

## **GROUP DYNAMICS IN ISOLATED ENVIRONMENTS**

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The aim of this study was to investigate the way in which being in an isolated environment affects how people interact with one another. This study was one of many during the Mars Society's "Expedition Two", which took place in Arkaroola, South Australia in August 2004. Twenty-four expeditioners participated in this research over a period of four weeks. Psychological measurements were taken every day, although not all participants were present for the entire study period. It was predicted that the social environment of this isolated group would be far simpler and less dynamic than that found in normal everyday life. This was based on the assumption that in normal life, people are faced with a large variety of different social encounters, while in isolation; members of a small group's interactions are more limited. It was predicted that a stable social environment would be associated with participants' development of fairly stable and shared social identities. That is, we expected to see a high degree of consensus about the social groups that people (a) described themselves as belonging to and (b) perceived to be important within the social environment. It was also predicted that the degree of perceived variability in the social environment would be related to a number of other social psychological variables. Findings suggest that the environment was actually quite dynamic despite the small group size and isolation. No relationship was found between the level of change in the social environment and the other social psychological constructs investigated. It was also found that consensus about the groups which people defined as being important was achieved for only a few key social identities. In the main, different people perceived their social environment and themselves along very diverse lines. Results are discussed in terms of how this relates to group functioning.

### **NOTES**