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From Groupthink to Teamthink: Toward the Creation of Constructive Thought Patterns in Self-Managing Work Teams

Christopher P. Neck[1,3] and Charles C. Manz[2]

Groups have been subject to a number of weaknesses and problems that interfere with their effectiveness. One notable destructive group tendency has been labeled "groupthink"—a defective decision-making process afflicting highly cohesive and conforming groups (Janis, 1972, 1983). One contemporary type of group that appears particularly vulnerable to groupthink is the self-managing or self-directing team (Manz & Sims, 1982). In this article we examine the vulnerability of self-managing teams to groupthink and propose a theory regarding the establishment of constructive synergistic team thinking and problem solving—"teamthink."

KEY WORDS: groupthink; teamthink; self-managing work teams.

INTRODUCTION

Work groups have long been a critical element of organizations (e.g. Maier, 1963). People coming together with different skills and experiences to perform work and solve problems is a fundamental fact of organizational functioning (Barnard, 1938). One contemporary type of work group is that of a self-managing team. Self-managing or self-directed teams have recently gained widespread notoriety as a contemporary human resource management approach (e.g., Hackman, 1986; Lawler, 1986; Manz, 1990). The development of the self-managing team approach largely resulted from the sociotechnical systems perspective which calls for joint optimization of both the social and technical aspects of work (Cummings, 1978; Emery & Trist,

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1969; Susman, 1976). This perspective emerged in response to challenges such as declining productivity and quality, and increases in employee dissatisfaction, absenteeism, turnover, and counterproductive behavior (Cummings & Malloy, 1977), as well as increasingly complex, interdependent, and uncertain organizational environments (Trist, 1977). The rationale for focusing on teams rather than individual employees derives from the proposition that "a group can more effectively allocate its resources when and where required to deal with its total variance in work conditions than can an aggregate of individuals each of whom is assigned a portion of the variance" (Susman, 1976, p. 183).

Self-managing teams generally entail an increase in decision-making autonomy and behavioral control for work team employees. The teams usually perform a relatively whole task and contain members who possess a variety of work skills (Hackman, 1977; Cummings, 1978). Teams are responsible for many traditional management functions such as assigning members to various tasks, solving within team quality and interpersonal problems, and conducting team meetings. Estimates suggest that hundreds of team systems have been tried in multiple types of work settings (Lawler, 1986; Walton, 1985). The variety of work settings in which teams have been implemented include a dog-food plant (Walton, 1977), coal mines (Trist, Susman, & Brown, 1977), a paint manufacturing plant (Poza and Markus, 1980), small parts manufacturing (Manz & Sims, 1987), an independent insurance firm (Manz & Angle, 1986), a warehouse (Manz, Keating, & Donnellon, 1990), and a paper mill (Manz & Newstrom, 1990).

Many benefits have been attributed to the implementation of self-managing teams such as increased productivity, quality, employee quality of work life and decreases in absenteeism and turnover (Lawler, 1986; Manz & Sims, 1987). While there is a clear need to further access benefits that have been derived from team applications in practice, work should also be directed toward improving the effectiveness of teams. For example, the issue of leadership of self-managing employees has been particularly challenging. The question "How does one go about leading employees that are expected to increasingly lead themselves?" captures the essence of this challenge (Manz & Sims, 1986, 1987, 1990; Walton & Schlesinger, 1979).

Another significant challenge regarding our insight into the benefits of team applications centers on the effectiveness of team problem solving and decision-making. Janis (1972, 1983) in his work on group decision-making studied the tendency for group members' striving to agree with one another to interfere with rational constructive decision-making processes. He coined this potential pitfall of groups "groupthink." Manz and Sims (1982) noted the vulnerability of self-managing teams to this same kind of defective decision-making process. They described specific cases in which

groupthink symptoms were displayed within self-managing teams. In this paper we will revisit the potential threat of groupthink for self-managing teams. In addition, we will attempt to fill a major gap in the group decision-making literature—the aspect of process gains. Process gains refer to the gains in effectiveness that follow from the group processes, whereas process losses refer to the losses in effectiveness that result from the group processes (Huber, 1980). While much of the existing literature focuses on the process losses of groups (notably groupthink), a scarcity of research addresses the process gains obtainable in decision-making groups. Consequently, we will propose an alternative process that self-managing teams might use to avoid groupthink and to achieve effective synergistic thinking within the group—what we will refer to as "teamthink." We argue that the collective thinking of a self-managing work group can serve as a catalyst of not only negative outcomes (e.g., groupthink), but also *positive* group outcomes. A framework is developed that contrasts (1) the antecedents of groupthink and the corresponding process losses to that of, (2) the antecedents of teamthink and the resulting process gains. Propositions and suggestions for future research on this important subject will be offered.

GROUPTHINK

The idea that groups may experience a collective pattern of thinking that directly affects its ability to make effective decisions is introduced by the concept "Groupthink." Janis (1972) coined the term "groupthink" defining it as "a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group. . .members' striving for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action. . .a deterioration of mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment that results from in-group pressures" (p. 9, 1972). Since the origination of groupthink, various empirical studies (e.g., Flowers, 1977; Callaway, Marriott, & Esser, 1985; Leana, 1985; Moorhead & Montanari, 1986), and case analyses (Smith, 1984; Hensley & Griffin, 1986; Moorhead, Ference, & Neck, 1991) have provided support for the occurrence of this phenomena within decision-making groups.

