent of the decisions he studied. Nutt, P. C. (1994). Conversely, successful managers know what they want at the outset of the decision-making process, set objectives for others to respond to, carry out an unrestricted search for solutions, get key people to participate, and avoid using their power to push their perspective. Nutt, P. C. (1998). Surprising but true: Half the decisions in organizations fail. Image: Saylor Academy. [Human Relations, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Color altered from original. [click to enlarge]

While decision makers can get off track during any of these steps, research shows that searching for alternatives in the fourth step can be the most challenging and often leads to failure. In fact, one researcher found that no alternative generation occurred in 85 percent of the decisions he studied (Nutt, 1994). Conversely, successful managers know what they want at the outset of the decision-making process, set objectives for others to respond to, carry out an unrestricted search for solutions, get key people to participate, and avoid using their power to push their perspective (Nutt, 1998).

The rational decision-making model has important lessons for decision makers. First, when making

a decision, you may want to make sure that you establish your decision criteria before you search for alternatives. This would prevent you from liking one option too much and setting your criteria accordingly. For example, let's say you started browsing cars online before you generated your decision criteria. You may come across a car that you feel reflects your sense of style and you develop an emotional bond with the car. Then, because of your love for the particular car, you may say to yourself that the fuel economy of the car and the innovative braking system are the most important criteria. After purchasing it, you may realize that the car is too small for your friends to ride in the back seat, which was something you should have thought about. Setting criteria before you search for alternatives may prevent you from making such mistakes. Another advantage of the rational model is that it urges decision makers to generate all alternatives instead of only a few. By generating a large number of alternatives that cover a wide range of possibilities, you are unlikely to make a more effective decision that does not require sacrificing one criterion for the sake of another.

Despite all its benefits, you may have noticed that this decision-making model involves a number of unrealistic assumptions as well. It assumes that people completely understand the decision to be made, that they know all their available choices, that they have no perceptual biases, and that they want to make optimal decisions. Nobel Prize-winning economist Herbert Simon observed that while the rational decision-making model may be a helpful device in aiding decision makers when working through problems, it doesn't represent how decisions are frequently made within organizations. In fact, Simon argued that it didn't even come close.

Think about how you make important decisions in your life. It is likely that you rarely sit down and complete all eight of the steps in the rational decision-making model. For example, this model proposed that we should search for all possible alternatives before making a decision, but that process is time consuming, and individuals are often under time pressure to make decisions. Moreover, even if we had access to all the information that was available, it could be challenging to compare the pros and cons of each alternative and rank them according to our preferences. Anyone who has recently purchased a new laptop computer or cell phone can attest to the challenge of sorting through the different strengths and limitations of each brand and model and arriving at the solution that best meets particular needs. In fact, the availability of too much information can lead to **analysis paralysis**, in which more and more time is spent on gathering information and thinking about it, but no decisions actually get made. A senior executive at Hewlett-Packard Development Company LP admits that his company suffered from this spiral of analyzing things for too long to the point where data gathering led to "not making decisions, instead of us making decisions (Zell et al., 2007). Moreover, you may not always be interested in reaching an optimal decision. For example, if you are looking to purchase a house, you may be willing and able to invest a great deal of time and energy to find your dream house, but if you are only looking for an apartment to rent for the academic year, you may be willing to take the first one that meets your criteria of being clean, close to campus, and within your price range.

Bounded Rationality: Making “Good Enough” Decisions

The **bounded rationality model** of decision making recognizes the limitations of our decision-making processes. According to this model, individuals knowingly limit their options to a manageable set and choose the first acceptable alternative without conducting an exhaustive search for alternatives. An important part of the bounded rationality approach is the tendency to **satisfice** (a term coined by Herbert Simon from satisfy and suffice), which refers to accepting the first alternative that meets your minimum criteria.

For example, many college graduates do not conduct a national or international search for potential job openings. Instead, they focus their search on a limited geographic area, and they tend to accept the first offer in their chosen area, even if it may not be the ideal job situation. Satisficing is similar to rational decision making. The main difference is that rather than choosing the best option and maximizing the potential outcome, the decision maker saves cognitive time and effort by accepting the first alternative that meets the minimum threshold.

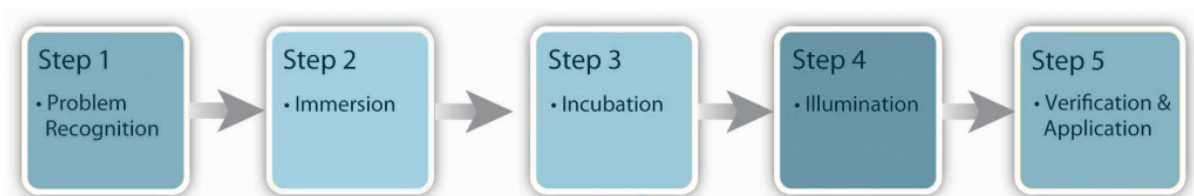
Intuitive Decision-making

The **intuitive decision-making model** has emerged as an alternative to other decision making processes. This model refers to arriving at decisions without conscious reasoning. A total of 89 percent of managers surveyed admitted to using intuition to make decisions at least sometimes and 59 percent said they used intuition often (Burke & Miller, 1999). Managers make decisions under challenging circumstances, including time pressures, constraints, a great deal of uncertainty, changing conditions, and highly visible and high-stakes outcomes. Thus, it makes sense that they would not have the time to use the rational decision-making model. Yet when CEOs, financial analysts, and health care workers are asked about the critical decisions they make, seldom do they attribute success to luck. To an outside observer, it may seem like they are making guesses as to the course of action to take, but it turns out that experts systematically make decisions using a different model than was earlier suspected. Research on life-or-death decisions made by fire chiefs, pilots, and nurses finds that experts do not choose among a list of well thought out alternatives. They don't decide between two or three options and choose the best one. Instead, they consider only one option at a time. The intuitive decision-making model argues that in a given situation, experts making decisions scan the environment for cues to recognize patterns (Breen, 2000; Klein, 2003; Salas & Klein, 2001). Once a pattern is recognized, they can play a potential course of action through to its outcome based on their prior experience. Thanks to training, experience, and knowledge, these decision makers have an idea of how well a given solution may work. If they run through the mental model and find that the solution will not work, they alter the solution before setting it into action. If it still is not deemed a workable solution, it is discarded as an option, and a new idea is tested until a workable solution is found. Once a viable course of action is identified, the decision maker puts the solution into motion. The key point is that only one choice is considered at a time. Novices are not able to make effective decisions this way, because they do not have enough prior experience to draw upon.

Creative Decision-making

In addition to the rational decision making, bounded rationality, and intuitive decision-making models, **creative decision making** is a vital part of being an effective decision maker. **Creativity** is the generation of new, imaginative ideas. With the flattening of organizations and intense competition among companies, individuals and organizations are driven to be creative in decisions ranging from cutting costs to generating new ways of doing business. Please note that, while creativity is the first step in the innovation process, creativity and innovation are not the same thing. Innovation begins with creative ideas, but it also involves realistic planning and follow-through. Innovations such as 3M's Clearview Window Tinting grow out of a creative decision-making process about what may or may not work to solve real-world problems.

The five steps to creative decision making are similar to the previous decision-making models in some key ways. All the models include **problem identification**, which is the step in which the need for problem solving becomes apparent. If you do not recognize that you have a problem, it is impossible to solve it. **Immersion** is the step in which the decision maker consciously thinks about the problem and gathers information. A key to success in creative decision making is having or acquiring expertise in the area being studied. Then, **incubation** occurs. During incubation, the individual sets the problem aside and does not think about it for a while. At this time, the brain is actually working on the problem unconsciously. Then comes **illumination**, or the insight moment when the solution to the problem becomes apparent to the person, sometimes when it is least expected. This sudden insight is the "eureka" moment, similar to what happened to the ancient Greek inventor Archimedes, who found a solution to the problem he was working on while taking a bath. Finally, the **verification and application** stage happens when the decision maker consciously verifies the feasibility of the solution and implements the decision.



7.3 Steps in the Creative Decision-making Process. Image: Saylor Academy. [Human Relations, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Color altered from original. [click to enlarge]



Here's an Example

A NASA scientist describes his decision-making process leading to a creative outcome as follows: He had been trying to figure out a better way to de-ice planes to make the process faster and safer.

After recognizing the problem, he immersed himself in the literature to understand all the options, and he worked on the problem for months trying to figure out a solution. It was not until he was sitting outside a McDonald's restaurant with his grandchildren that it dawned on him.

The [golden arches of the M of the McDonald's logo](#) inspired his solution—he would design the de-icer as a series of Ms. This represented the illumination stage. After he tested and verified his creative solution, he was done with that problem, except to reflect on the outcome and process.

How do you know if your decision process is creative?

Researchers focus on three factors to evaluate the level of creativity in the decision-making process.

Fluency refers to the number of ideas a person is able to generate. **Flexibility** refers to how different the ideas are from one another. If you are able to generate several distinct solutions to a problem, your decision-making process is high on flexibility. **Originality** refers to how unique a person's ideas are.

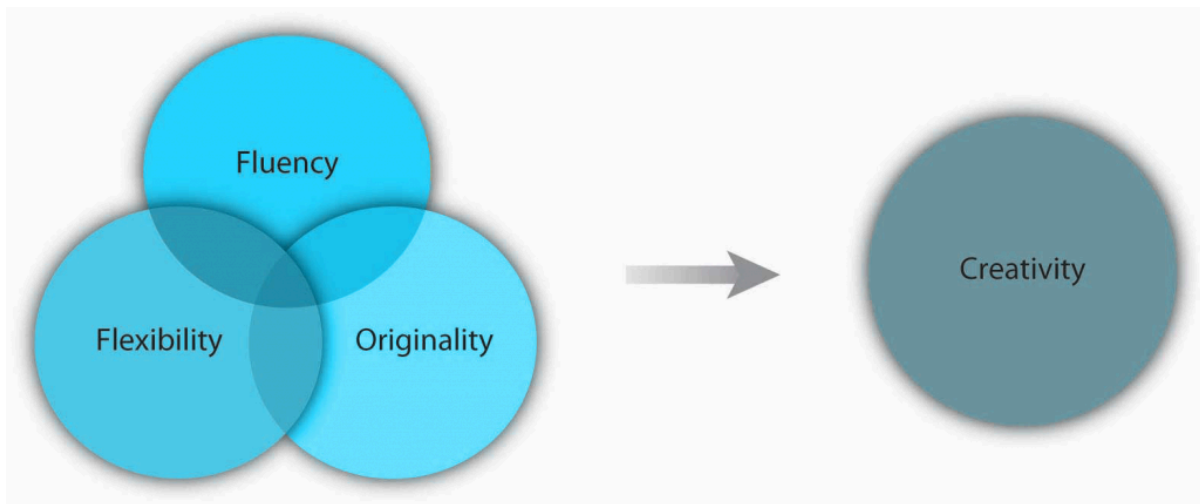


Figure 7.4 Dimensions of Creativity. Image: Saylor Academy. [Human Relations, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Color altered from original. [click to enlarge]

Some experts (Amabile, 1999; Amabile et al., 1996; Ford et al., 2000; Tierney et al., 1999; Woodman et al., 1993) have proposed that creativity occurs as an interaction among three factors: people's personality traits (openness to experience, risk taking), their attributes (expertise, imagination, motivation), and the situational context (encouragement from others, time pressure, physical structures). For example, research shows that individuals who are open to experience, less conscientious, more self-accepting, and more impulsive tend to be more creative (Feist, 1998).



Consider This

Ideas for Enhancing Creativity in Groups

Some ideas for enhancing creativity in groups include:

Team Composition

- *Diversify your team* to give them more inputs to build on and more opportunities to create

functional conflict while avoiding personal conflict.

- *Change group membership* to stimulate new ideas and new interaction patterns.
- *Leaderless teams* can allow teams freedom to create without trying to please anyone up front.

Team Process

- *Engage in brainstorming* to generate ideas. Remember to set a high goal for the number of ideas the group should come up with, encourage wild ideas, and take brainwriting breaks.
- *Use the nominal group technique* (see Tools and Techniques for Making Better Decisions below) *in person or electronically* to avoid some common group process pitfalls. Consider anonymous feedback as well.
- *Use analogies* to envision problems and solutions.

Leadership

- *Challenge teams* so that they are engaged but not overwhelmed.
- *Let people decide how to achieve goals* rather than telling them what goals to achieve.
- *Support and celebrate creativity* even when it leads to a mistake. Be sure to set up processes to learn from mistakes as well.
- *Role model* creative behavior.

Culture

- *Institute organizational memory* so that individuals do not spend time on routine tasks.
- *Build a physical space conducive to creativity* that is playful and humorous—this is a place where ideas can thrive.
- *Incorporate creative behavior* into the performance appraisal process.

Sources: Adapted from ideas in Amabile, T. M. (1998). How to kill creativity. *Harvard Business Review*, 77-87. Gundry, L. K., Kickul, J. R., & Prather, C. W. (1994). Building the creative organization. *Organizational Dynamics*, 22(4), 22–37.; Keith, N., & Frese, M. (2008). Effectiveness of error management training: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 93(1), 59–69.; Pearsall, M. J., Ellis, A. P. J., & Evans, J. M. (2008). Unlocking the effects of gender faultlines on team creativity: Is activation the key? *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 93(1), 225–234.; Thompson, L. (2003). Improving the creativity of organizational work groups. *Academy of Management Executive*, 17, 96-109.

Enhancing Creative Decision-making

There are many techniques available that enhance and improve creativity. Linus Pauling (2008), the Nobel Prize winner who popularized the idea that vitamin C could help strengthen the immune system, said, “The best way to have a good idea is to have a lot of ideas.” One popular method of generating ideas is to use brainstorming. **Brainstorming** is a group process of generating ideas that follow a set of guidelines, including no criticism of ideas during the brainstorming process, the idea that no suggestion is too crazy, and building on other ideas (piggybacking). Research shows that the quantity of ideas actually leads to better idea quality in the end, so setting high idea quotas, in which

the group must reach a set number of ideas before they are done, is recommended to avoid process loss and maximize the effectiveness of brainstorming. Another unique aspect of brainstorming is that since the variety of backgrounds and approaches give the group more to draw upon, the more people are included in the process, the better the decision outcome will be. A variation of brainstorming is **wildstorming**, in which the group focuses on ideas that are impossible and then imagines what would need to happen to make them possible (Scott et al., 2004).

One example of a creative decision making model is the Edward Debono model. The **Edward Debono's model of the Six Thinking Hats** provides us with a different way of thinking about the way we make decisions. The six hats provide us with perspectives from six different perspectives. Similar to the rational decision making model discussed earlier, this model uses hats to represent the steps we need to follow in order to make good decisions. For example, the white hat helps us look at the facts of the situation. The red hat helps us look at the emotional aspect of the problem or solution. The black hat helps us to look at the negatives of the solution, while the yellow hat helps us think about the positives of the solution. The green hat allows us to come up with potential solutions or courses of action, while the blue hat helps us manage the process of making the decision.



Let's Focus

Andi and the 6 Hats: An Example

Consider the opening scenario where Andi is considering which job to accept. If she were using the six hats model, first she would look at the facts—that is, the aspects of each job offer (white hat). Then, she would look at how she feel (red hat) about each job. Next, she would look at the downsides of each job (black hat). Then, she would look at the positives of each job (yellow hat). Next, she would use the green hat to look at the job offers from a creative way and look at potential of choosing one job over another. Finally, the blue hat would cause Andi to make sure she used all hats to make a decision and, based on the data, would go ahead and make the best choice.

Which Model is Best?

Now that we've reviewed all four types of models for non-programmed decisions, you may be wondering: which model is best to use when I make a decision? As we've learned, each of these models has potential advantages and disadvantages. Figure 7.6 below offers some suggestions as to when each model is helpful based on the time/information available, the importance of the decision, and the clarity of the problem/solutions.

Table 7.2 Which decision-making model should I use?

Decision Making Model	Use This Model When:
Rational	Information on alternatives can be gathered and quantified. The decision is important. You are trying to maximize your outcomes.
Bounded Rationality	The minimum criteria are clear. You do not have or you are not willing to invest much time to make the decision. You are not trying to maximize your outcome.
Intuitive	Goals are unclear. There is time pressure and analysis paralysis would be costly. You have experience with the problem.
Creative	Solutions to the problem are not clear. New solutions need to be generated, You have time to immerse yourself in the issue.



Let's Review

- In this section we learned about **four models** for nonprogrammed decision-making: **rational, bounded rationality, intuitive, and creative decision making**.
- **Each of these can be useful, depending on the circumstances and the problem** that needs to be solved.



Exercises

- Have you used the rational decision-making model to make a decision? What was the context? How well did the model work?
- Share an example of a decision in which you used satisficing. Were you happy with the outcome? Why or why not? When would you be most likely to engage in satisficing?
- Do you think intuition is respected as a decision-making style? Do you think it should be? Why or why not?

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7.3 Bias in Decision-making

Bias in Decision-making

No matter which model you use, it is important to know and avoid the decision-making traps that exist. Daniel Kahnemann (another Nobel Prize winner) and Amos Tversky spent decades studying how people make decisions. They found that individuals are influenced by overconfidence bias, hindsight bias, anchoring bias, framing bias, and escalation of commitment. An awareness of some of the pitfalls of decision making enhances our ability to make good decisions. When we make good decisions, we are happier, which makes for more positive human relations skills.

In this Section:

- [Overconfidence bias](#)
- [Hindsight bias](#)
- [Anchoring bias](#)
- [Framing bias](#)
- [Escalation of commitment](#)

Overconfidence Bias

Overconfidence bias occurs when individuals overestimate their ability to predict future events. Many people exhibit signs of overconfidence. For example, 82 percent of the drivers surveyed feel they are in the top 30 percent of safe drivers, 86 percent of students at the Harvard Business School say they are better looking than their peers, and doctors consistently overestimate their ability to detect problems (Tilson, 1999). People who purchase lottery tickets as a way to make money are probably suffering from overconfidence bias. It is three times more likely for a person driving ten miles to buy a lottery ticket to be killed in a car accident than to win the jackpot (Orkin, 1991). Further, research shows that overconfidence leads to less successful negotiations (Neale & Bazerman, 1985). To avoid this bias, take the time to stop and ask yourself if you are being realistic in your judgments.

Hindsight Bias

Hindsight bias is the opposite of overconfidence bias, as it occurs when looking backward in time and mistakes seem obvious after they have already occurred. In other words, after a surprising event occurred, many individuals are likely to think that they already knew the event was going to happen. This bias may occur because they are selectively reconstructing the events. Hindsight bias tends to become a problem when judging someone else's decisions. For example, let's say a company driver hears the engine making unusual sounds before starting the morning routine. Being familiar with this car in particular, the driver may conclude that the probability of a serious problem is small and continues to drive the car. During the day, the car malfunctions and stops miles away from the office. It would be easy to criticize the decision to continue to drive the car because in hindsight, the noises heard in the morning would make us believe that the driver should have known something was wrong and taken the car in for service. However, the driver in question may have heard similar sounds before with no consequences, so based on the information available at the time, continuing with the regular routine may have been a reasonable choice. Therefore, it is important for decision makers to remember this bias before passing judgments on other people's actions.

Anchoring Bias

Anchoring refers to the tendency for individuals to rely too heavily on a single piece of information. Job seekers often fall into this trap by focusing on a desired salary while ignoring other aspects of the job offer such as additional benefits, fit with the job, and working environment. Similarly but more dramatically, lives were lost in the Great Bear Wilderness Disaster when the coroner, within five minutes of arriving at the accident scene, declared all five passengers of a small plane dead, which halted the search effort for potential survivors. The next day two survivors who had been declared dead walked out of the forest. How could a mistake like this have been made? One theory is that decision biases played a large role in this serious error, and anchoring on the fact that the plane had been consumed by flames led the coroner to call off the search for any possible survivors (Becker, 2007).

Framing Bias

Framing bias is another concern for decision makers. Framing bias refers to the tendency of decision makers to be influenced by the way that a situation or problem is presented. For example, when making a purchase, customers find it easier to let go of a discount as opposed to accepting a surcharge, even though they both might cost the person the same amount of money. Similarly, customers tend to prefer a statement such as "85 percent lean beef" as opposed to "15 percent fat" (Li et al., 2007). It is important to be aware of this tendency, because depending on how a problem is presented to us, we might choose an alternative that is disadvantageous simply because of the way it is framed.

Escalation of Commitment

Escalation of commitment occurs when individuals continue on a failing course of action after information reveals it may be a poor path to follow. It is sometimes called the “sunken costs fallacy,” because continuation is often based on the idea that one has already invested in the course of action. For example, imagine a person who purchases a used car, which turns out to need something repaired every few weeks. An effective way of dealing with this situation might be to sell the car without incurring further losses, donate the car, or use it until it falls apart. However, many people would spend hours of their time and hundreds, even thousands of dollars repairing the car in the hopes that they might recover their initial investment. Thus, rather than cutting their losses, they waste time and energy while trying to justify their purchase of the car.

Why does escalation of commitment occur? There may be many reasons, but two are particularly important. First, decision makers may not want to admit that they were wrong. This may be because of personal pride or being afraid of the consequences of such an admission. Second, decision makers may incorrectly believe that spending more time and energy might somehow help them recover their losses. Effective decision makers avoid escalation of commitment by distinguishing between when persistence may actually pay off versus when it might mean escalation of commitment. T

To avoid escalation of commitment, you might consider having strict turning back points. For example, you might determine up front that you will not spend more than \$500 trying to repair the car and will sell it when you reach that point. You might also consider assigning separate decision makers for the initial buying and subsequent selling decisions. Periodic evaluations of an initially sound decision to see whether the decision still makes sense is also another way of preventing escalation of commitment. This type of review becomes particularly important in projects such as the Iridium phone, in which the initial decision is not immediately implemented but instead needs to go through a lengthy development process. In such cases, it becomes important to periodically assess the soundness of the initial decision in the face of changing market conditions. Finally, creating an organizational climate in which individuals do not fear admitting that their initial decision no longer makes economic sense would go a long way in preventing escalation of commitment, as it could lower the regret the decision maker may experience (Wong & Kwong, 2007).

So far we have focused on how individuals make decisions and how to avoid decision traps. Next we shift our focus to the group level. There are many similarities as well as many differences between individual and group decision making. There are many factors that influence group dynamics and also affect the group decision-making process. We will discuss some of them in the following section.



Let's Review

- **Understanding decision-making traps** can help you avoid and manage them.
- **Overconfidence bias** can cause you to ignore obvious information.
- **Hindsight bias** can similarly cause a person to incorrectly believe in the ability to predict events.
- **Anchoring and framing biases** show the importance of the way problems or alternatives are presented in influencing one's decision.
- **Escalation of commitment** demonstrates how individuals' desire to be consistent or avoid admitting a mistake can cause them to continue to invest in a decision that is no longer prudent.



Exercises

1. Describe a time when you fell into one of the decision-making traps. How did you come to realize that you had made a poor decision?
2. How can you avoid escalation of commitment?
3. Share an example of anchoring.
4. Which of the traps seems the most dangerous for decision makers and why?

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7.4 Key Takeaways, Knowledge Check and Key Terms



Key Takeaways

In this chapter, we learned that:

- **Decision making is a critical component** of our success in the workplace.
- **Some decisions are obvious and can be made quickly**, without investing much time and effort in the decision-making process. **Others, however, require substantial consideration** of the circumstances surrounding the decision, available alternatives, and potential outcomes.
- **Fortunately, there are several methods** that can be used when making non-programmed decisions.
- **Even when specific models are followed, groups and individuals can often fall into potential decision-making pitfalls.** If too little information is available, decisions might be made based on a feeling. On the other hand, if too much information is presented, people can suffer from analysis paralysis, in which no decision is reached because of the overwhelming number of alternatives.



Knowledge Check

Review your understanding of this chapter's key concepts by taking the interactive quiz below.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationpsychology/?p=686#h5p-7>



Key Terms

Key terms in this chapter include:

- **Decision-making**
- **Stakeholders**
- **Programmed decisions**
- **Heuristics**
- **Non-programmed decisions**
- **Strategic decisions**
- **Tactical decisions**
- **Operational decisions**
- **Reflective and reactive systems**
- **Emotional intelligence**
- **Empathy**
- **Rational decision making**
- **Analysis paralysis**
- **Bounded rationality model**
- **Intuitive decision-making model**
- **Creative decision-making model**
- **Creativity**
- **Problem identification**
- **Immersion**
- **Incubation**
- **Illumination**

- **Verification and application**
- **Fluency**
- **Flexibility**
- **Originality**
- **Brainstorming**
- **Wildstorming**
- **Thinking hats**
- **Overconfidence bias**
- **Hindsight bias**
- **Anchoring bias**
- **Framing bias**
- **Escalation of commitment**

CHAPTER 8: PERSONALITY



Learning Objectives

In this chapter, we will:

1. **Define** personality, values, and attitudes.
2. **Explain** the link between personality, values, attitudes, and work behaviour.
3. **Appreciate** the diversity of methods that are used to measure personality characteristics.
4. **Describe** different theories of personality.
5. **Understand** how personality interacts with job, organizational, and situational factors to produce behaviours in the workplace.

Our personality differentiates us from other people, and understanding someone's personality gives us clues about how that person is likely to act and feel in a variety of situations. In order to effectively manage organizational behaviour, an understanding of different employees' personalities is helpful. Having this knowledge is also useful for placing people in jobs and organizations. In this chapter, we will define personality and explore how attitudes, values, and personality influence our behaviours. In addition, we will explore how personality is measured and some well-known theories of personality. Finally, we will bring all this information together to discuss how personality impacts behaviours in the workplace.

8.1 Personality

Personality encompasses our relatively stable feelings, thoughts, and behavioural patterns.

Our personality differentiates us from other people, and understanding someone's personality gives us clues about how that person is likely to act and feel in a variety of situations. In order to effectively manage organizational behaviour, an understanding of different employees' personalities is helpful. Having this knowledge is also useful for placing people in jobs and organizations.

Our personality has a lot to do with how we relate to one another at work. How we think, what we feel, and our normal behavior characterize what our colleagues come to expect of us both in behavior and the expectation of their interactions with us. For example, let's suppose at work you are known for being on time but suddenly start showing up late daily. This directly conflicts with your personality—that is, the fact that you are conscientious. As a result, coworkers might start to believe something is wrong. On the other hand, if you did not have this characteristic, it might not be as surprising or noteworthy. Likewise, if your normally even-tempered supervisor yells at you for something minor, you may believe there is something more to his or her anger since this isn't a normal personality trait and also may have a more difficult time handling the situation since you didn't expect it. When we come to expect someone to act a certain way, we learn to interact with them based on their personality. This goes both ways, and people learn to interact with us based on our personality. When we behave different than our normal personality traits, people may take time to adjust to the situation.

Personality also affects our ability to interact with others, which can impact our career success. For example, Sutin & Costa (2009) found that the personality characteristic of neuroticism (a tendency to experience negative emotional states) had more effect than any personality characteristic on determining future career success. In other words, those with positive and hopeful personalities tend to be rewarded through career success later in life.

While we will discuss the effects of personality for employee behaviour, keep in mind that the relationships we describe are modest correlations and other factors also impact workplace behaviour. For example, having a sociable and outgoing personality may encourage people to seek friends and prefer social situations. This does not mean that their personality will immediately affect their work behaviour. At work, we have a job to do and a role to perform. Therefore, our behaviour may be more strongly affected by what is expected of us, as opposed to how we want to behave. When people have a lot of freedom at work, their personality will become a stronger influence over their behaviour (Barrick & Mount, 1993).

Is it Nature or Nurture?

How much of our personality is in-born and biological, and how much is influenced by the environment and culture we are raised in? Psychologists who favor the biological approach believe that inherited predispositions as well as physiological processes can be used to explain differences in our personalities (Burger, 2008).

Evolutionary psychology relative to personality development looks at personality traits that are universal, as well as differences across individuals. In this view, adaptive differences have evolved and then provide a survival and reproductive advantage. Individual differences are important from an evolutionary viewpoint for several reasons. Certain individual differences, and the heritability of these characteristics, have been well documented. David Buss has identified several theories to explore this relationship between personality traits and evolution, such as life-history theory, which looks at how people expend their time and energy (such as on bodily growth and maintenance, reproduction, or parenting). Another example is costly signaling theory, which examines the honesty and deception in the signals people send one another about their quality as a mate or friend (Buss, 2009).

In the field of behavioral genetics, the Minnesota Study of Twins Reared Apart—a well-known study of the genetic basis for personality—conducted research with twins from 1979 to 1999. In studying 350 pairs of twins, including pairs of identical and fraternal twins reared together and apart, researchers found that identical twins, whether raised together or apart, have very similar personalities (Bouchard, 1994; Bouchard et al., 1990; Segal, 2012). These findings suggest the heritability of some personality traits. **Heritability** refers to the proportion of difference among people that is attributed to genetics. Some of the traits that the study reported as having more than a 0.50 heritability ratio include leadership, obedience to authority, a sense of well-being, alienation, resistance to stress, and fearfulness. The implication is that some aspects of our personalities are largely controlled by genetics; however, it's important to point out that traits are not determined by a single gene, but by a combination of many genes, as well as by epigenetic factors that control whether the genes are expressed.

Most contemporary psychologists believe temperament has a biological basis due to its appearance very early in our lives (Rothbart, 2011). As you learned when you studied lifespan development, Thomas and Chess (1977) found that babies could be categorized into one of three temperaments: easy, difficult, or slow to warm up. However, environmental factors (family interactions, for example) and maturation can affect the ways in which children's personalities are expressed (Carter et al., 2008).

Research suggests that there are two dimensions of our temperament that are important parts of our adult personality—reactivity and self-regulation (Rothbart et al., 2000). **Reactivity** refers to how we respond to new or challenging environmental stimuli; **self-regulation** refers to our ability to control that response (Rothbart & Derryberry, 1981; Rothbart et al., 2011). For example, one person may immediately respond to new stimuli with a high level of anxiety, while another barely notices it.

Although there is debate between whether or not our personalities are inherent when we are born (nature) versus the way we grew up (nurture), most researchers agree that personality is usually a result of both nature and our environmental/education experiences. For example, you have probably heard someone say, “She acts just like her mother.” She likely behaves that way because she was born with some of her mother’s traits, as well as because she learned some of the behaviors her mother passed to her while growing up.

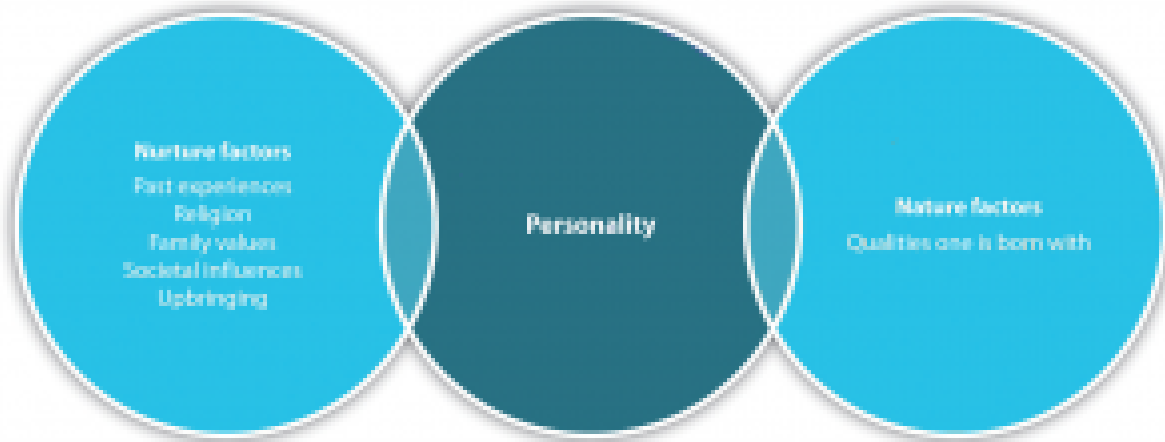


Figure 8.1 A combination of nature and nurture determines our personality. Image: Saylor Academy. [Human Relations](#), CC BY-NC-SA 3.0. Color altered from original. [click to enlarge]

Can Our Personality Change?

If personality is stable, does this mean that it does not change? You probably remember how you have changed and evolved as a result of your own life experiences, attention you received in early childhood, the style of parenting you were exposed to, successes and failures you had in high school, and other life events. In fact, our personality changes over long periods of time. For example, we tend to become more socially dominant, more conscientious (organized and dependable), and more emotionally stable between the ages of 20 and 40, whereas openness to new experiences may begin to decline during this same time (Roberts et al., 2006). In other words, even though we treat personality as relatively stable, changes occur. Moreover, even in childhood, our personality shapes who we are and has lasting consequences for us. For example, studies show that part of our career success and job satisfaction later in life can be explained by our childhood personality (Judge & Higgins, 1999; Staw et al., 1986). This change in personality over time can be adaptive and essential to our personal growth and development, both personally and professionally.

Values

Values refer to stable life goals that people have, reflecting what is most important to them. Values are established throughout one’s life as a result of the accumulating life experiences and tend to

be relatively stable (Lusk & Oliver, 1974; Rokeach, 1973). The values that are important to people tend to affect the types of decisions they make, how they perceive their environment, and their actual behaviours (Judge & Bretz, 1992; Ravlin & Meglino, 1987). Moreover, people are more likely to accept job offers when the company possesses the values people care about. Value attainment is one reason why people stay in a company, and when an organization does not help them attain their values, they are more likely to decide to leave if they are dissatisfied with the job itself (George & Jones, 1996).

What are the values people care about? There are many typologies of values. One of the most established surveys to assess individual values is the Rokeach Value Survey (Rokeach, 1974). This survey lists 18 terminal and 18 instrumental values in alphabetical order. **Terminal values** refer to end states people desire in life, such as leading a prosperous life and a world at peace. **Instrumental values** deal with views on acceptable modes of conduct, such as being honest and ethical, and being ambitious.

According to Rokeach, values are arranged in hierarchical fashion. In other words, an accurate way of assessing someone's values is to ask them to rank the 36 values in order of importance. By comparing these values, people develop a sense of which value can be sacrificed to achieve the other, and the individual priority of each value emerges.

Table 8.1 Sample Items From Rokeach (1973) Value Survey

Terminal Values	Instrumental Values
A world of beauty	Broad minded
An exciting life	Clean
Family security	Forgiving
Inner harmony	Imaginative
Self respect	Obedient

Source: [Source](#)

Where do values come from? Research indicates that they are shaped early in life and show stability over the course of a lifetime. Early family experiences are important influences over the dominant values. People who were raised in families with low socioeconomic status and those who experienced restrictive parenting often display conformity values when they are adults, while those who were raised by parents who were cold toward their children would likely value and desire security (Kasser et al., 2002)

Values of a generation also change and evolve in response to the historical context that the generation grows up in. Research comparing the values of different generations resulted in interesting findings. For example, Generation Xers (those born between the mid-1960s and 1980s) are more individualistic and are interested in working toward organizational goals so long as they coincide with their personal goals. This group, compared to the baby boomers (born between the

1940s and 1960s), is also less likely to see work as central to their life and more likely to desire a quick promotion (Smola & Sutton, 2002).

The values a person holds will affect his or her employment. For example, someone who has an orientation toward strong stimulation may pursue extreme sports and select an occupation that involves fast action and high risk, such as fire fighter, police officer, or emergency medical doctor. Someone who has a drive for achievement may more readily act as an entrepreneur. Moreover, whether individuals will be satisfied at a given job may depend on whether the job provides a way to satisfy their dominant values. Therefore, understanding employees at work requires understanding the value orientations of employees.

Our values also help determine our personality. Our values are those things we find most important to us. For example, if your value is calmness and peace, your personality would show this in many possible ways. You might prefer to have a few close friends and avoid going to a nightclub on Saturday nights. You might choose a less stressful career path, and you might find it challenging to work in a place where frequent conflict occurs.

We often find ourselves in situations where our values do not coincide with our coworkers or organization that employs us. For example, if Alison's main value is connection, this may come out in a warm communication style with coworkers and an interest in their personal lives. Imagine Alison works with Tyler, whose core value is efficiency. Because of Tyler's focus, he may find it a waste of time to make small talk with colleagues. When Alison approaches Tyler and asks about his weekend, she may feel offended or upset when he brushes her off to ask about the project they are working on together. She feels like a connection wasn't made, and he feels like she isn't efficient. Understanding our own values as well as the values of others can greatly help us become better communicators.



Exercise 1

What Are Your Values?

What are your top five values? How do you think these values affect your personality?

Accomplishment, success	Ease of use	Meaning	Results-oriented
Accountability	Efficiency	Justice	Rule of law
Accuracy	Enjoyment	Kindness	Safety
Adventure	Equality	Knowledge	Satisfying others
All for one & one for all	Excellence	Leadership	Security
Beauty	Fairness	Love, romance	Self-givingness
Calm, quietude, peace	Faith	Loyalty	Self-reliance
Challenge	Faithfulness	Maximum utilization	Self-thinking
Change	Family	Intensity (of time, resources)	Sensitivity
Charity	Family feeling	Merit	Service (to others, society)
Cleanliness, orderliness	Flair	Money	Simplicity
Collaboration	Freedom, liberty	Oneness	Skill
Commitment	Friendship	Openness	Solving problems
Communication	Fun	Other's point of view, inputs	Speed
Community	Generosity	Patriotism	Spirit, spirituality in life
Competence	Gentleness	Peace, nonviolence	Stability
Competition	Global view	Perfection	Standardization
Concern for others	Goodwill	Personal growth	Status
Connection	Goodness	Perseverance	Strength
Content over form	Gratitude	Pleasure	A will to perform
Continuous improvement	Hard work	Power	Success, achievement
Cooperation	Happiness	Practicality	Systemization
Coordination	Harmony	Preservation	Teamwork
Creativity	Health	Privacy	Timeliness
Customer satisfaction	Honor	Progress	Tolerance
Decisiveness	Human-centered	Prosperity, wealth	Tradition
Determination	Improvement	Punctuality	Tranquility
Delight of being, joy	Independence	Quality of work	Trust
Democracy	Individuality	Regularity	Truth
Discipline	Inner peace, calm, quietude	Reliability	Unity
Discovery	Innovation	Resourcefulness	Variety
Diversity	Integrity	Respect for others	Well-being
Dynamism	Intelligence	Responsiveness	Wisdom

[Source](#)

Attitudes

Our **attitudes** are favorable or unfavorable opinions toward people, things, or situations. Many things affect our attitudes, including the environment we were brought up in and our individual experiences. Our personalities and values play a large role in our attitudes as well. For example, many people may have attitudes toward politics that are similar to their parents, but their attitudes may change as they gain more experiences. If someone has a bad experience around the ocean, they may develop a negative attitude around beach activities. However, assume that person has a memorable experience seeing sea lions at the beach, for example, then he or she may change their opinion about the ocean. Likewise, someone may have loved the ocean, but if they have a scary experience, such as nearly drowning, they may change their attitude.

The important thing to remember about attitudes is that they can change over time, but usually some sort of positive experience needs to occur for our attitudes to change dramatically for the better. We also have control of our attitude in our thoughts. If we constantly stream negative thoughts, it is likely we may become a negative person.

In a workplace environment, you can see where attitude is important. Someone's personality may be cheerful and upbeat. These are the prized employees because they help bring positive perspective to the workplace. Likewise, someone with a negative attitude is usually someone that most people prefer not to work with. The problem with a negative attitude is that it has a devastating effect on everyone else. Have you ever felt really happy after a great day and when you got home, your roommate was in a terrible mood because of her bad day? In this situation, you can almost feel yourself deflating! This is why having a positive attitude is a key component to having good human relations at work and in our personal lives.

But how do we change a negative attitude? Because a negative attitude can come from many sources, there are also many sources that can help us improve our attitude.



Exercise 2

Changing Your Attitude

Our attitude is ultimately about how we set our expectations; how we handle the situation when our expectations are not met; and finally, how we sum up an experience, person, or situation. When we focus on improving our attitude on a daily basis, we get used to thinking positively and our entire personality can change. It goes without saying that employers prefer to hire and promote someone with a positive attitude as opposed to a negative one. Other tips for improving attitude include

1. **When you wake up in the morning, decide you are going to have an excellent day.** By having this attitude, it is less likely you may feel disappointed when small things do not go your way.
2. **Be conscious of your negative thoughts.** Keep a journal of negative thoughts. Upon reviewing them, analyze why you had a negative thought about a specific situation.
3. **Try to avoid negative thinking.** Think of a stop sign in your mind that stops you when you have negative thoughts. Try to turn those thoughts into positive ones. For example, instead of saying, “I am terrible in math,” say, “I didn’t do well on that test. It just means I will study harder next time.”
4. **Spend time with positive people.** All of us likely have a friend who always seems to be negative or a coworker who constantly complains. People like this can negatively affect our attitude, too, so steering clear when possible, or limiting the interaction time, is a great way to keep a positive attitude intact.
5. **Spend time in a comfortable physical environment.** If your mattress isn’t comfortable and you aren’t getting enough sleep, it is more difficult to have a positive attitude! Or if the light in your office is too dark, it might be more difficult to feel positive about the day. Look around and examine your physical space. Does it match the mental frame of mind you want to be in?

Source: From Richard Whitaker, “[Improving Your Attitude](#),” Biznick, September 2, 2008, accessed February 3, 2012.

When considering our personality, values, and attitudes, we can begin to get the bigger picture of who we are and how our experiences affect how we behave at work and in our personal lives. It is a good idea to reflect often on what aspects of our personality are working well and which we might like to change. With self-awareness, we can make changes that eventually result in more effective communication and stronger interpersonal relationships.



Let's Review

- **Personality** is defined as a set of traits that predict and explain a person's behavior. Values are closely interwoven into personality, as our values often define our traits.
- **Our personality can help define our attitudes** toward specific things, situations, or people. Most people prefer to work with people who have a positive attitude.
- **We can improve our attitude by waking up and believing that the day is going to be great.** We can also keep awareness of our negative thoughts or those things that may prevent us from having a good day. Spending time with positive people can help improve our own attitude as well.

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8.2 Measuring Personality

As we learned in the previous section, personality is the field within psychology that studies the thoughts, feelings, behaviors, goals, and interests of individuals. It therefore covers a very wide range of important psychological characteristics. Researchers have adopted a wide range of approaches to measure important personality characteristics. The most widely used strategies will be summarized in this section. Strategies to assess personality include objective, projective, implicit, and behavioural tests. Personality tests can provide employers with helpful insights. However, as we will discuss, they must be used and interpreted with caution.

In this Section:

- [Objective Tests](#)
- [Projective and Implicit Tests](#)
- [Behavioural Tests](#)
- [Personality Testing in Employee Selection](#)

Objective Tests

Objective tests (Loevinger, 1957; Meyer & Kurtz, 2006) represent the most familiar and widely used approach to assessing personality. Objective tests involve administering a standard set of items, each of which is answered using a limited set of response options (e.g., true or false; strongly disagree, slightly disagree, slightly agree, strongly agree). Responses to these items then are scored in a standardized, predetermined way. For example, self-ratings on items assessing talkativeness, assertiveness, sociability, adventurousness, and energy can be summed up to create an overall score on the personality trait of extraversion.

It must be emphasized that the term “objective” refers to the method that is used to score a person’s responses, rather than to the responses themselves. As noted by Meyer and Kurtz (2006), “What is *objective* about such a procedure is that the psychologist administering the test does not need to rely on judgment to classify or interpret the test-taker’s response; the intended response is clearly indicated and scored according to a pre-existing key” (p. 233). In fact, as we will see, a person’s test responses may be highly subjective and can be influenced by a number of different rating biases.

Information from objective tests can be gathered in two ways: through self-report in which participants reflect on their own personality or by using ratings from informants.

Self-report measures

Objective personality tests can be further subdivided into two basic types. The first type—which easily is the most widely used in modern personality research—asks people to describe themselves. This approach offers two key advantages. First, self-raters have access to an unparalleled wealth of information: After all, who knows more about you than you yourself? In particular, self-raters have direct access to their own thoughts, feelings, and motives, which may not be readily available to others (Oh et al., 2011; Watson et al., 2000). Second, asking people to describe themselves is the simplest, easiest, and most cost-effective approach to assessing personality. Countless studies, for instance, have involved administering self-report measures to college students, who are provided some relatively simple incentive (e.g., extra course credit) to participate.

The items included in self-report measures may consist of single words (e.g., *assertive*), short phrases (e.g., *am full of energy*), or complete sentences (e.g., *I like to spend time with others*). Table 1 presents a sample self-report measure assessing the general traits comprising the influential **five-factor model (FFM)** of personality: neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (John & Srivastava, 1999; McCrae et al., 2005). The sentences shown in Table 1 are modified versions of items included in the **International Personality Item Pool (IPIP)** (Goldberg et al., 2006), which is a rich source of personality-related content in the public domain (for more information about IPIP, go to: <http://ipip.ori.org/>).

Please read each statement carefully and then mark the appropriate response below. For each item, select the answer that best represents the personality characteristics of *your wife*. Use the following scale to record your responses:

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	slightly disagree	neutral or cannot decide	slightly agree	strongly agree

Figure 8.2 Sample Self-Report Personality Measure. In [Personality Assessment](#) by David Watson is licensed under a [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#) [click to enlarge]

Self-report personality tests show impressive validity in relation to a wide range of important outcomes. For example, self-ratings of conscientiousness are significant predictors of both overall academic performance (e.g., cumulative grade point average; Poropat, 2009) and job performance (Oh et al., 2011). Roberts et al. (2007) reported that self-rated personality predicted occupational attainment, divorce, and mortality. Similarly, Friedman et al. (2010) showed that personality ratings collected early in life were related to happiness/well-being, physical health, and mortality risk assessed several decades later. Finally, self-reported personality has important and pervasive links to psychopathology. Most notably, self-ratings of neuroticism are associated with a wide array of clinical

syndromes, including anxiety disorders, depressive disorders, substance use disorders, somatoform disorders, eating disorders, personality and conduct disorders, and schizophrenia/schizotypy (Kotov et al., 2010; Mineka et al., 1998).

At the same time, however, it is clear that this method is limited in a number of ways. First, raters may be motivated to present themselves in an overly favorable, **socially desirable way** (Paunonen & LeBel, 2012). This is a particular concern in “high-stakes testing,” that is, situations in which test scores are used to make important decisions about individuals (e.g., when applying for a job). Second, personality ratings reflect a **self-enhancement bias** (Vazire & Carlson, 2011); in other words, people are motivated to ignore (or at least downplay) some of their less desirable characteristics and to focus instead on their more positive attributes. Third, self-ratings are subject to the **reference group effect** (Heine et al., 2008); that is, we base our self-perceptions, in part, on how we compare to others in our sociocultural reference group. For instance, if you tend to work harder than most of your friends, you will see yourself as someone who is relatively conscientious, even if you are not particularly conscientious in any absolute sense.

Informant Ratings

Rather than have someone self-report, another approach is to ask someone who knows a person well to describe their personality characteristics. In the case of children or adolescents, the informant is most likely to be a parent or teacher. In studies of older participants, informants may be friends, roommates, dating partners, spouses, children, or bosses (Oh et al., 2011; Vazire & Carlson, 2011; Watson et al., 2000).

Generally speaking, informant ratings are similar in format to self-ratings. As was the case with self-report, items may consist of single words, short phrases, or complete sentences. Indeed, many popular instruments include parallel self- and informant-rating versions, and it often is relatively easy to convert a self-report measure so that it can be used to obtain informant ratings. Table 2 illustrates how the self-report instrument shown in Table 1 can be converted to obtain spouse-ratings (in this case, having a husband describe the personality characteristics of his wife).

Please read each statement carefully and then mark the appropriate response below. Use the following scale to record your responses:

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	slightly disagree	neutral or cannot decide	slightly agree	strongly agree

- _____ 1. I get upset easily.
- _____ 2. I enjoy being part of a group.
- _____ 3. I like to solve complex problems.
- _____ 4. I believe that others have good intentions.
- _____ 5. I am always prepared.
- _____ 6. I have a low opinion of myself.
- _____ 7. I have a natural talent for influencing people.
- _____ 8. I enjoy the beauty of nature.
- _____ 9. I try to anticipate the needs of others.
- _____ 10. I can be trusted to keep my promises.
- _____ 11. I get irritated easily.
- _____ 12. I have a lot of fun.
- _____ 13. I like to visit new places.
- _____ 14. I love to help others.
- _____ 15. I set high standards for myself and others.

Sum up the following items to see how you score on five general personality traits. The numbers below indicate which questions correspond to each trait. A high score indicates a stronger level of that trait:

1	6	11	Neuroticism
2	7	12	Extraversion
3	8	13	Openness/Intellect
4	9	14	Agreeableness
5	10	15	Conscientiousness

Figure 8.3 Sample Self-Report Personality Measure. In [Personality Assessment](#) by David Watson is licensed under a [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#) [click to enlarge]

Informant ratings are particularly valuable when self-ratings are impossible to collect (e.g., when studying young children or cognitively impaired adults) or when their validity is suspect (e.g., as noted earlier, people may not be entirely honest in high-stakes testing situations). They also may be combined with self-ratings of the same characteristics to produce more reliable and valid measures of these attributes (McCrae, 1994).

Informant ratings offer several advantages in comparison to other approaches to assessing personality. A well-acquainted informant presumably has had the opportunity to observe large samples of behavior in the person he or she is rating. Moreover, these judgments presumably are not subject to the types of defensiveness that potentially can distort self-ratings (Vazire & Carlson, 2011). Indeed, informants typically have strong incentives for being accurate in their judgments. As Funder and Dobroth (1987), put it, “Evaluations of the people in our social environment are central to our decisions about who to befriend and avoid, trust and distrust, hire and fire, and so on” (p. 409).

Informant personality ratings have demonstrated a level of validity in relation to important life outcomes that is comparable to that discussed earlier for self-ratings. Indeed, they outperform self-ratings in certain circumstances, particularly when the assessed traits are highly evaluative in nature (e.g., intelligence, charm, creativity; see Vazire & Carlson, 2011). For example, Oh et al. (2011) found that informant ratings were more strongly related to job performance than were self-ratings. Similarly, Oltmanns and Turkheimer (2009) summarized evidence indicating that informant ratings of Air Force cadets predicted early, involuntary discharge from the military better than self-ratings.

Nevertheless, informant ratings also are subject to certain problems and limitations. One general issue is the level of relevant information that is available to the rater (Funder, 2012). For instance, even under the best of circumstances, informants lack full access to the thoughts, feelings, and motives of the person they are rating. This problem is magnified when the informant does not know the person particularly well and/or only sees him or her in a limited range of situations (Funder, 2012; Beer & Watson, 2010).

Informant ratings also are subject to some of the same response biases noted earlier for self-ratings. For instance, they are not immune to the reference group effect. Indeed, it is well-established that parent ratings often are subject to a **sibling contrast effect**, such that parents exaggerate the true magnitude of differences between their children (Pinto et al., 2012). Furthermore, in many studies,



Informant personality ratings are generally a reliable and valid assessment instrument, however in certain cases the informant may have some significant biases that make the rating less reliable. Newly married individuals, for example, are likely to rate their partners in an unrealistically positive way. Image: by [El Heraldo de Saltillo](#), [Violeta y Francisco se dan el sí](#), in [Personality Assessment](#). CC BY-NC-SA 2.0. [click to enlarge]

individuals are allowed to nominate (or even recruit) the informants who will rate them. Because of this, it most often is the case that informants (who, as noted earlier, may be friends, relatives, or romantic partners) like the people they are rating. This, in turn, means that informants may produce overly favorable personality ratings. Indeed, their ratings actually can be more favorable than the corresponding self-ratings (Watson & Humrichouse, 2006). This tendency for informants to produce unrealistically positive ratings has been termed the **letter of recommendation effect** (Leising et al., 2010) and the **honeymoon effect** when applied to newlyweds (Watson & Humrichouse, 2006).

Projective and Implicit Tests

Some approaches to personality assessment are based on the belief that important thoughts, feelings, and motives operate outside of conscious awareness. Two ways to assess these nonconscious influences on personality are through projective and implicit tests.

