Motivation and De-Motivation in Groups
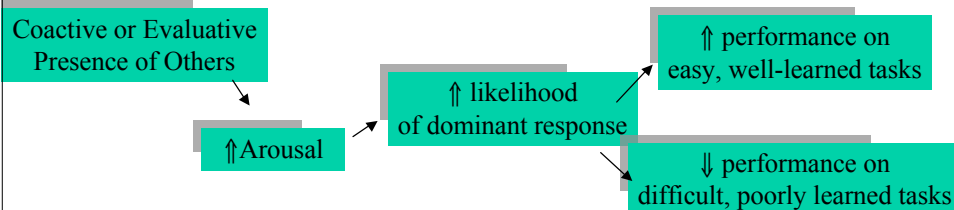

Prof. Williams
Psy 240
Spring 2007

Overview

- We will focus on two phenomena:
  - Social Facilitation
  - Social Loafing
- These two phenomena are very basic to all group research, and represent two very old traditions of research in social psychology.
- They appear to say the opposite thing, but they can be reconciled.
- Meta-analysis of social loafing research
- Searching for motivation gains on collective tasks.
  - Social compensation

Social Facilitation

- Triplett (1898): Dynamogenic factors in pacemaking and competition
  - *bicyclists go faster when competing;*
  - *boys reeled a motor contraption faster in the social presence of another competing boy*
- *followed by many years of inconsistent results … researchers lost interest*
- Zajonc (1965): Social facilitation of dominant responses

Social Facilitation

Coactive or Evaluative Presence of Others

⇑ Arousal

⇑ likelihood of dominant response

⇑ performance on easy, well-learned tasks

⇓ performance on difficult, poorly learned tasks

But, why?

(1) *Compresence* (Zajonc, 1966)

(2) *Evaluation apprehension* (Cottrell, 1968)

(3) *Distraction-conflict* (Baron & Sanders, 1986)

Social Facilitation:
The Compresence Explanation
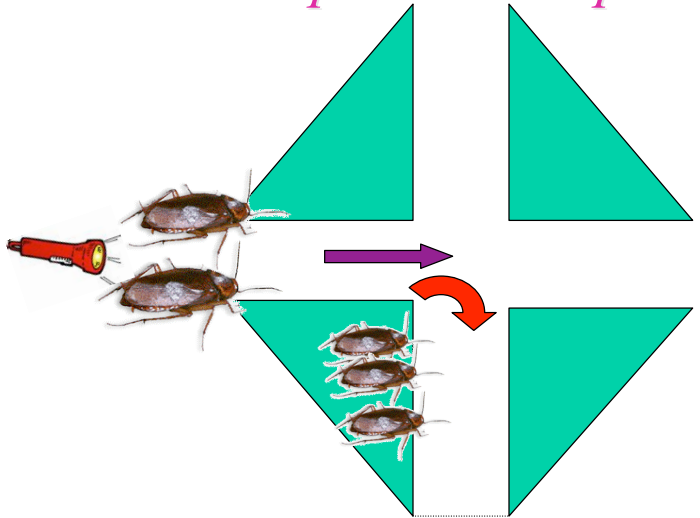
Social Facilitation

- Evaluation Apprehension
  - Being evaluated is arousing, and the presence of others implies potential evaluation.
  - If you can make such that others are present but clearly can't evaluate, social facilitation should disappear.
- Distraction-Conflict
  - The presence of others is distracting, and being distracted from a task is arousing. Thus, either distraction alone (non-social) should be sufficient to cause so-called "social" facilitation.

Social Loafing

Trying less hard when working collectively than when working coactively (or individually)


Ringelmann Effect ➔ Social Loafing

- Historical context
  - Ringelmann (1880)
    - Studying men to understand oxen
  - Steiner (1965)
    - Ringelmann Effect not psychological; it's simply incoordination
  - Ingham, Levinger, Peckham, & Graves (1974)
    - Ringelmann effect is psychological
  - Latané, Williams, & Harkins (1979)
    - Removes final alternative explanation; coin term, "Social Loafing"

Social Loafing
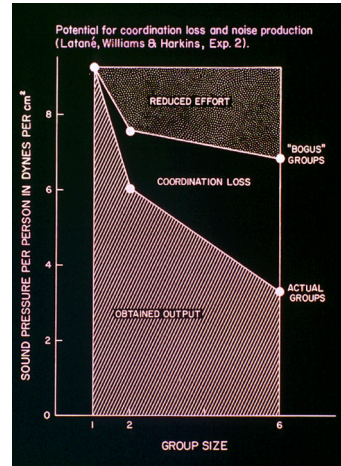
Latané, Williams, & Harkins (1979)

