

# **Group Dynamics**

PM 830

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A summary of Chapter readings from:

Johnson, David and Frank Johnson. Joining Together: Group Theory and Group Skills.  
Allyn and Bacon, 2003.

**Christopher J. Kinner**

## Chapter 1: Group Dynamics

### **Humans are Small Group Beings**

Highly sophisticated and cooperative efforts characterized by social organization, reach goals that a strong individual cannot meet alone

“no man is an island, entire of itself.” --John Donne

### **We Live in Groups**

Family, work, school – Living in a group whether intentional or ubiquitous we interact in groups.

### **Groups and the Quality of Life**

Effectiveness of our groups impacts the quality of our lives.

- Maintains and improves family life
- Effective business and industries
- Central to education
- Long term maintenance of psychological health

When it comes to small group functioning, knowledge can give you power.

### **How to Create an Effective Small Group**

1. Establish clear goals:
  - That create positive interdependence
  - And evoke a high level of commitment from each member
2. Establish effective communication
  - Group members communicate ideas and feelings
3. Ensure leadership and participation are distributed among all group members
4. Ensure use of power is distributed among group members
  - Watch patterns of influence
5. Match decision-making procedures with situational needs
6. Engage in controversy – challenge conclusions
  - Reasoning
  - Promote creative decision making
  - Creative problem solving
7. Face conflicts and resolve them in constructive ways

### **The Nature of Groups**

“It takes two flints to make a fire.” – Louisa May Alcott

Aggregate – Collection of people in the same general place and time, but nothing in common (people on a street corner).

Group Orientation – Focuses on group over individual

Individualistic Orientation – Focuses on individual over group

### **Creating Productive Groups**

- ★ Pseudogroup – Individuals assigned to work together but have no interest in doing so.
- ★ Traditional Work Group – Individuals assigned to work together and accept this.
- ★ Effective Group – More than the sum of its parts. Group members work together to maximize their own and each others success! (on this project)
- ★ High Performance Group – Not just focused as a group on this project, but challenge each other to maximize personal performance.

### **Development of Groups Over Time**

1. Defining and structuring procedures
2. Conforming to procedures and getting acquainted
3. Recognizing mutuality and building trust
4. Rebelling and differentiating
5. Committing to and taking ownership of the goals, procedures and other members
6. Functioning maturely and productively
7. Terminating

### **Length of Stages**

Group Dynamics – observing the actions of the group.

## Chapter 2: Experiential Learning

### Procedural Learning:

- Learn Concepts
  - Concepts become group skills
  - Practice group skills
  - Perfect skills (through repeated practice)
  - Master group skills
- \* Understand and practice group dynamics  
\* Differs from factual learning as you are involved
- Group Skills --- <You can impact> ---Group Dynamics

### Action Theories

- In a given situation if we do X then Y will result.

### Gaining Expertise through Experiential Learning

1. Information and knowledge – not enough to effect change.
2. Firsthand experience not enough to bring knowledge.
3. More than new behavior to result in permanent change.

### Principles (ones to remember) to Effect Change

1. Effective experiential learning changes attitudes, values, perceptions and behavioral patterns.
2. People believe more strongly in knowledge they have discovered.
3. Learning is more effective when it is done actively.
4. Behavior changes will be temporary unless attitudes underlying them are changed.
5. The more supportive (accepting and caring) environment the more likely a person is to experiment with new action theories.
6. Both person and social environment need to change to permanently change behaviors.
7. It is easier to change and individual's behavior in a group than in an individual context.

### Learning Group Skills

Group skills are learned

- Acquiring a new skill requires practice!

### Experiential learning and motivation

- Set goals that test your abilities  
>not too high and not too low<

### Role Playing

Vital training tool

- ★ Three things to remember:
  1. Help participants get into their roles (get them emotionally involved).
  2. Discuss role play when finished.
  3. Make sure everyone is “out of their role.”

**Learning to Be a Participant Observer**

Learn group processing ability.

- ★ Receive feedback, analyze and reflect
- ★ Set improvement goals – celebrate!

Something used like this to analyze weekly staff meetings?  
(Use Chart from pg 59)

Page 62 – Design a skill-training session

- Most leaders have not learned how to provide “skilled feedback.”
- Most groups are never “measured” through evaluation to see how successful it was in achieving its goals.

The coordinator’s knowledge skills and needs (does he/she have)

- Knowledge (empirically validated)
- Experience (in learning experientially)
- Clear explanations (ability to give)
- Self awareness (deal productively with own needs)

These are good gauges of an individual’s maturity and should be looked for by church leadership!

### Chapter 3: Group Goals, Social Interdependence and Trust

Groups form for a cooperative purpose.