The central proposition of Janis' (1983) framework (see Fig. 1) is that when a group is moderately or highly cohesive, the presence of specific antecedent conditions increases the probability that the group will exhibit symptoms representative of groupthink. Additionally, these symptoms will lead to observable defects in the group's decision-making processes that may result in poor quality decisions (Moorhead & Montanari, 1986).
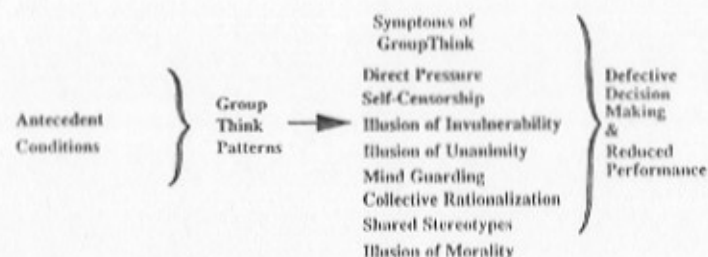
Fig. 1. An overview of groupthink.

Antecedent Conditions

According to Janis (1983), antecedent conditions are the observable causes of groupthink. In other words, they are the conditions "that produce, elicit, or facilitate the occurrence of the syndrome" (p. 176). The primary antecedent condition necessary for groupthink is a moderately or highly cohesive group. Janis (1983) argues that "the more amiability and *esprit de corps* among the members of an in-group. . .the greater the danger that independent critical thinking will be replaced by groupthink. . ." (p. 245).

However, it is important to note that cohesiveness is a necessary but insufficient condition for groupthink to contaminate a decision-making group. Janis postulated a number of secondary conditions necessary for groupthink to occur. Some of these secondary conditions relate to the structural or administrative fault of the organization. These include (1) insulation of the group, (2) leader preference for a certain decision, (3) lack of norms requiring methodical procedures, and (4) homogeneity of members' social background and ideology. The remaining conditions are related to the decision-making context and include: (1) high stress from external threats with low hope of a better solution that the leader's, and (2) low self-esteem temporarily induced by the group's perception of recent failures, excessive difficulties on current decision-making tasks, and, moral dilemmas (i.e., apparent lack of feasible alternatives except ones that violate ethical standards) (Janis, 1983).

Symptoms of Groupthink

Janis specified that the antecedent conditions stimulate the generation of eight consequences, or symptoms, that serve as the primary means of identifying the occurrence of groupthink. These symptoms are (1) direct social pressure placed on a member who argues against the group's shared beliefs, (2) members' self-censorship of their own thoughts or concerns that

deviate from the group consensus, (3) an illusion of the groups' invulnerability to failure, (4) a shared illusion of unanimity, (5) the emergence o self-appointed mind guards that screen out adverse information from outside the group, (6) collective efforts to rationalize, (7) stereotyped view: of enemy leaders as weak or incompetent, and (8) an unquestioned belie in the group's inherent morality.

Decision-Making Defects

When a group displays the symptoms listed above, the group ma) exhibit specific defects in the decision-making process. Janis states when a "group displays most of the symptoms of groupthink, we can expect to find that the group also displays symptoms of defective decision-making" (p. 175). Janis argues that the defects in the decision-making process which result from groupthink are: (1) incomplete survey of alternatives, (2) incomplete survey of objectives, (3) failure to examine the risks of the preferred choice, (4) failure to reappraise initially rejected alternatives, (5) poor information search, (6) selective bias in processing information at hand, (7) failure to work out contingency plans. Janis (1983) hypothesized that the more frequently a group exhibits these defects the worse will be the quality of the decisions.

In summary, groupthink focuses on the negative impact of the group's thinking processes on the performance of a group faced with decision-making. In essence the group loses its ability to make use of the cognitive ability of its members and instead seeks complacency and complete agreement. For example, excessive emphasis on group cohesiveness and conformity can interfere with effective thinking processes. A minority of members (most notably a designated leader) may dominate the mode of thinking, interfering with group members' contributions, creativity, and innovation.

As mentioned earlier, one particular type of group that is highly susceptible to groupthink is a self-managed work team (Manz & Sims, 1982). Self-managing teams are prime candidates for the groupthink phenomenon for two primary reasons. First, since team members experience high levels of interaction with and support from other members in order to perform tasks and make decisions, the potential for significant cohesiveness is likely to be high (Manz & Sims, 1982). Second, members will likely experience a tendency to conform with the general views of the team because members depend on each other for effective completion of tasks (Manz & Sims, 1982). Thus, self-managed work teams are vulnerable to groupthink due to the cohesiveness and conformity pressures within the teams.

Similarly, decisions of self-managed work teams may be impacted by polarization processes. Recently, it has been suggested that a weakness in

the groupthink hypothesis is that it does not take into account the concept of group polarization—the tendency for group discussion to enhance the point of view initially dominant within the group (Whyte, 1989). One of the primary processes that has been proposed as the cause of group polarization is social motivation (Isenberg, 1986), that is, group members alter their views to maintain an image of social desirability because people need to perceive and present themselves in a favorable light (Whyte, 1989). Similarity, since members of self-managed work teams tend to experience a high level of interaction with other members and depend on each other for completion of tasks, the desire of members to be liked by other members will be high; and, thus there is a likelihood that group decisions may be polarized. Thus, the probability that the decision-making processes of self-managed work teams will be impaired by groupthink and polarization pressures does indeed exist.

In this paper however, we propose an alternative perspective—"teamthink." Our view is that the collective thinking of a group can impact group outcomes *positively*, as well as negatively. The key contribution of this manuscript is the proposition that the application of thought self-leadership (TSL) strategies can facilitate constructive team thinking patterns. The specific mechanisms we discuss in this paper that facilitate teamthink include the effective team self-management of self-talk, mental imagery, and beliefs and assumptions. We propose that, together, these create constructive thought patterns within self-managing teams which can result in enhanced group effectiveness as measured by decision-making quality and team performance.

