Groupthink

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Groupthink is a psychological phenomenon that occurs within groups of people. Group members try to minimize conflict and reach a consensus decision without critical evaluation of alternative ideas or viewpoints. Antecedent factors such as group cohesiveness, structural faults, and situational context play into the likelihood of whether or not groupthink will impact the decision-making process

The primary socially negative cost of groupthink is the loss of individual creativity, uniqueness, and independent thinking. While this often causes groupthink to be portrayed in a negative light, because it can suppress independent thought, groupthink under certain contexts can also help expedite decisions and improve efficiency. As a social science model, groupthink has an enormous reach and influences literature in the fields of communications, political science, social psychology, management, organizational theory, and information technology.

The majority of the initial research on groupthink was performed by Irving Janis, a research psychologist from Yale University. His original definition of the term was, "A mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive ingroup, when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action" (Janis, 1972). Since Janis's work, other studies have attempted to reformulate his groupthink model. 'T Hart (1998) developed a concept of groupthink as "collective optimism and collective avoidance," while McCauley (1989) pointed to the impact of conformity and compliance pressures on groupthink decisions.

History

William H. Whyte coined the term in 1952, in Fortune magazine:

Groupthink being a coinage -- and, admittedly, a loaded one -- a working definition is in order. We are not talking about mere instinctive conformity -- it is, after all, a perennial failing of mankind. What we are talking about is a rationalized conformity -- an open, articulate philosophy which holds that group values are not only expedient but right and good as well.

Irving Janis led the initial research on the groupthink theory. His main principle of groupthink states:

The more amiability and esprit de corps there is among the members of a policy-making ingroup, the greater the danger that independent critical thinking will be replaced by groupthink, which is likely to result in irrational and dehumanizing actions against outgroups.

Janis set the foundation for the study of groupthink starting with his research in the American Soldier Project where he studied the effect of extreme stress on group cohesiveness. After this study he remained interested in the ways in which people make decisions under external threats.

This interest led Janis to study a number of 'disasters' in American foreign policy, such as failure to anticipate the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor (1941); the Bay of Pigs fiasco (1961) when the US administration sought to overthrow Fidel Castro; and the prosecution of the Vietnam War (1964-67) by President Lyndon Johnson. He concluded that in each of these cases, the decisions were made largely due to groupthink, which prevented contradictory views from being expressed and subsequently evaluated.

After the publication of Janis' book Victims of Groupthink, in 1972, the concept of groupthink was used to explain many other faulty decisions in history. These events included Nazi Germany's decision to invade the Soviet Union in 1941, the Watergate Scandal and countless others. Despite this being such a popular topic less than two dozen studies were done on the phenomenon, after the publication of Victims of Groupthink, from the years 1972-1998. This is surprising considering how many fields of interests it spans, which include political science, communications, organizational studies, social psychology, management, strategy, counseling, and marketing. This lack of research is most likely due to the fact that group research is difficult to conduct, groupthink has many independent and dependent variables, and there is no clear-cut definition of it.

Bay of Pigs Invasion case study

The United States Bay of Pigs Invasion was one of the primary political case studies that Irving Janis used in explaining the theory groupthink. The invasion plan was initiated by the Eisenhower administration, but when the Kennedy White House took over, the plan was uncritically accepted, even after the plan was beginning to get leaked. Kennedy's ingroup was overly optimistic of the CIA's plan. When some members of the Kennedy administration, such as Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and Senator J. William Fulbright, attempted to present their objections to the plan, other members ignored these objections and kept believing in the morality of their plan. The administration began to judge Schlesinger because he questioned the policy. Eventually Schlesinger began to minimize his own doubts. The CIA made many assumptions, including the weakness of Castro's army and the lack of effectiveness of Castro's air force. Kennedy's ingroup believed the CIA's assumptions, and stereotyped Castro and the Cubans. Finally, the Bay of Pigs Invasion was marked with a huge reliance on consensual validation. Kennedy came into office trusting Eisenhower's policy and continued to trust the CIA's intelligence without question. The fiasco that ensued could have been prevented if the Administration had followed the remedies to preventing groupthink.

Pearl Harbor case study

The attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 was a prime example of groupthink. A number of factors such as shared illusions and rationalizations contributed to the lack of precaution taken by Naval officers based in Hawaii. The United States had intercepted Japanese messages and they

discovered that Japan was arming itself for an offensive attack. Washington took action by warning officers stationed at Pearl Harbor, but their warning was not taken seriously. They assumed that Japan was taking measures in the event that their embassies and consulates in enemy territories were usurped.

