WHAT IS A SMALL GROUP?
More about Working in Groups

Video Lectures Cover

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Small Groups: You</th>
<th>Small Group: First Meeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ What to do before you start working in groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Key Terms:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Synergy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Tuckman’s stages of group development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Equifinality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Common Complaints about Groupwork</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Superordinate Goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Dimensions in decision-making groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Suggestions on developing group expectations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Difference between Leader and Leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Beatrice Shultz’s definition

□ A limited number of people
□ who communicate face-to-face,
□ sharing a common understanding of an interdependent goal,
□ influencing one another, and
□ expressing a sense of belongingness to the group.
J. Dan Rothwell’s definition

- A human communication system
  - composed of three or more individuals
  - interacting for the achievement of some common goals
- who
  - influence and
  - are influenced by each other

Beebe & Masterson’s definition

- Communication among
  - a small group of people
  - who share a common purpose or goal,
  - who feel a sense of belonging to the group, and
  - who exert influence over each other

What do these definitions have in common?

- Limited number of people
  - 2+, 3+  
  - 20 upper limit
- Face-to-face interaction helps (can perceive nonverbal)
- Common purpose/goal/fate
- Mutual influence
- Belongingness
What is Not a Small Group?

Aggregate:
a collection of individuals
who are present at the
same time and place but
do not form a unit or
have a common degree
of similarity.

Which of the following meet the
definition of a small group?

1. People standing in line waiting to
get into a concert?
2. Members of an audience at a play?
3. Students in a study group?
4. A basketball team?
5. A healthcare team?

A. Meets definition
B. Does NOT meet
definition

Another Way of Looking
at Small Group Components

- Goals
- Interdependence
- Interpersonal Interaction
- Perceptions of Membership
- Structured Relationships
- Mutual Influence
- Motivation

Johnson & Johnson, 1997
Small Groups vs. Teams

- Team is a small group, but …
  - More definition, discussion (and acceptance):
    - Goals (drive all aspects of team accomplishment)
    - Roles/responsibilities
    - Rules/expectations
  - Collaboration and coordination, work together interdependently

Classification of Groups

- Groups are classified based upon:
  - The reason they were formed (Why was the group first created?)
  - The human needs they serve (Why do people join the group?)

William Schutz’s Theory of Interpersonal Needs

- Three Needs:
  - Inclusion - a need to belong and be identified with others
  - Affection - a need for love and esteem from others
  - Control - a need to achieve and exert power over others and our environment
- We are willing to exchange items of value to meet these needs

Schutz, 1958
Two Major Classifications of Small Groups

- **Primary Groups** - groups that exist chiefly to satisfy human needs for inclusion and affection
- **Secondary Groups** - groups that are formed for the purpose of doing work (fulfilling task needs)

Main Types of Secondary Groups

- **Activity Groups** – to participate in an activity
- **Personal Growth Groups** – to develop personal insights, overcome personality problems, & to grow as individuals from the feedback of others
- **Learning Groups** - to understand a subject more thoroughly
- **Problem-Solving Groups** - to address some condition or problem
- **Decision-Making Groups** – to make a choice among several alternatives.

Types of Problem-Solving Groups & Teams

- Governance groups & committees
- Ad hoc committees/special committees/task forces
- Standing committees
- Staff groups
- Management teams

Lumsden & Lumsden, 1997
Types of Problem-Solving Groups & Teams (continued)

- Self-managing teams/self-managed work groups
- Quality circles
- Project teams/Creative teams
- Health care teams
- Focus groups

Lumsden & Lumsden, 1997

When do groups perform better than individuals?

- When the task requires a wide range and variety of information and skills
  - Pooling knowledge
  - Group remembering
- When neither the group nor the individual have expertise
- When the task is especially complicated and complex
- Sometimes when the group is reasonably bright

When do individuals perform better than groups?

- When the group is composed of uninformed laypersons vs. an expert
- When groups establish norms of mediocrity
- When groups become too large
- When the task is a simple one
- When time is a critical factor