TOWARD A THEORY OF TEAMTHINK IN SELF-MANAGING TEAMS

Individual "Thought Self-Leadership"—The Foundation

It has been recently proposed that employees in organizations can influence or lead themselves by utilizing specific cognitive strategies that focus on individual self-dialogue (self-talk), mental imagery, beliefs and assumptions, and thought patterns (Manz & Neck, 1991; Neck & Manz, 1992). This perspective, labeled "thought self-leadership" (TSL), specifies that constructive thought management through the effective application of these cognitive strategies can lead to enhanced individual performance. TSL attempts to expand on the process of self-leadership introduced by (Manz, 1983, 1986, 1992)—"The process of influencing oneself to establish the self-direction and self-motivation needed to perform" (Manz, 1992).

For decades, authors in the realm of popular psychology have touted the benefits of various cognitive strategies including self-talk and mental imagery (e.g., Peale, 1952, 1982). While some might argue that this work lacks scientific credibility, it has played an important role in drawing attention to a new fruitful area for empirical studies. Indeed, research from various disciplines provides convincing empirical support for this relationship between TSL techniques and enhanced performance. More specifically, the influence of self-talk and mental imagery on performance has been empirically supported in sports psychology (e.g., Andres & Means 1986; Clark, 1960; Feltz & Landers, 1983), clinical psychology (Bonadies & Bass, 1984; Crowder, 1989; Harrell, Chambless, & Calhoun, 1981), counseling psychology (Baker, Johnson, Kopala, & Strout, 1985; Hazler & Hipple, 1981; Kurpius, Benjamin, & Morran, 1985), education (Swanson & Kozleski, 1985), and communication (Boice, 1985). Additionally, a survey of 3580 managers suggested that thought patterns of higher performing mangers differed from those of lower performing managers (Manz, Adsit, Campbell, & Mathison-Hance, 1988). Furthermore, it has been suggested that an individual's negative beliefs and assumptions can result in various cognitive distortions that lead to destructive outcomes including depression (Burns, 1980, Ellis, 1975). Finally, various TSL techniques have been successfully employed to treat clinically depressed individuals (Uleman & Bargh, 1989). Thus, the literature provides widespread support for the relationship between the utilization of TSL techniques and enhanced individual performance. However, a question that has not been addressed is whether self-leadership techniques help *groups* (e.g., self-managing work teams) enhance their performance?

Since the research suggests that TSL techniques can enhance individual performance, it seems logical that a collection of individuals, a group, could also facilitate its performance through the use of these cognitive strategies. In addition, evidence exists suggesting a group pattern of thinking emerges, that is, more than the existence of a simple collection of separate individual minds, particularly for groups involved in decision-making. The notion of a "group mind" has been asserted by various researchers including LeBon (1985), Bion (1961), Freud (1960), and McDougall (1921). For example, Freud (1960) observed "that individuals in groups tend to subjugate their individuality and act as though they were of one mind." Similarly, Bion (1961) asserted that a group's mentality exists beyond that of the individual group members in that the group's mentality connects group members by an unconscious implied agreement.

Additionally, concepts in the organizational literature that parallel that of the "group mind" are the constructs of organizational thinking (Sims & Gioia, 1986), and organizational memory (e.g., Walsh & Ungson, 1991).
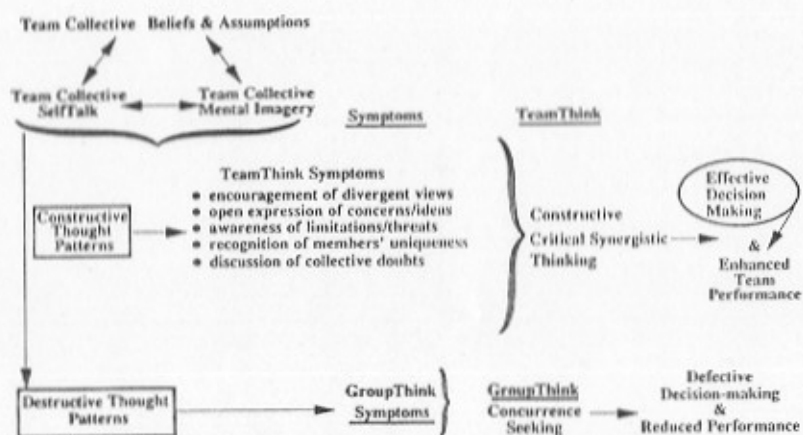
Fig. 2. The emergence of teamthink and groupthink.

It is argued that "people can be seen as so immersed in the organizational context and its influence on the perception and thought that individual thinking cannot be usefully distinguished from organizational thinking" (Sims & Gioia, 1986).

The Teamthink Framework

In this paper will propose a framework for addressing the development of a constructive pattern of group thinking within self-managing work teams that we call "teamthink." The main elements of the framework are summarized in Fig. 2. As the figure suggests, group thought patterns are created through the combination of a team's self-talk, mental imagery, and belief and assumptions. The nature (i.e., constructive/destructive) of each of these cognitive element will influence the nature of the specific existing thought pattern.