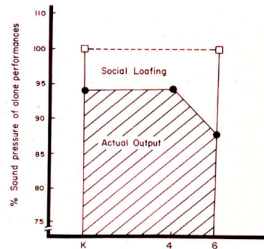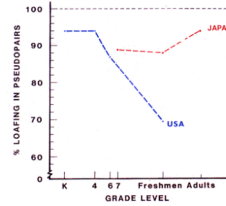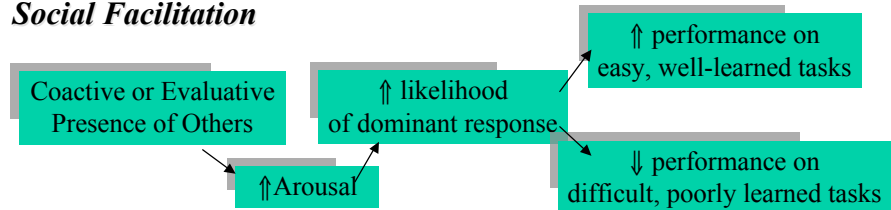# Social Loafing: In children and across cultures

Social Facilitation & Social Loafing: Reconciled

Social Facilitation

| Coactive or Evaluative Presence of Others | ⇑ likelihood of dominant response | ⇑ performance on easy, well-learned tasks |

⇑ Arousal

⇓ performance on difficult, poorly learned tasks

Social Loafing

| Collective Presence of Others | ⇓ likelihood of dominant response | ⇓ performance on easy, well-learned tasks |

⇓ Arousal

⇑ performance on difficult, poorly learned tasks
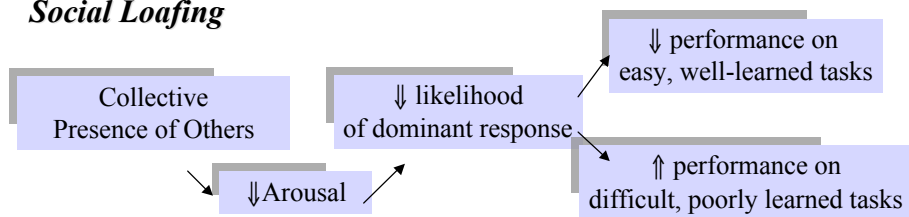
Meta-analysis of all the studies on Social Loafing

– Karau & Williams (1993)

- Meta-analysis of 78 social loafing studies
- Robust effect across tasks, populations
- Examined factors that predicted strongest social loafing effects
- Proposed the collective effort model (CEM)

Moderators of Social Loafing

- **Meta-analysis (Karau & Williams, 1993) revealed that the primary causes of social loafing are:**
  - *evaluation potential*…we loaf more when it's more difficult to evaluate our contributions
  - *task valence*…we loaf more in meaningless tasks
  - *uniqueness of individual inputs*…we loaf more when we believe our contributions are redundant
  - *group size*…more loafing in larger groups
  - *sex and culture*…social loafing effect larger for males and for individualistic cultures
  - *task complexity*…better performance coactively with simple tasks, not with complex tasks
  - …*and two more*…
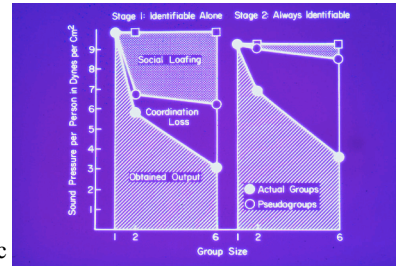
Today's Focus

- *expectations of co-worker performance*…we loaf more when we expect that our co-workers will be strong contributors
- *group valence & group level comparison standards*…we loaf less in cohesive groups or when our group's outcomes can be compared to outcomes of other groups.

Social Compensation

- Williams & Karau (1991)
  - Under certain circumstances, individuals will compensate for others on collective tasks; thus working (and trying) harder collectively than coactively.
    - When partners are not expected to contribute sufficiently
    - When the task is meaningful

Social Compensation Studies

- Study 1: Trust as an individual difference.
- Study 2: Trust, as manipulated by expectations of partner's intention to work hard.
- Study 3: Trust, as manipulated by partner's disclosure of their own ability on the given task.

Study 1: Trust

- If we have high levels of trust in our co-workers, should we be less or more likely to socially loaf?
  - In 1979 (*Psychology Today*), Latané, Harkins, & Williams guessed "less."
  - In 1991, (*JPSP*), Williams & Karau hypothesized "more."

Rotter's Interpersonal Trust Scale

- Trust in the sense that
  - you can depend on others;
  - you can rely on others;
  - others keep their word;
  - others don't cheat.
- Gave scale to 1,085 introductory psychology students
- Selected lowest quintile ($n = 42$); middle quintile ($n = 41$); top quintile ($n = 43$).