- Operational goals specified and measured
- Cooperative interdependence is structured among group members

★ What is a goal?

- A group goal is a future state of affairs desired by enough members of a group to motivate the group to work towards its achievement.

★ A joint vision!

- Vision – an ideal and unique image of the future.

Goals can be cold, lifeless – Vision is warm, alive!

Start with goals –

“If a man does not know to which part he is sailing, no wind is favorable” –  
Seneca.

Make the goals clear!

- Make them useful

Operational goals – clear and identifiable

Non-Operational goals – abstract and ambiguous

#### **Group goals and level of aspiration**

LOA – compromise between ideal goals and realistic expectations (i.e. where are you now and where can you get to?)

#### **Hidden Agendas**

Personal goals:

- Homogeneous – Like
- Heterogeneous – Not Like

Handling them:

1. Thoroughly discuss group goals
2. Groups work on two level groups goals – individuals goals and motives
3. Bring hidden agendas to surface in the appropriate manner
4. Do not scold or pressure members when hidden agendas recognized
5. Evaluate the ability of the group to deal with the hidden agenda – effectively.

#### **Effective Goal Setting**

- Survey – feedback method
- Critical path method

Interdependence and trust

- Cooperation – working together
- Competition – working against each other
- Individualism – personal effort

**Quality of Relationships**

- Caring and committed relationships are not a luxury; they are a necessity.
- Productivity of the group brings cohesiveness.
- We instead of ME!

Promotive Interaction

- Encourage People
  - ★ Effective assistance
  - ★ Provide resources
  - ★ Quality feedback
  - ★ Challenge conclusions (positively)
  - ★ Advocate positive efforts
  - ★ Influence efforts to reach goals
  - ★ Be trustworthy
  - ★ Motivate for group benefit
  - ★ Reduce stress
- Develop and improve social skills.
  - ★ Benefits to group members (of participating in your group)

## Chapter 4: Communication within Groups

### **Group Communication**

#### ➤ Effective Communication

- Effective communication when receiver interprets message in the same way sender gives it!
- Multi-person exchange – sender to receivers

Considerable complexity in this exchange!

### **Sending Effective Messages (things to remember):**

1. Clearly own your message (I – personal pronoun)
2. Make your messages complete and specific
3. Make verbal and non-verbal message congruent
4. Be redundant
5. Ask for feedback concerning the way your message is being read
6. Make message appropriate to the users frame of reference
7. Communicate your feelings by name, action, figure of speech
8. Describe others behavior without elevating or interpreting

### **Receiving Messages Effectively**

1. Paraphrase accurately and non-evaluative the content of the message.
2. Describe what you perceive are the sender's feelings.
3. State your interpretation of the sender's message (clarify)

Communication in a problem solving group

- Each member is crucial to the success of this group's purpose. Each member has a piece of the solution.

Gatekeeper – Translates and interprets messages, information and new developments to group mates.

*Is there a gatekeeper?*

Communication Networks – Paths of communication among members of a group or organization. Influence leadership development and the organization of groups.

Cooperation vs. Competition

- ★ Cooperation is most effective
- ★ Competition breeds defensive communication

## Chapter 5: Leadership

Leadership -- The process through which leaders exert such influence on other group members.

Leadership skills -- Sum total of your ability to help the group achieve its goals and maintain an effective working relationship among members.

Leadership skills can be learned – practice is needed.

Trait theories of leadership

- Some are born leaders

General traits of leaders:

1. Intelligence (not always)
2. Personal adjustment
  - ★ Correlate to leadership

Leaders are better adjusted psychologically than non leaders – (Hitler)???

Leaders can:

- Organize cooperative effort
- Take personal responsibility
- Persistence in pursuit of goals
- Exercise initiative in social situations
- Self confidence
- Ability to accept consequences of group
- Absorb interpersonal stress
- Ability to tolerate frustration

Problems in defining a good leader:

1. Many leadership traits (too many to track)
2. Differing traits for differing conditions
3. Great leaders identified after the fact
4. Matching the spirit of the times and a great leader may be what is required

### Charisma

- Inspiring others
- Not part of any specific personality type.

Charismatic leaders have:

- A. Power of vision
- B. Practical leadership

Machiavellian Leadership

- A. People are weak, fallible and gullible
- B. Others are impersonal objects
- C. One should manipulate others to achieve ones ends

### Leadership Styles

Autocratic – Dictate orders

Democratic – Set policies through cooperation

Laissez Faire – Do not participate

Influence approach to leadership – [followers to leaders; reciprocal roles]

Leadership – Is actions performed by many; not a position held by one!

Situational Leadership – Delegating, participating, selling, telling

Organizational Leadership – Staying the same not an option!

