8. TOPIC

GROUPS AND TEAMS IN THE ORGANIZATION

GROUP FORMATION

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Content

Group formation – key terms and learning outcomes

- **The key characteristics of a group**

- **Different types of group tasks**

- **Formal and an informal group**

- **Group formation and group development**

How the lecture will be conducted?

1. The lecture is divided into **two blocks**, where each block introduces an issue associated with:

   - Group formation
   - The key characteristics of a group
   - Different types of group tasks
   - Formal and Informal group

2. We use **MS Teams**, a shared whiteboard for your engagement and reactions, brainstorming ideas and for sharing answers.

3. The lecture is completed by **quizzes in Vevox**, the link is always in the presentation.

Contents

1. **PART** (45 min.)

- Group formation
- The key characteristics of a group
- Different types of group tasks

2. **PART** (45 min.)

- Definitions and distinctions formal and Informal group

After studying this topic, you should be able to:

- Have knowledge of group formation and group building, you will be able to recognise the key characteristics of groups.

- To distinguish between typologies and types of groups according to formality and degree of development, which can then be applied in practical team creation/development.

Key readings

You can find support in the following sources:

- Book – Huczynski, A. (2013). *Organizational Behaviour.* Chapter 10., p. 322

PART 2

Group formation

The key characteristics of a group

Different types of group tasks

Work groups and teams have become a nearly ubiquitous part of contemporary management practice in the majority of prominent organizations in the world.

Why study groups?

- **Groups embody many important cultural values** of Western society: teamwork, cooperation, a collective that is greater than the sum of its parts, informality, egalitarianism and even the indispensability of the individual member.

- **Groups are seen as having a motivating, inspiring influence on the individual**, drawing the best out of him or her, enabling him or her to perform feats that would be beyond him or herself as a detached individual.

- **Groups can have a healing effect on individuals**, bolstering their self-esteem and filling their lives with meaning.

Why study groups?

According to the European Foundation:

- **60 per cent** of EU workers perform all or part of their work in teams;

- most teamworking is to be found in the UK and Estonia (81 per cent) and the least in Lithuania (38 per cent) and Italy (41 per cent);

- most **teamwork occurs in industrial** rather than service industries;

- teamwork is most often found in **larger** organizations.

Why study groups?

McGrath's circumplex model shown reflects the four major activities performed by groups, and classifies eight different group tasks.

- Groups generate **plans and ideas** (e.g. solutions, strategies);

- They **execute tasks** (e.g. surgical operations, military missions);

- They **engage in negotiations** (e.g. in labour–management conflicts and company–government disputes); and

- They **choose between options** (e.g. appointment decisions, investment decisions).

