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ASA ANNUAL CONFERENCE
2016
LAS VEGAS, NV

GROUPTHINK – BEWARE
THE PERILS !

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Workshop Blocks

Block 1: Historical Fiascos

Block 2: GroupThink – What is it?

Block 3: Janis's GroupThink Model – (1982) (Yale University)

Block 4: Modified GroupThink Models – Refinements in Understanding:

- Modified Path Model 1: Christopher P. Neck & Gregory Moorhead, 1995

- Modified Path Model 2: , Jim Nam Choi, (U. of Michigan), Myung Un Kim, (Seoul National University), 1999

- Reason's Pathology Model (University of Leicester)

- Coopers Model (Dr. Dominic Cooper (U. of Manchester)

- Triple Constraint Model

Block 5: Putting it all together for better Understanding

Block 6: Relevance & Recommendations

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BLOCK 1

GroupThink – Beware the Perils ! –
Historical Fiascos

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1941: Pearl Harbor; failure to protect forces



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1961: Cuba; Bay of Pigs Invasion



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2000 Swiss Air – “The Flying Bank”



Ref: *Hermann, A.; Rammal, H. G. (2010). "The grounding of the "flying bank", Management Decision, Vol. 48 Iss: 7, pp.1048 - 1062*

1986: Cape Canaveral FL, USA Challenger Space Shuttle 51-L SRB

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7 Dead

2+ year delay in program
+\$480 million to fix the
SRB O-ring design

Political and Management
pressure overriding
engineering evidence
to delay the launch.

GroupThink dominated
Resulting in Breakdown in
Safety Culture



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2003 Columbia Space Shuttle Disaster



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2003-2004: US Invasion of Iraq and the Policy Decision about Saddam Hussein



Group Think' Led to Iraq WMD Assessment, Published July 11, 2004

BLOCK 2

GroupThink – WHAT IS IT?

What is GroupThink?

“The mode of thinking that persons engage in when concurrence-seeking becomes so dominant in a cohesive in-group that it tends to over-ride realistic appraisals of alternative courses of action.”

(Ref: Janis, 1971)



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GroupThink: Perspective

- Belongs to Social and Behavioral Psychology
- Irving Janis: most decisions are made in small groups
- Small groups: 3-20 individuals
- Groups are used to counteract limitations of individual decision-making
- Group-dynamics rather than individual-dynamics come into play in decision-making

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GroupThink: Is it relevant today? Perhaps!

- Takata 2002 – 2015: air bag recall
- Libya 2011: the ouster of Khadafy and the ensuing ISIS insurgency
- Libya 2012: Benghazi – US Embassy tragedy
- Volkswagen 2009 to 2016: emission cheating scandal spreads to more vehicle models
- Others?...

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GroupThink: Is it relevant to you? You decide!

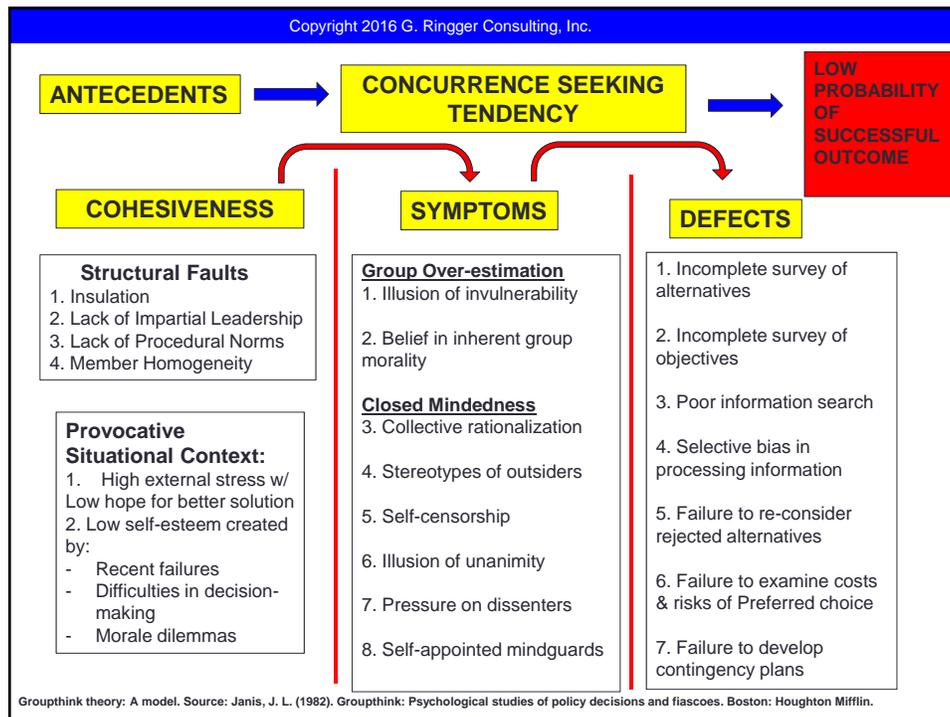
Government / Religions	Business / Community	Business / Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political parties • Juries • Military • Religions / Sects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mergers & Acquisitions • Joint ventures • Committees • Boards • Associations • Departments • Teams • Functional groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vertical groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality; • Purchasing; • Sales; Marketing • Horizontal groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labor; • management; • divisional management

“The mode of thinking that persons engage in when concurrence-seeking becomes so dominant in a cohesive in-group that it tends to over-ride realistic appraisals of alternative courses of action.”