Teamthink Antecedent Conditions

Team Beliefs and Assumptions. It has been suggested that many problems that individuals encounter result from dysfunctional thinking (Ellis, 1975; Burns, 1980). These theorists suggest that cognitive distortions establish the foundation for ineffective thinking that hinders personal effectiveness, and even leads to some forms of depression. This is important in that much research has examined the influence of mood on cognitive processes in general (Zajonc, 1980) as well as on problem solving, decision

making, judgment, and evaluation (e.g., Isen, Shalker, Clark, & Karp, 1978 Isen & Shalker, 1982; Isen, Means, Patrick, & Nowicki, 1982). These studie: suggest that a positive mood influences evaluation, judgment and decisior making; and thus, an employee's mood state may influence his/her per formance. These distorted thoughts are based on some commor dysfunctional beliefs and assumptions that are activated by potentially trou bling situations. Most of the individual level beliefs have corresponding analogs at the group level.

An example of an individual level dysfunctional assumption is called "all or nothing" thinking. This refers to the tendency to evaluate thing: in extreme, black or white categories (Burns, 1980). Similarly, a group car adopt "all or nothing" beliefs. Cohesive decision-making groups can accentuate this undesirable phenomenon via dysfunctional within—group processes. If a risk does not seem overwhelmingly dangerous, the team a: a whole is inclined to minimize its importance and proceed without further preparation instead of developing contingency plans in case the risk materializes (Janis, 1983). Another example of a team belief is an illusion of group morality. Janis (1983) argues that groups who succumb to groupthink believe unquestioningly in the inherent morality of their ingroup; this belief inclines the members to ignore the ethical or moral consequences of their decisions. Furthermore, a final example of a team belief involves the group's perception of its ability to overcome challenges. More specifically, if a self-managing work team is faced with a technical problem that affects the quality of its product, it can view this occurrence as an "opportunity" to focus the group's energies and to utilize the decision-making and technical skills of the team, or as an "obstacle" that will prevent the team from producing a product of high quality. If the work team believes that this technical problem in an obstacle that it cannot be overcome, then it is practically assured that the product's quality will suffer. On the other hand, if the team feels that this technical problem is an opportunity in that it can be successfully handled, the probability of producing a high quality product is enhanced. This conclusion is based on the logic that team members are more likely to exert more effort and persist in addressing the challenge when they believe they are capable of overcoming it (see for example Bandura's (1986) writings on self-efficacy). Thus, if the team believes problems are "opportunities" to overcome challenges, rather than "obstacles" that will lead to failure, its performance should be enhanced.

Team Self-Talk. Self-talk or self-verbalizations is defined as what we covertly tell ourselves (Ellis, 1962). It has been suggested that self-talk can serve as a tool for self-influence directed at improving the personal effectiveness of employees and managers (Manz, 1986, 1992; Manz & Sims,

1990). Additionally, Weick (1979) applied this cognitive strategy to group-level phenomenon when he argued that "Organizations are presumed to talk to themselves" (p. 133). As stated earlier, research has clearly indicated a positive relationship between constructive self-talk and enhanced individual performance. Similarly, it has been suggested that group verbalizations (the self-talk of the group) may impact group performance (Janis, 1983). More specifically, it is proposed that within a cohesive self-managing team, there is a tendency for members to put social pressure on any member who expresses verbalizations that deviates from the dominant form of dialogue (which is derived from the dominant group beliefs) of the group. This pressure is exerted by group members to assure that the deviant member does not disrupt the consensus of the group as a whole. This tendency toward conformation group dialogue may lead to defective decision-making on the part of the group (Janis, 1983).

Team Mental Imagery. There are various definitions for the term mental imagery. In sports psychology, mental imagery describes methods involving rehearsal of a physical task in the absence of observable movement (Corbin, 1972; Richardson, 1967). In clinical psychiatry, mental imagery is defined as "the mental invention or recreation of an experience that in at least some respects resembles the experience of actually perceiving an object or an event, either in conjunction with, or in the absence of, direct sensory stimulation" (Finke, 1989). In the management literature, mental imagery has been described as a process in which: "we can create and, in essence, symbolically experience imagined results of our behavior before we actually perform" (Manz, 1992, p. 75). From these views, mental imagery refers to imagining performance of a task prior to its physical completion. For example, managers are frequently required to make public presentations. A manager can potentially enhance a presentation performance by visualizing the completion of a successful presentation in his/her mind before it is actually delivered. Similarly, a decision-making group or work team could potentially enhance its performance through the utilization of group mental imagery to establish a common vision. It has been argued elsewhere that the most successful groups are those in which the members share a common vision (Napier & Gershenfeld, 1987). Consequently, when faced with strategic decisions, a self-managing work team can interactively create a common vision regarding what it wants to accomplish and an effective means for doing so.

Thought Patterns

Thought patterns can be described as integrated patterns of thinking that tend to be repeated when triggered by situational events or as "habit-

ual ways of thinking" (Manz, 1992). Individuals may engage in both negative and positive chains of thoughts (habitual ways of thinking) that affec emotional and behavioral reactions (Manz, & Neck, 1991; Neck & Manz 1992). An example of the types of thought patterns a person could adop are called opportunity thinking and obstacle thinking (Manz, 1992). Op portunity thinking involves a pattern of thought that focuses or opportunities, worthwhile challenges, and constructive ways of dealing witl challenging situations. More specifically, opportunity thinking involves a re alistic appraisal of difficult situations that leads to the necessary preparatior and application of skills to overcome existing challenges. Opportunity think ers view challenging or difficult situations as temporary occurrences tha will be overcome. Obstacle thinking, on the other hand, involves a focus on the negative aspects (the obstacles) involved in challenging situ ations—such as reasons to give up and retreat from problems. Obstacle thinkers view troubling occurrences as permanent events that happen re peatedly and these difficulties can rarely be conquered. The nature of one's thought pattern may be directly related to his/her performance (Manz & Neck, 1991; Neck & Manz, 1992). In other words, if thought patterns are constructive in the sense that they focus on opportunities and potential ways of overcoming challenges, rather than obstacles, the potential for subsequent performance to be enhanced is established. If on the other hand, a person engages in "obstacle thinking," subsequent performance is more likely to be hindered.

