

CUET · PSYCHOLOGY · CLASS XII · CODE 324

Social Influence and Group Processes

CUET unit: Social Influence and Group Processes

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Snapshot

- Defines a group as an organised system of two or more interdependent individuals with common motives, role relationships and norms — and contrasts groups with crowds, audiences, mobs and teams.
- Explains why people join groups (security, status, self-esteem, satisfaction of needs, goal achievement, knowledge) and the conditions facilitating group formation (proximity, similarity, common motives/goals).
- Lays out Tuckman's five-stage model of group development — forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning — and group structure (roles, norms, status, cohesiveness).
- Introduces types of groups: primary vs secondary, formal vs informal, ingroup vs outgroup — including Tajfel's minimal group paradigm.
- Examines how groups influence individuals through social facilitation, social loafing, groupthink and group polarisation, with reduction strategies for each.

Detailed Notes

2.1 Core concepts

Every day-to-day interaction — with family in the morning, classmates at school, friends in the evening — situates the individual inside one group or another, providing not only emotional support but a structural scaffolding for personal growth and good citizenship (NCERT §Introduction, p. 121). The foundational question: what distinguishes a group from any other collection of people?

A **group** is "an organised system of two or more individuals who are interacting and interdependent, who have common motives, have a set of role relationships among its members, and have norms that regulate the behaviour of its members" (NCERT §Nature and Formation of Groups, p. 121). Five salient characteristics flow from this definition (NCERT §What is a Group?, pp. 121–122): (i) a social unit whose members perceive themselves as belonging — this gives the group its unique identity; (ii) members share common motives and goals, either working towards a goal or away from a threat; (iii) members are interdependent — one fielder's dropped catch has consequences for the entire cricket team; (iv) members interact directly or indirectly; and (v) interactions are structured by **roles** and **norms** that regulate behaviour.

Several look-alikes must be carefully distinguished. A **crowd** is "a collection of people who may be present at a place/situation by chance" — the spectators at a roadside accident illustrate it; there is no structure, no belongingness, behaviour is irrational and there is no interdependence (NCERT §What is a Group?, p. 122). An **audience** is also a collection assembled for a special purpose (a cricket match or a movie); audiences are generally passive but may "sometimes go into a frenzy and become **mobs**" (NCERT §What is a Group?, p. 123). Mob behaviour is characterised by a definite sense of purpose, polarisation of attention in a common direction, homogeneity of thought and impulsivity. **Teams** are special kinds of groups whose members "often have complementary skills and are committed to a common goal or purpose"; teams generate a positive synergy through coordinated effort, members are mutually accountable, and unlike ordinary groups where the leader holds responsibility, in teams each member holds himself or herself responsible (NCERT §What is a Group?, p. 122).

People join groups for six reasons enumerated in NCERT (§Why Do People Join Groups?, p. 123): **security** (being with people gives a sense of comfort and protection, reducing vulnerability), **status** (membership of a respected group brings recognition and a sense of power), **self-esteem** (groups establish a positive social identity and enhance self-concept), **satisfaction of one's psychological and social needs** (belongingness, attention, love, power), **goal achievement** (groups help achieve what cannot be attained individually — "there is power in the majority") and **provision of knowledge and information** (group membership broadens an individual's view).

Group formation rests on contact and interaction, facilitated by three classical conditions (NCERT §Group Formation, pp. 123–124). **Proximity** — repeated interactions with the same individuals (same colony, same school, same playground) give us a chance to know their interests and attitudes; common background, interests and attitudes determine our liking. **Similarity** — exposure to others allows us to assess similarities, and people prefer consistency: when two persons are similar, they validate and reinforce each other's opinions, attitudes and values (the example given is two people sharing the view that "too much watching of television is not good"). **Common motives and goals** — like-minded people may join hands to teach children in a slum area, achieving what could not be done alone.

