

Social collaboration among citizens and organizations with the purpose to refine ...

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Within every community, there are various types of groups that gather together throughout certain days of the week or month. This paper will discuss what goes on within a specific group of my choice. This paper will also touch on the social norm, and conformity of this group or committee. It will give a better understanding on how observations can help you better understand how members of a group interact and influence each other.

According to Fiske (2003), “ Interacting groups typically include two to six members; people tend to enjoy these smaller groups when accomplishing tasks or enjoying each other socially.” These interactions amongst the group can either be positive or negative. When the group seems to increase in size, then there tends to be sudden conflict and people become unhappy. There are some people who like to over dominate people within the group which can cause other issues such as lack of cooperation from other group members or decrease in performance. Or there can be positive interactions such as feeding from one another, building relationships and several other positive outcomes.

A local group known as, “ The Sol-Legare Community Group,” is one of these groups. This group, or committee, is made up of parents, teachers, legal guardians, and other forms of social groups. The Sol-Legare Community Group is in Charleston South Carolina in a neighborhood on Sol-Legare road. Their group meetings are usually held at the Sol-Legare community center on every fourth Monday of the month. It was one of these meetings the author went to observe what takes place within these meetings in her neighborhood.

The author was fascinated that so many people from the neighborhood showed up to the meeting; it consisted of about 20-30 people. The room where the meeting took place was spacious and everyone sat at round tables. There were ten tables. She was surprised by the various diversity of individuals involved. There seemed to be no discrimination against sex, race or ethnicity although there were more women than men in the room. Everyone seemed to be anywhere from the age of thirty to late sixties or so and a mixture of African American and Caucasian individuals. The meetings are long-term; they happen every month throughout the year and usually last about an hour and a half to two hours. The main facilitator, or president of the committee by the name of Sharon Richardson starts off by stating the mission of the meeting. She explained that the purpose of each meeting is to make sure that everyone works together to achieve and preserve a vibrant community for living, working, learning and playing.

The goals consisted of promoting cooperation and goodwill among everyone, giving out information that is relevant for the community. Also, collaborating with officials, citizens and organizations to maintain the beauty and the safety of the neighborhood. She then began handing out agendas for the night. Before discussing the agenda, she had everyone introduce themselves briefly to allow everyone to participate at least once in the meeting. On the agenda that night, she explained that the purpose of the meeting would be stated for the new members. She also reintroduced herself as well as her daughter who was helping her out by the name of Trayanna Richardson classified as the vice facilitator or president. Along with the treasurer and

secretary. She explained that from about 6-6: 15 they will do introductions, which already took place. From 6: 15-7: 45 would consist of discussions involving the goals of the community stated before.

Finally, from 7: 45-8 the meeting will conclude and discussions of the agenda items for the next meeting will take place. As the meeting began, she observed that it was running smoothly. They spoke about how to keep the neighborhood cleaner. One of the members apart of the committee stated that she notices sometimes that people litter while driving and that needs to stop. Another member stated that she also noticed people not picking up behind their dogs while walking them. Other issues such as speeding while the kids are walking home from school was also brought up, which is known to be a touchy subject because, parents throughout the neighborhood brought this issue up before. At the end of these discussions she observed that everyone agreed to work together to make sure the neighborhood stays clean and that they are more cautious when the kids are walking home from school. She noticed that this was an example of interdependence.

Interdependence is the extent to which the group members are mutually dependent upon each other to reach a goal; and each member needs to do their part to make sure that goal is met. Observing further, she started to think about how seriously the role of the main facilitator was. She knew Ms. Richardson personally and she was known to be a very humorous and a silly person. However, during the meeting her role was taken seriously because the topics were serious. This ties into social norms; which are unwritten rules on how to behave. Her norm defined appropriate behavior for the social

group that was taking place. She conformed her expectation for her to behave that way during this serious time.

She also noticed unified communication patterns in the group meeting. Everyone related about the speeding that takes place in the neighborhood. They all agreed that people need to slow down and, be more aware of the people around for safety purposes. The suggestion was maybe getting speed bumps put down somehow or getting more stop signs. She realized that no one was forcing their opinions on each other or ignoring each other's ideas. Along with that, she observed the similarity amongst the group of people. Being similar, requires a collection of people who are interested in the same thing or working together to complete a certain task. Even though they were different people with different roles within the community, they all came together for the same cause. As far as group thinking goes she did not see this occurring. Group thinking usually happens when people set aside what they believe in, or their opinions to adopt the opinion for the rest of the group. They would rather keep the peace than disrupt the crowd. The lead facilitator did not override anyone, she allowed everyone to state their opinions and took them into consideration. She did not observe anyone being conservative and hesitant to speak up.

Overall, she was very surprised how smoothly the entire meeting went. She thought since they touched on touchy subjects, that something would get out of hand, but it did not. Ultimately everyone agreed to work together to make sure their place of residence is well taken care of and everyone remains safe.

In conclusion, there are many different groups for communities all around us. The Sol-Legare Community center in Charleston South Carolina being one. Just like most groups there are established hierarchies within the group to create a balance for the members who are involved. Each meeting takes place around the same time and place every month and, they provide free open floors to anyone who would like to state their opinion or ideas. This group showed signs of conformity in terms of behaving appropriately in the type of setting they were in. The groupthink was very cohesive, and everyone had their chance to speak. The group showed a sense of unity and allowed everyone to play a role in the decision-making process which in the end was very beneficial for the community's wellbeing.