# McGrath's circumplex model of group tasks
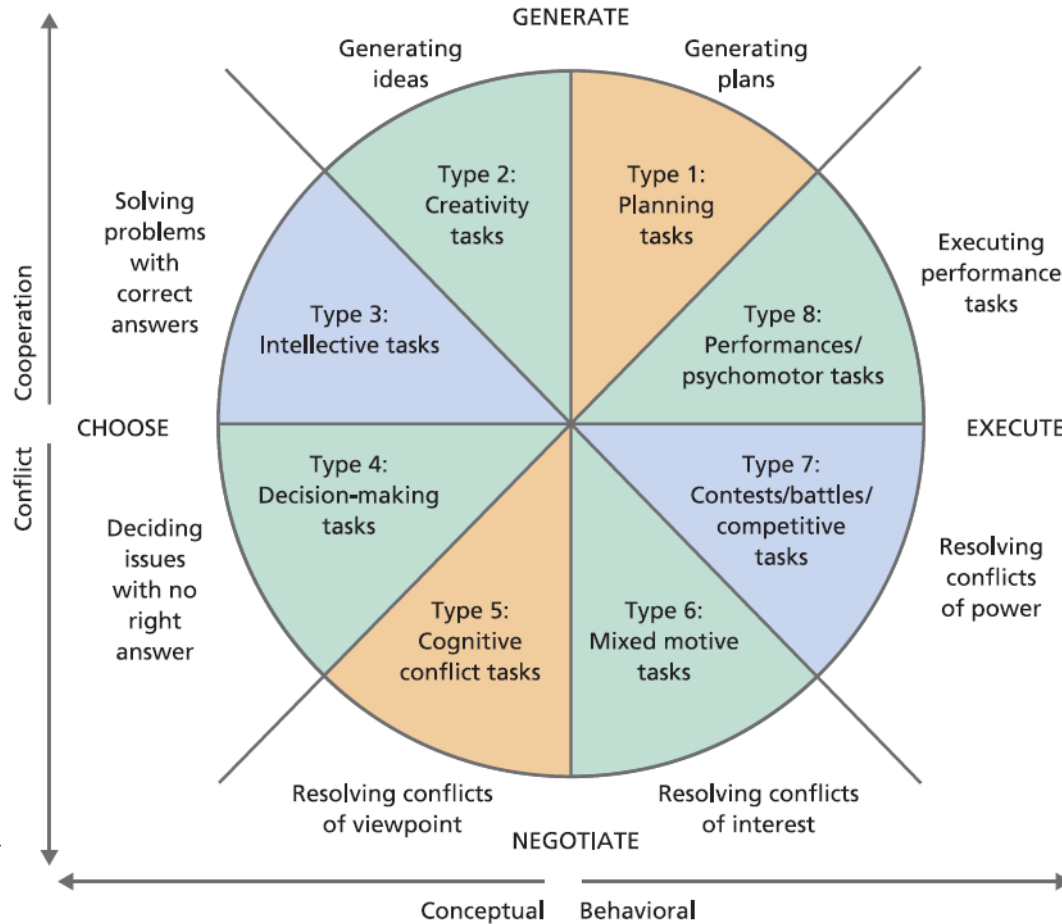
Definitions of groups

- The term **group** is thus reserved for people who consider themselves to be part of an identifiable unit, who relate to each other in a meaningful fashion, and who share dispositions through their shared sense of collective identity.

- Researchers often refer to these as **psychological groups.**

- **Group** **two or more people, in face-to-face interaction, each aware of their group membership and interdependence, as they strive to achieve their goals.**

- **Group dynamics** the forces operating within groups that affect their performance and their members' satisfaction.