Tuckman's five-stage model maps group development onto a fixed developmental sequence: formation, conflict, stabilisation, performance and dismissal, technically called **forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning** (NCERT §Stages of Group Formation, pp. 124–125). In **forming** members face uncertainty about the group, goal and how it is to be achieved — excitement and apprehension coexist. **Storming** brings intragroup conflict about how the target will be achieved, who will control the group's resources and who will perform what task; the stage ends with a hierarchy of leadership and a clear vision. **Norming** sees the development of norms and a positive group identity. **Performing** is the stage at which the group structure is accepted and the group moves towards its goal — for many groups this is the final stage. **Adjourning** is added for time-bound groups (e.g., a school-function organising committee) where

the group disbands once the function is over. NCERT cautions that not all groups proceed systematically — stages may go on simultaneously, groups may go back and forth, and some stages may be skipped (p. 125).

Group structure consists of four elements (NCERT §Group Structure, pp. 125–126): **Roles** ("socially defined expectations that individuals in a given situation are expected to fulfil" — a son or daughter is expected to respect elders and be responsible towards studies — these carry **role expectations**); **Norms** ("expected standards of behaviour and beliefs established, agreed upon, and enforced by group members" — the group's unspoken rules — they represent shared ways of viewing the world); **Status** ("relative social position given to group members by others"), which may be either **ascribed** (given because of seniority) or **achieved** (earned through expertise or hard work) — the cricket captain has higher status than other members; and **Cohesiveness** ("togetherness, binding, or mutual attraction among group members" — a sense of team spirit, the 'we feeling'). However, NCERT warns that extreme cohesiveness "may sometimes not be in a group's interest", because psychologists have identified the phenomenon of **groupthink** as a direct consequence of extreme cohesiveness.

Groupthink (Box 7.1, p. 125) was discovered by **Irving Janis**: cohesion can interfere with effective leadership and lead to disastrous decisions. The group "override[s] the motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action"; it is characterised by the appearance of consensus or unanimous agreement in which no one expresses dissenting opinion for fear of being unpopular. Such a group develops an exaggerated sense of its own power and ignores cues from the real world that suggest danger. Groupthink is likely in **socially homogeneous, cohesive groups that are isolated from outsiders, have no tradition of considering alternatives, and face a decision with high costs or failures**. NCERT cites the **Vietnam War (1964–1967)** under President **Lyndon Johnson** as an example — escalation decisions made despite warnings cost 56,000 American and more than one million Vietnamese lives. Counter-measures include encouraging critical thinking, encouraging disagreement, inviting outside experts, and seeking feedback from trusted others.

Major **types of groups** are three pairs (NCERT §Type of Groups, p. 126): primary–secondary, formal–informal, ingroup–outgroup. **Primary groups** are pre-existing formations "given to" the individual — family, caste and religion — with face-to-face interaction, close physical proximity, warm emotional bonds and **low permeability** (members do not choose their membership). **Secondary groups** are joined by choice (membership of a political party) with relationships that are impersonal, indirect and less frequent — and high permeability. **Formal groups** have functions stated explicitly, definite roles and a set of norms (university, office organisation, army); **informal groups** have no formal rules and close relationships among members. **Ingroup** = 'we'; **outgroup** = 'they' — ingroup members are presumed similar and viewed favourably with desirable traits; outgroup members are viewed differently and often negatively. Tajfel's **Minimal Group Paradigm** experiments (Box 7.2, p. 127) showed British schoolboys grouped purely on a flimsy criterion — preference for paintings by **Vassily**

Kandinsky versus **Paul Klee** — still favoured their own group when distributing money among recipients identified only by code numbers.

Finally, NCERT examines two influences of group on individual behaviour (§Influence of Group on Individual Behaviour, p. 128). **Social facilitation** research (cited generally to social-psychological tradition) shows that presence of others creates arousal and enhances performance when the person is already good at the task and is individually evaluated. **Social loafing** — first demonstrated experimentally by **Latane and his associates** asking male students to clap or cheer as loudly as possible in groups of size 1, 2, 4 and 6 — is the reduction in individual effort when working on a collective pooled task (the tug-of-war is the prototypical example): although the total noise rose as group size increased, the noise produced by each participant dropped. Five causes are listed (NCERT p. 128): reduced personal responsibility, lower motivation (no individual evaluation), no inter-group comparison, improper or no coordination, and the group being a mere aggregate where belongingness is unimportant. Five reduction strategies follow: making efforts identifiable, increasing pressure to work hard, increasing apparent task importance, making individual contribution feel important, and strengthening cohesiveness. **Group polarisation** (NCERT pp. 128–129) is the tendency of groups to take more extreme decisions than individuals — explained by (i) newer arguments encountered in the company of like-minded people, (ii) the **bandwagon effect** where finding others holding the same view validates one's own conviction, and (iii) perceiving like-minded others as ingroup, identifying with them and showing conformity.