Projective Tests

Projective tests represent influential early examples of this approach. Projective tests originally were based on the **projective hypothesis** (Frank, 1939; Lilienfeld et al., 2000): If a person is asked to describe or interpret ambiguous stimuli—that is, things that can be understood in a number of different ways—their responses will be influenced by nonconscious needs, feelings, and experiences (note, however, that the theoretical rationale underlying these measures has evolved over time) (see, for example, Spangler, 1992). Two prominent examples of projective tests are the Rorschach Inkblot Test (Rorschach, 1921) and the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) (Morgan & Murray, 1935). The former asks respondents to interpret symmetrical blots of ink, whereas the latter asks them to generate stories about a series of pictures.

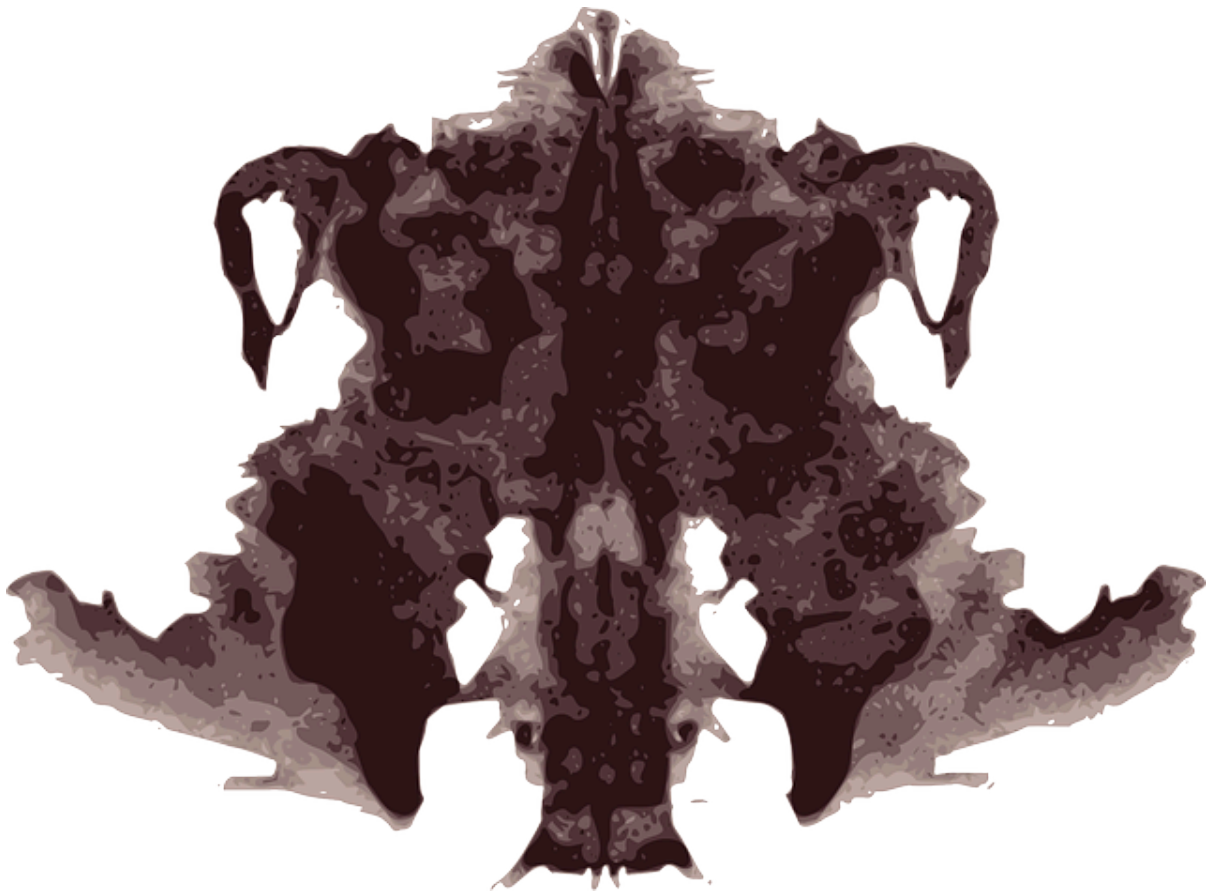


Figure 8.4 Projective tests, such as the famous Rorschach inkblot test require a person to give spontaneous answers that “project” their unique personality onto an ambiguous stimulus. In [Personality Assessment](#) by David Watson. [CC0 1.0 Public Domain](#) [click to enlarge]

In comparison to objective tests, projective tests tend to be somewhat cumbersome and labor intensive to administer. The biggest challenge, however, has been to develop a reliable and valid scheme to score the extensive set of responses generated by each respondent. The most widely used Rorschach scoring scheme is the Comprehensive System developed by Exner (2003). The most influential TAT scoring system was developed by McClelland, Atkinson and colleagues between 1947 and 1953 (McClelland et al., 1989; see also Winter, 1998), which can be used to assess motives such as the need for achievement.

The validity of the Rorschach has been a matter of considerable controversy (Lilienfeld et al., 2000; Mihura et al., 2012; Society for Personality Assessment, 2005). Most reviews acknowledge that Rorschach scores do show some ability to predict important outcomes. Its critics, however, argue that it fails to provide important incremental information beyond other, more easily acquired information, such as that obtained from standard self-report measures (Lilienfeld et al., 2000).

Validity evidence is more impressive for the TAT. In particular, reviews have concluded that TAT-based measures of the need for achievement (a) show significant validity to predict important criteria and (b) provide important information beyond that obtained from objective measures of this motive

(McClelland et al., 1989; Spangler, 1992). Furthermore, given the relatively weak associations between objective and projective measures of motives, McClelland et al. (1989) argue that they tap somewhat different processes, with the latter assessing **implicit motives** (Schultheiss, 2008).

Implicit Tests

In recent years, researchers have begun to use implicit measures of personality (Back et al., 2009; Vazire & Carlson, 2011). These tests are based on the assumption that people form automatic or implicit associations between certain concepts based on their previous experience and behavior. If two concepts (e.g., *me* and *assertive*) are strongly associated with each other, then they should be sorted together more quickly and easily than two concepts (e.g., *me* and *shy*) that are less strongly associated. Although validity evidence for these measures still is relatively sparse, the results to date are encouraging: Back et al. (2009), for example, showed that implicit measures of the FFM personality traits predicted behavior even after controlling for scores on objective measures of these same characteristics.

Behavioral Tests

A final approach is to infer important personality characteristics from direct samples of behavior. For example, Funder and Colvin (1988) brought opposite-sex pairs of participants into the laboratory and had them engage in a five-minute “getting acquainted” conversation; raters watched videotapes of these interactions and then scored the participants on various personality characteristics. Mehl et al. (2006) used the electronically activated recorder (EAR) to obtain samples of ambient sounds in participants’ natural environments over a period of two days; EAR-based scores then were related to self- and observer-rated measures of personality. For instance, more frequent talking over this two-day period was significantly related to both self- and observer-ratings of extraversion. As a final example, Gosling et al. (2002) sent observers into college students’ bedrooms and then had them rate the students’ personality characteristics on the Big Five traits. The averaged observer ratings correlated significantly with participants’ self-ratings on all five traits. Follow-



Observing real world behavior is one way to assess personality. Tendencies such as messiness and neatness are clues to personality. [Image: , <https://goo.gl/6Ahn8q>, CC BY 2.0, <https://goo.gl/BRvSA7>]Image: by [Crumley Roberts](#), [Crumley Roberts Extreme Dorm Makeover](#), in [Personality Assessment](#). CC BY 2.0. [click to enlarge]

up analyses indicated that conscientious students had neater rooms, whereas those who were high in openness to experience had a wider variety of books and magazines.

Behavioral measures offer several advantages over other approaches to assessing personality. First, because behavior is sampled directly, this approach is not subject to the types of response biases (e.g., self-enhancement bias, reference group effect) that can distort scores on objective tests. Second, as is illustrated by the Mehl et al. (2006) and Gosling et al. (2002) studies, this approach allows people to be studied in their daily lives and in their natural environments, thereby avoiding the artificiality of other methods (Mehl et al., 2006). Finally, this is the only approach that actually assesses what people *do*, as opposed to what they think or feel (see Baumeister et al., 2007).

At the same time, however, this approach also has some disadvantages. This assessment strategy clearly is much more cumbersome and labor intensive than using objective tests, particularly self-report. Moreover, similar to projective tests, behavioral measures generate a rich set of data that then need to be scored in a reliable and valid way. Finally, even the most ambitious study only obtains relatively small samples of behavior that may provide a somewhat distorted view of a person's true characteristics. For example, your behavior during a "getting acquainted" conversation on a single given day inevitably will reflect a number of transient influences (e.g., level of stress, quality of sleep the previous night) that are idiosyncratic to that day.

Personality Testing in Employee Selection

Personality is a potentially important predictor of work behaviour. Matching people to jobs matters, because when people do not fit with their jobs or the company, they are more likely to leave, costing companies as much as a person's annual salary to replace them. In job interviews, companies try to assess a candidate's personality and the potential for a good match, but interviews are only as good as the people conducting them. In fact, interviewers are not particularly good at detecting the best trait that predicts performance: conscientiousness (Barrick et al., 2000). One method some companies use to improve this match and detect the people who are potentially good job candidates is personality testing. Companies such as Kronos and Hogan Assessment Systems conduct preemployment personality tests. Companies using them believe that these tests improve the effectiveness of their selection and reduce turnover. For example, Overnight Transportation in Atlanta found that using such tests reduced their on-the-job delinquency by 50%–100% (Emmet, 2004; Gale, 2002).

Yet, are these methods good ways of selecting employees? Experts have not yet reached an agreement on this subject and the topic is highly controversial. Some experts believe, based on data, that personality tests predict performance and other important criteria such as job satisfaction. However, we must understand that how a personality test is used influences its validity. Imagine filling out a personality test in class. You may be more likely to fill it out as honestly as you can. Then, if your instructor correlates your personality scores with your class performance, we could say that the correlation is meaningful. In employee selection, one complicating factor is that people filling out the survey do not have a strong incentive to be honest. In fact, they have a greater incentive to

guess what the job requires and answer the questions to match what they think the company is looking for. As a result, the rankings of the candidates who take the test may be affected by their ability to fake. Some experts believe that this is a serious problem (Morgeson et al., 2007; Morgeson et al., 2007). Others point out that even with faking, the tests remain valid—the scores are still related to job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1996; Ones et al., 2007; Ones et al., 1996; Tett & Christiansen, 2007). It is even possible that the ability to fake is related to a personality trait that increases success at work, such as social monitoring. This issue raises potential questions regarding whether personality tests are the most effective way of measuring candidate personality.

Scores are not only distorted because of some candidates faking better than others. Do we even know our own personality? Are we the best person to ask this question? How supervisors, coworkers, and customers see our personality matters more than how we see ourselves. Therefore, using self-report measures of performance may not be the best way of measuring someone's personality (Mount et al., 1994). We all have blind areas. We may also give “aspirational” answers. If you are asked if you are honest, you may think, “Yes, I always have the intention to be honest.” This response says nothing about your actual level of honesty.

There is another problem with using these tests: How good a predictor of performance is personality anyway? Based on research, not a particularly strong one. According to one estimate, personality only explains about 10%–15% of variation in job performance. Our performance at work depends on so many factors, and personality does not seem to be the key factor for performance. In fact, cognitive ability (your overall mental intelligence) is a much more powerful influence on job performance, and instead of personality tests, cognitive ability tests may do a better job of predicting who will be good performers. Personality is a better predictor of job satisfaction and other attitudes, but screening people out on the assumption that they may be unhappy at work is a challenging argument to make in the context of employee selection.

In any case, if you decide to use these tests for selection, you need to be aware of their limitations. Relying only on personality tests for selection of an employee is a bad idea, but if they are used together with other tests such as tests of cognitive abilities, better decisions may be made. The company should ensure that the test fits the job and actually predicts performance. This process is called validating the test. Before giving the test to applicants, the company could give it to existing employees to find out the traits that are most important for success in the particular company and job. Then, in the selection context, the company can pay particular attention to those traits. The company should also make sure that the test does not discriminate against people on the basis of sex, race, age, disabilities, and other legally protected characteristics. Rent-A-Center experienced legal difficulties when the test they used was found to be a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The test they used for selection, the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, was developed to diagnose severe mental illnesses and included items such as “I see things or people around me others do not see.” In effect, the test served the purpose of a clinical evaluation and was discriminating against people with mental illnesses, which is a protected category under ADA (Heller, 2005). Similarly, employers in Ontario need to use personality tests with caution and the use of these tests should not result in direct or indirect discrimination of groups protected by the Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC, 2008).



Let's Review

No single method of assessing personality is perfect or infallible; each of the major methods has both strengths and limitations. By using a diversity of approaches, researchers can overcome the limitations of any single method and develop a more complete and integrative view of personality. Employers should use personality testing with caution.



Exercises

1. Under what conditions would you expect self-ratings to be most similar to informant ratings? When would you expect these two sets of ratings to be most different from each other?
2. The findings of Gosling et al. (2002) demonstrate that we can obtain important clues about students' personalities from their dorm rooms. What other aspects of people's lives might give us important information about their personalities?
3. Suppose that you were planning to conduct a study examining the personality trait of honesty. What method or methods might you use to measure it?

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8.3 Theories of Personality

In this Section:

- [Early Trait Theories](#)
- [Trait Theory: Big Five Personality](#)
- [Myers-Briggs Type Inventory](#)
- [Positive and Negative Affect](#)
- [Self-efficacy](#)
- [Self-monitoring](#)
- [Proactive Personality](#)
- [Type A/B Personality](#)

Early Trait Theories

Trait theorists believe personality can be understood via the approach that all people have certain traits, or characteristic ways of behaving. Do you tend to be sociable or shy? Passive or aggressive? Optimistic or pessimistic? Moody or even-tempered? Early trait theorists tried to describe all human personality traits. For example, one trait theorist, Gordon Allport (Allport & Odbert, 1936), found 4,500 words in the English language that could describe people. He organized these personality traits into three categories: cardinal traits, central traits, and secondary traits. A cardinal trait is one that dominates your entire personality, and hence your life—such as Ebenezer Scrooge’s greed and Mother Theresa’s altruism. Cardinal traits are not very common: Few people have personalities dominated by a single trait. Instead, our personalities typically are composed of multiple traits. **Central traits** are those that make up our personalities (such as loyal, kind, agreeable, friendly, sneaky, wild, and grouchy). **Secondary traits** are those that are not quite as obvious or as consistent as central traits. They are present under specific circumstances and include preferences and attitudes. For example, one person gets angry when people try to tickle him; another can only sleep on the left side of the bed; and yet another always orders her salad dressing on the side. And you—although not normally an anxious person—feel nervous before making a speech in front of your English class.

In an effort to make the list of traits more manageable, Raymond Cattell (1946, 1957) narrowed down the list to about 171 traits. However, saying that a trait is either present or absent does not accurately reflect a person’s uniqueness, because all of our personalities are actually made up of the same traits; we differ only in the degree to which each trait is expressed. Cattell (1957) identified **16**

factors or dimensions of personality: warmth, reasoning, emotional stability, dominance, liveliness, rule-consciousness, social boldness, sensitivity, vigilance, abstractedness, privateness, apprehension, openness to change, self-reliance, perfectionism, and tension (see *Table 8.2*). He developed a personality assessment based on these 16 factors, called the 16PF. Instead of a trait being present or absent, each dimension is scored over a continuum, from high to low. For example, your level of warmth describes how warm, caring, and nice to others you are. If you score low on this index, you tend to be more distant and cold. A high score on this index signifies you are supportive and comforting.

Table 8.2 Personality Factors Measured by the 16PF Questionnaire

Factor	Low Score	High Score
Warmth	Reserved, detached	Outgoing, supportive
Intellect	Concrete thinker	Analytical
Emotional stability	Moody, irritable	Stable, calm
Aggressiveness	Docile, submissive	Controlling, dominant
Liveliness	Somber, prudent	Adventurous, spontaneous
Dutifulness	Unreliable	Conscientious
Social assertiveness	Shy, restrained	Uninhibited, bold
Sensitivity	Tough-minded	Sensitive, caring
Paranoia	Trusting	Suspicious
Abstractness	Conventional	Imaginative
Introversion	Open, straightforward	Private, shrewd
Anxiety	Confident	Apprehensive
Openmindedness	Closeminded, traditional	Curious, experimental
Independence	Outgoing, social	Self-sufficient
Perfectionism	Disorganized, casual	Organized, precise
Tension	Relaxed	Stressed

Psychologists Hans and Sybil Eysenck were personality theorists focused on temperament, the inborn, genetically based personality differences that you studied earlier in the chapter. They believed personality is largely governed by biology. The Eysencks (Eysenck, 1990, 1992; Eysenck & Eysenck, 1963) viewed people as having two specific personality dimensions: extroversion/introversion and neuroticism/stability.

According to their theory, people high on the trait of extroversion are sociable and outgoing, and readily connect with others, whereas people high on the trait of introversion have a higher need to be alone, engage in solitary behaviors, and limit their interactions with others. In the neuroticism/stability dimension, people high on neuroticism tend to be anxious; they tend to have an overactive

sympathetic nervous system and, even with low stress, their bodies and emotional state tend to go into a flight-or-fight reaction. In contrast, people high on stability tend to need more stimulation to activate their flight-or-fight reaction and are considered more emotionally stable. Based on these two dimensions, the Eysencks' theory divides people into four quadrants. These quadrants are sometimes compared with the four temperaments described by the Greeks: melancholic, choleric, phlegmatic, and sanguine (see Figure 8.5).

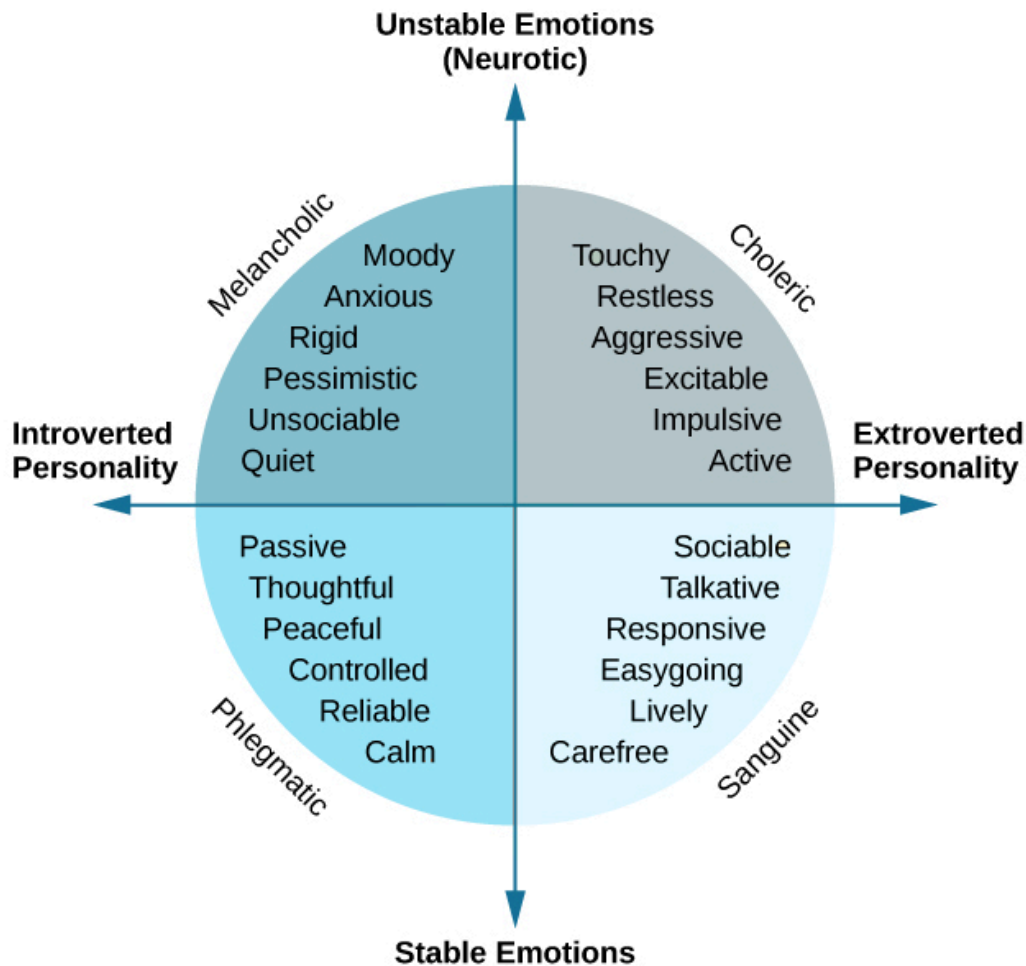


Figure 8.5 The Eysencks described two factors to account for variations in our personalities: extroversion/introversion and emotional stability/instability. In *Psychology, 2nd edition* by Rice University, [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#) [click to enlarge]

Trait Theory: Big 5 Personality

While Cattell's 16 factors may be too broad, the Eysenck's two-factor system has been criticized for being too narrow. Another personality theory, called the Five Factor Model, effectively hits a middle ground, with its five factors referred to as the Big Five personality factors. It is the most popular theory in personality psychology today and the most accurate approximation of the basic personality dimensions (Funder, 2001). The five factors are openness to experience, conscientiousness,

extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (see Figure 8.6) A helpful way to remember the factors is by using the mnemonic **OCEAN**.

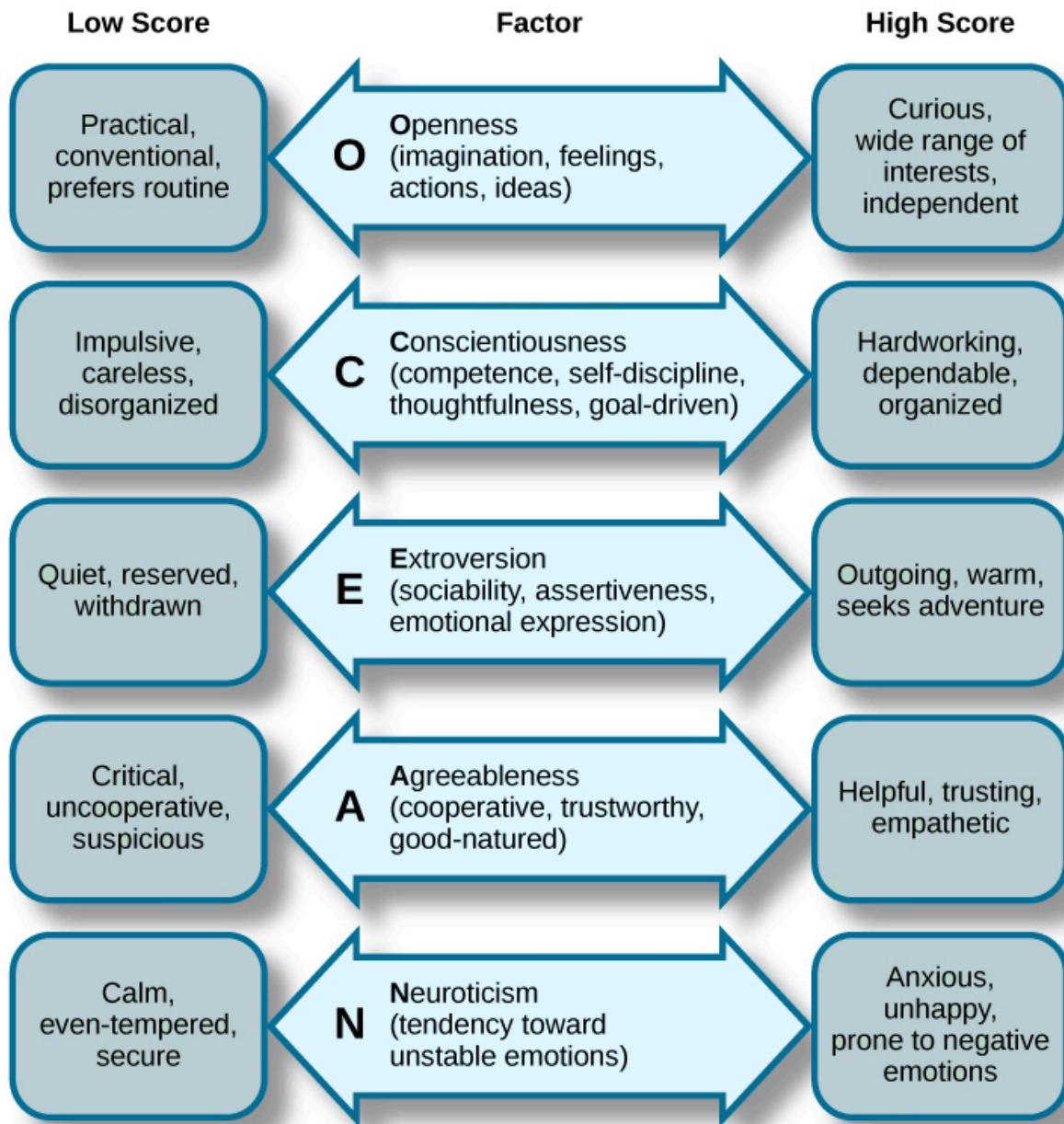


Figure 8.6 In the Five Factor Model, each person has five factors, each scored on a continuum from high to low. In the center column, notice that the first letter of each factor spells the mnemonic OCEAN. In *Psychology, 2nd edition* by Rice University, [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/) [click to enlarge]

The Big Five personality factors each represent a range between two extremes. In reality, most of us tend to lie somewhere midway along the continuum of each factor, rather than at polar ends. It's important to note that the Big Five factors are relatively stable over our lifespan, with some tendency for the factors to increase or decrease slightly. Researchers have found that conscientiousness increases through young adulthood into middle age, as we become better able to manage our

personal relationships and careers (Donnellan & Lucas, 2008). Agreeableness also increases with age, peaking between 50 to 70 years (Terracciano et al., 2005). Neuroticism and extroversion tend to decline slightly with age (Donnellan & Lucas; Terracciano et al.). Additionally, The Big Five factors have been shown to exist across ethnicities, cultures, and ages, and may have substantial biological and genetic components (Jang et al., 1996; Jang et al., 2006; McCrae & Costa, 1997; Schmitt et al., 2007).

Openness is the degree to which a person is curious, original, intellectual, creative, and open to new ideas. People high in openness seem to thrive in situations that require being flexible and learning new things. They are highly motivated to learn new skills, and they do well in training settings (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Lievens et al., 2003). They also have an advantage when they enter into a new organization. Their open-mindedness leads them to seek a lot of information and feedback about how they are doing and to build relationships, which leads to quicker adjustment to the new job (Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). When supported, they tend to be creative (Baer & Oldham, 2006). Open people are highly adaptable to change, and teams that experience unforeseen changes in their tasks do well if they are populated with people high in openness (LePine, 2003). Compared to people low in openness, they are also more likely to start their own business (Zhao & Seibert, 2006).

Conscientiousness refers to the degree to which a person is organized, systematic, punctual, achievement oriented, and dependable. Conscientiousness is the one personality trait that uniformly predicts how high a person's performance will be, across a variety of occupations and jobs (Barrick & Mount, 1991). In fact, conscientiousness is the trait most desired by recruiters and results in the most success in interviews (Dunn et al., 1995; Tay et al. 2006). This is not a surprise, because in addition to their high performance, conscientious people have higher levels of motivation to perform, lower levels of turnover, lower levels of absenteeism, and higher levels of safety performance at work (Judge & Ilies, 2002; Judge et al., 1997; Wallace & Chen, 2006; Zimmerman, 2008). One's conscientiousness is related to career success and being satisfied with one's career over time (Judge & Higgins, 1999). Finally, it seems that conscientiousness is a good trait to have for entrepreneurs. Highly conscientious people are more likely to start their own business compared to those who are not conscientious, and their firms have longer survival rates (Certo & Certo, 2005; Zhao & Seibert, 2006).

Extraversion is the degree to which a person is outgoing, talkative, and sociable, and enjoys being in social situations. One of the established findings is that they tend to be effective in jobs involving sales (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Vinchur et al., 1998). Moreover, they tend to be effective as managers and they demonstrate inspirational leadership behaviours (Bauer & Oldham, 2006; Bono & Judge, 2004). Extraverts do well in social situations, and as a result they tend to be effective in job interviews. Part of their success comes from how they prepare for the job interview, as they are likely to use their social network (Caldwell & Burger, 1998; Tay et al., 2006). Extraverts have an easier time than introverts when adjusting to a new job. They actively seek information and feedback, and build effective relationships, which helps with their adjustment (Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). Interestingly, extraverts are also found to be happier at work, which may be because of the relationships they build with the people around them and their relative ease in adjusting to a new job (Judge et al., 2002). However, they do not necessarily perform well in all jobs, and jobs depriving

them of social interaction may be a poor fit. Moreover, they are not necessarily model employees. For example, they tend to have higher levels of absenteeism at work, potentially because they may miss work to hang out with or attend to the needs of their friends (Judge et al., 1997).

Agreeableness is the degree to which a person is nice, tolerant, sensitive, trusting, kind, and warm. In other words, people who are high in agreeableness are likeable people who get along with others. Not surprisingly, agreeable people help others at work consistently, and this helping behaviour is not dependent on being in a good mood (Ilies et al., 2006). They are also less likely to retaliate when other people treat them unfairly (Skarlicki et al., 1999). This may reflect their ability to show empathy and give people the benefit of the doubt. Agreeable people may be a valuable addition to their teams and may be effective leaders because they create a fair environment when they are in leadership positions (Mayer et al., 2007). At the other end of the spectrum, people low in agreeableness are less likely to show these positive behaviours. Moreover, people who are not agreeable are shown to quit their jobs unexpectedly, perhaps in response to a conflict they engage with a boss or a peer (Zimmerman, 2008). If agreeable people are so nice, does this mean that we should only look for agreeable people when hiring? Some jobs may actually be a better fit for someone with a low level of agreeableness. Think about it: When hiring a lawyer, would you prefer a kind and gentle person, or a pit bull? Also, high agreeableness has a downside: Agreeable people are less likely to engage in constructive and change-oriented communication (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001). Disagreeing with the status quo may create conflict and agreeable people will likely avoid creating such conflict, missing an opportunity for constructive change.

Neuroticism refers to the degree to which a person is anxious, irritable, aggressive, temperamental, and moody. These people have a tendency to have emotional adjustment problems and experience stress and depression on a habitual basis. People very high in neuroticism experience a number of problems at work. For example, they are less likely to be someone people go to for advice and friendship (Klein et al., 2004). In other words, they may experience relationship difficulties. They tend to be habitually unhappy in their jobs and report high intentions to leave, but they do not necessarily actually leave their jobs (Judge et al., 2002; Zimmerman, 2008). Being high in neuroticism seems to be harmful to one's career, as they have lower levels of career success (measured with income and occupational status achieved in one's career). Finally, if they achieve managerial jobs, they tend to create an unfair climate at work (Mayer et al., 2007).



Studies show that there is a relationship between being extraverted and effectiveness as a salesperson. realtor. Image by [sdhfbss182, realtor](#), in [NSCC Organizational Behaviour by NSCC. CC BY 2.0](#)

Table 8.3 Summary of MBTI Types

Dimension		Explanation
EI	Extraversion: Those who derive their energy from other people and objects.	Introversion: Those who derive their energy from inside.
SN	Sensing: Those who rely on their five senses to perceive the external environment.	Intuition: Those who rely on their intuition and hunches to perceive the external environment.
TF	Thinking: Those who use their logic to arrive at solutions.	Feeling: Those who use their values and ideas about what is right and wrong to arrive at solutions.
JP	Judgment: Those who are organized, systematic, and would like to have clarity and closure.	Perception: Those who are curious, open minded, and prefer to have some ambiguity.

Source: [NSCC Organizational Behaviour by NSCC](#)

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

Aside from the Big Five personality traits, perhaps the most well-known and most often used personality assessment is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). Unlike the Big Five, which assesses traits, MBTI measures types. Assessments of the Big Five do not classify people as neurotic or extravert: It is all a matter of degrees. MBTI on the other hand, classifies people as one of 16 types (Carlyn, 1977; Myers, 1962).

In MBTI, people are grouped using four dimensions. Based on how a person is classified on these four dimensions, it is possible to talk about 16 unique personality types, such as ESTJ and ISTP.

MBTI was developed in 1943 by a mother–daughter team, Isabel Myers and Katherine Cook Briggs. Its objective at the time was to aid World War II veterans in identifying the occupation that would suit their personalities. Since that time, MBTI has become immensely popular, and according to one estimate, around 2.5 million people take the test annually. The survey is criticized because it relies on types as opposed to traits, but organizations who use the survey find it very useful for training and team-building purposes. More than 80 of the *Fortune* 100 companies used Myers-Briggs tests in some form. One distinguishing characteristic of this test is that it is explicitly designed for learning, not for employee selection purposes. In fact, the Myers & Briggs Foundation has strict guidelines against the use of the test for employee selection. Instead, the test is used to provide mutual understanding within the team and to gain a better understanding of the working styles of team members (Leonard & Straus, 1997; Shuit, 2003)

Positive and Negative Affectivity

You may have noticed that behaviour is also a function of moods. When people are in a good mood, they may be more cooperative, smile more, and act friendly. When these same people are in a

bad mood, they may have a tendency to be picky, irritable, and less tolerant of different opinions. Yet, some people seem to be in a good mood most of the time, and others seem to be in a bad mood most of the time regardless of what is actually going on in their lives. This distinction is manifested by positive and negative affectivity traits. Positive affective people experience positive moods more frequently, whereas negative affective people experience negative moods with greater frequency. Negative affective people focus on the “glass half empty” and experience more anxiety and nervousness (Watson & Clark, 1984). Positive affective people tend to be happier at work (Ilies & Judge, 2003), and their happiness spreads to the rest of the work environment. As may be expected, this personality trait sets the tone in the work atmosphere. When a team comprises mostly negative affective people, there tend to be fewer instances of helping and cooperation. Teams dominated by positive affective people experience lower levels of absenteeism (George, 1989). When people with a lot of power are also high in positive affectivity, the work environment is affected in a positive manner and can lead to greater levels of cooperation and finding mutually agreeable solutions to problems (Anderson & Thompson, 2004).



Let's Focus

Help, I Work With a Negative Person!

Employees who have high levels of neuroticism or high levels of negative affectivity may act overly negative at work, criticize others, complain about trivial things, or create an overall negative work environment. Here are some tips for how to work with them effectively.

- **Understand that you are unlikely to change someone else's personality.** Personality is relatively stable and criticizing someone's personality will not bring about change. If the behaviour is truly disruptive, focus on behaviour, not personality.
- **Keep an open mind.** Just because a person is constantly negative does not mean that they are not sometimes right. Listen to the feedback they are giving you.
- **Set a time limit.** If you are dealing with someone who constantly complains about things, you may want to limit these conversations to prevent them from consuming your time at work.
- **You may also empower them to act on the negatives they mention.** The next time an overly negative individual complains about something, ask that person to think of ways to change the situation and get back to you.

- **Ask for specifics.** If someone has a negative tone in general, you may want to ask for specific examples for what the problem is.

Sources: Adapted from ideas in Ferguson, J. (2006, October 31); Karcher, C. (2003, September); Mudore, C. F. (2001, February/March).

Self-Monitoring

Self-monitoring refers to the extent to which a person is capable of monitoring his or her actions and appearance in social situations. In other words, people who are social monitors are social chameleons who understand what the situation demands and act accordingly, while low social monitors tend to act the way they feel (Snyder, 1974; Snyder, 1987). High social monitors are sensitive to the types of behaviours the social environment expects from them. Their greater ability to modify their behaviour according to the demands of the situation and to manage their impressions effectively is a great advantage for them (Turnley & Bolino, 2001). In general, they tend to be more successful in their careers. They are more likely to get cross-company promotions, and even when they stay with one company, they are more likely to advance (Day & Schleicher; Kilduff & Day, 1994). Social monitors also become the “go to” person in their company and they enjoy central positions in their social networks (Mehra et al., 2001). They are rated as higher performers, and emerge as leaders (Day et al., 2002). While they are effective in influencing other people and get things done by managing their impressions, this personality trait has some challenges that need to be addressed. First, when evaluating the performance of other employees, they tend to be less accurate. It seems that while trying to manage their impressions, they may avoid giving accurate feedback to their subordinates to avoid confrontations (Jawahar, 2001). This tendency may create problems for them if they are managers. Second, high social monitors tend to experience higher levels of stress, probably caused by behaving in ways that conflict with their true feelings. In situations that demand positive emotions, they may act happy although they are not feeling happy, which puts an emotional burden on them. Finally, high social monitors tend to be less committed to their companies. They may see their jobs as a stepping-stone for greater things, which may prevent them from forming strong attachments and loyalty to their current employer (Day et al., 2002).

Proactive Personality

Proactive personality refers to a person’s inclination to fix what is perceived as wrong, change the status quo, and use initiative to solve problems. Instead of waiting to be told what to do, proactive people take action to initiate meaningful change and remove the obstacles they face along the way. In general, having a proactive personality has a number of advantages for these people. For example, they tend to be more successful in their job searches (Brown et al., 2006).

They are also more successful over the course of their careers, because they use initiative and acquire greater understanding of the politics within the organization (Seibert, 1999; Seibert et al., 2001). Proactive people are valuable assets to their companies because they may have higher levels of performance (Crant, 1995). They adjust to their new jobs quickly because they understand the political environment better and often make friends more quickly (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Thompson, 2005). Proactive people are eager to learn and engage in many developmental activities to improve their skills (Major et al., 2006). Despite all their potential, under some circumstances a proactive personality may be a liability for an individual or an organization. Imagine a person who is proactive but is perceived as being too pushy, trying to change things other people are not willing to let go, or using their initiative to make decisions that do not serve a company's best interests. Research shows that the success of proactive people depends on their understanding of a company's core values, their ability and skills to perform their jobs, and their ability to assess situational demands correctly (Chan, 2006; Erdogan & Bauer, 2005).

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is a belief that one can perform a specific task successfully. Research shows that the belief that we can do something is a good predictor of whether we can actually do it. Self-efficacy is different from other personality traits in that it is job specific. You may have high self-efficacy in being successful academically, but low self-efficacy in relation to your ability to fix your car. At the same time, people have a certain level of generalized self-efficacy and they have the belief that whatever task or hobby they tackle, they are likely to be successful in it.

Research shows that self-efficacy at work is related to job performance (Bauer et al., 2007; Judge et al., 2007; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). This relationship is probably a result of people with high self-efficacy setting higher goals for themselves and being more committed to these goals, whereas people with low self-efficacy tend to procrastinate (Phillips & Gully, 1997; Steel, 2007; Wofford et al., 1992). Academic self-efficacy is a good predictor of your GPA, whether you persist in your studies, or drop out of college (Robbins et al., 2004).

Is there a way of increasing employees' self-efficacy? Hiring people who are capable of performing their tasks and training people to increase their self-efficacy may be effective. Some people may also respond well to verbal encouragement. By showing that you believe they can be successful and effectively playing the role of a cheerleader, you may be able to increase self-efficacy. Giving people opportunities to test their skills so that they can see what they are capable of doing (or empowering them) is also a good way of increasing self-efficacy (Ahearne et al., 2005).



Consider This

Ways to Build Your Self-Confidence

Having high self-efficacy and self-esteem are boons to your career. People who have an overall positive view of themselves and those who have positive attitudes toward their abilities project an aura of confidence. How do you achieve higher self-confidence?

- **Take a self-inventory.** What are the areas in which you lack confidence? Then consciously tackle these areas. Take part in training programs; seek opportunities to practice these skills. Confront your fears head-on.
- **Set manageable goals.** Success in challenging goals will breed self-confidence, but do not make your goals impossible to reach. If a task seems daunting, break it apart and set mini goals.
- **Find a mentor.** A mentor can point out areas in need of improvement, provide accurate feedback, and point to ways of improving yourself.
- **Don't judge yourself by your failures.** Everyone fails, and the most successful people have more failures in life. Instead of assessing your self-worth by your failures, learn from mistakes and move on.
- **Until you can feel confident, be sure to act confident.** Acting confident will influence how others treat you, which will boost your confidence level. Pay attention to how you talk and behave, and act like someone who has high confidence.
- **Know when to ignore negative advice.** If you receive negative feedback from someone who is usually negative, try to ignore it. Surrounding yourself with naysayers is not good for your self-esteem. This does not mean that you should ignore all negative feedback, but be sure to look at a person's overall attitude before making serious judgments based on that feedback.

Sources: Adapted from information in Beagrie, S. (2006, September 26); Beste, F. J., III. (2007, November–December); Goldsmith, B. (2006, October). Kennett, M. (2006, October); Parachin, V. M. (March 2003, October).

Type A/B Personality

Type A Personality

Research has focused on what is perhaps the single most dangerous personal influence on experienced stress and subsequent physical harm. This characteristic was first introduced by Friedman and Rosenman and is called Type A personality (Friedman & Rosenman, 1974).

Type A and Type B personalities are felt to be relatively stable personal characteristics exhibited by individuals. **Type A personality** is characterized by impatience, restlessness, aggressiveness, competitiveness, polyphasic activities (having many “irons in the fire” at one time), and being under considerable time pressure. Work activities are particularly important to Type A individuals, and they tend to freely invest long hours on the job to meet pressing (and recurring) deadlines. **Type B people**, on the other hand, experience fewer pressing deadlines or conflicts, are relatively free of any sense of time urgency or hostility, and are generally less competitive on the job. These differences are summarized in table 8.4

Table 8.4 Profiles of Type A and Type B Personalities

Type A	Type B
Highly competitive	Lacks intense competitiveness
Workaholic	Work only one of many interests
Intense sense of urgency	More deliberate time orientation
Polyphasic behaviour	Does one activity at a time
Strong goal-directedness	More moderate goal-directedness

Source: [NSCC Organizational Behaviour by NSCC](#)

Type A personality is frequently found in managers. Indeed, one study found that 60 percent of managers were clearly identified as Type A, whereas only 12 percent were clearly identified as Type B (Howard et al., 1976).

It has been suggested that Type A personality is most useful in helping someone rise through the ranks of an organization. The role of Type A personality in producing stress is exemplified by the relationship between this behaviour and heart disease. Rosenman and Friedman studied 3,500 men over an 8 1/2-year period and found Type A individuals to be twice as prone to heart disease, five times as prone to a second heart attack, and twice as prone to fatal heart attacks when compared to Type B individuals. Similarly, Jenkins (1971) studied over 3,000 men and found that of 133 coronary heart disease sufferers, 94 were clearly identified as Type A in early test scores.

Type A behaviour very clearly leads to one of the most severe outcomes of experienced stress. One

irony of Type A is that although this behaviour is helpful in securing rapid promotion to the top of an organization, it may be detrimental once the individual has arrived. That is, although Type A employees make successful managers (and salespeople), the most successful *top* executives tend to be Type B. They exhibit patience and a broad concern for the ramifications of decisions. The key is to know how to shift from Type A behaviour to Type B.

How does a manager accomplish this? The obvious answer is to slow down and relax. However, many Type A managers refuse to acknowledge either the problem or the need for change, because they feel it may be viewed as a sign of weakness. In these cases, several small steps can be taken, including scheduling specified times every day to exercise, delegating more significant work to subordinates, and eliminating optional activities from the daily calendar. Some companies have begun experimenting with interventions to help reduce job-related stress and its serious health implications.



Self-assessments

See Appendix B – [Assessment: Are you a Type A Personality?](#)

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8.4 Personality at Work

Personality theories that utilize the trait approach have proven popular among investigators of employee behavior in organizations. There are several reasons for this. To begin with, trait theories focus largely on individuals in the average (working) adult population, in contrast to psychoanalytic and other personality theories that focus on clinical populations and behaviours. Trait theories identify several characteristics that describe people. In the study of people at work, we may discuss an employee's dependability, emotional stability, or cognitive complexity. These traits, when taken together, form a large mosaic that provides insight into individuals. A third reason for the popularity of trait theories in the study of organizational behavior is that the traits that are identified are measurable and tend to remain relatively stable over time. It is much easier to make comparisons among employees using these tangible qualities rather than the somewhat mystical psychoanalytic theories or the highly abstract and volatile self theories.

The number of traits people are believed to exhibit varies according to which theory we employ. In an exhaustive search, over 17,000 can be identified. We can identify six traits that seem to be relatively important for our purposes here, some of which relate to the constructs discussed in the previous section. It will be noted that some of these traits (for example, self-esteem or locus of control) have to do with how we see ourselves, whereas other traits (for example, introversion-extroversion or dependability) have to do with how we interact with others. Moreover, these traits are largely influenced by one's personality development and, in turn, influence actual attitudes and behaviors at work, as shown in Figure 8.7 below.

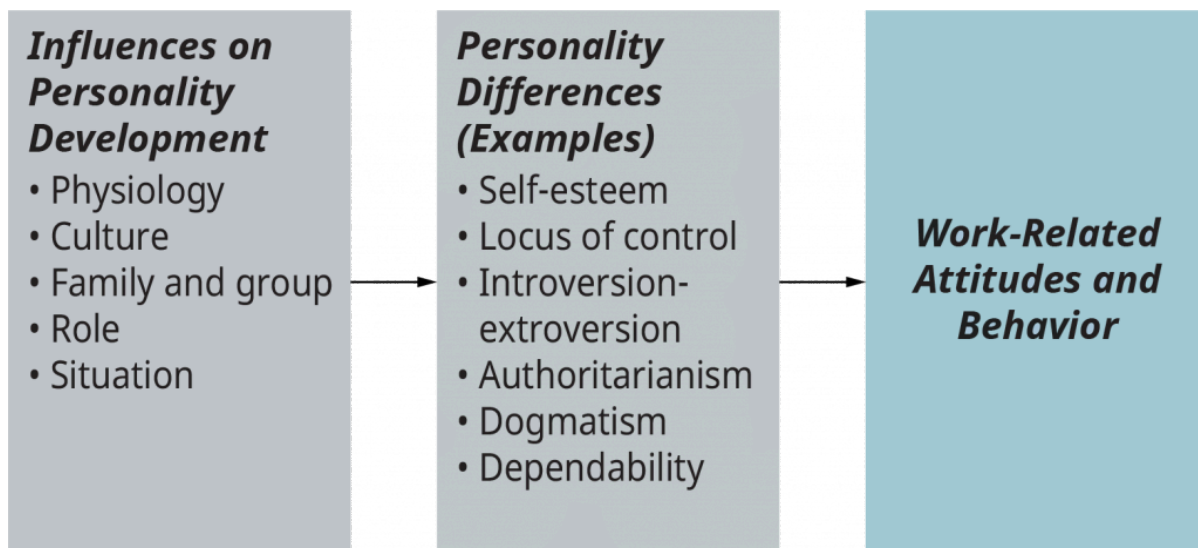


Figure 8.7 Relation of Personality to Attitudes and Behavior Image: Rice University. [Organizational Behavior, CC BY 4.0](#). Color altered from original. [click to enlarge]

Self-esteem

One trait that has emerged recently as a key variable in determining work behavior and effectiveness is an employee's self-esteem. **Self-esteem** can be defined as one's opinion or belief about one's self and self-worth. It is how we see ourselves as individuals. Do we have confidence in ourselves? Do we think we are successful? Attractive? Worthy of others' respect or friendship?

Research has shown that high self-esteem in school-age children enhances assertiveness, independence, and creativity. People with high self-esteem often find it easier to give and receive affection, set higher goals for personal achievement, and exert energy to try to attain goals set for them. Moreover, individuals with high self-esteem will be more likely to seek higher-status occupations and will take more risks in the job search. For example, one study found that students possessing higher self-esteem were more highly rated by college recruiters, received more job offers, and were more satisfied with their job search than students with low self-esteem (Ellis & Taylor, 1983). Hence, personality traits such as this one can affect your job and career even before you begin work!

People with high self-esteem view themselves in a positive light, are confident, and respect themselves. On the other hand, people with low self-esteem experience high levels of self-doubt and question their self-worth. High self-esteem is related to higher levels of satisfaction with one's job and higher levels of performance on the job (Judge & Bono, 2001). People with low self-esteem are attracted to situations in which they will be relatively invisible, such as large companies (Turban & Keon, 1993). Managing employees with low self-esteem may be challenging at times, because negative feedback given with the intention to improve performance may be viewed as a judgment on their worth as an employee. Therefore, effectively managing employees with relatively low self-esteem requires tact and providing lots of positive feedback when discussing performance incidents.

Locus of Control

Locus of control refers to the tendency among individuals to attribute the events affecting their lives either to their own actions or to external forces; it is a measure of how much you think you control your own destiny. Two types of individual are identified. People with an **internal** locus of control tend to attribute their successes—and failures—to their own abilities and efforts. Hence, a student would give herself credit for passing an examination; likewise, she would accept blame for failing.

In contrast, people with an **external** locus of control tend to attribute things that happen to them as being caused by someone or something else. They give themselves neither credit nor blame. Hence, passing an exam may be dismissed by saying it was "too easy," whereas failing may be excused by convincing one's self that the exam was "unfair."

Recent research on locus of control suggests that people with an internal locus of control (1) exhibit greater work motivation, (2) have stronger expectations that effort will lead to actual high job performance, (3) perform better on tasks requiring learning or problem-solving, (4) typically receive

higher salaries and salary increases, and (5) exhibit less job-related anxiety than externals (Nystrom, 1983; Spector, 1983). Locus of control has numerous implications for management. For example, consider what would happen if you placed an “internal” under tight supervision or an “external” under loose supervision. The results probably would not be very positive. Or what would happen if you placed both internals and externals on a merit-based compensation plan? Who would likely perform better? Who might perform better under a piece-rate system?

Internals thrive in contexts in which they have the ability to influence their own behaviour. Successful entrepreneurs tend to have high levels of internal locus of control (Certo & Certo, 2005). In addition, research has shown that individuals with an internal locus of control are more likely initiative to start mentor-protégé relationships. They are more involved with their jobs. They demonstrate higher levels of motivation and have more positive experiences at work (Ng et al., 2006; Reitz & Jewell, 1979; Turban & Dougherty, 1994). Interestingly, internal locus is also related to one’s subjective well-being and happiness in life, while being high in external locus is related to a higher rate of depression (Benassi et al., 1988; DeNeve & Cooper, 1998).

Introversion-Extroversion

The third personality dimension we should consider focuses on the extent to which people tend to be shy and retiring or socially gregarious. *Introverts* (introversion) tend to focus their energies inwardly and have a greater sensitivity to abstract feelings, whereas *extroverts* (extroversion) direct more of their attention to other people, objects, and events. Research evidence suggests that both types of people have a role to play in organizations (Morriss, 1979). Extroverts more often succeed in first-line management roles, where only superficial “people skills” are required; they also do better in field assignments—for example, as sales representatives. Introverts, on the other hand, tend to succeed in positions requiring more reflection, analysis, and sensitivity to people’s inner feelings and qualities. Such positions are included in a variety of departments within organizations, such as accounting, personnel, and computer operations. In view of the complex nature of modern organizations, both types of individual are clearly needed.

Authoritarianism and Dogmatism

Authoritarianism refers to an individual’s orientation toward authority. More specifically, an authoritarian orientation is generally characterized by an overriding conviction that it is right and proper for there to be clear status and power differences among people (Adorno et al., 1950). According to T. W. Adorno, a high authoritarian is typically (1) demanding, directive, and controlling of her subordinates; (2) submissive and deferential toward superiors; (3) intellectually rigid; (4) fearful of social change; (5) highly judgmental and categorical in reactions to others; (6) distrustful; and (7) hostile in response to restraint. **Nonauthoritarians**, on the other hand, generally believe that power and status differences should be minimized, that social change can be constructive, and that people should be more accepting and less judgmental of others.

In the workplace, the consequences of these differences can be tremendous. Research has shown, for example, that employees who are high in authoritarianism often perform better under rigid supervisory control, whereas those rated lower on this characteristic perform better under more participative supervision (Vroom, 1960). Can you think of other consequences that might result from these differences?

Related to this authoritarianism is the trait of dogmatism. Dogmatism refers to a particular cognitive style that is characterized by closed-mindedness and inflexibility (Rokeach, 1960). This dimension has particularly profound implications for managerial decision-making; it is found that dogmatic managers tend to make decisions quickly, based on only limited information and with a high degree of confidence in the correctness of their decisions (Taylor & Dunnette, 1974). Do you know managers (or professors) who tend to be dogmatic? How does this behavior affect those around them?

Dependability

Finally, people can be differentiated with respect to their behavioral consistency, or dependability. Individuals who are seen as self-reliant, responsible, consistent, and dependable are typically considered to be desirable colleagues or group members who will cooperate and work steadfastly toward group goals (Stogdill, 1948; Greer, 1955). Personnel managers often seek a wide array of information concerning dependability before hiring job applicants. Even so, contemporary managers often complain that many of today's workers simply lack the feeling of personal responsibility necessary for efficient operations. Whether this is a result of the personal failings of the individuals or a lack of proper motivation by superiors remains to be determined.