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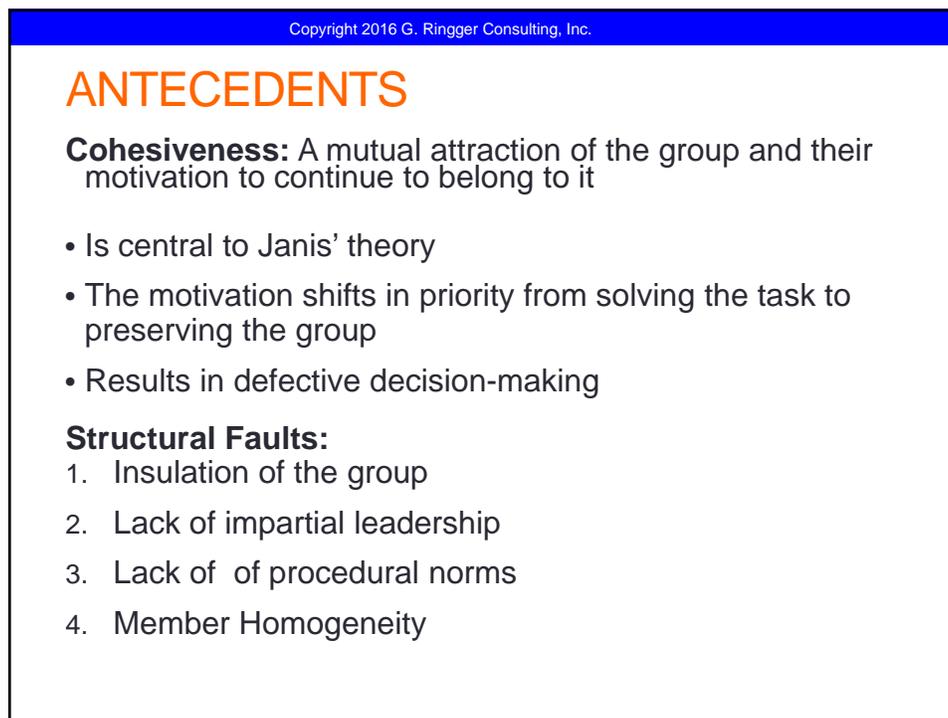
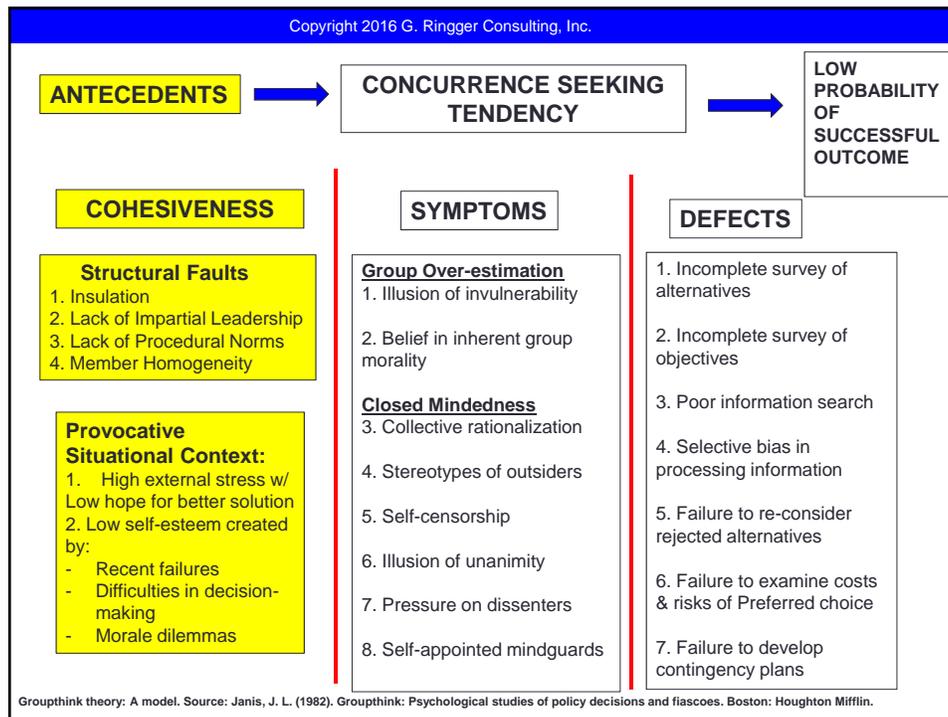
BLOCK 3

GroupThink Model



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GROUPTHINK - ANTECEDENTS



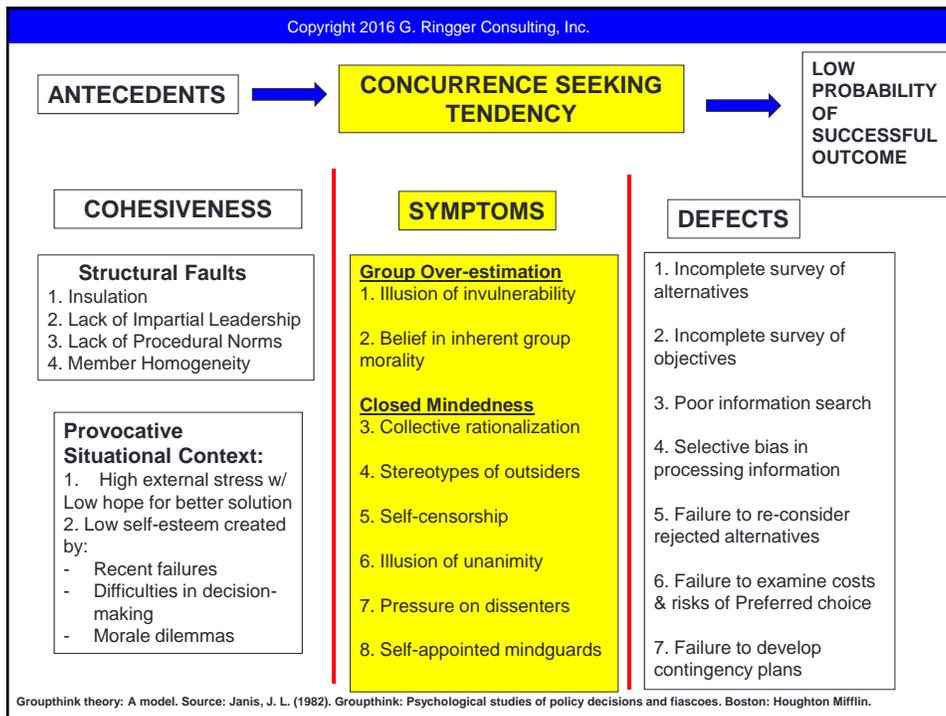
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ANTECEDENTS (continued)

Provocative Situational Context:

1. High external stress w/ low hope for a better solution
2. Low self-esteem created by:
 - Recent failures
 - Difficulties in decision-making
 - Morale dilemmas

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CONCURRENCE SEEKING TENDENCY

“The mode of thinking that persons engage in when *concurrency-seeking* becomes so dominant in a cohesive ingroup that it tends to override realistic appraisal of alternative courses of action.” (Janis 1971)

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Symptoms: Group Over-Estimation

1. **An illusion of invulnerability:**
 - Leads to excessive optimism;
 - Leads to heightened risk-taking.
2. **An unquestioned belief in the inherent morality of the group:**
 - Leads to being blind to moral consequences

Example: The Kennedy group knew that some cabinet members had moral reservations about invading a smaller neighboring country but these reservations were never explored.

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Symptoms: Closed-mindedness

Closed-mindedness:

- Collective efforts to discount information that would raise doubts about the chosen/preferred alternative;
- Possesses a stereotyped view of the “enemy” as: evil, stupid or weak.

Definition of “Enemy”: The term here is used to describe any outsider with an opposing view or position.

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Symptoms: Closed-mindedness

3. Collective rationalization

Example: Rockefeller said, *“The fact is, the administration, at all levels and to some extent, us [Congress], used bad information to bolster its case for war, and we in Congress would not have authorized that war — we would not have authorized that war with 75 votes — if we knew what we know now.”*

4. Stereotyped views of out-groups

Example: The Kennedy group convinced themselves that Castro’s army was so weak and popular support so shallow that a single brigade could overturn the entire government.

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Symptoms: Closed-mindedness

5. **Self-censorship: In order not to deviate from conformity, minimize doubts and counter-arguments:**

Example: Following the Bay of Pigs invasion Arthur Schlesinger said, *"My feelings of guilt were tempered by the knowledge that any objection would have accomplished nothing but gain me a name as a nuisance."*

6. **Illusion of unanimity: Absence of dissent creates the illusion. Everyone might disagree but everyone thinks that everyone else agrees.**

Example: After an off-line discussion with company executives, Morton Thiokol engineers reversed their "no-go" position and announced that their solid rocket booster was ready to fly.

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Symptoms: Closed-mindedness

7. **Direct pressure on dissenters: Pressure on members who argue against the groups' stereotypes, illusions, conformity:**

- Dissent is regarded as disloyalty;

Example: When Morton Thiokol engineers raised the safety issue in a teleconference, NASA personnel discounted their concerns and urged them to reconsider their recommendation.

8. **Self-appointed 'mind-guards':**

- People who protect the leader or group from hearing disagreeable facts that would challenge their collective consensus.

