Individual Contexts Versus Group Contexts

Thomas Ewing
Grand Valley State University

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Have you ever been to a fancy restaurant and felt that you were going to make a fool of yourself? There were five forks, three spoons and you didn’t know which water was yours. If you have been in this situation or one similar, you probably experienced anxiety. This type of scenario makes people feel uneasy, uncertain and possibly threatened. Because people have these feelings, they suppress urges that may be socially unacceptable like tucking their napkins into their shirts or using a salad fork for the main course. Urges are suppressed because people don’t want to look uncultured or look like they don’t fit in. So, people become cautious by limiting their actions to ones believed to be socially acceptable. They pay attention to their surroundings and receive clues on how to act or how not to act. They monitor their actions and the actions of others around them to reduce those feelings of uneasiness and uncertainty in attempts to act appropriately.

When people keep themselves from acting on urges and impulses to avoid negative consequences they are inhibiting (Hirsh, Galinsky & Zhong, 2011). Inhibitions are suppressed by the behavioral inhibition system or BIS (Gray, 1972). Known as the “stop, look and listen” system because it makes the organism act cautious and careful, the more active the BIS the more it directs the organism to be diligent in its surveillance of the immediate environment with more emphasis on cues of potential danger or threat so dangers are apparent and easy to avoid (Gray, 1987; Watson, Wiese, Vaidya, & Tellegen, 1999). For example, children were given descriptions of numerous fictitious animals, and the descriptions varied in terms of how threatening these animals were (Field, 2006). BIS sensitivity was also measured. The findings show that the more sensitive children’s BIS, the more attention is paid to those stimuli related to threat. Highly anticipatory, the BIS makes the person aware of the things that could possibly go wrong in the environment and directs the person to be careful until safety is inferred (Park & Hinsz, 2006).

So, the BIS activates when there is potential to experience negative outcomes or when a person is nervous or anxious. In 1994, Carver and White found that the more sensitive people’s BIS the more anxiety they experience in threatening situations. Conversely, the more safe a person feels the less need there is to inhibit, so the BIS is less active. When the BIS is less active, people feel less anxious and they don’t pay close attention to those cues in the environment telling them to be cautious and inhibited. Research supports these claims. For example, in contexts related to psychological safety, people tend to act less inhibited (Hirsh et. al., 2011). When people feel powerful, they are less likely to suppress impulses and urges. Presumably, this is because the more powerful people are, the less susceptible they are to being punished by others because there are fewer people that exist above their ranks. Since powerful people feel more protected from harm, the BIS is less active and powerful people are more disinhibited. Research also shows that when people are in the dark, wearing masks or participating in online chat room discussions, they feel more anonymous and tend to act less inhibited (Hirsh et. al., 2011). Presumably, this is because when people are anonymous and less identifiable they feel less susceptible to threat since they feel they cannot be singled out and punished for their actions.

Research has shown that when feeling safe, people are less inhibited. One context that relates to safety that has not been thoroughly explored in terms of disinhibition is participation in groups. Being in a group is likely to increase a sense of psychological safety for a number of reasons. Just like being in the dark or wearing a mask, being in a group often makes one less identifiable and thus more anonymous (Diener, 1979). The larger the group or crowd, the harder it is for any single individual to be singled out. Also, when people work in groups and complete group tasks, often their personal
contributions cannot be identified. Since it is possible to hide in the crowd and since people cannot be singled out in terms of what they contribute or do not contribute to the group product, people feel less identifiable in these contexts. This anonymity in groups is likely to make people feel safer, especially when there is potential for threat or a risk that the group product is unsatisfactory.