Definitions of groups
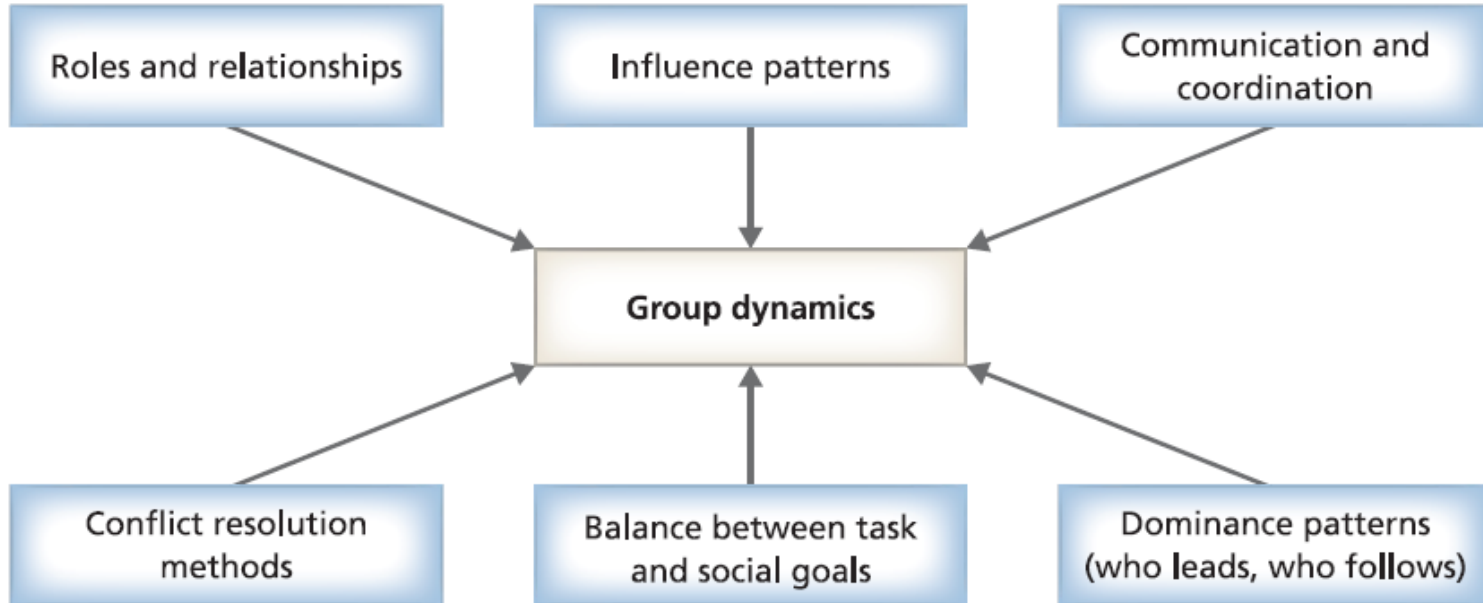
STOP AND THINK

Why would only one of the following be considered to be a group? In what circumstances could one of the other aggregates become a group?

- (a) people riding on a bus

- (b) blonde women between 20 and 30 years of age

- (c) members of a football team

- (d) audience in a theatre

- (e) people sheltering in a shop doorway from the rain

Definitions of groups

Groups differ in the degree to which they possess the five **characteristics** listed below.

- **A minimum membership of two people.** Groups can range from two people to over 30. However, the greater the number of group members, the higher the number of possible relationships between them, the greater the level of communication that is required, and the more complex the structure needed to operate the group successfully.

- **A communication network**. Each group member must be capable of communicating with every other member. In this communication process, the aims and purposes of the group are exchanged. The mere process of interaction satisfies some of our social needs, and it is used to set and enforce standards of group behaviour.

- **A shared sense of collective identity**. Each member must identify with the other members of their group, and not see themselves as an individual acting independently. They must all believe themselves to be participants in the group which itself is distinct from other groups.

Definitions of groups

Groups differ in the degree to which they possess the five **characteristics** listed below.

- **Complementary goals.** Members have individual objectives which can only be met through membership of and participation in the group. Their goals may differ but are sufficiently complementary that members feel able to achieve them through participation in the group. They recognize the need to work collectively and not as individuals.

- **Group structure**. Individuals in the group will have different roles, e.g. initiator/ideas person, suggestion-provider, compromiser. These roles, which tend to become fixed, indicate what members expect of each other. Norms or rules exist which indicate which behaviours are acceptable in the group and which are not (e.g. smoking, swearing, late arrival).

Issues facing any work group

Issue	Questions
1. Atmosphere and relationships	What kinds of relationships should there be among members? How close and friendly, formal or informal?
2. Member participation	How much participation should be required of members? Some more than others? All equally? Are some members more needed than others?
3. Goal understanding and acceptance	How much do members need to *understand* group goals? How much do they need to *accept* to be *committed* to the goals? Everyone equally? Some more than others?
4. Listening and information-sharing	How is information to be shared? Who needs to know what? Who should listen most to whom?
5. Handling disagreements and conflict	How should disagreements or conflicts be handled? To what extent should they be resolved? Brushed aside? Handled by diktat?
6. Decision-making	How should decisions be made? Consensus? Voting? One-person rule? Secret ballot?
7. Evaluation of member performance	How is evaluation to be managed? Everyone appraises everyone else? A few take the responsibility? Is it to be avoided?
8. Expressing feelings	How should feelings be expressed? Only about the task? Openly and directly?
9. Division of labour	How are task assignments to be made? Voluntarily? By discussion? By leaders?
10. Leadership	Who should lead? How should leadership *functions* be exercised? Shared? Elected? Appointed from outside?
11. Attention to process	How should the group monitor and improve its own process? Ongoing feedback from members? Formal procedures? Avoiding direct discussion?

