Five Stages of Group Development

In 1965, Bruce W. Tuckman hypothesized that groups go through four stages of development during their formation, existence, and dispersal:

- *Forming,*

- *Storming,*

- *Norming,* and

- *Performing.*

On reviewing studies of his hypothesis in 1977, Tuckman decided to add a fifth and final stage of group development: *Adjourning.*

Other researchers have labeled similar stages of group development. Charrier (1974) calls them *Polite* or *Why We're Here; Bid for Power; Constructive;* and *Esprit.* Cooke and Widdis (1988) call them *Polite* or *Purpose; Power; Positive;* and *Proficient.* The figure that follows illustrates the relationships between some of these classifications.

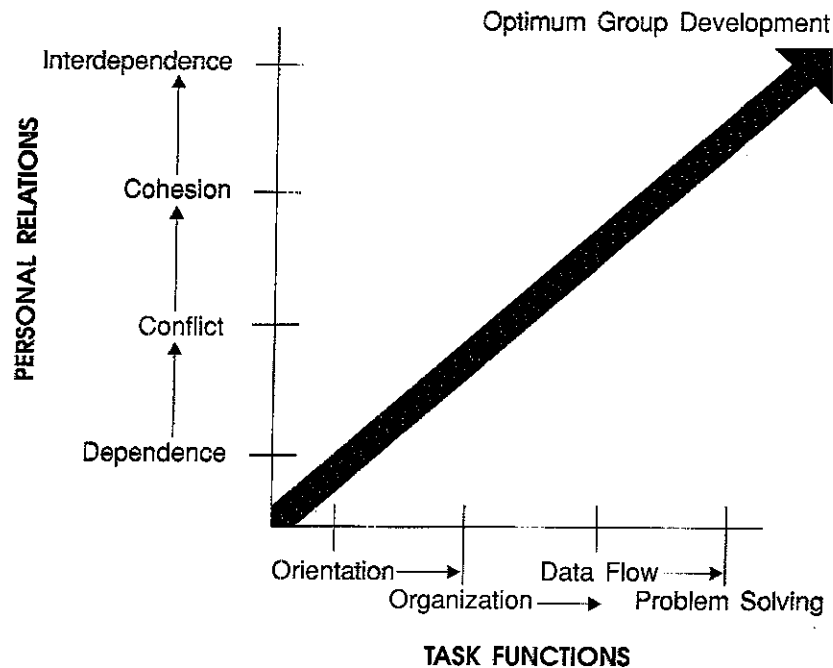| Tuckman	Charrier	Cooke & Widdis
Forming Storming Norming Performing Adjourning	Polite Why We're Here Bid for Power Constructive Esprit	Polite Purpose Power Positive Proficient

Jones (1974) depicts the model to show the four typical stages in the evolution of a group in relation to two major dimensions of personal relations and task functions. The progress along these two paths is parallel and interrelated, as shown in the figure on the next page.

The personal-relations dimension of the model encompasses all the interrelationships that people develop and sustain in the group—their feelings, expectations, commitments, assumptions, and problems with one another. The stages of personal relations correlate with the development of the identity and functions of a group from the personal orientations of individual members. The stages of task functions correlate with the progress of a group in understanding and accomplishing its work. As a group moves through the personal-relations and task-functions stages simultaneously, the progress and setbacks in one dimension influence the behavior and progress in the other:

STAGES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT

PERSONAL RELATIONS (vertical axis, bottom to top): Dependence, Conflict, Cohesion, Interdependence

Optimum Group Development

Orientation → Organization → Data Flow → Problem Solving

TASK FUNCTIONS

Stages Are Sequential and Developmental

The stages of group development are sequential and developmental. A group will proceed through these five stages only as far as its members are willing to grow. Group cohesiveness seems to depend on how well group members can relate in the same phase at the same time. Each member must be prepared to give up something at each step in order to make the group move to the next stage. The timing of each will depend on the nature of the group, the members, and the leadership of the group. Issues and concerns must be resolved in each stage before the group can move on. If the group is not able to resolve such issues, the dominant behavior will become either apathy or conflict, and group disintegration will result.

Stage 1: Forming

In the *Forming* stage, personal relations are characterized by dependence. Group members rely on safe, patterned behavior and look to the group leader for guidance and direction. Group members have a desire for acceptance by the group and a need to be sure that the group is safe. They set about gathering impressions and data about the similarities and differences among them and forming preferences for future subgrouping. Rules of behavior seem to be to keep things simple and avoid controversy. Serious topics and feelings are avoided.

