



Group work in psychology assessment

SLOWposium Provocation

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Social facilitation and social loafing

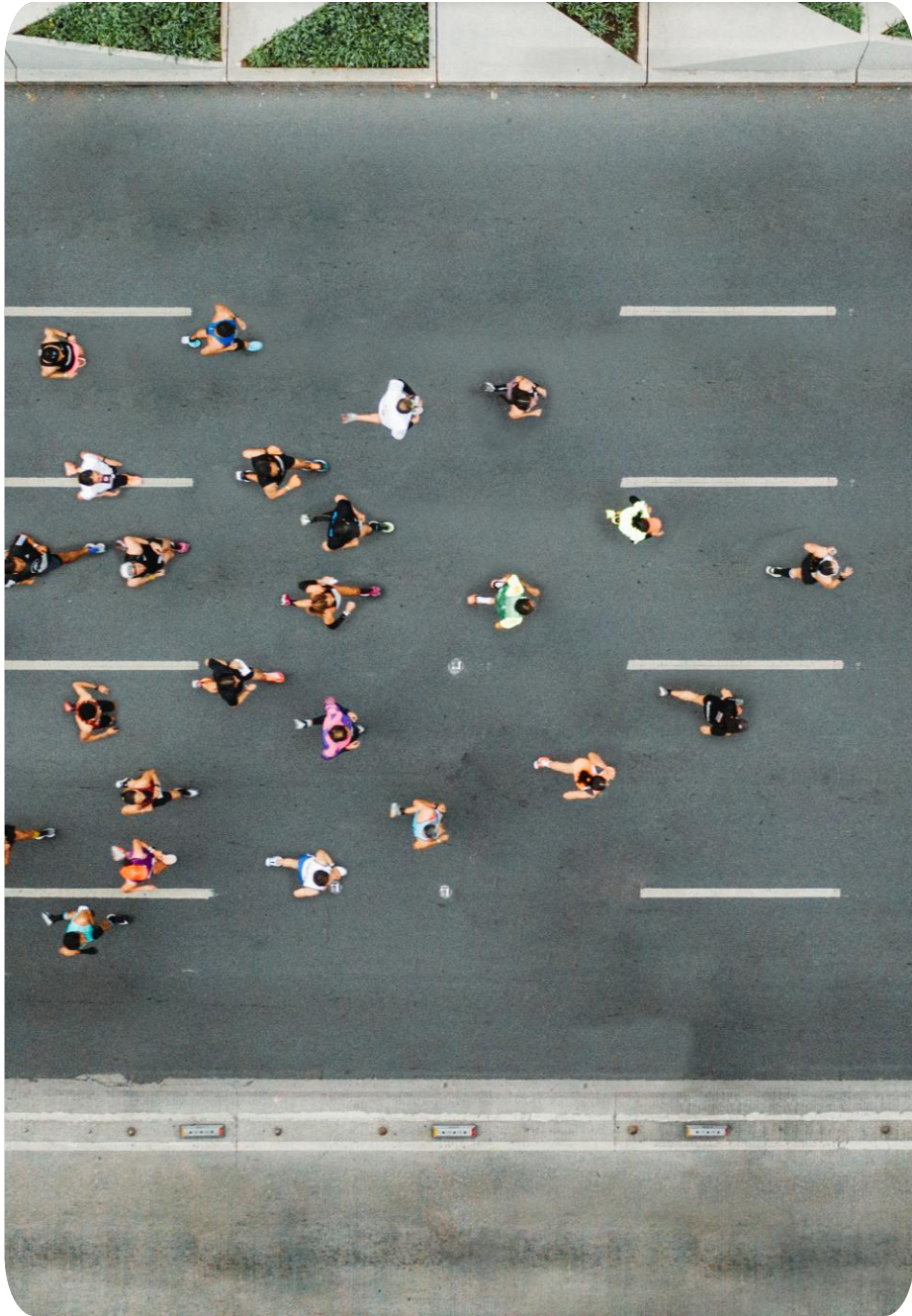
- Why does the idea of group work bring people out in hives?
- Research in social psychology
- Triplett 1898 – cyclists who competed against each other performed better than those who competed against the clock
- Children worked faster in the presence of a partner doing the same task independently, even though they weren't competing or collaborating (social facilitation)
- Ringelmann – people's output declines when they work together rather than alone (social loafing)
- Implications for group work at university





Becoming a psychologist

- 6+ years undergraduate, postgraduate + supervision to become qualified and registered as a clinical psychologist
- > Registration with the Psychology Board of Australia
 - Can go on to specialise in an Area of Practice Endorsement



Progression is competitive

- Entry into Masters' programmes in psychology is highly competitive
- Students are competing with each other to progress into their chosen career
- Poses huge challenges for group work in psychology degrees
- Accreditation standards require students to demonstrate skills in:
 - Interpersonal relations
 - Interprofessional working relationships
 - Culturally responsive working relationships

