

Epilogue

Ever-Aftering

Living in a Forest of Peer Groups



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The honor of one is the honor of all. The hurt of one is the hurt of all.

—Creek Indian Creed

Un pour tous, tous pour un.

—D'Artagnan (1625)*

Workin' together—white, black, Spanish—work together. If anything happened to one, it happened to all.

—Rev. Mack Williams¹

The only tragedy is never-aftering. Never fully participating in our peer groups, never expanding our experiences with seemingly diverse others, never examining the effects our communication choices have on other group members, never knocking on the doors of new groups, never allowing outsiders to penetrate the membership boundaries of our own treasured peer groups.

The purpose in this book has been to alter your consciousness about what is possible concerning the communication dynamics of peer groups that impact your life, to stimulate new thinking about your own behaviors and reactions in these groups, and to suggest new avenues for group research. This book has attempted to function as both a window and a door: to let you see group processes and consequences that may have been invisible to you, and, at the same time, to allow you to enter future peer groups and behave differently, when you hope for different results. (At times, these pages may have served as a useful *mirror* for you, as well.)

There are undoubtedly more delightful peers around us than we realize. Swarms of them; droves, routes, packs, paddlings, pods, be vies, and clowders.

*“One for all, all for one.” In 1844, the French author Alexandre Dumas wrote a serialized novel, *Les Trois Mousquetaires* (“The Three Musketeers”) set in 17th-century France. They are comrades who together perform many daring deeds. In fact, there were not three, but four Musketeers. The young d’Artagnan, a teenager, arrives in Paris and almost immediately offends three musketeers (Porthos, Aramis, and Athos). Before they can fight one another, the four are attacked by the Cardinal’s guards and their courage is tested, leading them to a fast friendship of inseparable peers. Along the way, of course, they encounter demons, treachery, a beautiful young spy, and surprising enemies. Intriguingly, the familiar phrase, “All for one, one for all,” appears only *once* in the entire book.

We live in the midst of people like us, who share our beliefs, values, goals, abilities, inclinations, experiences, gripes, or responsibilities. More to the point, we are living in a social forest, surrounded by people who—if we managed to herd them into a small peer group—would share our interests, applaud our dreams, bemoan our losses, crew our ships, rebuild our neighborhoods, join our revolutions, jump to our defense, stretch our compassion, pull us from fires, join us in crafting good decisions, or inspire us regularly to exceed our personal bests.

We do not study peer groups simply because we think *other people* need to know about them. The core, heart, sticky-goopy center of peer group studies involves *us*. We need to understand the dynamics and processes of these groups, because we will be embedded in them for the rest of our lives. We are less alone than we might be without them.

You will have opportunities throughout your life span to belong to more peer groups: We need peers to watch our backs. We need more eyes looking out for us, because we can't always see what's coming. Peer groups give us practice on how to be together.

May you achieve successes
(in your careers and in your relationships)
one conversation
and one peer group
at a time.

a pallor of night students • a drowse of underachievers • a leap of overachievers • a platitude of sophomores • a gratitude of juniors • an attitude of seniors • a fortitude of graduate students • a clamber of assistant professors • a tenure of associate professors • an entropy of full professors • an oversight of deans • a conjunction of grammarians • a shelf of classicists • a shush of librarians • a brood of researchers • a discord of experts • a tribe of group scholars • a browse of readers • a tedium of footnotes • a providence of publishers*

*Harvested from Lipton, J. (1968/1991). *An exaltation of larks* (the ultimate edition). New York: Penguin. James Lipton is the son of a prominent American poet and was publishing his own poetry by the age of 12. He is an author, director, choreographer, and producer who has written screenplays for eight motion pictures, written and produced hundreds of hours of award-winning television drama and entertainment specials, and who wrote the book and lyrics for two Broadway musicals. Lipton is a *Delight of Writers*, even alone (which he apparently never is).



There's one advantage to being 102. There's no peer pressure.

—Dennis Wolfberg