Example: Bay of Pigs: *"You may be right or you may be wrong, but the President has made up his mind. Don't push it any further. Now is the time to help him all we can."* Robert Kennedy, Attorney General of the United States."

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GroupThink Symptoms in the Workplace

1. **Illusions of Invulnerability:** As a result of their illusions, the group may not currently conduct a full analysis of a problem, express excessive optimism and may begin to accept greater risks.
2. **Collective Rationalization:** The members may engage in collective efforts to rationalize the chosen course of action to support conformance rather than consensus. Warnings may be ignored. The group may recommit to past decisions without considering alternatives.
3. **Belief in inherent morality:** Group may become insulated from adverse information about the morality of their decisions and engage in self-censorship in order to get along.
4. **Stereotyped View of Others:** The members may underestimate the potential of others to contribute relevant information. They may not attempt to understand the ethical concerns of others.

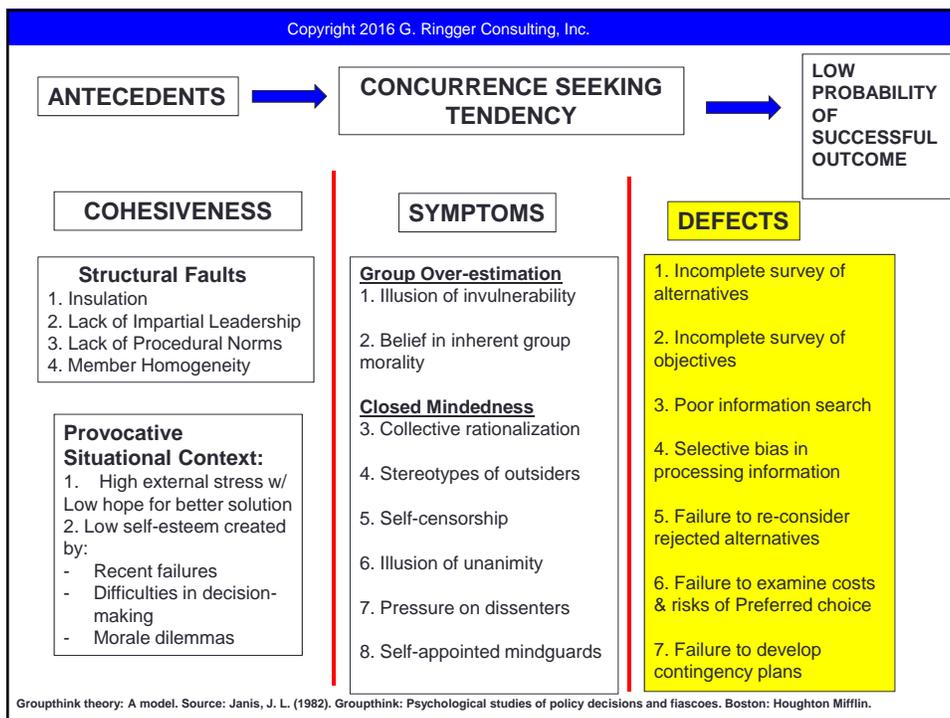
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GroupThink Symptoms in the Workplace

5. **Pressure on Dissent:** Group may exert pressure on members to conform. The group may repress discussion or information that might destroy the consensus. Members may hesitate to express opposing arguments.
6. **Self censorship:** Members may engage in self-censorship in order to get along.
7. **Illusion of unanimity:** Members may engage in self-censorship. "Silence is acceptance".
8. **Mind Guards:** In the presence of GroupThink, a member may receive pressure to acquiesce. ("I thought you were a team player!")

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GROUPTHINK - DEFECTS



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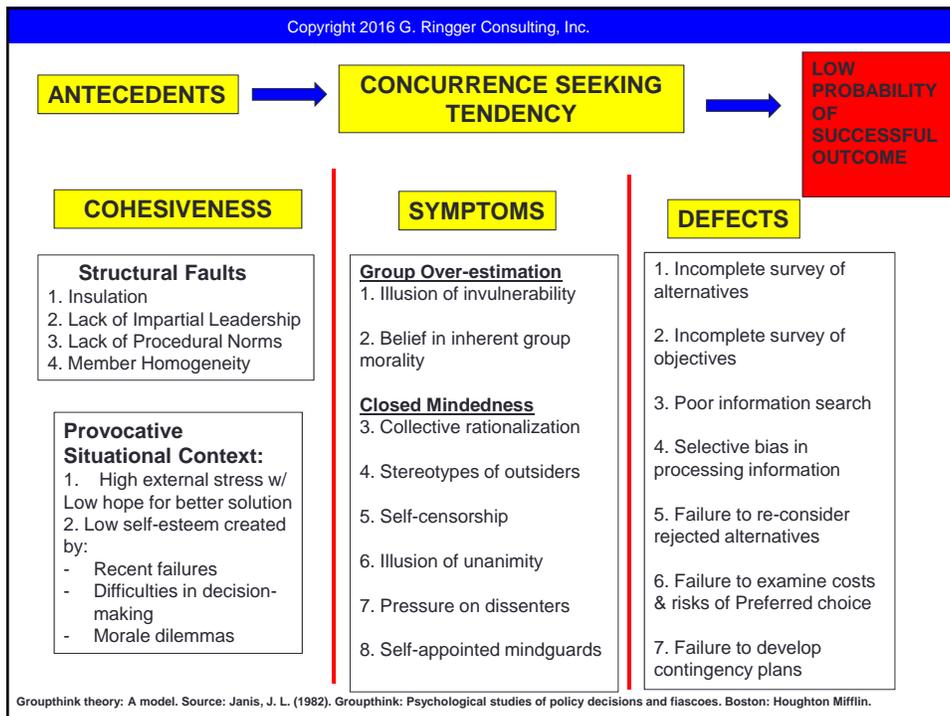
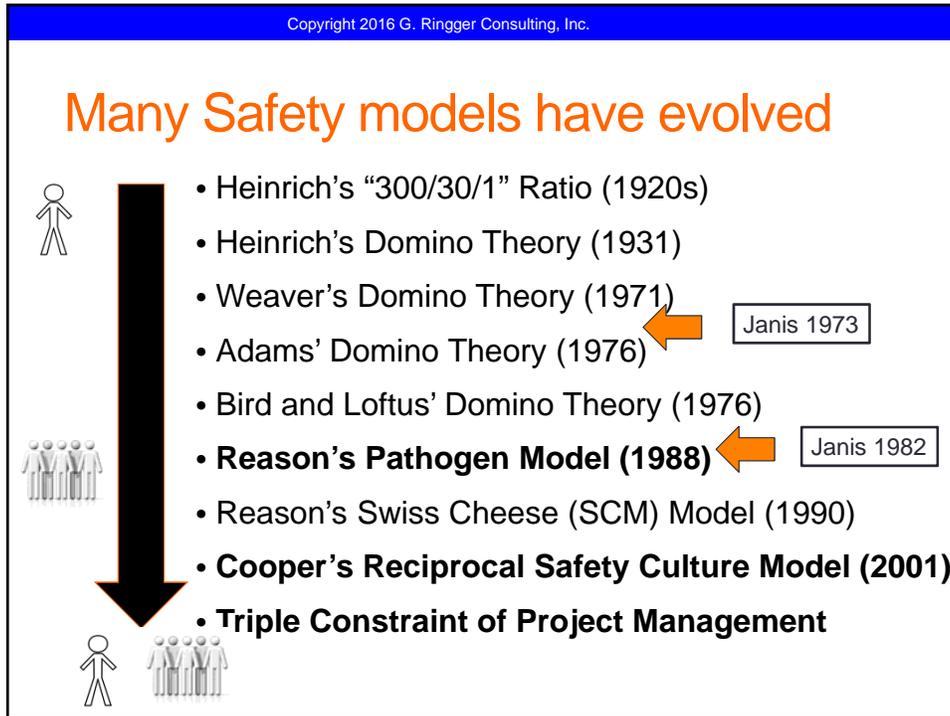
DEFECTS