Another way that groups are likely to induce psychological safety is through the process of diffusion of responsibility. Diffusion of responsibility refers to the way in which group members can spread a sense of accountability amongst members of the group (Bem, Wallach, & Kogan, 1965). The opportunity to diffuse responsibility is likely to induce a sense of psychological safety in groups compared to when one is alone because if a group product is negatively evaluated, the impact of threatening evaluations can be distributed across group members and blame can be shared. Conversely, if one is alone, threatening evaluations of the product are targeted at the individual and one feels solely accountable and must take on all of the blame. So, because the magnitude of potentially threatening consequences are perceived to be reduced in groups when the blame for poor outcomes is shared, groups are likely to be a context that provide members with a sense of safety in numbers (Park & Hinsz, 2006).

A third way that being in a group can induce a sense of safety involves the process of validation. When people work and make decisions in groups, it is common for group members to express agreement and support as members share their views and perspectives (Minson & Mueller, 2012). As group members receive encouragement and validation verbally and non-verbally from one another, they are likely to feel more confident and competent (Park & Hinsz, 2006). Since these forms of validation are unique to groups and cannot be experienced when one works alone, people in groups are more likely to feel correct compared to people working alone (Minson & Mueller, 2012). In feeling more confident, competent and correct, group members should feel less concerned about acting incorrectly and inappropriately, and thus, should experience less anxiety and feelings of threat. This sense of “consensus equals correctness” is likely to provide a sense of safety and reduce threat concerns.

The current study is an initial attempt to explore the general hypotheses that people feel safer and are less inhibited in groups. As a starting point to examine these hypotheses, participants were presented with a series of hypothetical scenarios that describe potentially threatening situations. After reading the scenarios and imagining themselves actually in them, participants were asked to make choices about how they would respond. Some choices involved taking actions to be with other people while other choices involved navigating the situation alone. By having participants imagine being in potentially threatening situations and then recording their preferences for being with others versus being alone, one can examine whether people show a tendency to prefer being in groups when facing harm. If this pattern emerges, it would support the notion that groups are associated with a sense of safety since people gravitate towards them when feeling threatened.

To test these hypotheses, participants were also given a number of hypothetical scenarios that related to acting unethically. Participants were asked to imagine engaging in these unethical behaviors and asked to report how likely it was they would actually behave in these ways. Some of the scenarios described acting unethically as a part of a group, while others described acting unethically when alone. Since acting unethically is likely to reflect a lack of inhibition and restraint, and if participants report being more likely to act unethically in group contexts compared to individual contexts, results will support the notion that people feel less inhibited in groups. This study also included other survey items designed to explore the general hypotheses.

It is important to start with examining whether people are less inhibited in groups. One reason is because as a society we assign many important decisions to groups. For example, we use juries to make legislative decisions and teams and committees to make business and military decisions. If group dynamics lead people to feel safer and more protected from harm, group members may be less inhibited and less attentive to threat than if making decisions alone. This could result in group decisions and actions that are unnecessarily risky, impulsive and unethical.

To summarize, the following survey study was conducted as an initial exploration to examine the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The more threatened people feel when imagining various scenarios the more they will prefer to be with others.

Hypothesis 2: People will report acting less inhibited and restrained when in groups compared to when alone.

Method

Participants and Research Design

We collected exploratory data using a survey research design. A sample of 39 participants ($n = 39$) were recruited from introductory psychology summer classes at a large Midwestern university as partial fulfillment of their class requirement. Some demographic characteristics were collected but not analyzed because these variables were not directly relevant to the hypotheses. It is likely that demographics of the sample mirror those of the university. Participants signed consent forms to participate in the study by using an electronic research participation system. All participants were 18 years of age or older and agreed to this requirement when signing up to participate.

Procedure and Materials

Participants reported to the laboratory in groups of up to three, signed consent forms and were given a set of general instructions. After consent forms were collected, participants were given a survey with up to one hour to complete the survey at their own pace. When more than one participant was present, participants were separated throughout the lab so they could complete their surveys in private. Participants then completed the survey which is described below.

