on

e most obvious one: Multiparty negotiations
otiations simply become larger. This creates
spectives and ensuring that each party has
arty may be acting as a principal—that is,
.1)—or an agent—representing the interests
igure 13.2). (Refer back to our discussion
ies may have different social roles outside
director, board chairman) that may lead to
us in the negotiation (see Chapter 8). If the
he exchange within the negotiation should
s or power than the others. For instance, if
presidents, we can expect the president to

A second difference in multiparty ne-
s on issues, and more total information
ary support) are introduced. "One of the
number of parties is that the negotiation
x, and therefore, in some respects, more
values, interests, and perceptions to be
eral, 1977, p. 332, as quoted in Kramer,
erspectives of each side, and the bound-
becomes a major challenge for the ne-
gotiators spend time in more thorough
than trying to keep track of issues and

e number of parties increases, the so-
gue to a small-group discussion. As a
ffect the way the negotiators behave.
notivational orientation of the parties
a cooperative (versus an individualis-
achieve a higher-quality outcome in
rties were more trusting and engaged
gart, Bennett, and Brett, 1993). This
scussed the issues (discussed later).
egate to act cohesively, yet the mem-
sive unless they can find an accept-
nother, evaluate themselves against
cs to persuade one another toward
these tactics). Strong pressures for
rs to adopt a common perspective
olution. In addition, the parties can
e, if the parties want to be unified
ninimize conflict by downplaying

Space Shuttle *Challenger* BOX 13.1

On January 28, 1986, the space shuttle *Challenger* exploded 73 seconds into its flight. All those on the flight were instantly killed, including civilian passengers specially recruited for the trip. Subsequent investigations placed part of the blame for this tragedy on leaders at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) who failed to create a communication environment that allowed their subordinates to discuss openly potential technical difficulties. If communication had been more open, the *Challenger* might not have been lost.

In his book-length report on the *Challenger* disaster, Philip Tompkins (1993) noted that workers at NASA knew their director did not like to hear bad news. He had a tendency to "kill the messenger," particularly when faced with technical information that might necessitate delays in the launch schedule. Consequently, his subordinates communicated with him in a passive, nondirective style. In the days prior to *Challenger's* launch, engineers met to discuss potential technical difficulties with the flight based on the colder-than-usual weather. These technical professionals concluded that launching the *Challenger* might be dangerous in cold-weather conditions. However, because meetings at NASA did not generally promote open exchange of ideas and debate, the indirect warnings they issued were ignored. Some professionals testified after the accident that they were intimidated by senior administrators at NASA and did not feel they could bring problems to the table for discussion. Instead, they relied on hints and technical memos to try to get their message across without angering their superiors.

Tompkins wrote that one purpose of his book was "to point out the value of communication, the dangers of defensiveness and unwillingness to face open appraisal" (p. 110). The *Challenger* disaster aptly demonstrates the tragedy that can strike if all members of a work team cannot speak openly in meetings and negotiations. Many who have studied this disaster have also pointed out that the dynamics Tompkins describes are dramatically similar to the characteristics of "groupthink" (Janis, 1982).

Source: Adapted from Phillip K. Tompkins, *Organizational Communication Imperatives: Lessons of the Space Program* (Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing Company, 1993).

their differences or may not work through their differences adequately to reach an effective solution. Janis's (1982, 1989) research on policy-making and decision-making groups has shown that these efforts to minimize and avoid conflict can frequently lead to disaster. Fiascoes such as the U.S. invasion of the Bay of Pigs in Cuba during the Kennedy administration (Janis, 1982) or NASA's decision to launch the *Challenger* space shuttle (Tompkins, 1993) were caused by dynamics in the key decision-making groups that pushed group members to avoid conflict and avoid expressing their real reservations about going ahead with the project (see Box 13.1). This hesitancy led to an illusion of consensus in which each party believed that he was the only dissenting member in a strong, emerging agreement about what actions to take. Afraid to express their dissent for fear of looking weak and foolish (note the face-saving dynamics—see Chapter 11), group members self-censored their reservations and concerns, thereby reinforcing the apparent surface consensus and leading to a decision with disastrous consequences.

Procedural Complexity A fourth way in which multiparty negotiations are more complex than two-party ones is that the process they have to follow is more complicated. In one-on-one negotiations, the parties simply take turns in presenting their issues and perspectives,