The Interactionist Perspective: The Role of Fit

Individual differences matter in the workplace. Human beings bring in their personality, physical and mental abilities, and other stable traits to work. Imagine that you are interviewing an employee who is proactive, creative, and willing to take risks. Would this person be a good job candidate? What behaviours would you expect this person to demonstrate?

The question posed above is misleading. While human beings bring their traits to work, every organization is different, and every job within the organization is also different. According to the interactionist perspective, behaviour is a function of the person and the situation interacting with each other. Think about it. Would a shy person speak up in class? While a shy person may not feel like speaking, if the individual is very interested in the subject, knows the answers to the questions, and feels comfortable within the classroom environment, and if the instructor encourages participation and participation is 30% of the course grade, regardless of the level of shyness, the person may feel inclined to participate. Similarly, the behaviour you may expect from someone who is proactive, creative, and willing to take risks will depend on the situation.

When hiring employees, companies are interested in assessing at least two types of fit. **Person–organization fit** refers to the degree to which a person’s values, personality, goals, and other characteristics match those of the organization. **Person–job fit** is the degree to which a person’s skill, knowledge, abilities, and other characteristics match the job demands. Thus, someone who is proactive and creative may be a great fit for a company in the high-tech sector that would benefit from risk-taking individuals, but may be a poor fit for a company that rewards routine and predictable behaviour, such as accountants. Similarly, this person may be a great fit for a job such as a scientist, but a poor fit for a routine office job. The opening case illustrates one method of assessing person–organization and person–job fit in job applicants.

The first thing many recruiters look at is the person–job fit. This is not surprising, because person–job fit is related to a number of positive work attitudes such as satisfaction with the work environment, identification with the organization, job satisfaction, and work behaviours such as job performance. Companies are often also interested in hiring candidates who will fit into the company culture (those with high person–organization fit). When people fit into their organization, they tend to be more satisfied with their jobs, more committed to their companies, and more influential in their company, and they actually remain longer in their company (Anderson et al., 2008; Cable & DeRue, 2002; Caldwell & O’Reilly, 1990; Chatman, 1991; Judge & Cable, 1997; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; O’Reilly et al., 1991; Saks & Ashforth, 2002).

One area of controversy is whether these people perform better. Some studies have found a positive relationship between person–organization fit and job performance, but this finding was not present in all studies, so it seems that fitting with a company’s culture will only sometimes predict job performance (Arthur et al., 2006). It also seems that fitting in with the company culture is more important to some people than to others. For example, people who have worked in multiple companies tend to understand the impact of a company’s culture better, and therefore they pay more attention to whether they will fit in with the company when making their decisions (Kristof-Brown et al., 2002). Also, when they build good relationships with their supervisors and the company, being a misfit does not seem to lead to dissatisfaction on the job (Erdogan et al., 2004)



Let’s Review

While personality traits and other individual differences are important, we need to keep in mind that behaviour is jointly determined by the person and the situation. Certain situations bring out the best in

people, and someone who is a poor performer in one job may turn into a star employee in a different job.



Case Study

See Appendix A – [Using Science to Match Candidates to Jobs: The Case of Kronos](#)



Self-assessments

See Appendix B – [Assessment: What is your locus of control?](#)



Exercises

1. How can a company assess person–job fit before hiring employees? What are the methods you think would be helpful?
2. How can a company determine person–organization fit before hiring employees? Which methods do you think would be helpful?
3. What can organizations do to increase person–job and person–organization fit *after* they hire employees?

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8.5 Key Takeaways, Knowledge Check and Key Terms



Key Takeaways

In this chapter, we learned that:

- **Personality** is our stable traits that help us to interact with the world.
- **Our values and attitudes** have an influence on our personality.
- **There are many methods used by researchers to measure personality** including objective tests, projective tests, implicit tests, and by directly observing behaviour.
- **There are many theories to describe personality.**
- **Studying specific traits can be useful to predict behaviour in the workplace.** However, we also need to consider situational factors including a person's fit with their job and the organization when trying to understand behaviour in the workplace.



Knowledge Check

Review your understanding of this chapter's key concepts by taking the interactive quiz below.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationpsychology/?p=1327#h5p-5>



Key Terms

Key terms in this chapter include:

- **Personality**
- **Nature/Nurture**
- **Heritability**
- **Values**
- **Terminal values**
- **Instrumental values**
- **Attitudes**
- **Objective tests**
- **Self-report**
- **Self-enhancement bias**
- **Informant ratings**
- **Reference groups**
- **Sibling contrast effect**
- **Letter of recommendation effect**
- **Honeymoon effect**
- **Projective tests**
- **Implicit tests**
- **Behavioural tests**
- **Central traits**
- **Secondary traits**
- **16 factors of personality**

- **Big 5 (five factor)**
 - **Openness**
 - **Conscientiousness**
 - **Extraversion**
 - **Agreeableness**
 - **Neuroticism**
- **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator**
- **Positive and negative affectivity**
- **Self-monitoring**
- **Proactive personality**
- **Self-efficacy**
- **Type A personality**
- **Type B personality**
- **Self-esteem**
- **Locus of control**
- **Introversion and extroversion**
- **Authoritarianism**
- **Dogmatism**
- **Dependability**

CHAPTER 9: GROUP DYNAMICS



Learning Objectives

In this chapter, we will:

- **Differentiate** between groups and teams.
- **Identify** reasons that people join groups and when they might be preferred to working alone.
- **Explore** the benefits and challenges associated with virtual teams.
- **Describe** the phenomenon of social loafing and identify strategies for minimizing it.
- **Describe** factors that influence group effectiveness including collaboration, team norms, roles, group cohesion, collective efficacy, and emotional intelligence.
- **Outline** the life cycle of groups and their members.
- **Identify** the symptoms of groupthink and strategies to avoid it.
- **Describe** communication strategies for group meetings.

Available research on group dynamics demonstrates rather conclusively that individual behavior is highly influenced by coworkers in a work group. In this chapter, we will explore the nature of groups and teams and factors that influence their effectiveness. We will learn about the lifecycle of teams and our membership in groups from beginning to end. In addition, we will explore how group cohesion can both help and hurt group decision-making and some practical strategies for communicating a common workplace group setting aka the business meeting.

9.1 Groups and Teams

Groups

A **group** is a collection of individuals who interact with each other such that one person's actions have an impact on the others. In organizations, most work is done within groups. How groups function has important implications for organizational productivity. Groups where people get along, feel the desire to contribute to the team, and are capable of coordinating their efforts may have high performance levels, whereas teams characterized by extreme levels of conflict or hostility may demoralize members of the workforce.

Types of Groups

There are two primary types of groups: formal and informal. Moreover, within these two types, groups can be further differentiated on the basis of their relative degree of permanence. The resulting four types are shown in Table 9.1.

Table 9.1 Types of Groups

	Relatively Permanent	Relatively Temporary
Formal	Command group	Task group
Informal	Friendship group	Interest group

Source: [Organizational Behavior](#).

Formal groups are work units that are prescribed by the organization. Examples of formal groups include sections of departments (such as the accounts receivable section of the accounting department), committees, or special project task forces. These groups are set up by management on either a temporary or permanent basis to accomplish prescribed tasks. When the group is permanent, it is usually called a **command group or functional group**. An example would be the sales department in a company. When the group is less permanent, it is usually referred to as a **task group**. An example here would be a corporate-sponsored task force on improving affirmative action efforts. In both cases, the groups are formal in that they are both officially established by the company to carry out some aspect of the business.

In addition to formal groups, all organizations have a myriad of **informal groups**. These groups

evolve naturally out of individual and collective self-interest among the members of an organization and are not the result of deliberate organizational design. People join informal groups because of common interests, social needs, or simply friendship. Informal groups typically develop their own norms and roles and establish unwritten rules for their members. Studies in social psychology have clearly documented the important role of these informal groups in facilitating (or inhibiting) performance and organizational effectiveness. Again, on the basis of their relative degree of permanence, informal groups can be divided into **friendship groups** (people you like to be around) and **interest groups** (e.g., a network of working women or minority managers). Friendship groups tend to be long-lasting, whereas interest groups often dissolve as people's interests change. One of the more interesting aspects of group processes in organizations is the interaction between informal and formal groups. Both groups establish norms and roles and goals and objectives, and both demand loyalty from their members. When an individual is a member of many groups—both formal and informal—a wide array of potentially conflicting situations emerges that has an impact upon behavior in organizations.



Consider This

Reasons for Joining Groups

People join groups for many reasons. Often, joining a group serves several purposes at once. In general, at least six reasons can be identified for joining groups:

- **Security.** Most people have a basic need for protection from external threats, real or imagined. These threats include the possibility of being fired or intimidated by the boss, the possibility of being embarrassed in a new situation, or simply the anxiety of being alone. Groups can be a primary source of *security* against such threats. We have often heard that there is “safety in numbers.”
- **Social Needs.** In addition, as discussed in previous chapters, basic theories of personality and motivation emphasize that most individuals have relatively strong *social needs*. They need to interact with other people and develop meaningful relationships. People are clearly social creatures. Groups provide structured environments in which individuals can pursue friendships.
- **Self-Esteem.** Similarly, membership in groups can assist individuals in developing self-esteem. People often take pride in being associated with prestigious groups; note such examples as

professors elected to membership in the National Academy of Sciences or salespeople who qualify for a million dollar club as a reward for sales performance.

- **Economic Self-Interest.** People often associate with groups to pursue their own *economic self-interest*. Labor unions are a prime example of this phenomenon, as are various professional and accrediting agencies, such as the American Bar Association. These organizations often attempt to limit the supply of tradespeople or professionals in order to maintain employment and salaries.
- **Mutual Interest.** Some groups are formed to pursue goals that are of *mutual interest* to group members. Included here are bridge clubs, company-sponsored baseball teams, and literary clubs. By joining together, individuals can pursue group goals that are typically not feasible alone.
- **Physical Proximity.** Finally, many groups form simply because people are located in close *physical proximity* to one another. In fact, office architecture and layout can have considerable influence over the development of social networks and groups. Consider, for example, two floors in the same building. On the first floor, all the managers have private offices arranged in a long row, with their assistants arranged in a similar row in front of them. This horizontal pattern of offices does not allow for frequent interaction between either the managers or the secretaries, and as a result group formation may be slowed. On the second floor, however, suppose all the managers' offices are arranged in a cluster surrounding a similar cluster of assistants. The result would be more frequent social interaction among employees. This is not to say that one arrangement is superior to the other; rather, it is simply to point out how variations in office arrangements can have an impact on group formation.

Teams

You probably described a team as a group of some kind. However, a team is more than just a group. When you think of all the groups that you belong to, you will probably find that very few of them are really teams. Some of them will be family or friendship groups that are formed to meet a wide range of needs such as affection, security, support, esteem, belonging, or identity. Some may be committees whose members represent different interest groups and who meet to discuss their differing perspectives on issues of interest.

In this reading the term 'work group' (or 'group') is often used interchangeably with the word 'team,' although a **team** may be thought of as a particularly cohesive and purposeful type of work group. We can distinguish work groups or teams from more casual groupings of people by using the following set of criteria (Adair, 1983).

Defining a Work Group or Team



A collection of people can be defined as a work group or team if it shows most, if not all, of the following characteristics:

- **A definable membership:** a collection of three or more people identifiable by name or type;
- **A group consciousness or identity:** the members think of themselves as a group;
- **A sense of shared purpose:** the members share some common task or goals or interests;
- **Interdependence:** the members need the help of one another to accomplish the purpose for which they joined the group;
- **Interaction:** the members communicate with one another, influence one another, react to one another;
- **Sustainability:** the team members periodically review the team's effectiveness;
- **An ability to act together.**

Usually, the tasks and goals set by teams cannot be achieved by individuals working alone because of constraints on time and resources, and because few individuals possess all the relevant competences and expertise. Sports teams or orchestras clearly fit these criteria.

Is a Team or Group Really Needed?

There may be times when group working – or simply working alone – is more appropriate and more effective. For example, decision-making in groups and teams is usually slower than individual decision-making because of the need for communication and consensus. In addition, groups and teams may produce conventional rather than innovative responses to problems, because decisions may regress towards the average, with the more innovative decision options being rejected (Makin et al., 1989).

In general, the greater the 'task uncertainty', that is to say the less obvious and more complex the task to be addressed, the more important it will be to work in a group or team rather than individually. This is because there will be a greater need for different skills and perspectives, especially if it is necessary to represent the different perspectives of the different stakeholders involved.

Table 9.2 lists some occasions when it will be appropriate to work in teams, in groups or alone.

Table 9.2 When to Work Alone, In Groups, Or In Teams

When to work alone or in groups

- For simple tasks or problems
- When cooperation is sufficient
- When minimum discretion is required
- When fast decisions are needed
- When few competences are required
- When members' interests are different or in conflict
- When an organization credits individuals for operational outputs
- When innovative responses are sought

When to build teams

- For highly-complex tasks or problems
- When decisions by consensus are essential
- When there is a high level of choice and uncertainty
- When high commitment is needed
- When a broad range of competences and different skills are required
- When members' objectives can be brought together towards a common purpose
- When an organization rewards team results for strategy and vision building
- When balanced views are sought

Source: [Defining Teams and Groups](#)

Virtual Teams

Increasingly, virtual team are common. **A virtual team** is one whose primary means of communicating is electronic, with only occasional phone and face-to-face communication, if at all. Table 9.3 contains a summary of benefits virtual groups provide to organizations and individuals, as well as the potential challenges and disadvantages associated with virtual groups.

Table 9.3 Team Benefits

Teams have organizational and individual benefits, as well as possible challenges and disadvantages

The Organization Benefits	The Individual Benefits	Possible Challenges and Disadvantages
People can be hired with the skills and competences needed regardless of location	People can work from anywhere at any time	Communicating effectively across distances
In some cases, working across different time zones can extend the working day	Physical location is not a recruitment issue; relocation is unnecessary	Management lacks the planning necessary for a virtual group
It can enable products to be developed more quickly	Travelling expenses and commuting time are cut	Technology is complicated and/or unfamiliar to some or all members
Expenses associated with travel and relocation can be cut; Carbon emissions can be reduced.	People can work from anywhere at any time	Difficult to coordinate times and hard to squeeze all the information into a more narrow time slot

Source: [Defining Teams and Groups](#)

References

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9.2 Characteristics of Effective Groups

Social Loafing

Before we discuss characteristics of effective groups, we are going to discuss a well-known effect of group work called social loafing.

Social loafing refers to the tendency of individuals to put in less effort when working in a group context. This phenomenon, also known as the Ringelmann effect, was first noted by French agricultural engineer Max Ringelmann in 1913. In one study, he had people pull on a rope individually and in groups. He found that as the number of people pulling increased, the group's total pulling force was less than the individual efforts had been when measured alone (Karau & Williams, 1993).



Image: by Shane T. McCoy, Law Enforcement Explorers Conference Two Teams Pulling, [Wikimedia Commons](#). [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](#). [click to enlarge]

Why do people work less hard when they are working with other people? Observations show that as the size of the group grows, this effect becomes larger as well (Karau & Williams, 1993). The social

loafing tendency is less a matter of being lazy and more a matter of perceiving that one will receive neither one's fair share of rewards if the group is successful nor blame if the group fails. Rationales for this behaviour include, "My own effort will have little effect on the outcome," "Others aren't pulling their weight, so why should I?" or "I don't have much to contribute, but no one will notice anyway." This is a consistent effect across a great number of group tasks and countries (Gabrenya et al., 1983; Harkins & Petty, 1982; Taylor & Faust, 1952; Ziller, 1957). Research also shows that perceptions of fairness are related to less social loafing (Price et al., 2006). Therefore, teams that are deemed as more fair should also see less social loafing.



Let's Focus

Social Loafing in Groups

Tips for Preventing Social Loafing in Your Group

When designing a group project, here are some considerations to keep in mind:

- **Carefully choose the number of individuals you need to get the task done.** The likelihood of social loafing increases as group size increases (especially if the group consists of 10 or more people), because it is easier for people to feel unneeded or inadequate, and it is easier for them to "hide" in a larger group.
- **Clearly define each member's tasks in front of the entire group.** If you assign a task to the entire group, social loafing is more likely. For example, instead of stating, "By Monday, let's find several articles on the topic of stress," you can set the goal of "By Monday, each of us will be responsible for finding five articles on the topic of stress." When individuals have specific goals, they become more accountable for their performance.
- **Design and communicate to the entire group a system for evaluating each person's contribution.** You may have a midterm feedback session in which each member gives feedback to every other member. This would increase the sense of accountability individuals have. You may even want to discuss the principle of social loafing in order to discourage it.
- **Build a cohesive group.** When group members develop strong relational bonds, they are more committed to each other and the success of the group, and they are therefore more likely to pull their own weight.
- **Assign tasks that are highly engaging and inherently rewarding.** Design challenging, unique, and varied activities that will have a significant impact on the individuals themselves, the

organization, or the external environment. For example, one group member may be responsible for crafting a new incentive-pay system through which employees can direct some of their bonus to their favorite nonprofits.

- ***Make sure individuals feel that they are needed.*** If the group ignores a member's contributions because these contributions do not meet the group's performance standards, members will feel discouraged and are unlikely to contribute in the future. Make sure that everyone feels included and needed by the group.

In this Section:

Now that we've learned about the phenomenon of social loafing, let's turn our attention towards effective teams. We will discuss characteristics of effective groups and teams based on a number of factors, including:

- [Team Norms](#)
- [Group Roles](#)
- [Cohesion](#)
- [Collective Efficacy](#)
- [Emotional Intelligence](#)

Team Norms

Norms are shared expectations about how things operate within a group or team. Just as new employees learn to understand and share the assumptions, norms, and values that are part of an organization's culture, they also must learn the norms of their immediate team. This understanding helps teams be more cohesive and perform better. Norms are a powerful way of ensuring coordination within a team. For example, is it acceptable to be late to meetings? How prepared are you supposed to be at the meetings? Is it acceptable to criticize someone else's work? These norms are shaped early during the life of a team and affect whether the team is productive, cohesive, and successful.



Let's Focus

Establishing Norms Using Team Contracts

Scientific research, as well as experience working with thousands of teams, show that teams that are able to articulate and agree on established ground rules, goals, and roles and develop a team contract around these standards are better equipped to face challenges that may arise within the team (Katzenback & Smith, 1993; Porter & Lilly, 1996). Having a team contract does not necessarily mean that the team will be successful, but it can serve as a road map when the team veers off course.

The following questions can help to create a meaningful team contract:

Team Values and Goals

- What are our shared team values?
- What is our team goal?

Team Roles and Leadership

- Who does what within this team? (Who takes notes at the meeting? Who sets the agenda? Who assigns tasks? Who runs the meetings?)
- Does the team have a formal leader? If so, what are the leaders' roles?

Team Decision Making

- How are minor decisions made?
- How are major decisions made?

Team Communication

- Who do you contact if you cannot make a meeting?
- Who communicates with whom?
- How often will the team meet?

Team Performance

- What constitutes good team performance?
- What if a team member tries hard but does not seem to be producing quality work?
- How will poor attendance/work quality be dealt with?

Group Roles

In order to accomplish its goals and maintain its norms, a group must differentiate the work activities of its members. One or more members assume leadership positions, others carry out the major work of the group, and still others serve in support roles. This specialization of activities is commonly referred to as role differentiation. More specifically, a **work role** is an expected behavior pattern assigned or attributed to a particular position in the organization. It defines individual responsibilities on behalf of the group.

As we might expect, individual group members often perform several of these roles simultaneously. A group leader, for example, must focus group attention on task performance while at the same time preserving group harmony and cohesiveness. To see how this works, consider your own experience. You may be able to recognize the roles you have played in groups you have been a member of. In your experience, have you played multiple roles or single roles?

Studies show that individuals who are more aware of team roles and the behaviour required for each role perform better than individual who do not. This fact remains true for both student project teams as well as work teams, even after accounting for personality and intelligence (Mumford et al., 2008). Early research found the teams tend to have two categories of roles consisting of those related to the tasks at hand and those related to the team's functioning. For example, teams that focus only on production at all costs may be successful in the short run, but if they pay no attention to how team members feel about working 70 hours a week, they are likely to experience high turnover. Figure 9.1 lists the various roles in a team role typology chart.

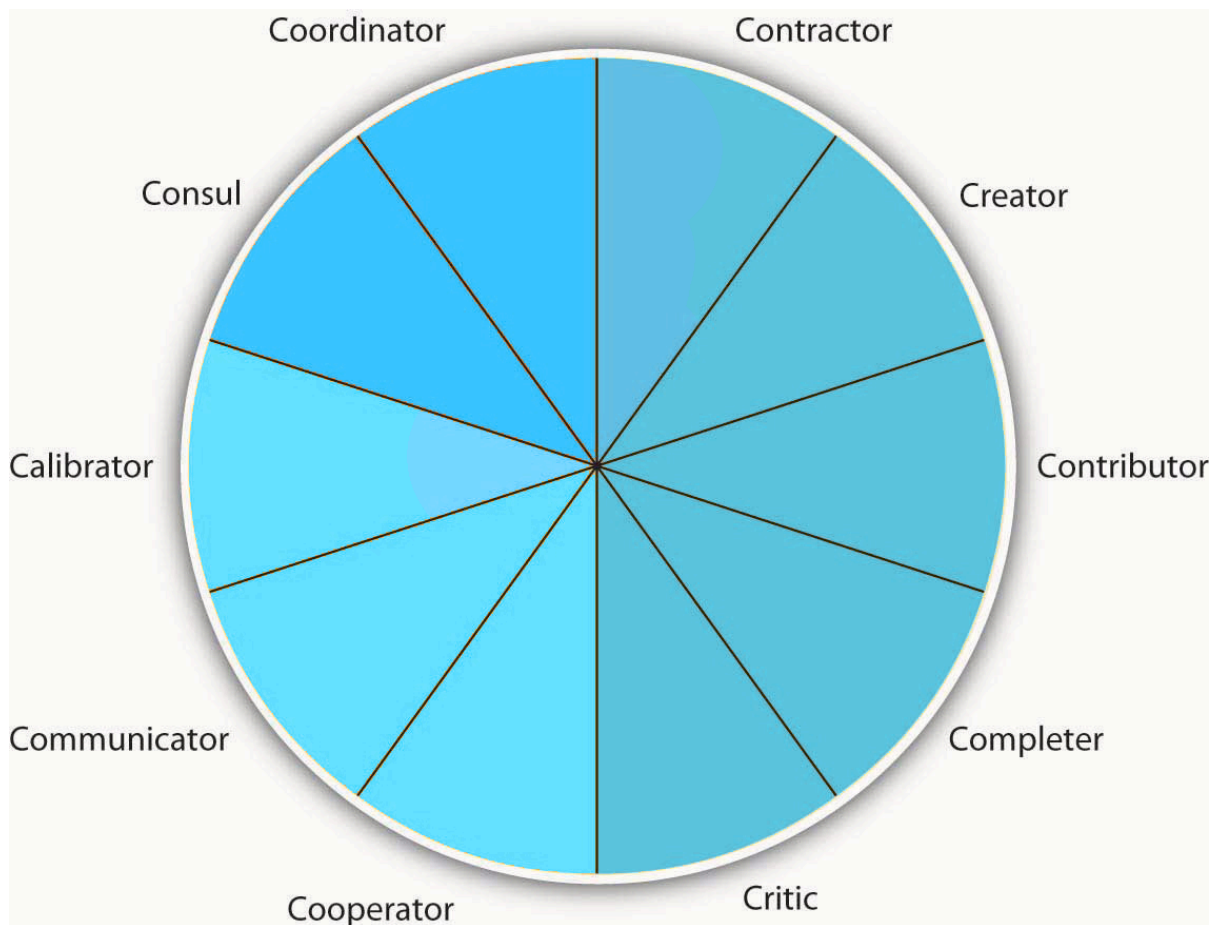


Figure 9.1 Teams are based on many roles being carried out, as summarized by the Team Role Typology. These 10 roles include: task roles (green), social roles (yellow), and boundary-spanning roles (orange) (Mumford et al., 2006; Mumford et al., 2008). Image: Seneca College, [Organizational Behaviour at Seneca](#). CC BY-NC 4.0. Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge]

Based on decades of research on teams, 10 key roles have been identified (Bales, 1950; Benne & Sheats, 1948; Belbin, 1993). Team leadership is effective when leaders are able to adapt the roles they are contributing or asking others to contribute to fit what the team needs given its stage and the tasks at hand (Kozlowski et al., 1996; Kozlowski et al., 1996). Ineffective leaders might always engage in the same task role behaviours, when what they really need is to focus on social roles, put disagreements aside, and get back to work. While these behaviours can be effective from time to time, if the team doesn't modify its role behaviours as things change, they most likely will not be effective.

Cohesion

Cohesion can be thought of as a kind of social glue. It refers to the degree of camaraderie within the group. Cohesive groups are those in which members are attached to each other and act as

one unit. Generally speaking, the more cohesive a group is, the more productive it will be and the more rewarding the experience will be for the group's members (Beal et al., 2003; Evans & Dion, 1991). Members of cohesive groups tend to have the following characteristics: They have a collective identity; they experience a moral bond and a desire to remain part of the group; they share a sense of purpose, working together on a meaningful task or cause; and they establish a structured pattern of communication.

The fundamental factors affecting group cohesion include the following:

- **Similarity.** The more similar group members are in terms of age, sex, education, skills, attitudes, values, and beliefs, the more likely the group will bond.
- **Stability.** The longer a group stays together, the more cohesive it becomes.
- **Size.** Smaller groups tend to have higher levels of cohesion.
- **Support.** When group members receive coaching and are encouraged to support their fellow team members, group identity strengthens.
- **Satisfaction.** Cohesion is correlated with how pleased group members are with each other's performance, behaviour, and conformity to group norms.



As you might imagine, there are many benefits in creating a cohesive group. Members are generally more personally satisfied and feel greater self-confidence and self-esteem when in a group where they feel they belong. For many, membership in such a group can be a buffer against stress, which can improve mental and physical well-being. Because members are invested in the group and its work, they are more likely to regularly attend and actively participate in the group, taking more responsibility for the group's functioning. In addition, members can draw on the strength of the group to persevere through challenging situations that might otherwise be too hard to tackle alone.



Let's Focus

Cohesive Team Building

Steps to Creating and Maintaining a Cohesive Team

- **Align the group with the greater organization.** Establish common objectives in which members can get involved.
- **Let members have choices in setting their own goals.** Include them in decision making at the organizational level.
- **Define clear roles.** Demonstrate how each person's contribution furthers the group goal—everyone is responsible for a special piece of the puzzle.
- **Situate group members in close proximity to each other.** This builds familiarity.
- **Give frequent praise.** Both individuals and groups benefit from praise. Also encourage them to praise each other. This builds individual self-confidence, reaffirms positive behaviour, and creates an overall positive atmosphere.
- **Treat all members with dignity and respect.** This demonstrates that there are no favorites and everyone is valued.
- **Celebrate differences.** This highlights each individual's contribution while also making diversity a norm.
- **Establish common rituals.** Thursday morning coffee, monthly potlucks—these reaffirm group identity and create shared experiences.

Can a Group Have Too Much Cohesion?

Keep in mind that groups can have too much cohesion. Because members can come to value belonging over all else, an internal pressure to conform may arise, causing some members to modify their behaviour to adhere to group norms. Members may become conflict avoidant, focusing more on trying to please each other so as not to be ostracized. In some cases, members might censor themselves to maintain the party line. As such, there is a superficial sense of harmony and less diversity of thought. Having less tolerance for deviants, who threaten the group's static identity, cohesive groups will often excommunicate members who dare to disagree.

Members attempting to make a change may even be criticized or undermined by other members, who perceive this as a threat to the status quo. The painful possibility of being marginalized can keep many members in line with the majority. The more strongly members identify with the group, the easier it is to see outsiders as inferior, or enemies in extreme cases, which can lead to increased insularity. This form of prejudice can have a downward spiral effect. Not only is the group not getting corrective feedback from within its own confines, it is also closing itself off from input and a cross-fertilization of ideas from the outside. In such an environment, groups can easily adopt extreme ideas that will not be challenged. Denial increases as problems are ignored and failures are blamed on external factors. With limited, often biased, information and no internal or external opposition, groups like these can make disastrous decisions. **Groupthink** is a group pressure phenomenon that increases the risk of the group making flawed decisions by allowing reductions in mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment. Groupthink is most common in highly cohesive groups (Janis, 1972). You'll read more about groupthink later in this chapter.

Cohesive groups can go awry in much milder ways. For example, group members can value their social interactions so much that they have fun together but spend little time on accomplishing their assigned task. Or a group's goal may begin to diverge from the larger organization's goal and those trying to uphold the organization's goal may be ostracized (e.g., teasing the class "brain" for doing well in school).

In addition, research shows that cohesion leads to acceptance of group norms (Goodman et al., 1987). Groups with high task commitment do well, but imagine a group where the norms are to work as little as possible? As you might imagine, these groups get little accomplished and can actually work together against the organization's goals.

Collective Efficacy

Collective efficacy refers to a group's perception of its ability to successfully perform well (Bandura, 1997). **Collective efficacy** is influenced by a number of factors, including watching others ("that group did it and we're better than them"), verbal persuasion ("we can do this"), and how a person feels ("this is a good group"). Research shows that a group's collective efficacy is related to its performance (Gully et al., 2002; Porter, 2005; Tasa et al., 2007). In addition, this relationship is higher when task interdependence (the degree an individual's task is linked to someone else's work) is high rather than low.

Emotional Intelligence

Without a doubt, most if not all of us will work in groups in our workplace. Even if we seem to have a somewhat isolated job, part of what we do will impact others. Developing skills that can help us work better in these groups relates to the social awareness and relationship management aspects of emotional intelligence. **These two skills—the ability to understand social cues that can**

be affecting others and our ability to communicate and maintain good relationships—are the cornerstones in any group situation.

For example, in the group development process, we depend greatly on our social awareness skills in order to make successful first impressions during the forming stage. We use our ability to resolve conflict during the storming and norming phase. Having the skills to handle these different phases are key to successful and productive group work. Have you ever worked with a dysfunctional group, perhaps on a class project? These types of groups are lacking in communication and possibly emotional intelligence skills, which can make the group more cohesive. **Group cohesiveness is the goal in any type of group setting. This makes the performing stage more productive, less stressful, and maybe even enjoyable!**

In a study by Jordan and Troth (2004), there was a significant correlation between higher team performance and the emotional intelligence skills of the team members. **Being able to understand your own emotions (self-awareness), manage them (self-management), and establish positive relationships built on trust is what makes groups work most effectively.**



Self-assessments

See Appendix B:

- [Assessment: How Do You Behave in Groups?](#)
- [Assessment: How Effective Is Your Work Group?](#)



Exercises

- Think about the most cohesive group you have ever been in. How did it compare in terms of similarity, stability, size, support, and satisfaction?
- Why do you think social loafing occurs within groups?
- Have you seen instances of collective efficacy helping or hurting a team? Please explain your answer.
- What can be done to combat social loafing?

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9.3 Group Life Cycle

Groups are dynamic systems in constant change. Groups grow together and eventually come apart. People join groups and others leave. This dynamic changes and transforms the very nature of the group. **Group socialization** involves how the group members interact with one another and form relationships. Just as you were once born and changed the caregivers that raised you, they changed you. You came to know a language and culture, a value system, and set of beliefs that influence you to this day. You came to be socialized, to experience the process of learning to associate, communicate, or interact within a group. A group you belong to this year—perhaps a soccer team or the cast of a play—may not be part of your life next year. And those who are in leadership positions may ascend or descend the leadership hierarchy as the needs of the group, and other circumstances, change over time.

Group Life Cycle Patterns

Your life cycle is characterized with several steps, and while it doesn't follow a prescribed path, there are universal stages we can all recognize. You were born. You didn't choose your birth, your parents, your language, or your culture, but you came to know them through communication. You came to know yourself, learned skills, discovered talents, and met other people. You learned, worked, lived, and loved, and as you aged, minor injuries took longer to heal. You competed in ever-increasing age groups in your favorite sport, and while your time for each performance may have increased as you aged, your experience allowed you to excel in other ways. Where you were once a novice, you have now learned something to share. You lived to see some of your friends pass before you, and the moment will arrive when you too must confront death.

In the same way, groups experience similar steps and stages and take on many of the characteristics we associate with life (Moreland & Levine, 1982). They grow, overcome illness and dysfunction, and transform across time. No group, just as no individual, lives forever.

Your first day on the job may be comparable to the first day you went to school. At home, you may have learned some of the basics, like how to write with a pencil, but knowledge of that skill and its application are two different things. In school, people spoke and acted in different ways than at home. Gradually, you came to understand the meaning of recess, the importance of raising your hand to get the teacher's attention, and how to follow other school rules. At work, you may have had academic training for your profession, but the knowledge you learned in school only serves as your foundation—much as your socialization at home served to guide you at school. On the job they use jargon terms, have schedules that may include coffee breaks (recess), have a supervisor (teacher), and have rules, explicit and understood. On the first day, it was all new, even if many of the elements were familiar.

In order to better understand group development and its life cycle, many researchers have described

the universal stages and phases of groups. While there are modern interpretations of these stages, most draw from the model proposed by Bruce Tuckman specifies the usual order of the phases of group development and allows us to predict several stages we can anticipate as we join a new group.

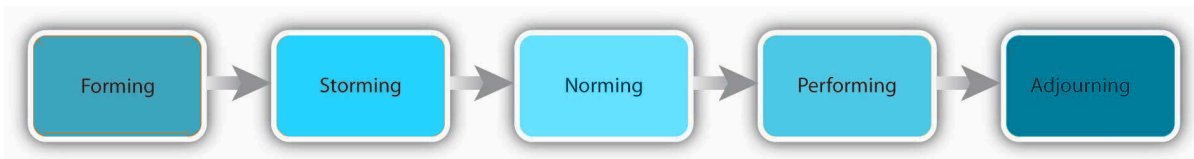


Figure 9.2 Stages of Group Development. Image: NSCC. [NSCC Organizational Behaviour, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge]

Forming

Tuckman (1965) begins with the **forming stage** as the initiation of group formation. This stage is also called the orientation stage because individual group members come to know each other. Group members who are new to each other and can't predict each other's behavior can be expected to experience the stress of uncertainty. Uncertainty theory states that we choose to know more about others with whom we have interactions in order to reduce or resolve the anxiety associated with the unknown (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Berger, 1986; Gudykunst, 1995). The more we know about others and become accustomed to how they communicate, the better we can predict how they will interact with us in future contexts. If you learn that Monday mornings are never a good time for your supervisor, you quickly learn to schedule meetings later in the week. Individuals are initially tentative and display caution as they begin to learn about the group and its members.

Storming

If you don't know someone very well, it is easy to offend. Each group member brings to the group a set of experiences, combined with education and a self-concept. You won't be able to read this information on a nametag, but instead you will only come to know it through time and interaction. Since the possibility of overlapping and competing viewpoints and perspectives exists, the group will experience a **storming stage**, a time of struggles as the members themselves sort out their differences. There may be more than one way to solve the problem or task at hand, and some group members may prefer one strategy over another. Some members of the group may be more senior to the organization than you, and members may treat them differently. Some group members may be as new as you are and just as uncertain about everyone's talents, skills, roles, and self-perceptions. The wise business communicator will anticipate the storming stage and help facilitate opportunities for the members to resolve uncertainty before the work commences. There may be challenges for leadership, and there may be conflicting viewpoints. The sociology professor sees the world differently than the physics professor. The sales agent sees things differently than someone

from accounting. A manager who understands and anticipates this normal challenge in the group's life cycle can help the group become more productive.

A clear definition of the purpose and mission of the group can help the members focus their energies. Interaction prior to the first meeting can help reduce uncertainty. Coffee and calories can help bring a group together. Providing the group with what they need and opportunities to know each other prior to their task can increase efficiency.

Although little seems to get accomplished at this stage, group members are becoming more authentic as they express their deeper thoughts and feelings. What they are really exploring is "Can I truly be me, have power, and be accepted?" During this chaotic stage, a great deal of creative energy that was previously buried is released and available for use, but it takes skill to move the group from storming to norming. In many cases, the group gets stuck in the storming phase.



Let's Focus

The Storming Phase

Avoid Getting Stuck in the Storming Phase!

There are several steps you can take to avoid getting stuck in the storming phase of group development. Try the following if you feel the group process you are involved in is not progressing:

- **Normalize conflict.** Let members know this is a natural phase in the group-formation process.
- **Be inclusive.** Continue to make all members feel included and invite all views into the room. Mention how diverse ideas and opinions help foster creativity and innovation.
- **Make sure everyone is heard.** Facilitate heated discussions and help participants understand each other.
- **Support all group members.** This is especially important for those who feel more insecure.
- **Remain positive.** This is a key point to remember about the group's ability to accomplish its goal.
- **Don't rush the group's development.** Remember that working through the storming stage can take several meetings.

Norming

Groups that make a successful transition from the storming stage will next experience the **norming stage**, where the group establishes norms, or informal rules, for behavior and interaction. Who speaks first? Who takes notes? Who is creative, who is visual, and who is detail-oriented? Sometimes our job titles and functions speak for themselves, but human beings are complex. We are not simply a list of job functions, and in the dynamic marketplace of today's business environment you will often find that people have talents and skills well beyond their "official" role or task. Drawing on these strengths can make the group more effective.

The norming stage is marked by less division and more collaboration. The level of anxiety associated with interaction is generally reduced, making for a more positive work climate that promotes listening. When people feel less threatened and their needs are met, they are more likely to focus their complete attention on the purpose of the group. If they are still concerned with who does what and whether they will speak in error, the interaction framework will stay in the storming stage. Tensions are reduced when the normative expectations are known and the degree to which a manager can describe these at the outset can reduce the amount of time the group remains in uncertainty. Group members generally express more satisfaction with clear expectations and are more inclined to participate.

Performing

Ultimately, the purpose of a work group is performance, and the preceding stages lead us to the **performing stage**, in which the group accomplishes its mandate, fulfills its purpose, and reaches its goals. To facilitate performance, group members can't skip the initiation of getting to know each other or the sorting out of roles and norms, but they can try to focus on performance with clear expectations from the moment the group is formed. Productivity is often how we measure success in business and industry, and the group has to produce. Outcome assessments may have been built into the system from the beginning to serve as a benchmark for success. Wise managers know how to celebrate success, as it brings more success, social cohesion, group participation, and a sense of job satisfaction. Incremental gains toward a benchmark may also be cause for celebration and support, and failure to reach a goal should be regarded as an opportunity for clarification.

It is generally wiser to focus on the performance of the group rather than individual contributions. Managers and group members will want to offer assistance to underperformers as well as congratulate members for their contributions. If the goal is to create a community where competition pushes each member to perform, individual highlights may serve your needs, but if you want a group to solve a problem or address a challenge as a group, you have to promote group cohesion. Members need to feel a sense of belonging, and praise (or the lack thereof) can be a sword with two edges: one stimulates and motivates while the other demoralizes and divides.

Groups should be designed to produce and perform in ways and at levels that individuals cannot,

or else you should consider compartmentalizing the tasks. The performing stage is where the productivity occurs, and it is necessary to make sure the group has what it needs to perform. Missing pieces, parts, or information can stall the group and reset the cycle to storming all over again. Loss of performance is inefficiency, which carries a cost. Managers will be measured by the group's productivity and performance. Make sure the performing stage is one that is productive and healthy for its members.

Adjourning

Now, as typically happens, all groups will eventually have to move on to new assignments. In the **adjourning stage**, members leave the group. The group may cease to exist or it may be transformed with new members and a new set of goals. Others will be reassigned to tasks that require their talents and skills, and you may or may not collaborate with them in the future.

You may miss the interactions with the members, even the more cantankerous ones, and will experience both relief and a sense of loss. Like life, the group process is normal, and mixed emotions are to be expected. A wise manager anticipates this stage and facilitates the separation with skill and ease. We often close this process with a ritual marking its passing, though the ritual may be as formal as an award or as informal as a “thank you” or a verbal acknowledgement of a job well done over coffee and calories. It is important not to forget that groups can reach the adjourning stage without having achieved success. Some businesses go bankrupt, some departments are closed, and some individuals lose their positions after a group fails to perform. Adjourning can come suddenly and unexpectedly or gradually and piece by piece. Either way, a skilled business communicator will be prepared and recognize it as part of the classic group life cycle.

High Performing Groups and The Punctuated-Equilibrium Model

As you may have noted, the five-stage model we have just reviewed is a linear process. According to the model, a group progresses to the performing stage, at which point it finds itself in an ongoing, smooth-sailing situation until the group dissolves. In reality, subsequent researchers, most notably Joy H. Karriker, have found that the life of a group is much more dynamic and cyclical in nature (Karriker, 2005). For example, a group may operate in the performing stage for several months. Then, because of a disruption, such as a competing emerging technology that changes the rules of the game or the introduction of a new CEO, the group may move back into the storming phase before returning to performing. Think of your own experiences with project teams and the backslide that the group may have taken when another team member was introduced or when a leader or project sponsor changed a new project task. The team has to re-group and will likely re-storm and re-form before getting back to performing as a team. Ideally, any regression in the linear group progression will ultimately result in a higher level of functioning.

Katzenberg and Smith (2005), in their study of teams, have created a “team performance curve”

that graphs the journey of a team from a working group to a high-performing team. The team performance curve is illustrated in Figure 9.3

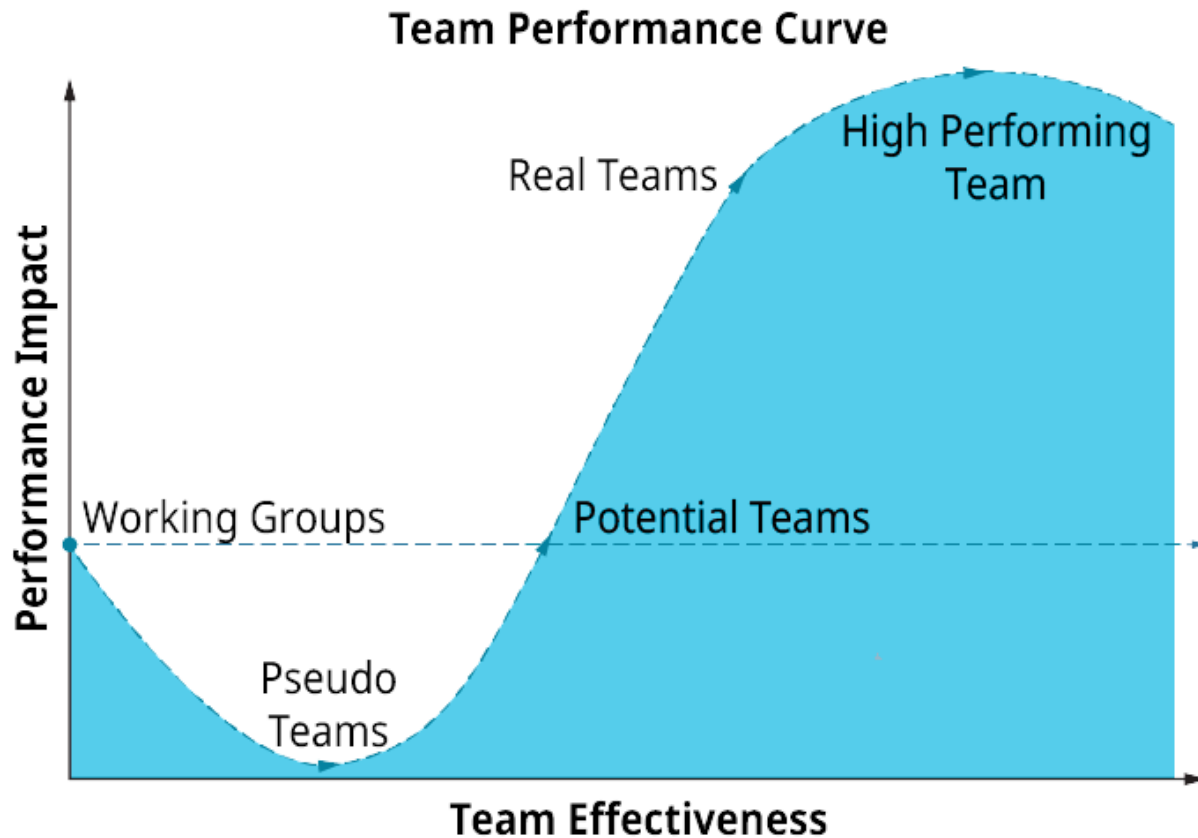


Figure 9.3 Team Performance Curve Image: Rice University. [Organizational Behavior, CC BY 4.0](#). Color altered from original. [click to enlarge]

Proponents of this cyclical model draw from behavioural scientist Connie Gersick's study of **punctuated equilibrium** (Gersick, 1991). The concept of punctuated equilibrium was first proposed in 1972 by paleontologists Niles Eldredge and Stephen Jay Gould, who both believed that evolution occurred in rapid, radical spurts rather than gradually over time. Identifying numerous examples of this pattern in social behaviour, Gersick found that the concept applied to organizational change. She proposed that groups remain fairly static, maintaining a certain equilibrium for long periods of time. Change during these periods is incremental, largely due to the resistance to change that arises when systems take root and processes become institutionalized. In this model, revolutionary change occurs in brief, punctuated bursts, generally catalyzed by a crisis or problem that breaks through the systemic inertia and shakes up the deep organizational structures in place. At this point, the organization or group has the opportunity to learn and create new structures that are better aligned with current realities. Whether the group does this is not guaranteed. In sum, in Gersick's model, groups can repeatedly cycle through the storming and performing stages, with revolutionary change taking place during short transitional windows. For organizations and groups who understand that disruption, conflict, and chaos are inevitable in the life of a social system, these disruptions represent opportunities for innovation and creativity.

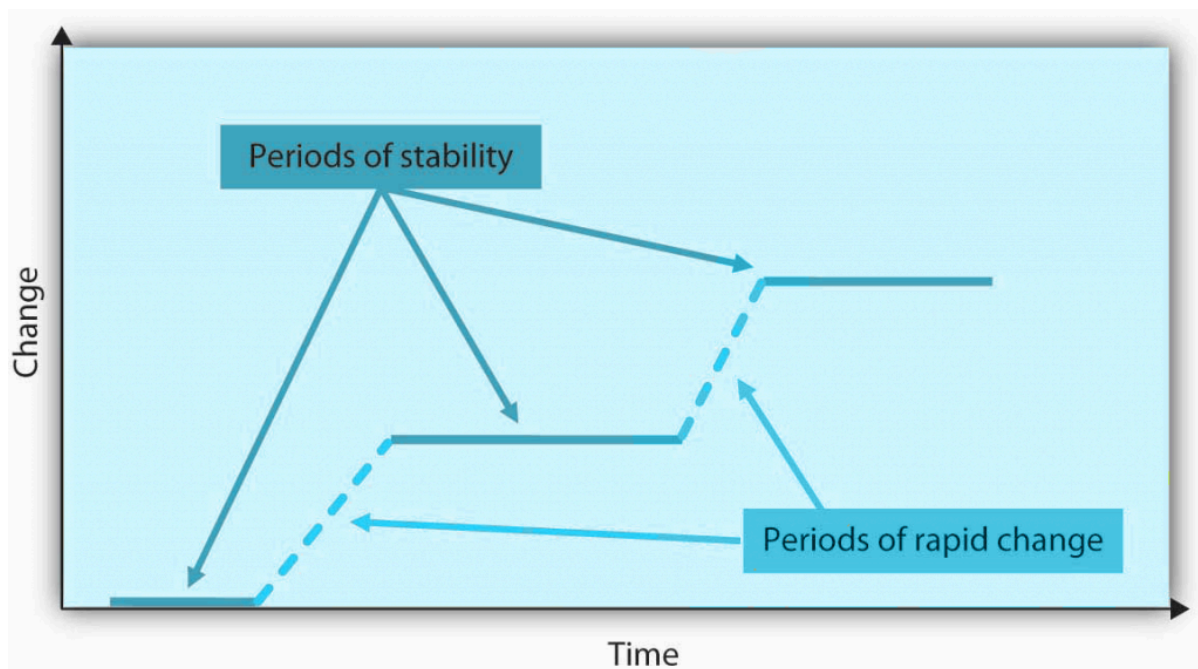


Figure 9.4 Punctuated Equilibrium. Image: NSCC. [NSCC Organizational Behaviour, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge]

Life Cycle of Member Roles

Just as groups go through a life cycle when they form and eventually adjourn, so do the group members fulfill different roles during this life cycle. These roles, proposed by Richard Moreland and John Levine are summarized in Table 9.4.

Table 9.4 Life Cycle of Member Roles

1. Potential member	Curiosity and interest
2. New member	Joined the group but still an outsider, and unknown
3. Full member	Knows the rules and is looked to for leadership
4. Divergent member	Focuses on differences
5. Marginal member	No longer involved
6. Ex-Member	No longer considered a member

Source: [Human Relations](#)



Consider This

Group Scenario

Suppose you are about to graduate from school and you are in the midst of an employment search. You've gathered extensive information on a couple of local businesses and are aware that they will be participating in the university job fair. You've explored their websites, talked to people currently employed at each company, and learned what you can from the public information available. At this stage, you are considered a potential member. You may have an electrical, chemical, or mechanical engineering degree soon, but you are not a member of an engineering team.

You show up at the job fair in professional attire and completely prepared. The representatives of each company are respectful, cordial, and give you contact information. One of them even calls a member of the organization on the spot and arranges an interview for you next week. You are excited at the prospect and want to learn more. You are still a potential member.

The interview goes well the following week. The day after the meeting, you receive a call for a follow-up interview that leads to a committee interview. A few weeks later, the company calls you with a job offer. However, in the meantime, you have also been interviewing with other potential employers, and you are waiting to hear back from two of them. You are still a potential member.

As a member of a new group, you may learn new customs, traditions, and group norms. After careful consideration, you decide to take the job offer and start the next week. The projects look interesting, you'll be gaining valuable experience, and the commute to work is reasonable. Your first day on the job is positive, and they've assigned you a mentor. The conversations are positive, but you feel lost at times, as if they are speaking a language you can't quite grasp. As a *new group member*, your level of acceptance will increase as you begin learning the groups' rules, spoken and unspoken (Fisher, 1970). You will gradually move from the potential member role to the role of new group member as you learn to fit into the group.

Over time and projects, you gradually increase your responsibilities. You are no longer looked at as the new person, and you can follow almost every conversation. You can't quite say, "I remember when," because your tenure hasn't been that long, but you are a known quantity and know your way around. You are a full member of the group. *Full members* enjoy knowing the rules and customs and can even create new rules. New group members look to full members for leadership and guidance. Full group members can control the agenda and have considerable influence on the agenda and activities.

Full members of a group, however, can and do come into conflict. When you were a new member, you

may have remained silent when you felt you had something to say, but now you state your case. There is more than one way to get the job done. You may suggest new ways that emphasize efficiency over existing methods. Coworkers who have been working in the department for several years may be unwilling to adapt and change, resulting in tension. Expressing different views can cause conflict and may even interfere with communication.

When this type of tension arises, divergent group members pull back, contribute less, and start to see themselves as separate from the group. *Divergent group members* have less eye contact, seek out each other's opinion less frequently, and listen defensively. In the beginning of the process, you felt a sense of belonging, but now you don't. *Marginal group members* start to look outside the group for their interpersonal needs.

After several months of trying to cope with these adjustments, you decide that you never really investigated the other two companies, that your job search process was incomplete. Perhaps you should take a second look at the options. You will report to work on Monday but will start the process of becoming an ex-member, one who no longer belongs. You may experience a sense of relief upon making this decision, given that you haven't felt like you belonged to the group for a while. When you line up your next job and submit your resignation, you make it official.

This process has no set timetable. Some people overcome differences and stay in the group for years; others get promoted and leave the group only when they get transferred to regional headquarters. As a skilled business communicator, you will recognize the signs of divergence, just as you have anticipated the storming stage and do your best to facilitate success.



Let's Review

- **Groups and their individual members come together and grow apart** in predictable patterns.
- **Group lifecycle patterns** refer to the process or stages of group development.
- **There are five stages to the group development process**, which include forming, norming, storming, performing, and adjourning.
- **Within each of the stages, group members have a variety of roles**, which include potential member, new member, full member, divergent member, marginal member, and an ex-member.