The Navy and Army in Pearl Harbor also shared rationalizations about why an attack was unlikely. Some of them included:

"The Japanese would never dare attempt a full-scale surprise assault against Hawaii because they would realize that it would precipitate an all-out war, which the United States would surely win."
"The Pacific Fleet concentrated at Pearl Harbor was a major deterrent against air or naval attack."
"Even if the Japanese were foolhardy to send their carriers to attack the United States, we could certainly detect and destroy them in plenty of time."
"No warships anchored in the shallow water of Pearl Harbor could ever be sunk by torpedo bombs launched from enemy aircraft."

In addition, officers succumbed to social pressures and did not want to face social scrutiny by objecting to the common belief that Japan would not attack Pearl Harbor.

At the end of the day, the leading officers at Pearl Harbor reinforced each other's feeling of invulnerability and it is the reason why the United States was defenseless against Japan's attacks.

Causes

Janis prescribed three antecedent conditions to groupthink:

1. High group cohesiveness

Janis emphasized that cohesiveness is the main factor that leads to groupthink. Groups that lack cohesiveness can of course make bad decisions, but they do not experience groupthink. In a cohesive group, members avoid speaking out against decisions, avoid arguing with others, and work towards maintaining friendly relationships in the group. If cohesiveness gets to such a high level where there are no longer disagreements between members, then the group is ripe for groupthink.

deindividuation: group cohesiveness becomes more important than individual freedom of expression

2. Structural faults

Cohesion is necessary for groupthink, but it becomes even more likely when the group is organized in ways that disrupt the communication of information, and when the group engages in

carelessness while making decisions.

insulation of the group: can promote the development of unique, inaccurate perspectives on issues the group is dealing with, and can then lead to faulty solutions to the problem.
lack of impartial leadership: leaders can completely control the group discussion, by planning what will be discussed, only allowing certain questions to be asked, and asking for opinions of only certain people in the group. Closed style leadership is when leaders announce their opinions on the issue before the group discusses the issue together. Open style leadership is when leaders withheld their opinion until a later time in the discussion. Groups with a closed style leader have been found to be more biased in their judgments, especially when members had a high degree for certainty. Thus, it is best for leaders to take an open style leadership approach, so that the group can discuss the issue without any pressures from the leader.
lack of norms requiring methodological procedures
homogeneity of members' social backgrounds and ideology

3. Situational context:

highly stressful external threats: High stake decisions can create tension and anxiety, and group members then may cope with the decisional stress in irrational ways. Group members may rationalize their decision by exaggerating the positive consequences and minimizing the possible negative consequences. In attempt to minimize the stressful situation, the group will make a quick decision with little to no discussion or disagreement about the decision. Studies have shown that groups under high stress are more likely to make errors, lose focus of the ultimate goal, and use procedures that members know have not been effective in the past.

recent failures: can lead to low self-esteem, resulting in agreement with the group in fear of being seen as wrong.
excessive difficulties on the decision-making task
time pressures: group members are more concerned with efficiency and quick results, instead of quality and accuracy. Additionally, time
pressures can lead to group members overlooking important information regarding the issue of discussion.
moral dilemmas

Although it is possible for a situation to contain all three of these factors, all three are not always present even when groupthink is occurring. Janis considered a high degree of cohesiveness to be the most important antecedent to producing groupthink and always present when groupthink was occurring; however, he believed high cohesiveness would not always produce groupthink. A very cohesive group abides to all group norms; whether or not groupthink arises is dependent on what the group norms are. If the group encourages individual dissent and alternative strategies to problem solving, it is likely that groupthink will be avoided even in a highly cohesive group. This

means that high cohesion will lead to groupthink only if one or both of the other antecedents is present, situational context being slightly more likely than structural faults to produce groupthink.

Symptoms

To make groupthink testable, Irving Janis devised eight symptoms indicative of groupthink (1977).

Type I: Overestimations of the group--its power and morality

Illusions of invulnerability creating excessive optimism and encouraging risk taking.
Unquestioned belief in the morality of the group, causing members to ignore the consequences of their actions.

Type II: Closed-mindedness

Rationalizing warnings that might challenge the group's assumptions.
Stereotyping those who are opposed to the group as weak, evil, biased, spiteful, impotent, or stupid.

