

# Group Cohesion

by Sophia Tutorial



## WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, we'll discuss the formation of lasting bonds in groups, as well as the factors that promote these bonds, and the elements that affect them. In particular, we'll focus on:

1. Factors Promoting Group Cohesiveness
  - a. Sense of Belonging
  - b. Attraction
  - c. Teamwork
2. Elements that Affect Group Cohesiveness Factors
  - a. Sense of Similarity
  - b. Group Success
  - c. Entry Difficulty
  - d. External Competition/Threat

## 1. Factors Promoting Group Cohesiveness

**Group cohesiveness** refers to the tendency of group members to remain together over long periods of time.

As human beings, we're all members of groups. We join them for many different reasons, most typically because we have an interest, goal, or value in common with the other people who are in this group.

Group cohesiveness is thus promoted by three main factors:

- Sense of belonging
- Attraction
- Teamwork



### TERM TO KNOW

#### **Group Cohesiveness**

The tendency of a group to remain together (feeling similarity and affective bonds) over time.

##### **1a. Sense of Belonging**

When we join a group, we feel like we have a **sense of belonging**, or perception of safety and comfort, with

the people in this group because of the shared interest, goal, or value.

↪ **EXAMPLE** Say you are a writer, and you join a writing group. You feel a sense of belonging because you are around people who understand your interest in writing, and the challenges and rewards that come with it.



#### TERM TO KNOW

### Sense of Belonging

Perception that one is safe, comfortable, and valued by members of one's group.

#### 1b. Attraction

Another factor that promotes group cohesiveness is the element of **attraction**. This is the perception that the other group members will be sources of a reward or gain.

In other words, people feel an attraction to a group because they're going to get something positive from it.

↪ **EXAMPLE** Say you're a musician, and you join a band or musical group. This group is comprised of other musicians who enjoy the same kind of music as you, and who also want to compose and practice this music. By being part of this group, your reward or gain is going to be that you are able to create the kind of music you want.



#### TERM TO KNOW

### Attraction

The perception that one's group members are potential sources of reward or gain.

#### 1c. Teamwork

Another reason that a group will stick together is because of a sense of **teamwork**, or effort to achieve a shared goal.

If the group is working together on something that all the members view as important, the group is more likely to remain cohesive.



#### TERM TO KNOW

### Teamwork

Collaborative effort to achieve shared goals with others perceived as being members of one's group.

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## 2. Elements that Affect Group Cohesiveness Factors

Additionally, there are several elements that can strengthen these cohesiveness factors.

These elements are:

- Sense of similarity
- Group success
- Entry difficulty

- External competition/threat

Because of these elements and the factors that promote cohesiveness, group cohesion often leads to **self-reinforcement**, or the tendency of a belief to become stronger once there has been evidence that the belief leads to something positive.

Self-reinforcement tends to promote a feeling of closeness within a group.



#### TERM TO KNOW

### Self-Reinforcement

The tendency of a principle or belief to become more strongly held after evidence that holding the belief leads to a positive gain.

#### 2a. Sense of Similarity

One of the elements that strengthens group cohesion is a sense of similarity, or the sense that the experiences and perceptions of the group members are the same.

This occurs when group members feel as though they share a bond because of a shared interest, goal, or value.

#### 2b. Group Success

Another element is **group success**, or a collaborative achievement that strengthens the group bond.

🔗 **EXAMPLE** If you're a musician, one of your goals is probably to learn a new, difficult piece of music, and then perform it publicly. If you're part of a band or musical group, you share that goal with the other members. If you achieve it by putting on a great performance, then you experience group success.

🔗 **EXAMPLE** If you're on a sports team, you might be competing in a tournament or a meet. As a team, you're going for a particular prize. If you win the prize, that group success really does solidify the bond between the team members.



#### TERM TO KNOW

### Group Success

Instances when collaboration between group members leads to shared interests being met.

#### 2c. Entry Difficulty

The next element is **entry difficulty**, which refers to how difficult it is to get into a particular group.

Entry difficulty is based on factors like the exclusivity of the group, and the kind of special positive characteristics (e.g., talent for music, writing, or a particular sport) required to be part of the group.

The more exclusive the group, the stronger the bond between the members because they have been accepted in a group that is not easy to get into.

🔗 **EXAMPLE** If you join a casual soccer game where anyone can walk up and play, you likely didn't experience much entry difficulty. If you join a league soccer team where you had to try-out and earn a place on the team, your sense of commitment to the team is likely to be much higher, due to the high entry difficulty.



## TERM TO KNOW

### Entry Difficulty

Perception that one's group is exclusive, requiring particular positive characteristics for entry or membership.

### 2d. External Competition/Threat

The last element is an external threat or competition. This is a threat coming from outside the group, causing group members to bond in order to protect the group.

➦ **EXAMPLE** If someone has served in the military, and has faced a threat and come through it, this person and their fellow soldiers probably feel a bond, which may last a lifetime.

However, external threats or competitions are not only cases of an immediate life or death situation; they can be any competition or cause that group members feel strongly about.

➦ **EXAMPLE** If you're on a sports team that goes to a championship, the external threat is the other team. You band together with your teammates in order to win the competition.

➦ **EXAMPLE** Say you're part of a group supporting environmental causes. You and your group members want to preserve natural resources, so you're working against the threat of people that you feel are destroying the environment.



## BIG IDEA

While not all groups stay together, many do because of the presence of the elements and factors that promote strong group cohesion.



## SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that group cohesiveness is the tendency of group members to stay together over long periods time. There are certain **factors that promote group cohesiveness**: sense of belonging, attraction, and teamwork. The presence of one or all of these factors can strengthen a group's bond. You now understand that there are also several **elements that can affect the cohesiveness factors**: sense of similarity, group success, entry difficulty, and external threat/competition. These elements positively affect the cohesiveness factors, as they cause the group members to band together to achieve a particular outcome. Good luck!

Source: Adapted from Sophia tutorial by Marlene Johnson.



## TERMS TO KNOW

### Attraction

The perception that one's group members are potential sources of reward or gain.

### Entry Difficulty

Perception that one's group is exclusive, requiring particular positive characteristics for entry or membership.

### Group Cohesiveness

The tendency of a group to remain together (feeling similarity and affective bonds) over time.

**Group Success**

Instances when collaboration between group members leads to shared interests being met.

**Self-Reinforcement**

The tendency of a principle or belief to become more strongly held after evidence that holding the belief leads to a positive gain.

**Sense of Belonging**

Perception that one is safe, comfortable, and valued by members of one's group.

**Teamwork**

Collaborative effort to achieve shared goals with others perceived as being members of one's group.