The first part of the survey examined preferences for groups by having participants read scenarios, imagine that they were in the scenarios, and then rate how much they agreed with the statements that followed each scenario. First in the survey was a scenario about finding a wallet
full of money. After reading the scenario, participants rated how likely it was that they would turn in the wallet to proper authorities, the money to keep for themselves, and so forth (see Appendices A and B for a complete description and listing of the items). These materials were created under the assumption that the first impulse of most people would be to want to take the found money to keep for themselves. Since keeping the money may seem less ethical (versus turning it in), it was also assumed that some participants would inhibit their initial impulse to take the money and would instead favor turning in the money and wallet to proper authorities.

To examine whether people are more likely to report being less inhibited when with others versus when alone (e.g., keep the found money), every participant was presented with two variations of this scenario. In one version, participants were alone when finding the wallet and money, and in the other, participants were with a friend. Participants were asked to respond to both versions of the scenario to see if they would act differently in the scenario with a friend compared to the same scenario when they imagined being alone. The order of these scenarios was counterbalanced to control for order effects. The scenarios that participants read are presented below, with the only difference between the versions being whether they imagined being with a friend or not. The alternative wording for the “friend” version is presented in parentheses:

Imagine that you are walking to class alone (with one of your good friends. Take a moment and think about the friend you’re walking with and what your friend looks like). It’s a beautiful day, the sun is shining and you can hear the birds outside singing. (Visualize you and your friend walking.) Suddenly, from the corner of your eye you notice a wallet on the ground. You pick up the wallet and inside you find a total of $100. The wallet contains the identification of the owner. You look around and notice there is no one in sight. (You turn to your friend to decide on what to do next and your friend responds that it’s completely up to you).

After reading and imagining the scenarios, participants rated how much they agreed that they would engage in the behaviors described. Participants used a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) to answer statements like: I would turn in all of the money and the wallet into the proper authorities; I would take the $100 to keep for myself and put the wallet back on the ground (see Appendices A and B for descriptions of the actual scenarios and all of the corresponding survey items).

Next, participants were presented with scenarios that described potentially threatening situations, and were asked to respond to items that assessed how much they would prefer to be with others. For example, participants were asked to imagine the following:

Imagine you live alone and are on your way home when you hear on the radio that there is a tornado coming your way. As you are hearing this, you receive a call from some good friends of yours. Your friends inform you that they are going down into their basement to wait out the tornado, and invite you to join them. Your friends live five minutes away. You also live five minutes away and have a basement as well. The tornado is quickly approaching and you now have to make the decision about whether to go to your friends’ house to be with other people or to go home where all of your personal belongings are.

Using the same 7-point scale, they were then asked to rate how much they agreed to statements such as, “I would go to my own house to be with all of my belongings and weather the storm by myself.” To allow us to test if this preference relates to feelings of threat, participants were also asked to rate how much they agreed with statements such as, “Knowing a tornado was coming my way, I would feel nervous.” For a complete description and list of survey items, as well as a description of an additional scenario participants were asked to imagine and respond to, see Appendices C and D.

Next in the survey were exploratory items dealing with lay theories and personal beliefs people may have about groups. These items were used to explore whether people had a preference for groups when encountering threatening situations. The following examples were included in the survey: If in a dangerous situation, I would prefer to make a decision by myself instead of with other people on how to best handle the situation; If in an unfamiliar situation, I would prefer to make a decision with a group of my friends instead of by myself on how to best handle the situation. Participants used the same 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree) to rate these items (see Appendix E for all personal belief items).

Similarly, we had a self-report item in the survey that looked at impulsivity. Here, we asked participants to think of the most impulsive thing they had done and did not end up regretting. This item was used to test the hypothesis that people are more impulsive with others versus when alone. After thinking of this impulsive act, participants answered true or false to whether they were by themselves when they acted impulsively. While still thinking about this impulsive act, participants were then asked to rate how many people they were with at that time (see Appendix F for full description of these items).