<https://psychology.org.au/about-us/news-and-media/aps-in-the-media/2024/despite-growing-need-psychology-almost-impossibl>

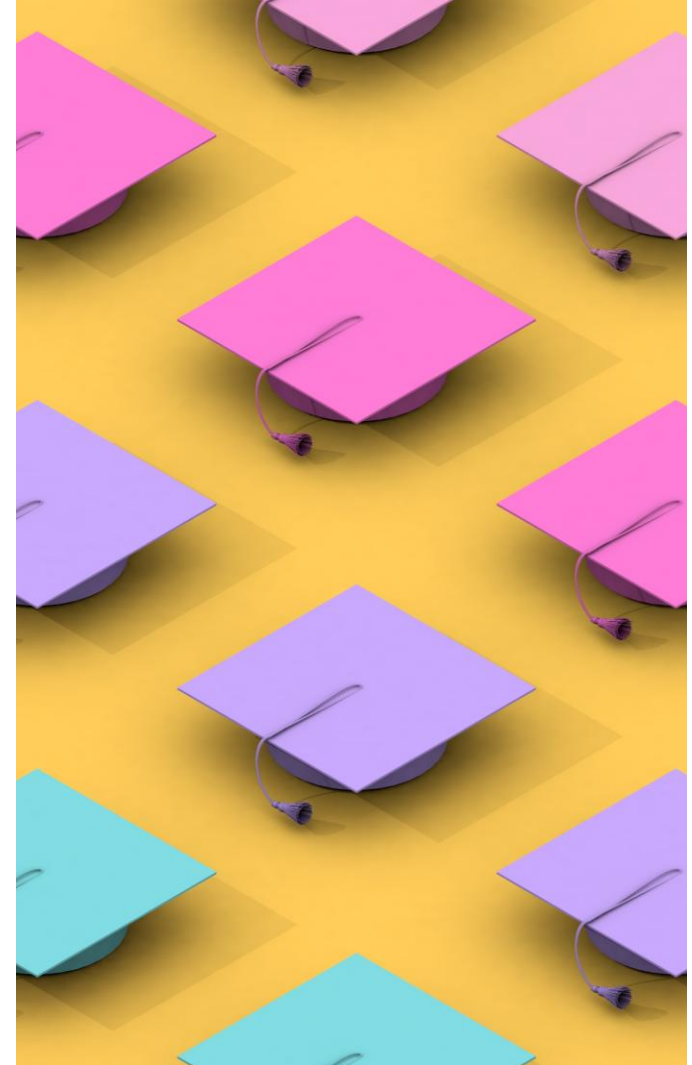
Group work in psychology

- How do students collaborate while competing with each other to progress in the context of limited opportunities?
- How do we manage that process? Implications for workloads?
- Do our assessment structures support group work in psychology?



My provocation

- “...but not everybody pulls equal weight” problem (social loafing)
- Social facilitation = increased competitiveness
- Psychology competencies : understand and demonstrate skills in interprofessional collaboration and culturally responsive abilities to work with others
 - Is a stand-alone group work assessment really going to assess that effectively?
 - Is there scope to assess the class as a group across the session?
 - Continual observation and evaluation across the session – a piece of ‘action research’
 - Specific, pre-determined in class tasks and small projects
 - Improve assessment validity for these competencies
 - Potential to make processes and workloads more manageable.





Challenges (a few...)

1. Could it work in an online environment?
2. Could it work in the context of 'flexible learning'?
3. Could it be sufficiently structured for students to feel confident they knew how to achieve well in the assessment?

Implementation in a psychology subject

- PSY 204/454 Psychological Testing ($n = 185$)
- Psychological test evaluation team presentation (50%)
 - Part A: Group contract (US/SY), due week 8
 - Part B: Individual expert contribution, 1-page overview (US/SY), week 10
 - Part C: Team Synthesis, presentation prep, and check-in (US/SY), week 11
 - Part D: Team presentation and individual questioning (35%), weeks 13-14
 - 10-minute team presentation, 2 individual questions each
 - Part E: Individual reflection (15%), due week 14
 - Peer evaluation matrix (rating each team member, justify low scores)
 - Students' average rating calculated (5%)
 - 500-word reflection (10%)

How is it going?

- It is early stages, but...
- What worked
 - Better coverage of learning outcomes and competencies
 - Advice from BJBS faculty staff and support from DLT
 - Preplanning around contingencies (e.g., scheduling after census, guidelines)
- Challenges
 - Apprehension from staff and students
 - Students going MIA, dropping out, applying for extensions
 - Current CSU technology does not support team tasks
- What now?
 - QUASAR reflection and planning
 - Formal scholarly activity evaluation