Exercises

- Is it possible for an outsider (a nongroup member) to help a group move from the storming stage to the norming stage? Explain your answer and present it to the class.
- Think of a group of which you are a member and identify some roles played by group members, including yourself. Have your roles, and those of others, changed over time? Are some roles more positive than others? Discuss your answers with your classmates.
- In the course where you are using this book, think of yourself and your classmates as a group. At what stage of group formation are you currently? What stage will you be at when the school year ends?
- Think of a group you no longer belong to. At what point did you become an ex-member? Were you ever a marginal group member or a full member? Write a two- to three-paragraph description of the group, how and why you became a member, and how and why you left.

References

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9.4 Group Decision-making



Let's Focus

Group Decision Making

When It Comes to Decision Making, Are Two Heads Better Than One?

The answer to this question depends on several factors. Group decision making has the advantage of drawing from the experiences and perspectives of a larger number of individuals. Hence, a group may have the potential to be more creative and lead to more effective decisions. In fact, groups may sometimes achieve results beyond what they could have done as individuals. Groups may also make the task more enjoyable for the members. Finally, when the decision is made by a group rather than a single individual, implementation of the decision will be easier, because group members will be more invested in the decision. If the group is diverse, better decisions may be made, because different group members may have different ideas based on their backgrounds and experiences. Research shows that for top management teams, diverse groups that debate issues make decisions that are more comprehensive and better for the bottom line (Simons et al., 1999).

Despite its popularity within organizations, group decision making suffers from a number of disadvantages. We know that groups rarely outperform their best member (Miner, 1984). While groups have the potential to arrive at an effective decision, they often suffer from process losses. For example, groups may suffer from coordination problems. Anyone who has worked with a team of individuals on a project can attest to the difficulty of coordinating members' work or even coordinating everyone's presence in a team meeting. Furthermore, groups can suffer from groupthink. Finally, group decision making takes more time compared to individual decision making, because all members need to discuss their thoughts regarding different alternatives.

Thus, whether an individual or a group decision is preferable will depend on the specifics of the situation. For example, if there is an emergency and a decision needs to be made quickly, individual decision making might be preferred. Individual decision making may also be appropriate if the individual in question has all the information needed to make the decision and if implementation problems are not expected. On the other hand, if one person does not have all the information and skills needed to make a decision, if implementing the decision will be difficult without the involvement

of those who will be affected by the decision, and if time urgency is more modest, then decision making by a group may be more effective.

Groupthink

Earlier in the chapter we learned about [group cohesiveness](#) and the concept of [groupthink](#). In this section, we will explore characteristics and consequences of groupthink.

Have you ever been in a decision-making group that you felt was heading in the wrong direction but you didn't speak up and say so? If so, you have already been a victim of groupthink. Irving Janis (1972), author of a book called *Victims of Groupthink*, explained that groupthink is characterized by eight symptoms:

1. **Illusion of invulnerability** is shared by most or all of the group members, which creates excessive optimism and encourages them to take extreme risks.
2. **Collective rationalizations** occur, in which members downplay negative information or warnings that might cause them to reconsider their assumptions.
3. **An unquestioned belief in the group's inherent morality** occurs, which may incline members to ignore ethical or moral consequences of their actions.
4. **Stereotyped views of outgroups** are seen when groups discount rivals' abilities to make effective responses.
5. **Direct pressure** is exerted on any members who express strong arguments against any of the group's stereotypes, illusions, or commitments.
6. **Self-censorship** occurs when members of the group minimize their own doubts and counterarguments.
7. **Illusions of unanimity** occur, based on self-censorship and direct pressure on the group. The lack of dissent is viewed as unanimity.
8. **The emergence of self-appointed mindguards** happens when one or more members protect the group from information that runs counter to the group's assumptions and course of action.



Let's Focus

Recommendations for Avoiding Groupthink

Here are some recommendations for groups, individuals, and leaders to help minimize the risk of groupthink.

Groups should do the following:

- **Discuss** the symptoms of groupthink and how to avoid them.
- **Assign** a rotating devil's advocate to every meeting.
- **Invite** experts or qualified colleagues who are not part of the core decision-making group to attend meetings and get reactions from outsiders on a regular basis and share these with the group.
- **Encourage** a culture of difference where different ideas are valued.
- **Debate** the ethical implications of the decisions and potential solutions being considered.

Individuals should do the following:

- **Monitor** personal behavior for signs of groupthink and modify behavior if needed.
- **Check** for self-censorship.
- **Carefully** avoid mindguard behaviors.
- **Avoid** putting pressure on other group members to conform.
- **Remind** members of the ground rules for avoiding groupthink if they get off track.

Group leaders should do the following:

- **Break** the group into two subgroups from time to time.
- **Have** more than one group work on the same problem if time and resources allow it. This makes sense for highly critical decisions.
- **Remain** impartial and refrain from stating preferences at the outset of decisions.
- **Set** a tone of encouraging critical evaluations throughout deliberations.
- **Create** an anonymous feedback channel through which all group members can contribute if desired.

Adapted and expanded from: Janis(1972); and Whyte (1991).



Let's Review

- **There are trade-offs** between making decisions alone and within a group.
- **Groups have a greater diversity of experiences and ideas than individuals**, but they also have potential process losses such as groupthink.
- **Groupthink** can be avoided by recognizing the eight symptoms discussed.



Exercises

1. Do you prefer to make decisions in a group or alone? What are the main reasons for your preference?
2. Have you been in a group that used the brainstorming technique? Was it an effective tool for coming up with creative ideas? Please share examples.
3. Have you been in a group that experienced groupthink? If so, how did you deal with it?
4. Which of the decision-making tools discussed in this chapter (NGT, Delphi, and so on) have you used? How effective were they?

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9.5 Group Communication

Group Communication

We form self-identities through our communication with others, and much of that interaction occurs in a group context. **Group communication** may be defined as the exchange of information with those who are alike culturally, linguistically, and/or geographically. Group members may be known by their symbols, such as company logos or work uniforms. They may be known by their use of specialized language or jargon; for example, someone in information technology may use the term “server” in reference to the Internet, whereas someone in the food service industry may use “server” to refer to the worker who takes customer orders in a restaurant. Group members may also be known by their proximity, such as members of the accounting department who sit near one another in the office. Regardless of how the group defines itself, and regardless of the extent to which its borders are porous or permeable, a group recognizes itself as a group. Humans naturally make groups a part of their context or environment.

In Table 9.5 Possible Interaction in Groups, you can quickly see how the number of possible interactions grows according to how many people are in the group. At some point, we all find the possible and actual interactions overwhelming and subdivide into smaller groups. For example, you may have hundreds of friends and followers on social media, but how many of them do you regularly communicate with? You may be tempted to provide a number greater than eight, but if you exclude the “all to one” messages, such as a general tweet to everyone (but no one person in particular), you’ll find the group norms will appear.

Table 9.5 Possible Interaction in Groups

Number of group members	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Number of possible interactions	2	9	28	75	186	441	1,056

Source: [Human Relations](#)

If there are more than eight members, it becomes a challenge to have equal participation, where everyone has a chance to speak, listen, and respond. Some will dominate, others will recede, and smaller groups will form. Finding a natural balance within a group can also be a challenge. Small groups need to have enough members to generate a rich and stimulating exchange of ideas, information, and interaction, but not so many people that what each brings cannot be shared (Galanes et al., 2000).

Meetings

Business and professional meetings are a part of the communication climate of any business. Some people view meetings as boring, pointless, and futile exercises, while others see them as opportunities to exchange information and produce results. A combination of preparation and execution makes all the difference. Remember, too, that meetings do not have to take place in a physical space where the participants meet face to face. Instead, a number of technological tools make it possible to hold virtual meetings in which the participants are half a world away from one another. Virtual meetings are formally arranged gatherings where participants, located in distinct geographic locations, come together via the Internet. With a rapid pivot to virtual meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic, many working professionals found themselves having to learn very quickly how to communicate effectively through these virtual channels.

Preparation

A meeting, like a problem-solving group, needs a clear purpose statement. The specific goal for the specific meeting will clearly relate to the overall goal of the group or committee. Determining your purpose is central to an effective meeting and getting together just to get together is called a party, not a meeting. Do not schedule a meeting just because you met at the same time last month or because it is a standing committee. Members will resent the intrusion into their schedules and quickly perceive the lack of purpose.

Similarly, if the need for a meeting arises, do not rush into it without planning. A poorly planned meeting announced at the last minute is sure to be less than effective. People may be unable to change their schedules, may fail to attend, or may impede the progress and discussion of the group because of their absence. Those who attend may feel hindered because they needed more time to prepare and present comprehensive results to the group or committee.

If a meeting is necessary, and a clear purpose can be articulated, then you'll need to decide how and where to meet. Distance is no longer an obstacle to participation, as we will see later in this section when we explore some of the technologies for virtual meetings. However, there are many advantages to meeting in person. People communicate not just with words but also with their body language—facial expressions, hand gestures, head nodding or head shaking, and posture. These subtleties of communication can be key to determining how group members really feel about an issue or question. Meeting in real time can be important, too, as all group members have the benefit of receiving new information at the same time. For purposes of our present discussion, we will focus on meetings taking place face to face in real time.

If you have a purpose statement for the meeting, then it also follows that you should be able to create an agenda or a list of topics to be discussed. You may need to solicit information from members to formulate an agenda, and this pre-meeting contact can serve to encourage active participation. The agenda will have a time, date, place, and method of interaction noted, as well as

a list of participants. It will also have a statement of purpose, a list of points to be considered, and a brief summary of relevant information that relates to each point. The start and end times need to be clearly indicated somewhere on the agenda, and it is always a good idea to leave time at the end for questions and additional points that individual members may want to share. If the meeting has an emotional point or theme, or the news is negative, plan for additional time for discussion, clarification, and recycling of conversations as the participants process the information.

If you are planning an intense work session, you need to consider the number of possible interactions among the participants and limit them. Smaller groups are generally more productive. If you are gathering to present information or to motivate the sales staff, a large audience, where little interaction is expected, is appropriate. Each member has a role, and attention to how and why they are interacting will produce the best results. Review the stages of group formation in view of the idea that a meeting is a short-term group. You can anticipate a “forming” stage, and if roles are not clear, there may be a bit of “storming” before the group establishes norms and becomes productive. Adding additional participants for no clear reason will only make the process more complex and may produce negative results.

Inviting the participants via e-mail has become increasingly common across business and industry. Software programs like Microsoft Outlook allow you to initiate a meeting request and receive an “accept” or “decline” response that makes the invitation process organized and straightforward. Reliance on a software program, however, may not be enough to encourage and ensure participation. A reminder on the individual’s computer may go off fifteen minutes prior to the meeting, but if they are away from their computer or if Outlook is not running, the reminder will go unseen and unheard. A reminder e-mail on the day of the meeting, often early in the morning, can serve as a personal effort to highlight the activities of the day.

If you are the person responsible for the room reservation, confirm the reservation a week before the meeting and again the day before the meeting. Redundancy in the confirmation process can help eliminate double-booking a room, where two meetings are scheduled at the same time. If technology is required at the meeting, such as a microphone, conference telephone, or laptop and projector, make sure you confirm their reservation at the same time as you confirm the meeting room reservation. Always personally inspect the room and test these systems prior to the meeting. There is nothing more embarrassing than introducing a high-profile speaker, such as the company president, and then finding that the PowerPoint projector is not working properly.

Conducting the Meeting

The world is a stage and a meeting is a performance, the same as an interview or speech presentation. Each member has a part to perform and they should each be aware of their roles and responsibilities prior to the meeting. Everyone is a member of the group, ranging from new members to full members. If you can reduce or eliminate the storming stage, all the better. A clearly defined agenda can be a productive tool for this effort.

People may know each other by role or title but may not be familiar with each other. Brief introductions can serve to establish identity, credibility, and help the group transition to performance. The purpose of the meeting should be clearly stated, and if there are rules or guidelines that require a specific protocol, they should be introduced.



Let's Focus

Conducting a Meeting

Guffey (2007) provides a useful participant checklist that is adapted here for our use:

- **Arrive on time** and stay until the meeting adjourns (unless there are prior arrangements).
- **Leave the meeting only for established breaks** or emergencies.
- **Be prepared** and have everything you need on hand.
- **Turn off cell phones** and personal digital assistants.
- **Follow the established protocol** for turn taking.
- **Respect** time limits.
- **Demonstrate professionalism** in your verbal and nonverbal interactions.
- **Communicate interest** and stay engaged in the discussion.
- **Avoid tangents** and side discussions.
- **Respect space** and don't place your notebook or papers all around you.
- **Clean up** after yourself.
- **Engage in polite conversation** after the conclusion.

If you are cast in the role of meeting leader, you may need to facilitate the discussion and address conflict. The agenda serves as your guide and you may need to redirect the discussion to the topic, but always demonstrate respect for each and every member. You may also need to intervene if a point has reached a stalemate and the meeting isn't moving forward with the agenda.

There has been quite a discussion on the role of seating arrangements in meeting within the field of business communication. Generally, a table that is square, rectangular, or U-shaped has a fixed point at which the attention is directed, often referred to as the head of the table. This space is often associated with power, status, and hierarchy and may play an important role in the flow of interactions across the meeting. If information is to be distributed and presented from

administration to managers, for example, a table with a clear focal point for the head or CEO may be indicated. Tables that are round, or tables arranged in a circular pattern, allow for a more egalitarian model of interaction, reducing the hierarchical aspects while reinforcing the clear line of sight among all participants. If a meeting requires intense interaction and collaboration, generally a round table or a circular pattern is indicated.

Some meetings do not call for a table but rather rows of seats all facing toward the speaker; you probably recognize this arrangement from many class lectures you have attended. For relatively formal meetings in which information is being delivered to a large number of listeners and little interaction is desired, seating in rows is an efficient use of space.

Transitions are often the hardest part of any meeting. Facilitating the transition from one topic to the next may require you to create links between each point. You can specifically note the next point on the agenda and verbally introduce the next speaker or person responsible for the content area. Once the meeting has accomplished its goals in the established time frame, it is time to facilitate the transition to a conclusion. You may conclude by summarizing what has been discussed or decided and what actions the group members are to take as a result of the meeting. If there is a clear purpose for holding a subsequent meeting, discuss the time and date and specifically note assignments for next time.

Feedback is an important part of any communication interaction. Minutes are a written document that serves to record the interaction and can provide an opportunity for clarification. Minutes often appear as the agenda with notes in relation to actions taken during the meeting or specific indications of who is responsible for what before the next meeting. In many organizations, minutes of the meeting are tentative, like a rough draft, until they are approved by the members of the group or committee. Normally minutes are sent within a week of the meeting if it is a monthly event and more quickly if the need to meet more frequently has been determined. If your organization does not call for minutes, you can still benefit by reviewing your notes after a meeting and comparing them with those of others to make sure you understood what was discussed and did not miss—or misinterpret—any key information.

Using Technology to Facilitate Meetings

Given the widespread availability and increasingly low cost of electronic communication, technologies that once served to bring people together across continents and time zones are now also serving people in the same geographic area. Rather than traveling (by plane, car, or even elevator within the same building) to a central point for a face-to-face interaction, busy and cost-conscious professionals often choose to see and hear each other via one of many different electronic interface technologies. It is important to be aware of the dimensions of nonverbal communication that are lost in a virtual meeting compared to an in-person meeting. Nevertheless, these technologies are a boon to today's business organizations, and knowing how to use them is a key skill for all job seekers. We will discuss the technologies by category, beginning with audio-only, then audio-visual, and finally social media.

Audio-Only Interactions

The simplest form of audio-only interaction is, of course, a telephone call. Chances are that you have been using the phone all your life, yet did you know that some executives hire professional voice coaches to help them increase their effectiveness in phone communication? When you stop to think about it, we use a great many audio-only modes of communication, ranging from phone calls and voice-activated telephone menus to radio interviews, public address systems, dictation recording systems, and computer voice recognition technology. The importance of audio communication in the business world has increased with the availability of conference calls, web conferences, and voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) communications.

Your voice has qualities that cannot be communicated in written form, and you can use these qualities to your advantage as you interact with colleagues. If you are sending a general informative message to all employees, an e-mail may serve you well, but if you are congratulating one employee on receiving an industry award, your voice as the channel carries your enthusiasm.

Take care to pay attention to your pronunciation of words, stating them correctly in normal ways, and avoiding words that you are not comfortable with as you may mispronounce them. Mispronunciation can have a negative impact on your reputation or perceived credibility. Instead of using complicated words that may cause you to stumble, choose a simple phrase if you can or learn to pronounce the word correctly before you use it in a formal interactive setting.

Your voice quality, volume, and pitch also influence how your spoken words are interpreted. Quality often refers to emotional tone of your voice, from happy and enthusiastic to serious or even sad. In most business situations, it is appropriate to speak with some level of formality yet avoid sounding stilted or arrogant. Your volume (the loudness of your voice) should be normal, but do make sure your listeners can hear you. In some situations, you may be using a directional microphone that only amplifies your voice signal if you speak directly into it.

If your audience includes English learners, remember that speaking louder (i.e., shouting) does not help them to understand you any better than speaking in a normal tone. Your word choices will make a much more significant impact when communicating across cultures; strive to use direct sentences and avoid figures of speech that do not translate literally.

Pitch refers to the frequency, high or low, of your voice. A pleasant, natural voice will have some variation in pitch. A speaker with a flat pitch, or a monotone (one-tone) voice, is often interpreted as being bored and often bores his or her listeners.

If you are leaving a voicemail, state all the relevant information in concise, clear terms, making sure to speak slowly; don't forget to include your contact information, even if you think the person already knows your phone number. Imagine you were writing down your phone number as you recite it and you will be better able to record it at a "listener-friendly" speed. Don't leave a long, rambling voice mail message. You may later wish you had said less, and the more content you provide the more you increase the possibility for misunderstandings without your being present for clarification.

Audio-Visual Interactions

Rather than call each other, we often call and interact in both audio and visual ways via the Internet. There are several ways to interface via audio and video, and new technologies in this area are being invented all the time. Videoconferencing software such as Zoom which allows the participants to see and hear each other across time and distance with one-on-one calls and video conferencing are quickly becoming a low- or no-cost business tool for interaction.

If you are going to interact via audio and visual signals, make sure you are prepared. Appropriate dress, setting, and attitude are all required. The integration of a visual signal to the traditional phone call means that nonverbal gestures can now be observed in real time and can both aid and detract from the message.

If you are unfamiliar with the technology, practice with it before your actual business interaction. Try out the features with a friend and know where to find and access the information. If the call doesn't go as planned, or the signal isn't what you expected or experienced in the past, keep a good attitude and try again.

Social Media

Online communities, forums, blogs, tweets, cloud computing, and avatar-activated environments are some of the continually developing means of social media being harnessed by the business world. The Internet is increasingly promoting tools and platforms for people to interact.

When you use these channels, remember a few simple cautions:

- Not everything is as it appears. The individuals on the forum may not all be who they represent themselves to be.
- The words you write and the images you send, regardless of how much you trust the recipient, may become public and can remain online forever.
- Always consider what you access and what you post and how it represents you and your employer, even if you think others cannot know where you work or who you are.
- Be aware of privacy laws and policies. Understand how the platforms and websites that you interact with collect and use your personal information.



Professional networking sites such as [LinkedIn](#) allow people to link to, and interact with, others who work in their industry or related ones. More general social media sites such as Facebook, which also present threaded discussions and dynamic interfaces with groups that may or may not be limited to those that user intends. Interactive writing platforms such as blogs, wikis, and cloud computing involve having common documents stored on the Internet, which can be accessed from multiple

sites at once, further facilitating the interaction. Blogs are online web pages with periodic posts that may or may not feature feedback responses from readers. Wikis are collaborations on web content that are created and edited by users. Cloud computing involves secure access of files from anywhere as information is stored remotely.

Business and industry organizations may also incorporate posts and threaded discussions but often under a password-protected design on a company's intranet or other limited-access platform. Employees may use their business-provided computer equipment to access sites that are not business related (if not specifically blocked), but all information associated with each business's computer is subject to inspection, archival, and supervision.



Let's Review

- **Meetings require planning**, appropriate conduction of the meeting, choice of appropriate technology, and understanding of organizational communication to enhance their success.
- **Forming groups fulfills many human needs**, such as the need for affiliation, affection, and control; individuals also need to cooperate in groups to fulfill basic survival needs.
- **Primary groups are those groups that meet all or most of our needs.** Secondary groups are those that meet some but not all of our needs.
- **A group includes at least three people.** Groups and their individual members come together and grow apart in predictable patterns. This is called the group development stages, which include forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. Groups have norms, which can change over time.
- **Each group member has a life cycle that defines their role** as they enter and exit the group.
- **There are a number of negative and positive roles** that group members can play within a group.



Exercises

- Take notes in one of your classes as if they were the official minutes of a meeting. Does the class “meeting” have a purpose? What preparations were made and what technology was used? Is there a follow-up or a plan for the next class meeting? Compare your notes with another student to see if you understood all the information conveyed in the class.
- Collaborate with one or more classmates and contribute to a computing cloud or a wiki. What was the activity like? Did you learn new information that you would not have learned by studying individually?
- Make an audio recording of your voice and listen to it. Are there aspects of your voice quality, pronunciation, or delivery style that you would like to improve? Practice daily and make more recordings until you notice improvement.

References

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[7.1 What is a Group](#) and [7.3 Effective Group Meetings](#) in [Human Relations](#) by Saylor Academy which is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 License](#) unless otherwise specified.

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9.6 Key Takeaways, Knowledge Check and Key Terms



Key Takeaways

- **A group is a collection of individuals who interact with each other such that one person's actions have an impact on the others.** Groups can be informal or formal in nature. Both informal and formal groups serve important functions in the workplace.
- **When a group is cohesive and has a shared purpose it can be considered a team.**
- **Social loafing is the finding that individuals do not always contribute as much effort to work when in a group compared to when they are working alone.** There are a number of factors that can help us to understand group effectiveness and decrease the probability of social loafing.
- **Groups and their individual members come together and grow apart in predictable patterns.** This is called the group development stages, which include forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. Each group member has a life cycle that defines their role as they enter and exit the group.
- **Groups decision-making can lead to more diverse thinking and problem solving.** However, when groups are too cohesive or controlled, they can fall prey to insulated thinking and groupthink.
- **Group communications, including meetings, are an important part of workplace communications.**



Knowledge Check

Review your understanding of this chapter's key concepts by taking the interactive quiz below.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationpsychology/?p=1721#h5p-4>



Key Terms

Key terms in this chapter include:

- **Groups**
- **Formal groups**
- **Informal groups**
- **Command/functional groups**
- **Task group**
- **Friendship groups**
- **Interest groups**
- **Teams**
- **Virtual teams**

- **Social loafing**
- **Norms**
- **Work role**
- **Cohesion**
- **Collective efficacy**
- **Emotional intelligence**
- **Group socialization**
- **Forming**
- **Storming**
- **Norming**
- **Performing**
- **Adjourning**
- **Punctuated equilibrium**
- **Groupthink**
- **Group communication**

CHAPTER 10: LEADERSHIP



Learning Objectives

In this chapter, we will:

1. **Explain** the differences between leaders and managers.
2. **Understand** factors that can substitute and neutralize leadership.
3. **Describe** various theories of leadership.
4. **Identify** strategies for developing your own leadership skills and abilities.

What's the difference between a leader and a manager? What makes leaders effective? What distinguishes people who are perceived as leaders from those who are not perceived as leaders? More importantly, how do we train future leaders and improve our own leadership ability? These are important questions that have attracted scholarly attention in the past several decades. In this chapter, we will review some of the key findings related to leadership in the workplace.

10.1 Leadership vs. Management

Leadership

Many people use the term leadership as interchangeable with management, but the two terms are actually quite different. The term **management** implies someone has been given a position, and through that position or title they have power to guide others. **Leadership**, on the other hand, does not require specific titles. Consider the last group project you worked on for school. It was likely that someone took on the leadership role for this project, such as coordinating schedules, emailing the team, and so forth. This person did not have a formal title but lead the group anyway. This is an example of leadership. To be successful at our jobs, we must show leadership skills. These leadership skills can come from our emotional intelligence skills—for example, self-awareness, self-management, relationship management, and social awareness. All emotional intelligence skills are needed to be a successful leader. For example, if you are the informal leader for your group project and feel frustrated with response times, you must have the ability to be aware of this emotion and manage it by not yelling at your team member when you see them!

Getting the team to work better together requires social awareness skills, or the ability to understand how actions of one team member may affect another. Finally, relationship management is necessary to manage group conflict and maintain good relationships with your team. As you can see, leadership encompasses all of the emotional intelligence skills we have been discussing throughout the book. Do you think leadership comes natural to some and not to others?

Whether or not there is a “natural leader,” born with a combination of talents and traits that enable a person to lead others, has been a subject of debate across time. In a modern context, we have come to recognize that leadership comes in many form and representations. Once it was thought that someone with presence of mind, innate intelligence, and an engaging personality was destined for leadership, but modern research and experience shows us otherwise. Just as a successful heart surgeon has a series of skill sets, so does a dynamic leader. A television producer must both direct and provide space for talent to create, balancing control with confidence and trust. This awareness of various leadership styles serves our discussion as groups and teams often have leaders, and they may not always be the person who holds the title, status, or role.

Leaders take on the role because they are appointed, elected, or emerge into the role. The group members play an important role in this process. An **appointed leader** is designated by an authority to serve in that capacity, irrespective of the thoughts or wishes of the group. They may serve as the leader and accomplish all the designated tasks, but if the group does not accept their role as leader, it can prove to be a challenge. As Bruce Tuckman (1965) notes, “storming” occurs as group members come to know each other and communicate more freely, and an appointed leader who lacks the endorsement of the group may experience challenges to his or her authority.

A **democratic leader** is elected or chosen by the group but may also face serious challenges. If

individual group members or constituent groups feel neglected or ignored, they may assert that the democratic leader does not represent their interests. The democratic leader involves the group in the decision-making process and ensures group ownership of the resulting decisions and actions as a result. Open and free discussions are representative of this process, and the democratic leader acknowledges this diversity of opinion.

An **emergent leader** contrasts the first two paths to the role by growing into the role, often out of necessity. The appointed leader may know little about the topic or content, and group members will naturally look to the senior member with the most experience for leadership. If the democratic leader fails to bring the group together or does not represent the whole group, subgroups may form, each with an informal leader serving as spokesperson.

Is A Leader Always Needed? Substitutes For And Neutralizers of Leadership

Several factors have been discovered that can substitute for or neutralize the effects of leader behavior (see Table 10.1) (Podsakoff et al., 1993; Kerr, 1977; Kerr & Jermier, 1978; Howell & Dorfman, 1981; Pierce et al., 1984). **Substitutes** for leadership behavior can clarify role expectations, motivate organizational members, or satisfy members (making it unnecessary for the leader to attempt to do so). In some cases, these substitutes supplement the behavior of a leader. Sometimes it is a group member's characteristics that make leadership less necessary, as when a master craftsperson or highly skilled worker performs up to his or her own high standards without needing outside prompting. Sometimes the task's characteristics take over, as when the work itself—solving an interesting problem or working on a familiar job—is intrinsically satisfying. Sometimes the characteristics of the organization make leadership less necessary, as when work rules are so clear and specific that workers know exactly what they must do without help from the leader.

Table 10.1: Substitutes for and Neutralizers of Leader Behavior

Supportive or Neutralizer	Leader Behavior Influenced	
	Substitute Leadership	Instrumental Leadership
A. Subordinate Characteristics:		
1. Experience, ability, training		Substitute
2. "Professional" orientation	Substitute	Substitute
3. Indifference toward rewards offered by organization	Neutralizer	Neutralizer
B. Task Characteristics:		
1. Structured, routine, unambiguous task		Substitute
2. Feedback provided by task		Substitute
3. Intrinsically satisfying task	Substitute	
C. Organization Characteristics:		
1. Cohesive work group	Substitute	Substitute
2. Low position power (leader lacks control over organizational rewards)	Neutralizer	Neutralizer
3. Formalization (explicit plans, goals, areas of responsibility)		Substitute
4. Inflexibility (rigid, unyielding rules and procedures)		Neutralizer
5. Leader located apart from subordinates with only limited communication possible	Neutralizer	Neutralizer

Source: [Principles of Management](#)

Neutralizers of leadership, on the other hand, are not helpful; they prevent leaders from acting as they wish. A computer-paced assembly line, for example, prevents a leader from using initiating structure behavior to pace the line. A union contract that specifies that workers be paid according to seniority prevents a leader from dispensing merit-based pay. Sometimes, of course, neutralizers can be beneficial. Union contracts, for example, clarify disciplinary proceedings and identify the responsibilities of both management and labor. Leaders must be aware of the presence of neutralizers and their effects so that they can eliminate troublesome neutralizers or take advantage of any potential benefits that accompany them (such as the clarity of responsibilities provided by a union contract). If a leader's effectiveness is being neutralized by a poor communication system, for example, the leader might try to remove the neutralizer by developing (or convincing the organization to develop) a more effective system.

Followers differ considerably in their *focus of attention* while at work, thereby affecting the effectiveness of the act of leadership. Focus of attention is an employee's cognitive orientation while at work. It reflects what and how strongly an individual thinks about various objects, events, or phenomena while physically present at work. Focus of attention reflects an individual difference in that not all individuals have the same cognitive orientation while at work—some think a great deal about their job, their coworkers, their leader, or off-the-job factors, while others daydream (Gardner et al., 1989). An employee's focus of attention has both "trait" and "state" qualities. For example, there

is a significant amount of minute-by-minute variation in an employee's focus of attention (the “state” component), and there is reasonable consistency in the categories of events that employees think about while they are at work (the “trait” component).

Research suggests that the more followers focus on off-job (nonleader) factors, the less they will react to the leader's behaviors. Thus, a strong focus on one's life “away from work” (for example, time with family and friends) tends to neutralize the motivational, attitudinal, and/or behavioral effects associated with any particular leader behavior. It has also been observed, however, that a strong focus on the leader, either positive or negative, enhances the impact that the leader's behaviors have on followers (Gardner et al., 1987).



Exercises

1. Think of a leader you admire and respect. How did this individual become a leader—for example, by appointment, democratic selection, or emergence?
2. Even if you don't ever plan to hold a formal title of “leader” or “manager” why is it important for you to understand leadership?

References

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10.2 Theories of Leadership

In this Section:

- [Theory X and Theory Y Leaders](#)
- [The Trait Approach to Leadership](#)
- [Behavioural Approaches to Leadership](#)
- [Contingency Approaches to Leadership](#)
 - [Situational Leadership](#)
 - [Path-goal Leadership](#)
- [Transformational and Transactional Approaches to Leadership](#)
 - [Servant leadership](#)
 - [Authentic leadership](#)

Theory X and Theory Y Leaders

McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y posits two different sets of attitudes about the individual as an organizational member (McGregor, 1957; McGregor, 1960). Theory X and Y thinking gives rise to two different styles of leadership. The Theory X leader assumes that the average individual dislikes work and is incapable of exercising adequate self-direction and self-control. As a consequence, they exert a highly controlling leadership style. In contrast, Theory Y leaders believe that people have creative capacities, as well as both the ability and desire to exercise self-direction and self-control. They typically allow organizational members significant amounts of discretion in their jobs and encourage them to participate in departmental and organizational decision-making. Theory Y leaders are much more likely to adopt involvement-oriented approaches to leadership and organically designed organizations for their leadership group.

Trait Approaches to Leadership

The earliest approach to the study of leadership sought to identify a set of traits that distinguished leaders from non-leaders. What were the personality characteristics and the physical and psychological attributes of people who are viewed as leaders? Because of the problems in measurement of personality traits at the time, different studies used different measures. By 1940, researchers concluded that the search for leadership-defining traits was futile. In recent years, though, after the advances in personality literature such as the development of the Big Five personality framework, researchers have had more success in identifying traits that predict leadership (House & Aditya, 1997). Most importantly, charismatic leadership, which is among the contemporary approaches to leadership, may be viewed as an example of a trait approach.

The traits that show relatively strong relations with leadership are discussed below (Judge et al., 2002).

Intelligence

General mental ability, which psychologists refer to as “g” and which is often called “IQ” in everyday language, has been related to a person's emergence as a leader within a group. Specifically, people who have high mental abilities are more likely to be viewed as leaders in their environment (House & Aditya, 1997; Ilies et al., 2004; Lord et al., 1986; Taggar et al., 1999). We should caution, though, that intelligence is a positive but modest predictor of leadership, and when actual intelligence is measured with paper-and-pencil tests, its relationship to leadership is a bit weaker compared to when intelligence is defined as the perceived intelligence of a leader (Judge et al., 2004). In addition to having a high IQ, effective leaders tend to have high emotional intelligence (EQ). The psychologist

who coined the term *emotional intelligence*, Daniel Goleman, believes that IQ is a threshold quality: It matters for entry to high-level management jobs, but once you get there, it no longer helps leaders because most leaders already have a high IQ. According to Goleman, what differentiates effective leaders from ineffective ones becomes their ability to control their own emotions and understand other people’s emotions, their internal motivation, and their social skills (Goleman, 2004).

Table 10.2 Big Five Personality Traits

Trait	Descriptions
Openness	Being curious, original, intellectual, creative, and open to new ideas.
Conscientiousness	Being organized, systematic, punctual, achievement-oriented, and dependable.
Extraversion	Being outgoing, talkative, sociable, and enjoying social situations.
Agreeableness	Being affable, tolerant, sensitive, trusting, kind, and warm.
Neuroticism	Being anxious, irritable, temperamental, and moody.

Source: [Organizational Behaviour](#)

Psychologists have proposed various systems for categorizing the characteristics that make up an individual's unique personality; one of the most widely accepted is the “Big Five” model, which rates an individual according to Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. Several of the Big Five personality traits have been related to leadership emergence (whether someone is viewed as a leader by others) and effectiveness (Judge et al., 2002). For example, extraversion is related to leadership. *Extraverts* are sociable, assertive, and energetic people. They enjoy interacting with others in their environment and demonstrate self-confidence. Because they are both dominant and sociable in their environment, they emerge as leaders in a wide variety of situations. Out of all personality traits, extraversion has the strongest relationship with both leader emergence and leader effectiveness. This is not to say that all effective leaders are extraverts, but you are more likely to find extraverts in leadership positions. Research shows that another personality trait related to leadership is *conscientiousness*. Conscientious people are organized, take initiative, and demonstrate persistence in their endeavors. Conscientious people are more likely to emerge as leaders and be effective in that role. Finally, people who have *openness to experience*—those who demonstrate originality, creativity, and are open to trying new things—tend to emerge as leaders and also be quite effective.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is not one of the Big Five personality traits, but it is an important aspect of one’s personality. The degree to which a person is at peace with oneself and has an overall positive assessment of one’s self worth and capabilities seem to be relevant to whether someone is viewed as a leader. Leaders with high self-esteem support their subordinates more and, when punishment

is administered, they punish more effectively (Atwater et al., 1998; Niebuhr, 1984). It is possible that those with high self-esteem have greater levels of self-confidence and this affects their image in the eyes of their followers. Self-esteem may also explain the relationship between some physical attributes and leader emergence. For example, research shows a strong relationship between being tall and being viewed as a leader (as well as one's career success over life). It is proposed that self-esteem may be the key mechanism linking height to being viewed as a leader because people who are taller are also found to have higher self-esteem and therefore may project greater levels of charisma as well as confidence to their followers (Judge & Cable, 2004).

Integrity

Research also shows that people who are effective as leaders tend to have a moral compass and demonstrate honesty and integrity (Reave, 2005). Leaders whose integrity is questioned lose their trustworthiness, and they hurt their company's business along the way. There are also some traits that are negatively related to leader emergence and being successful in that position. For example, agreeable people who are modest, good natured, and avoid conflict are less likely to be perceived as leaders (Judge et al., 2002).

Despite problems in trait approaches, these findings can still be useful to managers and companies. For example, knowing about leadership traits helps organizations select the right people into positions of responsibility. The key to benefiting from the findings of trait researchers is to be aware that not all traits are equally effective in predicting leadership potential across all circumstances. Some organizational situations allow leader traits to make a greater difference (House & Aditya, 1997). For example, in small, entrepreneurial organizations where leaders have a lot of leeway to determine their own behaviour, the type of traits leaders have may make a difference in leadership potential. In large, bureaucratic, and rule-bound organizations such as the government and the military, a leader's traits may have less to do with how the person behaves and whether the person is a successful leader (Judge et al., 2002). Moreover, some traits become relevant in specific circumstances. For example, bravery is likely to be a key characteristic in military leaders, but not necessarily in business leaders. Scholars now conclude that instead of trying to identify a few traits that distinguish leaders from non-leaders, it is important to identify the conditions under which different traits affect a leader's performance, as well as whether a person emerges as a leader (Hackman & Wageman, 2007).

Behavioural Approaches to Leadership

When trait researchers became disillusioned in the 1940s, their attention turned to studying leader behaviours. What did effective leaders actually do? Which behaviours made them perceived as leaders? Which behaviours increased their success? To answer these questions, researchers at Ohio State University and the University of Michigan used many different techniques, such as observing leaders in laboratory settings as well as surveying them. This research stream led to the discovery

of two broad categories of behaviours – task vs people-oriented behaviours. That is to say the extent to which a leader is focussed on the task at hand compared to the relationships. At the time, researchers thought that these two categories of behaviours were the keys to the puzzle of leadership (House & Aditya, 1997).

When we look at the overall findings regarding these leadership behaviours, it seems that both types of behaviours, in the aggregate, are beneficial to organizations, but for different purposes. For example, when leaders demonstrate people-oriented behaviours, employees tend to be more satisfied and react more positively. However, when leaders are task oriented, productivity tends to be a bit higher (Judge et al., 2004). Moreover, the situation in which these behaviours are demonstrated seems to matter. In small companies, task-oriented behaviours were found to be more effective than in large companies (Miles & Petty, 1977). There is also some evidence that very high levels of leader task-oriented behaviours may cause burnout with employees (Seltzer & Numerof, 1988).

Contingency Approaches to Leadership

What is the best leadership style? By now, you must have realized that this may not be the right question to ask. Instead, a better question might be: under which conditions are certain leadership styles more effective? After the disappointing results of trait and behavioural approaches, several scholars developed leadership theories that specifically incorporated the role of the environment. Specifically, researchers started following a contingency approach to leadership—rather than trying to identify traits or behaviours that would be effective under all conditions, the attention moved toward specifying the situations under which different styles would be effective.

One of the earliest, best-known, and most controversial situation-contingent leadership theories was set forth by Fred E. Fiedler from the University of Washington. This theory is known as the contingency theory of leadership. According to Fiedler, organizations attempting to achieve group effectiveness through leadership must assess the leader according to an underlying trait, assess the situation faced by the leader, and construct a proper match between the two.

In this section, we will discuss two alternate contingency theories: Situational Leadership and Path-goal Theory.

Situational Leadership

Kenneth Blanchard and Paul Hersey's Situational Leadership Theory (SLT) which argues that leaders must use different leadership styles depending on their followers' development level (Hersey et al., 2007). According to this model, employee readiness (defined as a combination of their competence and commitment levels) is the key factor determining the proper leadership style. This approach has been highly popular with 14 million managers across 42 countries undergoing SLT training and 70% of *Fortune* 500 companies employ its use.

The model summarizes the level of directive and supportive behaviours that leaders may exhibit. The model argues that to be effective, leaders must use the right style of behaviours at the right time in each employee's development. It is recognized that followers are key to a leader's success. Employees who are at the earliest stages of development are seen as being highly committed but with low competence for the tasks. Thus, leaders should be highly directive and less supportive. As the employee becomes more competent, the leader should engage in more coaching behaviours. Supportive behaviours are recommended once the employee is at moderate to high levels of competence. And finally, delegating is the recommended approach for leaders dealing with employees who are both highly committed and highly competent.

While the SLT is popular with managers, relatively easy to understand and use, and has endured for decades, it received mixed support from research on the basic assumptions of the model (Blank et al., 1990; Graeff, 1983; Fernandez & Vecchio, 2002). Therefore, while it can be a useful way to think about matching behaviours to situations, overreliance on this model, at the exclusion of other models, is premature.

Table 10.3: Situational Leadership

Follower Readiness Level	Competence (Low)	Competence (Low)	Competence (Moderate to High)	Competence (High)
	Commitment (High)	Commitment (Low)	Commitment (Variable)	Commitment (High)
Recommended Leader Style	Directing Behaviour	Coaching Behaviour	Supporting Behaviour	Delegating Behaviour

Situational Leadership Theory helps leaders match their style to follower readiness levels.

Path-Goal Theory of Leadership

Robert House's **path-goal theory of leadership** is based on the expectancy theory of motivation (House, 1971). The expectancy theory of motivation suggests that employees are motivated when they believe—or expect—that (a) their effort will lead to high performance, (b) their high performance will be rewarded, and (c) the rewards they will receive are valuable to them. According to the path-goal theory of leadership, the leader's main job is to make sure that all three of these conditions exist. Thus, leaders will create satisfied and high-performing employees by making sure that employee effort leads to performance, and their performance is rewarded by desired rewards. The leader removes roadblocks along the way and creates an environment that subordinates find motivational.

The theory also makes specific predictions about what type of leader behaviour will be effective

under which circumstances (House, 1996; House & Mitchell, 1974). The theory identifies four leadership styles. Each of these styles can be effective, depending on the characteristics of employees (such as their ability level, preferences, locus of control, and achievement motivation) and characteristics of the work environment (such as the level of role ambiguity, the degree of stress present in the environment, and the degree to which the tasks are unpleasant).

Four Leadership Styles

Directive leaders provide specific directions to their employees. They lead employees by clarifying role expectations, setting schedules, and making sure that employees know what to do on a given work day. The theory predicts that the directive style will work well when employees are experiencing role ambiguity on the job. If people are unclear about how to do their jobs, giving them specific directions will motivate them. On the other hand, if employees already have role clarity, and if they are performing boring, routine, and highly structured jobs, giving them direction does not help. In fact, it may hurt them by creating an even more restricting atmosphere. Directive leadership is also thought to be less effective when employees have high levels of ability. When managing professional employees with high levels of expertise and job-specific knowledge, telling them what to do may create a low-empowerment environment, which impairs motivation.

Supportive leaders provide emotional support to employees. They treat employees well, care about them on a personal level, and they are encouraging. Supportive leadership is predicted to be effective when employees are under a lot of stress or performing boring, repetitive jobs. When employees know exactly how to perform their jobs but their jobs are unpleasant, supportive leadership may be more effective.

Participative leaders make sure that employees are involved in the making of important decisions. Participative leadership may be more effective when employees have high levels of ability, and when the decisions to be made are personally relevant to them. For employees with a high internal locus of control (those who believe that they control their own destiny), participative leadership is a way of indirectly controlling organizational decisions, which is likely to be appreciated.

Achievement-oriented leaders set goals for employees and encourage them to reach their goals. Their style challenges employees and focuses their attention on work-related goals. This style is likely to be effective when employees have both high levels of ability and high levels of achievement motivation.

The path-goal theory of leadership has received partial but encouraging levels of support from researchers. The theory's biggest contribution may be that it highlights the importance of a leader's ability to change styles depending on the circumstances. Unlike Fiedler's contingency theory, in which the leader's style is assumed to be fixed and only the environment can be changed, House's path-goal theory underlines the importance of varying one's style depending on the situation.

Table 10.4: The Path-Goal Theory Approach

Situation	Appropriate Leadership Style
When employees have high role ambiguity When employees have low abilities When employees have external locus of control	Directive
When tasks are boring or repetitive When tasks are stressful	Supportive
When employees have high abilities When the decision is relative to employees	Participative
When employees have high abilities When employees have high achievement motivation	Achievement-oriented

Source: Predictions of the Path-Goal Theory Approach to Leadership Sources: Based on information presented in House, R. J. (1996) and House, R. J., & Mitchell, T. R. (1974).

Transformational and Transactional Theories of Leadership Leadership

Transformational leadership theory is a recent addition to the literature, but more research has been conducted on this theory than all the contingency theories combined. The theory distinguishes transformational and transactional leaders. **Transformational leaders** lead employees by aligning employee goals with the leader's goals. Thus, employees working for transformational leaders start focusing on the company's well-being rather than on what is best for them as individual employees. On the other hand, **transactional leaders** ensure that employees demonstrate the right behaviours and provide resources in exchange (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978).

Transformational leaders have four tools in their possession, which they use to influence employees and create commitment to the company goals (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Bycio et al., 1995; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). First, transformational leaders are charismatic. **Charisma** refers to behaviours leaders demonstrate that create confidence in, commitment to, and admiration for the leader (Shamir et al., 1993). Charismatic individuals have a "magnetic" personality that is appealing to followers. Second, transformational leaders use inspirational motivation, or come up with a vision that is inspiring to others. Third is the use of intellectual stimulation, which means that they challenge organizational norms and status quo, and they encourage employees to think creatively and work harder. Finally, they use individualized consideration, which means that they show personal care and concern for the well-being of their followers.

While transformational leaders rely on their charisma, persuasiveness, and personal appeal to change and inspire their companies, **transactional leaders** use three different methods. **Contingent rewards** mean rewarding employees for their accomplishments. **Active management by exception** involves leaving employees to do their jobs without interference, but at the same time proactively predicting potential problems and preventing them from occurring. **Passive**

management by exception is similar in that it involves leaving employees alone, but in this method the manager waits until something goes wrong before coming to the rescue.

Which leadership style do you think is more effective, transformational or transactional?

Research shows that transformational leadership has a very powerful influence over leader effectiveness as well as employee satisfaction (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). In fact, transformational leaders increase the intrinsic motivation of their followers, build more effective relationships with employees, increase performance and creativity of their followers, increase team performance, and create higher levels of commitment to organizational change efforts (Herold et al., 2008; Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006; Schaubroeck et al., 2007; Shin & Zhou, 2003; Wang et al., 2005).

However, except for passive management by exception, the transactional leadership styles are also effective, and they also have positive influences over leader performance as well as employee attitudes (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). To maximize their effectiveness, leaders are encouraged to demonstrate both transformational and transactional styles. They should also monitor themselves to avoid demonstrating passive management by exception or leaving employees to their own devices until problems arise.

Why is transformational leadership effective?

The key factor may be **trust**. Trust is the belief that the leader will show integrity, fairness, and predictability in his or her dealings with others. Research shows that when leaders demonstrate transformational leadership behaviours, followers are more likely to trust the leader. The tendency to trust in transactional leaders is substantially lower. Because transformational leaders express greater levels of concern for people's well-being and appeal to people's values, followers are more likely to believe that the leader has a trustworthy character (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002).

Servant Leadership

The early 21st century was marked by a series of highly publicized corporate ethics scandals: between 2000 and 2003 we witnessed the scandals of Enron, WorldCom, Arthur Andersen LLP, Qwest Communications International Inc., and Global Crossing Ltd. As corporate ethics scandals shake investor confidence in corporations and leaders, the importance of ethical leadership and keeping long-term interests of stakeholders in mind is becoming more widely acknowledged.

Servant leadership is a leadership approach that defines the leader's role as serving the needs of others. According to this approach, the primary mission of the leader is to develop employees and

help them reach their goals. Servant leaders put their employees first, understand their personal needs and desires, empower them, and help them develop in their careers. Unlike mainstream management approaches, the overriding objective in servant leadership is not limited to getting employees to contribute to organizational goals. Instead, servant leaders feel an obligation to their employees, customers, and the external community. Employee happiness is seen as an end in itself, and servant leaders sometimes sacrifice their own well-being to help employees succeed. In addition to a clear focus on having a moral compass, servant leaders are also interested in serving the community. In other words, their efforts to help others are not restricted to company insiders, and they are genuinely concerned about the broader community surrounding their organization (Greenleaf, 1977; Liden et al., 2008).

Even though servant leadership has some overlap with other leadership approaches such as transformational leadership, its explicit focus on ethics, community development, and self-sacrifice are distinct characteristics of this leadership style. Research shows that servant leadership has a positive impact on employee commitment, employee citizenship behaviours toward the community (such as participating in community volunteering), and job performance (Liden et al., 2008). Leaders who follow the servant leadership approach create a climate of fairness in their departments, which leads to higher levels of interpersonal helping behaviour (Ehrhart, 2004).

Authentic Leadership

Leaders have to be a lot of things to a lot of people. They operate within different structures, work with different types of people, and they have to be adaptable. At times, it may seem that a leader's smartest strategy would be to act as a social chameleon, changing his or her style whenever doing so seems advantageous. But this would lose sight of the fact that effective leaders have to stay true to themselves. The **authentic leadership approach** embraces this value: Its key advice is "be yourself." Think about it: we all have different backgrounds, different life experiences, and different role models. These trigger events over the course of our lifetime that shape our values, preferences, and priorities. Instead of trying to fit into societal expectations about what a leader should be, act like, or look like, authentic leaders derive their strength from their own past experiences. Thus, one key characteristic of authentic leaders is that they are self-aware. They are introspective, understand where they are coming from, and have a thorough understanding of their own values and priorities. Secondly, they are not afraid to act the way they are. In other words, they have high levels of personal integrity. They say what they think. They behave in a way consistent with their values. As a result, they remain true to themselves. Instead of trying to imitate other great leaders, they find their own style in their personality and life experiences (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner et al., 2005; George, 2007; Ilies et al., 2005; Sparrowe, 2005).

One example of an authentic leader is Howard Schultz, the founder of Starbucks Corporation coffeehouses. As a child, Schultz witnessed the job-related difficulties his father experienced as a result of medical problems. Even though he had no idea he would have his own business one day, the desire to protect people was shaped in those years and became one of his foremost values. When he founded Starbucks, he became an industry pioneer by providing health insurance and retirement coverage to part-time as well as full-time employees (Shamir & Eilam, 2005).

Authentic leadership requires understanding oneself. Therefore, in addition to self-reflection, feedback from others is needed to gain a true understanding of one's behaviour and its impact on others. Authentic leadership is viewed as a potentially influential style, because employees are more likely to trust such a leader. Moreover, working for an authentic leader is likely to lead to greater levels of satisfaction, performance, and overall well-being on the part of employees (Walumbwa et al., 2008).



An example of an authentic leader is Howard Schultz, the founder of Starbucks coffeehouses. Witnessing his father losing jobs because of medical problems, he became passionate about a company's need to care for its employees. Image: Sillygwailo. [Howard-Schultz Starbucks](#), Wikimedia Commons, [CC BY 2.5](#). [\[click to enlarge\]](#)



Exercises

1. Which best describes your leadership approach: Theory X or Theory Y?
2. Think of a leader you admire. What traits does this persona have? Are they consistent with the traits discussed in this chapter? If not, why is this person effective despite the presence of different traits?



Let's Review

In this section, we reviewed several influential leadership theories.

- **Theory X and Theory Y leaders hold different fundamental assumptions** about the nature of employees and their motivations at work.
- **Trait approaches identify the characteristics required to be perceived as a leader** and to be successful in the role.
- **Intelligence, extraversion, conscientiousness, openness to experience, and integrity** seem to be leadership traits.
- **Behavioural approaches** identify the types of behaviours leaders demonstrate.
- **Both trait and behavioural approaches suffered from a failure to pay attention to the context in which leadership occurs**, which led to the development of contingency approaches.
- **Recently, ethics became an explicit focus of leadership theories such as servant leadership and authentic leadership.** It seems that being conscious of one's style and making sure that leaders demonstrate the behaviours that address employee, organizational, and stakeholder needs are important and require flexibility on the part of leaders.

References

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10.3 Developing Your Leadership Skills

As we've already learned, leaders share traits, successful leaders are not simply "born leaders" – they develop and refine leadership skills and behaviors. Since much of leadership is skill and behavior based, it is never too early to start developing yourself as a leader. Whether you are planning to start your first career path fresh out of college, you've returned to college in order to switch career paths, or you're in college to help you advance more quickly in your current career path, you should have already been working on your leadership skills for years; it's not something you want to start your first day on the new job. Since leaders must be able to draw from a wealth of personal experience in order to solve problems, relate to others, and motivate others to achieve a task, you should start to seek out leadership positions in school and/or community groups.