Next in the survey were scenarios that described situations where one is acting unethically. Participants were asked to read each scenario and imagine as vividly as possible that they were actually in the situation and to rate how likely it was that they would engage in the behaviors described. Some of the situations participants were asked to imagine involved acting alone and some of the situations involved acting with other people. By comparing these types of situations, we could determine whether people are more likely to act unethically in group contexts compared to individual contexts. These items were modified from a previous study on unethical behavior (Piff, P. K., Stancato, D. M., Cote, S. Mendoza-Denton, R., & Keitner, D., 2012) for use in the current study. Here are some examples of the unethical behavior scenarios (first example illustrates an “alone” situation, while the second example illustrates acting unethically “with others”):

You work as an office assistant for a department on campus. You’re alone in the office making copies and realize you’re out of copy paper at home. You therefore slip a ream of paper into...
your backpack.

Imagine you and your friend work in a fast-food restaurant in downtown Grand Rapids. It’s against policy to eat food without paying for it. You both came straight from class and are therefore both hungry. Your supervisor isn’t around, so you both make something for yourselves and eat without paying for it.

After reading scenarios like these, participants were asked to rate how likely it is that they would behave in the ways described using a 7-point scale (1 = not likely and 7 = highly likely). See Appendix G for all unethical behavior scenarios.

After completing and turning in their surveys, participants were debriefed and excused.

Results

To test the general hypothesis that the more people feel threatened or afraid, the more they will prefer to be with others was tested with the following analyses. Using responses from the subway station scenario where participants were asked how afraid they would feel and also how much they agreed with the statement about waiting for friends (see Appendix D), a correlational analysis was performed. Results from this analysis support the hypothesis and show a positive correlation, \( r(37) = .44, p < .05 \).

A correlational analysis was also conducted on responses following the tornado scenario (see Appendix C) to examine whether ratings of nervousness correlated with the preference to be with others. Results from this analysis do not support the hypothesis, \( r(37) = .03, p > .05 \). To explore for potential reasons for why the hypothesis was not supported (e.g., not enough variance to detect a correlation), an alternative strategy for analyzing the data was used. First, the mean rating of nervousness was calculated and found to be high (\( M = 6.15, SD = 1.31 \)). This suggests the described scenario was one that would induce nervousness. Instead of a correlational analysis, to test the hypothesis a one-sample t-test was performed to determine if there were differences in how much participants agreed to the option of going home alone versus being with friends when in a threatening situation.

First, the mean response for the “going home alone” item was determined (\( M = 2.33, SD = 1.30 \)), and then this mean was compared to the mean response for the item reflecting the desire to be with friends (\( M = 5.9, SD = 1.10 \)). The result for this t-test was significant, \( t(38) = 20.34, p < .05 \). In using this approach, support for the general hypothesis that people prefer to be with others when experiencing threat was found.

As an additional test of the first hypothesis, scores from two survey items were also analyzed. One asked participants to rate how much they agreed with the statement that in dangerous situations they prefer to make decisions by themselves instead of with others. The mean response for this item (\( M = 4.05, SD = 1.76 \)) was compared to the midpoint of the scale (i.e., \( 4 = \text{Undecided} \)) to test whether participants significantly agreed with the statement or not. The result from this one-sample t-test was not significant and the hypothesis was not supported, \( t(38) = 0.182, p > .05 \), indicating participants did not agree with the statement. Using a similar strategy, responses from a second item (“If in an unfamiliar situation, I would prefer to make a decision with a group of my friends instead of by myself on how to best handle the situation”) were analyzed and compared to the scale mid-point. The result of this analysis did support the hypothesis, \( M = 5.0, SD = 1.34 \); \( t(38) = 4.67, p < .05 \).

