2. Variables That Moderate Social Loafing Effects

When learning about research on social loafing, many students think to themselves: “I don’t do that. If I’m in a group where other people are slacking off, I work even harder to make up for their laziness.” Although no one enjoys being taken advantage of (Kerr, 1983), there are conditions under which people exhibit social compensation—they work even harder when other group members are not pulling their weight. This is most apt to occur when a task is important or personally meaningful (K. D. Williams & Karau, 1991). In fact, social loafing effects are reduced when people care a great deal about whether the group succeeds or fails.

Individuals also differ in how likely they are to slack off. Although the effects are small, women are less likely to exhibit social loafing than men are, and people from Eastern cultures are less apt to exhibit social loafing than people from Western cultures are (Karau & Williams, 1993; Kugihara, 1999). Presumably, this occurs because women show greater concern for maintaining group harmony than men do, and because people from Eastern cultures have a more collectivistic orientation than people from Western cultures have.

C. Integrating Social Facilitation Research and Social Loafing

Earlier we noted that the presence of others impairs performance on difficult tasks. Although this is usually the case, the presence of others can sometimes enhance our performance at a difficult task. Imagine, for example, that you are going to publicly sing a very challenging song. Chances are, you’d be more nervous singing alone in front of an audience than singing along with a large choir. That’s because the presence of others can calm us, especially when a task is difficult.

The fact that in some situations there is safety in numbers has led theorists to develop an integrated model of social facilitation and social loafing (J. M. Jackson & Williams, 1985; Sanna, 1992). As shown in Figure 9.5, the key variable is whether

![Figure 9.5](image-url)