Type III: Pressures toward uniformity

Self-censorship of ideas that deviate from the apparent group consensus.
Illusions of unanimity among group members, silence is viewed as agreement.
Direct pressure to conform placed on any member who questions the group, couched in terms of "disloyalty"
Mind guards -- self-appointed members who shield the group from dissenting information.

Groupthink, resulting from the symptoms listed above, results in defective decision-making. That is, consensus-driven decisions are the result of the following practices of groupthinking:

Incomplete survey of alternatives
Incomplete survey of objectives
Failure to examine risks of preferred choice
Failure to reevaluate previously rejected alternatives
Poor information search
Selection bias in collecting information
Failure to work out contingency plans.

Janis argued that groupthink was responsible for the Bay of Pigs 'fiasco' and other major examples of faulty decision-making. The UK bank Northern Rock, before its nationalisation, is thought to be a recent major example of groupthink. In such real-world examples, a number of the above groupthink symptoms were displayed.

Deindividuation

Cults are also studied by sociologists in regard to groupthink and its deindividuation effects. The textbook definition describes deindividuation as the loss of self-awareness and evaluation apprehension, which occurs in group situations that foster anonymity and draw attention away from the individual.

Prevention

It has been thought that groups with the strong ability to work together will be able to solve dilemmas in a quicker and more efficient fashion than an individual. Groups have a greater amount of resources which lead them to be able to store and retrieve information more readily and come up with more alternatives solutions to a problem. There was a recognized downside to group problem solving in that it takes groups more time to come to a decision and requires that people make compromises with each other. However, it was not until the research of Irving Janis appeared that anyone really considered that a highly cohesive group could impair the group's ability to generate quality decisions. Tightly-knit groups may appear to make decisions better because they can come to a consensus quickly and at a low energy cost; however, over time this process of decision making may decrease the members' ability to think critically. It is, therefore, considered by many to be important to combat the effects of groupthink.

According to Irving Janis, decision making groups are not necessarily destined to groupthink. He devised seven ways of preventing groupthink (209-15):

Leaders should assign each member the role of "critical evaluator". This allows each member to freely air objections and doubts.
Higher-ups should not express an opinion when assigning a task to a group.
The organization should set up several independent groups, working on the same problem.
All effective alternatives should be examined.
Each member should discuss the group's ideas with trusted people outside of the group.
The group should invite outside experts into meetings. Group members should be allowed to discuss with and question the outside experts.
At least one group member should be assigned the role of Devil's advocate. This should be a different person for each meeting.

By following these guidelines, groupthink can be avoided. After the Bay of Pigs invasion fiasco, President John F. Kennedy sought to avoid groupthink during the Cuban Missile Crisis. During meetings, he invited outside experts to share their viewpoints, and allowed group members to question them carefully. He also encouraged group members to discuss possible solutions with trusted members within their separate departments, and he even divided the group up into various

sub-groups, to partially break the group cohesion. Kennedy was deliberately absent from the meetings, so as to avoid pressing his own opinion.

Assumptions

As observed by Aldag and Fuller (1993), the groupthink phenomenon seems to consistently uphold the following principles:

The purpose of group problem solving is mainly to improve decision quality
Group problem solving is considered a rational process.

Benefits of group problem solving:

variety of perspectives
more information about possible alternatives
better decision reliability
dampening of biases
social presence effects
Groupthink prevents theses benefits due to structural faults and provocative situational context
Groupthink prevention methods will produce better decisions
"An illusion of well-being is presumed to be inherently dysfunctional."
Group pressures towards consensus lead to concurrence-seeking tendencies

Empirical findings

Whether groupthink occurs in a situation is largely a subjective perception. Researchers hold different opinions as to the amount of agreement needed within a group to conclude the occurrence of groupthink. Even then, researchers argue whether the agreement comes about through the social influence of groupthink, or whether the agreement is simply a result of a clear, optimal solution. There is no fixed threshold of factors at which one can definitively conclude groupthink occurred. Instead, a particular group could be considered a victim of groupthink from the perspective of one researcher while remaining un-victimized in the eyes of another researcher. It is also incredibly difficult to test groupthink in the laboratory because it removes groups from real social situations, which changes the variables conducive or inhibitive to groupthink. Because of its subjectivity, researchers have struggled to measure groupthink as a complete phenomenon. Instead, they often opt to measure particular factors of the groupthink phenomenon. These factors range from causal to effectual and focus on group and situational aspects.