To test the second general hypothesis that people will report acting less inhibited when with others compared to when alone, the following analyses were performed. First, responses from the two different versions of the scenario involving what to do when finding a wallet full of money were compared. Participants were asked to rate how much they agreed with the statement, “I would turn in all of the money and the wallet into the proper authorities” after both versions of the wallet scenario (finding the wallet when alone and finding the wallet when with a friend). Turning in the wallet and money instead of keeping the money is likely to reflect a degree of inhibition since turning in the money and wallet would require people to suppress their urge to keep the money for themselves. So, support for the hypothesis would be found if scores on the item were higher in the “alone” condition compared to the “friend” condition. The means and standard deviations for these items were calculated (\( M_{\text{alone}} = 6.38, SD = 1.23; M_{\text{friend}} = 6.51, SD = 1.02 \)) and a one-sample t-test was performed. The result was not significant and the hypothesis was not supported, \( t(38) = -0.638, p > .05 \).

To test the second hypothesis in a different way, the following analyses were performed. Participants were asked to rate how much they agreed to the statements, “I am more likely to act impulsively when I am out alone compared to when I am out with a group of friends,” and “I am more likely to act morally when I am out with a group of friends compared to when I am out alone.” The hypothesis would be indirectly supported if responses to the first item were significantly lower than the scale mid-point (\( 4 = \text{undecided} \)), and indirectly supported if scores were significantly lower than the mid-point for the second item. One-sample t-tests were performed, comparing mean responses for these items to the scale mid-point. The first test (“...more likely to act impulsively when I am out alone...”) was significant and the hypothesis was indirectly supported, \( M = 3.13, SD = 1.78 \); \( t(38) = -3.06, p < .05 \). Participants disagreed with the statement; however, this result does not necessarily mean that they are reporting they would be more impulsive in groups (i.e., it could also reflect they are equally impulsive across conditions). The second test was also significant \( (M = 2.87, SD = 1.54); t(38) = -4.57, p < .05 \), showing that participants disagreed with the statement about acting more moral with friends compared to when alone. While this provides indirect support of the hypothesis, admittedly, this result could also reflect participants’ views that they act equally moral across situations.

As a more direct test of the second hypothesis, participants were asked to think of the most impulsive thing they had ever done and were then asked to answer (true or false) if they were by themselves at the time. After recalling this memory, the overwhelming majority of participants responded “false” to the item “I was by myself when I acted impulsively” (92.3% responded false; 36 out of 39 participants).

As a final test of the second hypothesis,
responses to the unethical behavior scenarios (see Appendix G) were analyzed. Participants were asked to read scenarios that described acting unethically and were asked to rate how likely they were to behave in these ways. Recall that some of the scenarios involved acting unethically as a part of a group while other scenarios involved acting alone. To test the hypothesis, agreement scores from the alone scenarios were compared to agreement scores from the group scenarios. One of the scenarios was excluded from this analysis because it was unclear whether the scenario truly involved acting alone or whether it reflected acting in a group (asking friends who stole an exam what you should study). So, there were a total of two scenarios that involved acting unethically alone and three scenarios that involved acting unethically as a part of a group. To test the hypothesis, two composite scores were created. The first reflected the mean likelihood rating for the alone scenarios (i.e., stealing paper from work; spying on competitor company) and the second composite reflected the mean likelihood rating for the group scenarios (i.e., not revealing grading error; stealing fast food from work; cheating by turning in someone else’s work). The mean ratings (versus an additive score) were used to account for the different number of scenarios that made up the two composites. Results from a one-sample t-test were significant, $t(38) = 3.24, p < .05$ ($M_{alone} = 2.74, SD = 1.51$; $M_{group} = 3.41, SD = 1.31$). These results show that participants reported saying it was more likely they would act unethically when they were in groups compared to when alone. One could argue this finding can be seen as particularly strong support for the hypothesis since the scenarios in the group condition were arguably more unethical than those in the alone condition (although this difference in magnitude was not tested since data relevant to this were not collected).

