**Social Psychology Lesson Plan**

**Lesson:** Group Dynamics

**Reading to complete before class:**

Reading to complete before class: Henderson, R. (2017, May 24). The science behind why we follow the crowd. Retrieved from https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/after-service/201705/the-science-behind-why-people-follow-the-crowd

**Learning objectives from the course syllabus**

1. Demonstrate familiarity with the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, and historical trends in social psychology through in-class quizzes.
2. Develop critical thinking by applying social psychology concepts to real-world situations.

**Lesson-specific learning objectives**

1. Describe the influence that groups have on decision-making.
2. Define and distinguish between the risky-shift phenomenon and group polarization.

**Materials**

* Polling Software, such as polleverywhere.com
* Group Dynamics (Mini Lesson) PowerPoint
* Group Dynamics Worksheet

**Lesson Outline *(75 minutes)***

* Brief overview of the lesson *(5 minutes)*
* Minute paper 1 – Slide 2 *(3 minutes)*
  + Prompt: What are groups, and why do people join them?
* Chapter review – Slide 3 *(12 minutes)*
  + Using polling software, students will participate in a review of the group processes outlined in the chapter *(6 minutes)*
    - Matching exercise: students will match the definitions to the correct group processes (see Appendix A)
  + Instructor will discuss the correct responses and explain any material that is unclear *(6 minutes)*
* Mini Lesson (*45 minutes)*
  + Give instructions *(1 minute)*
    - “I am going to provide you with a story of an individual that is facing a difficult decision. You will need to advise the fictional character as to how much risk he should take in facing the given decision.”
  + Provide scenario – Slide 4 *(1 minute)*
  + Give answer choices and ask clarifying questions *(3 minutes)*
    - Which choice is the riskiest?
    - Which choice is the safest?
  + Students complete the poll (see Appendix B) *(2 minutes)*
  + Gather the average from the poll, form the class into groups of five, and give them a fresh copy of the same case example. Invite each group to discuss the case either until they reach a consensus, or until you call time after 3 or 4 minutes. At that point, have them mark what they would *now* advise. *(5 minutes)*
  + Think-Pair-Share – Slide 7 *(15 minutes)*
    - Provide slide with expected results and have students discuss what they notice about the individual versus group probabilities
    - Meanwhile, the instructor gathers the group results and provides the class data so that the students can compare class results to expected results
      * Think *(2 minutes)*
      * Pair *(5 minutes)*
      * Share *(7 minutes)*
    - Discussion points:
      * Do groups or individuals take more risks?
      * Was there a shift in risk taking?
      * Did you decide to conform to your group’s choice?
  + Group Work *(8 minutes)*
    - Ask students to define the risky-shift phenomenon, define group polarization, and write how the two relate to one another. Students should also write about whether people might be more risk-averse in today’s political climate.
* Group Processes review – Slide 8 *(10 minutes)*
  + Give instructions *(1 minute)*
    - “Today, you saw one example of how individuals make decisions when they are in groups. Sometimes, groups lead individuals to behave in different ways than they would on their own. Identify the group processes that are at play in the each of the examples on the following worksheet”
  + Students complete group processes worksheet (*9* minutes; see Appendix C)
* Minute paper 2 – Slide 9 *(3 minutes)*
  + Prompt: List a few of the negative consequences that can occur when people think or act in groups. Reflect on some of the concepts you went over today.

Appendix A

**Group Dynamics Definitions**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Term | Definition |
| Minority influence | occurs when a confident and persistent minority group influences a decision made by a whole group |
| Social facilitation | the mere presence of others can improve performance on well-practiced tasks |
| Group polarization | occurs when a group supports a decision supported by the majority of the group following a group discussion |
| Social inhibition | The mere presence of others can impair performance on tasks that one is not particularly good at |
| Groupthink | a mode of thinking that occurs when the desire for unanimity in a decision-making group overrides a realistic appraisal of alternative courses of action |
| Social loafing | on group tasks, people will sometimes exert less effort if individual contributions are not possible to identify |
| Deindividuation | giving up normal behavioral restraints to the group |
| Bystander effect | claims that behavior is influenced by the number of people available to intervene |
| Pluralistic ignorance | the tendency to do nothing because others are doing nothing |
| Diffusion of responsibility | the tendency for individuals to think others will help, so they do not intervene |

Appendix B

**Group Polarization Demonstration**

*Shared with STP’s “This is How I Teach” blog by David Myers.*

Have everyone in the class read the following scenario:

George, a competent chess player, is participating in a national chess tournament. In an early match he draws the top-favored player in the tournament as his opponent. George has been given a relatively low ranking in light of his performance in previous tournaments. During the course of his play with the opponent, George notes the possibility of a deceptive though risky maneuver which might bring him a quick victory. At the same time, if the attempted maneuver should fail, George would be left in an exposed position and defeat would almost certainly follow.

Imagine that you are advising George. Please check the *lowest* probability that you would consider acceptable for the risky play to be attempted.

George should attempt the play if the chances that the play would succeed are at *least*:

\_\_ 10% chance of success

\_\_ 20% chance of success

\_\_ 30% chance of success

\_\_ 40% chance of success

\_\_ 50% chance of success

\_\_ 60% chance of success

\_\_ 70% chance of success

\_\_ 80% chance of success

\_\_ 90% chance of success

\_\_ 100% (George should attempt the play only if it is certain that the play would succeed)

Before students complete the poll, ensure that the students understand the probabilities by asking the following questions:

* Which number is the riskiest choice?
* Which is the safest?

Gather the average from the poll, form the class into groups of five, and give them a fresh copy of the same case example. Invite each group to discuss the case either until they reach a consensus, or until you call time after 3 or 4 minutes. At that point, have them mark what they would *now* advise.

If you look at the average from the pre-discussion responses, you will observe that the average student will tend to favor attempting the play, even if the chances of success are as low as 40%. After discussion, this tendency will typically be strengthened, with the class average having shifted to something near 30%. This illustrates a well-replicated phenomenon, the *risky-shift* phenomenon, in which groups take more risks than their average individual members. This phenomenon inspired follow-up experiments on group polarization—the tendency of group discussion to enhance a group members’ initial leanings.

Appendix C

**Group Processes Worksheet**

Below are some examples of common group processes. Read through each example, then list the term that corresponds with that example.

**Example 1**: In 1964 Kitty Genovese was stabbed to death in front of her apartment in New York City at 2:30 a.m. Her murder was overheard by 34 of her neighbors, yet none of them came to her aid.

Group process: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Example 2**: If two students are walking down the hallway at school, and a pen falls out of one student’s pocket or backpack, the other student is more likely to tell the first student that he or she dropped something when the two students are alone in the hallway. If the hallway is crowded with people and a pen falls out of a student’s pocket or backpack, the same other student may think others will help, and, therefore, he or she may not say anything.

Group process: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Example 3**: An alarm is sounding and no one is moving. A person assumes that there is no real threat because everyone else is acting as if things are normal.

Group process: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Example 4**: A popular student at school declares that he/she is going to have an impromptu protest about “unreasonable” school rules. Other students need to decide quickly if they will join the protest. Rather than think through the relatively unsound reasoning behind the decision to protest, other students decide to join the protest.

Group process: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Example 5**: A group of students decides it would be fun to car surf. So, with the encouragement of all involved, one student climbs to the roof of a car and assumes the surfer position on the slowly moving car. Unfortunately, when the car stops, the surfer slides forward over the hood of the car and is seriously injured. No one in the group had considered the possible danger of their decision.

Group process:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_