Additionally, another form of a thought pattern paralleling that of opportunity/obstacle thinking that individuals can adopt has been posited by a leading psychologist. He argues that individuals tend to evoke one of two habits of thinking—optimism or pessimism (Seligman, 1991). When confronted by a bad situation, optimists "perceived it as a challenge and try harder" whereas pessimists believe "bad events will last a long time, and will undermine everything they do" (p. 4-5). A similar but unrealistic dysfunctional (thought pattern) related to optimism can be enacted by self-managing teams. Teams may adopt an over optimistic pattern of thought as a result of a shared illusion of invulnerability. Subsequently, the group may be willing to take extraordinary unnecessary risks (Janis, 1983). Thus, opportunity thinking and optimism will likely need to be tampered with realism to produce positive outcomes.

In general, we are proposing that a similar relation between the type of thought pattern and performance holds for teams also. In other words, the collectivity of individuals within a self-managing work team will tend to adopt habitual patterns of viewing specific types of situations that reflect thought patterns such as opportunity/obstacle thinking and/or opti-

mism/pessimism. The nature of these patterns will likely affect subsequent team performance.

Teamthink Symptoms

If the dominant group pattern of thought is constructive, the team will exhibit teamthink symptoms such as: (1) encouragement of divergent views, (2) open expression of concerns/ideas, (3) awareness of limitations/threats, (4) recognition of member's uniqueness, (5) discussion of collective doubts.

These symptoms generally entail constructive counter views to those of the dysfunctional groupthink symptoms proposed by Janis (1983). Furthermore, these symptoms indicate effective thought processes in that they encourage constructive critical synergistic thinking, as opposed to dysfunctional concurrence seeking thought processes (groupthink). The outcome of the teamthink process should be increased effectiveness of decision-making and enhanced team performance. If, on the other hand, the self-managing team holds destructive cognitive patterns, the concurrence-seeking symptoms and decisions defects of groupthink can occur. As stated earlier, empirical research suggests a significant relationship between the constructive application of these cognitive strategies and enhanced individual performance. In the following discussion, each of these aspects of thought will be briefly defined and applied to the group level of analysis.

In sum, teamthink suggests that the collective thinking of a self-managing team can serve as a catalyst of not only negative outcomes (such as groupthink); but also positive group outcomes. Consequently, this argument suggests that the processes of teamthink and groupthink are two separate and distinct phenomenon. More specifically, groupthink involves a condition in which a collectivity of individuals succumb to a dysfunctional unrealistic (e.g., over optimistic) view of a difficult situation. The result tends to be concurrence seeking and an inadequate appraisal of alternative course of action. On the other hand, teamthink depicts a process in which the group enacts constructive forms of thought patterns that stimulate the realistic appraisal of challenging events and this required preparation and skill application necessary to overcome obstacles and to pursue opportunities. This realistic appraisal of alternative courses of action creates the "non-concurrence seeking" within the group and as a result, the positive teamthink symptoms. Overall, teamthink is characterized by effective synergistic thinking within the group.

Figure 3 attempts to further clarify the concept of teamthink by comparing different forms of decision-making units. It is argued that as organizations move from traditional methods of job designs to those that
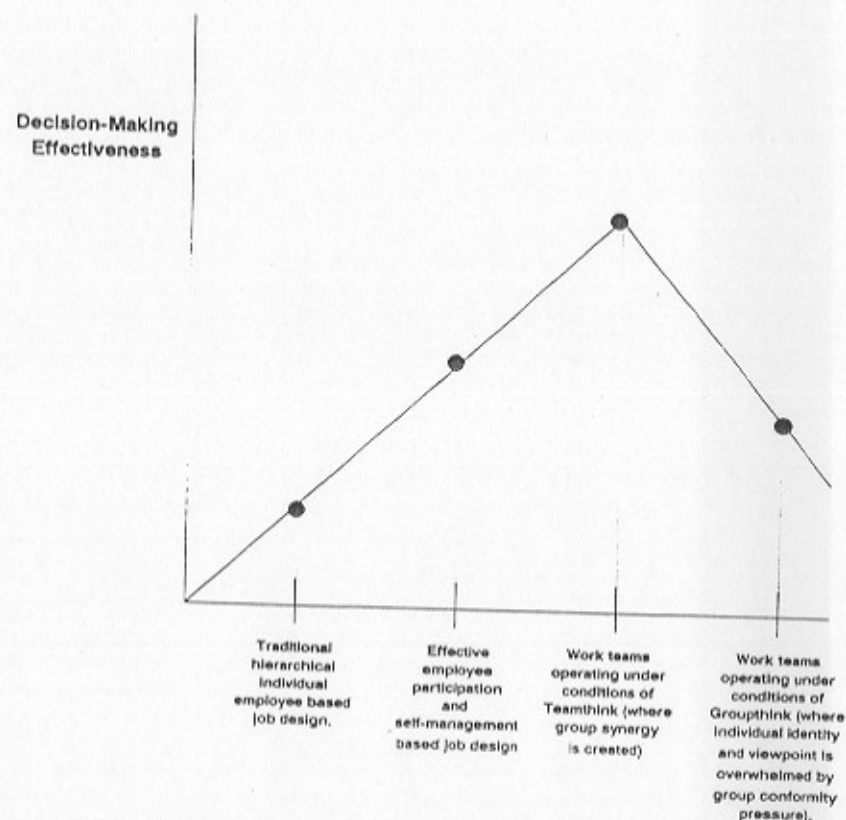
Fig. 3. Proposed theoretical relationships between individual and team-based job design and decision-making effectiveness.