**Discussion**

This survey study presented an initial attempt to examine the general hypotheses that the more that people feel threatened the more they prefer to be with others, and that people are less inhibited (more impulsive) and more unethical when with others compared to when alone. Some support for these hypotheses was found. For example, when asked to imagine being in scenarios that are potentially threatening, participants showed a preference to be with others rather than alone. In the situation of being in a subway station and seeing a group of rowdy people by the exit, participants’ preferences to wait for their friends before passing by this rowdy group of strangers was positively associated with the amount of fear they imagined feeling. This suggests that when people are afraid, they seek out and want to be with others in attempts to feel and be safer. Likewise, when asked to imagine being outside during a tornado warning, participants reported they would be more likely to go to their friends’ house to seek shelter rather than going home alone to be with their belongings. This hypothetical scenario suggests that people care more about being with others, potentially to feel safer, than with protecting their material belongings and prized possessions. While a few initial analyses did not support the hypothesis (correlation with nervousness and preference to be with friends during a tornado warning was not significant), no analysis resulted in findings that were in direct opposition to the hypothesis (e.g., preference to be alone more than with others during threatening situations).

Some support for the second hypothesis was also found. Across different measures, participants reported a higher likelihood of acting less inhibited (less ethical) and more impulsive in group contexts compared to individual ones. For example, when asked to recall the most impulsive thing they had ever done (without regrets), participants overwhelmingly reported doing it with at least one other person at the time. In addition, when asked to report how likely it was that they would engage in unethical behaviors, the likelihood was higher when the situations involved acting with others in comparison to acting alone. Overall, results support the general theory that people find safety in numbers, which may help explain why inhibitions are lessened in group contexts.

The results of this initial study highlight several important implications. People often form and use groups to make important decisions and to complete important tasks. However, people don’t often think about whether being in a group will impact how people think and behave when making these decisions and completing these tasks. These results suggest that people in groups will be less inhibited and restrained in many cases and are likely to be less cautious, vigilant to threats, and avoidant of errors. This impact of groups should be considered before arbitrarily assigning groups to make decisions and perform tasks. For example, results suggest that groups may be less effective than the same number of individuals when it comes to tasks that require a heightened sensitivity to threat cues. Instead of assigning a team to act as a patrol group to monitor for breaches in security, the same number of individuals patrolling the grounds may be more effective since those individuals are likely to be more aware of potential threats.

Another implication that follows from this work relates to negotiations (e.g., arbitrating divorce settlement; business negotiations). This work suggests that negotiations may be more peaceful, civil, and cooperative if individuals negotiate rather than groups or teams. If being in a group makes people less inhibited and more impulsive, when people negotiate as a part of a group they may be more likely to say things they might later regret. Conversely, if two individuals (rather than two groups) negotiate on behalf of their groups, these individuals may show more restraint and may act more ethically.

On the flip side, this research also highlights some contexts where group membership may be particularly beneficial. This theory and research helps understand why some people who feel vulnerable and hopeless are likely to prefer “support groups” and why this form of treatment may be useful particularly for people feeling scared and anxious. In addition, this work also highlights the importance of social networks and friendships and helps explain why people who lack membership in these groups often find the world threatening and fearful. An increased sensitivity to the importance of groups and the psychological safety they provide (and conversely, the fear that may result when group membership is lacking) could help make people more empathetic to those
who feel lonely, and may motivate people to reach out more to be more inclusive.

There are a number of limitations to the current study. As a preliminary attempt to explore the hypotheses, due to limitations of time, a survey design was used. Future research should test the hypotheses more directly, using an experimental method rather than asking people to imagine how they would feel and act. This study also used college students as participants. While there is no clear reason why college students should differ from the general population in what they think about groups and how they are impacted by them, future research should recruit participants from a more diverse population.
References


Instructions: Read the following questions and scenarios and answer using the response scales that are provided. Your name and personal identification will not be associated with your responses and no one other than the researchers involved with this project will see any of these data. Because the quality of this research is dependent on the extent to which people answer genuinely, we ask that you read the materials carefully and answer as honestly as possible. If for whatever reason you prefer not to answer something, we respect your right and ask that you skip those items and complete as much as you feel comfortable with. Thank you in advance for your time and effort.