The major task functions also concern orientation. Members attempt to become oriented to the task as well as to one another. Discussion centers around defining the scope of the task, how to approach it, and similar concerns.

Io giow fiom this stage to the next, each membei must relinquish the comfort of nonthreatening topics and risk the possibility of conflict

Stage 2: Storming

The next stage, which Iuckman calls *Storming,* is characterized by competition and conflict in the personal-relations dimension and organization in the task-functions dimension. As the group members attempt to organize foi the task, conflict inevitably results in their personal relations. Individuals have to bend and mold their feelings, ideas, attitudes, and beliefs to suit the group organization. Because of fear of exposure oi weakness oi fear of failure at tasks, there will be an increased desire for structure oi clarification and commitment to structure. Although conflicts may oi may not surface as group issues, they do exist. Questions will arise about who is going to be responsible foi what, what the rules are, what the reward system is, and what the criteria foi evaluation are. These reflect conflicts ovei leadership, structure, power, and authority. Ihere may be wide swings in members' behavior based on emerging issues of competition and hostilities. Because of the discomfort generated during this stage, some members may remain completely silent while others attempt to dominate

In ordei to piogress to the next stage, group members must move from a "testing and proving" mentality to a problem-solving mentality. The most important trait in helping groups to move on to the next stage seems to be the ability to listen.

Stage 3: Norming

In Tuckman's *Norming* stage, interpersonal relations are characterized by cohesion. Group members are engaged in active acknowledgment of all members' contributions, community building and maintenance, and solving of group issues. Members are willing to change their preconceived ideas oi opinions on the basis of facts presented by other members, and they actively ask questions of one another. Leadership is shared, and cliques dissolve. When members begin to know—and identify with—one another, the level of trust in their personal relations contributes to the development of group cohesion. It is during this stage of development (assuming that the group gets this fai) that people begin to experience a sense of groupness and a feeling of catharsis at having resolved interpersonal conflicts

The major task function of stage thiee is the data flow between group members; they share feelings and ideas, solicit and give feedback to one another, and explore actions related to the task. Creativity is high. If this stage of data flow and cohesion is attained by the group members, their interactions are characterized by openness and sharing of information on both a personal and task level. They feel good about being part of an effective gioup

The major diawback of the noiming stage is that members may begin to feai the inevitable future bieakup of the group; they may iesist change of any sort.

Stage 4: Performing

The *Performing* stage is not reached by all groups If group members are able to evolve to stage four, their capacity, range, and depth of personal relations expand to true interdependence In this stage, people can work singly, in subgroups, or as a total unit with equal facility Their roles and authorities dynamically adjust to the changing needs of the group and individuals Stage four is marked by interdependence in personal relations and problem solving in the realm of task functions By now, the group should be most productive Individual members have become self-assuring, and the need for group approval is past Members are both highly task oriented and highly people oriented There is unity: group identity is complete, group morale is high, and group loyalty is intense The task function becomes genuine problem solving, leading toward optimal solutions and optimum group development There is support for experimentation in solving problems and an emphasis on achievement The overall goal is productivity through problem solving and work

Stage 5: Adjourning

Tuckman's final stage, *Adjourning*, involves the termination of task behaviors and disengagement from relationships A planned conclusion usually includes recognition for participation and achievement and an opportunity for members to say personal goodbyes Concluding a group can create some apprehension—in effect, a minor crisis The termination of the group is a regressive movement from giving up control to giving up inclusion in the group The most effective interventions in this stage are those that facilitate task termination and the disengagement process

Applications of the Model

Facilitators must be sensitive to the needs of group members in various stages of group development By referring to this model, a facilitator can gain some insight into the inevitable stages through which a group must pass before attaining the benefits of stage four This insight is useful both in planning group-learning situations and for monitoring a group's progress while it is in session

As a tool to facilitate group communication and development, the model is most effective at stage three of a group's development At this point, the members have experienced stages one and two and are in a receptive mode to internalize the implications of stage four The model provides them with a goal they can visualize and work toward Paying earnest attention to strategies for reaching stage four can facilitate the movement to that stage

If the concepts of the model are presented when a group is in stage one, they may fall on deaf ears, receiving only polite attention If presented in stage two, the concepts become food for conflicts or are ground into oblivion by the process of organization At stage four, the model is unnecessary

(left margin, vertical text) STAGES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT

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Tuckman

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