Definitions of groups

There are many **benefits** of group working:

- Groups allow organizations to **develop and deliver products and services quickly** and cost-effectively while maintaining quality.

- They enable organizations to **learn**, and to retain learning, more effectively.

- Cross-functional groups promote **improved quality management**.

- Cross-functional design groups can undertake **effective process re-engineering**.

- **Production time can be reduced** if tasks currently performed consecutively by individuals are performed concurrently by people in groups.

Types of group tasks

Borrill and West (2005) reported research estimating that 88% of the variation in a group's performance could be explained with reference to the task that it was asked to perform.

Steiner (1972) classified group tasks on the **basis of the type of interdependence** that they required between their members.

- With an **additive task**, all group members do basically the same job, and the final group product or outcome (group performance) is the **sum of all their individual contributions**.

- The final **outcome is roughly proportional** to the number of individuals contributing. There is low interdependency between these people.

- A group working together will normally **perform better than the same number of individuals working alone**, provided that all group members make their contribution.

Types of group tasks

Steiner (1972) classified group tasks on the **basis of the type of interdependence** that they required between their members.

- In a <mark>**disjunctive task**</mark>, one **member's performance depends on another's**. Again there is high interdependency. However, this time, the group's most capable member determines its performance.

- Groups **perform better than their average member** on disjunctive tasks, since even the best performer will not know all the answers, and working with others helps to improve overall group performance.

- Examples of disjunctive task performers are quiz teams (University Challenge, pub quiz) and a maintenance team in a nuclear power generating plant.

Group-oriented view of organizations

- Another famous psychologist, **Rensis Likert** (1903–1981) , echoed the idea that organizations should be **viewed and managed as a collection of groups rather than individuals.**

He argued that:

- work groups are important sources of **individuals' need satisfaction**;
- groups in organizations that **fulfil this psychological function** are also more productive;
- management's task is therefore to create **effective work groups** by developing '**supportive relationships**';
- an effective organizational structure consists of **democratic-participative** work groups, each linked to the organization as a whole through overlapping memberships;
- coordination is achieved by individuals who carry out '**linking functions**'.

Group-oriented view of organizations

Organizational design based around groups rather than individuals:

- improves communications;

- increases co-operation;

- provides more team member commitment;

- produces faster decision-making.

Rensis Likert's linking pin model
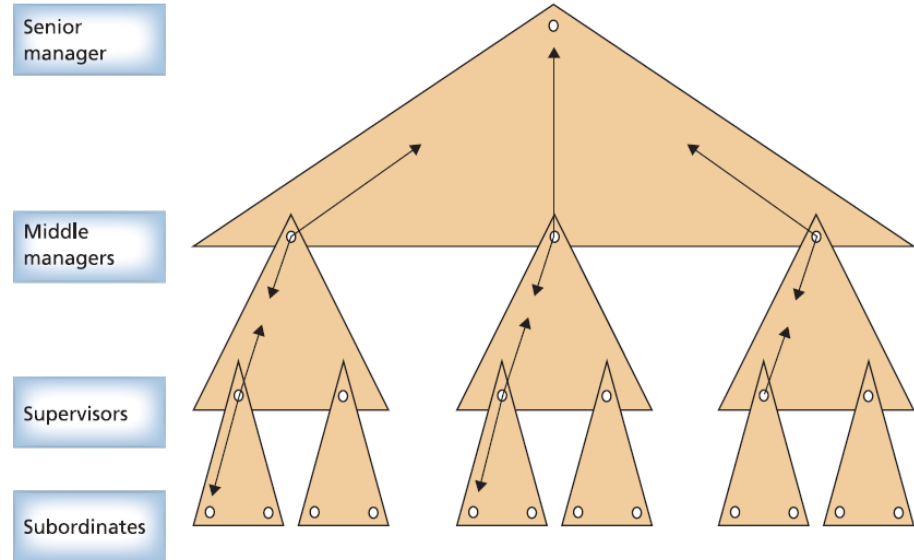
STOP AND THINK