Cline's study

In a study done by Cline (1990), the correlation between groupthink and group cohesiveness was

measured in an attempt to predict if group cohesiveness affected the occurrence of groupthink. Participants in the groupthink conditions reported significantly greater cohesiveness in their groups than participants in nongroupthink conditions. Cline explains this correlation as a result of the participants in the groupthink conditions bonding throughout the time spent in the experiment. Participant-reported group cohesiveness increased from the pre-experimental discussion to the post experimental discussion. Within the same study, agreement versus disagreement between the participants of a group was hypothesized to vary between groups in the groupthink condition and groups in the nongroupthink condition. The hypothesis was proven valid as "groupthink groups expressed proportionately more agreement than nongroupthink groups." Levels of disagreement were similar for groupthink and nongroupthink groups. The study also hypothesized that "groupthink groups express proportionately more simple agreements and proportionately fewer substantiated agreements than nongroupthink groups." Again, the hypothesis was proven valid as groupthink groups were shown to use more simple agreements and fewer substantiated agreements than nongroupthink groups.

Schafer's and Crichlow's study

Schafer and Crichlow (1996) performed an analytical study of the antecedent factors that are conducive to a group falling into groupthink. They measured whether groupthink occurred by gauging information-processing errors within the participant groups. The antecedent conditions most strongly predicting information-processing errors (and, in turn, groupthink) are group homogeneity, recent failure, high personal stress, group insulation, and perceived short time restraint. If the members of a group are highly similar, they will be more likely to engage in groupthink as a result of similar opinions and cost-benefit analysis. If a group recently failed at a task, the members will become more reserved in their idea generation, opting to support the most popular idea in order to avoid becoming the scapegoat. This process increases the likelihood of groupthink. If the individual members of a group are experiencing high stress, they will feel anxiety towards dissenting (which would produce more stress). An anxiety toward dissent increases the probability of groupthink. If a group is separated from external influence (including the influence of other groups), they will lack exposure to innovative thinking and dissenting opinion. This lack of exposure makes it difficult for group members to introduce new trains of thought into the group, thus prompting groupthink. If a group is under a short time restriction in generating ideas, it will feel anxious about spending time debating the value of dissenting opinions. Instead, the group will more likely commit to a popular idea and attempt to refine it with the time given. This process is conducive to groupthink.

Flowers' study

Flowers (1977) analyzed the number of solutions produced to a particular problem by four different

groups. The groups were characterized by low or high cohesiveness and open or closed leadership. Open and closed leadership refer to the nature of the leader--whether they were open to new suggestions and respectful dissent or closed to it (rather headstrong). Her findings relate to groupthink in the sense that groupthink is often believed to limit the number of solutions created by a group. She analyzed two factors (cohesiveness and leadership style) that are commonly known to affect the occurrence of groupthink. High cohesiveness and closed leadership were predicted to be most conducive to groupthink. If groupthink were occurring, her results would show a decreased number of solutions produced by the respective groups. Flowers' results reveal that the group with the two characteristics most conducive to groupthink (high cohesiveness and closed leadership) produced the fewest number of solutions, thus indicating an occurrence of groupthink. The group with the characteristics opposite to those conducive to groupthink (low cohesiveness and open leadership) produced the greatest number of solutions, thus indicating that the type of leadership and cohesiveness within a group have an effect on groupthink. Closed leadership creates groupthink because members' dissenting opinions and innovations are labeled illegitimate by the authority figure, allowing the group to easily dismiss them as inferior options. High cohesiveness creates groupthink because members feel stronger personal ties to each other and are therefore more hesitant to disagree with others' opinions. A hesitancy to disagree reduces dissent and leads to groupthink.

