

Group Behavior

by Michael Stahl (Adapted by ReadWorks)



Most human beings live in groups or communities. These groups are called societies. Some scientists study the way people act around each other in society. They are called sociologists. These scientists have seen that people have a strong need to be part of a group. They have studied this need. They even have a name for it. They call it "group behavior."

Scientists think that people began to form groups a long time ago. Back then, people did not have safe homes made of brick or concrete. Instead, they slept in caves. During the day, they would go outside. They would look for food to stay alive. And they would try to stay safe from animals that could attack them. Over time, people started to see that it was helpful to work together. They saw that they could find more food if they worked together. They could also fight off animals if they had to. So they formed groups. Groups of people who lived and worked together stayed safer and found more food. So they survived and grew stronger.

Over time, people saw more good things about being in a group. For example, they got to be around other people. They could have friendships with the other people in the group. People began to like this part of being in a group. People liked it even more when everyone in the group shared the same goals. They got more out of it, too. They could feel proud of themselves when they did something to help the group. Some people became leaders in their groups. Other people in the group respected and valued the leader.

The group leader was the first role for people in groups. A "role" is a job in a group. Some people in groups made their own role. Other people might have been given a role by the group leader. One role people had in groups was hunter. Another role was fire builder.

Another part of group behavior was making "norms." Norms are things that a people in a group normally do over time. For example, people in a group might all wake up at the same time. They might do the same jobs every day. These are norms.

Groups also had "values." Values have to do with what a group believes. They could have to do with the goals of the group. Or they could have to do with the kinds of actions the group thinks are good or bad. For example, a group might think honesty is important. That same group might think stealing is bad. These are both values.

There are many good things that come from group behavior. But there are bad things that come from it too. For example, a person might not be accepted in their group. Then they might feel sad. Group behavior can also cause one group to fight another group because it has different norms or values. And people in groups are more likely to believe something just because someone in their group says it's true. This can happen even if it isn't true or helpful.

Today, many parts of our society are based on group behaviors. Cities, towns, and countries were built because of groups that had shared values. Groups having norms and values are the reason why there are big, popular religions. And they are even why there are small clubs after school!

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What is "group behavior"?

- A. mankind's desire to study sociology
- B. mankind's desire to be part of one group
- C. mankind's desire to not be part of different groups
- D. mankind's desire to be part of different groups

2. Being part of a group is an effect. What caused people to become part of a group a long time ago?

- A. People wanted to believe something just because one member said it was so.
- B. People wanted to be able to better survive and prosper.
- C. People wanted to be alone.
- D. People wanted to have big homes made of concrete or brick to protect them from dangerous animals.

3. Groups accept certain behaviors according to what their members believe to be correct. Which sentence from the passage best supports this conclusion?

- A. "Individuals in a group either naturally created a purpose for themselves or might have been given one by the group's leader."
- B. "Group behavior is the basis for so much of what we see in our society today."
- C. "Group behavior also makes it more likely that all of the members of a group will believe something just because one member says so."
- D. "Norms are examples of what a group normally does over a period of time."

4. Based on the passage, what might the identity of a group be based on?

- A. the group's values
- B. the group's location
- C. the group's "common enemy"
- D. the group's size

5. What is the passage mostly about?

- A. how to use group behavior to better interact with other people
- B. how to be accepted in a group
- C. groups in different societies
- D. group behavior

6. Read the following sentences: "Eventually, people began to realize that if they traveled and worked together, they could find more food and would be able to more effectively battle animals that threatened them. Bigger quantities of food and a better sense of safety helped humans survive and **prosper**."

Based on the passage, what does the word "**prosper**" most nearly mean?

- A. to move
- B. to fight
- C. to die out
- D. to succeed

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Values are a summary of what the group's goals might be or a general idea of what is acceptable behavior; _____, some groups might strongly believe in honesty and dislike theft.

- A. otherwise
- B. on the contrary
- C. however
- D. for example

8. Describe at least two advantages of being in a group by using information from the passage.

9. Group behavior also makes it more likely that all of the members of a group will believe something just because one member says so. Explain why this may be a negative aspect of group behavior by using information from the passage.

10. Explain whether a group fighting a "common enemy" is a positive or negative thing. Use information from the passage to support your argument.