CREATIVE COLLABORATION

OUTLINE
- Social facilitation
- Group creativity
  - Advantages of working in group
  - Threats to group creativity
- Creative collaboration techniques:
  - Brainstorming
  - Brainwriting
  - Pool method

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SOCIAL FACILITATION
- One of the earliest findings in social psychology
- The mere presence of other people engaged in the same task as us can boost our motivation
- This is why many creatives enjoy working at their local café surrounded by industrious strangers
- In 1920, social psychologist Floyd Allport conducted experiments:
  - Showed that a group of people working individually at the same table performed better on a whole range of tasks even though they weren’t competing or cooperating
  - Illustrated how the energy of other people can act as a substitute team even if we’re working solo

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GROUP CREATIVITY
- Need for creativity is inversely proportional to how well we understand the problem
  - Well-understood problems → don’t need to be creative
  - Not well-understood problems → need creative solutions
- Individuals perform better with well-understood problems
  - Well-understood problem → individuals do better
  - Not well-understood problems → team are better
- Previous research and thinking was that creativity is an individual skill, however we increasingly work in teams

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ADVANTAGES OF WORKING IN GROUP
- Groups bring together knowledge & skills not possessed by any individual member of the group
- Groups are more effective than individuals in eliminating errors & avoiding mistakes
- Group members learn from one another, stimulate one another, and add to each other’s knowledge
- A group solution is more likely to be accepted by those who must implement it than is the solution of an individual
- If the members of a group must act on evidence, it is likely that they will be more productive & effective if they have played a role in developing that evidence

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THREATS TO GROUP CREATIVITY
- Social loafing:
  - A person exerting less effort to achieve a goal when he or she works in a group than when working alone
- Conformity
- Production blocking:
  - Tendency for one individual during a group discussion to block or inhibit other people from offering ideas
- Downward norm setting:
  - The overall performance of the group devolves to the performance of the lowest performing member
- Lack of collaboration
- Communication issues:
  - Defective communication climate or differences in communication styles
WAYS TO OVERCOME THREATS

- Embrace diversity
- Facilitate a supportive communication climate
- Reward inventive & innovative creativity
- Foster collaboration
- Practice active listening

BRAINSTORMING

- Coined by advertising executive Alex F. Osborn
  - Claimed that brainstorming doubles the output
  - Written in Applied Imagination, 1953
  - Many companies adopted the method
  - 2 key principles:
    - Deferral of judgment
    - Go for quantity

LIMITATIONS OF BRAINSTORMING

- Many scientific studies were conducted on the effectiveness of brainstorming later
  - The conclusion is negative
  - People generate fewer good ideas when they brainstorm together than they ideate alone
- Reasons include:
  - Only one person can talk at a time
  - One or two people could dominate the conversation
  - When one person is sharing the idea, others might forget theirs
  - The group may become fixated on the ideas people already shared

BRAINWRITING

- Participants write down ideas instead of sharing it aloud
  - These notes are passed around the group
  - People read each other’s ideas while they continue to write their own
- Allows the group to share & build on each other’s ideas while avoid the pitfalls of face-to-face brainstorming

EXPERIMENTS ON BRAINSTORMING

- Paul Paulus tested the brainwriting technique in a real-world office
  - Worked with employees at a tech company that’s rated among the top 30 businesses in the world
  - Involves 57 employees, mostly engineers and computer scientists
  - Brainwriting is better than work alone
  - Brainwriters came up with 37% more ideas than working alone
  - Brainwriting in groups first then work alone produces more good ideas than the reverse scenario

ASYNCHRONOUS BRAINSTORMING

- Switching multiple times between group brainwriting & working alone
  - Working alone, you never get other people’s ideas
  - Working in a group all the time, you may spend more time thinking about other people’s ideas than your own
  - Get the best of both worlds if you combine the two
- Experimented on the same 57 employees
  - Rotated between 8-minute individual writing sessions and 3-minute group sessions, where group members read over each other’s ideas
  - The alternated approach allows them to come up with 30 ideas per hour versus 17 ideas per hour in group-only brainstorming
**POOL METHOD**

- Each participant gets a form with problem written on it
- 4 ~ 8 people in each group
- Each person writes 3 ideas at top and puts sheet in center of table
- Participants take new sheet out of center pile and add to it
- No rounds; put sheets back and get new sheets at own pace
- Process completed at end of pre-determined time (e.g. 30 min)
- Sort ideas

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**30 CIRCLES CHALLENGE**

- Draw something to turn circles into recognizable objects
  - Time limit is 3 minutes
  - Turn as many circles as possible
    - e.g., sun & smiling face
  - The goal is quantity, not quality

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**30 CIRCLES CHALLENGE (CONT'D)**

- Compare results
  - How many people filled in 10, 15, 20 or more circles?
  - Did participants use patterns?
    - e.g., multiple sports balls?
  - Did anyone “break the rules” and combine circles?