Until instructed otherwise, use the 1 to 7 scale provided below to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each item by filling in the corresponding blank space with the appropriate number.

1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Disagree Somewhat
4 = Undecided
5 = Agree Somewhat
6 = Agree
7 = Strongly Agree

Read the scenario below and visualize yourself actually experiencing the event that is being described.

Imagine that you are walking to class alone. It’s a beautiful day, the sun is shining, and you can hear the birds outside singing. Suddenly, from the corner of your eye you notice a wallet on the ground. You pick up the wallet and inside you find a total of $100. The wallet contains the identification of the owner. You look around and notice there is no one in sight.

Now, try to imagine you are actually in this situation and take a moment and think about what you would do.

Using the scale below, fill in the following blank spaces.

1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Disagree Somewhat
4 = Undecided
5 = Agree Somewhat
6 = Agree
7 = Strongly Agree

I would put the wallet back on the ground and continue on my way to class. ______________

I would take out $50 dollars to keep for myself and place the wallet and rest of the money back on the ground. ______________

I would take the $100 to keep for myself and put the wallet back on the ground. __________

I would turn in all of the money and the wallet into the proper authorities. _______________

In this situation, I feel certain it would be wrong to take any of the money. __________________

In this situation described I would feel conflicted about what to do. _______________
Read the scenario below and visualize yourself actually experiencing the event that is being described.

Imagine you are walking to class with one of your good friends. Take a moment and think about the friend you’re walking with and what your friend looks like. It’s a beautiful day, the sun is shining, and you can hear the birds outside singing. Visualize you and your friend walking. Suddenly, from the corner of your eye you notice a wallet on the ground. You pick up the wallet and inside you find a total of $100. The wallet contains the identification of the owner. You turn to your friend to decide on what to do next and your friend responds that it’s completely up to you.

Now, try to imagine you are actually in this situation and take a moment and think about what you would do.

I would put the wallet back on the ground and continue on my way to class. __________

I would take out $50 dollars to keep for myself and give the remaining $50 to my friend before placing the wallet back on the ground. __________

I would take the $100 to keep for myself and put the wallet back on the ground. __________

I would turn in all of the money and the wallet into the proper authorities. ________________

In this situation, I feel certain it would be wrong to take any of the money. _______________

In the situation described, I would feel conflicted about what to do. ________________
Appendix C

Read the scenario below and visualize yourself actually experiencing the event that is being described.

Imagine you live alone and are on your way home when you hear on the radio that there is a tornado coming your way. As you are hearing this, you receive a call from some good friends of yours. Your friends inform you that they are going down into their basement to wait out the tornado, and invite you to join them. Your friends live 5 minutes away. You also live 5 minutes away and have a basement as well. The tornado is quickly approaching and you now have to make the decision about whether to go to your friend's house to be with other people or whether to go home where all of your personal belongings are.

Now, try to imagine you are actually in this situation and take a moment and think about what you would do.

Using the scale below, fill in the following blank spaces.

1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Disagree Somewhat
4 = Undecided
5 = Agree Somewhat
6 = Agree
7 = Strongly Agree

I would go to my own house to be with all of my belongings and weather the storm by myself. ______________

I would forget about my personal belongings and go to my friend's house so we can weather the storm together. ______________

Knowing the tornado was coming my way, I would feel nervous. ______________

In the tornado situation described, I would feel uncertain about what to do. ______________
Imagine you live alone in a big city. You and your friends have been invited to a party. You have been looking forward to this party all week and are really excited because you’ve been waiting for a chance to blow off some steam. You decide to take the subway alone and meet your friends there. While on the subway, you get a message from your friends and they tell you they also are on their way and that they are about 15 minutes behind you. You get off of the subway and before you go upstairs to exit the subway station, you notice the stairwell lights are out. At the top of the stairs you see a group of people who appear to be drinking. You can’t see them clearly but you can hear them because they are loud and appear rowdy.