encourage employees to maintain their individual beliefs and identify, (e.g., self-leadership) the decision-making within the organization will be enhanced (Manz, 1986, 1992). Furthermore, the pinnacle of effective group decision making, teamthink, occurs when a collection of self-leaders (a self-managing work group) work together to reach an optimal decision—while at the same time the members maintain their separate identity and individual beliefs. This process of decision-making where a group of self-led individuals maintain their separate identities and reach an optimal decision is what we are describing when we refer to "constructive critical synergistic thinking." Specifically, the group reaches a decision of the quality that could not have been reached by adding the efforts of each separate member. By maintaining their separate belief systems, members are able to critically examine the decision-making process without being influenced to
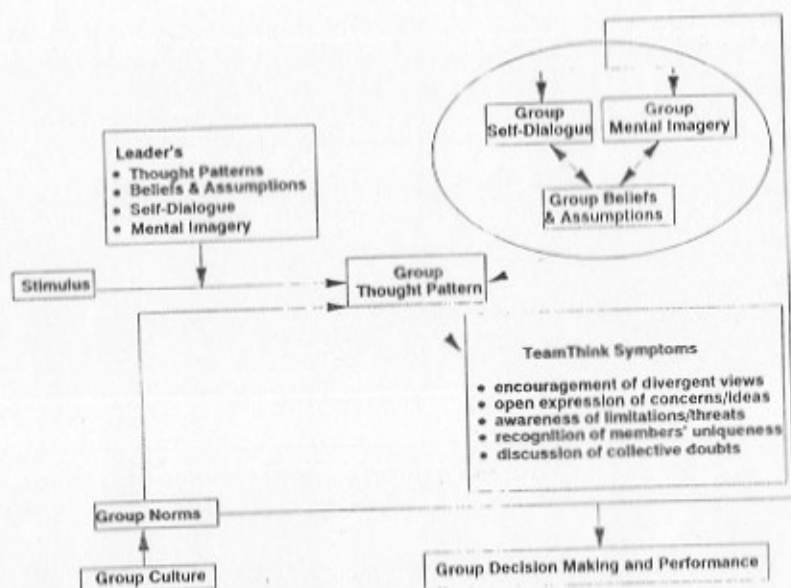
Fig. 4. The teamthink framework.

conform to a group view that overwhelms individual viewpoints. As Fig. 3 illustrates, once, the members of the group become detached from their own separate identity and viewpoint. The group is vulnerable to groupthink; and, thus decision-making effectiveness is at risk.

CONTINGENCY FACTORS

While Fig. 2 depicts the central elements of teamthink, it is important to note that various contingency factors will impact the unfolding of the teamthink process and the impact on group decision-making and performance. Some particularly important factors include the team leader, group culture, and group norms (see Fig. 4).

The Team Leader

One important focal point of the team application of TSL techniques is the group or team leader. The group leader serves as a primary mechanism by which the group mind revolves. As Elmes & Giemmill (1990) argues: "the regressive leader–member relationship is characterized by childlike dependence of members upon the leader; under the spell of the leader, they re-

nounce their own critical thinking and relegate it to the role of the leader whom they blindly follow: (p. 35). Indeed, there is a tendency within decision-making groups to adopt the thoughts, self-dialogue, and mental imagery patterns of the leader, unless the leader purposely acts to discourage such concurrence seeking. Maier (1950) has argued that within all groups a pressure toward consensus prevails unless the leader deliberately counteracts such pressure by encouraging diversity of viewpoints. The leader's behavior can promote the establishment and maintenance of a group norm that may develop within the group. For example, the leader can facilitate an atmosphere of closed inquiry that should evoke conformity with the leaders's view (Janis, 1983), or a pattern geared to promote independent contributions toward creative critical thinking and innovation (Manz & Sims, 1990).

Figure 4 summarizes the preceding discussion in pictorial form. When confronted with certain stimuli from its environment, the type (constructive/destructive) of cognition (i.e., thought pattern that consists of combinations of self-talk and mental imagery and beliefs/assumptions) that the group enact will be strongly influenced (moderated) by the cognition and actions of the leader. For example, a self-managing team that is faced with a technical problem that could contaminate the product's quality, can view this occurrence as an opportunity to utilize the decision-making and technical skills of the group to produce an even better work process and product that resists future defects, or as an obstacle that will lead to a faulty product. It is proposed that a key factor in whether or not the self-managing team views this product-related stimulus as an obstacle or an opportunity will be the thought pattern (e.g., obstacle vs. opportunity thinking) of the leader.

In explaining the use of a moderator variable, Baron and Kenny (1986) state that this type of variable is introduced when a relation holds in one setting, but not in another. Figure 3 indicates that the nature of the leader's cognition will significantly influence whether or not the groups cognition in relating to the stimulus is positive or negative or constructive/destructive.

Group Culture and Norms

Norms can be defined as "rules" of behavior that govern a group: who can do what when (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Culture is a set of beliefs and values that provide identity and a framework of meaning for people in a group (Gillette & McCollom, 1990). Thus, norms can be classified as a subset of the group's culture and are grounded in a cultural system of beliefs and assumptions about relationships within the group and between the group and the outside environment (Gillette & McCollom, 1990).