You have accepted a job and your new employer tells you that you will become '**part of the team**', and a '**member of one big happy family here**'.

• How do you feel about the organization as your 'psychological home' in this respect?

• When managers say that they want you 'to belong' what do they really mean?

• Why do you think teamworking has been so consistently popular with managers interested in improving employees' performance?

Vevox questions

https://silesianuniversity.vevox.com/#/meeting/450463/polls

PART 2

Formal and Informal groups

Workplace behaviour can be considered as varying along a continuum from formally to informally organized.

Formal and informal groups

- **Formal group** a group that has been consciously created by management to accomplish a defined task that contributes to the organization's goal.

All have certain **common characteristics**:

- They are task-orientated.
- They tend to be permanent.
- They have a formal structure.
- They are consciously organized by management to achieve organizational goals.
- Their activities contribute directly to the organization's collective purpose.

Formal and informal groups

- **Informal group** a collection of individuals who become a group when they develop interdependencies, influence one another's behaviour, and contribute to mutual need satisfaction.

- **Self-interest** and **self-identity** interact and reciprocate. These processes have implications for the behaviour of the groups concerned. This phenomenon is termed **group self-organization**.

Group self-organization refers to the tendency of groups to

- form interests,
- develop autonomy, and
- establish identities.

A social network in an organization
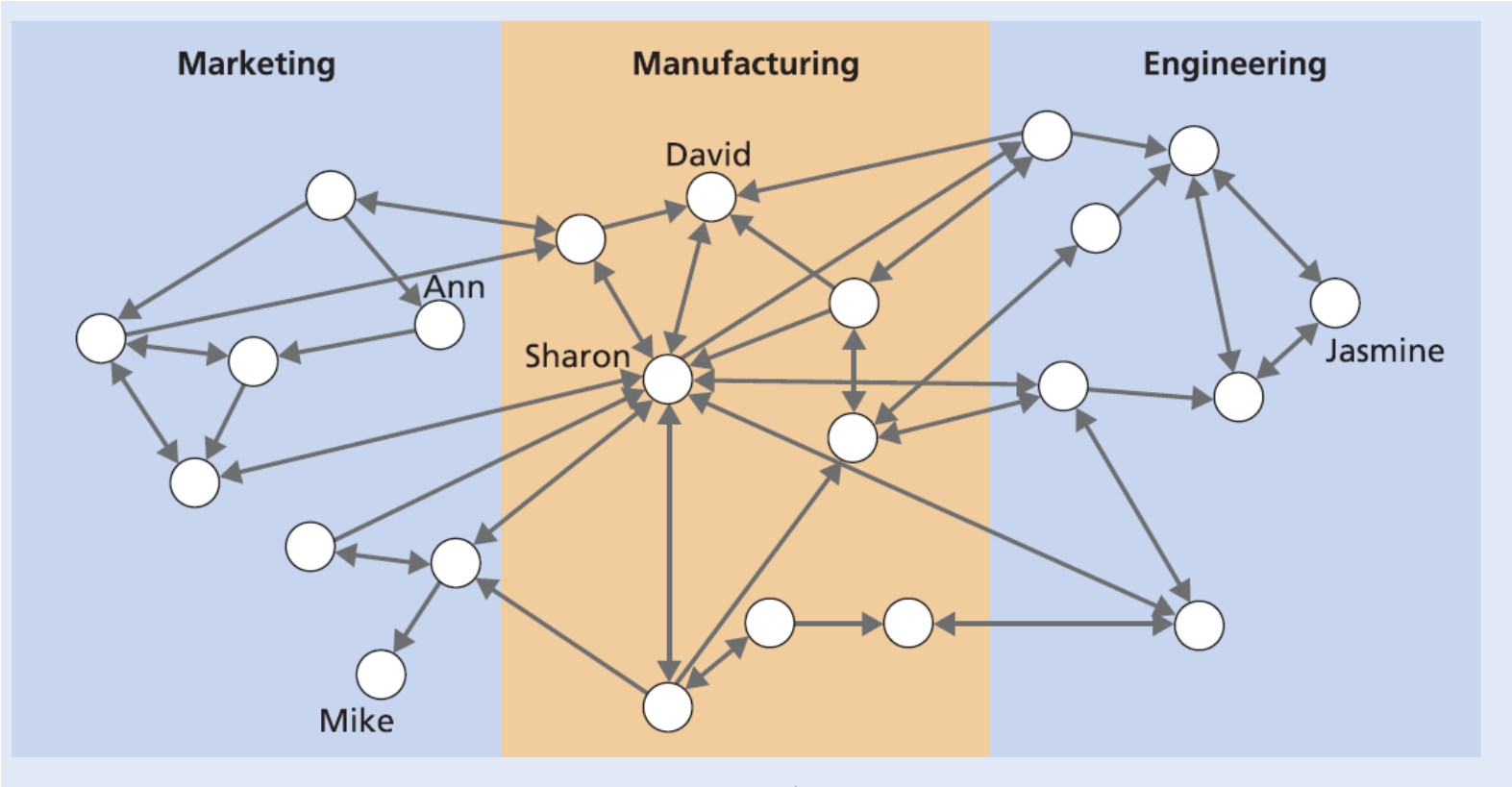
Group formation