Since you may not yet be sure of your exact career path, try to get a variety of positions over a few years that are generally transferrable to professional contexts. In these roles, work on building a reputation as an ethical leader and as a leader who takes responsibility. Once you're in your career path, you can draw on this previous leadership experience and volunteer or step up when the need arises, which can help you get noticed. Hopefully, your previous leadership experience will give you confidence that your group members will notice. People are attracted to confidence and want to follow people who exhibit it. Aside from confidence, good leaders also develop dynamism, which is a set of communication behaviors that conveys enthusiasm and creates an energetic and positive climate. Once confidence and dynamism have attracted a good team of people, good leaders facilitate quality interaction among group members, build cohesion, and capitalize on the synergy of group communication in order to come up with forward-thinking solutions to problems.

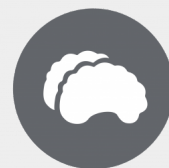
Good leaders also continue to build skills in order to become better leaders. Leaders are excellent observers of human behavior and are able to assess situations using contextual clues and nonverbal communication. They can then use this knowledge to adapt their communication to the situation. Leaders also have a high degree of emotional intelligence, which allows them to better sense, understand, and respond to others' emotions and to have more control over their own displays of emotions. Last, good leaders further their careers by being reflexive and regularly evaluating their strengths and weaknesses as a leader. Since our perceptions are often skewed, it's also good to have colleagues and mentors/supervisors give you formal evaluations of your job performance, making explicit comments about leadership behaviors. As you can see, the work of a leader only grows more complex as one moves further along a career path. But with the skills gained through many years of increasingly challenging leadership roles, a leader can adapt to and manage this increasing complexity.



The former CEO of PepsiCo, Indra Nooyi, often appears on a list of the world's most powerful women. She is a leader who demonstrates passion for her vision and energizes those around her. Image: [World Economic Forum](#), Indra Nooyi – Annual Meeting Davos 2008, Wikimedia Commons, [CC BY 2.0](#). [click to enlarge]

In this section, we will give you tips to help you develop your charismatic, servant, and authentic leadership skills. Each of these contemporary approaches to leadership is believed to be related to employee attitudes and a healthy work environment.

Develop Your Charismatic Leadership Skills



Charismatic individuals have a “magnetic” personality that is appealing to followers. While many people assume that charisma is inborn, it is possible to improve your charisma by following these suggestions (Frese, et. al., 2003; Shamir et. al., 1993):

- Have a vision around which people can gather. When framing requests or addressing to others, instead of emphasizing short-term goals, stress the importance of the long-term vision. When giving a message, think about the overarching purpose. What is the ultimate goal? Why

should people care? What are you trying to achieve?

- **Tie the vision to history.** In addition to stressing the ideal future, charismatic leaders bring up the history and how the shared history ties to the future.
- **Watch your body language.** Charismatic leaders are energetic and passionate about their ideas. This involves truly believing in your own ideas. When talking to others, you may want to look confident, look them in the eye, and express your belief in your ideas.
- **Make sure that employees have confidence in themselves.** You can achieve this by showing that you believe in them and trust their abilities. If they have real reason to doubt their abilities, make sure that you help them address the underlying issue, such as through training and mentoring.
- **Challenge the status quo.** Charismatic leaders solve current problems by radically rethinking the way things are done and suggesting alternatives that are risky, novel, and unconventional.

Develop Your Servant Leadership Skills



One of the influential leadership paradigms involves leaders putting others first. This could be a hard transition for an achievement-oriented and success-driven manager who rises to high levels. Here are some tips to achieve **servant leadership** (Buchanan, 2007; Douglas, 2005; Ramsey, 2005).

Don't ask what your employees can do for you. Think of what you can do for them.

- **One of your key priorities should be to help employees reach their goals.** This involves getting to know them. Learn about who they are and what their values and priorities are.
- **Be humble.** You are not supposed to have all the answers and dictate to others. One way of achieving this humbleness may be to do volunteer work.
- **Be open with your employees.** Ask them questions. Give them information so that they understand what is going on in the company.
- **Find ways of helping the external community.** Giving employees opportunities to be involved in community volunteer projects or even thinking and strategizing about making a positive impact on the greater community would help.

Develop Your Authentic Leadership Skills



Authentic leaders have high levels of self-awareness and their behavior is driven by their core personal values. This leadership approach recognizes the importance of self-reflection and understanding one's life history. Address the following questions to gain a better understanding of your own core values and authentic leadership style.

- **Understand your history.** *Review your life history.* What are the major events in your life? How did these events make you the person you are right now? *Think about your role models.* Who were your role models as you were growing up? What did you learn from your role models?
- **Take stock of who you are now.** *Describe your personality.* How does your personality affect your life? *Know your strengths and weaknesses.* What are they and how can you continue to improve yourself?
- **Reflect on your successes and challenges.** *Keep a journal.* Research shows that journaling is an effective tool for self-reflection. Write down challenges you face and how you will surmount them; periodically review your entries to check your progress.
- **Make integrity a priority.** *Understand your core values.* What are your core values? Name three of your most important values. *Do an ethics check.* Are you being consistent with your core values? If not, how can you get back on track?
- **Understand the power of words.** *Words shape reality.* Keep in mind that the words you use to describe people and situations matter. For example, how might the daily reality be different if you refer to those you manage as associates or team members rather than employees or subordinates?

In view of your answers to the questions above, what kind of a leader would you be if you truly acted out your values? How would people working with you respond to such a leadership style?

Leaders Emerge Based on Communication Skill and Competence

One final approach to the study of leadership is considered a functional approach, because it focuses on how particular communication behaviors function to create the conditions of leadership. This last approach is the most useful for communication scholars and for people who want to improve their leadership skills, because leadership behaviors (which are learnable and adaptable) rather than traits or situations (which are often beyond our control) are the primary focus of study. As we've already learned, any group member can exhibit leadership behaviors, not just a designated or emergent leader. Therefore leadership behaviors are important for all of us to understand even if we don't anticipate serving in leadership positions (Cragen & Wright, 1991).

The communication behaviors that facilitate effective leadership encompass three main areas of

group communication including task, procedural, and relational functions. Although any group member can perform leadership behaviors, groups usually have patterns of and expectations for behaviors once they get to the norming and performing stages of group development. Many groups only meet one or two times, and in these cases it is likely that a designated leader will perform many of the functions to get the group started and then step in to facilitate as needed.

Leadership behaviors that contribute to a group's task-related functions include providing, seeking, and evaluating information. Leaders may want to be cautious about contributing ideas before soliciting ideas from group members, since the leader's contribution may sway or influence others in the group, therefore diminishing the importance of varying perspectives. Likewise a leader may want to solicit evaluation of ideas from members before providing his or her own judgment. In group situations where creativity is needed to generate ideas or solutions to a problem, the task leader may be wise to facilitate brainstorming and discussion.

This can allow the leader to keep his or her eye on the "big picture" and challenge group members to make their ideas more concrete or discuss their implications beyond the group without adding his or her own opinion. To review, some of the key leadership behaviors that contribute to the task-related functions of a group include the following list (Cragen & Wright, 1991).

- Contributing ideas
- Seeking ideas
- Evaluating ideas
- Seeking idea evaluation
- Visualizing abstract ideas
- Generalizing from specific ideas

Leadership behaviors that contribute to a group's procedural-related functions help guide the group as it proceeds from idea generation to implementation. Some leaders are better at facilitating and managing ideas than they are at managing the administrative functions of a group. So while a group leader may help establish the goals of the group and set the agenda, another group member with more experience in group operations may step in to periodically revisit and assess progress toward completion of goals and compare the group's performance against its agenda. It's also important to check in between idea-generating sessions to clarify, summarize, and gauge the agreement level of group members. A very skilled and experienced leader may take primary responsibility for all these behaviors, but it's often beneficial to share them with group members to avoid becoming overburdened. To review, some of the key leadership behaviors that contribute to the procedural functions of a group include the following suggestions from Cragan & Wright (1991):

- Goal setting
- Agenda making
- Clarifying
- Summarizing
- Verbalizing consensus
- Generalizing from specific ideas

Leadership behaviors that contribute to a group's relational functions include creating a participative and inclusive climate, establishing norms of reflection and self-analysis, and managing conflict. By encouraging participation among group members, a leader can help quell people who try to monopolize discussion and create an overall climate of openness and equality. Leaders want to make sure that people don't feel personally judged for their ideas and that criticism remains idea centered, not person centered. A safe and positive climate typically leads to higher-quality idea generation and decision making. Leaders also encourage group members to metacommunicate, or talk about the group's communication. This can help the group identify and begin to address any interpersonal or communication issues before they escalate and divert the group away from accomplishing its goal. A group with a well-established participative and inclusive climate will be better prepared to handle conflict when it emerges. Remember that conflict when handled competently can enhance group performance. Leaders may even instigate productive conflict by playing devil's advocate or facilitating civil debate of ideas. To review, some of the key leadership behaviors that contribute to the relational functions of a group include the following:

- Regulating participation
- Climate making
- Instigating group self-analysis
- Resolving conflict
- Instigating productive conflict



Exercises

- What communication competencies do you think are most important for a leader to have and why? How do you rate in terms of the competencies you ranked as most important?
- Who do you know who would be able to give you constructive feedback on your leadership skills? What do you think this person would say? (You may want to consider actually asking the person for feedback).



Let's Review

As we have discussed in this chapter, you do not need a fancy title to be a leader. To be an effective leader, you must exhibit all aspects of emotional intelligence skills. For example, good leaders will know themselves well and know their strengths and weaknesses. Good leaders also know their feelings from moment to moment and they have learned how to handle those emotions. Good leaders have many similar qualities, such as empathy, ethics, understanding, and patience. These skills are also emotional intelligence skills—specifically, social awareness and relationship management skills.

Social awareness skills are key in leadership, including reading and interpreting social cues and body language, setting goals, resolving conflict, understanding the perspectives of others, and a positive attitude. A leader is someone people want to be around, because they have a certain charisma that draws us to them! Leaders are also excellent at relationship management in that they handle relationships with others well. If you don't have the formal title of leader or manager, showing these skills in the workplace can not only make you a happier person but also show your supervisor you are ready to move up within your organization.

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10.4 Key Takeaways, Knowledge Check and Key Terms



Key Takeaways

- **Leadership is a bit different than management** in that management includes a “title” while leadership and the leadership development process can occur without a title.
- **Leaders can be appointed into a role, elected into the role, or emerge** into the role of leader.
- **Characteristics of the situation, task, and/or organization** may make a leader less effective or unnecessary.
- We reviewed several influential leadership theories:
 - **Theory X and Theory Y** leaders hold different fundamental assumptions about the nature of employees and their motivations at work.
 - **Trait approaches** identify the characteristics required to be perceived as a leader and to be successful in the role.
 - **Intelligence, extraversion, conscientiousness, openness to experience, and integrity** seem to be leadership traits.
 - **Behavioural approaches** identify the types of behaviours leaders demonstrate.
 - Both trait and behavioural approaches suffered from a failure to pay attention to the context in which leadership occurs, which led to the development of contingency approaches such as situational leadership and path-goal theories.
 - Recently, ethics became an explicit focus of leadership theories such as servant leadership and authentic leadership.
 - It seems that being conscious of one’s style and making sure that leaders demonstrate the behaviours that address employee, organizational, and stakeholder needs are important and require flexibility on the part of leaders.
- **Leadership skills are not simply born, they’re made.** We don’t need to wait until we have the title of manager to begin developing our skill set – can grow and develop our leadership skills now. This chapter provided several suggestions for developing your own leadership and communication skills.



Knowledge Check

Review your understanding of this chapter's key concepts by taking the interactive quiz below.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationpsychology/?p=2183#h5p-6>



Key Terms

Key terms in this chapter include:

- **Management**
- **Leadership**
- **Appointed leaders**
- **Democratic leaders**
- **Emergent leaders**
- **Theory X leaders**
- **Theory Y leaders**
- **Trait approach**
- **Behavioural approach**

- Contingency approach
- Situational leadership
- Path-goal theory
- Directive leaders
- Supportive leaders
- Participatory leaders
- Achievement-oriented leaders
- Transformational leaders
- Transactional leaders
- Charisma
- Contingency rewards
- Active management by exception
- Passive management by exception
- Servant leadership
- Authentic leadership

CHAPTER 11: DIMENSIONS OF DIVERSITY AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION



Learning Objectives

In this chapter, we will:

1. **Define** key terms related to the dimensions of diversity.
2. **Understand** that employees in Ontario should not be discriminated against in the workplace based on protected grounds.
3. **Describe** the benefits and challenges associated with a diverse workforce within an organization.
4. **Explain** the process by which we join and participate in a culture such as in the workplace.
5. **Identify** dimensions of cultural difference from a sociological perspective.
6. **Explain** strategies for how to establish and maintain friendly professional relations with people from different cultures.

Canadian workplaces are becoming more diverse as organizations realize what a diverse workforce can bring, from innovation and creativity to employee happiness and retention. In this chapter we will explore some of the dimensions of diversity that you will likely encounter in your professional life. You'll then learn about why some of the benefits and challenges of diversity in Canadian workplaces. In order to understand how to communicate more effectively, we need to develop our abilities in better understanding ourselves and how culture influences our communication.

11.1 Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity is “the presence of differences among individuals in a group in terms of various aspects (e.g., gender, attraction, race, class, ability, etc) that may create advantages or barriers to opportunities and resources because of historical and ongoing systems of oppression. It is important to remember that only groups and not individuals should be described as diverse, and that the existence of diversity in any given environment does not necessarily signal that it is an inclusive or equitable environment” (Egale, 2022, p. 17).

Surface-level, Deep-level, and Hidden Diversity

Surface diversity, deep diversity, and deep diversity are categories of personal attributes—or differences in attributes—that people perceive to exist between people or groups of people.

Surface-level diversity refers to differences you can generally observe in others, like ethnicity, race, gender, age, culture, language, disability, etc. You can often quickly and easily observe these features in a person. And people often do just that, making subtle judgments at the same time, which can lead to bias or discrimination (see definitions below).

Deep-level diversity, on the other hand, reflects differences that are less visible, like personality, attitude, beliefs, and values. These attributes are generally communicated verbally and non-verbally, so they are not easily noticeable or measurable. You may not detect deep-level diversity in a coworker, for example, until you get to know them.

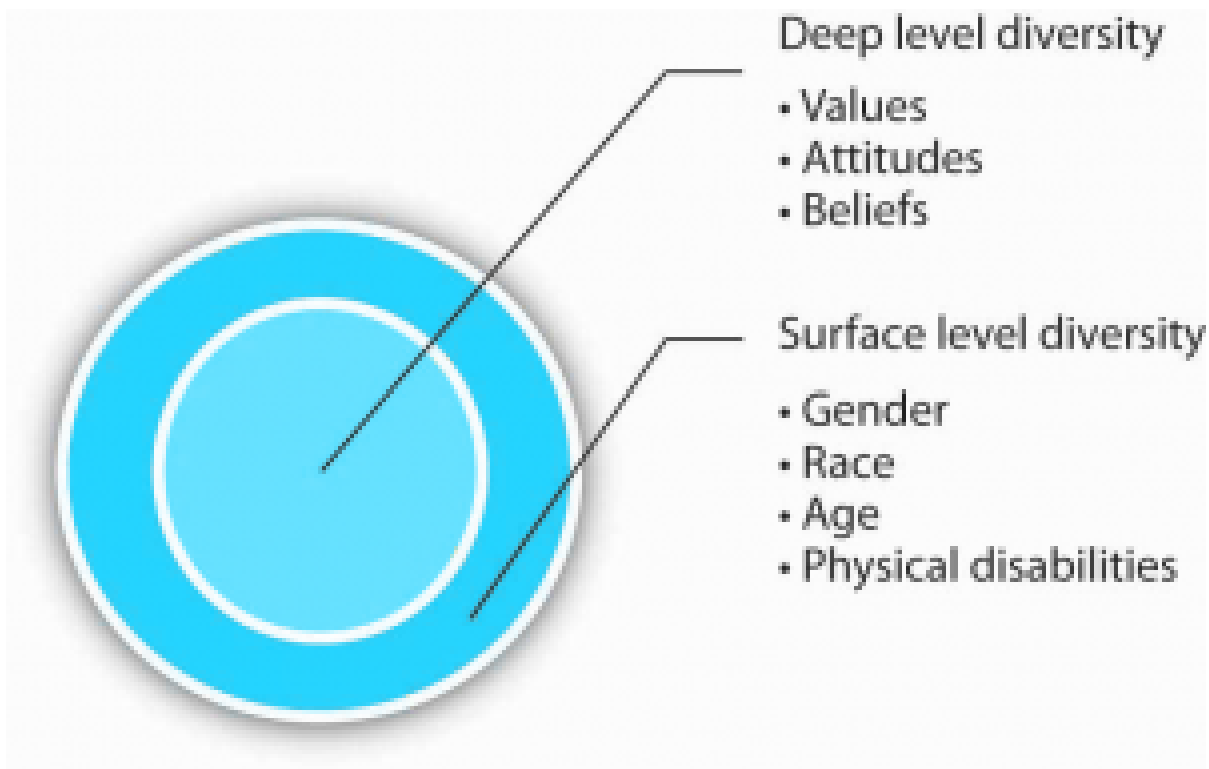


Figure 11.1 Examples of surface and deep level diversity. Image: NSCC. NSCC [Organizational Behaviour, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Color altered from original. [Click to enlarge]

Hidden diversity includes traits that are deep-level but may be concealed or revealed at the discretion of individuals who possess them (Lambert & Bell, 2013). These hidden traits are called **invisible social identities** (Clair et al., 2005) and may include sexual orientation, a hidden disability (such as a mental illness or chronic disease), racial heritage (Phillips et al., 2009) or socioeconomic status.

Why Diversity Matters

Diversity matters because when we communicate with people who are different from us in a fundamental way, it can be difficult to go from miscommunication and misunderstanding to synergy and high performance in a business context. In an interpersonal context it is also difficult to make the leap from thinking the other person is “ridiculous” to challenging ourselves to develop our skills in listening and empathy before leaping to dismissive judgement.

Since the 1970s, Canada has had an official policy of multiculturalism. This policy says people do not have to give up parts of their identity or their culture such as their religion, language, or customs, provided that they don't interfere with others' rights and freedoms as defined in Canada's Constitution or Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Canada is often described as a mosaic, in contrast to the melting pot philosophy of the United States to the south. Where the melting pot expects people

to blend in, assimilate, and become “American,” the Canadian mosaic identity is arguably more fluid, enabling people to retain their cultures, customs, traditions, or other elements of their heritage.

In addition, the Canadian Employment Equity Act has a mandate to “encourage the establishment of working conditions that are free of barriers, corrects the conditions of disadvantages in employment and promotes the principle that employment equity requires special measures and the accommodation of differences for the four designated groups in Canada” (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018).

The *Employment Equity Act* identifies and defines the designated groups as:

- Women
- Aboriginal peoples – Indian, Inuit or Métis;
- Persons with disabilities; and
- Members of visible minorities



If you’re interested in reading about more legal cases related to diversity and discrimination, [The Ontario Human Rights Legal Support Centre](#) has a description of recent cases related to diversity and discrimination where you can see the latest outcomes of those cases.

Diversity is not about those other folks over there; it’s about you as well as them. It’s about all of us.

Diversity and inclusion should hopefully be more than just buzzwords and avoiding lawsuits. When done right and applied to people in a work or professional context, having diversity provides a competitive advantage for businesses and increased satisfaction for employees who can put their full potential to work. According to Ryerson University’s Diversity Institute (Ryerson University, 2015), the business case for diversity in Canada has several strong points including that it diversity has improves company performance and shareholder stock value. We will discuss more of the benefits and challenges of workplace diversity later in this chapter.

Key Diversity-Related Concepts and Definitions

When trying to understand how to more effectively communicate, it’s important to understand that people’s identities are diverse and complex, often shaped by their environment, history, and experience. We sometimes generalize in order to make sense of or evaluate a situation, but being mindful and listening carefully will help us do a better job of responding to a situation case-by-

case instead of falling back on bias, stereotypes, and discrimination. We'll look at each one of these definitions in turn.

Bias is subjective opinion, preference, prejudice, or inclination, either for or against an individual or group, formed without reasonable justification that influences an individual's or group's ability to evaluate a particular situation objectively or accurately (mygsa.ca, 2015). Many people in the workplace are unaware of the biases they may have, which is why self-reflection is such an important part of how to improve interpersonal communication through self-awareness.

Similarly, a **stereotype** is a false or generalized, and usually negative, conception of a group of people that results in the unconscious or conscious categorization of each member of that group, without regard for individual differences (mygsa.ca, 2015). When we learn about other groups of people, it's easy to forget that individuals make up groups. For good interpersonal communication to occur, it is important to be open, to listen, and to recognize that person as a unique individual.

Discrimination is defined as "the unequal treatment of groups or individuals with a history of marginalization either by a person or a group or an institution which, through the denial of certain rights, results in inequality, subordination and/or deprivation of political, education, social, economic, and cultural rights" (mygsa.ca, 2015). Discrimination in the workplace can take many forms. For example, a female board member once told the author that after board meetings in previous decades, all the other board members—all men—would go socialize afterwards, typically to play golf. When she tried to join them, they said, "These excursions are just 'for the boys' You understand, right?"

Understanding how bias, stereotypes, and discrimination affect the workplace and how people communicate are essential to understanding the move toward inclusive practices.

Inclusion means acknowledging systems of oppression, respecting diversity, and providing opportunities for everyone to have a voice (Egale, 2022).

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11.2 Dimensions of Diversity

In this Section

We will discuss a number of dimensions of diversity, including:

- [Race](#)
- [Ethnicity](#)
- [Nationality](#)
- [Sex](#)
- [Gender](#)
- [Sexual Orientation](#)
- [Religion](#)
- [Ability](#)

Race

Race is often difficult to talk about, not because of the inherent complexity of the term itself, but because of the role that race plays in society. Race is what we call a loaded word because it can bring up strong emotions and connotations. Understandings of race fall into two camps: a biological versus a sociopolitical construction of what it means to belong to a particular racial group. A biological construction of race claims that “pure” races existed and could be distinguished by such physical features as eye color and shape, skin color, and hair. Moreover, these differences could be traced back to genetic differences. This theory has been debunked by numerous scientists and been replaced with the understanding that there are greater genetic differences within racial groups, not between them. In addition, there is no scientific connection with racial identity and cultural traits or behaviors. **From a biological standpoint, race is not a valid construct.**

Instead of biology, we draw on a sociopolitical understanding of what it means to be of a particular race. This simply means that it is not a person’s DNA that places them into a particular racial grouping, but all of the other factors that create social relations—politics, geography, or migration. We can also examine the reality that the meanings of race have changed across time and space. As dramatized in the film, “Gangs of New York,” the Irish were once considered a minority with little social or political status. Now, being Irish in America (or Irish-Canadian) is considered part of the general majority group. Noting the change from the biological to the sociopolitical understanding, we refer to **race** as “a largely social—yet powerful— construction of human difference that has

been used to classify human beings into separate value-based categories” (Orbe & Harris, 2012). **Racism** is institutional and involves the unequal accessibility to resources and power; maintaining systems of dominance, privilege, and oppression. Racism in the modern Canadian workplace can show up in many ways and be either intentional or unintentional, from screening out or prioritizing certain names on résumés to assuming the racialized person in the room is the server or assistant. For many people in Canada’s dominant group, being called a racist is a tremendous insult that can immediately shut down communication. Ironically, the power to shut down or ignore communication related to racial discrimination is a racist act. People with good interpersonal communication skills can navigate their discomfort long enough to focus on listening, reflecting, and collaborating to find solutions.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity refers to a person’s or people’s heritage and history, and involves shared cultural traditions and beliefs. Many Canadians identify with several ethnicities (-Canadian). There has been much debate about whether and how information about race and ethnicity in Canada should be tracked (if at all). To see examples of changes to self-reported ethnicities on the Canada census refer to the article entitled, [Ethnic or cultural origins: Technical report on changes for the 2021 Census](#). Proposals include indigenous origins, country of origin, and culture/ethnic origins (Statistics Canada, 2020).

Nationality

Nationality refers to a people’s nation-state of residence or where they hold citizenship. Most often nationality is derived from the country where one was born, but on occasion people give up their citizenship by birth and migrate to a new country where they claim national identity. For example, an individual could have been born and raised in another country but once they migrate to the Canada and have citizenship, their nationality becomes Canadian.

It is illegal in Canada to discriminate against someone on the basis of their race, ethnicity, or nationality at work. It can create a toxic or poisoned work environment.

For more information about rights and laws in Canada see this brochure from the Ontario Human Rights Commission: [Racial Harassment – Know Your Rights](#).

Sex

A person's **sex** is a label, often designated by doctors at birth as male or female, based on an individual's genitals, hormones, and/or chromosomes. According to the Intersex Society of North America, "**intersex**" is a general term used when a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male. For example, a person might be born appearing to be female on the outside but having mostly male-typical anatomy on the inside. Or a person may be born with mosaic genetics, so that some of her cells have XX chromosomes and some of them have XY. It is important to note that male, female, and intersex aren't discrete categories, just labels based on social convention.

Regardless of whether an individual is male, female, or intersex it is illegal to discriminate in the workplace in Ontario on the basis of sex.

One notable case of workplace discrimination on the basis of sex concerns job security and a woman's reproductive rights. Women should not experience workplace discrimination on the basis of pregnancy. This includes hiring, promotions, parental leave, and return to work after pregnancy (OHRC, 2014). Women in Ontario also have a right to breastfeed their child and be provided a private place to express breastmilk while at work. Learn more at the [Ontario Human Rights Code – Sex](#).

Gender

The Ontario Human Rights Code uses the term sex to encompass discrimination based on sex and/or gender. However, for our purposes these terms are distinct. While sex is a biological category, **gender** is, "the social construction of masculinity or femininity as it aligns with designated sex at birth in a specific culture and time period." (Pettitt, 2012). An individual is said to be **cisgender** if the gender that they identify is consistent the sex that they were assigned at birth. When an individual does not identify with the gender of the sex that they were assigned at birth, they may identify as **transgender**.

Our culture and socialization helps us to learn expected expressions of masculinity and femininity. Another expression of gender is known as **androgyny**, the term we use to identify gendered behavior that lies between feminine and masculine

Many folks will not identify as transgender, but also do not identify with the sex that they were assigned at birth. Some individuals do not identify as either male or female (non-binary, agender), their gender changes (gender fluid), or identify outside of the gender binary in other ways (genderqueer, gender non-conforming).

Transphobia is " the aversion to, fear or hatred or intolerance of trans people and communities.

Like other prejudices, it is based on stereotypes and misconceptions that are used to justify discrimination, harassment and violence toward trans people” (OHRC, 2014, Appendix B). It is important to respect an individual’s gender identity and gender expression. This includes being mindful of an individual’s choice of pronouns and personal names. In addition, workplaces should respect an individual’s gender identity when it comes to washrooms, work uniforms, and workplace documents (OHRC, 2014).

It is illegal to discriminate in Ontario workplaces on the basis of gender, gender identity, or gender expression.

Failing to respect someone’s pronouns is an example of gender-based harassment. Transphobia is one of many types of sexual harassment that are illegal in Ontario workplaces. To learn more: [OHRC – Sexual and Gender Based Harassment](#).

Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation refers to a person’s preference for sexual or romantic relationships; one may prefer a partner of the same sex, the opposite sex, both, or none. Even though sexual orientation is a protected grounds of employment, individuals that do not conform to societal heteronormative standards often still have to contend on a daily basis that some people think they are deviant. This may result in harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

Research shows that one of the most important issues relating to sexual orientation is the disclosure of sexual identity in the workplace. Employees may fear the reactions of their managers and coworkers, leading to keeping their sexual identity a secret (Ragins et al., 2007).

Discrimination and harassment on the basis of an individual’s sexual orientation is illegal in Ontario.

To learn more, see [OHRC – Discrimination and Harassment because of Sexual Orientation](#).

Religion

Employers are required to respect and accommodate an individual’s religion (aka creed). While the early White settlers were most often Protestant or Roman Catholic, the diversity of religions in Canada has significantly expanded to include all major world religions and increasingly people who

do not prescribe to any creed. The OHRC (2015) notes that that there is much work to be done with respect to Indigenous traditions after generations of Indigenous people in Canada were stripped of their opportunity to practice their traditions while in the residential school system. In Ontario in the past few years, an increase in hate-based crimes has also been noted against members of the Jewish and Islamic faith communities (Moreau, 2020).

In the workplace, it is important for employers to respect and accommodate an individual based on their religion. This includes dress, food, and accommodation for religious observances.

To learn more see [OHRC Preventing Discrimination Based on Creed](#).

Ability

According to Statistics Canada (2015), over 11 percent of Canadians experience pain, mobility, or flexibility challenges. These can be severe enough to require a wheelchair or other mobility aid, or they can be less severe but still make it difficult for people to do jobs that require some type of movement or labour. The next most common disability among Canadians was mental or psychological disabilities (3.9 percent). These commonly include depression and anxiety; however, a great many others exist that are less familiar to the general public. Dexterity problems is the next most common category, affecting 3.5 percent of Canadians. Dexterity limits can affect a person's motor function and can make moving around the worksite a challenge. It can also make it difficult for people to use computers and other digital devices. About 5.9 percent of Canadians have some type of vision or hearing problem, be it total blindness or deafness, or partial use of these senses.

While other areas like memory, learning, and developmental disabilities can also pose barriers, specific tools and aids can be useful for employees with disabilities. For example, wheelchairs and arm supports can make movement possible, while hearing aids and magnifiers can make hearing or vision clearer. For people who are blind, interaction with computers is possible with the aid of screen readers and text-to-speech technology.

People with ability challenges can be a significant boost to the ability of an organization to reach its market. Those who experience these things on a daily basis have an insight that other people who do not live with a disability cannot have. Environmental factors can play a part in making the work day of a person with a disability more of a challenge than it should be. For example, buildings that do not have ramps at the front entrance may instead fit an accessible entrance at the rear of the building. While this may not seem like a problem for some people, a person using a wheelchair or other assistive device (e.g., walker) will need to access the building differently than others, which may bring up feelings of exclusion.

A main communication challenge that arises here is misunderstanding on the part of people who

are not living with a disability. Supportive communication with others seems to be the key for making employees feel at home. Because the visible differences between individuals may act as an initial barrier against developing rapport, employees with disabilities and their co-workers may benefit from being proactive in relationship development (Colella & Varma, 2001). Another key way to make a people with different abilities feel confident in the workplace is to consider accessibility.

It is illegal to harass or discriminate in the workplace because of a visible or hidden disability.

To learn more see [OHRC – disability](#), and the [Employment Standard of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\)](#).



Let's Focus

Illegal Interview Questions?

I think I am being asked illegal interview questions. What can I do?

In Canada, demographic characteristics such as race, gender, national origin, age, and disability status are protected by law. Yet, job applicants have been asked illegal interview questions. How can you answer such questions?

Here are some options.

- **Refuse to answer.** You may point out that the question is illegal and refuse to answer. Of course, this may cost you the job offer, because you are likely to seem confrontational and aggressive.
- **Answer shortly.** Instead of giving a full answer to a question such as “are you married,” you could answer the question briefly and change the subject. In many cases, the interviewer may be trying to initiate small talk and may be unaware that the question is potentially illegal.
- **Answer the intent.** Sometimes, the illegal question hides a legitimate concern. When you are being asked where you are from, the potential employer might be concerned that you do not have a work permit. Addressing the issue in your answer may be better than answering the question you are being asked.
- **Walk away from the interview.** If you feel that the intent of the question is discriminatory, and if

you feel that you would rather not work at a company that would ask such questions, you can always walk away from the interview. If you feel that you are being discriminated against, you may also want to talk to a lawyer later on.

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11.3 Diversity in the Workplace - Benefits and Challenges

Benefits of Diversity

As we've already discussed, there are a number of benefits of having a diverse workforce. Let's explore some more benefits:

Higher Creativity in Decision Making

An important potential benefit of having a diverse workforce is the ability to make higher quality decisions. In a diverse work team, people will have different opinions and perspectives. In these teams, individuals are more likely to consider more alternatives and think outside the box when making decisions. Research also shows that diverse teams tend to make higher quality decisions (McLeod et al., 1996). Therefore, having a diverse workforce may have a direct impact on a company's bottom line by increasing creativity in decision making.

Better Understanding and Service of Customers

A company with a diverse workforce may create products or services that appeal to a broader customer base. For example, PepsiCo Inc. planned and executed a successful diversification effort in the recent past. The company was able to increase the percentage of women and ethnic minorities in many levels of the company, including management. A company with a diverse workforce may understand the needs of particular groups of customers better, and customers may feel more at ease when they are dealing with a company that understands their needs.

More Satisfied Workforce

When employees feel that they are fairly treated, they tend to be more satisfied. On the other hand, when employees perceive that they are being discriminated against, they tend to be less attached to the company, less satisfied with their jobs, and experience more stress at work (Sanchez & Brock, 1996). organizations where employees are satisfied often have lower turnover.

Market Reputation

Companies that do a better job of managing a diverse workforce are often rewarded in the stock market, indicating that investors use this information to judge how well a company is being managed. Ekta Mendhi is senior director of corporate strategy at CIBC in Canada. She serves as the co-chair of Women in Capital Markets', Women in Leadership Network, and co-founded the Canadian Gender and Good Governance Alliance. They found through their research that creating a more diverse board of directors can enhance decision-making process and augment an organisation's performance and market reputation (Mendhi & Dart, 2018).

New industries such as the Canadian Cannabis industry is not exempt from these diversity considerations. A report by Marijuana Business Daily reports that "Cannabis companies in Canada with "monoculture and mono-gender" boardroom compositions could face a competitive disadvantage and will ultimately take a hit to their bottom lines" (Lamers, 2019).

Lower Litigation Expenses

Companies doing a particularly bad job in diversity management face costly litigations. When an employee or a group of employees feel that the company is violating equity laws, they may file a complaint. The Ministry of Labour (MOL) acts as a mediator between the company and the person in cases where litigation is claimed due to unfair or unequal hiring practices, and the company may choose to settle the case outside the court. If no settlement is reached, the MOL may sue the company on behalf of the complainant or may provide the injured party with a right-to-sue letter. Regardless of the outcome, these lawsuits are expensive and include attorney fees as well as the cost of the settlement or judgment, which may reach millions of dollars. The resulting poor publicity also has a cost to the company. The Canadian Employment Equity Act has a mandate to "encourage the establishment of working conditions that are free of barriers, corrects the conditions of disadvantages in employment and promotes the principle that employment equity requires special measures and the accommodation of differences for the four designated groups in Canada" (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018).

The Employment Equity Act identifies and defines the designated groups as:

- Women
- Aboriginal peoples – Indian, Inuit or Métis;
- Persons with disabilities; and
- Members of visible minorities



If you're interested in reading about more legal cases related to diversity and discrimination, [The](#)

[Ontario Human Rights Legal Support Centre](#) has a description of recent cases related to diversity and discrimination where you can see the latest outcomes of those cases.

Higher Company Performance

As a result of all these potential benefits, companies that manage diversity more effectively tend to outperform others. Research shows that there is a positive relationship between racial diversity of the company and company performance. Companies ranked in the Diversity 50 list created by *DiversityInc* magazine performed better than their counterparts (Slater et al., 2008).

Challenges of Diversity

If managing diversity effectively has the potential to increase company performance, increase creativity, and create a more satisfied workforce, why aren't all companies doing a better job of encouraging diversity? Despite all the potential advantages, there are also a number of challenges associated with increased levels of diversity in the workforce.

Similarity-Attraction Phenomenon

There is a tendency for people to be attracted to people similar to themselves (Riordan & Shore, 1997). Research shows that individuals communicate less frequently with those who are perceived as different from themselves (Chatman et al., 1998). They are also more likely to experience emotional conflict with people who differ with respect to race, age, and gender (Jehn et al., 1999; Pelled et al., 1999). Individuals who are different from their team members are more likely to report perceptions of unfairness and feel that their contributions are ignored (Price et al., 2006).

The **similarity-attraction phenomenon** may explain some of the potentially unfair treatment based on demographic traits. If a hiring manager chooses someone who is racially similar over a more qualified candidate from a different race, the decision will be unfair. In other words, similarity-attraction may prevent some highly qualified women, minorities, or persons with disabilities from being hired. Of course, the same tendency may prevent highly qualified White and male candidates from being hired as well, but given that White males are more likely to hold powerful management positions in today's Canadian based organizations, similarity-attraction may affect women and minorities to a greater extent. Even when candidates from minority or underrepresented groups are hired, they may receive different treatment within the organization.

For example, research shows that one way in which employees may get ahead within organizations is through being mentored by a knowledgeable and powerful mentor. Yet, when the company does not have a formal mentoring program in which people are assigned a specific mentor, people are more likely to develop a mentoring relationship with someone who is similar to them in

demographic traits (Dreher & Cox, 1996). This means that those who are not selected as protégés will not be able to benefit from the support and advice that would further their careers. Similarity-attraction may even affect the treatment people receive daily. If the company CEO constantly invites a male employee to play golf with him while a female employee never receives the invitation, the male employee may have a serious advantage when important decisions are made.

Faultlines

A **faultline** is an attribute along which a group is split into subgroups. For example, in a group with three female and three male members, gender may act as a faultline because the female members may see themselves as separate from the male members. Now imagine that the female members of the same team are all over 50 years old and the male members are all younger. In this case, age and gender combine to further divide the group into two subgroups. Teams that are divided by faultlines experience a number of difficulties. For example, members of the different subgroups may avoid communicating with each other, reducing the overall cohesiveness of the team. Research shows that these types of teams make less effective decisions and are less creative (Pearsall et al., 2008; Sawyer et al., 2006). Faultlines are more likely to emerge in diverse teams, but not all diverse teams have faultlines. Going back to our example, if the team has three male and three female members, but if two of the female members are older and one of the male members is also older, then the composition of the team will have much different effects on the team's processes. In this case, age could be a bridging characteristic that brings together people divided across gender.

Research shows that even groups that have strong faultlines can perform well if they establish certain norms. When members of subgroups debate the decision topic among themselves before having a general group discussion, there seems to be less communication during the meeting on pros and cons of different alternatives. Having a norm stating that members should not discuss the issue under consideration before the actual meeting may be useful in increasing decision effectiveness (Sawyer et al., 2006).

Stereotypes

An important challenge of managing a diverse workforce is the possibility that stereotypes about different groups could lead to unfair decision making. The assumption that women are more relationship oriented, while men are more assertive is an example of a stereotype. The problem with stereotypes is that people often use them to make decisions about a particular individual without actually verifying whether the assumption holds for the person in question. As a result, stereotypes often lead to unfair and inaccurate decision making. For example, a hiring manager holding the stereotype mentioned above may prefer a male candidate for a management position over a well-qualified female candidate. The assumption would be that management positions require assertiveness and the male candidate would be more assertive than the female candidate. Being aware of these stereotypes is the first step to preventing them from affecting decision making.

Suggestions for Managing Demographic Diversity

What can organizations do to manage diversity more effectively? In this section, we review research findings and the best practices from different companies to create a list of suggestions for organizations.

Build a Culture of Respect for Diversity

In the most successful companies, diversity management is not the responsibility of the human resources department. Starting from top management and including the lowest levels in the hierarchy, each person must understand the importance of respecting others. If this respect is not part of an organisation's culture, no amount of diversity training or other programs are likely to be effective. In fact, in the most successful companies, diversity is viewed as everyone's responsibility. Rogers Communications Inc. partners with Career Bridge to provide work to internationally educated professionals. Accenture Inc. has a global Persons with Disabilities Champions program, which is focused on workplace accommodations. Finally, British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority encourages managers to hire skilled newcomers, providing a career advancement plan (Jermyn, 2018). Companies with a strong culture, where people have a sense of shared values, is rewarded with loyalty and team performance. This enables employees with vastly different demographics and backgrounds to feel a sense of belonging (Chatman et al., 1998; Fisher, 2004).

Make Managers Accountable for Diversity

People are more likely to pay attention to aspects of performance that are measured. In successful companies, diversity metrics are carefully tracked. For example, in PepsiCo, during the tenure of former CEO Steve Reinemund, half of all new hires had to be either women or minorities. Bonuses of managers partly depended on whether they had met their diversity-related goals (Yang, 2006). When managers are evaluated and rewarded based on how effective they are in diversity management, they are more likely to show commitment to diversity that in turn affects the diversity climate in the rest of the organization.

Diversity Training Programs

Many companies provide employees and managers with training programs related to diversity. However, not all diversity programs are equally successful. You may expect that more successful programs are those that occur in companies where a culture of diversity exists. A study of over 700 companies found that programs with a higher perceived success rate were those that occurred in companies where top management believed in the importance of diversity, where there were

explicit rewards for increasing diversity in the company, and where managers were required to attend the diversity training programs (Rynes & Rosen, 1995).

Review Recruitment Practices

Companies may want to increase diversity by targeting a pool that is more diverse. There are many minority professional groups such as The Aboriginal Women's Professional Association (AWPA) which provides "Aboriginal women from all over Canada the opportunity to gather and meet other Aboriginal women and to learn from each other" (Charity Village, 2019). By building relationships with these occupational groups, organizations may attract a more diverse group of candidates to choose from. The auditing company Ernst & Young Global Ltd. increases diversity of job candidates by mentoring undergraduate students (Nussenbaum, 2003). Companies may also benefit from reviewing their employment advertising to ensure that diversity is important at all levels of the company (Avery, 2003).



Let's Focus

Dealing with Being Different

At any time in your career, you may find yourself in a situation in which you are different from those around you. Maybe you are the only male in an organization where most of your colleagues and managers are females. Maybe you are older than all your colleagues. How do you deal with the challenges of being different?

- **Invest in building effective relationships.** Early in a relationship, people are more attracted to those who are demographically similar to them. This means that your colleagues or manager may never get to find out how smart, fun, or hardworking you are if you have limited interactions with them. Create opportunities to talk to them. Be sure to point out areas of commonality.
- **Choose your mentor carefully.** Mentors may help you make sense of the organization's culture, give you career-related advice, and help you feel like you belong. That said, how powerful and knowledgeable your mentor is also matters. You may be more attracted to someone at your same level and who is similar to you, but you may have more to learn from someone who is more

experienced, knowledgeable, and powerful than you are.

- **Investigate company resources.** Many companies offer networking opportunities and interest groups for women, ethnic minorities, and employees with disabilities among others. Check out what resources are available through your company.
- **Know your rights.** You should know that harassment based on protected characteristics such as gender, race, age, or disabilities, as well as discrimination based on these traits are illegal in the Ontario. If you face harassment or discrimination, you may want to notify your manager or your company's HR department.

References

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11.4 Culture

Intercultural Communication

All communication is intercultural. The term “intercultural communication” may conjure in your mind a picture of two people from different continents speaking or writing to one another. Considering the vast size of Canada and wide variety of cultures from the west coast to the Maritimes, however, or from northern communities to the border-lining south, or from Indigenous peoples to first-generation immigrants, all communication in Canada is intercultural. You can hear it in the diverse accents across the provinces and even within a province from urban to suburban to rural cultures. Even within a household, parents represent one culture influenced by the decades preceding their kids, who have their own culture with its own dialect and media preferences. This argument extends even as far as your individual self; when you’re at odds with yourself about something, where does that internal conflict come from but the various cultures you’ve internalized through the years? Every culture you’ve ever participated in has left its mark on you with a set of perspectives and values that shape your worldview and behaviour. Still, you’re a cohesive self rather than a fractured and divided one, which suggests we can all get along with one another despite our cultural differences.

Always approach intercultural communication as an opportunity to overcome cultural differences and achieve the cross-cultural understanding you need to be a better person and do your job effectively in a multicultural environment. When you enter a profession, you begin to internalize a new workplace culture and therefore a new set of values. You represent that culture (and even subculture within a company) to the various audiences you deal with: customers or clients outside, management above, and colleagues in adjacent departments. In all such interactions, your goal is to find a common language that helps get the job done. Intercultural communication is thus vital to your success.

On the other hand, if you’re **ethnocentric** in the sense of being fearful, intolerant, or even just avoidant towards those other cultures—be they on the other side of the planet, country, province, city, building, counter, or desk—you limit your opportunities for success in the globalized market. Even engaging other cultures with simplistic, preconceived notions informed by media stereotypes reducing everyone in a culture to a one-dimensional character or prop will similarly lead you into serious error. Intercultural communication requires openness to difference, patience in overcoming cultural and language barriers, and the desire to learn about other cultures and points of view.

If your work brings you into contact with cultures that you know little about, forget the stereotypes and learn about their culture by both researching it and talking to them respectfully. Along these lines, this chapter section provides a guide for how to approach intercultural communication in the modern workplace by considering what you share in common with the people you interact with, what to look for in terms of cultural differences, and how to act in either case. Though we don’t have room for a thorough guide on specific cultural differences pertaining to every unique culture

you might encounter, we will focus on basic principles for conducting intercultural communication (*Business Communication for Success*, 2015, 18.1 – 18.2).

In this Section

- [Common Cultural Characteristics](#)
- [Understanding and Respecting Cultural Differences](#)

Common Cultural Characteristics

While we may be members of many different cultures, we tend to identify with some more than others. Perhaps you have become friendly with several of your classmates in your college program. As you take many of the same classes and share on-campus experiences, you share more and more in common, forming a small group culture of your own. A similar cultural formation process happens in the workplace where coworkers spend many hours each week sharing work experiences and getting to know each other socially in the process. Let's look at how each of these shared experiences is an important communication function.

Rites of Initiation and Adopting a Common Language

Cultures tend to have a ritual for welcoming a new member. Some such rituals may be so informal as to be hardly noticed, such as when you are invited to lunch so your new team members can get to know you. Others may be highly formalized such as religious rites. In your life, you've passed through rites such as the first day of school, high-school graduation and prom, getting your driver's license, registering to vote, and getting your first job. Each passage into a new culture and its associated responsibilities requires your participation as a communicator, such as learning traffic signs and how to signal your intention to turn your vehicle.

After the written and oral communications tests of getting your first job, the biggest challenge of your first day on the job is to learn how the group members communicate with each other. You'll have learned much of the technical terminology and jargon in your college program, but then you'll find that working professionals have changed it to suit their purposes and added new lingo for you to master. Learning to "talk the talk" is vital to passing the rite of initiation, becoming a full member of that workplace culture, successfully completing your work, and rising to positions of greater status and responsibility.'

Common Values and Goals

Cultures all hold values and principles that are commonly shared and communicated by established members to newer ones. Time and length of commitment are associated with an awareness of these values and principles so that new members, whether they are socialized at home, in school, or at work, may not have a thorough understanding of their importance. For example, rapid customer service and cleanliness are two cornerstone values of the Tim Hortons franchise. A new employee may take these for granted if not for seasoned employees and management communicating and reinforcing these core values. Without reinforcement, norms may gradually shift and fundamentally change the customer experience associated with franchise brand.

Cultures likewise share common goals. Companies often state these in mission and vision statements (usually stated on the “About” page of the company website) that individual members are expected to acknowledge, adopt, and realize through action. Without action, the **mission and vision statements** are simply empty abstractions. As a guide to individual and group behavioural norms, they can serve as a powerful motivator and a call to action (*Business Communication for Success*, 2015, 18.3).

Understanding and Respecting Cultural Differences

Successfully communicating across cultures requires understanding and respecting how the culture or cultures you represent differ from those of the people you’re communicating with. While you may think that you should just follow the golden rule and treat everyone else the way you would like to be treated yourself, the more you travel to distant lands, the more you realize that cultural conventions and expectations for how people would like to be treated are relative. One culture will place a high value on a friendly handshake and eye contact, while you would come off as aggressive or awkward if you did those things well in another.

Though you can’t be expected to know every little custom across the planet, having a general sense of large-scale cultural differences and a willingness to learn the details as necessary can save you from embarrassing yourself or offending people of different cultures when interacting with them. An open approach to cultural differences can also impress your audiences in ways favourable to your reputation and the organization you represent.

With these goals in mind, let’s consider the following dimensions of cultural difference from the perspective of social anthropology:

- [Individualistic vs. Collectivist Cultures](#)
- [Explicit-rule vs. Implicit-rule Cultures](#)

- [Uncertainty-Accepting vs. Uncertainty-Rejecting Cultures](#)
- [Time Orientation](#)
- [Short-term vs. Long-term Orientation](#)
- [Masculine vs. Feminine Orientation](#)
- [Direct vs. Indirect Communication Cultures](#)
- [Materialism vs. Relationship-based Cultures](#)
- [Low-power vs. High-power Distance Cultures](#)

Individualistic vs. Collectivist Cultures

People in **individualistic cultures** value individual freedom and personal independence as reflected in the stories they tell themselves. The story of Superman co-created by Canadian-born artist Joe Shuster, for instance, reflects North American culture's fondness for the heroic individual overcoming foes and obstacles through inner strength. Canada in particular favours heroes with significant pro-social achievements such as hockey legend Wayne Gretzky, who racked up more regular-season career points in assists alone (1963) than the second best point scorer did in both goals and assists combined (Jaromir Jagr with 1921). Still, we celebrate the individual hockey hero in the Hall of Fame more than the teams that helped them set their records.

However, as a pluralistic society blending a wide diversity of cultures, especially with a large immigrant population from typically collectivist cultures, 21st-century Canada can't be so easily reduced to an individualistic culture. You may belong to some communities that express individualistic cultural values, while others place the focus on a collectivist viewpoint. Besides, individualism and collectivism aren't so much either/or cultural values as they are tendencies on a sliding scale.

According to Geert Hofstede (1982), **collectivist cultures**, such as many in Asia and South America, focus on the needs of the nation, community, family, or group of workers. Ownership and private property is one way to examine this difference. In some cultures, property is almost exclusively private while others tend toward community ownership. The collectively owned resource returns benefits to the community. Water, for example, has long been viewed as a community resource, much like air, though this is compromised as business and organizations purchase water rights and gain control over resources. Public lands such as parks are often considered public, and individual exploitation of them is restricted. Copper, a metal with a variety of industrial applications, is collectively owned in Chile with profits deposited in the general government fund. So how does someone raised in a culture that emphasizes the community interact with someone raised in a primarily individualistic culture? How could tensions be expressed and how might interactions be influenced by this point of divergence? The answer begins with understanding and respecting a different cultural orientation, and the practicalities involve mutual compromise.

Explicit-rule vs. Implicit-rule Cultures

Do you know the rules of your business or organization? Did you learn them from an employee manual or by observing the conduct of others? Your response may include both options, but not all cultures communicate rules in the same way. Having found quite a range of difference, Carley Dodd (1998) discusses how, in an explicit-rule culture where rules are clearly communicated so that everyone is aware of them, the guidelines and agenda for a meeting are announced prior to it. In an implicit-rule culture where rules are often understood and communicated nonverbally, there may be no such agenda. Everyone knows why they are gathered and what role each member plays, even though the expectations may not be clearly stated. Power, status, and behavioural expectations may all be understood, and to the person from outside this culture, it may prove a challenge to understand the rules of context.

Outsiders often communicate their “otherness” by not knowing where to stand, when to sit, or how to initiate a conversation if the rules are not clearly stated. While it may help to know that implicit-rule cultures are often more tolerant of deviation from the understood rules, the newcomer must learn by observing quietly after doing as much research as possible ahead of the event.

Uncertainty-Accepting vs. Uncertainty-Rejecting Cultures

When we meet each other for the first time, we often use what we have previously learned to understand our current context. We also do this to reduce our uncertainty. Some cultures, such as the North American and British generally, are highly tolerant of uncertainty, while others go to great lengths to reduce the element of surprise. Cultures in the Arab world, for example, are high in uncertainty avoidance; they tend to be resistant to change and reluctant to take risks. Whereas a Canadian business negotiator might enthusiastically agree to try a new procedure, the Egyptian counterpart would likely refuse to get involved until all the details are worked out.

Charles Berger and Richard Calabrese (1975) developed uncertainty reduction theory to examine this dynamic aspect of communication. Their seven axioms of uncertainty are as follows:

1. There is a high level of uncertainty at first contact in any interaction between unknown parties. As we get to know one another, our verbal communication increases and our uncertainty begins to decrease.
2. Following verbal communication, nonverbal communication increases, uncertainty continues to decrease, and more nonverbal displays of affiliation, like smiling and nodding one's head to indicate agreement, will start to be expressed.
3. To overcome high levels of uncertainty, we tend to increase our information-seeking behaviour, perhaps asking questions to gain more insight. As our understanding increases, uncertainty decreases, as does the information-seeking behaviour.