Park's meta-analysis

Park (1990) conducted a meta-analysis of the results of 16 empirical studies on groupthink. The results of the analysis contradict the findings presented above as well as several of Janis' claims about groupthink antecedents (Janis is one of the founders of the groupthink concept). Park concludes, "despite Janis' claim that group cohesiveness is the major necessary antecedent factor, no research has showed a significant main effect of cohesiveness on groupthink." Park also concludes that research on the interaction between group cohesiveness and leadership style does not support Janis' claim that cohesion and leadership style interact to produce groupthink symptoms. Park presents a summary of the results of the studies analyzed. According to Park, a study by Huseman and Drive (1979) indicates groupthink occurs in both small and large decision making groups within businesses. This results partly from group isolation within the business. Manz and Sims (1982) conducted a study showing that autonomous work groups are susceptible to groupthink symptoms in the same manner as decisions making groups within businesses. Fodor and Smith (1982) produced a study revealing that group leaders with high power motivation create atmospheres more susceptible to groupthink. Leaders with high power motivation possess characteristics similar to leaders with a "closed" leadership style--an unwillingness to respect dissenting opinion. The same study indicates that level of group cohesiveness is insignificant in predicting groupthink occurrence. Park summarizes a study performed by Callaway, Marriot, and Esser (1985) in which groups with highly dominant members "made higher quality decisions,

exhibited lowered state of anxiety, took more time to reach a decision, and made more statements of disagreement/agreement." Overall, groups with highly dominant members expressed characteristics inhibitory to groupthink. If highly dominant members are considered equivalent to leaders with high power motivation, the results of Callaway, Marriot, and Esser contradict the results of Fodor and Smith. A study by Leana (1985) indicates the interaction between level of group cohesion and leadership style is completely insignificant in predicting groupthink. This finding refutes Janis' claim that the factors of cohesion and leadership style interact to produce groupthink. Park summarizes a study by McCauley (1989) in which structural conditions of the group were found to predict groupthink while situational conditions did not. The structural conditions included group insulation, group homogeneity, and promotional leadership. The situational conditions included group cohesion. These findings refute Janis' claim about group cohesiveness predicting groupthink.

Overall, studies on groupthink have largely focused on the factors (antecedents) that predict groupthink. Groupthink occurrence is often measured by number of ideas/solutions generated within a group, but there is no uniform, concrete standard by which researchers can objectively conclude groupthink occurs. The studies of groupthink and groupthink antecedents reveal a mixed body of results. Some studies indicate group cohesion and leadership style to be powerfully predictive of groupthink, while other studies indicate the insignificance of these factors. Group homogeneity and group insulation are generally supported as factors predictive of groupthink.

Real-world application

Corporate world

Swissair's collapse

In the corporate world, ineffective and suboptimal group-making decision can negatively affect the health of a company and cause a considerable amount of monetary loss. Aaron Hermann and Hussain Rammal illustrate the detrimental role of groupthink in the collapse of Swissair, a Swiss airline company that was thought to be so financially stable that it earned the title the "Flying Bank." The authors argue that, among other factors, Swissair carried two symptoms of groupthink: the belief that the group is invulnerable and the belief in the morality of the group. In addition, prior to the fiasco, the size of the company board was reduced, subsequently eliminating industrial expertise. This may have further increased the likelihood of groupthink. With the board members lacking expertise in the field and having somewhat similar background, norms, and values, the pressure to conform may have become more prominent. This phenomenon is called group homogeneity, which is an antecedent to groupthink. Together, these conditions may have contributed to the poor decision-making process that eventually led to Swissair's collapse. As illustrated by Swissair's crisis, the ramification of groupthink can be monumental in the business

world.

Politics

Some experts believe that groupthink also has a strong hold on political decisions and military operations, which may result in enormous expenditures of human and material resources. These scholars, including Janis and Raven, attribute political and military fiascos, such as the Bay of Pigs invasion, Vietnam War, and the Watergate scandal, to the effect of groupthink. More recently, Dina Badie argues that the invasion of Iraq by the United States was driven by groupthink. According to Badie, groupthink was largely responsible for the shift in the U.S. administration's view on Sadam Hussein that eventually led to military action in Iraq. After 9/11, "stress, promotional leadership, and intergroup conflict" were all factors that gave way to the occurrence of groupthink. Political case studies of groupthink serve to illustrate the impact that the occurrence of groupthink can have in today's political scene.

New arena: sports

Recent literature of groupthink attempts to study the application of this concept beyond the framework of business and politics. One particularly relevant and popular arena in which groupthink is rarely studied is sports. The lack of literature in this area prompted Charles Koerber and Christopher Neck to begin a case-study investigation that examined the effect groupthink on the decision of the Major League Umpires Association (MLUA) to stage a mass resignation in 1999. The decision was a failed attempt to gain a stronger negotiating stance against Major League Baseball. Koerber and Neck suggest that three groupthink symptoms can be found in the decision-making process of the MLUA. First, the umpires overestimated the power that they had over the baseball league and the strength of their group's resolve. The union also exhibited some degree of closed-mindedness with the notion that MLB is the enemy. Lastly, there was the presence of self-censorship; some umpires who disagreed with the decision to resign failed to voice their dissent. These factors, along with other decision-making defects, led to a decision that was suboptimal and ineffective.