Group norms are particularly important for understanding the group mind since they are characteristics of the group as a whole as opposed to an isolated individual member (Williams, Martin, & Gray, 1975). In terms of our TSL work group framework (Fig. 3), norms (which originate from the culture of the group) play an integral role in determining the nature of a group's self-dialogue, mental imagery, and thought patterns. More specifically, several norms that may emerge within a self-managing work team, and that may impact its cognition, are summarized below.

Pressure to Conform. Groups exert enormous pressures on their members to conform to the norms established by the group social system (Fisher, 1980). It is important to note, however, that conformity can have both positive and negative ramifications on group performance. A negative example of pressure to conform within decision-making groups is that of "Groupthink." Group members fail to realistically appraise alternative courses of action that results from various in-group pressures, especially pressure to conform (Janis, 1983).

On the other hand, the norm of conformity could result in positive benefits for the group. For example, in terms of group TSL, if members of a self-managing team pressure other members to conform to self-dialogue, mental imagery, and thought patterns of a constructive nature, then this conformity pressure can potentially enhance, rather than detract from the quality of the group's performance.

Reciprocity Norm. The norm of reciprocity is based on the assumption that "humans tend to react to other humans in a manner similar to the way in which those humans behave toward them" (Fisher, 1980, p. 187). This norm can create an effect that accumulates (is amplified) within groups as each person's behavior reinforces the similar behaviors of other group members (Fisher, 1980). Thus, in terms of group TSL, the norm of reciprocity could significantly impact the cognitions of the self-managing team. For example, if individual members adopt positive thought patterns (e.g., constructively focus on and respond to the opportunistic aspects of a challenging and difficult situation, rather than the obstacles inherent in the situation), then other members will tend to think and behave in a similar manner in response to the initial members' reactions.

TEAMTHINK PROPOSITIONS: TOWARD A THEORY OF ENHANCED TEAM DECISION-MAKING AND PERFORMANCE

The following propositions for future research on self-managing teams were derived from the teamthink framework:

Proposition 1. The more that each teamthink element of self-dialogue mental imagery, and beliefs/assumptions possessed by a team reflects that of a constructive nature, the greater the likelihood that the group will exhibit positive thought patterns (e.g., opportunity thinking) as opposed to destructive thought patterns (e.g., obstacle thinking).

This proposition addresses the reciprocal nature of a self-managing team's self-talk, imagery, and beliefs/assumptions depicted in the teamthink framework. Additionally, testing this proposition will examine the impact of these three cognitive elements on the type (constructive/destructive) of thought pattern that the group exhibits.

Proposition 2. Teams possessing thought patterns of a constructive nature will display symptoms conducive to enhanced decision-making—that is, teamthink symptoms (as opposed to groupthink symptoms that are conducive to defective decision-making).

This second proposition examines the consequences of a team's thought patterns. More specifically, this proposition focuses on a key factor that determines whether or not a self-managing team exhibits decision-making symptoms that enhances decision making (teamthink symptoms) or symptoms of a defective decision-making process (groupthink symptoms).

Proposition 3. A self-managing team whose leader possesses constructive thought patterns, resulting from the combination of constructive beliefs/assumptions, self-talk, and mental imagery, will collectively possess cognitions and overall thought patterns of a similar (constructive) nature.

This proposition allows for the empirical test of the moderating influence of the team leader's cognitions on the thought patterns collectively held by the decision-making group.

Proposition 4. Teams holding norms of a nonconforming nature will exhibit thought patterns of a parallel (non-conformance) nature.

This proposition formalizes the impact of norms on the thought patterns collectively held by a self-managing work team. Specifically, this proposition examines whether inter-group processes such as conformity pressures impact the nature of a group's thought patterns.

Proposition 5. The greater the number of teamthink symptoms that a team exhibits, the more likely the performance (decision-making) of the team will be enhanced. This proposition will serve to test the ultimate benefit or outcome of teamthink—that is, enhanced performance. Janis (1983) argued that the greater the number of groupthink symptoms that the group exhibits the more likely that the group will make decisions of a defective nature. Similarly, this proposition will serve to test whether this direct relationship will hold between symptoms of a constructive nature and enhanced performance.

TEAMTHINK PRESCRIPTIONS

The importance of the preceding discussion is reflected in several prescriptions for groups to foster team-think in the decision-making process.

Prescriptions for Establishing Constructive Beliefs and Assumptions

An initial step that self-managing work teams can undertake to foster teamthink symptoms is for members to identify and confront the team's dysfunctional beliefs and replace them with more rational beliefs. For example, as stated earlier, groups can adopt the "all or nothing" belief of minimizing the importance of various risks. This dysfunction can be corrected by identifying and then altering the beliefs in order to establish a more rational approach. For example, the group could correct this all or nothing thinking by establishing a decision-making sequence to ensure that risks related to the decision at hand are examined and that contingency plans are developed in case the risk materializes.

Prescriptions for Establishing Constructive Team Self-Dialogue and Mental Imagery

Through our teamthink framework, we hypothesize that group self-attempts and mental imagery can impact the effectiveness of its decision making. Self-managing teams that bring self-defeating internal verbalizations to a level of awareness, and who re-think and design these inner dialogues, may be able to enhance their performance. Specifically, team members should examine the group's dialogue to ensure that social pressure is not placed on members who express verbalizations that deviate from the dominant form of dialogue of the group.