4. When experiencing high levels of uncertainty, the communication interaction is not as personal or intimate. As uncertainty is reduced, intimacy increases.
5. When experiencing high levels of uncertainty, communication will feature more reciprocity or displays of respect. As uncertainty decreases, reciprocity may diminish.
6. Differences between people increase uncertainty, while similarities decrease it.
7. Higher levels of uncertainty are associated with the diminished likability of the other person, while reductions in uncertainty are associated with liking the other person more.

Time Orientation

Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall (1990) state that **monochronic** time-oriented cultures consider one thing at a time, whereas polychronic time-oriented cultures schedule many things at one time, and time is considered in a more fluid sense. In monochronic time, interruptions are to be avoided, and everything has its own specific time. Even the multitasker from a monochronic culture will, for example, recognize the value of work first before play or personal time. Canada, the United States, Germany, and Switzerland are often renowned for being countries that value a monochronic time orientation. Such generalizations break down in specific regions, however, such as indigenous communities or coastal island cultures within Canada, which are more likely to be monochronic's opposite.

With business, family, and social life mixing more freely, **polychronic** time-oriented cultures tend to challenge the monochronic outsider. In Greece, Italy, Chile, and Saudi Arabia, for instance, business meetings may be scheduled at a certain time, but when they actually begin may be another story. If an invitation to dinner says it starts at 8pm, it might as well say 9pm. If you were to show up at 8pm, you might be the first person to arrive and find the hosts unready for you. Likewise, a polychronically oriented person who crosses into a monochronic culture for a 3pm meeting and arrives at 3:44pm will disappoint all who took pains to be there at 2:55pm for the 3pm start.

If you're oriented monochronically and suspect that you find yourself in a polychronic culture, always ask before the event; many people in such cultures will be used to outsiders' tendency to be punctual, even compulsive, about respecting established times for events. The skilled business communicator is aware of this difference and takes steps to anticipate it. The value of time in different cultures is expressed in many ways, and your understanding can help you communicate more effectively.

Short-term vs. Long-term Orientation

Do you want your reward right now or can you dedicate yourself to a long-term goal? You may

work in a culture whose people value immediate results and grow impatient when those results do not materialize. Geert Hofstede discusses this relationship of time orientation to a culture as a “time horizon,” and it underscores the perspective of the individual within a cultural context. Many countries in Asia, influenced by the teachings of Confucius, value a long-term orientation, whereas other continents such as North America have a more short-term approach to life and results. Indigenous cultures within North America, however, are known for holding a long-term orientation, as illustrated by the proverb attributed to the Iroquois that decisions require contemplation of their impact seven generations removed.

If you work within a culture that has a **short-term orientation**, you may need to place greater emphasis on reciprocating greetings, gifts, and rewards. For example, if you send a thank-you note the morning after being treated to a business dinner, your host will appreciate your promptness. While there may be a respect for tradition, there is also an emphasis on personal representation and honour as reflections of identity and integrity. Short-term oriented cultures also value personal stability and consistency, contributing to an overall sense of predictability and familiarity.

Long-term oriented cultures such as in Asia value delayed gratification, perseverance, thrift and frugality, and a social hierarchy based on age and status. A sense of shame for the family and community is also observed across generations. What an individual does reflects on the family and is carried by immediate and extended family members.

Masculine vs. Feminine Orientation

Characterizing a whole culture as masculine or feminine according to stereotypes associated with both can be a fool’s errand, especially in the West where gender politics is hotly contested between liberal and conservative factions. Conservatism generally clings to a traditional notion of a masculine society, whereas feminist-friendly liberalism generally embraces equal opportunity and even female power. Still, many cultures across the globe have long traditions of either patriarchal (male-dominant) or matriarchal (female-dominant) social orientations. Each carries with it a set of cultural expectations and norms for gender behaviour and gender roles across life, including business.

Hofstede et al. (2010) describe the masculine-feminine dichotomy not in terms of whether men or women hold the power in a given culture, but rather the extent to which that culture values certain traits that may be considered masculine or feminine. Thus, the assertive pole has been called “masculine” and the modest, caring pole “feminine.” The women in feminine countries have the same modest, caring values as the men; in the masculine countries they are somewhat assertive and competitive, but not as much as the men, so that these countries show a gap between men’s values and women’s values. (Hofstede et al., 2010)

We can observe this difference wherever people gather, how they interact, and how they dress. We can see it during business negotiations where it may make an important difference in the success of the organizations involved. Cultural expectations precede the interaction, so someone who doesn’t

match those expectations may experience tension. According to Hofstede et al., business in the United States has a masculine orientation where assertiveness and competition are highly valued. In other cultures such as Sweden, business values are more attuned to modesty (lack of self-promotion) and taking care of society's weaker members. On a sliding scale, Canada is somewhere between these poles. This range of difference is one aspect of intercultural communication that requires significant attention when the business communicator enters a new environment.

Direct vs. Indirect Communication

In North America, business correspondence is expected to be short and to the point. "What can I do for you?" is a common question when an employee receives a call from a stranger. It is an accepted way of asking the caller to skip or minimize pleasantries and get on with their business. In indirect cultures, such as in Latin America, business conversations may start with discussions of the weather, family, or topics other than the business at hand as the partners get a sense of each other long before the main topic is raised. Again, the skilled business communicator researches the new environment before entering it because an avoidable social faux pas, or error, can have a significant impact.

Materialism vs. Relationship-based Cultures

Does the car someone drives say something about them? You may consider that many people across the planet do not own a vehicle and that a car or truck is a statement of wealth. Beyond that, however, do the make and model reflect the driver's personality? If you represent a materialistic culture, you may be inclined to say Yes. If you're from a culture that values relationships rather than material objects, you may say No or focus on how the vehicle serves the family. From rocks that display beauty and wealth (jewelry) to what you eat (will it be a vegan option or prime rib?), we express our values and cultural differences with our purchase decisions.

Members of a materialistic culture place emphasis on external goods and services as a representation of self, power, and social rank. If you see a plate of food and consider the labour required to harvest the grain, butcher the animal, and cook the meal, you are focusing more on the relationships involved with its production than the foods themselves. Caviar may be a luxury, and it may communicate your ability to acquire and offer a delicacy, but it also represents the efforts of those who harvested it. Cultures differ in how they view material objects and their relationship to them, and some value people and relationships more than the objects themselves. The United States and Japan are often noted as materialistic cultures, while many Scandinavian nations feature cultures that place more emphasis on relationships. Again, Canada might be somewhere between these ends of the scale.

Low-power vs. High-power Distance Cultures

How comfortable are you with critiquing your boss's decisions? If you are from a low-power distance culture, your answer might be "no problem." In low-power distance cultures, according to Hofstede, people relate to one another more as equals and less as a reflection of dominant or subordinate roles, regardless of their actual formal roles as employee and manager, for example.

In a high-power distance culture, you'd probably be much less likely to challenge the decision, to provide an alternative, or to give input to someone superior to you in the social hierarchy. When working with people from a high-power distance culture, you may need to take extra care to offer feedback and even wait to approach them on their terms because their cultural framework may discourage such a casual attitude to authority. They may have learned that less powerful people must accept decisions without comment, even if those people have a concern or know of a significant problem vital to the operation. Unless you're sensitive to cultural orientation and power distance, you may either risk giving offense or be responsible for some major miscommunication (*Business Communication for Success*, 2015, 18.4).



Consider This

Culture Competency

As a college student, you are likely to find yourself in diverse classrooms, organizations, and – eventually – workplaces. It is important to prepare yourself to be able to adapt to diverse environments.

Cultural competency can be defined as the ability to recognize and adapt to cultural differences and similarities. It involves "(a) the cultivation of deep cultural self-awareness and understanding (i.e., how one's own beliefs, values, perceptions, interpretations, judgments, and behaviors are influenced by one's cultural community or communities) and (b) increased cultural other-understanding (i.e., comprehension of the different ways people from other cultural groups make sense of and respond to the presence of cultural differences)" (Bennett, 2015).

In other words, cultural competency requires you to be aware of your own cultural practices, values, and experiences, and to be able to read, interpret, and respond to those of others. Such awareness will help you successfully navigate the cultural differences you will encounter in diverse environments. Cultural

competency is critical to working and building relationships with people from different cultures; it is so critical, in fact, that it is now one of the most highly desired skills in the modern workforce

Engaging Culturally Mindful Interactions

Admittedly, being culturally competent takes a lot of work and a lot of practice. Even if you're not completely culturally competent, you can engage with people from other cultures in a mindful way. Shauna Shapiro and Linda Carlson (2017) introduced us to the three-component model of mindfulness: attention, intention, and attitude.

First, when it comes to engaging with people from other cultures, we need to be fully in the moment and not think about previous interactions with people from a culture or possible future interactions with people from a culture. Instead, it's essential to focus on the person you are interacting with. You also need to be aware of your stereotypes and prejudices that you may have of people from a different culture. Don't try to find evidence to support or negate these stereotypes or prejudices. If you focus on evidence-finding, you're just trying to satisfy your thoughts and feelings and not mindfully engaging with this other person. Also, if you find that your mind is shifting, recognize the shift and allow yourself to re-center on your interaction with the other person.

Second, go into an intercultural interaction knowing your intention. If your goal is to learn more about that person's culture, that's a great intention. However, that may not be the only intention we have when interacting with someone from another culture. For example, you may be interacting with someone from another culture because you're trying to sell them a product you represent. If your main intention is sales, then be aware of your intention and don't try to deceive yourself into thinking it's something more altruistic.

Lastly, go into all intercultural interactions with the right attitude. Remember, the goal of being mindful is to be open, kind, and curious. Although we often discuss mindful in terms of how we can be open, kind, and curious with ourselves, it's also important to extend that same framework when we are interacting with people from other cultures. So much of mindful relationships is embodying the right attitude during our interactions with others.

Overall, the goal of mindful intercultural interactions is to be present in the moment in a nonjudgmental way. When you face judgments, recognize them, and ask yourself where they have come from. Interrogate those judgments. At the same time, don't judge yourself for having these ideas. If we have stereotypes about another a specific culture, it's important to recognize those stereotypes, call them out, understand where they came from in the first place, and examine them for factualness.



Self-assessments

See Appendix B – [Assessment: Cultural Intelligence](#)



Exercises

1. List all of the distinct cultures you identify with in order of the extent of how much sway you feel they hold over you. For each one, describe the rites of initiation you experienced upon entering that culture, as well as some of the values and principles associated with it.
2. Research and write a short report on a culture very different from your own. It may be one on another continent or one closer to home, yet still so distinct that you don't fully understand yet why people in that culture do the things they do. Make it your mission to understand why. What cultural characteristics distinguish it from your own (use on cultural differences as our guide)? Despite these differences, what cultural characteristics do you share in common?
3. Consider a few basic types of nonverbal interaction:
 1. Maintaining direct eye contact
 2. Shaking hands
 3. Holding hands
4. What cultures encourage these kinds of contact between people who have just met? What cultures discourage them and why? (Identify particular countries or communities near your own.) How do gender differences affect these customs in the countries or communities you covered?

References

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11.5 Key Takeaways, Knowledge Check and Key Terms



Key Takeaways

- **In this chapter, we learned that there are many sources of human diversity.** Some of these characteristics are surface-level and superficial, while other differences are deeper or hidden.
- **Canada is often celebrated for its policies on equity and multiculturalism.** However, within Canadian society there are still ongoing systems of privilege and oppression that impact employment.
- **Biases and stereotypes based on surface-level characteristics** can lead to discrimination in the workplace.
- **It is illegal to discriminate in Ontario workplaces on the basis of** race, ethnicity, nationality, sex, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or ability.
- **All communication is intercultural communication,** which requires an open attitude to understanding and accommodating cultural differences in the workplace to make business connections.
- **Using mindfulness** (attention, intention, and attitude) we can become more culturally competent communicators.



Knowledge Check

Review your understanding of this chapter's key concepts by taking the interactive quiz below.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationpsychology/?p=2398#h5p-3>



Key Terms

Key terms in this chapter include:

- **Diversity**
- **Surface-level diversity**
- **Deep-level diversity**
- **Hidden diversity**
- **Bias**
- **Stereotypes**
- **Discrimination**
- **Race**
- **Ethnicity**

- Nationality
- Sex
- Gender
- Intersex
- Cisgender (gender identity)
- Transgender (gender identity)
- Masculine (gender expression)
- Feminine (gender expression)
- Transphobia
- Androgenous
- Sexual orientation
- Religion
- Ability
- Similarity-attraction phenomenon
- Faultline
- Intercultural communication
- Ethnocentric
- Individualistic cultures
- Collectivist cultures
- Monochronic
- Polychronic
- Short-term orientation
- Long-term orientation
- Masculine orientation
- Feminine orientation
- Direct vs indirect communication
- Materialism
- Low-power distance
- High-power distance
- Culture competency

CHAPTER 12: PROFESSIONALISM, ETHICS, AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



Learning Objectives

In this chapter, we will:

1. **Define** the terms profession and professionalism.
2. **Understand** the importance of respecting one's coworkers.
3. **Explain** the concept of personal responsibility in the workplace.
4. **Define** the term "ethics".
5. **Identify** levels of ethics within organizations.
6. **Understand** sources of individual and organizational ethics.
7. **Describe** different methods of ethical decision-making.
8. **Explain** and give examples of the levels of social responsibility for organizations and individuals.

We spend more time with the people we work with than the people we live with during the five-day workweek. So, it shouldn't be too surprising that our workplace relationships tend to be very important to our overall quality of life. In this chapter, we're going to explore some areas directly related to workplace interpersonal relationships, including professionalism and ethics. We will also look at how our ethical behaviour and the behaviours of the organizations that we work in can be placed in terms of responsibility to society.

12.1 Professionalism

What is Professionalism?

A **profession** is an occupation that involves mastery of complex knowledge and skills through prolonged training, education, or practical experience. Becoming a member of a specific profession doesn't happen overnight. Whether you seek to be a public relations expert, lawyer, doctor, teacher, welder, electrician, and so on, each profession involves that interested parties invest themselves in learning to become a professional or a member of a profession who earns their living through specified expert activity. It's much easier to define the terms "profession" and "professional" than it is to define the term "professionalism" because each profession will have its take on what it means to be a professional within a given field. According to the United States Department of Labor (2012), professionalism "does not mean wearing a suit or carrying a briefcase; rather, it means conducting oneself with responsibility, integrity, accountability, and excellence. It means communicating effectively and appropriately and always finding a way to be productive." The U.S. Department of Labor's book *Skills to Pay the Bills: Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success* (2012, p. 114) goes on to note:

Professionalism isn't one thing; it's a combination of qualities. A professional employee arrives on time for work and manages time effectively. Professional workers take responsibility for their own behavior and work effectively with others. High quality work standards, honesty, and integrity are also part of the package. Professional employees look clean and neat and dress appropriately for the job. Communicating effectively and appropriately for the workplace is also an essential part of professionalism.

The Requirements of Professionalism

As you can see here, professionalism isn't a single "thing" that can be labeled. Instead, professionalism involves the aims and behaviors that demonstrate an individual's level of competence expected by a professional within a given profession. By the word "aims," we mean that someone who exhibits professionalism is guided by a set of goals in a professional setting. Whether the aim is to complete a project on time or help ensure higher quarterly incomes for their organization, professionalism involves striving to help one's organization achieve specific goals. By "behaviors," we mean specific ways of behaving and communicating within an organizational environment. Some common behaviors can include acting ethically (we'll discuss ethics in the next section of this chapter), respecting others, taking personal/professional responsibility, and managing our online presence. Let's look at each of these separately.

Respect for Others

Our second category related to professionalism is respecting others. Sadly, many people exist in the modern workplace that need a refresher in common courtesy. From workplace bullying to sexual harassment, many people simply do not always treat people with dignity and respect in the workplace. So, what do we mean by treating someone with respect? There are a lot of behaviors one can engage in that are respectful if you're interacting with a coworker or interacting with leaders or followers.

Here's a list we created of respectful behaviors for workplace interactions:

- Be courteous, polite, and kind to everyone.
- Do not criticize or nitpick at little inconsequential things.
- Do not engage in patronizing or demeaning behaviors.
- Don't engage in physically hostile body language.
- Don't roll your eyes when your coworkers are talking.
- Don't use an aggressive tone of voice when talking with coworkers.
- Encourage coworkers to express opinions and ideas.
- Encourage your coworkers to demonstrate respect to each other as well.
- Listen to your coworkers openly without expressing judgment before they've finished speaking.
- Listen to your coworkers without cutting them off or speaking over them.
- Make sure you treat all of your coworkers fairly and equally.
- Make sure your facial expressions are appropriate and not aggressive.
- Never engage in verbally aggressive behavior: insults, name-calling, rumor mongering, disparaging, and putting people or their ideas down.
- Praise your coworkers more often than you criticize them. Point out when they're doing great things, not just when they're doing "wrong" things.
- Provide an equal opportunity for all coworkers to provide insight and input during meetings.
- Treat people the same regardless of age, gender, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, etc....
- When expressing judgment, focus on criticizing ideas, and not the person.



Personal Responsibility

Let's face it; we all make mistakes. Making mistakes is a part of life. **Personal responsibility** refers to an individual's willingness to be accountable for what they feel, think, and behave. Whether we're talking about our attitudes, our thought processes, or physical / communicative behaviors, personal responsibility is simply realizing that we are in the driver's seat and not blaming others for our current circumstances. Now, this is not to say that there are never external factors that impede our success. Of course, there are. This is not to say that certain people have a leg-up on life because

of a privileged background, of course, some people have. However, personal responsibility involves differentiating between those things we can control and those things that are outside of our control. For example, I may not be able to control a coworker who decides to yell at me, but I can control how I feel about that coworker, how I think about that coworker, and how I choose to respond to that coworker.

Here are some ways that you can take personal responsibility in your own life (or in the workplace):

- Acknowledge that you are responsible for your choices in the workplace.
- Acknowledge that you are responsible for how you feel at work.
- Acknowledge that you are responsible for your behaviors at work.
- Accept that your choices are yours alone, so you can't blame someone else for them.
- Accept that your sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem are yours.
- Accept that you can control your stress and feelings of burnout.
- Decide to invest in your self-improvement.
- Decide to take control of your attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors.
- Decide on specific professional goals and make an effort and commitment to accomplish those goals.



Although you may have the ability to take responsibility for your feelings, thoughts, and behaviors, not everyone in the workplace will do the same. Most of us will come in contact with coworkers who do not take personal responsibility. Dealing with coworkers who have a million and one excuses can be frustrating and demoralizing.

Excuse-making occurs any time an individual attempts to shift the blame for an individual's behavior from reasons more central to the individual to sources outside of their control in the attempt to make themselves look better and more in control (Snyder & Higgins, 1988). For example, an individual may explain their tardiness to work by talking about how horrible the traffic was on the way to work instead of admitting that they slept in late and left the house late. People make excuses because they fear that revealing the truth would make them look bad or out of control. In this example, waking up late and leaving the house late is the fault of the individual, but they blame the traffic to make themselves look better and in control even though they were late.

Excuse-making happens in every facet of life, but excuse-making in the corporate world can be highly problematic. For example, research has shown that when front-line service providers engage in excuse-making, they are more likely to lose return customers as a result (Hill et al., 1992; Hill & Baer, 1994). In one study, when salespeople attempted to excuse their lack of ethical judgment on their customer's lack of ethics, supervisors tended to punish more severely those who engaged in excuse-making than those who had not (Bellizzi & Norvell, 1991). Of course, even an individual's peers can become a little annoyed (or downright disgusted) by a colleague who always has a handy

excuse for their behavior. For this reason, Amy Nordam recommends using the ERROR method when handling a situation where your behavior was problematic: Empathy, Responsibility, Reason, Offer Reassurance (Nordrum, 2014).

Here is an example Nordrum uses to illustrate the ERROR method:

I hate that you [burden placed on person] because of me (Empathy). I should have thought things out better (Responsibility), but I got caught up in [reason for behavior] (Reason). Next time I'll [preventative action] (Offer Reassurance).



As you can see, the critical parts of this response involve validating the other person, taking responsibility, and providing an explanation for how you'll behave in the future to avoid similar problems.

Online Identity Management

Our identity management is an important part of our professionalism. Our choice of attire and communication (verbal and non-verbal) are just some examples of how we can create a positive impression in the workplace. Another important, and often overlooked, aspect of our identity management is our digital footprint.

Have you ever given someone's page a "once-over" before you send or accept a friend request just to make sure that the content displayed is giving off the desired impression? The personal and social nature of online social media platforms also creates an openness that isn't necessarily part of our offline social reality. Although some people try to address this problem by creating more than one account or adjusting the privacy settings, social media can blur the lines between personal and professional.

Personal media devices bring with them a sense of constant connectivity that makes us "reachable" nearly all the time and can be comforting or anxiety inducing. Devices such as smartphones and computers, and platforms such as e-mail, Facebook, and the web, are within an arm's reach of many people. While this can be convenient and make things more efficient in some cases, it can also create a dependence that we might not be aware of until those connections are broken or become unreliable. You don't have to look too far to see people buried in their smartphones, tablets, or laptops all around. The constant connection offered by laptops and smartphones increases the expectation that people will continue working from home or while on vacation. Recently, Bill 27, the Working for Workers Act was passed in Ontario (Government of Ontario, 2021). One of the primary purposes of this legislation is to provide employees with the right to disconnect from workplace communication during non-working hours.

At the same time, however, people may use new media for non-work-related purposes while at work, which may help even out the work/life balance. **Cyberslacking** which is the non-work-related use of social media while on the job, is seen as a problem in many organizations and workplaces. However, some research shows that occasional use of technology for personal reasons while at work can have positive effects, as it may relieve boredom, help reduce stress, or lead to greater job satisfaction (Vitak et al., 2011).

A key part of interpersonal communication is impression management, and some forms of new media allow us more tools for presenting ourselves than others. Social networking sites (SNSs) in many ways are platforms for self-presentation. Even more than blogs, web pages, and smartphones, the environment on an SNS like Facebook or Twitter facilitates self-disclosure in a directed way and allows others who have access to our profile to see our other “friends.” This convergence of different groups of people (close friends, family, acquaintances, friends of friends, colleagues, and strangers) can present challenges for self-presentation.

We should be aware that people form impressions of us based not just on what we post on our profiles but also on our friends and the content that they post on our profiles. In short, as in our offline lives, we are judged online by the company we keep (Walther et al., 2008). The information on our social media profiles is also often archived, meaning there is a record the likes of which doesn’t exist in offline interactions. Self-disclosure is a fundamental building block of interpersonal relationships, and new media make self-disclosures easier for many people because of the lack of immediacy, meaning the fact that a message is sent through electronic means arouses less anxiety or inhibition than would a face-to-face exchange. It can also lead to feeling too safe and disclosing information that you wouldn’t usually share in-person. The “Getting Competent” feature box that discusses some tips on how to competently use social media.



Consider This

Using Social Media Competently

We all have a growing log of personal information stored on the Internet, and some of it is under our control and some of it isn't. We also have increasingly diverse social networks that require us to be cognizant of the information we make available and how we present ourselves. While we can't control

all the information about ourselves online or the impressions people form, we can more competently engage with social media so that we are getting the most out of it in both personal and professional contexts.

A quick search on Google for “social media dos and don’ts” will yield around 100,000 results, which shows that there’s no shortage of advice about how to competently use social media. I’ll offer some of the most important dos and don’ts that I found that relate to communication (Doyle, 2012). Feel free to do your own research on specific areas of concern, but consider the following important aspects:

- **Be consistent.** Given that most people have multiple social media accounts, it’s important to have some degree of consistency. At least at the top level of your profile (the part that isn’t limited by privacy settings), include information that you don’t mind anyone seeing.
- **Know what’s out there.** Since the top level of many social media sites are visible in Google search results, you should monitor how these appear to others by regularly (about once a month) doing a Google search using various iterations of your name. Putting your name in quotation marks will help target your results. Make sure you’re logged out of all your accounts and then click on the various results to see what others can see.
- **Think before you post.** Software that enable people to take “screen shots” or download videos and tools that archive web pages can be used without our knowledge to create records of what you post. While it is still a good idea to go through your online content and “clean up” materials that may form unfavorable impressions, it is even a better idea to not put that information out there in the first place. Posting something about how you hate school or your job or a specific person may be done in the heat of the moment and forgotten, but a potential employer might find that information and form a negative impression even if it’s months or years old.
- **Be familiar with privacy settings.** If you are trying to expand your social network, it may be counterproductive to put your Facebook or Twitter account on “lockdown,” but it is beneficial to know what levels of control you have and to take advantage of them. For example, I have a “Limited Profile” list on Facebook to which I assign new contacts or people with whom I am not very close. You can also create groups of contacts on various social media sites so that only certain people see certain information.
- **Be a gatekeeper for your network.** Do not accept friend requests or followers that you do not know. Not only could these requests be sent from “bots” that might skim your personal info or monitor your activity; they could be from people that might make you look bad. Remember, we learned earlier that people form impressions based on those with whom we are connected. You can always send a private message to someone asking how he or she knows you or do some research by Googling his or her name or username.
 - Identify information that you might want to limit for each of the following audiences: friends, family, and employers.
 - Google your name (remember to use multiple forms and to put them in quotation marks). Do the same with any usernames that are associated with your name (e.g., you can Google your Twitter handle or an e-mail address). What information came up? Were you surprised by anything?
 - What strategies can you use to help manage the impressions you form on social media?



Exercises

1. Think of a time in an organization where you witnessed unethical organizational communication. Which of Redding's typology did you witness? Did you do anything about the unethical organizational communication? Why?
2. Look at the list of respectful behaviors for workplace interactions. How would you react if others violated these respectful behaviors towards you as a coworker? Have you ever been disrespectful in your communication towards coworkers? Why?
3. Why do you think it's essential to take personal responsibility and avoid excusing making in the workplace? Have you ever found yourself making excuses? Why?
4. Do you find the constant connectivity that comes with personal media overstimulating or comforting?
5. What opportunities and challenges do you face as you try to use social media for personal and professional purposes?

References

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12.2 Ethics

Ethics

Every year there are lapses in ethical judgment by organizations and organizational members. Sadly, these ethical lapses are still frequent in corporate Canada, and they often come with huge lawsuit settlements and/or jail time.

Examples of Ethical Situations



Have you found yourself having to make any of these ethical choices within the last few weeks?

- Cheating on exams
- Downloading music and movies from share sites
- Plagiarizing
- Breaking trust
- Exaggerating experience on a resume
- Using personal websites during company or class time
- Taking office supplies home
- Taking credit for another's work
- Gossiping
- Lying on time cards
- Conflicts of interest
- Knowingly accepting too much change
- Calling in sick when you aren't really sick
- Discriminating against people
- Taking care of personal business on company or class time
- Stretching the truth about a product's capabilities to make the sale
- Divulging private company information

The word "ethics" actually is derived from the Greek word *ethos*, which means the nature or disposition of a culture (OED, 1963). From this perspective, ethics then involves the moral center of a culture that governs behavior. Without getting too deep, let's just say that philosophers debate the very nature of ethics, and they have described a wide range of different philosophical perspectives on what constitutes ethics. For our purposes, **ethics** is the judgmental attachment to whether something is good, right, or just.

Levels of Ethics

While there may appear to be a difference in ethics between individuals and the organization, often individuals' ethics are shown through the ethics of an organization, since individuals are the ones who set the ethics to begin with (Brown, 2010). In other words, while we can discuss organizational ethics, remember that individuals are the ones who determine organizational ethics, which ties the conversation of organizational ethics into personal ethics as well. If an organization can create an ethically oriented culture, it is more likely to hire people who behave ethically (Sims, 1991).

There are four main levels of ethical levels within organizations (Roa Rama, 2009). The first level is **societal issues**. These are the top-level issues relating to the world as a whole, which deal with questions such as the morality of child labor worldwide. Deeper-level societal issues might include the role (if any) of capitalism in poverty, for example. Most companies do not operate at this level of ethics, although some companies, such as Tom's Shoes, feel it is their responsibility to ensure everyone has shoes to wear. As a result, their "one for one" program gives one pair of shoes to someone in need for every pair of shoes purchased. Concern for the environment, for example, would be another way a company can focus on societal-level issues. Many companies take a stand on societal ethics in part for marketing, but also in part because of the ethics the organization creates due to the care and concern for individuals.

Our second level of ethics is **stakeholder's issues**. A stakeholder is anyone affected by a company's actions. In this level, businesses must deal with policies that affect their customers, employees, suppliers, and people within the community. For example, this level might deal with fairness in wages for employees or notification of the potential dangers of a company's product.

The third level is the **internal policy issue level** of ethics. In this level, the concern is internal relationships between a company and employees. Fairness in management, pay, and employee participation would all be considered ethical internal policy issues. If we work in management at some point in our careers, this is certainly an area we will have extensive control over. Creation of policies that relate to the treatment of employees relates to human relations—and retention of those employees through fair treatment. It is in the organization's best interests to create policies around internal policies that benefit the company, as well as the individuals working for them.

The last level of ethical issues is **personal issues**. These deal with how we treat others within our organization. For example, gossiping at work or taking credit for another's work would be considered personal issues. As an employee of an organization, we may not have as much control over societal and stakeholder issues, but certainly we have control over the personal issues level of ethics. This includes "doing the right thing." Doing the right thing affects our human relations in that if we are shown to be trustworthy when making ethical decisions, it is more likely we can be promoted, or at the very least, earn respect from our colleagues. Without this respect, our human relations with coworkers can be impacted negatively.

One of the biggest ethical challenges in the workplace is when our company's ethics do not meet our own personal ethics. For example, suppose you believe strongly that child labor should not be

used to produce clothing. You find out, however, that your company uses child labour to produce 10 percent of your products. In this case, your personal values do not meet the societal and stakeholder values you find important. This kind of difference in values can create challenges working in a particular organization. When choosing the company or business we work for, it is important to make sure there is a match between our personal values and the values within the organization.

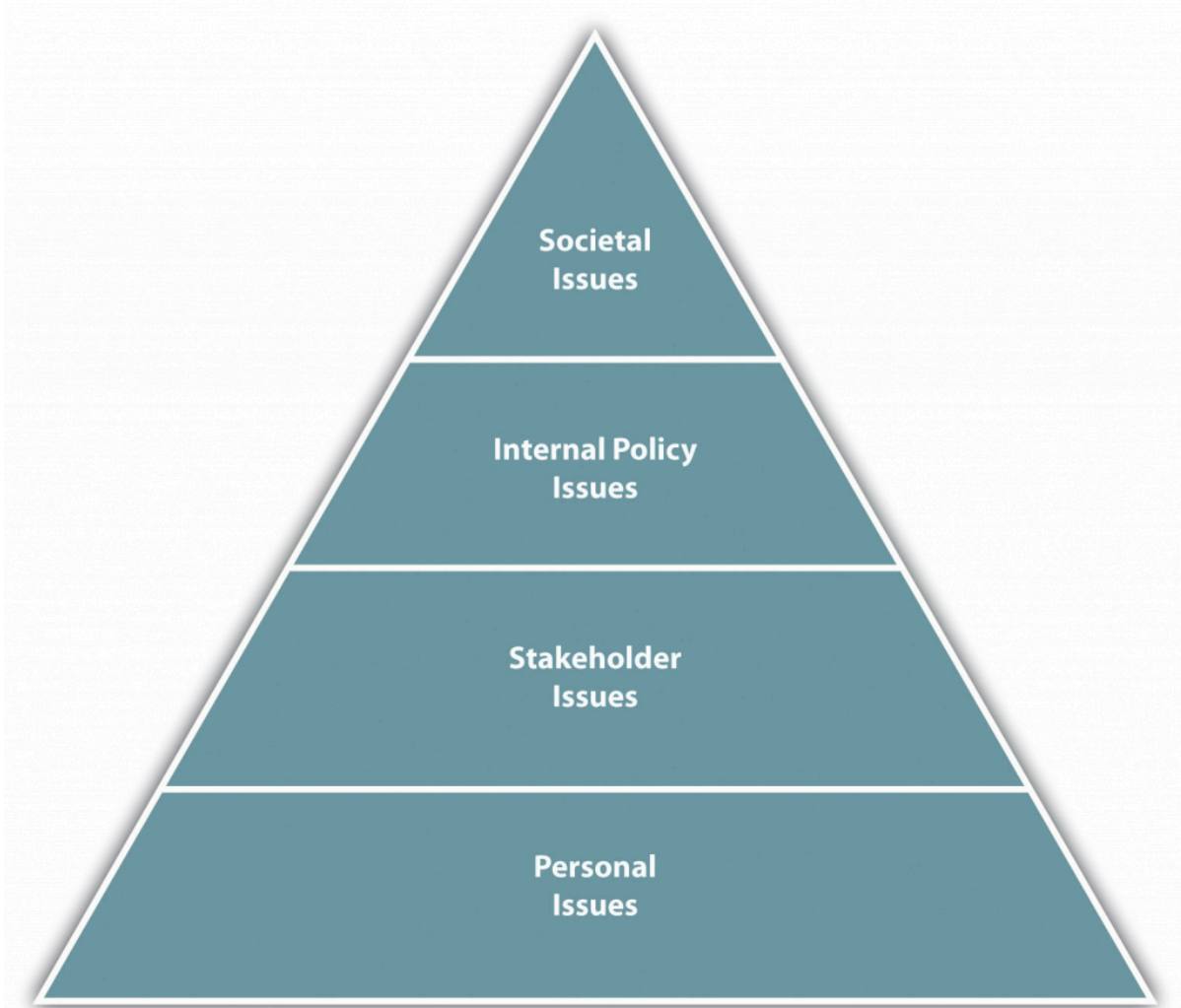


Figure 12.1 The Four Levels of Ethics in Organizations. Image: Saylor Academy. [Human Relations, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Color altered from original. [click to enlarge]

Sources of Personal Ethics

People are not born with a set of values. The values are developed during the aging process. Our values may be influenced by the following:

1. **Religion.** Religion has an influence over what is considered right and wrong. Religion can be the guiding force for many people when creating their ethical framework.

2. **Culture.** Every culture has a societal set of values. Our culture tells us what is good, right, and moral. In some cultures, bribery or “gifts” is the normal way of doing business.
3. **Media.** Advertising shows us what our values “should” be.
4. **Models.** Our parents, siblings, mentors, coaches, and others can affect our ethics today and later in life. The way we see them behave and the things they say affect our values.
5. **Attitudes.** Our attitudes, similar to values, start developing at a young age. As a result, our impression, likes, and dislikes affect ethics, too. For example, someone who spends a lot of time outdoors may feel a connection to the environment and try to purchase environmentally friendly products.
6. **Experiences.** Our values can change over time depending on the experiences we have. For example, if we are bullied by our boss at work, our opinion might change on the right way to treat people when we become managers.

Our personality affects our values, too. For example, we discussed type A personalities and their concern for time. Because of this personality trait, the type A person may value using their time wisely. Aspects of emotional intelligence, which relate to ethics, include self-management, social awareness, and empathy. Lacking social awareness and empathy when it comes to ethics can have disastrous effects.

Sources of Company Ethics

Since we know that everyone’s upbringing is different and may have had different models, religion, attitudes, and experiences, companies create policies and standards to ensure employees and managers understand the expected ethics. These sources of ethics can be based on the levels of ethics, which we discussed earlier. Understanding our own ethics and company ethics can apply to our emotional intelligence skills in the form of self-management and managing our relationships with others. Being ethical allows us to have a better relationship with our supervisors and organizations.

For example, companies create values statements, which explain their values and are tied to company ethics. A **values statement** is the organization’s guiding principles, those things that the company finds important. A company publicizes its values statements but often an internal code of conduct is put into place in order to ensure employees follow company values set forth and advertised to the public.

The **code of conduct** is a guideline for dealing with ethics in the organization. The code of conduct can outline many things, and often companies offer training in one or more of these areas:



- Sexual harassment policy
- Workplace violence
- Employee privacy
- Misconduct off the job
- Conflicts of interest
- Insider trading
- Use of company equipment
- Company information nondisclosures
- Expectations for customer relationships and suppliers
- Policy on accepting or giving gifts to customers or clients
- Bribes
- Relationships with competition

Some companies have 1-800 numbers, run by outside vendors, that allow employees to anonymously inform about ethics violations within the company. Someone who informs law enforcement of ethical or illegal violations is called a **whistleblower**. Like a person, a company can have ethics and values that should be the cornerstone of any successful person. Understanding where our ethics come from is a good introduction into how we can make good personal and company ethical decisions. Ethical decision making ties into human relations through emotional intelligence skills, specifically, self-management and relationship management. The ability to manage our ethical decision-making processes can help us make better decisions, and better decisions result in higher productivity and improved human relations.

Ethical Decision-making

Now that we have working knowledge of ethics, it is important to discuss some of the models we can use to make ethical decisions. Understanding these models can assist us in developing our self-management skills and relationship management skills. These models will give you the tools to make good decisions, which will likely result in better human relations within your organization.

Note there are literally hundreds of models, but most are similar to the ones we will discuss. Most people use a combination of several models, which might be the best way to be thorough with ethical decision making. In addition, often we find ethical decisions to be quick. For example, if I am given too much change at the grocery store, I may have only a few seconds to correct the situation. In this case, our values and morals come into play to help us make this decision, since the decision making needs to happen fast.

Philosopher's Approach

Philosophers and ethicists believe in a few ethical standards, which can guide ethical decision making. First, the **utilitarian approach** says that when choosing one ethical action over another, we should select the one that does the most good and least harm. For example, if the cashier at the grocery store gives me too much change, I may ask myself, if I keep the change, what harm is caused? If I keep it, is any good created? Perhaps the good created is that I am not able to pay back my friend whom I owe money to, but the harm would be that the cashier could lose his job. In other words, the utilitarian approach recognizes that some good and some harm can come out of every situation and looks at balancing the two.

In the **rights approach**, we look at how our actions will affect the rights of those around us. So rather than looking at good versus harm as in the utilitarian approach, we are looking at individuals and their rights to make our decision. For example, if I am given too much change at the grocery store, I might consider the rights of the corporation, the rights of the cashier to be paid for something I purchased, and the right of me personally to keep the change because it was their mistake.

The **common good approach** says that when making ethical decisions, we should try to benefit the community as a whole. For example, if we accepted the extra change in our last example but donated to a local park cleanup, this might be considered OK because we are focused on the good of the community, as opposed to the rights of just one or two people.

The **virtue approach** asks the question, "What kind of person will I be if I choose this action?" In other words, the virtue approach to ethics looks at desirable qualities and says we should act to obtain our highest potential. In our grocery store example, if given too much change, someone might think, "If I take this extra change, this might make me a dishonest person—which I don't want to be."

The imperfections in these approaches are threefold (Santa Clara University, n.d.):

- Not everyone will necessarily agree on what is harm versus good.
- Not everyone agrees on the same set of human rights.
- We may not agree on what a common good means.

Because of these imperfections, it is recommended to combine several approaches discussed in this section when making ethical decisions. We can also consider another, more concrete model of ethical decision-making such as the 12 Questions Model or the 8 steps by Corey et al. (1998). Let's discuss both of these models in more detail.

The Twelve Questions Model

Laura Nash, an ethics researcher, created the Twelve Questions Model as a simple approach to ethical decision making (Nash, 1981). In her model, she suggests asking yourself questions to determine if you are making the right ethical decision. This model asks people to reframe their

perspective on ethical decision making, which can be helpful in looking at ethical choices from all angles. Her model consists of the following questions: Have you defined the problem accurately?

1. How would you define the problem if you stood on the other side of the fence?
2. How did this situation occur in the first place?
3. To whom and what do you give your loyalties as a person and as a member of the company?
4. What is your intention in making this decision?
5. How does this intention compare with the likely results?
6. Whom could your decision or action injure?
7. Can you engage the affected parties in a discussion of the problem before you make your decision?
8. Are you confident that your position will be as valid over a long period of time as it seems now?
9. Could you disclose without qualms your decision or action to your boss, your family, or society as a whole?
10. What is the symbolic potential of your action if understood? If misunderstood?
11. Under what conditions would you allow exceptions to your stand?

Consider the situation of Catha and her decision to take home a printer cartridge from work, despite the company policy against taking any office supplies home. She might go through the following process, using the Twelve Questions Model:

1. My problem is that I cannot afford to buy printer ink, and I have the same printer at home. Since I do some work at home, it seems fair that I can take home the printer ink.
2. If I am allowed to take this ink home, others may feel the same, and that means the company is spending a lot of money on printer ink for people's home use.
3. It has occurred due to the fact I have so much work that I need to take some of it home, and often I need to print at home.
4. I am loyal to the company.
5. My intention is to use the ink for work purposes only.
6. If I take home this ink, my intention may show I am disloyal to the company and do not respect company policies.
7. The decision could injure my company and myself, in that if I get caught, I may get in trouble. This could result in loss of respect for me at work.
8. Yes, I could engage my boss and ask her to make an exception to the company policy, since I am doing so much work at home.
9. No, I am not confident of this. For example, if I am promoted at work, I may have to enforce this rule at some point. It would be difficult to enforce if I personally have broken the rule before.
10. I would not feel comfortable doing it and letting my company and boss know after the fact.
11. The symbolic action could be questionable loyalty to the company and respect of company policies.
12. An exception might be ok if I ask permission first. If I am not given permission, I can work with my supervisor to find a way to get my work done without having a printer cartridge at home.

As you can see from the process, Catha came to her own conclusion by answering the questions involved in this model. The purpose of the model is to think through the situation from all sides to make sure the right decision is being made.

As you can see in this model, first an analysis of the problem itself is important. Determining your true intention when making this decision is an important factor in making ethical decisions. In other words, what do you hope to accomplish and who can it hurt or harm? The ability to talk with affected parties upfront is telling. If you were unwilling to talk with the affected parties, there is a chance (because you want it kept secret) that it could be the wrong ethical decision. Also, looking at your actions from other people's perspectives is a core of this model.



Consider This

8 Steps to Ethical Decision Making

There are many models that provide several steps to the decision-making process. One such model was created in the late 1990s for the counseling profession but can apply to nearly every profession from health care to business (Corey et al., 1998). In this model, the authors propose eight steps to the decision-making process:

1. **Step 1: Identify the problem.** Sometimes just realizing a particular situation is ethical can be the important first step. Occasionally in our organizations, we may feel that it's just the "way of doing business" and not think to question the ethical nature.
2. **Step 2: Identify the potential issues involved.** Who could get hurt? What are the issues that could negatively impact people and/or the company? What is the worst-case scenario if we choose to do nothing?
3. **Step 3: Review relevant ethical guidelines.** Does the organization have policies and procedures in place to handle this situation? For example, if a client gives you a gift, there may be a rule in place as to whether you can accept gifts and if so, the value limit of the gift you can accept.
4. **Step 4: Know relevant laws and regulations.** If the company doesn't necessarily have a rule against it, could it be looked at as illegal?
5. **Step 5: Obtain consultation.** Seek support from supervisors, coworkers, friends, and family, and especially seek advice from people who you feel are moral and ethical.
6. **Step 6: Consider possible and probable courses of action.** What are all of the possible solutions

for solving the problem? Brainstorm a list of solutions—all solutions are options during this phase.

7. **Step 7: List the consequences of the probable courses of action.** What are both the positive and negative benefits of each proposed solution? Who can the decision affect?
8. **Step 8: Decide on what appears to be the best course of action.** With the facts we have and the analysis done, choosing the best course of action is the final step. There may not always be a “perfect” solution, but the best solution is the one that seems to create the most good and the least harm.

Ethics and Communication at Work

From a communication perspective, there are also ethical issues that you should be aware of. W. Charles Redding (1996), the father of organizational communication, broke down unethical organizational communication into six specific categories.

Table 12.1 Redding's Typology of Unethical Communication

An organizational communication act is unethical if it is...

coercive

Such organizational communication unethically...

abuses power or authority
unjustifiably invades others' autonomy
stigmatizes dissents
restricts freedom of speech
refuses to listen
uses rules to stifle discussion and complaints

destructive

attacks others' self-esteem, reputations, or feelings
disregards other's values
engages in insults, innuendoes, epithets, or derogatory jokes
uses put-downs, backstabbing, and character assassination
employs so-called "truth" as a weapon
violates confidentiality and privacy to gain an advantage
withholds constructive feedback

deceptive

willfully perverts the truth to deceive, cheat, or defraud
sends evasive or deliberately misleading or ambiguous messages
employs bureaucratic euphemisms to cover up the truth

intrusive

uses hidden cameras
taps telephones
employs computer technologies to monitor employee behavior
disregards legitimate privacy rights

secretive

uses silence and unresponsiveness
hoards information
hides wrongdoing or ineptness

manipulative/exploitative

uses demagoguery
gains compliance by exploiting fear, prejudice, or ignorance
patronizes or is condescending toward others

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Source: [Interpersonal Communication](#)



Case Study

See Appendix A – [Being Ethical: Dealing with Conflicts of Interest](#)

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12.3 Social Responsibility

No chapter on ethics would be complete without a discussion on social responsibility. People, not only companies, can engage in social responsibility. Being socially responsible shows both social awareness and self-management skills—that is, an awareness of how our decisions affect others. This section will first discuss social responsibility on the corporate level and then social responsibility on the individual level. As we discussed with ethical company standards, it is difficult to separate corporate ethics and corporate social responsibility from individual ethics and social responsibility, since people are the ones making the corporate policies. For purposes of this section, we will first discuss social responsibility on the corporate level and then on the individual level.

Since social responsibility was first mentioned in the 1960s, companies have felt pressure from society to behave in a more socially responsible manner. **Social responsibility** is the duty of business to do no harm to society. In other words, in their daily operations, businesses should be concerned about the welfare of society and mindful of how its actions could affect society as a whole. We know that social responsibility doesn't always happen and profits are sometimes put first.

Ideally, companies should look at four main areas of social responsibility and act ethically in all four areas. In fact, even as individuals we should be aware of these areas of social responsibility, which we will discuss in this section (Carroll, 1991). Those four areas are the following:

- **Economic aspects.** Companies need to maintain strong economic interests so they can stay in business. Being profitable and providing value to shareholders is part of a company being socially responsible.
- **Legal aspects.** A company must follow the law and have a legal obligation to do so. For example, car companies are required to meet a certain level of emissions standards in car production.
- **Ethical aspects.** Acting ethically means going above and beyond the legal requirements and meeting the expectations of society. The ethical expectations (and outrage) of society can encourage companies to act ethically.
- **Philanthropic aspects.** This is the expectation that companies should give back to society in the form of charitable donations of time, money, and goods.¹

Based on these areas, many believe business should go above and beyond the law to act ethically, meet expectations of society, and even go beyond by donating profit back to the communities in which the businesses operate. As we mentioned at the start of this section, businesses are not the only ones who engage in social responsibility. Since people run businesses, often we see business social responsibility initiatives that are directly related to individuals in the organization.

1.

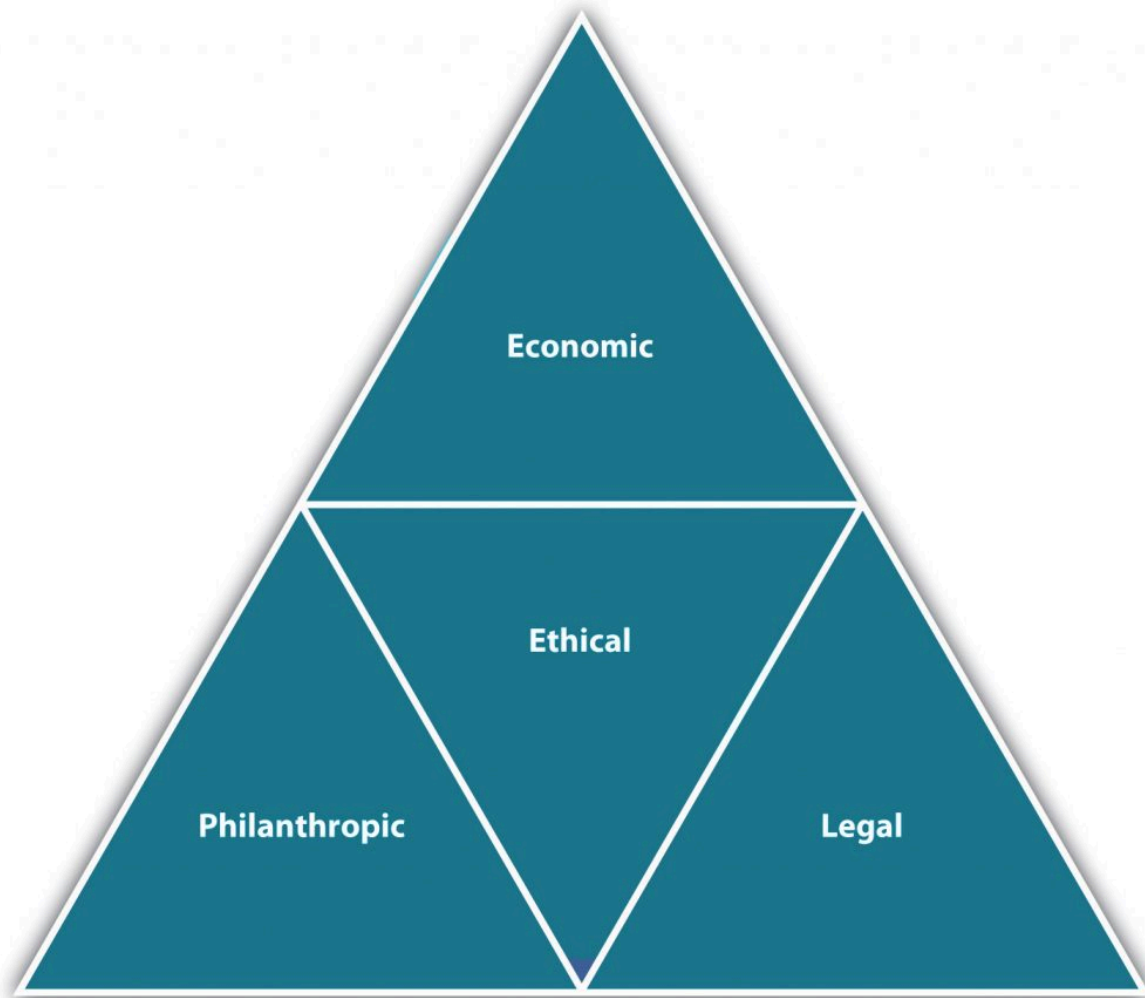


Figure 12.2 The Four Areas of Social Responsibility. Companies should strive to meet all areas of social responsibility. Image: Saylor Academy. [Human Relations, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Color altered from original. [click to enlarge]

More recently, social responsibility has been looked at as going above and beyond even philanthropy. Past ideas on social responsibility implied that businesses must trade off social responsibility for profits—in other words, in order to make profit, businesses had to actually harm society. This way of thinking has changed with the idea of creating shared value. This concept, created by Michael E. Porter and Mark R. Kramer of Harvard University (2011), attempts to dispel this myth by presenting a new view on social responsibility. **Creating shared value (CSV)** is the premise that companies and the community are tied closely together, and if one benefits, they both benefit. For example, if companies donate money to schools, it actually benefits both the community and the company in that a better educated workforce can be profitable for the company in the long run. The idea that social responsibility is something that costs companies money is no longer in favor. In fact, behaving socially responsibly can help a company save money. Small things, such as turning off computers at night, result in cost savings in electricity and are the right thing to do from a social responsibility

perspective, too. As Porter and Kramer have pointed out through their research, benefiting the community does not have to be at the cost of the company or of society; both can work in tandem.

Individual Social Responsibility

As we have already discussed, even though we say companies are socially responsible (or not), individuals in the organization are the ones who create policies surrounding social responsibility efforts. As individuals, we can show social responsibility efforts within an organization and also through our personal social responsibility efforts. **ISR (individual social responsibility)** is defined as an individual being aware of how personal actions have an effect on the community. ISR can include the following:

- Charitable acts, including philanthropy such as donation of money.
- Working for the community, such as volunteering, giving blood donations, and working at a food bank or animal shelter.
- Supporting issues that affect society, such as advocating political or social issues that can help others—for example, advocating for child labor laws, purchasing fair trade products, recycling.
- Individual ethics, such as integrity and honesty. These individual ethics can also include the “golden rule”: treat others how you wish to be treated. This might mean with empathy and a sense of fairness.