1. Challenge status quo
2. Inspire a clear mutual vision
3. Empower members through cooperative teamwork
4. Lead by example
5. Encourage the hearts (of members)

## Chapter 6: Using Power

“The price of greatness is responsibility.” – Winston Churchill

### **Power is a Basic Aspect of Social Life**

-- Constructive and destructive --

Use of power:

- Self Benefit – others benefit
- Agreement of others – non-agreement

Destructive → Self Benefit → Forcing Others

### **Power Exists in Relationships**

Power in relationships, not individuals.

1. Power is inevitable
2. Use of power is essential to group functioning
3. Use of power is dynamic
4. Power is distributed among all group members

### **Power Can be Used:**

In a competitive context

- One power against another – reactance
- Use of coercive power – escalates as it encounters resistance

In a cooperative context

- Maximizes joint benefits and enhances effectiveness
- Expandable, sharable, bi-directional, non coercive
- Inductability – open to influence

### **Mobilizing Power to Achieve Goals**

1. Determine goals
2. Determine relevant resources
3. Determining your needed coalitions
4. Negotiating mutual support contracts
5. Implementing the contracts

Approaches to power...

1. Power and persuasion
2. Social dominance
3. Individual vs. relationship

### **Bases of Power**

1. Social exchange theory – (social currency)
2. Reward power – over other group members
3. Legitimate power – position in group; elected leader
4. Referent power – group members want to be like you
5. Expert power – expert, in skills or competency
6. Informational power – you have information and resources the group needs

Unequal power in groups:

- High Power vs. Low Power (members)
- Status and power
- Power stereotyping theory → those in high power positions stereotype low power
- Metamorphic effect of low power → having low power can cause passivity

Power → Conflict → Revenge

- ★ Low power feels mistreated

Indirect Power → Conformity → Compliance

## Chapter 7: Decision Making

Individual vs. Group Decision making

- ★ Which is more effective?

Process Gain – interaction among members results in ideas, insights and strategies that no one member had previously thought of.

1. Groups provide higher motivation to achieve
2. Groups make riskier decisions than individuals
3. Involvement in group eases implementation of decision

Group Polarization → Risky Shift

Group Productivity → Riskier stones in jar  
Group made higher estimate!

Methods of Decision Making:

1. Rely on leader
2. Postpone making decision
3. Let expert make decision
4. Poll all members – choose most prolific answer
5. Flip a coin
6. Rely on leader
7. Elect a qualified committee to decide
8. Take a vote, majority rules
9. Find out what other groups have done
10. Group consensus – all agree on what group should do

### Factors Hindering Group Decision Making

- Lack of group maturity
- Uncritically giving one's dominant response
- Social loafing – reduction in individual effort when working in a group
- Free Riding – benefiting from the work of other group members
- Motivation losses due to perceived inequity
- Defensive avoidance and group think
- Conflicting goals of group members
- Egocentrism of group members
- Lack of sufficient heterogeneity
- Interference or production blocking
- Inappropriate group size
- Premature closure and dissonance reduction – reaching decision too quietly
- Lack of relevant skills among members
- Lack of individual incentives for and barriers to contributing

**Considered and Thoughtful Decision Making (includes):**

- Identifying and defining the problem or issue
- Gathering information
- Formulating and considering alternative solutions
- Force field analysis
- Vigilant analysis
- (Recognizing) Barriers
- Deciding on a solution
- Presenting the recommendation to the organization
- Evaluating the extent and success of implementation

## **Chapter 8: Controversy and Creativity**

### **Deliberate Discourse**

1. Research and prepare a position
2. Present and advocate their position
3. Engage in an open discussion
4. Reverse perspectives
5. Reach a decision through consensus on which course of action to implement

Concurrence Seeking – members of group inhibit discussion to avoid disagreements or arguments; emphasize agreement and avoid appraisal of alternative ideas and a course of action.

### **Avoidance of Controversy**

- Few can accept controversy and utilize it effectively
- Many lack skills to stimulate and manage controversy
- Discussion of conflicting ideas not a familiar identity

.....Caused by

- Fear of controversy
- Ignorance - how to engage in controversy
- Lack of training – that controversy can be productive

“When two men in a business always agree one of them is unnecessary.” – William Wrigly, Jr.