- Groups do not suddenly appear out of nowhere.

- Before being able and willing to contribute as part of a collective, individuals who were previously **strangers have to become familiar with each other** in order to establish how best to work together to achieve the common task.

Environment of group	External system	Internal system	
Physical Technological Social	Required activities Required interactions Required sentiments	Emergent activities Emergent interactions Emergent sentiments	Formation of a group
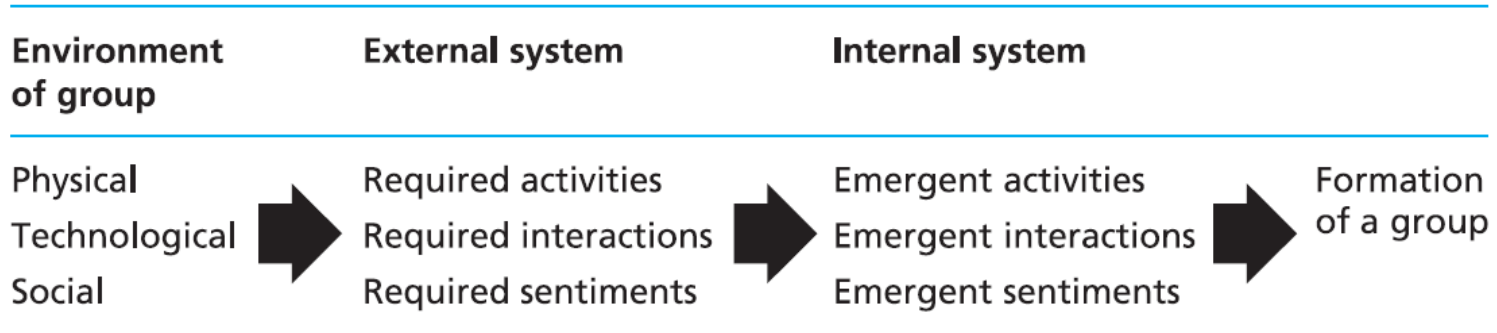
Group formation

Group environment is created by management's decisions in three areas:

- **Physical**. These are the actual surroundings within which a group functions. It includes the spatial arrangement of physical objects and location of human activities, e.g. office architecture and work furniture; placement of workers on an assembly line.

