Small Group Development

- Dimensions (and outputs) in Decision-Making Groups
- More on Stages of Group Development
- Other theories

Dimensions in Decision-Making Groups

The task and social dimensions of a group are interrelated.

What is Group Cohesiveness?

- The degree of attraction members feel:
  - Toward one another
  - Toward the group

  AKA:
  The glue that holds the group together
Remember the Stages of Group Development?

- **Forming**: initial phase where individuals join together for some reason.
  - Establishing standards and rules of conduct.
- **Storming**: tension phase.
  - Tension can be positive.
  - Three types of tension:
    - **Primary** tension - during the initial meeting (low intensity).
    - **Secondary** tension - later in the group, often during decision-making stage (can be very high intensity).
    - **Tertiary** tension - results from status or power struggles.
- **Norming**: when effort is targeted toward goal achievement.
- **Performing**: not always linear progression.
- **Adjourning**: terminating group membership.

Tuckman (1965)

**Forming**: why we join groups

- Interpersonal Attraction
  - Similarity
  - Complementarity
  - Proximity/Contact/Interaction
  - Physical Attractiveness
- Group Attraction
  - Group Activities
  - Group Goals
  - Group Membership
    - Establishment of meaning and identity
    - Fulfillment of unrelated needs

**Storming**: social tension in groups

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Suggestions for Managing Group Tensions

- Make sure members know each other as individuals
- Include a get-acquainted period
- Schedule an informal chat period before each meeting
- Engage in group social activities
- Have members share information and feelings about the group's task so members arrive at a common understanding

Suggestions for Managing Group Tensions (continued)

- Make sure members display tolerance for disagreement
- Use sensitivity in expressing disagreement
- Remind the group that disagreement can help achieve a superior outcome
- Confront inappropriate behavior by describing its effect on the group
- Use humor, joking, and shared laughter to lighten the mood

Norming: regulating the group

- A group will develop standards to define appropriate behaviors in specified social situations
- Rules are formal standards, frequently written down (explicit)
- Norms are informal standards, usually not written down (implicit)
Performance: group output
- Performance - actually doing the work and producing an end product
- Effective when groups focus on the task
- Effective when all group members participate
- Remember when groups outperform individuals and vice versa

Main Purpose of Norms: To Achieve Group Goals
- Where do norms come from?
  - Outside systems
  - Influence of a single member
  - The group itself
- How do norms develop within the group?
  - Primacy
  - Explicit statements
  - Critical events
  - Carry-over behaviors

How Are Group Norms Enforced?
- Pay attention to how others act
  - Which behaviors are occurring regularly?
  - Which behaviors incur approval?
  - Which behaviors incur disapproval?
- Not all norms are enforced equally
  - Important norms are those related to the group's survival and help define it as a group
Conforming to Norms

- **Conformity** - the adherence to group norms
  - Conformity reduces ambiguity and makes functioning in a group a smoother operation
  - Conformity results in social acceptance, support, companionship, and recognition
  - Groups provide information which allows us to assess the reasonability of our own opinions and behavior

Nonconformity to Group Norms

- Deviants consistently violate group norms
  - People do not appreciate those who do not conform to norms
- Strategies for dealing with deviants:
  - Reasoning ➔ Teasing ➔ Coercion
  - Increased solidarity of other members
  - Ostracizing the deviant

What happens when someone new joins a group?

- Depends upon:
  - the level of group development
  - the level of group performance
  - the number of members
  - the degree of openness in a group
What can a newcomer do?

- Conduct a thorough reconnaissance of the group
- Play the “newcomer” role
- Seek patrons within the group
- Collaborate with other newcomers

Other Theories of Group Development

- Bales & Strodtbeck (1951)
  - Orientation
  - Evaluation
  - Control

- B. Aubrey Fisher (1970)
  - Focuses on verbal interactions
  - Orientation
  - Conflict
  - Emergence
  - Reinforcement

Group Culture

- Group culture refers to the behaviors and beliefs shared by members of a group, such as:
  - Roles
  - Norms
  - Status hierarchy
  - Patterns of interacting
  - Deeply held values which characterize a group
Fantasy Themes

• Fantasy - what is being discussed when the group is not discussing “group stuff”; an unrelated topic
• Fantasy chain - when other members pick up the story and add to it.
• Fantasies have two themes:
  • manifest theme (obvious)
  • latent theme (underlying)