2.2 Definitions to memorise

| Term | Definition | Page |
|--------------------------|---|------|
| Group | Organised system of two or more interacting, interdependent individuals with common motives, role relationships and norms | 121 |
| Crowd | Collection of people present at a place by chance; no structure, no belongingness, irrational behaviour | 122 |
| Audience | Collection of people assembled for a special purpose; generally passive | 123 |
| Mob | Audience that becomes frenzied — polarised attention, homogeneity of thought, impulsivity | 123 |
| Team | Special group with complementary skills, mutual accountability, positive synergy through coordinated effort | 122 |
| Proximity | Repeated interactions with the same set of individuals; a facilitator of group formation | 123 |
| Similarity | Consistency in attitudes/values — basis for mutual validation and liking | 123 |
| Common motives and goals | Shared purposes that bring like-minded people together to form a group | 124 |

| Term | Definition | Page |
|---------------------|--|---------|
| Forming | First Tuckman stage — uncertainty about goal, excitement and apprehension | 124 |
| Storming | Second stage — intragroup conflict over goals, leadership and tasks | 124 |
| Norming | Third stage — development of norms and positive group identity | 124 |
| Performing | Fourth stage — accepted group structure moves towards goal | 124 |
| Adjourning | Fifth stage — group disbands once function is over | 125 |
| Roles | Socially defined expectations individuals fulfil in a given situation; carry role expectations | 125 |
| Norms | Expected standards of behaviour, agreed upon, enforced — 'unspoken rules' | 125 |
| Status (ascribed) | Position given due to seniority | 126 |
| Status (achieved) | Position attained through expertise or hard work | 126 |
| Cohesiveness | Togetherness, binding, mutual attraction, 'we feeling' | 126 |
| Groupthink | Override of realistic appraisal due to extreme cohesiveness; appearance of consensus | 125 |
| Primary group | Pre-existing face-to-face group (family/caste/religion); low permeability | 126 |
| Secondary group | Joined by choice (political party); impersonal, indirect, high permeability | 126 |
| Ingroup / Outgroup | One's own group ('we') vs another group ('they') | 127 |
| Social facilitation | Enhancement of performance in others' presence when individually evaluated | 128 |
| Social loafing | Reduction in individual effort on collective pooled task | 128 |
| Group polarisation | Tendency of groups to take more extreme decisions than individuals | 128–129 |
| Bandwagon effect | Strengthening of view because others also hold it | 129 |

2.3 Diagrams / processes to remember

- **Fig. 7.1 (p. 122):** Picture A shows a football team — members with roles, interaction and a common goal (a group). Picture B shows an audience watching the match — a mere collection coinciding in interest and place. This is the visual template NCERT uses to distinguish group from non-group; CUET case-vignettes commonly test exactly this contrast.
- **Tuckman's five stages (p. 124):** forming → storming → norming → performing → adjourning. The order is fixed and NCERT names each stage twice — first in

everyday language (formation/conflict/stabilisation/performance/dismissal) and then in Tuckman's terms — so both vocabularies can appear in distractors.