### **Outcomes of Controversy**

- Productivity (increased)
- Quality of decision making (improved)
- Task involvement (greater input)
- Interpersonal relationships strengthened
- Improved psychological health and social competence

### **Process of Controversy**

“Difference of opinion leads to inquiry, and inquiry to truth.” – Thomas Jefferson

1. Individuals derive initial conclusions
2. They share these conclusions to the group
3. Then confronted by the conclusions of others
4. Uncertainty of their views
5. Uncertainty brings divergent attention and stimulates thought
6. Reconceptions – novel solutions and decisions that are quantitatively better emerge

### **Constructiveness of Controversy**

- Cooperative goal structure

#### Successful controversy

1. Accurate communication
2. Supportive climate
3. Controversy must be valued
4. Deal with feelings and ideas
5. Constructive management
6. Find similarities and differences in controversy

#### Skilled disagreement (noted by those who):

- Perspective taking
- Differentiation of positions (and integration)

#### Guidelines for Constructive Controversy:

1. Emphasize common need to make the best possible decision
2. Look for opportunities to engage in controversy
3. Prepare the best possible case for your position
4. Advocate your position, but with an open mind
5. Encourage others to advocate their position
6. Understand and challenge opposing ideas

### **Creativity** → is a process

1. Problem – motivation to repair
2. Knowledge and resources gathered (for problem solving)
3. Cooperative context for the group
4. Group needs to support multiple perspectives
5. Incubation period – frustration
6. New unique solution to the problem – testing

#### Open vs. Closed Belief System

- Openness → Brainstorming!  
More creative conclusions reached.

## Chapter 9: Managing Conflict of Interests

### The Conflict Positive Group

1. Understand nature of conflicts and interests
2. Use strategies to manage conflict of interest
3. Understand the nature of distribution and interrogative negotiations
4. Utilize steps for interrogative negotiations
5. Understand the nature of inter-group conflict
6. Know how to apply constructive procedures to inter-group conflict

### The Conflict Negative Group

- Sees conflict as the problem
- Avoids, suppresses, contains, conflict
- No value in conflict – destructive
- Create only anxiety and defensiveness
- Individuals simply want to “win”

### Conflicts can be:

- Destructive
  - Destroy group effectiveness
  - Sabotage work
  - Hurt relationships
- Constructive
  - Benefits all in group
  - Strengthens relationships
  - Increases ability to resolve future conflicts

### Conflict Strategies (Should):

1. Reach agreement that satisfies our needs and meets our goals.
2. Maintain an appropriate relationship with the other person.

### What are you like?

1. The Owl (problem solving negotiations)
  - Value goals and relationships
  - Reveal your underlying interests (risky if others are not open)
2. Teddy Bear (smoothing)
  - Relationships important
  - Own goals not important
3. The Shark (forcing win-lose negotiations)
  - Overpower opponents to win
  - Goal important, relationship not
4. The Fox (compromising)
  - Moderately concerned with goals and relationships
  - Compromising is often used
5. The Turtle (withdrawing)
  - Avoid conflicts
  - Neither goal nor relationship is important

### Occurrence of Conflicts

Internal Barriers – what's inside you that keeps you from conflict

External Barriers – group conditions that limit conflict

Can occur at a triggering event.

Can occur at an entry state.

- Dealing constructively with the conflict

### Two types of negotiations

#### 1. Distributive Negotiations

- ★ Maximize your outcomes while minimizing others

#### 2. Integrative Negotiations

- ★ Maximize joint benefits

Steps in integrative negotiations:

1. Describe what you want
2. Describe your feelings
3. Exchange reasons for positions
4. Understand other perspectives
5. Invent options for mutual gain
6. Reach a wise agreement

Try, Try again – this takes practice to be successful

## Chapter 11: Learning and Discussion Groups

### Cooperative Learning

- Importance of a learning partner.

- ★ Schools capitalize on utilizing the benefits of group learning.

Teaching:

- Social interdependence (working together)
- Positive interdependence (cooperation)
- Negative interdependence (competition)
- Social independence (growth)

Learning Types:

1. Cooperative Learning (small groups)
2. Competitive Learning (earn higher grade)
3. Individualistic Learning (learning goals unrelated)

### Preinstructional Decisions

- Defining instructional objectives
- Deciding on size of group
  - ★ Group size depends on “**TEAM**”
    - T** = Time limits
    - E** = students Experience in working in groups
    - A** = students Age
    - M** = Materials and equipment available
- Assigning students to groups
- Working to ensure interdependence (assigning roles)
- Arranging the room
- Planning instructional materials

Structuring the task (develop a cooperative structure)

- Explain the academic task
- Explain the criteria for success
- Set structure for positive interdependence
  - Establish mutual or joint goals
  - Establish rewards for joint success
- Set individual accountability
- Structure inter-group cooperation
- Specify desired behaviors

### Observing Behavior and Evaluating the Process and Interaction

How well did the group function?

1. Gather feedback
2. Ask for reflection
3. Set improvement goals
4. Celebrate the groups successes

**Using Informal Cooperative Learning**

- ★ Introductory focused discussions
- ★ Intermittent focused discussions
- ★ Closure focused discussion

Use in business situation when group training and coaching (page 506)