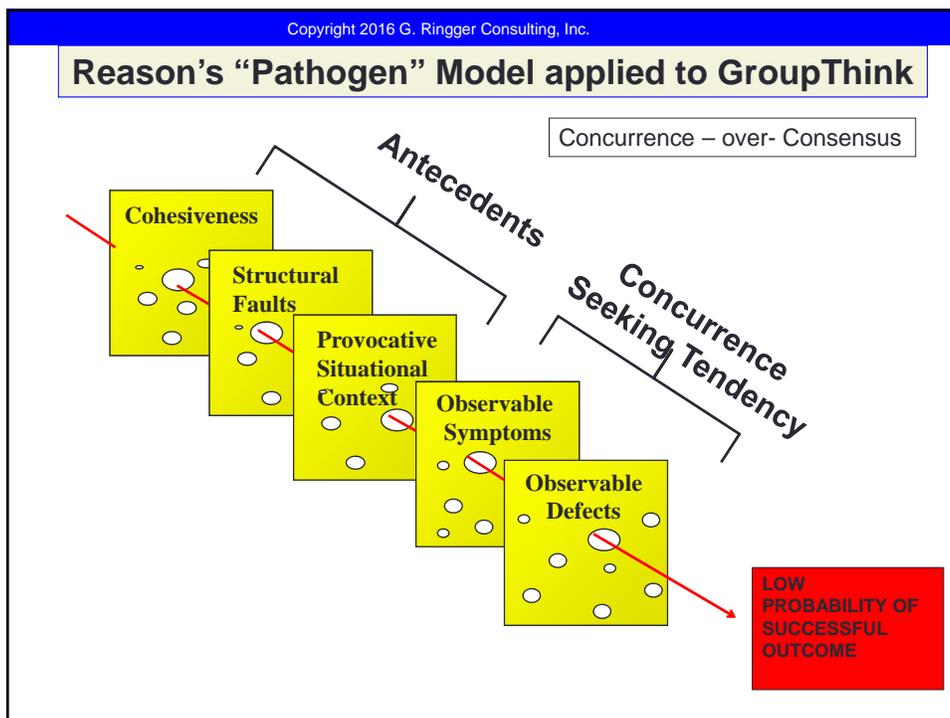
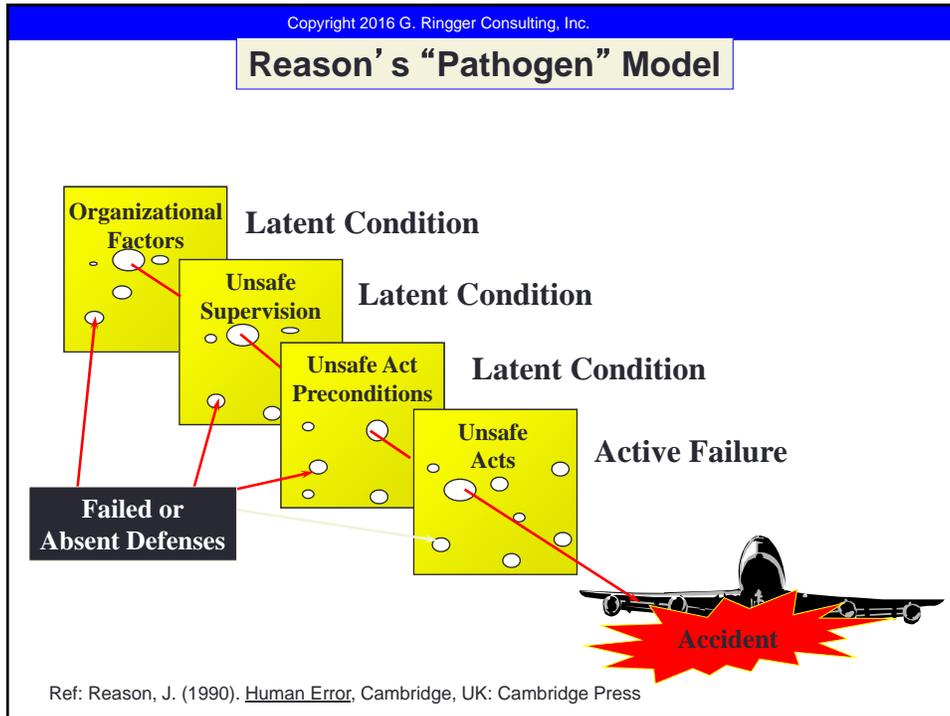
1. Incomplete survey of alternatives (e.g. only 2 alternatives are considered, examination is not detailed);
2. Incomplete survey of objectives (e.g. no clear-cut definition of what they want to achieve);
3. Poor information search (e.g. feeds only on in-group knowledge/experience) ;
4. Selective bias in processing information (e.g. confirmation Bias Example: WMD in Iraq);
5. Failure to re-consider rejected/discounted alternatives;
6. Failure to examine costs & risks of the preferred choice;
7. Failure to develop contingency plans.

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BLOCK 4

Modified GroupThink Models – Refinements
in understanding





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“Moderators” (Neck & Moorhead)

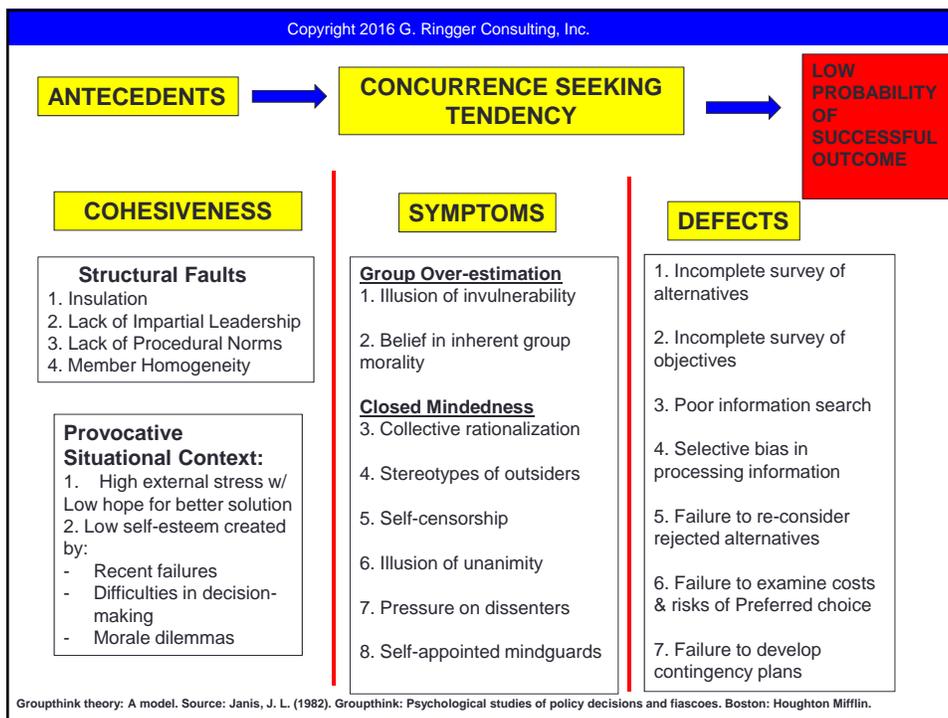
A Moderator affects the direction and/or strength of the relation between an independent and dependent variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986)