Criticisms and recent development

Even though groupthink has become increasing popular to the general public and relevant in many fields over the last few decades, scholars still raise some reasonable doubts about the legitimacy of the concept. Some scholars, like opt for a new model in place of groupthink. Others wish to reformulate the original model by reexamining traditional case studies of groupthink and considering new theories and empirical findings.

New models

Ubiquity model

Researcher Robert Baron (2005) contends that the connection between certain antecedents Janis believed necessary have not been demonstrated by the current collective body of research on groupthink. He believes that Janis' antecedents for groupthink is incorrect and argues that not only are they "not necessary to provoke the symptoms of groupthink, but that they often will not even amplify such symptoms." As an alternative to Janis' model, Baron proposes a ubiquity model of groupthink. This model provides a revised set of antecedents for groupthink, including social identification, salient norms, and low self-efficacy.

GGPS

Aldag and Fuller (1993) argue that the concept was based on "small and relatively restricted sample" that became too broadly generalized. Furthermore, the concept is too rigidly staged and deterministic. Empirical support for it has also not been consistent. The authors compare groupthink model to findings presented by Maslow and Piaget; they argue that, in each case, the model incites great interest and further research that, subsequently, invalidate the original concept. Aldag and Fuller thus suggest a new model called the general group problem-solving (GGPS) model, which integrates new findings from groupthink literature and alters aspects of groupthink itself. Two main differences between GGPS and groupthink is that the former is more value neutral and political oriented. Further research is necessary to assess the validity of Aldag's and Fuller's model.

Reexamination

Other scholars attempt to assess the merit of groupthink by reexamining case studies that Janis had originally used to buttress his model. Roderick Kramer (1998) believe that, because scholars today have a more sophisticated set of ideas about the general decision-making process and because new and relevant information about the fiascos have surfaced over the years, a reexamination of the case studies is appropriate and necessary. He argues that new evidence does not support Janis' view that groupthink was largely responsible for President Kennedy's and President Johnson's decisions in the Bay of Pigs invasion and U.S. escalated military involvement in the Vietnam War, respectively. Both presidents sought the advice of experts outside of their political groups more than Janis suggested. Kramer also argues that the presidents were the final decision-makers of the fiascos; while determining which course of action to take, they relied more heavily on their own construals of the situations than on any group-consenting decision presented to them. Kramer concludes that Janis' explanation of the two military issues is flawed and that groupthink has much less influence on group decision-making than is popularly believed to be.

Reformulation

Some of the scholars who have contributed to a new understanding of groupthink include Glen Whyte, Clark McCauley, and Marlene Turner, and Anthony Partkanis. Whyte (1998) suggests that collective efficacy play a large role in groupthink because it causes groups to become less vigilant and to favor risks, two particular factors that characterize groups affected by groupthink. McCauley recasts aspects of groupthink's preconditions by arguing that the level of attractiveness of group members is the most prominent factor in causing poor decision-making. The results of Turner's and Partkanis' (1991) study on social identity maintenance perspective and groupthink conclude that groupthink can be viewed as a "collective effort directed at warding off potentially negative views of the group." Together, the contributions of these scholars have brought about new understandings of groupthink that help reformulate Janis' original model.

Conclusion

Looking forward, Groupthink continues to be a popular and somewhat controversial topic in psychology research. More than twenty major studies focusing on some aspect or application of Groupthink have been published since the beginning of 2010. One of the more popular current research trends includes comparing the prevalence of groupthink in a diverse corporate environment to that of a less diverse firm. Another ongoing study by Duval frames groupthink in the context of a small group social network.

While the exact form and extent to which groupthink occurs remains subjective based off individual researchers, there is strong evidence to show that such a phenomenon exists and impacts real-world decisions on a daily basis. Groups that are engaging in groupthink target the consensus group decision and bypass alternatives without careful consideration or discussion. Greater awareness of groupthink has the potential to help minimize social damage associated with its negative consequences.