Now, try to imagine you are actually in this situation and take a moment and think about what you would do.

Using the scale below, fill in the following blank spaces.

1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Disagree Somewhat
4 = Undecided
5 = Agree Somewhat
6 = Agree
7 = Strongly Agree

I would go ahead without my friends and pass by the strangers so I could get to the party as soon as possible. ________________

I would wait for my friends in the subway station so I don’t have to pass by the strangers alone. ________________

In this situation, I would feel afraid._______________

In the subway situation described, I wouldn’t know what to do.
Appendix E

Until instructed otherwise, use the 1 to 7 scale provided below to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each item by filling in the corresponding blank space with the appropriate number.

1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Disagree Somewhat
4 = Undecided
5 = Agree Somewhat
6 = Agree
7 = Strongly Agree

When I need to complete an important task that has to be done right (without errors) I prefer to work with other people rather than by myself. _______________

I have more confidence in myself when I am in a group with people I know compared to when I am alone. ____________

If in a dangerous situation, I would prefer to make a decision by myself instead of with other people on how to best handle the situation. ____________

I am more likely to act impulsively when I am alone compared to when I am with a group of friends. ______________

If in an unfamiliar situation, I would prefer to make a decision with a group of my friends instead of by myself on how to best handle the situation. ____________

I am more likely to act morally when I am with a group of friends compared to when I am alone. ____________
Think of the most impulsive thing you have ever done and did not end up regretting. In other words, something risky that you did without much forethought or deliberation. This would be a time when, for whatever reason, the potentially negative consequences of your actions did not seem to matter. Think about the situation and how you felt at the time. Now, after recalling and thinking about this time you acted impulsively, answer the following questions.

I was by myself when I acted impulsively. (Circle the appropriate response)    True           False

Use the scale below to answer the following item. Enter the appropriate number in the corresponding blank space.

1 = 1 other person
2 = 2 other people
3 = 3 other people
4 = 4 other people
5 = 5 other people
6 = I was alone

Still thinking about the most impulsive thing you've ever done and did not end up regretting, indicate how many other people were together with you at the time. _____________
Appendix G

For the next 6 items, you will read several short descriptions of different situations. For each situation, please imagine as vividly as you can that you are in this situation. So, imagine for every situation that you act out the behaviors described. For each situation, you have to indicate how likely is it you would engage in the behaviors described. After being able to picture yourself in the situation, indicate for each situation how likely it is you would behave in that way. Until instructed otherwise, respond to the following items by entering a number in the blank space by using a scale ranging from 1 (not likely) to 7 (highly likely).

29. Imagine you and your friend work in a fast-food restaurant in downtown Grand Rapids. It’s against policy to eat food without paying for it. You both came straight from class and are therefore both hungry. Your supervisor isn’t around, so you both make something for yourselves and eat without paying for it. ______________

30. You work as an office assistant for a department on campus. You’re alone in the office making copies and realize you’re out of copy paper at home. You therefore slip a ream of paper into your backpack. _______________

31. You are preparing for the final examination in a class where the professor uses the same examination in both sections. Some of your friends somehow get a copy of the examination after the first section. They are now trying to memorize the right answers. You don’t look at the examination, but just ask them what topics you should focus your studying on. _____________

32. You and a friend have a class together. You receive feedback on a group project that you worked on together. You both notice your professor marked correct three answers that you two actually got wrong. Revealing this error would mean the difference between an A and a B. You both say nothing.  ______________

33. Your boss at your summer job asks yo to get confidential information about a competitor’s product. You therefore pose as a student doing a research project on the competitor’s company and ask for the information. ______________

34. You are assigned a team project in one of your courses. Your team waits until the last minute to begin working. Several team members suggest using an old project out of their fraternity/sorority files. You go along with this plan. _____________