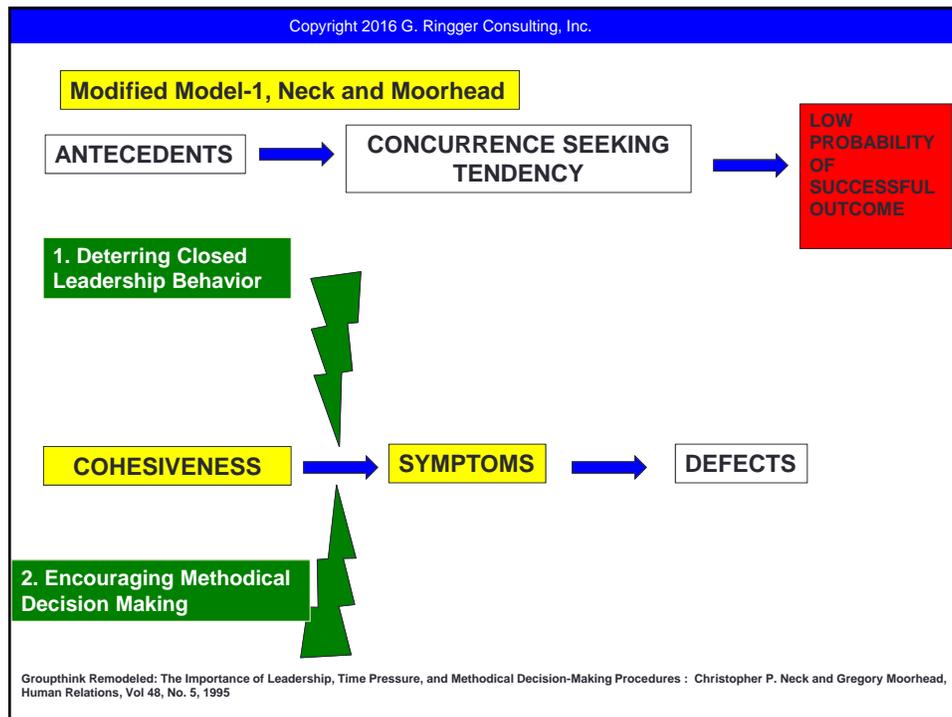
Moderators:

1. Detering Closed Leadership Behavior;
2. Encouraging Methodical Decision Making.

Groupthink Remodeled: The Importance of Leadership, Time Pressure, and Methodical Decision-Making Procedures : Christopher P. Neck and Gregory Moorhead, Human Relations, Vol 48, No. 5, 1995

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Moderator-1 (Neck & Moorhead) Deterring Closed Leadership Behavior

Discourage the following behavior:

1. Does not encourage member participation;
2. Does state his/her opinions at the beginning of the meeting;
3. Does not encourage divergent opinions from all group members, and
4. Does not emphasize the importance of reaching a wise decision.

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Moderator-2 (Neck & Moorhead) Encouraging Methodical Decision Making

Encourage the following behavior:

1. Use a Methodical Decision-Making process to ensure the group adheres to a highly structured and systematic decision-making process.
2. Build-in checks & Balances (self-assessment) to avoid GroupThink symptoms and decision making defects.

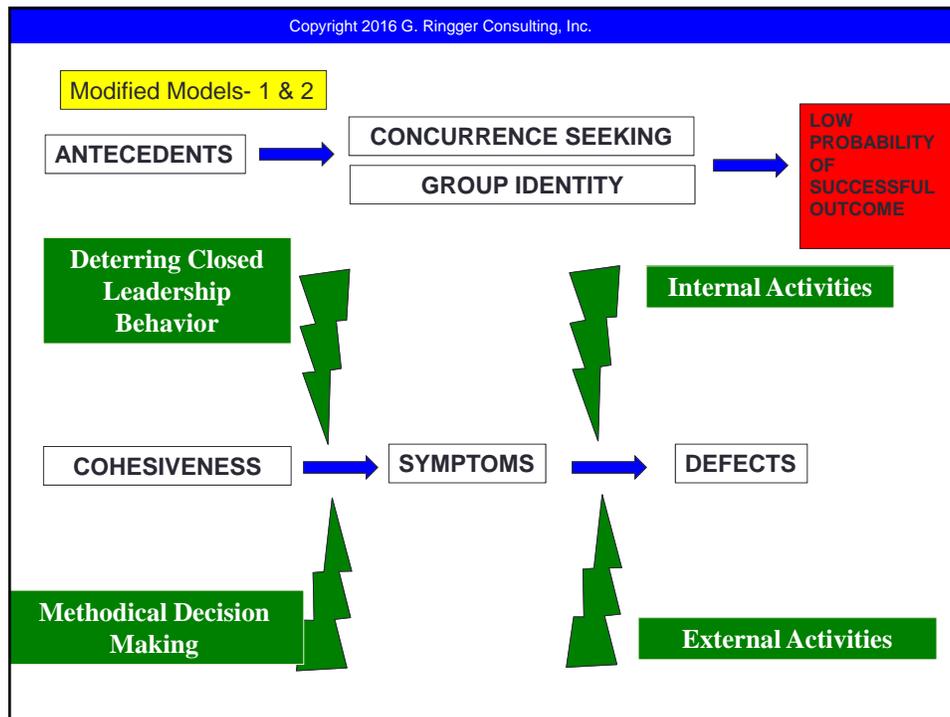
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Modified Model-2, Choi and Kim

Moderators:

- Internal Activities - Cognitive Dimensions
- External Activities Behavioral Dimensions

Jim Nam Choi, University of Michigan, Myung Un Kim, Seoul National University, (1999), The Organizational Application of Groupthink and Its Limitations in Organizations, Journal of Applied Psychology, Vol. 84, No. 2, 297-306.



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Modified Model-1 (Neck & Moorhead)	Modified Model-2 Choi and Kim
<p>Moderators:</p> <p>Deterring Closed Leadership Behavior Discourage the following behavior:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage member participation 2. Leader neutral of opinions 3. Encourage divergent member views 4. Emphasize importance of reaching a wise decision. <p>Encouraging Methodical Decision Making</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use a Methodical Decision-Making process 2. Ensure adherence to a highly structured and systematic decision-making process. 3. Build-in self-assessment to avoid GroupThink symptoms and decision making defects. 	<p>Concurrence seeking Group identity</p> <p>Internal activities (Cognition)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person/group/decision-making <p>External activities (Behavior)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person/group/performance

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Cooper's Reciprocal Safety Culture Model

Built upon the **reciprocal relationship** between an organization's:

- Safety Climate (**beliefs, perceptions & attitudes**);
- Safety Management System (**processes & procedures**);
- Safety behavior (**Safety Policy**).