Furthermore, a work team could enhance its performance through the utilization of group mental imagery to establish a common vision. For example, a design group could combine the expertise and experience of its various members for creating a feasible image of a new technology advancement to an existing product. This collective vision could increase the team's ability to make effective decisions because they already viewed the outcome of their performance in their minds. Caution must be taken, however, to assure that the vision does not become another source of pressure toward conforming. The vision should reflect the combination of individuals' views on the team.

Prescriptions for Establishing Constructive Thought Patterns

The teamthink framework suggests a relation between a group's thought patterns and team decision making and performance. Consequently, one way to enhance a team's performance is to alter its thought patterns. First, an examination of the group's current thought patterns must occur. If the group tends to excessively focus on the negative aspects (the obstacles), rather than the positive aspects (the opportunities) involved in challenging situations the team could benefit from changing its perspective in future decision-making situations. If the team succeeds in repeatedly reversing the tone of its patterns of thought, over time, this new constructive way of group thinking should become a habitual pattern. Ultimately, the potential for the group's performance to improve could be established.

Prescriptions for Avoiding Excessive Concurrence-Seeking

The teamthink framework also suggests some additional prescriptions to avoid excessive concurrence-seeking within the group and thus, to achieve teamthink.

First, each member should adopt the role of critical evaluator and be responsible for airing any objections and doubts that they may have. Second, each member should take responsibility for ensuring that destructive norms (e.g., toward over conformity and reciprocity) do not develop within the group. Third, the leader of the group should not reveal his/her patterns of thought, self-dialogue, and mental imagery, early in the group's discussions to avoid creating concurrence-seeking pressure within the group.

In summary, these four categories of teamthink prescriptions should increase the probability that a decision-making group (e.g., self-managing work group) experiences the teamthink phenomena, i.e., enactment of constructive, critical, synergistic thinking, and consequently enhanced team decision-making and performance.

CONCLUSION

Various empirical and conceptual research has focused on a number of weaknesses and obstacles that interfere with the effectiveness of decision-making groups. The most prevalent of these destructive group tendencies has ben coined "groupthink"—a contaminating process afflicting highly cohesive groups that leads to defective decision-making. However, we have proposed an alternative perspective (teamthink) in which the collective thinking of a group (particularly, self-managing teams) can serve as a catalyst of positive as opposed to negative (group) outcomes.

Clearly, research is needed to assess the applicability of teamthink in organizations. It is important to note that while laboratory studies may be the best way to address some of these issues, the full spectrum of behavioral research methods, including comparative case studies and field experiments in natural settings could be used to further refine and test the theoretical positions advanced here. For example, one method of empirically examining teamthink's applicability in an organizational setting would involve a training intervention based field study. More specifically, a field study similar to that of Latham & Saari (1979) modeling-based training design could be utilized focusing on a group-level analysis. The design would include two groups (one receiving teamthink training, the other not receiving any training—the control group). Therefore, the teamthink perspective would be compared to a non-treatment control group in terms of its impact on behavior and performance. The teamthink training would focus on each of the major components of teamthink addressed in this paper. Pre- and post-measures would be collected to assess the impact of the teamthink training. The measures would be of a multiple nature including team performance and decision-making effectiveness.

Yet, while this type of research should add greatly toward a better understanding about team decision making, there are several difficulties to consider in terms of carrying out empirical research based on the teamthink framework. These difficulties include the complexity of the model (a substantial number of variables), the cognitive nature as opposed to behavioral nature of many variables in the model (cognitive elements are difficult to observe directly), and the difficulty in obtaining field settings to introduce a teamthink intervention (given the experimental controls necessary to carry out rigorous research). However, the authors are greatly optimistic that the potential benefits of carrying out empirical research based on the teamthink framework clearly outweigh these difficulties; and thus, the potential benefits toward enhanced team decision making warrant pursuing this intriguing line of research.

A comprehensive model of teamthink is proposed that extends the individual thought self-leadership process (Manz & Neck, 1991; Neck & Manz, 1992) to a group level analysis. The basic premise of teamthink is that self-managing work teams can enhance their performance through the collective application of specific cognitive strategies that result in constructive synergistic team thinking. Propositions derived from our framework have been proposed to serve as catalysts for empirically testing the applicability of teamthink for improving the performance of self-managing work teams. Additionally, prescriptions that groups should follow in order to foster teamthink are discussed. Overall, the challenge of better understanding constructive cognitive processes that lead to enhanced decision-making and

performance within groups (and avoiding destructive, defective decision making processes) appears to be a promising frontier for organizationa research and practice.

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A Definition and Illustration of Democratic Leadership

John Gastil[1,2]

Renewed calls for democracy make it imperative that we understand the nature of democratic leadership. Existing definitions of democratic leadership are inconsistent and inadequate, so this essay provides a clear definition that applies to social groups both large and small. As defined herein, democratic leadership is conceptually distinct from positions of authority; rather, it is defined as the performance of three functions: distributing responsibility among the membership, empowering group members, and aiding the group's decision-making process. Many, most, or all members of a group serve these functions, regularly exchanging the roles of leader and follower. A limited number of practical and moral considerations are identified for assessing the appropriateness of the democratic leadership model for different groups. In addition, the National Issues Forums program is used to illustrate the model and suggestions are made for future research on democratic leadership.

KEY WORDS: democratic leadership; democracy; participation; decision making; facilitation.

INTRODUCTION

Across the globe, the tumultuous political events of the past 3 years have raised hopes for the creation and revitalization of democratic institutions. In some countries, dictatorships have crumbled and new governments have crawled from the rubble. In others democratic opposition movements have gained strength, courage, and international recognition. Emboldened citizens in China, Czechoslovakia, Namibia, El Salvador, and elsewhere have organized to promote democratic social change, and new political par-