our performance can be identified and evaluated. When it can, the presence of others creates arousal. This arousal aids our performance on easy tasks (social facilitation) but impairs our performance on difficult tasks (social impairment). When our performance is pooled and cannot be identified or evaluated, we relax when others are around. This can lead to a poor performance when the task is easy (social loafing) but may improve our performance when the task is difficult. This latter effect, a type of social comfort, occurs because we worry less about making a mistake when others are around to share the responsibility.

Sanna (1992) tested this model. The participants in Sanna’s study were asked to solve easy or difficult problems related to creativity. Some of the participants solved the problems while working alone, some worked with others but believed their performance could be evaluated, and some worked with others and believed their performance could not be evaluated. Figure 9.6 shows that, for easy tasks, the presence of others improved performance when performances could be identified and evaluated (social facilitation) but impaired performance when performance could not be identified and evaluated (social loafing). When a task was difficult, the presence of others impaired performance when performances could be identified and evaluated (social impairment) but improved performance when performances could not be identified and evaluated (social comfort).

**FIGURE 9.6**
Social Facilitation, Social Loafing, and Task Difficulty

When a task is easy, the presence of others improves our performance on an easy task if our performance can be identified and evaluated (social facilitation) but impairs our performance if our performance cannot be identified and evaluated (social loafing). When a task is difficult, the presence of others impairs our performance when our performance can be identified and evaluated (social impairment) but improves our performance when our performance cannot be identified and evaluated (social comfort).