- **Technological**. This includes both material technology (the tools, machinery, and equipment that can be seen, touched, and heard) that group members use to do their jobs, and social technology (the methods which order their behaviour and relationships).

- **Social**. This encompasses the norms and values of the group itself; of its managers (e.g. employees as motivated solely by money) and of the organization culture (stressing mutual support and collaboration or competition, distrust and backstabbing).
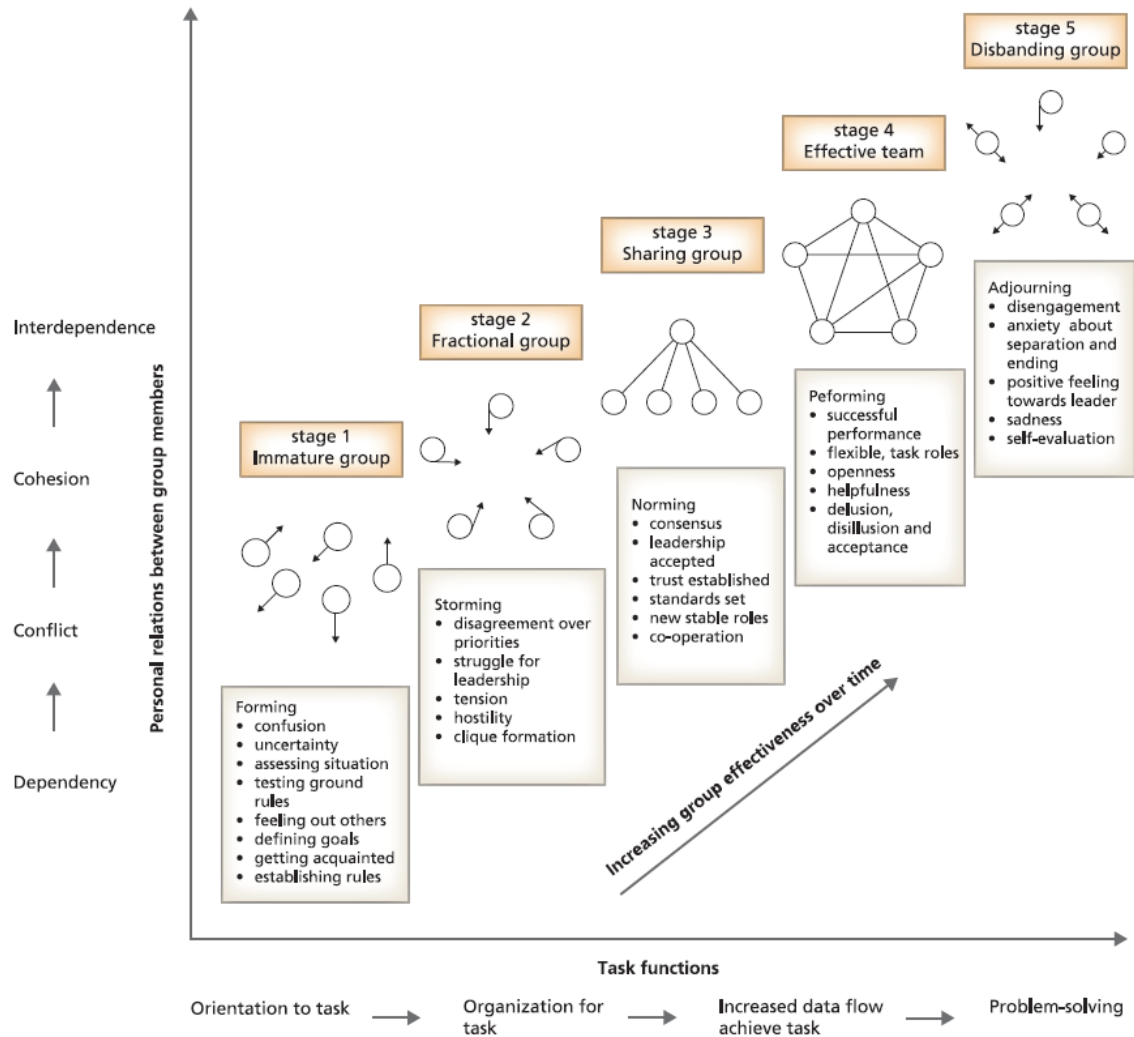
Group formation