Figure 12.3 Some Examples of Individual Social Responsibility. Image: Saylor Academy. [Human Relations](#), CC BY-NC-SA 3.0. Color altered from original. [click to enlarge]

Engaging in ISR activities such as these can help us develop our emotional intelligence skills through the use of social awareness—that is, understanding how our actions can affect others and engaging in empathy for others. In addition, we can build our self-esteem and self-perception by helping others (2

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12.4 Key Takeaways, Knowledge Check and Key Terms



Key Takeaways

In this chapter, we learned that:

- **A profession is an occupation** that involves mastery of complex knowledge and skills through prolonged training, education, or practical experience. **Professionalism**, on the other hand, involves the aims and behaviors that demonstrate an individual's level of competence expected by a professional within a given profession.
- **Respecting our coworkers is one of the most essential keys** to developing a positive organizational experience. There are many simple things we can do to show our respect, but one crucial feature is thinking about the types of language we use.
- **Personal responsibility** refers to an individual's willingness to be accountable for what they feel, think, and behave. Part of being a successful coworker is taking responsibility for your behaviors, communication, and task achievement in the workplace.
- **Ethics is defined** as a set of values that define right and wrong.
- **There are four levels of ethical issues.**
 - First, societal issues deal with bigger items such as taking care of the environment, capitalism, or embargos.
 - The second level of ethical issues is stakeholder issues. These are the things that a stakeholder might care about, such as product safety.
 - Internal policy issues are the third level of ethical issues. This includes things like pay and how employees are treated.
 - Personal issues, our last level of ethical issues, refer to how we treat others within our organization.
- **There are sources of personal ethics and sources of company ethics.** Our personal sources of ethics may come from the models we had in our childhood, such as parents, or from experiences, religion, or culture. Companies use values statements and codes of ethics to ensure everyone is following the same ethical codes, since ethics vary from person to person.

- **We can use a variety of models and frameworks** to help us in ethical decision making.\
- **Philosophers look at ethical frameworks** following a utilitarian approach, common good approach, rights approach, and the virtue approach. These approaches provide a framework for sound ethical decision making.\
- **The *Twelve Questions Model*** encourages us to ask questions such as who this decision affects to determine the best ethical choice.
- **Another model by Corey et al. discussed has the following 8 steps:**
 - identify the problem,
 - identify the potential issues involved,
 - review relevant ethical guidelines,
 - know relevant laws and regulations,
 - obtain consultation
 - consider possible and probable courses of action,
 - list the consequences of the probable courses of action, and
 - decide on what appears to be the best course of action.
- **Social responsibility** is defined as the duty of business to do no harm to society.
- **There are four levels of social responsibility as follows:**
 - economics, or the responsibility of the business to be profitable;
 - the responsibility to meet the legal obligations—businesses must comply with the law and regulations;
 - companies have a responsibility to act ethically and morally and to choose the action that causes the least, if any, harm; and
 - finally, philanthropic is the idea that businesses should give back, either in time, money, or goods, to the community in which they serve.
- **People used to believe that the relationship between social responsibility and the community was an inverse one**, where if companies benefited society, it came at economic cost to them. Recent research has pointed out that in fact creating shared value (CSV) actually benefits both parties and not at a cost to one or the other.
- **ISR or individual social responsibility refers to our awareness of how our actions affect the community as a whole.** ISR can include volunteering time, giving money, and standing up for issues that affect the rights of others



Knowledge Check

Review your understanding of this chapter's key concepts by taking the interactive quiz below.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationpsychology/?p=2451#h5p-2>



Key Terms

Key terms from this chapter include:

- **Profession**
- **Professionalism**
- **Excuse-making**
- **Cyberslacking**
- **Ethics**
- **Societal issues**

- Stakeholder's issues
- Internal policy issues
- Personal issues
- Values statement
- Code of conduct
- Whistleblower
- Utilitarian approach
- Rights approach
- Common good approach
- Virtue approach
- Social responsibility
- Creating shared value
- Individual social responsibility

Appendix A: Case Studies

Case studies in this section include:

- [Getting Emotional: The Case of American Express](#)
- [Motivating Employees: The Case of Canada's Shopify](#)
- [Using Science to Match Candidates to Jobs: The Case of Kronos](#)
- [Being Ethical: Dealing with Conflicts of Interest](#)

Getting Emotional: The Case of American Express

Death and money can be emotional topics. Sales reps at American Express Company's (NYSE: AXP) life insurance division had to deal with both these issues when selling life insurance, and they were starting to feel the strain of working with such volatile emotional materials every day. Part of the problem representatives faced seemed like an unavoidable side effect of selling life insurance. Many potential clients were responding fearfully to the sales representatives' calls. Others turned their fears into anger. They replied to the representatives' questions suspiciously or treated them as untrustworthy.

The sales force at American Express believed in the value of their work, but over time, customers' negative emotions began to erode employee morale. Sales of policies slowed. Management insisted that the representatives ignore their customers' feelings and focus on making sales. The representatives' more aggressive sales tactics seemed only to increase their clients' negative emotional responses, which kicked off the cycle of suffering again. It was apparent something had to change.

In an effort to understand the barriers between customers and sales representatives, a team led by Kate Cannon, a former American Express staffer and mental-health administrator, used a technique called emotional resonance to identify employees' feelings about their work. Looking at the problem from an emotional point of view yielded dramatic insights about clients, sales representatives, and managers alike.

The first step she took was to acknowledge that the clients' negative emotions were barriers to life insurance sales. Cannon explained, "People reported all kinds of emotional issues—fear, suspicion, powerlessness, and distrust—involved in buying life insurance." Clients' negative emotions, in turn, had sparked negative feelings among some American Express life insurance sales representatives,

including feelings of incompetence, dread, untruthfulness, shame, and even humiliation. Management's focus on sales had created an emotional disconnect between the sales reps' work and their true personalities. Cannon discovered that sales representatives who did not acknowledge their clients' distress felt dishonest. The emotional gap between their words and their true feelings only increased their distress.

Cannon also found some good news. Sales representatives who looked at their job from the customer's point of view were flourishing. Their feelings and their words were in harmony. Clients trusted them. The trust between these more openly emotional sales representatives and their clients led to greater sales and job satisfaction. To see if emotional skills training could increase job satisfaction and sales among other members of the team, Cannon instituted a course in emotional awareness for a test group of American Express life insurance sales representatives. The goal of the course was to help employees recognize and manage their feelings. The results of the study proved the value of emotional clarity. Coping skills, as measured on standardized psychological tests, improved for the representatives who took Cannon's course.

The emotional awareness training program had significant impact on American Express's bottom line. Over time, as Cannon's team expanded their emotion-based program, American Express life insurance sales rose by tens of millions of dollars. American Express's exercise in emotional awareness shows that companies can profit when feelings are recognized and consciously managed. Employees whose work aligns with their true emotions make more believable corporate ambassadors. The positive use of emotion can benefit a company internally as well. According to a Gallup poll of over 2 million employees, the majority of workers rated a caring boss higher than increased salary or benefits. In the words of career expert and columnist Maureen Moriarty, "Good moods are good for business" (Kirkwood & Ward, 2002; Moriarty, 2007; Schwartz, 2008).

Discussion Questions

1. What are some other jobs that deal with negative or unfavourable emotions on a daily basis?
2. In what type of job might American Express's open emotion policy not be acceptable?
3. What are some ways you deal with negative emotions at work or school? Do your methods differ depending on what type of situation you are in?

Chapter Resource

- Refer to section [3.3 Emotions at Work](#).

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Motivating Employees: The Case of Canada's Shopify

Shopify is a Canadian e-commerce company based in Ottawa, Ontario. Shopify offers services to online retailers “including payments, marketing, shipping and customer engagement tools to simply if the process of running an online store for small merchants” (McCleod, 2018, p. 2). Shopify was identified as one of Canada's top employers for 2018 ([click here](#) to see the list for 2022). Watch the video below ([direct link](#)) and see what aspects you can pick out that makes Shopify a motivating place for it's employees.

Discussion Questions

1. What differentiates Spotify from other Canadian companies? Why do you think that they are rated so highly by their employees?
2. What are some examples of incentives discussed in the chapter readings that are used by Shopify to motivate their employees?



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/communicationpsychology/?p=6#oembed-1>

Chapter Resource

- Refer to section [4.4 Influencing Emotions at Work](#)

References

This section is from:

[Chapter 6: Designing a Motivating Work Environment](#) in [Organizational Behaviour](#) by Seneca College is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

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Using Science to Match Candidates to Jobs: The Case of Kronos

You are interviewing a candidate for a position as a cashier in a supermarket. You need someone polite, courteous, patient, and dependable. The candidate you are talking to seems nice. But how do you know who is the right person for the job? Will the job candidate like the job or get bored? Will they have a lot of accidents on the job or be fired for misconduct? Don't you wish you knew before hiring? One company approaches this problem scientifically, saving the business time and money on hiring hourly wage employees.

Retail employers do a lot of hiring, given their growth and high turnover rate. According to one estimate, replacing an employee who leaves in retail costs companies around \$4,000. High turnover also endangers customer service. Therefore, retail employers have an incentive to screen people carefully so that they hire people with the best chance of being successful and happy on the job. Unicru, an employee selection company, developed software that quickly became a market leader in screening hourly workers (Frauenheim, 2006; Rafter, 2005). The company was acquired by Massachusetts-based Kronos Inc. (NASDAQ: KRON) in 2006 and is currently owned by a private equity firm.

The idea behind the software is simple: if you have a lot of employees and keep track of your data over



Image: Seneca College. [Organizational Behavior, CC BY-NC 4.0](#). [click to enlarge]

time, you have access to an enormous resource. By analyzing this data, you can specify the profile of the “ideal” employee. The software captures the profile of the potential high performers, and applicants are screened to assess their fit with this particular profile. More importantly, the profile is continually updated as new employees are hired. As the database gets larger, the software does a better job of identifying the right people for the job.

If you applied for a job in retail, you may have already been a part of this database: the users of this system include giants such as Universal Studios, Costco Wholesale Corporation, Burger King, and other retailers and chain restaurants. In companies such as Albertsons, applicants use a kiosk in the store to answer a list of questions and to enter their background, salary history, and other information. In other companies, such as some in the trucking industry, candidates enter the data through the website of the company they are applying to. The software screens people on basic criteria such as availability in scheduling as well as personality traits.

Candidates are asked to agree or disagree with statements such as “I often make last-minute plans” or “I work best when I am on a team.” After the candidates complete the questions, hiring managers are sent a report complete with a colour-coded suggested course of action. Red means the candidate does not fit the job, yellow means proceed with caution, and green means the candidate can be hired on the spot. Interestingly, the company contends that faking answers is not easy because it is difficult for candidates to predict the desired profile. For example, according to their research, being a successful salesman has less to do with being an extraverted and sociable person and more to do with a passion for the company’s product.

Matching candidates to jobs has long been viewed as a key way of ensuring high performance and low turnover in the workplace, and advances in computer technology are making it easier and more efficient to assess candidate–job fit. Companies using such technology are cutting down the time it takes to hire people, and it is estimated that using such technologies lowers their turnover by 10%–30% (Berta, 2002; Frazier, 2005; Haaland, 2006; Overholt, 2002).

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it so expensive for companies to replace workers?
2. In modern times, it is possible that an employee could have a number of different jobs in a short amount of time. Do you think this frequent job changing could skew results for this type of “ideal” employee selection? Do you think potential candidates can use these screening mechanisms to their advantage by making themselves seem like perfect candidates when in fact they are not?
3. What personality traits may not seem like a good fit based on an initial screening, but in fact, would make a good employee?
Do you feel that hard work and dedication could overcome a person–job mismatch?

Chapter Resource

- Refer to section [8.4 Personality at Work](#)

References

This section is adapted from:

[Chapter 3: Understanding People at Work, Individual Differences, and Perception](#) in [Organizational Behaviour](#) by Seneca College is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

Berta, D. (2002, February 25). Industry increases applicant screening amid labor surplus, security concerns. *Nation's Restaurant News*, 36(8), 4.

Frauenheim, E. (2006, March 13). Unicru beefs up data in latest screening tool. *Workforce Management*, 85(5), 9–10

Frazier, M. (2005, April). Help wanted. *Chain Store Age*, 81(4), 37–39.

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Being Ethical: Dealing with Conflicts of Interest

Damon has just been promoted to the program manager in his digital marketing agency. As program manager, he is responsible for working with vendors to provide services to his clients. One part of his job is to screen out potential vendors for clients and then make overall recommendations and provide project plans to the client based on his selected vendors. This relationship is important because the client places an immense amount of trust in the vendor choices made. Damon, with his straightforward communication style, is talented in picking and choosing the best vendors for the client, which was one reason he was hired. The nature of the job requires Damon to often meet with potential vendors and salespeople. One late afternoon, a vendor meeting with Valerie runs into dinnertime. Valerie asks Damon if he wants to have a drink and some appetizers while they continue discussing the services the vendor has to offer. They go next door to a pub and continue their discussion. When the check comes, Damon picks it up and the Valerie says, "No, you can't pay for this. I got it." Damon hands her the check and thanks her for dinner.

Later that week, after Damon has met with all possible vendors for the project, he decides to go with Valerie's company. They provide the highest-quality services at the best price. In fact, their pricing is

about 10 percent less while the services they will provide get rave reviews from other clients. Damon is confident it is the right choice. When Damon goes to the project manager with this decision, the project manager, Janet, says she prefers not to work with that vendor, then asks, “Didn’t Valerie take you to dinner the other night?”

Damon replies, “Yes, but that isn’t why I choose them to be our vendor for this project.” Janet doesn’t respond and turns back to her computer and asks Damon to explain why Valerie’s company is better.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the potential conflict of interest in this case?
2. How can outside perception impact our ethical choices? Should outside perception affect our choices at work?
3. Using one of the models discussed in the chapter, address how Damon should have gone about making this ethical choice.

Chapter Resource

- Refer to section [12.2 Ethics](#)

References

This section is adapted from:

[Be Ethical at Work](#) in [Human Relations](#) by Saylor Academy and is under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 License](#) without attribution as requested by the work’s original creator or licensor.

Appendix B: Self-assessments

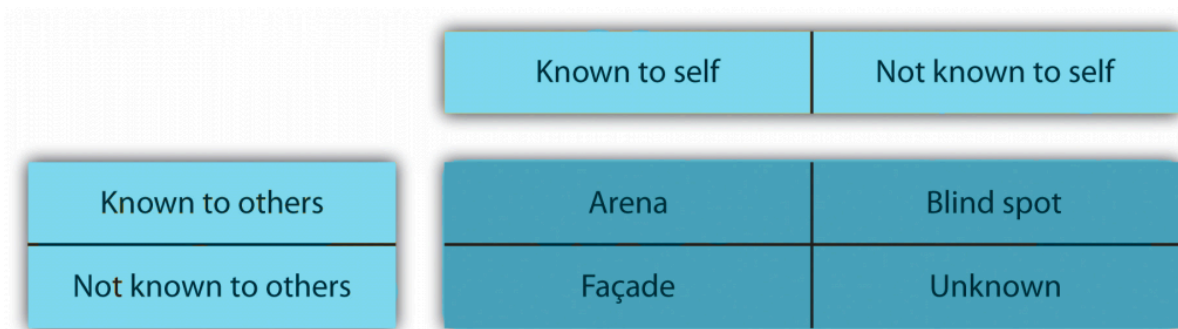
Assessments in this section include:

- [The Johari Window](#)
- [What's My Attitude](#)
- [Are you a Type A personality?](#)
- [What is your locus of control?](#)
- [How do you behave in groups?](#)
- [How effective is group group work?](#)
- [Cultural intelligence](#)
- [Links to additional questionnaires](#)

The Johari Window: A Tool for Critical Self-reflection

Everyone can continue working on developing their skills and abilities throughout their lifetime. The Johari window is one tool that can help us determine how we see ourselves and how others see us. This can serve as a good starting point and self-assessment tool to engage in critical self-reflection.

The Johari window was created in 1955 by Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham. When it was created, the researchers gave people fifty-six adjectives they could use to describe themselves. The subjects picked five or six adjectives and then had someone who knew them well pick six for that person as well. Then, the adjectives were placed in the appropriate place in the grid. The grid consists of four windows. The first window is the open area. In this area, these are things that someone knows about themselves and others see in them too. The second window is the blind area. In the blind area, the person does not know it about themselves, but others see it in them. In the hidden area, the person knows this about her- or himself, but others are not aware of it. In the unknown area, neither person knows what exists there. Through time and as we change and grow, we may have more self-awareness and aspects of ourselves once in the unknown area may go into one of the other windows.



The Johari Window. Image: Saylor Academy. [Human Relations](#), CC BY-NC-SA 3.0. Color altered from original. [click to enlarge]

Having higher self-esteem and higher self-confidence can improve our projection, meaning we can better accept criticism, learn from our mistakes, and communicate more effectively. This can result in better human relations at work and, ultimately, higher productivity and higher profitability. In this appendix, students will have the opportunity to complete a number of self-assessments. These questionnaires are not full-scale clinical tools. Their purpose is not to give a complete picture or to diagnose. Rather, these are meant to be questions to quick start your curiosity and self-reflection.

Assessment: The Johari Window

Download a [PDF version](#) of this assessment

Chapter Resource

- Please refer to section [2.4 Communication Competence](#)

Instructions:

Using the adjectives below, please select five to six that best describe you. Then answer the following questions:

- Do you think that the adjectives that you chose would match the ones that a close friend or family member would chose to describe you? Why or why not?
- What are some ways you can make your hidden area more open? What are the advantages to doing this?
- How do you think this exercise relates to your sense of self and communication skills?

- How can the information you gained about yourself apply to positive human relations?

simple	brash	vulgar	unimaginative	violent
withdrawn	childish	unhappy	irrational	insecure
cynical	impatient	inane	imperceptive	hostile
boastful	panicky	distant	loud	needy
weak	smug	chaotic	self-satisfied	ignorant
unethical	predictable	vacuous	overdramatic	blasé
rash	foolish	passive	unreliable	embarrassed
callous	patient	dull	dependable	insensitive
humorless	powerful	intelligent	dignified	dispassionate
sensible	proud	introverted	energetic	inattentive
sentimental	quiet	kind	extroverted	able
shy	reflective	knowledgeable	friendly	accepting
silly	relaxed	logical	giving	adaptable
spontaneous	religious	loving	happy	bold
sympathetic	responsive	mature	helpful	brave
tense	searching	modest	idealistic	calm
trustworthy	self-assertive	nervous	independent	caring
warm	self-conscious	observant	ingenious	cheerful
wise	cowardly	organized	inflexible	clever
witty	irresponsible	timid	glum	complex
intolerant	selfish	unhelpful	aloof	confident

References

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Assessment: What's My Attitude?

Download a [PDF version](#) of this assessment

Chapter Resource

- Please refer to section [2.4 Communication Competence](#)

Read the following items and choose whether you believe the statement is True or False.

1. People would describe me as unhappy.
 - True
 - False
2. I complain right away if there is something I don't like.
 - True
 - False
3. Being positive most of the time is far too unrealistic.
 - True
 - False
4. If I have a bad morning, the rest of my day is sure to be ruined.
 - True
 - False
5. I tend to think more about my weak points than my strong points.
 - True
 - False
6. I don't give out compliments because I don't want someone to get a big ego.
 - True
 - False
7. In the past two weeks, I have called myself depressed.
 - True
 - False

8. I worry too much about things I can't control.

- True
- False

9. It takes a lot to make me happy.

- True
- False

10. When I experience a failure, I usually just stop trying.

- True
- False

Now, count the number of true and false answers. The more false answers you have, the better attitude you tend to have. If you have many true answers, what are some ways to help you change to a more positive attitude?

When considering our personality, values, and attitudes, we can begin to get the bigger picture of who we are and how our experiences affect how we behave at work and in our personal lives. It is a good idea to reflect often on what aspects of our personality are working well and which we might like to change. With self-awareness, we can make changes that eventually result in more effective communication and positive interpersonal relationships.

References

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Assessment: Are you a Type A Personality?

Download a [PDF version](#) of this assessment

Chapter Resource

- Please refer to section [8.3 Theories of Personality](#)

Instructions

Choose from the following responses to answer the questions below:

1. Almost always true
2. Usually true.
3. Seldom true
4. Never true

Answer each question according to what is generally true for you:

1. I do not like to wait for other people to complete their work before I can proceed with my own.
2. I hate to wait in most lines.
3. People tell me that I tend to get irritated too easily.
4. Whenever possible I try to make activities competitive.
5. I have a tendency to rush into work that needs to be done before knowing the procedure I will use to complete the job.
6. Even when I go on vacation, I usually take some work along.
7. When I make a mistake, it is usually due to the fact that I have rushed into the job before completely planning it through.
8. I feel guilty for taking time off from work.
9. People tell me I have a bad temper when it comes to competitive situations.
10. I tend to lose my temper when I am under a lot of pressure at work.
11. Whenever possible, I will attempt to complete two or more tasks at once.
12. I tend to race against the clock.
13. I have no patience for lateness.
14. I catch myself rushing when there is no need.

Scoring

This instrument is somewhat complicated to score. Follow these instructions carefully:

- Time urgency: Time urgency reflects one's race against the clock, even on items when there is little reason to hurry. It is measured by the following items 1, 2, 8, 12, 14. For each *A* or *B* answer you gave on these questions, give yourself 1 point. Put the total number on the line on the left.
- Inappropriate aggression and hostility: This dimension reflects excessively competitive behavior and frequent displays of hostility. It is measured by items 3, 4, 9, and 10. For each *A* or *B* answer you gave on these questions, give yourself 1 point. Put the total number on the line on the left.
- Polyphasic behavior: This is the tendency to undertake several activities simultaneously at inappropriate times. As a result, individuals often end up wasting time instead of saving it, which leads to wasted energy. It is measured by items 6 and 11. For each *A* or *B* answer you gave on these questions, give yourself 1 point. Put the total number on the line on the left.
- Goal directedness without proper planning: This is the tendency to rush into work without

knowing how to accomplish the desired result. Consequently, incomplete work or errors are likely to occur. It is measured by items 5 and 7. For each *A* or *B* answer you gave on these questions, give yourself 1 point. Put the total number on the line on the left.

Now add up your total score.

If you received a total of 5 or greater, you may possess some of the attributes of a Type A personality. How did you do? If you received a high score, what are some things that you can do to reduce your stress level?

Source: Adapted from "Are You a Type A?" The Stress Mess Solution: The Causes and Cures of Stress on the Job, by G. S. Everly and D. A. Girdano. Reprinted by permission of the authors.

References

This section is adapted from:

[Chapter 18: Stress and Well-being](#) in [Organizational Behaviour](#) by Rice University, OpenStax and is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#), unless otherwise noted.

Assessment: What is your locus of control?

Download a [PDF version](#) of this assessment

Chapter Resource

- Please refer to section [8.4 Personality at Work](#)

Instructions

This instrument lists several pairs of statements concerning the possible causes of behavior. For each pair, select the letter (A or B) that better describes your own beliefs. Remember: there are no right or wrong answers.

1. A) In the long run, the bad things that happen to us are balanced by the good ones.
B) Most misfortunes are the result of lack of ability, ignorance, laziness, or all three.
2. A) I have often found that what is going to happen will happen.
B) Trusting to fate has never turned out as well for me as making a decision to take a definite

course of action.

3. A) Many of the unhappy things in people's lives are partly due to bad luck.
B) People's misfortunes result from the mistakes they make.
4. A) Without the right breaks, one cannot be an effective leader.
B) Capable people who fail to become leaders have not taken advantage of their opportunities.
5. A) Many times, I feel I have little influence over the things that happen to me.
B) It is impossible for me to believe that chance or luck plays an important role in my life.
6. A) Most people don't realize the extent to which their lives are controlled by accidental happenings.
B) There really is no such thing as "luck."
7. A) Unfortunately, an individual's worth often passes unrecognized no matter how hard they try.
B) In the long run, people get the respect they deserve.

Scoring

After completing the instrument, score it by assigning a zero (0) to any A you assigned and a one (1) to any B. Add up your total score, and compare it to the following norms:

- 1–3 = an external locus of control
- 4–5 = a balanced locus of control
- 6–7 = an internal locus of control

Source: Adapted from Julian B. Rotter, "Generalized Expectancies for Internal Versus External Control of Reinforcement." Psychological Monographs, 80 (Whole No. 609, 1966), pp. 11–12.

References

This questionnaire is adapted from:

[Chapter 2 Management Skills Application Exercises](#) in [Organizational Behaviour](#) by Rice University, OpenStax and is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#), unless otherwise noted.

Rotter, J. B. (1966). Generalized expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement. *Psychological Monographs, 80* (609), pp. 11–12.

Assessment: How Do You Behave in Groups?

Download a [PDF version](#) of this assessment

Chapter Resource

- Please refer to section [9.2 Characteristics of Effective Groups](#)

Instructions

Think of a typical group situation in which you often find yourself (e.g., a club, study group, small work group), and answer the following items as accurately as possible.

In a group, how often do you:	Never	Seldom	Fairly Often	Frequently
1. Keep the group focused on the task at hand?	1	2	3	4
2. Help the group clarify the issues?	1	2	3	4
3. Pull various ideas together?	1	2	3	4
4. Push the group to make a decision or complete a task?	1	2	3	4
5. Support and encourage other groups members?	1	2	3	4
6. Try to reduce interpersonal conflicts?	1	2	3	4
7. Help the group reach a compromise?	1	2	3	4
8. Assist in maintaining group harmony?	1	2	3	4
9. Seek personal recognition from other group members?	1	2	3	4
10. Try to dominate group activities?	1	2	3	4
11. Avoid unpleasant or undesirable group activities?	1	2	3	4
12. Express your impatience or hostility with the group?	1	2	3	4

Scoring

This questionnaire asks you to describe your own behavior within a group setting. To score the instrument, add up your scores as follows for the three categories of behavior.

Task-oriented behavior	(add up items 1–4)
Relations-oriented behavior	(add up items 5–8)
Self-oriented behavior	(add up items 9–12)

Examine the resulting pattern in your answers. As usual, there are no correct or incorrect answers. Instead, this is an opportunity to view how you describe your own role-related activities in a group.

What did you learn about yourself? How does your role in a group differ from those of other individuals?

References

This section is adapted from:

[Chapter 9: Group and Intergroup Relations](#) in [Organizational Behaviour](#) by Rice University, OpenStax and is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#), unless otherwise noted.

Assessment: How Effective Is Your Work Group?

Download a [PDF version](#) of this assessment

Chapter Resource

- Please refer to section [9.2 Characteristics of Effective Groups](#)

Instructions:

Select a group to which you belong, and use this group to answer the following questions. Check “mostly yes” or “mostly no” to answer each question.

	Mostly Yes	Mostly No
1. The atmosphere is relaxed and comfortable.	_____	_____
2. Group discussion is frequent, and it is usually pertinent to the task at hand.	_____	_____
3. Group members understand what they are trying to accomplish.	_____	_____
4. People listen to each other's suggestions and ideas.	_____	_____
5. Disagreements are tolerated, and an attempt is made to resolve them.	_____	_____
6. There is general agreement on most courses of action taken.	_____	_____
7. The group welcomes frank criticism from inside and outside sources.	_____	_____
8. When the group takes action, clear assignments are made and accepted.	_____	_____
9. There is a well-established, relaxed working relationship among the members.	_____	_____
10. There is a high degree of trust and confidence among the leader and subordinates.	_____	_____
11. The group members strive hard to help the group achieve its goal.	_____	_____
12. Suggestions and criticisms are offered and received with a helpful spirit.	_____	_____
13. There is a cooperative rather than a competitive relationship among group members.	_____	_____
14. The group goals are set high but not so high as to create anxieties or fear of failure.	_____	_____
15. The leaders and members hold a high opinion of the group's capabilities.	_____	_____
16. Creativity is stimulated within the group.	_____	_____
17. There is ample communication within the group of topics relevant to getting the work accomplished.	_____	_____

Source: Adapted from A. J. DuBrin from *The Human Side of Enterprise* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960).

18. Group members feel confident in making decisions. _____
19. People are kept busy but not overloaded. _____
20. The leader of the group is well suited for the job. _____

*Source: Adapted from A. J. DuBrin from *The Human Side of Enterprise* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960).*

Scoring

This instrument measures the relative effectiveness of a group to which you belong. Count the number of times that you answered “mostly yes.” The larger the number, the more productive and satisfied the group members should be. There are no norms for this exercise, so you might wish to create your own norms by comparing scores amongst others in your class who have completed this instrument for the groups that they belong to. Look at the range of scores, and then describe the characteristics of each group. Are there any common characteristics that distinguish the groups with the highest scores? The lowest scores? Why do these differences occur?

You could also use this questionnaire to compare groups to which you belong. If you were the leader of one of these groups, what would you do to make the group more effective? Why hasn’t this been done already?

References

This section is adapted from:

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Assessment: Cultural Intelligence

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Chapter Resource

- Please refer to section [11.4 Culture](#)

One of the latest buzz-words in the business world is “cultural intelligence,” which was initially introduced to the scholarly community in 2003 by P. Christopher Earley and Soon Ang. In the past decade, a wealth of research has been conducted examining the importance of cultural intelligence during interpersonal interactions with people from other cultures. **Cultural intelligence (CQ)** is defined as an “individual’s capability to function effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity”(Earley & Ang, 2008).

Four Factors of Cultural Intelligence

In their original study on the topic, Earley and Ang argued that cultural intelligence is based on four distinct factors: cognitive, motivational, metacognitive, and behavioral dimensions. Before continuing, take a minute and complete the Cultural Intelligence Questionnaire in the table below:

Instructions

Read the following questions and select the answer that corresponds with your perception. Do not be concerned if some of the items appear similar. Please use the scale below to rate the degree to which each statement applies to you.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

____1. When I’m interacting with someone from a differing culture, I know when I use my knowledge of that person’s culture during my interactions.

____2. When I interact with someone from a culture I know nothing about, I have no problem adjusting my perspective of their culture while we talk.

____3. During intercultural interactions, I am well aware of the cultural knowledge I utilize.

____4. I always check my knowledge of someone from another culture to ensure that my understanding of their culture is accurate.

____5. During my intercultural interactions, I try to be mindful of how my perceptions of someone’s culture are either consistent with or differ from reality.

____6. I pride myself on knowing a lot about other people’s cultures.

____7. I understand the social, economic, and political systems of other cultures.

____8. I know about other cultures’ religious beliefs and values.

____9. I understand how daily life is enacted in other cultures.

- ____10. I know the importance of paintings, literature, and other forms of art in other cultures.
- ____11. I enjoy reaching out and engaging in an intercultural encounter.
- ____12. I would have no problem socializing with people from a new culture.
- ____13. Although intercultural encounters often involve stress, I don't mind the stress because meeting people from new cultures makes it worth it.
- ____14. I would have no problems accustoming myself to the routines of another culture.
- ____15. I enjoy being with people from other cultures and getting to know them.
- ____16. I know how to interact verbally with people from different cultures.
- ____17. I know how to interact nonverbally with people from different cultures.
- ____18. I can vary my rate of speech if an intercultural encounter requires it.
- ____19. I can easily alter my behaviors to suit the needs of an intercultural encounter.
- ____20. I can alter my facial expressions if an intercultural encounter requires it.

Scoring:

Add items 1-5 (Intercultural Understanding) = _____

Add items 6-10 (Intercultural Knowledge) = _____

Add items 7-15 (Intercultural Motivation) = _____

Add items 16-20 (Intercultural Behavior) = _____

Interpreting Your Scores:

Scores for each of the four factors (intercultural understanding, intercultural knowledge, intercultural motivation, and intercultural behavior) can be added together to get a composite score. Each of the four factors exists on a continuum from 5 (not culturally intelligent) to 25 (highly culturally intelligent). An average person would score between 12-18.

Based on:

Van Dyne, L., Ang, S., & Koh, C. (2008). Development and validation of the CQS: The Cultural Intelligence Scale. In S. Ang & L. Van Dyne (Eds.), *Handbook of cultural intelligence: Theory, measurement, and application* (pp. 16-38). Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.

Cognitive CQ

First, cognitive CQ involves knowing about different cultures (intercultural knowledge). Many types of knowledge about a culture can be relevant during an intercultural interaction: rules and norms, economic and legal systems, cultural values and beliefs, the importance of art within a society, etc.... All of these different areas of knowledge involve facts that can help you understand people from different cultures. For example, in most of the United States, when you are talking to someone, eye contact is very important. You may have even been told by someone to “look at me when I’m talking to you” if you’ve ever gotten in trouble. However, this isn’t consistent across different cultures at all. Hispanic, Asian, Middle Eastern, and Native American cultures often view direct contact when talking to

someone superior as a sign of disrespect. Knowing how eye contact functions across cultures can help you know more about how to interact with people from various cultures.

Motivational CQ

Second, we have motivational CQ, or the degree to which an individual desires to engage in intercultural interactions and can easily adapt to different cultural environments. Motivation is the key to effective intercultural interactions. You can have all the knowledge in the world, but if you are not motivated to have successful intercultural interactions, you will not have them.

Metacognitive CQ

Third, metacognitive CQ involves being consciously aware of your intercultural interactions in a manner that helps you have more effective interpersonal experiences with people from differing cultures (intercultural understanding). All of the knowledge about cultural differences in the world will not be beneficial if you cannot use that information to understand and adapt your behavior during an interpersonal interaction with someone from a differing culture. As such, we must always be learning about cultures but also be ready to adjust our knowledge about people and their cultures through our interactions with them.

Behavioral CQ

Lastly, behavioral CQ is the next step following metacognitive CQ, which is behaving in a manner that is consistent with what you know about other cultures (Ang & VanDyne, 2008). We should never expect others to adjust to us culturally. Instead, culturally intelligent people realize that it's best to adapt our behaviors (verbally and nonverbally) to bridge the gap between people culturally. When we go out of our way to be culturally intelligent, we will encourage others to do so as well.

As you can see, becoming a truly culturally intelligent person involves a lot of work. As such, it's important to spend time and build your cultural intelligence if you are going to be an effective communicator in today's world.

References

This section was adapted from:

[Chapter 6: Cultural and Environmental Factors in Interpersonal Communication](#) in [Interpersonal Communication](#) by Jason S. Wrench; Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter; and Katherine S. Thweatt is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

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Additional Self-assessments

Want to learn more? Consider checking out the links below for more self-assessments:

- [Growth Mindset quiz](#)
- [Emotional intelligence](#)
- [Motivational questionnaire](#)
- [Big 5 Personality](#)

Glossary of Key Terms

16 factors of personality

Raymond Cattell (1946, 1957) identified 16 factors or dimensions of personality: warmth, reasoning, emotional stability, dominance, liveliness, rule-consciousness, social boldness, sensitivity, vigilance, abstractedness, privateness, apprehension, openness to change, self-reliance, perfectionism, and tension. He developed a personality assessment based on these 16 factors, called the 16PF. [See 8.3 Theories of Personality](#)

Ability

According to Statistics Canada (2015), over 11 percent of Canadians experience pain, mobility, or flexibility challenges. These can be severe enough to require a wheelchair or other mobility aid, or they can be less severe but still make it difficult for people to do jobs that require some type of movement or labour. The next most common disability among Canadians was mental or psychological disabilities (3.9 percent). People with ability challenges can be a significant boost to the ability of an organization to reach its market. A main communication challenge that arises here is misunderstanding on the part of able-bodied people. Supportive communication with others seems to be the key for making employees feel at home. [See 11.2 Dimensions of Diversity](#)

Achievement-oriented leaders

Achievement-oriented leaders set goals for employees and encourage them to reach their goals. Their style challenges employees and focuses their attention on work-related goals. This style is likely to be effective when employees have both high levels of ability and high levels of achievement motivation. [See 10.2 Theories of Leadership](#)

Acquired needs theory

Acquired-needs theory proposes that individuals acquire three types of needs as a result of their life experiences. These needs are the need for achievement, the need for affiliation, and the need for power. [See 4.2 Need-Based Theories of Motivation](#)

Active management by exception

Active management by exception involves leaving employees to do their jobs without interference, but at the same time proactively predicting potential problems and preventing them from occurring. [See 10.2 Theories of Leadership](#)

Adjourning

The adjourning stage is the fifth (and last) stage of Bruce Tuckman's model of group development. As typically happens, all groups will eventually have to move on to new

assignments. In the adjourning stage, members leave the group. The group may cease to exist or it may be transformed with new members and a new set of goals. [See 9.3 Group Life Cycle](#)

Affective events theory

This connection between emotions, attitudes, and behaviours at work may be explained using a theory named *Affective Events Theory (AET)*. The theory argues that specific events on the job cause different kinds of people to feel different emotions. These emotions, in turn, inspire actions that can benefit or impede others at work. [See 3.3 Emotions at Work](#)

Agreeableness

Agreeableness is the degree to which a person is nice, tolerant, sensitive, trusting, kind, and warm. In other words, people who are high in agreeableness are likeable people who get along with others. Not surprisingly, agreeable people help others at work consistently, and this helping behaviour is not dependent on being in a good mood. [See 8.3 Theories of Personality](#)

Analysis paralysis

The availability of too much information can lead to *analysis paralysis*, in which more and more time is spent on gathering information and thinking about it, but no decisions actually get made. [See 7.2 Decision-making Models](#)

Anchoring bias

Anchoring bias refers to the tendency for individuals to rely too heavily on a single piece of information. Job seekers often fall into this trap by focusing on a desired salary while ignoring other aspects of the job offer such as additional benefits, fit with the job, and working environment. [See 7.3 Bias in Decision-making](#)

Androgenous

An expression of gender, androgyny is the term we use to identify gendered behavior that lies between feminine and masculine. [See 11.2 Dimensions of Diversity](#)

Appointed leaders

An appointed leader is designated by an authority to serve in that capacity, irrespective of the thoughts or wishes of the group. They may serve as the leader and accomplish all the designated tasks, but if the group does not accept their role as leader, it can prove to be a challenge. [See 10.1 Leadership vs. Management](#)

Attitudes

Attitudes are favorable or unfavorable opinions toward people, things, or situations. Many things affect our attitudes, including the environment we were brought up in and our individual experiences. Our personalities and values play a large role in our attitudes as well. [See 8.1 Personality](#)

Authentic leadership

The authentic leadership approach embraces this value: Its key advice is “be yourself.” Think about it: we all have different backgrounds, different life experiences, and different role models. These trigger events over the course of our lifetime that shape our values, preferences, and priorities. Instead of trying to fit into societal expectations about what a leader should be, act like, or look like, authentic leaders derive their strength from their own past experiences. [See 10.2 Theories of Leadership](#)

Authoritarianism

Authoritarianism refers to an individual’s orientation toward authority. More specifically, an authoritarian orientation is generally characterized by an overriding conviction that it is right and proper for there to be clear status and power differences among people. [See 8.4 Personality at Work](#)

Autobiographical memory

Remembering specific events that have happened over the course of one’s entire life (e.g., your experiences in sixth grade) can be referred to as autobiographical memory. [See 6.2 Varieties of Memory](#)

Basic emotions

Basic emotions are rapid information-processing systems that help us act with minimal thinking. [See 3.1 Functions of Emotions](#)

Behavioural approach

When trait researchers became disillusioned in the 1940s, their attention turned to studying leader behaviours. Research led to the discovery of two broad categories of behaviours - task vs people-oriented behaviours. That is to say the extent to which a leader is focussed on the task at hand compared to the relationships. At the time, researchers thought that these two categories of behaviours were the keys to the puzzle of leadership. When we look at the overall findings regarding these leadership behaviours, it seems that both types of behaviours, in the aggregate, are beneficial to organizations, but for different purposes. [See 10.2 Theories of Leadership](#)

Behavioural self-management

Behavioral self-management (or BSM) is the process of modifying one’s own behavior by systematically managing cues, cognitive processes, and contingent consequences. [See 5.5 Learning at Work](#)

Behavioural tests

Behavioural tests infer important personality characteristics from direct samples of behavior .For example, Funder and Colvin (1988) brought opposite-sex pairs of participants into the laboratory

and had them engage in a five-minute “getting acquainted” conversation; raters watched videotapes of these interactions and then scored the participants on various personality characteristics. [See 8.2 Measuring Personality](#)

Bias

Bias is subjective opinion, preference, prejudice, or inclination, either for or against an individual or group, formed without reasonable justification that influences an individual’s or group’s ability to evaluate a particular situation objectively or accurately. [See 11.1 Diversity and Inclusion](#)

Big 5 (five factor)

The Five Factor Model is the most popular theory in personality psychology today and the most accurate approximation of the basic personality dimensions. The five factors are openness to experience, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. A helpful way to remember the factors is by using the mnemonic *OCEAN*. [See 8.3 Theories of Personality](#)

Bounded rationality model

The bounded rationality model of decision making recognizes the limitations of our decision-making processes. According to this model, individuals knowingly limit their options to a manageable set and choose the first acceptable alternative without conducting an exhaustive search for alternatives. [See 7.2 Decision-making Models](#)

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a group process of generating ideas that follow a set of guidelines, including no criticism of ideas during the brainstorming process, the idea that no suggestion is too crazy, and building on other ideas (piggybacking). [See 7.2 Decision-making Models](#)

Cannon-Bard theory

According to the Cannon-Bard theory of emotion, the experience of an emotion is accompanied by physiological arousal. Thus, according to this model of emotion, as we become aware of danger, our heart rate also increases. [See 3.2 The Experience of Emotion](#)

Case studies

Case studies are in-depth descriptions of a single industry or company. Case writers typically employ a systematic approach to gathering data and explaining an event or situation in great detail. [See 1.3 OB Research Methods](#)

Central traits

Central traits are those that make up our personalities (such as loyal, kind, agreeable, friendly, sneaky, wild, and grouchy). [See 8.3 Theories of Personality](#)

Charisma

Charisma refers to behaviours leaders demonstrate that create confidence in, commitment to, and admiration for the leader. Charismatic individuals have a “magnetic” personality that is appealing to followers. [See 10.2 Theories of Leadership](#)

Cisgender (gender identity)

An individual is said to be **cisgender** if the gender that they identify is consistent the sex that they were assigned at birth. [See 11.2 Dimensions of Diversity](#)

Classical conditioning

Classical conditioning is the process whereby a stimulus-response (S-R) bond is developed between a conditioned stimulus and a conditioned response through the repeated linking of a conditioned stimulus with an unconditioned stimulus. [See 5.2 Classical Conditioning](#)

Code of conduct

The code of conduct is a guideline for dealing with ethics in the organization. The code of conduct can outline many things, and often companies offer training in one or more areas. [See 12.2 Ethics](#)

Cognitive appraisal

The cognitive interpretations that accompany emotions— known as *cognitive appraisal* — allow us to experience a much larger and more complex set of secondary emotions. [See 3.2 The Experience of Emotion](#)

Cognitive dissonance

Cognitive dissonance is a term that refers to a mismatch among emotions, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour, for example, believing that you should always be polite to a customer regardless of personal feelings, yet having just been rude to one. [See 3.3 Emotions at Work](#)

Cohesion

Cohesion can be thought of as a kind of social glue. It refers to the degree of camaraderie within the group. Cohesive groups are those in which members are attached to each other and act as one unit. Generally speaking, the more cohesive a group is, the more productive it will be and the more rewarding the experience will be for the group’s members. [See 9.2 Characteristics of Effective Groups](#)

Collective efficacy

Collective efficacy refers to a group’s perception of its ability to successfully perform well. Collective efficacy is influenced by a number of factors, including watching others (“that group

did it and we're better than them"), verbal persuasion ("we can do this"), and how a person feels ("this is a good group"). [See 9.2 Characteristics of Effective Groups](#)

Collectivist cultures

Collectivist cultures, such as many in Asia and South America, focus on the needs of the nation, community, family, or group of workers. Ownership and private property is one way to examine this difference. [See 11.4 Culture](#)

Command/functional groups

When the group is permanent, it is usually called a command group or functional group. An example would be the sales department in a company. [See 9.1 Groups and Teams](#)

Common good approach

The common good approach says that when making ethical decisions, we should try to benefit the community as a whole. [See 12.2 Ethics](#)

Communication

Communication is the process of generating meaning by sending and receiving verbal and nonverbal symbols and signs that are influenced by multiple contexts. [See 2.1 Communication Defined](#)

Communication apprehension

Communication apprehension (CA) is fear or anxiety experienced by a person due to actual or imagined communication with another person or persons. CA includes multiple forms of communication, not just public speaking. [See 2.4 Communication Competence](#)

Communication competence

Communication competence refers to the knowledge of effective and appropriate communication patterns and the ability to use and adapt that knowledge in various contexts. [See 2.4 Communication Competence](#)

Conditioned response

In classical conditioning, the conditioned response is the learned response to the previously neutral stimulus. For example, the smell of food is an unconditioned stimulus, salivating in response to the smell is an unconditioned response, and the sound of a bell when you smell the food is the conditioned stimulus. The conditioned response would be feeling hungry when you heard the sound of the whistle. [See 5.2 Classical Conditioning](#)

Conditioned stimulus

In classical conditioning, the conditioned stimulus is a previously neutral stimulus that, after

becoming associated with the unconditioned stimulus, eventually comes to trigger a conditioned response. [See 5.2 Classical Conditioning](#)

Consolidation

Consolidation: is defined as the neural changes that occur after learning to create the memory trace of an experience. [See 6.2 Varieties of Memory](#)

Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness refers to the degree to which a person is organized, systematic, punctual, achievement oriented, and dependable. Conscientiousness is the one personality trait that uniformly predicts how high a person's performance will be, across a variety of occupations and jobs. [See 8.3 Theories of Personality](#)

Contingency approach

After the disappointing results of trait and behavioural approaches, several scholars developed leadership theories that specifically incorporated the role of the environment. Specifically, researchers started following a *contingency approach to leadership*—rather than trying to identify traits or behaviours that would be effective under all conditions, the attention moved toward specifying the situations under which different styles would be effective. [See 10.2 Theories of Leadership](#)

Contingency rewards

Contingent rewards mean rewarding employees for their accomplishments. [See 10.2 Theories of Leadership](#)

Creating shared value

Creating shared value (CSV) is the premise that companies and the community are tied closely together, and if one benefits, they both benefit. For example, if companies donate money to schools, it actually benefits both the community and the company in that a better educated workforce can be profitable for the company in the long run. [See 12.3 Social Responsibility](#)

Creative decision-making model

Creative decision making is a vital part of being an effective decision maker. With the flattening of organizations and intense competition among companies, individuals and organizations are driven to be creative in decisions ranging from cutting costs to generating new ways of doing business. [See 7.2 Decision-making Models](#)

Creativity

Creativity is the generation of new, imaginative ideas. [See 7.2 Decision-making Models](#)

Crucial conversations

Crucial conversations are discussions where not only the stakes are high but also where opinions vary and emotions run strong between parties. [See 2.1 Communication Defined](#)

Cue overload principle

To be effective, a retrieval cue cannot be overloaded with too many memories: this is known as the cue overload principle. [See 6.2 Varieties of Memory](#)

Cultural context

Cultural context includes various aspects of identities such as race, gender, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, and ability. [See 2.2 The Communication Process](#)

Cultural display rules

Cultural display rules are rules that are learned early in life that specify the management and modification of our emotional expressions according to social circumstances. [See 3.1 Functions of Emotions](#)

Culture competency

Cultural competency can be defined as the ability to recognize and adapt to cultural differences and similarities. It involves (a) the cultivation of deep cultural self-awareness and understanding (i.e., how one's own beliefs, values, perceptions, interpretations, judgments, and behaviors are influenced by one's cultural community or communities) and (b) increased cultural other-understanding (i.e., comprehension of the different ways people from other cultural groups make sense of and respond to the presence of cultural differences. [See 11.4 Culture](#)

Cyberslacking

Cyberslacking is the non-work-related use of social media while on the job, and it's seen as a problem in many organizations and workplaces. However, some research shows that occasional use of technology for personal reasons while at work can have positive effects, as it may relieve boredom, help reduce stress, or lead to greater job satisfaction. [See 12.1 Professionalism](#)

Decision-making

Decision-making is the action or process of thinking through possible options and selecting one. [See 7.1 Understanding Decision-making](#)

Deep acting

Deep acting takes surface acting one step further. This time, instead of faking an emotion that a customer may want to see, an employee will actively try to experience the emotion they are displaying. This genuine attempt at empathy helps align the emotions one is experiencing with the emotions one is displaying. The children's hairdresser may empathize with the toddler by

imagining how stressful it must be for one so little to be constrained in a chair and be in an unfamiliar environment, and the hairdresser may genuinely begin to feel sad for the child. [See 3.3 Emotions at Work](#)

Deep-level diversity

Deep-level diversity, on the other hand, reflects differences that are less visible, like personality, attitude, beliefs, and values. These attributes are generally communicated verbally and non-verbally, so they are not easily noticeable or measurable. [See 11.1 Diversity and Inclusion](#)

Democratic leaders

A democratic leader is elected or chosen by the group but may also face serious challenges. If individual group members or constituent groups feel neglected or ignored, they may assert that the democratic leader does not represent their interests. [See 10.1 Leadership vs. Management](#)

Dependability

Dependability refers to people's behavioral consistency. Individuals who are seen as self-reliant, responsible, consistent, and dependable are typically considered to be desirable colleagues or group members who will cooperate and work steadfastly toward group goals. [See 8.4 Personality at Work](#)

Direct vs indirect communication

In North America, business correspondence is expected to be short and to the point. "What can I do for you?" is a common question when an employee receives a call from a stranger. It is an accepted way of asking the caller to skip or minimize pleasantries and get on with their business. In indirect cultures, such as in Latin America, business conversations may start with discussions of the weather, family, or topics other than the business at hand as the partners get a sense of each other long before the main topic is raised. Again, the skilled business communicator researches the new environment before entering it because an avoidable social faux pas, or error, can have a significant impact. [See 11.4 Culture](#)

Directive leaders

Directive leaders provide specific directions to their employees. They lead employees by clarifying role expectations, setting schedules, and making sure that employees know what to do on a given work day. The theory predicts that the directive style will work well when employees are experiencing role ambiguity on the job. [See 10.2 Theories of Leadership](#)

Discrimination

Discrimination is defined as the unequal treatment of groups or individuals with a history of marginalization either by a person or a group or an institution which, through the denial of certain rights, results in inequality, subordination and/or deprivation of political, education, social, economic, and cultural rights. [See 11.1 Diversity and Inclusion](#)

Distinctiveness

Distinctiveness refers to having an event stand out as quite different from a background of similar events -- this is key to remembering events. In addition, when vivid memories are tinged with strong emotional content, they often seem to leave a permanent mark on us. [See 6.2 Varieties of Memory](#)

Distributive justice

Distributive justice refers to the degree to which the outcomes received from the organization are perceived to be fair. [See 4.3 Process-Based Theories](#)

Diversity

Diversity is the presence of differences among individuals in a group in terms of various aspects (e.g., gender, attraction, race, class, ability, etc.) that may create advantages or barriers to opportunities and resources because of historical and ongoing systems of oppression. [See 11.1 Diversity and Inclusion](#)

Dogmatism

Dogmatism refers to a particular cognitive style that is characterized by closed-mindedness and inflexibility. This dimension has particularly profound implications for managerial decision-making; it is found that dogmatic managers tend to make decisions quickly, based on only limited information and with a high degree of confidence in the correctness of their decisions. [See 8.4 Personality at Work](#)

Emergent leaders

An emergent leader contrasts the first two paths to the role (see *Democratic leaders* and *Emergent leaders*) by growing into the role, often out of necessity. The appointed leader may know little about the topic or content, and group members will naturally look to the senior member with the most experience for leadership. [See 10.1 Leadership vs. Management](#)

Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence looks at how people can understand each other more completely by developing an increased awareness of their own and others' emotions. [See 3.3 Emotions at Work](#)

Emotional labour

Emotional labor refers to the regulation of feelings and expressions for organizational purposes. There are three major levels of emotional labor: surface acting, deep acting, and genuine acting. [See 3.3 Emotions at Work](#)

Empathy

Empathy is the ability to put oneself in another's shoes, whether that individual has achieved a major triumph or fallen short of personal goals. [See 3.3 Emotions at Work](#)

Employee empowerment

Employee empowerment involves management allowing us to make decisions and act upon those decisions, with the support of the organization. When we are not micromanaged and have the power to determine the sequence of our own work day, we tend to be more satisfied than those employees who are not empowered. [See 4.4 Influencing Motivation at Work](#)

Encoding

Encoding refers to the initial experience of perceiving and learning information. [See 6.2 Varieties of Memory](#)