- **Sample distribution matrix from Minimal Group Paradigm (Box 7.2, p. 127):** Ingroup member 7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19 vs Outgroup member 1,3,5,7,9,11,13,15,17,19,21,23,25 — illustrates ingroup favouritism in money distribution despite the flimsiness of the Kandinsky vs Klee criterion.
- **Latane's clap-and-cheer experiment (p. 128):** Group sizes 1, 2, 4, 6 — total noise rose with size, but per-person noise dropped. This drop is the operational definition of social loafing. The tug-of-war analogy in NCERT is the real-world illustration.
- **Group structure quadrant (pp. 125–126):** Roles, Norms, Status, Cohesiveness — four cells students should be able to define and exemplify in one line each.
- **Causes-and-cures pairing for social loafing (p. 128):** the five causes (less responsibility, no individual evaluation, no inter-group comparison, no coordination, mere aggregate) and five cures (identifiable efforts, pressure to work hard, increased task importance, individual contribution important, strengthen cohesiveness) are made to map onto each other — a favourite match-the-following template.

2.4 Common confusions / NTA trap points

- **Group vs crowd vs audience vs mob vs team** — all are "collections of people" but only groups have interdependence, roles, norms; crowds lack structure; audiences are passive collections for a special purpose; mobs have polarised attention and impulsivity; teams have complementary skills, mutual accountability and positive synergy.
- **Groupthink vs Group polarisation** — groupthink (Irving Janis) = irrational consensus due to extreme cohesiveness, with appearance of unanimity; polarisation = the group's initial position becomes more extreme after discussion. Distinct mechanisms.
- **Social facilitation vs Social loafing** — facilitation occurs when others are present and the individual is evaluated (effort up); loafing occurs when efforts are pooled and individual contribution is hidden (effort down). NTA likes to flip these.
- **Ascribed vs Achieved status** — ascribed = given because of seniority/birth; achieved = earned through expertise/hard work. NCERT places this distinction within group structure (p. 126), not in 'types of groups'.
- **Primary vs Secondary groups** — primary are pre-existing (family/caste/religion) with low permeability; secondary are joined by choice (political party) with high permeability. Students often misclassify "religion" as secondary because it can feel chosen.
- **Tuckman's stages order** — forming → storming → norming → performing → adjourning is fixed; distractors will swap norming/storming.

- **Vietnam War example** — explicitly tied to groupthink and to **President Lyndon Johnson, 1964–1967**; not to polarisation, not to conformity.
- **Tajfel's flimsy criterion** — preference for paintings by **Kandinsky vs Klee** (Box 7.2); distractors often substitute "stamps", "music" or "sports teams".
- **Latane's experiment finding** — total noise rose, but **per-person** noise dropped. The distractor "total noise fell" is wrong even though something did fall.
- **Cohesiveness is not always good** — NCERT emphasises that extreme cohesiveness leads to groupthink; questions test this nuance against the common-sense answer "more cohesion is better".

2.5 Thinkers / Theories cited in this chapter

| Thinker / Construct | Theory or Concept | Where in NCERT |
|--|--|---|
| Bruce W. Tuckman (implied — "Tuckman suggested") | Five developmental stages of groups: forming, storming, norming, performing, adjourning | §Stages of Group Formation, p. 124 |
| Irving Janis | Groupthink — override of realistic appraisal due to extreme cohesiveness | Box 7.1, p. 125 |
| President Lyndon Johnson (and his advisors) | Vietnam War 1964–1967 cited as historical illustration of groupthink | Box 7.1, p. 125 |
| Henri Tajfel and colleagues | Minimal Group Paradigm — ingroup favouritism on flimsy criteria | Box 7.2, p. 127 |
| Vassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee | The two artists whose paintings provided the flimsy criterion in Tajfel's experiment | Box 7.2, p. 127 |
| Bibb Latane and associates ("Latane and his associates") | Social loafing — clap/cheer experiment with group sizes 1, 2, 4, 6 | §Social Loafing, p. 128 |
| Social facilitation tradition (no individual named) | Presence of others creates arousal, enhances performance on well-learned tasks when individually evaluated | §Influence of Group on Individual Behaviour, p. 128 |
| Bandwagon effect (named mechanism) | One of three explanations for group polarisation — view validated when others hold it | §Group Polarisation, p. 129 |
| Group polarisation tradition (no individual named) | Tendency of groups to take more extreme decisions than individuals | §Group Polarisation, pp. 128–129 |
| Role-and-norm framework (no individual named) | Group structure as the four elements: Roles, Norms, Status, Cohesiveness | §Group Structure, pp. 125–126 |

Note: NCERT does not name authors for several constructs (social facilitation, polarisation, the group definition itself). Only thinkers explicitly mentioned in this chapter are listed.