<mark>External system</mark> broadly compares to the concept of the formal organization.

- They require individuals to **perform certain activities**; to **have certain interactions** with others; and to **have certain sentiments or feelings** towards their work.

    - For example, in a supermarket, the physical/technological/social environment is represented by the design and positioning of the checkout stations, the choice of scanning equipment, and the company's 'the customer is always right' policy. The supermarket management wants its checkout operators to scan customers' purchases (**activities**); greet them, offer to pack their bags, and say goodbye to them (**interactions**). They are also expected to have positive attitudes and feelings towards their customers and their employer (**sentiments**).

- Each of these elements with the term '**required**' (required activities, required interactions, and required sentiments) and referred to them collectively as the external system.

Vertical axis (left): Personal relations between group members

- Interdependence
- Cohesion
- Conflict
- Dependency

Horizontal axis: Task functions

Stage labels:

- stage 1 — Immature group
- stage 2 — Fractional group
- stage 3 — Sharing group
- stage 4 — Effective team
- stage 5 — Disbanding group

Diagonal arrow: Increasing group effectiveness over time

Forming
- confusion
- uncertainty
- assessing situation
- testing ground rules
- feeling out others
- defining goals
- getting acquainted
- establishing rules

Storming
- disagreement over priorities
- struggle for leadership
- tension
- hostility
- clique formation

Norming
- consensus
- leadership accepted
- trust established
- standards set
- new stable roles
- co-operation

Peforming
- successful performance
- flexible, task roles
- openness
- helpfulness
- delusion, disillusion and acceptance

Adjourning
- disengagement
- anxiety about separation and ending
- positive feeling towards leader
- sadness
- self-evaluation

Bottom sequence:

Orientation to task → Organization for task → Increased data flow achieve task → Problem-solving

Groups and teams

	Teams	Work groups
Leadership	rotating among capable members	one assigned senior individual
Goals	agreed by team discussion	set by formal leader
Work organization	decided by team members	determined by leader
Outputs	collective results achieved by members' close collaboration	individual results achieved by people working on their own
Performance	low at first as team learns how to work together, then same rate as work group	at first faster than a team, as members do not have to learn how to work with each other
Performance evaluation	by team members themselves and senior management	by formal leader and senior management
Accountability	team members hold each other accountable	group members held individually accountable by leader
Works well with	complex, challenging tasks requiring collaboration and a mix of interdependent skills	time pressured tasks requiring leader's knowledge to integrate various contributions

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Vevox questions

RECAP

- A group consists of two or more people, in face-toface interaction, each aware of his or her membership in the group, each aware of the others who belong to the group, and each aware of their positive interdependence as they strive to achieve mutual goals.

- Groups can be assigned many different tasks, many of which can be categorized under the headings of additive, conjunctive, and disjunctive.

- Formal groups can be distinguished from informal groups in terms of who creates them and the purposes that they serve.

- George Homans's theory of group formation distinguishes between background factors and required and emergent activities, interactions, and sentiments, to explain how individuals come to form groups.

- We can distinguish five stages through which groups typically proceed, which they name forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning.

- Contrast a team with a single-leader working group on the dimensions of: who runs it; who sets the goals; performance evaluation; work style; business context; speed and efficiency; primary end products; and accountability.

We can share our thoughts and ask questions ☺

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