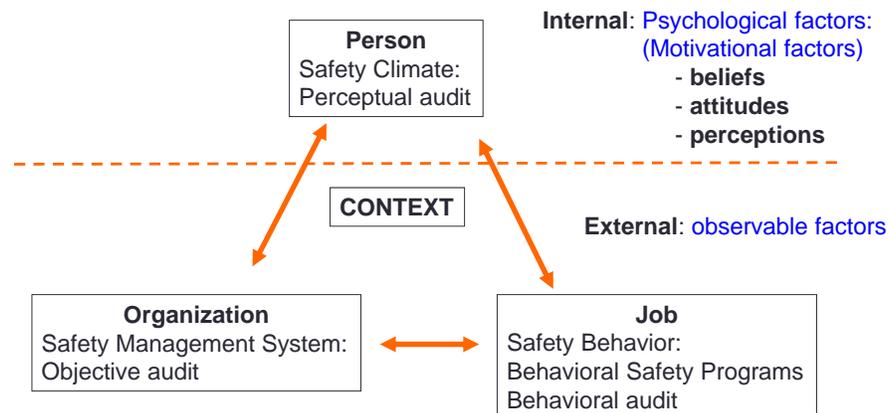
Each component can be directly measured either independently or in combination;

It is, therefore, possible to quantify **Safety Culture** at many different levels within an organizational.

(Reference: Improving Safety Culture, A Practical Guide, John Wiley & Sons, 2001ey & Sons, Dominic Cooper, Ph.D., Applied Behavioral Sciences, Indiana University)

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Cooper's Reciprocal Safety Culture Model



(Reference: Improving Safety Culture, A Practical Guide, John Wiley & Sons, 2001ey & Sons, Dominic Cooper, Ph.D., Applied Behavioral Sciences, Indiana University)

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Psychological Factors – - where do they fit in?

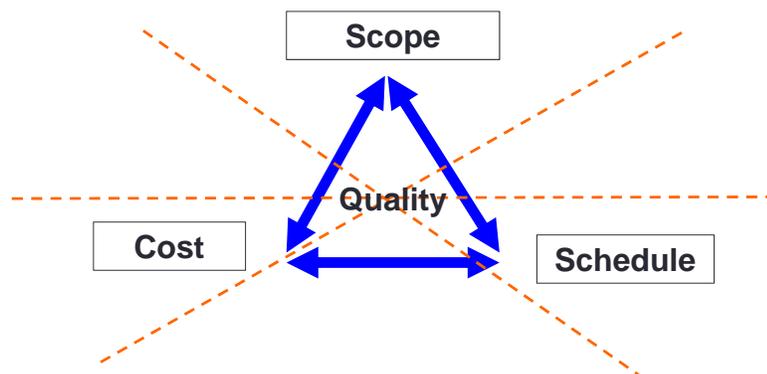
Motivation: The difference between what a person is capable of doing versus what they are willing to do.

Behavior...

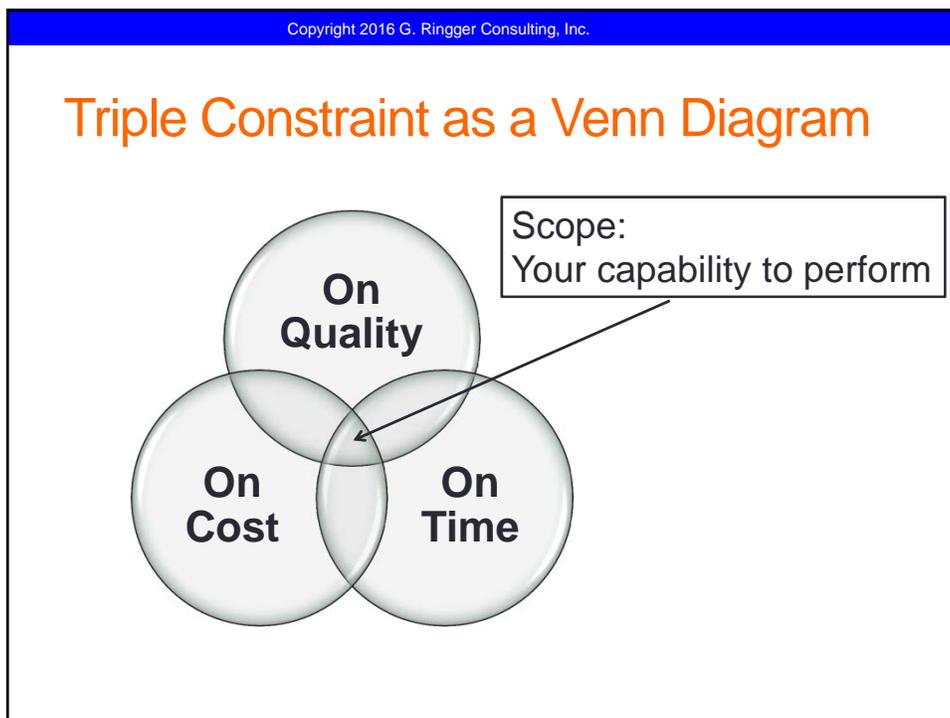
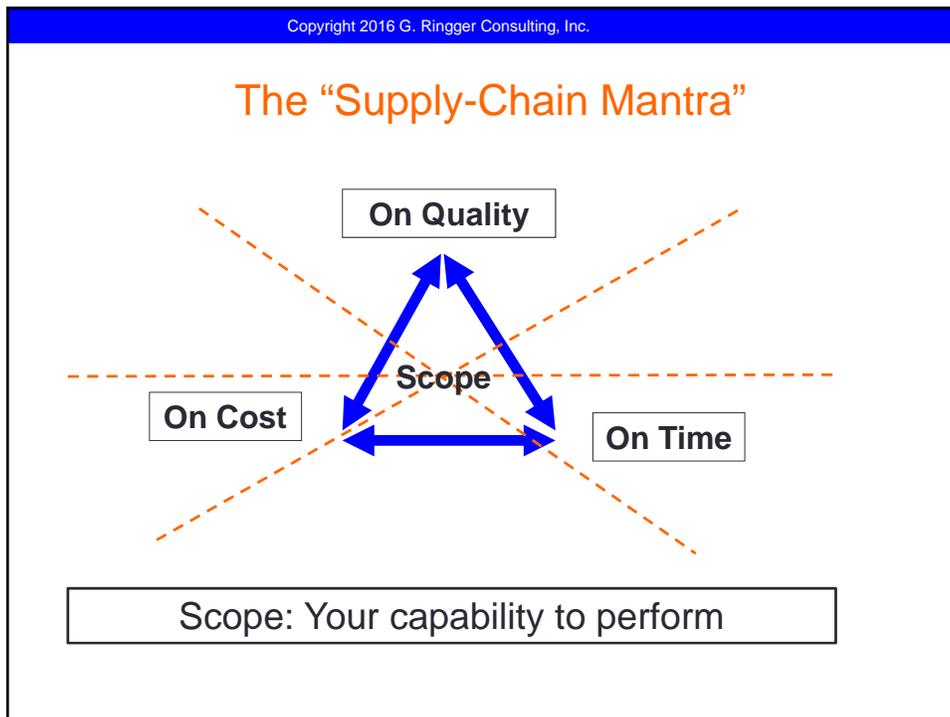
- Cannot be directly correlated a person's **attitude** and **beliefs** without taking into account their **motivational factors** within their environmental sphere of experience (i.e. job factors).
- is not only influenced by **perception** but is also swayed by the rewards & penalties (**Safety Policy**) associated with their **behavior**.