Method & Results
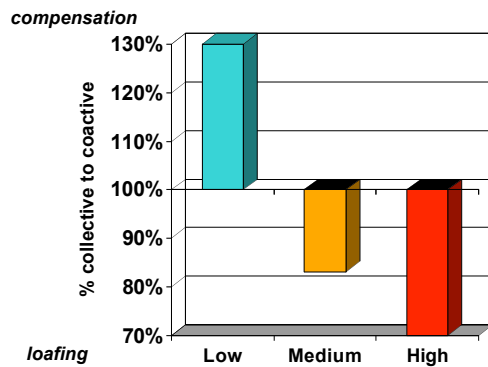
- People worked in groups of 6-8
- Either coactively or collectively
- Results:
  - Low trusters socially compensated
  - Medium trusters socially loafed
  - High trusters socially loafed (big time).

Study 2: Partner Effort

- Groups of two individuals in 2 X 2 between-S design.
- Task description held constant at highly meaningful (i.e., indicating intelligence).
- Idea generation task; the more the better.
- Worked coactively or collectively.
- Partner (really a confederate) would say,
  - (Low Effort Partner) "This is interesting, but I'm not going to try very hard."
  - (High Effort Partner) "This is interesting; I'm going to try really hard."
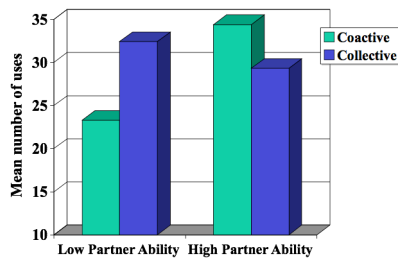
Study 2: Partner Effort
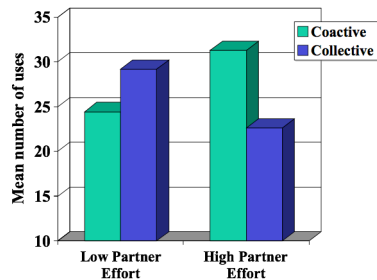
- When we think our partner will try hard, we loaf.
- When we think our partner will NOT try hard, we socially compensate.

Study 2: Partner Ability

- Groups of two individuals in 2 X 2 X 2 between-S design.
- Task description manipulated:
  - highly meaningful (i.e., indicating intelligence) or
  - low meaningful (i.e., undergrad extra credit project on kitchen utensils).
- Worked coactively or collectively.
- Partner (really a confederate) would say,
  - (Low Effort Ability) "This is interesting, but I'm awful at this sort of thing."
  - (High Effort Partner) "This is interesting; I'm pretty good at this sort of thing."

Study 3: Partner Ability *& High* Task Meaningfulness

Chart: Mean number of uses (y-axis from 10 to 35), categories "Low Partner Ability" and "High Partner Ability", with Coactive (green) and Collective (blue) series.

- If our partner is highly able, we loaf.
- If our partner is unable to perform well; we socially compensate.

Study 3: Partner Ability *& Low* Task Meaningfulness

Chart: Mean number of uses (y-axis from 10 to 35), categories "Low Partner Ability" and "High Partner Ability", with Coactive (green) and Collective (blue) series.
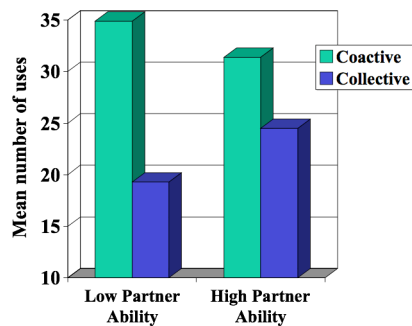
- If our partner is able to perform well; we loaf.
- If our partner is unable to perform well; we loaf.
- Social compensation appears to require that we value the task or the meaning attached to the performance.

Implications

- Trust isn't always a good thing.
- High trusters may take advantage of others' efforts and contributions, and slack off when the opportunities arise.
- Encouraging individuals to increase their trust in their coworkers (e.g., trust exercises) might actually promote social loafing.

Cohesiveness, (Not Trust), Reduces Social Loafing

- Karau & Williams (1998)
  - In two studies, for intact groups (friends), social loafing was reduced or eliminated (typing, knife task).
- Karau & Hart (1999):
  - For ad hoc groups who were induced to be more cohesive, social loafing was eliminated (knife task).
- Karau, Markus, & Williams (in preparation)
  - In three studies, for groups whose social identity was made salient (i.e., university affiliation or gender), social loafing was eliminated (knife task, hidden pictures task, radar detection task).

Conclusions on Trust and Cohesiveness

- There may be some disadvantages for interpersonal trust.
- Trust and cohesiveness may often co-occur; but if separated, trust may incline people to take advantage of others; whereas cohesiveness may obligate us to be reliable.

Related Topics

- The Kohler Effect - Kerr
- Coaction, Competition, and Collective Effort?

- Free Riding, Commons Dilemmas
- Implications for Donations?