Encoding specificity principle

The encoding specificity principle suggests that when people encode information, they do so in specific ways. In general, the encoding specificity principle states that, to the extent a retrieval cue (a song) matches or overlaps the memory trace of an experience (at a party, or a conversation), it will be effective in evoking the memory. [See 6.2 Varieties of Memory](#)

Engrams

Psychologists (and neurobiologists) say that experiences leave *memory traces*, or *engrams* (the two terms are synonyms). We encode each of our experiences within the structures of the nervous system, making new impressions in the process—and each of those impressions involves changes in the brain. [See 6.2 Varieties of Memory](#)

Episodic memory

Episodic memory is the ability to remember the episodes of our lives. If you were given the task of recalling everything you did 2 days ago, that would be a test of episodic memory; you would be required to mentally travel through the day in your mind and note the main events. [See 6.2 Varieties of Memory](#)

Equity theory

According to equity theory, individuals are motivated by a sense of fairness in their interactions. Moreover, our sense of fairness is a result of the social comparisons we make. Specifically, we compare our inputs and outcomes with other people's inputs and outcomes. [See 4.3 Process-Based Theories](#)

ERG theory

ERG theory, developed by Clayton Alderfer, is a modification of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Alderfer, 1969). Instead of the five needs that are hierarchically organized, Alderfer proposed that basic human needs may be grouped under three categories, namely, existence, relatedness, and growth. [See 4.2 Need-Based Theories of Motivation](#)

Escalation of commitment

Escalation of commitment occurs when individuals continue on a failing course of action after information reveals it may be a poor path to follow. It is sometimes called the “sunken costs fallacy,” because continuation is often based on the idea that one has already invested in the course of action. [See 7.3 Bias in Decision-making](#)

Ethics

The word “ethics” actually is derived from the Greek word *ethos*, which means the nature or disposition of a culture (OED, 1963). From this perspective, ethics then involves the moral center of a culture that governs behavior. For our purposes, ethics is the judgmental attachment to whether something is good, right, or just. [See 12.2 Ethics](#)

Ethnicity

Ethnicity refers to a person's or people's heritage and history, and involves shared cultural traditions and beliefs. Many Canadians identify with several ethnicities (-Canadian). There has been much debate about whether and how information about race and ethnicity in Canada should be tracked (if at all). [See 11.2 Dimensions of Diversity](#)

Ethnocentric

If you're ethnocentric in the sense of being fearful, intolerant, or even just avoidant towards those other cultures—be they on the other side of the planet, country, province, city, building, counter, or desk—you limit your opportunities for success in the globalized market. Even engaging other cultures with simplistic, preconceived notions informed by media stereotypes reducing everyone in a culture to a one-dimensional character or prop will similarly lead you into serious error. [See 11.4 Culture](#)

Excitation transfer

The *principle of excitation transfer* refers to the phenomenon that occurs when people who are already experiencing arousal from one event tend to also experience unrelated emotions more strongly. [See 3.2 The Experience of Emotion](#)

Excuse-making

Excuse-making occurs any time an individual attempts to shift the blame for an individual's

behavior from reasons more central to the individual to sources outside of their control in the attempt to make themselves look better and more in control. [See 12.1 Professionalism](#)

Expectancy

The first question used in *expectancy theory* is Expectancy. This question asks whether the person believes that high levels of effort will lead to outcomes of interest, such as performance or success. This perception is labeled expectancy. For example, do you believe that the effort you put forth in a class is related to performing well in that class? If you do, you are more likely to put forth effort. [See 4.3 Process-Based Theories](#)

Expectancy theory

According to expectancy theory, individual motivation to put forth more or less effort is determined by a rational calculation in which individuals evaluate their situation. [See 4.3 Process-Based Theories](#)

Extinction

Extinction is used to decrease the frequency of negative behaviours. Extinction is the removal of rewards following negative behaviour. Sometimes, negative behaviours are demonstrated because they are being inadvertently rewarded. For example, it has been shown that when people are rewarded for their unethical behaviours, they tend to demonstrate higher levels of unethical behaviours. [See 5.3 Operant Conditioning](#)

Extraversion

Extraversion is the degree to which a person is outgoing, talkative, and sociable, and enjoys being in social situations. One of the established findings is that they tend to be effective in jobs involving sales. [See 8.3 Theories of Personality](#)

Facial feedback hypothesis

The facial feedback hypothesis proposes that the movement of our facial muscles can trigger corresponding emotions. [See 3.2 The Experience of Emotion](#)

Faultline

A faultline is an attribute along which a group is split into subgroups. For example, in a group with three female and three male members, gender may act as a faultline because the female members may see themselves as separate from the male members. [See 11.3 Diversity in the Workplace – Benefits and Challenges](#)

Feminine (gender expression)

While sex is a biological category, gender is, the social construction of masculinity or femininity as it aligns with designated sex at birth in a specific culture and time period. [See 11.2 Dimensions of Diversity](#)

Feminine orientation

Hofstede et al. (2010) describe the masculine-feminine dichotomy not in terms of whether men or women hold the power in a given culture, but rather the extent to which that culture values certain traits that may be considered masculine or feminine. Thus, the modest, caring pole has been termed “feminine.” The women in feminine countries have the same modest, caring values as the men; in the masculine countries they are somewhat assertive and competitive, but not as much as the men, so that these countries show a gap between men’s values and women’s values. [See 11.4 Culture](#)

Field studies

Field studies are an effective ways to learn about what is truly going on within organizations. Compelling evidence comes from field studies that employ an experimental design. [See 1.3 OB Research Methods](#)

Fixed ratio

In a fixed-ratio schedule, the reward is administered only upon the completion of a given number of desired responses. In other words, rewards are tied to performance in a ratio of rewards to results. A common example of the fixed-ratio schedule is a piece-rate pay system, whereby employees are paid for each unit of output they produce. [See 5.3 Operant Conditioning](#)

Flashbulb memory

The term flashbulb memory was originally coined by Brown and Kulik (1977) to describe this sort of vivid memory of finding out an important piece of news. The name refers to how some memories seem to be captured in the mind like a flash photograph; because of the distinctiveness and emotionality of the news, they seem to become permanently etched in the mind with exceptional clarity compared to other memories. [See 6.2 Varieties of Memory](#)

Flexibility

Flexibility refers to how different the ideas are from one another. If you are able to generate several distinct solutions to a problem, your decision-making process is high on flexibility. [See 7.2 Decision-making Models](#)

Fluency

Fluency refers to the number of ideas a person is able to generate. [See 7.2 Decision-making Models](#)

Formal groups

Formal groups are work units that are prescribed by the organization. Examples of formal groups include sections of departments (such as the accounts receivable section of the accounting department), committees, or special project task forces. [See 9.1 Groups and Teams](#)

Forming

The forming stage is the first stage of Bruce Tuckman's model of group development and is the initiation of group formation. This stage is also called the orientation stage because individual group members come to know each other. Group members who are new to each other and can't predict each other's behavior can be expected to experience the stress of uncertainty. [See 9.3 Group Life Cycle](#)

Framing bias

Framing bias refers to the tendency of decision makers to be influenced by the way that a situation or problem is presented. For example, when making a purchase, customers find it easier to let go of a discount as opposed to accepting a surcharge, even though they both might cost the person the same amount of money. [See 7.3 Bias in Decision-making](#)

Friendship groups

Friendship groups consist of people you like to be around (a type of Informal groups). [See 9.1 Groups and Teams](#)

Gender

Gender is the social construction of masculinity or femininity as it aligns with designated sex at birth in a specific culture and time period.. [See 11.2 Dimensions of Diversity](#)

Genuine acting

Genuine acting occurs when individuals are asked to display emotions that are aligned with their own. If a job requires genuine acting, less emotional labor is required because the actions are consistent with true feelings. [See 3.3 Emotions at Work](#)

Goal theory

Goal theory states that people will perform better if they have difficult, specific, accepted performance goals or objectives. The first and most basic premise of goal theory is that people will attempt to achieve those goals that they intend to achieve. [See 4.3 Process-Based Theories](#)

Group communication

Group communication may be defined as the exchange of information with those who are alike culturally, linguistically, and/or geographically. Group members may be known by their symbols, such as company logos or work uniforms. They may be known by their use of specialized language or jargon, [See 9.5 Group Communication](#)

Group socialization

Group socialization involves how the group members interact with one another and form relationships. [See 9.3 Group Life Cycle](#)

Groups

A group is a collection of individuals who interact with each other such that one person's actions have an impact on the others. [See 9.1 Groups and Teams](#)

Groupthink

Groupthink is a group pressure phenomenon that increases the risk of the group making flawed decisions by allowing reductions in mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment. Groupthink is most common in highly cohesive groups). [See 9.4 Group Decision-making](#)

Hardiness

Hardiness is the tendency to be less affected by life's stressors and it can be characterized as an individual-difference measure that has a relationship to both optimism and self-efficacy. Hardy individuals are those who are more positive overall about potentially stressful life events, who take more direct action to understand the causes of negative events, and who attempt to learn from them what may be of value for the future. Hardy individuals use effective coping strategies, and they take better care of themselves. [See 3.4 How to Feel Better: Coping With Negative Emotions](#)

Heritability

Heritability refers to the proportion of difference among people that is attributed to genetics. Some of the traits that the study reported as having more than a 0.50 heritability ratio include leadership, obedience to authority, a sense of well-being, alienation, resistance to stress, and fearfulness. [See 8.1 Personality](#)

Heuristics

In programmed decisions, heuristics are mental shortcuts to help reach a decision. For example, a retail store manager may not know how busy the store will be the week of a big sale, but might routinely increase staff by 30% every time there is a big sale (because this has been fairly effective in the past). [See 7.1 Understanding Decision-making](#)

Hidden diversity

Hidden diversity includes traits that are deep-level but may be concealed or revealed at the discretion of individuals who possess them. These hidden traits are called invisible social identities (Clair et al., 2005) and may include sexual orientation, a hidden disability (such as a mental illness or chronic disease), racial heritage or socioeconomic status. [See 11.1 Diversity and Inclusion](#)

High-power distance

In a high-power distance culture, you'd probably be much less likely to challenge the decision, to provide an alternative, or to give input to someone superior to you in the social hierarchy. When

working with people from a high-power distance culture, you may need to take extra care to offer feedback and even wait to approach them on their terms because their cultural framework may discourage such a casual attitude to authority. [See 11.4 Culture](#)

Hindsight bias

Hindsight bias is the opposite of overconfidence bias, as it occurs when looking backward in time and mistakes seem obvious after they have already occurred. In other words, after a surprising event occurred, many individuals are likely to think that they already knew the event was going to happen. This bias may occur because they are selectively reconstructing the events. [See 7.3 Bias in Decision-making](#)

Honeymoon effect

The tendency for informants to produce unrealistically positive ratings has been termed the honeymoon effect when applied to newlyweds (*refer to the Letter of Recommendation Effect as well*). [See 8.2 Measuring Personality](#)

Hygiene factors and motivators

Hygiene factors are things that cause dissatisfaction of workers because they are part of the context in which the job was performed, as opposed to the job itself. Hygiene factors included company policies, supervision, working conditions, salary, safety, and security on the job.

Motivators are factors that are intrinsic to the job, such as achievement, recognition, interesting work, increased responsibilities, advancement, and growth opportunities. Motivators are the conditions that truly encourage employees to try harder. [See 4.2 Need-Based Theories of Motivation](#)

Illumination

Illumination is the insight moment when the solution to the problem becomes apparent to the person, sometimes when it is least expected. [See 7.2 Decision-making Models](#)

Immersion

Immersion is the step in which the decision maker consciously thinks about the problem and gathers information. [See 7.2 Decision-making Models](#)

Implicit tests

Implicit personality are tests based on the assumption that people form automatic or implicit associations between certain concepts based on their previous experience and behavior. If two concepts (e.g., me and assertive) are strongly associated with each other, then they should be sorted together more quickly and easily than two concepts (e.g., me and shy) that are less strongly associated. [See 8.2 Measuring Personality](#)

Incubation

During incubation, the individual sets the problem aside and does not think about it for a while. At this time, the brain is actually working on the problem unconsciously. [See 7.2 Decision-making Models](#)

Individual social responsibility

ISR (individual social responsibility) is defined as an individual being aware of how personal actions have an effect on the community. [See 12.3 Social Responsibility](#)

Individualistic cultures

People in individualistic cultures value individual freedom and personal independence as reflected in the stories they tell themselves. [See 11.4 Culture](#)

Informal groups

Informal groups evolve naturally out of individual and collective self-interest among the members of an organization and are not the result of deliberate organizational design. [See 9.1 Groups and Teams](#)

Informant ratings

Informant ratings ask someone who knows a person well to describe their personality characteristics. Informant ratings are similar in format to self-ratings. As was the case with self-report, items may consist of single words, short phrases, or complete sentences. Informant ratings are particularly valuable when self-ratings are impossible to collect or when their validity is suspect. They also may be combined with self-ratings of the same characteristics to produce more reliable and valid measures of these attributes. [See 8.2 Measuring Personality](#)

Inputs

Inputs are the contributions people feel they are making to the environment. For example, a person's hard work, loyalty to the organization, amount of time with the organization, and level of education, training, and skills may be relevant inputs to consider. [See 4.3 Process-Based Theories](#)

Instrumental values

Instrumental values deal with views on acceptable modes of conduct, such as being honest and ethical, and being ambitious. [See 8.1 Personality](#)

Instrumentality

The second question of used in *expectancy theory* is *Instrumentality*: this refers to the degree to which the person believes that performance is related to subsequent outcomes, such as rewards. For example, do you believe that getting a good grade in the class is related to rewards

such as getting a better job, or gaining approval from your instructor, or from your friends or parents? If you do, you are more likely to put forth effort. [See 4.3 Process-Based Theories](#)

Interactional justice

Interactional justice refers to the degree to which people are treated with respect, kindness, and dignity in interpersonal interactions. We expect to be treated with dignity by our peers, supervisors, and customers. When the opposite happens, we feel angry. [See 4.3 Process-Based Theories](#)

Intercultural communication

All communication is intercultural. Always approach intercultural communication as an opportunity to overcome cultural differences and achieve the cross-cultural understanding you need to be a better person and do your job effectively in a multicultural environment. Communication requires an open attitude to understanding and accommodating cultural differences in the workplace to make business connections. [See 11.4 Culture](#)

Interest groups

Interest groups consist of a network of working women or minority managers. Interest groups often dissolve as people's interests change. [See 9.1 Groups and Teams](#)

Internal policy issues

Internal policy issues are the third level of ethical issues. This includes things like pay and how employees are treated. [See 12.2 Ethics](#)

Interpersonal functions of emotions

Interpersonal functions of emotion refers to the role emotions play between individuals within a group. [See 3.1 Functions of Emotions](#)

Intersex

According to the Intersex Society of North America, "intersex" is a general term used when a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male. For example, a person might be born appearing to be female on the outside but having mostly male-typical anatomy on the inside. Or a person may be born with mosaic genetics, so that some of her cells have XX chromosomes and some of them have XY. It is important to note that male, female, and intersex aren't discrete categories, just labels based on social convention. [See 11.2 Dimensions of Diversity](#)

Intrapersonal functions of emotions

Intrapersonal functions of emotion, which refer to the role that emotions play within each of us individually. [See 3.1 Functions of Emotions](#)

Introversion and extroversion

Introverts (introversion) tend to focus their energies inwardly and have a greater sensitivity to abstract feelings, whereas extroverts (extroversion) direct more of their attention to other people, objects, and events. Research evidence suggests that both types of people have a role to play in organizations. [See 8.4 Personality at Work](#)

Intuitive decision-making model

The intuitive decision-making model has emerged as an alternative to other decision making processes. This model refers to arriving at decisions without conscious reasoning. [See 7.2 Decision-making Models](#)

James-Lange theory

According to the *James-Lange theory of emotion*, our experience of an emotion is the result of the arousal that we experience. This approach proposes that the arousal and the emotion are not independent, but rather that the emotion depends on the arousal. The fear does not occur along with the racing heart but occurs because of the racing heart. [See 3.2 The Experience of Emotion](#)

Job enrichment

Job enrichment means to enhance a job by adding more meaningful tasks to make our work more rewarding. For example, if we as retail salespersons are good at creating eye-catching displays, allowing us to practice these skills and assignment of tasks around this could be considered job enrichment. [See 4.4 Influencing Motivation at Work](#)

Law of effect

The *Law of Effect* was a precursor to B.F. Skinner's operant conditioning, and was developed by psychologist Edward Thorndike. The Law of Effect states that responses that receive positive outcomes in a given situation will be repeated in that situation, while responses that lead to negative outcomes in a given situation will not be repeated in that situation. [See 5.3 Operant Conditioning](#)

Leadership

Leadership does not require specific titles. Consider the last group project you worked on for school. It was likely that someone took on the leadership role for this project, such as coordinating schedules, e-mailing the team, and so forth. This person did not have a formal title but lead the group anyway. This is an example of leadership. [See 10.1 Leadership vs. Management](#)

Learning

Learning may be defined, for our purposes, as a relatively permanent change in behavior that occurs as a result of experience. [See 5.1 Learning](#)

Letter of recommendation effect

The tendency for informants to produce unrealistically positive ratings has been termed the letter of recommendation effect. [See 8.2 Measuring Personality](#)

Locus of control

Locus of control refers to the tendency among individuals to attribute the events affecting their lives either to their own actions or to external forces; it is a measure of how much you think you control your own destiny. Two types of individual are identified. People with an internal locus of control tend to attribute their successes—and failures—to their own abilities and efforts. In contrast, people with an external locus of control tend to attribute things that happen to them as being caused by someone or something else. [See 8.4 Personality at Work](#)

Long-term orientation

Long-term oriented cultures such as in Asia value delayed gratification, perseverance, thrift and frugality, and a social hierarchy based on age and status. A sense of shame for the family and community is also observed across generations. What an individual does reflects on the family and is carried by immediate and extended family members. [See 11.4 Culture](#)

Low-power distance

How comfortable are you with critiquing your boss's decisions? If you are from a low-power distance culture, your answer might be "no problem." In low-power distance cultures, according to Hofstede, people relate to one another more as equals and less as a reflection of dominant or subordinate roles, regardless of their actual formal roles as employee and manager, for example. [See 11.4 Culture](#)

Management

The term management implies someone has been given a position, and through that position or title they have power to guide others. [See 10.1 Leadership vs. Management](#)

Management by objective

Management by objectives (MBO) is a strategic management model that aims to improve the performance of an organization by clearly defining objectives that are agreed to by both management and employees.. MBO is based on goal theory and is quite effective when implemented consistently with goal theory's basic premises. [See 4.3 Process-Based Theories](#)

Masculine (gender expression)

While sex is a biological category, gender is, the social construction of masculinity or femininity as it aligns with designated sex at birth in a specific culture and time period. [See 11.2 Dimensions of Diversity](#)

Masculine orientation

Hofstede et al. (2010) describe the masculine-feminine dichotomy not in terms of whether men or women hold the power in a given culture, but rather the extent to which that culture values certain traits that may be considered masculine or feminine. Thus, the assertive pole has been called “masculine” and the modest, caring pole “feminine.” [See 11.4 Culture](#)

Maslows' hierarchy

Abraham Maslow's theory is based on a simple premise: Human beings have needs that are hierarchically ranked. There are some needs that are basic to all human beings, and in their absence nothing else matters. As we satisfy these basic needs, we start looking to satisfy higher order needs. In other words, once a lower level need is satisfied, it no longer serves as a motivator. [See 4.2 Need-Based Theories of Motivation](#)

Materialism

Members of a materialistic culture place emphasis on external goods and services as a representation of self, power, and social rank. [See 11.4 Culture](#)

Memory traces

Psychologists (and neurobiologists) say that experiences leave memory traces, or engrams (the two terms are synonyms). Memories have to be stored somewhere in the brain, so in order to do so, the brain biochemically alters itself and its neural tissue. *See also Engrams in* [6.2 Varieties of Memory](#)

Meta-analysis

Meta-analysis is a technique used by researchers to summarize what other researchers have found on a given topic. This analysis is based on taking observed correlations from multiple studies, weighting them by the number of observations in each study, and finding out if, overall, the effect holds or not. [See 1.3 OB Research Methods](#)

Misattribution of arousal

The tendency for people to incorrectly label the source of the arousal that they are experiencing is known as the misattribution of arousal. [See 3.2 The Experience of Emotion](#)

Misinformation effect

This misinformation effect in eyewitness memory represents a type of retroactive interference

that can occur during the retention interval. Of course, if correct information is given during the retention interval, the witness's memory will usually be improved. [See 6.2 Varieties of Memory](#)

Mnemonic device

Mnemonic devices are memory aids or tricks to recall information. In a typical case, the person learns a set of cues and then applies these cues to learn and remember information. [See 6.3 Putting it All Together: Improving Your Memory](#)

Monochronic

Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall (1990) state that monochronic time-oriented cultures consider one thing at a time, whereas polychronic time-oriented cultures schedule many things at one time, and time is considered in a more fluid sense. In monochronic time, interruptions are to be avoided, and everything has its own specific time. [See 11.4 Culture](#)

Motivation

Motivation is defined as the desire to achieve a goal or a certain performance level, leading to goal-directed behaviour. Motivation is one of the forces that lead to performance. When we refer to someone as being motivated, we mean that the person is trying hard to accomplish a certain task. Motivation is clearly important if someone is to perform well; however, it is not sufficient. [See 4.1 Motivation](#)

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

Aside from the Big Five personality traits, perhaps the most well-known and most often used personality assessment is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). Unlike the Big Five, which assesses traits, MBTI measures types. MBTI classifies people as one of 16 types. In MBTI, people are grouped using four dimensions. Based on how a person is classified on these four dimensions, it is possible to talk about 16 unique personality types, such as ESTJ and ISTP. [See 8.3 Theories of Personality](#)

Nationality

Nationality refers to a people's nation-state of residence or where they hold citizenship. Most often nationality is derived from the country where one was born, but on occasion people give up their citizenship by birth and migrate to a new country where they claim national identity. For example, an individual could have been born and raised in another country but once they migrate to the Canada and have citizenship, their nationality becomes Canadian. [See 11.2 Dimensions of Diversity](#)

Nature/Nurture

Although there is debate between whether or not our personalities are inherent when we are born (*nature*) versus the way we grew up (*nurture*), most researchers agree that personality is usually a result of both nature and our environmental/education experiences. [See 8.1 Personality](#)

Negative reinforcement

Negative reinforcement is also used to increase the desired behaviour. Negative reinforcement involves removal of unpleasant outcomes once desired behaviour is demonstrated. Nagging an employee to complete a report is an example of negative reinforcement. [See 5.3 Operant Conditioning](#)

Neuroticism

Neuroticism refers to the degree to which a person is anxious, irritable, aggressive, temperamental, and moody. These people have a tendency to have emotional adjustment problems and experience stress and depression on a habitual basis. People very high in neuroticism experience a number of problems at work. [See 8.3 Theories of Personality](#)

Non-programmed decisions

Nonprogrammed decisions are novel, unstructured decisions that are generally based on criteria that are not well-defined. With nonprogrammed decisions, information is more likely to be ambiguous or incomplete, and the decision maker may need to exercise some thoughtful judgment and creative thinking to reach a good solution. [See 7.1 Understanding Decision-making](#)

Nonverbal communication

Non-verbal communication elements include: body language, eye contact, facial expressions, posture, touch and space. Research also shows that 55% of in-person communication comes from nonverbal cues like facial expressions, body stance, and tone of voice. [See 2.1 Communication Defined](#)

Norming

The norming stage is the third stage of Bruce Tuckman's model of group development. Groups that make a successful transition from the storming stage will next experience the norming stage, where the group establishes norms, or informal rules, for behavior and interaction. [See 9.3 Group Life Cycle](#)

Norms

Norms are social conventions that we pick up on through observation, practice, and trial and error. We may not even know we are breaking a social norm until we notice people looking at us strangely or someone corrects or teases us. [See 2.2 The Communication Process](#)

Objective tests

Objective tests represent the most familiar and widely used approach to assessing personality. Objective tests involve administering a standard set of items, each of which is answered using a limited set of response options (e.g., true or false; strongly disagree, slightly disagree, slightly

agree, strongly agree). Responses to these items then are scored in a standardized, predetermined way. [See 8.2 Measuring Personality](#)

Openness

Openness is the degree to which a person is curious, original, intellectual, creative, and open to new ideas. People high in openness seem to thrive in situations that require being flexible and learning new things. They are highly motivated to learn new skills, and they do well in training settings. [See 8.3 Theories of Personality](#)

Operant conditioning

Operant conditioning theory is the simplest of the motivation theories. It basically states that people will do those things for which they are rewarded and will avoid doing things for which they are punished. This premise is based on Thorndyke's "law of effect." [See 5.3 Operant Conditioning](#)

Operational decisions

Operational decisions refer to decisions that employees make each day to make the organization run. [See 7.1 Understanding Decision-making](#)

Optimism

Optimism is defined as a general tendency to expect positive outcomes; studies suggest that optimists are happier and have less stress. [See 3.4 How to Feel Better: Coping With Negative Emotions](#)

Organizational behavior

Organizational behavior (OB) is defined as the systematic study and application of knowledge about how individuals and groups act within the organizations where they work. [See 1.2 What is Organizational Behaviour?](#)

Organizational behaviour modification

A systematic way in which reinforcement theory principles are applied is called Organizational Behaviour Modification (or OB Mod). This is a systematic application of reinforcement theory to modify employee behaviours in the workplace. The model consists of five stages. [See 5.5 Learning at Work](#)

Originality

Originality refers to how unique a person's ideas are. [See 7.2 Decision-making Models](#)

Outcomes

Outcomes are the perceived rewards someone can receive from the situation. For example, the

hourly wage for an employee could be a consideration. There may also be other, more peripheral outcomes, such as acknowledgment or preferential treatment from a manager. [See 4.3 Process-Based Theories](#)

Overconfidence bias

Overconfidence bias occurs when individuals overestimate their ability to predict future events. [See 7.3 Bias in Decision-making](#)

Participatory leaders

Participative leaders make sure that employees are involved in the making of important decisions. Participative leadership may be more effective when employees have high levels of ability, and when the decisions to be made are personally relevant to them. [See 10.2 Theories of Leadership](#)

Passive management by exception

Passive management by exception is similar in that it involves leaving employees alone, but in this method the manager waits until something goes wrong before coming to the rescue. [See 10.2 Theories of Leadership](#)

Path-goal theory

Robert House's path-goal theory of leadership is based on the expectancy theory of motivation. The expectancy theory of motivation suggests that employees are motivated when they believe—or expect—that (a) their effort will lead to high performance, (b) their high performance will be rewarded, and (c) the rewards they will receive are valuable to them. According to the path-goal theory of leadership, the leader's main job is to make sure that all three of these conditions exist. [See 10.2 Theories of Leadership](#)

Performing

The performing stage is the fourth stage of Bruce Tuckman's model of group development. In the performing stage, the group accomplishes its mandate, fulfills its purpose, and reaches its goals. [See 9.3 Group Life Cycle](#)

Personal issues

Personal issues, our last level of ethical issues, refer to how we treat others within our organization. [See 12.2 Ethics](#)

Personality

Personality encompasses our relatively stable feelings, thoughts, and behavioural patterns. [See 8.1 Personality](#)

Polychronic

With business, family, and social life mixing more freely, polychronic time-oriented cultures tend to challenge the monochronic outsider. In Greece, Italy, Chile, and Saudi Arabia, for instance, business meetings may be scheduled at a certain time, but when they actually begin may be another story. [See 11.4 Culture](#)

Positive and negative affectivity

Behaviour is function of moods and people can manifest by positive and negative affectivity traits. Positive affective people experience positive moods more frequently, whereas negative affective people experience negative moods with greater frequency. Negative affective people focus on the “glass half empty” and experience more anxiety and nervousness. Positive affective people tend to be happier at work, and their happiness spreads to the rest of the work environment. [See 8.3 Theories of Personality](#)

Positive reinforcement

Positive reinforcement is a method of increasing the desired behaviour (Beatty & Schneier, 1975). Positive reinforcement involves making sure that behaviour is met with positive consequences. For example, praising an employee for treating a customer respectfully is an example of positive reinforcement. [See 5.3 Operant Conditioning](#)

Proactive personality

Proactive personality refers to a person's inclination to fix what is perceived as wrong, change the status quo, and use initiative to solve problems. Instead of waiting to be told what to do, proactive people take action to initiate meaningful change and remove the obstacles they face along the way. In general, having a proactive personality has a number of advantages for these people. For example, they tend to be more successful in their job searches. [See 8.3 Theories of Personality](#)

Problem identification

Problem identification is the step in which the need for problem solving becomes apparent. If you do not recognize that you have a problem, it is impossible to solve it. [See 7.2 Decision-making Models](#)

Procedural justice

Procedural justice refers to the degree to which fair decision-making procedures are used to arrive at a decision. People do not care only about reward fairness. They also expect decision-making processes to be fair. [See 4.3 Process-Based Theories](#)

Profession

A profession is an occupation that involves mastery of complex knowledge and skills through prolonged training, education, or practical experience. [See 12.1 Professionalism](#)

Professionalism

Professionalism involves the aims and behaviors that demonstrate an individual's level of competence expected by a professional within a given profession. [See 12.1 Professionalism](#)

Programmed decisions

Programmed decisions are those that are repeated over time and for which an existing set of rules can be developed to guide the process. These decisions might be simple, or they could be fairly complex, but the criteria that go into making the decision are all known or can at least be estimated with a reasonable degree of accuracy. [See 7.1 Understanding Decision-making](#)

Projective tests

Projective tests originally were based on the projective hypothesis: If a person is asked to describe or interpret ambiguous stimuli—that is, things that can be understood in a number of different ways—their responses will be influenced by nonconscious needs, feelings, and experiences. Two prominent examples of projective tests are the Rorschach Inkblot Test and the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). [See 8.2 Measuring Personality](#)

Psychologist-practitioners

Psychologist-practitioners, such as clinical, counselling, industrial-organizational, and school psychologists, use existing research to enhance the everyday life of others. [See 1.1 Psychology Defined](#)

Psychology

The word “psychology” comes from the Greek words “psyche,” meaning life, and “logos,” meaning explanation. Formally defined, psychology is the scientific study of mind and behaviour. [See Section 1.1 Psychology Defined](#)

Punctuated equilibrium

The concept of punctuated equilibrium was first proposed in 1972 by paleontologists Niles Eldredge and Stephen Jay Gould, who both believed that evolution occurred in rapid, radical spurts rather than gradually over time. In this model, revolutionary change occurs in brief, punctuated bursts, generally catalyzed by a crisis or problem that breaks through the systemic inertia and shakes up the deep organizational structures in place. At this point, the organization or group has the opportunity to learn and create new structures that are better aligned with current realities. Whether the group does this is not guaranteed. [See 9.3 Group Life Cycle](#)

Punishment

Punishment is method of reducing the frequency of undesirable behaviours. Punishment involves presenting negative consequences following unwanted behaviours. Giving an employee a warning for consistently being late to work is an example of punishment. [See 5.3 Operant Conditioning](#)

Race

Race is what we call a loaded word because it can bring up strong emotions and connotations. Understandings of race fall into two camps: a biological versus a sociopolitical construction of what it means to belong to a particular racial group. A biological construction of race claims that “pure” races existed and could be distinguished by such physical features as eye color and shape, skin color, and hair. Moreover, these differences could be traced back to genetic differences. This theory has been debunked by numerous scientists and been replaced with the understanding that there are greater genetic differences within racial groups, not between them. In addition, there is no scientific connection with racial identity and cultural traits or behaviors. *From a biological standpoint, race is not a valid construct.*

Instead of biology, we draw on a sociopolitical understanding of what it means to be of a particular race. This simply means that it is not a person’s DNA that places them into a particular racial grouping, but all of the other factors that create social relations—politics, geography, or migration. [See 11.2 Dimensions of Diversity](#)

Rational decision making

The rational decision-making model describes a series of steps that decision makers should consider if their goal is to maximize the quality of their outcomes. In other words, if you want to make sure that you make the best choice, going through the formal steps of the rational decision-making model may make sense. [See 7.2 Decision-making Models](#)

Reciprocal determinism

This concept implies that people control their own environment (for example, by quitting one’s job) as much as the environment controls people (for example, being laid off). Thus, learning is seen as a more active, interactive process in which the learner has at least some control. [See 5.4 Social Learning Theory](#)

Recoding

The process of encoding always involves recoding—that is, taking the information from the form it is delivered to us and then converting it in a way that we can make sense of it. For example, you might try to remember the colors of a rainbow by using the acronym ROY G BIV (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet). [See 6.2 Varieties of Memory](#)

Reference groups

The reference group effect occurs when we base our self-perceptions, in part, on how we compare to others in our sociocultural reference group. For instance, if you tend to work harder than most of your friends, you will see yourself as someone who is relatively conscientious, even if you are not particularly conscientious in any absolute sense. [See 8.2 Measuring Personality](#)

Referent

In equity theory, the referent other may be a specific person as well as a category of people. Referents should be comparable to us—otherwise the comparison is not meaningful. For example, it would be pointless for students workers to compare themselves to the CEO of the company, given the differences in the nature of inputs and outcomes. [See 4.3 Process-Based Theories](#)

Reflective and reactive systems

The human brain processes information for decision-making using one of two routes: a reflective system and a reactive (or reflexive) system. The *reflective system* is logical, analytical, deliberate, and methodical, while the *reactive system* is quick, impulsive, and intuitive, relying on emotions or habits to provide cues for what to do next. [See 7.1 Understanding Decision-making](#)

Reinforcement

A central feature of most approaches to learning is the concept of reinforcement. This concept dates from Thorndike's law of effect. Hence, reinforcement can be defined as anything that causes a certain behavior to be repeated or inhibited. [See 5.3 Operant Conditioning](#)

Reinforcement schedule

A knowledge of the types of schedules of reinforcement is essential to managers if they are to know how to choose rewards that will have maximum impact on employee performance. There are two groups of reinforcement schedules: continuous and partial reinforcement schedules. A *continuous reinforcement schedule* rewards desired behavior every time it occurs. A *partial reinforcement schedule* rewards desired behavior at specific intervals, not every time desired behavior is exhibited. [See 5.3 Operant Conditioning](#)

Reinforcement theory

Reinforcement theory is based on a simple idea that may be viewed as common sense. Beginning at infancy we learn through reinforcement. According to reinforcement theory, behaviour is a function of its outcomes; it is based on the work of Ivan Pavlov on behavioural conditioning and the later work of B. F. Skinner on operant conditioning. [See 4.3 Process-Based Theories](#)

Relational context

Relational context includes the previous interpersonal history and type of relationship we have with a person. [See 2.2 The Communication Process](#)

Relationship management

Relationship management exists when you are able to help others manage their own emotions and truly establish supportive relationships with others. [See 3.3 Emotions at Work](#)

Religion

Employers are required to respect and accommodate an individual's religion (aka creed). While the early White settlers were most often Protestant or Roman Catholic, the diversity of religions in Canada has significantly expanded to include all major world religions and increasingly people who do not prescribe to any creed. [See 11.2 Dimensions of Diversity](#)

Research psychologist

Research psychologists use scientific methods to create new knowledge about the causes of behaviour. [See Section 1.1 Psychology Defined](#)

Retrieval

Retrieval is the key process in memory and describes our ability to call up information we have learned; it's given more prominence than encoding or storage because if information were encoded and stored but could not be retrieved, it would be useless. [See 6.2 Varieties of Memory](#)

Retroactive interference

Retroactive interference refers to new activities during the retention interval that interfere with retrieving the specific, older memory. But just as newer things can interfere with remembering older things, so can the opposite happen. [See 6.2 Varieties of Memory](#)

Rights approach

In the rights approach, we look at how our actions will affect the rights of those around us. So rather than looking at good versus harm as in the utilitarian approach, we are looking at individuals and their rights to make our decision. [See 12.2 Ethics](#)

Secondary emotions

Secondary emotions are those that have a major cognitive component. They are determined by both their level of arousal, ranging from mild to intense, and their valence, ranging from pleasant to unpleasant. [See 3.2 The Experience of Emotion](#)

Secondary traits

Secondary traits are those that are not quite as obvious or as consistent as central traits. They are

present under specific circumstances and include preferences and attitudes. For example, one person gets angry when people try to tickle him; another can only sleep on the left side of the bed; and yet another always orders her salad dressing on the side. [See 8.3 Theories of Personality](#)

Self-awareness

Self-awareness exists when you are able to accurately perceive, evaluate, and display appropriate emotions. [See 3.3 Emotions at Work](#)

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is a belief that one can perform a specific task successfully. Research shows that the belief that we can do something is a good predictor of whether we can actually do it. Self-efficacy is different from other personality traits in that it is job specific. [See 8.3 Theories of Personality](#)

Self-enhancement bias

Personality ratings reflect a self-enhancement bias; in other words, people are motivated to ignore (or at least downplay) some of their less desirable characteristics and to focus instead on their more positive attributes. [See 8.2 Measuring Personality](#)

Self-esteem

Self-esteem can be defined as one's opinion or belief about one's self and self-worth. [See 8.4 Personality at Work](#)

Self-management

Self-management exists when you are able to direct your emotions in a positive way when needed. [See 3.3 Emotions at Work](#)

Self-monitoring

In self-monitoring (*stage 1 of Behavioural self-management*), the individual tries to identify the problem. For example, if your supervisor told you that your choice of clothing was unsuitable for the office, you would more than likely focus your attention on your clothes. [See 5.5 Learning at Work](#)

Self-reinforcement

In self-reinforcement, people can, in effect, pat themselves on the back and recognize that they accomplished what they set out to do. According to Bandura, self-reinforcement requires three conditions if it is to be effective: (1) clear performance standards must be set to establish both the quantity and quality of the targeted behavior, (2) the person must have control over the desired reinforcers, and (3) the reinforcers must be administered only on a conditional basis—that is, failure to meet the performance standard must lead to denial of the reward. [See 5.5 Learning at Work](#)

Self-report

Self-report measures ask people to describe themselves. This approach offers two key advantages. First, self-raters have access to an unparalleled wealth of information. Second, asking people to describe themselves is the simplest, easiest, and most cost-effective approach to assessing personality. [See 8.2 Measuring Personality](#)

Semantic memory

Semantic memory is our storehouse of more-or-less permanent knowledge, such as the meanings of words in a language (e.g., the meaning of “parasol”) and the huge collection of facts about the world (e.g., there are 196 countries in the world, and 206 bones in your body). [See 6.2 Varieties of Memory](#)

Servant leadership

Servant leadership is a leadership approach that defines the leader’s role as serving the needs of others. According to this approach, the primary mission of the leader is to develop employees and help them reach their goals. Servant leaders put their employees first, understand their personal needs and desires, empower them, and help them develop in their careers. [See 10.2 Theories of Leadership](#)

Sex

A person’s **sex** is a label, often designated by doctors at birth as male or female, based on an individual’s genitals, hormones, and/or chromosomes. [See 11.2 Dimensions of Diversity](#)

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation refers to a person’s preference for sexual or romantic relationships; one may prefer a partner of the same sex, the opposite sex, both, or none. [See 11.2 Dimensions of Diversity](#)

Short-term orientation

If you work within a culture that has a short-term orientation, you may need to place greater emphasis on reciprocating greetings, gifts, and rewards. For example, if you send a thank-you note the morning after being treated to a business dinner, your host will appreciate your promptness. While there may be a respect for tradition, there is also an emphasis on personal representation and honour as reflections of identity and integrity. Short-term oriented cultures also value personal stability and consistency, contributing to an overall sense of predictability and familiarity. [See 11.4 Culture](#)

Sibling contrast effect

The sibling contrast effect occurs when parents exaggerate the true magnitude of differences between their children. [See 8.2 Measuring Personality](#)

Similarity-attraction phenomenon

There is a tendency for people to be attracted to people similar to themselves. Research shows that individuals communicate less frequently with those who are perceived as different from themselves. They are also more likely to experience emotional conflict with people who differ with respect to race, age, and gender. Individuals who are different from their team members are more likely to report perceptions of unfairness and feel that their contributions are ignored. The similarity-attraction phenomenon may explain some of the potentially unfair treatment based on demographic traits. [See 11.3 Diversity in the Workplace – Benefits and Challenges](#)

Situational leadership

Kenneth Blanchard and Paul Hersey's Situational Leadership Theory (SLT) argues that leaders must use different leadership styles depending on their followers' development level. According to this model, employee readiness (defined as a combination of their competence and commitment levels) is the key factor determining the proper leadership style. [See 10.2 Theories of Leadership](#)

Social and cultural functions of emotions

Social and cultural functions of emotion refers to the role that emotions play in the maintenance of social order within a society. [See 3.1 Functions of Emotions](#)

Social awareness

Social awareness exists when you are able to understand how others feel. [See 3.3 Emotions at Work](#)

Social context

Social context refers to the stated rules or unstated norms that guide communication. As we are socialized into our various communities, we learn rules and implicitly pick up on norms for communicating. [See 2.2 The Communication Process](#)

Social learning theory

A model of learning by psychologist Albert Bandura. Social learning theory is defined as the process of molding behavior through the reciprocal interaction of a person's cognitions, behavior, and environment. [See 5.4 Social Learning Theory](#)

Social loafing

Social loafing refers to the tendency of individuals to put in less effort when working in a group context. This phenomenon, also known as the Ringelmann effect, was first noted by French agricultural engineer Max Ringelmann in 1913. [See 9.2 Characteristics of Effective Groups](#)

Social referencing

Social referencing is the process whereby infants seek out information from others to clarify a situation and then use that information to act. Facial expressions of emotion are important regulators of social interaction. [See 3.1 Functions of Emotions](#)

Social responsibility

Social responsibility is the duty of business to do no harm to society. In other words, in their daily operations, businesses should be concerned about the welfare of society and mindful of how its actions could affect society as a whole. We know that social responsibility doesn't always happen and profits are sometimes put first. [See 12.3 Social Responsibility](#)

Societal issues

There are four levels of ethical issues. First, societal issues deal with bigger items such as taking care of the environment, capitalism, or embargos. [See 12.2 Ethics](#)

Stakeholder's issues

The second level of ethical issues is stakeholder issues. These are the things that a stakeholder might care about, such as product safety. [See 12.2 Ethics](#)

Stakeholders

Stakeholders are all the individuals or groups that are affected by an organization (such as customers, employees, shareholders, etc.). [See 7.1 Understanding Decision-making](#)

Stereotypes

A stereotype is a false or generalized, and usually negative, conception of a group of people that results in the unconscious or conscious categorization of each member of that group, without regard for individual differences. [See 11.1 Diversity and Inclusion](#)

Storage

Storage refers to maintaining information over time. [See 6.2 Varieties of Memory](#)

Storming

The storming stage is the second stage of Bruce Tuckman's model of group development. Since the possibility of overlapping and competing viewpoints and perspectives exists, the group will experience a storming stage, a time of struggles as the members themselves sort out their differences. There may be more than one way to solve the problem or task at hand, and some group members may prefer one strategy over another.. [See 9.3 Group Life Cycle](#)

Strategic decisions

Strategic decisions set the course of an organization. [See 7.1 Understanding Decision-making](#)

Supportive leaders

Supportive leaders provide emotional support to employees. They treat employees well, care about them on a personal level, and they are encouraging. Supportive leadership is predicted to be effective when employees are under a lot of stress or performing boring, repetitive jobs. [See 10.2 Theories of Leadership](#)

Surface acting

Surface acting requires an individual to exhibit physical signs, such as smiling, that reflect emotions customers want to experience. A children's hairdresser cutting the hair of a crying toddler may smile and act sympathetic without actually feeling so. In this case, the person is engaged in surface acting. [See 3.3 Emotions at Work](#)

Surface-level diversity

Surface-level diversity refers to differences you can generally observe in others, like ethnicity, race, gender, age, culture, language, disability, etc. You can often quickly and easily observe these features in a person. And people often do just that, making subtle judgments at the same time, which can lead to bias or discrimination. [See 11.1 Diversity and Inclusion](#)

Surveys

Surveys are one of the primary methods management researchers use to learn about OB. A basic survey involves asking individuals to respond to a number of questions. The questions can be open-ended or close-ended. [See 1.3 OB Research Methods](#)

Tactical decisions

Tactical decisions are decisions about how things will get done. [See 7.1 Understanding Decision-making](#)

Task group

When a group is less permanent, it is usually referred to as a task group. An example here would be a corporate-sponsored task force on improving affirmative action efforts. [See 9.1 Groups and Teams](#)

Teams

A team may be thought of as a particularly cohesive and purposeful type of work group. A collection of people can be defined as a work group or team if it shows a series of common characteristics. [See 9.1 Groups and Teams](#) for a list of team characteristics.

Terminal values

Terminal values refer to end states people desire in life, such as leading a prosperous life and a world at peace. [See 8.1 Personality](#)

Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)

Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) is a unique method developed by David McClelland is used to assess dominant need. This method entails presenting research subjects an ambiguous picture asking them to write a story based on it. [See 4.2 Need-Based Theories of Motivation](#)

Theory X leaders

The Theory X leader assumes that the average individual dislikes work and is incapable of exercising adequate self-direction and self-control. As a consequence, they exert a highly controlling leadership style. [See 10.2 Theories of Leadership](#)

Theory Y leaders

Theory Y leaders believe that people have creative capacities, as well as both the ability and desire to exercise self-direction and self-control. They typically allow organizational members significant amounts of discretion in their jobs and encourage them to participate in departmental and organizational decision-making. [See 10.2 Theories of Leadership](#)

Thinking hats

The Edward Debono's model of the *Six Thinking Hats* provides a different way of thinking about the way we make decisions. The six hats provide us with perspectives from six different perspectives. Similar to the [rational decision making model](#), this model uses hats to represent the steps we need to follow in order to make good decisions. [See 7.2 Decision-making Models](#)

Trait approach

The earliest approach to the study of leadership sought to identify a set of traits that distinguished leaders from non-leaders. In recent years, after the advances in personality literature such as the development of the Big Five personality framework, researchers have had more success in identifying traits that predict leadership. Most importantly, charismatic leadership, which is among the contemporary approaches to leadership, may be viewed as an example of a trait approach. [See 10.2 Theories of Leadership](#)

Transactional model of communication

Transactional model of communication describes communication as a process in which communicators generate social realities within social, relational, and cultural contexts. [See 2.2 The Communication Process](#)

Transformational leaders

Transformational leaders lead employees by aligning employee goals with the leader's goals. Thus, employees working for transformational leaders start focusing on the company's well-being rather than on what is best for them as individual employees. [See 10.2 Theories of Leadership](#)

Transgender (gender identity)

When an individual does not identify with the gender of the sex that they were assigned at birth, they may identify as transgender. [See 11.2 Dimensions of Diversity](#)

Transphobia

Transphobia is the aversion to, fear or hatred or intolerance of trans people and communities. Like other prejudices, it is based on stereotypes and misconceptions that are used to justify discrimination, harassment and violence toward trans people. [See 11.2 Dimensions of Diversity](#)

Transactional leaders

Transactional leaders ensure that employees demonstrate the right behaviours and provide resources in exchange. [See 10.2 Theories of Leadership](#)

Two-factor theory

Proposed by Frederick Herzberg, the *two-factor theory of motivation* includes hygiene factors and motivators. By asking individuals what satisfies them on the job and what dissatisfies them, Herzberg came to the conclusion that aspects of the work environment that satisfy employees are very different from aspects that dissatisfy them. [See 4.2 Need-Based Theories of Motivation](#)

Two-factor theory of emotion

The two-factor theory of emotion asserts that the experience of emotion is determined by the intensity of the arousal we are experiencing but that the cognitive appraisal of the situation determines what the emotion will be. Because both arousal and appraisal are necessary, we can say that emotions have two factors, both an arousal factor and a cognitive factor. [See 3.2 The Experience of Emotion](#)

Type A personality

Type A personality is characterized by impatience, restlessness, aggressiveness, competitiveness, polyphasic activities (having many “irons in the fire” at one time), and being under considerable time pressure. Work activities are particularly important to Type A individuals, and they tend to freely invest long hours on the job to meet pressing (and recurring) deadlines. [See 8.3 Theories of Personality](#)

Type B personality

Type B personality people experience fewer pressing deadlines or conflicts, are relatively free of any sense of time urgency or hostility, and are generally less competitive on the job. [See 8.3 Theories of Personality](#)

Unconditioned response

In classical conditioning, an unconditioned response (UR) is an unlearned response that occurs

naturally in reaction to the unconditioned stimulus. For example, if the smell of food is the unconditioned stimulus, the feeling of hunger in response to the smell of food is the unconditioned response. [See 5.2 Classical Conditioning](#)

Unconditioned stimulus

In classical conditioning, the unconditioned stimulus (UCS) is one that unconditionally, naturally, and automatically triggers a response. In other words, the response takes place without any prior learning. For example, when you smell one of your favorite foods, you may immediately feel hungry. In this example, the smell of the food is the unconditioned stimulus. This example is derived from "Pavlov's Dog" experiments, which illustrates the process. [See 5.2 Classical Conditioning](#)

Utilitarian approach

The utilitarian approach says that when choosing one ethical action over another, we should select the one that does the most good and least harm. [See 12.2 Ethics](#)

Valence

Valence is the third question used in *expectancy theory*. Individuals are concerned about the value of the rewards awaiting them as a result of performance. The anticipated satisfaction that will result from an outcome is labeled *valence*. For example, do you value getting a better job, or gaining approval from your instructor, friends, or parents? If these outcomes are desirable to you, your expectancy and instrumentality is high, and you are more likely to put forth effort. [See 4.3 Process-Based Theories](#)

Values

Values refer to stable life goals that people have, reflecting what is most important to them. Values are established throughout one's life as a result of the accumulating life experiences and tend to be relatively stable. [See 8.1 Personality](#)

Values statement

A values statement is the organization's guiding principles, those things that the company finds important. A company publicizes its values statements but often an internal code of conduct is put into place in order to ensure employees follow company values set forth and advertised to the public. [See 12.2 Ethics](#)

Variable ratio

A variable-ratio schedule is one in which rewards are administered only after an employee has performed the desired behavior a number of times, with the number changing from the administration of one reward to the next but averaging over time to a certain ratio of number of performances to rewards. [See 5.3 Operant Conditioning](#)

Verbal communication

Verbal communications in business take place over the phone or in person. In addition to routine phone calls and in-person conversations, verbal communication is an important tool for creating shared values within organization through storytelling and for communicating in crucial situations. [See 2.1 Communication Defined](#)

Verification and application

The verification and application stage happens when the decision maker consciously verifies the feasibility of the solution and implements the decision. [See 7.2 Decision-making Models](#)

Vicarious learning

Vicarious learning is learning that takes place through the imitation of other role models. That is, we observe and analyze what another person does and the resulting consequences. As a result, we learn without having to experience the phenomenon firsthand. [See 5.4 Social Learning Theory](#)

Virtual teams

A virtual team is one whose primary means of communicating is electronic, with only occasional phone and face-to-face communication, if at all. [See 9.1 Groups and Teams](#)

Virtue approach

The virtue approach asks the question, “What kind of person will I be if I choose this action?” In other words, the virtue approach to ethics looks at desirable qualities and says we should act to obtain our highest potential. [See 12.2 Ethics](#)

Whistleblower

Someone who informs law enforcement of ethical or illegal violations is called a whistleblower. Like a person, a company can have ethics and values that should be the cornerstone of any successful person. [See 12.2 Ethics](#)

Wildstorming

A variation of brainstorming is wildstorming, in which the group focuses on ideas that are impossible and then imagines what would need to happen to make them possible. [See 7.2 Decision-making Models](#)

Work role

A work role is an expected behavior pattern assigned or attributed to a particular position in the organization. It defines individual responsibilities on behalf of the group. [See 9.2 Characteristics of Effective Groups](#)

Written communication

Written communication can be constructed over a longer period of time (in contrast to verbal communication, which takes place in real time). Written communication is often *asynchronous* (occurring at different times). A written communication can also be read by many people (such as all employees in a department or all customers). [See 2.1 Communication Defined](#)

Versioning History

This page provides a record of edits and changes made to this book since its initial publication. Whenever edits or updates are made in the text, we provide a record and description of those changes here. If the change is minor, the version number increases by 0.1. If the edits involve a number of changes, the version number increases to the next full number.

The files posted alongside this book always reflect the most recent version.

Version	Date	Change	Affected Web Page
1.0	01 May 2022	First Publication	N/A