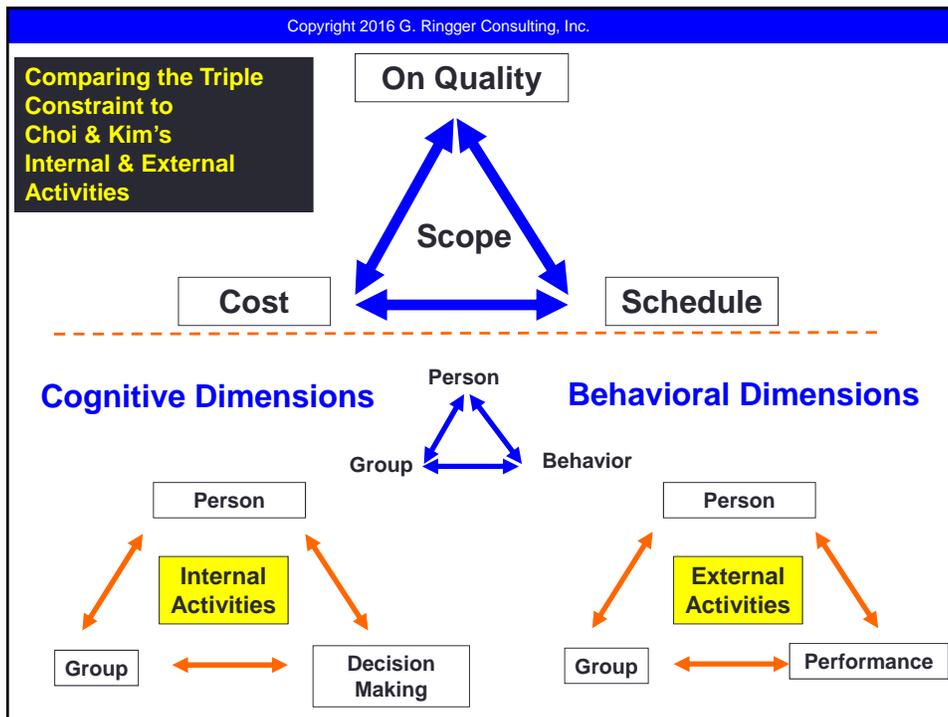
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The Triple Constraint of Project Management (The Iron Triangle)



Reference: Michael W. Newell, Marina N. Grashina (2004). *The Project Management Question and Answer Book*. p.8
 Pamela McGhee, Peter McAloney (2007). *Painless Project Management*. p.74.
 Michael Gentile, Ronald D. Collette, Thomas D. August (2005). *The CISO Handbook*. p.172

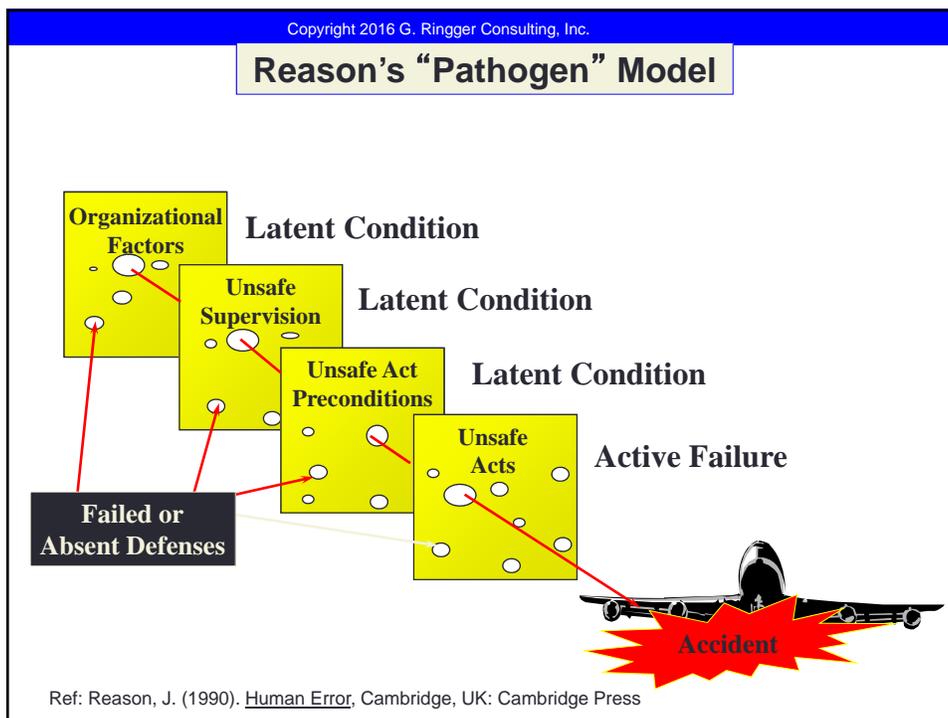
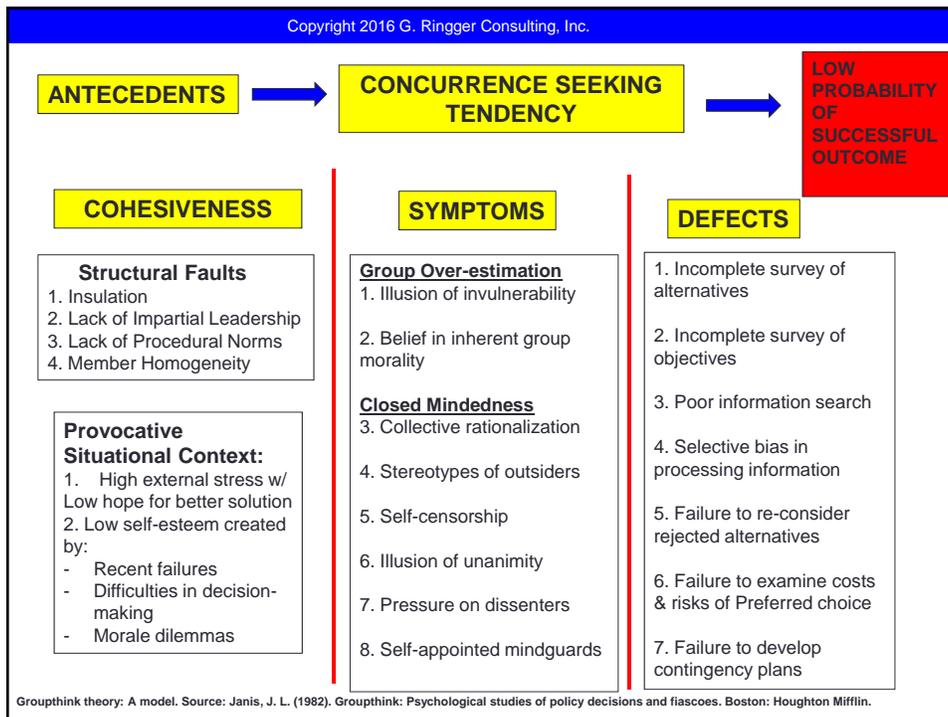