Practice MCQs

PYQ Alignment

This chapter is high-yield for CUET Psychology: questions consistently appear on definitions (group, crowd, mob, team), Tuckman's five stages (order/matching), key phenomena (groupthink, social loafing, group polarisation, bandwagon effect), classifications (primary vs secondary, formal vs informal, ingroup vs outgroup), and named studies (Janis on groupthink, Tajfel's minimal group paradigm, Latane on social loafing) — typically yielding ~8–10 MCQs per year across direct-recall, assertion–reason, matching and case-based formats.

CUET 2023 — Actual PYQs from this chapter

Q.35 (CUET 2023) The minimal group paradigm experiment was developed by:

- A) Milgram B) Triplett C) Tajfel and his colleagues D) Sherif **Tests:** Intergroup conflict — Tajfel's minimal group paradigm **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.36 (CUET 2023) The term _____ refers to processes whereby our attitudes and behaviour are influenced by the real or imagined presence of others.

- A) Social cognition B) Social influence C) Social facilitation D) Social inhibition **Tests:** Social influence — definition **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.37 (CUET 2023) How is Prisoner's Dilemma used to study cooperation and competition? A. They are separated and given a chance to confess B. If both confess, punishment is mild C. Two suspects are questioned separately D. If one confesses, the other gets punished E. If neither confesses, both receive lighter punishment

- A) C A B E D B) C B A D E C) C A D B E D) C A B D E **Tests:** Cooperation & competition — Prisoner's Dilemma **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.38 (CUET 2023) The ability to cope with situations where individuals compete for limited resources like space is known as:

- A) Crowding tolerance B) Substance tolerance C) Competition tolerance D) Density **Tests:** Crowding tolerance **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.39 (CUET 2023) Which of the following is not a feature of crowding? A. Crowding may cause feeling of discomfort B. Crowding may lead to loss of privacy C. Individual may feel control over social interaction D. Crowding may result in positive view of space

- A) A only B) B only C) C, D only D) A, C only **Tests:** Features of crowding **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.40 (CUET 2023) Tips to improve listening skills include: A. Be open to all ideas B. Respond in a hurry C. Control distractions D. Sit in a casual posture

- A) A, B only B) C, D only C) A, C only D) C, B only **Tests:** Group communication / listening skills **Answer:** Not in extracted key

CUET 2024 — Actual PYQs from this chapter

Q.20 (CUET 2024) Reena and Rabiya love dogs and form a group due to:

- A) Proximity B) Similarity C) Status D) Self-esteem needs **Tests:** Group formation — similarity **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.21 (CUET 2024) Arrange Tuckman's stages of group formation: (A) Norming (B) Forming (C) Storming (D) Performing (E) Adjourning

- A) B, C, A, D, E B) B, A, C, D, E C) A, B, C, E, D D) B, E, D, A, C **Tests:** Tuckman's stages of group formation **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.28 (CUET 2024) Which one is not a characteristic of crowding experience?

- A) Loss in privacy B) Loss of control over social interaction C) Negative view of the space around a person D) Feeling of comfort **Tests:** Crowding characteristics **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.34 (CUET 2024) When people work together in a group and the bigger the group the less effort each person puts in, it is called:

- A) Social facilitation B) Social loafing C) Social rejection D) Social participation **Tests:** Social loafing **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.39 (CUET 2024) Some children sing better in groups while others perform worse. This is explained by:

- A) Social facilitation B) Social loafing C) Social inhibition D) Social motivation **Tests:** Social facilitation **Answer:** Not in extracted key

CUET 2025 — Actual PYQs from this chapter

Q.27 (CUET 2025) Match List-I with List-II: List-I List-II Cohesiveness Strengthening of group's initial position Status Socially defined expectations Roles Relative position given to members Group polarisation Tendency of group to take extreme decisions

- A) B) C) D) **Tests:** Group dynamics — cohesiveness, status, roles, polarisation **Answer:** Not in extracted key