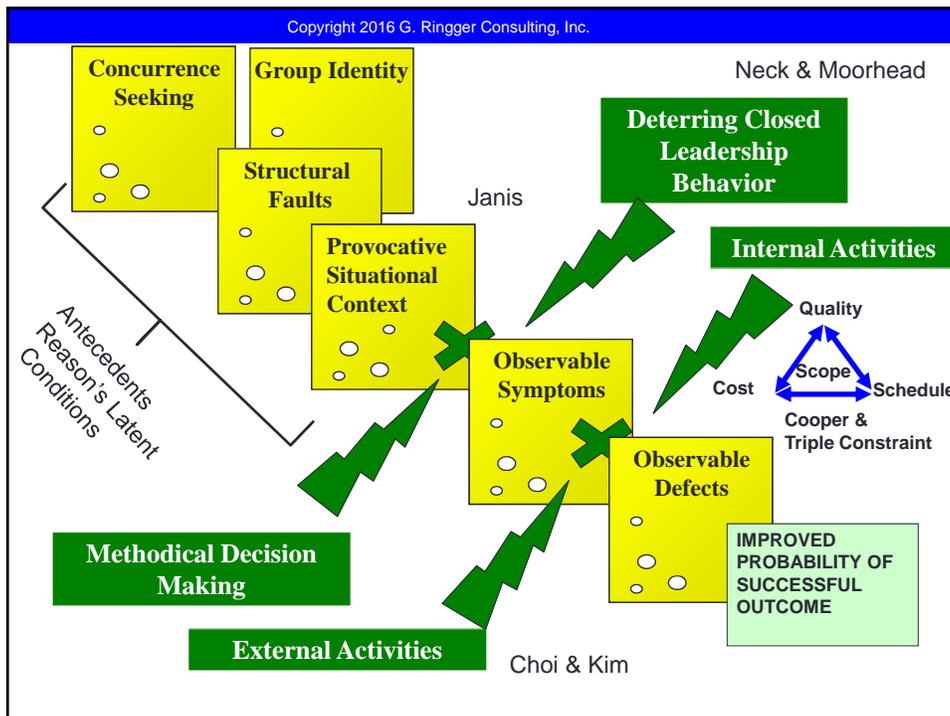
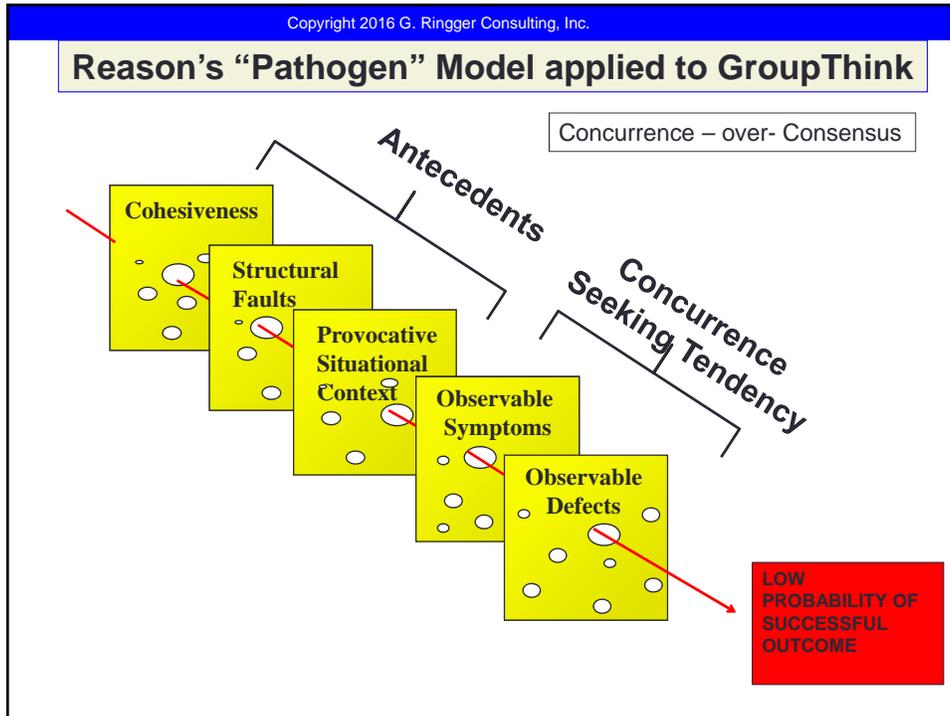


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BLOCK 5

Putting it all together for a better understanding





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BLOCK 6

Relevance & Recommendations

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Common groups we interact with or participate in

Government / Religions	Business / Community	Business / Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political parties • Juries • Military • Religions / Sects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mergers & Acquisitions • Joint ventures • Committees • Boards • Associations • Departments • Teams • Functional groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vertical groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality; • Purchasing; • Sales; Marketing • Horizontal groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labor; • management; • divisional management

“The mode of thinking that persons engage in when concurrence-seeking becomes so dominant in a cohesive in-group that it tends to over-ride realistic appraisals of alternative courses of action.”

When considering the Antecedents...

Janis' 8 Antecedents

- **Cohesiveness**
- **Structural Faults**
 1. Insulation
 2. Lack of Impartial Leadership
 3. Lack of Procedural Norms
 4. Member Homogeneity
- **Provocative Situational Context:**
 1. High external stress w/
 2. Low hope for better solution
 3. Low self-esteem created by:
 4. Recent failures
 5. Difficulties in decision-making
 6. Morale dilemmas

Questions worth pursuing

- How many does a group need to succumb to GroupThink?
- Are some more important than others?
- Is each symptom unique? Or, redundant?
- How do they interact?
- Do some tend to counter the effects of others?

When considering the Symptoms...

GroupThink Systems

- **Concurrence seeking**
- **Group Identity**
 1. Illusion of invulnerability
 2. Collective rationalization
 3. Belief in inherent morality
 4. Stereotyped views of out-groups
 5. Direct pressure on dissenters
 6. Self-censorship
 7. Illusion of unanimity
 8. Self-appointed 'mindguards'

Questions worth pursuing

- How many symptoms does a group need to display before being recognized as a GroupThink "diagnosis"?
- Are some symptoms more important than others?
- Does a group experience some symptoms before others?

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Janis' 9 Recommendations

1. Each member should be a critical evaluator of the group's course of action; an open climate of giving and accepting criticism should be encouraged by the leader.
2. Leaders should be impartial and refrain from stating personal preferences at the outset of group discussion; they should limit themselves initially to fostering open inquiry.
3. Establish multiple groups with different leaders to work the question in parallel.
4. Split groups into subgroups to assess feasibility and effectiveness of proposals.

Ref: Janis, I. L. (1982). Groupthink (2nd ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

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Janis' 9 Recommendations

5. Each member of the group should privately discuss current issues and options with trusted associates outside the group and report reactions.
6. From time to time, bring in outside experts to challenge the views of the core members.
7. There should be one or more devil's advocates during every group meeting.
8. In conflict situations, extra time should be devoted to interpreting warning signals from rivals and to constructing alternative scenarios of their intentions.
9. Reconsider the decision in second chance meetings before going public.

Ref: Janis, I. L. (1982). Groupthink (2nd ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

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GROUPTHINK – BEWARE THE PERILS !

QUESTIONS?

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Thanks for attending!

and remember...

“To stop learning.... is to stop living.”

George J. Ringger

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Hermann, A.; Rammal, H. G. (2010). "The grounding of the "flying bank"", *Management Decision*, Vol. 48 Iss: 7, pp.1048 - 1062

Group Think Led to Iraq WMD Assessment, Published July 11, 2004