

GROUP COHESIVENESS: A DYNAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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The purpose of the present article is to promote a tentative theoretical model that may account for the transformation of socioemotional group cohesiveness into instrumental group cohesiveness and vice versa, as a result of external or internal stimuli operating on the group. This model further suggests that the well-established typology of group cohesiveness types into instrumental versus socioemotional is in essence a result of the static non-longitudinal approach to group processes research. On the contrary, a dynamic perspective to group cohesiveness types as proposed by the model in this article may be more fruitful and appropriate to research of group cohesiveness.

In a broad, theoretical scope, we may conceptualize the group in terms of a system. We assert that such a conceptual approach, borrowing its basic concepts and tenets from systems theory, seems most fruitful for structural analysis of groups. Katz and Kahn (1966), among the first to develop systems theory, suggested that all systems are based on energetic input/output structures, one of whose functions is the assurance of resources for activation of the system. Their activity is cyclical, because in general the input is aimed at making resources available (affording resources) for the operation of intrasystem processes which are accompanied by certain products which are "exported" out of the system. However, the end-products are in part absorbed by the system itself, as components of new input to restore the activation. Consequently, a non-cyclical activity pattern cannot constitute an integral part of a system which is based on the idea of cycles and on recurrent activation.

In addition, another salient characteristic which typifies systems is engagement in an active, constant, and tremendous struggle with external environmental forces. Each system undergoes a dynamic process of adaptation while facing its ever-changing environment. The components of the system are required to exert a concerted effort to overcome environmental pressures; thereby the entire system may sometimes have to redefine its goals. Finally, every system also has a definite boundary which differentiates between it and the surrounding environment. Accordingly, all reciprocal processes between the system and its environment are dependent on the degree to which this boundary is penetrable.

Yet, it is plausible to treat each group as a system as well. Accordingly, we may adopt the conceptual perspective of systems theory, and, relying on its above-mentioned core characteristics, examine the functional and constitutional changes that a group undergoes over a period of time.

In the literature dealing with groups we find some evidence, albeit dispersed, that may support our approach. Here we will attempt to examine them in more detail. Wolfe (1970), for instance, argues that research of groups requires application of the "structural time" approach, relying on the distinction of phases in the creation of "links". In his opinion, it must never be assumed that any fraction of

the network of interpersonal links which develop between individuals in the group framework is liable to remain invariant over a period of time. Moreover, even the single link between two individuals, as a constituent of a set, cannot be considered *invariant* through time.

The most distinctive central assumption of his article views each link, from the moment of its inception, as subject to constant development under the influence of the experiences which the two individuals in the interaction undergo. These experiences are liable to force the individuals to adapt their link to the situation, and may also make redefinition of goals necessary.

The innovation in Wolfe's thesis is the conception that it is possible to distinguish between phases along a continuum of changes. Turner (1966) supports Wolfe's approach in his claim that events and processes in the group's external environment are likely to leave their mark on the behavior patterns of its constituent individuals. For demonstration of this thesis, we may turn to Russo (1967), who considers changes in the personal space and group territory as important factors determining group behavior. In his study, changes in the seating arrangements of the individuals in the research groups led to alterations in communication patterns. Changes in the personal space or in group territory may be caused by pressures operated by individuals or groups surrounding the subject group or by physical changes requiring re-evaluation of spatial range. According to Russo, as well as Mehrabian and Diamond (1971), it can be predicted that apparently irrelevant events may be characterized by great significance, because their influence is reflected in a continuum of changes in the group constitution (such as changes in communication patterns or adaptation to actual situational circumstances). Furthermore, following Dion (1979) the intensity and frequency of intergroup conflicts may also affect the group constitution. In addition to those mentioned above, other external stimuli have been examined in the context of intergroup implications, such as those stemming from the tasks performed by members of a group.

For example, Roby and Lanzetta (1968) as well as Collins and Guetzkow (1964) emphasize the influence of the characteristics of the tasks on the development of group behavior. Some of the tasks are likely to constitute, for instance, obstacles to their achievement owing to attributes inherent in them or in the task environment; consequently they induce frictions on the socio-emotional interpersonal level of interaction. As might be noted, this view, advanced by the researchers cited above, can be seen as a very significant theoretical breakthrough. Moreover, this view of the implications of a task's attributes challenges the classical approach which regarded socio-emotional interpersonal relationships as a separate unit, isolated from the influence of events in the task environment.

In accordance with the approach of both Roby and Lanzetta and Collins and Guetzkow, it can be hypothesized that obstacles encountered during task performance, or alternatively, changes in the nature of the tasks performed by the group, may lead to internal structural changes even in groups characterized by a socio-emotional constitution. The changes will be observed as transformations in the nature of the interpersonal relationships. It would appear, then, that alterations in the external situation affect the group since they act as inputs into the group system. Furthermore, as such, they may urge redefinition of goals because they constitute the code which directs the homeostasis. Consequently, the internal activity patterns, as well as the output of the system will certainly be altered.

Shaw (1964) shows this same course of thought in his discussion of communicative interaction in the group. He points out that effective coping with a task requires arrangement of the intragroup communicative system according to the nature of the task. Therefore, variation of external goals requires alteration of internal activity patterns. His article concludes that there is a general consensus of researchers concerning the effectiveness of centralized communication networks for performance of simple assignments, and of decentralized ones for complicated assignments. A good deal of support for this generalization is found in Collins (1970) and in Shaw (1976). Although they deal with the issue from a slightly different aspect, Faucheux and Moscovici (1960) also agree; their findings

show that optimal goal-pursuit by the group necessitates the selection of a suitable communicative structure. Thus, the hypothesis that can immediately be drawn supports the thesis posited in the present article, that a change in the nature of tasks and goals is accompanied by parallel changes in interpersonal communication patterns.

Regarding leadership, it is sufficient to cite Shaw (1976), who supports our approach to the constitution of groups: "The kinds of leadership abilities that are required for effective group action vary with the type of task." (p.275)

Furthermore, Stogdill (1974), claims that a functional dependence exists between the nature of leadership and group goals. The leader evolves from the group through pressure exerted on it to tackle given pressures inherent in the external environment. The leader also fulfills the function of a structural crystallizer of the group and as a catalyst of intergroup processes leading to the development of interpersonal links or a coordinator and mediator of activities. while striving to fulfill particular functions. Thus, it seems plausible to assert that in a group designed essentially to provide a suitable framework for interactive processes, aimed at supplying socio-emotional satisfactions for its individual members, the pattern of leadership which will evolve will be essentially different from that in a group committed to attainment of specific goals.

In this context, we can rely on the implications of Bales' (1955) article, according to which we must conclude that leadership suitable for a group of socioemotional structure (socio-emotional cohesiveness) is not necessarily suitable for a situation requiring organization for goal attainment or task performance. Once again, Stogdill (1974) supports this assertion. He claims that "person-oriented" leaders see their central function as nurturing a framework which will enhance socio-emotional satisfactions, but do not necessarily contribute to group productivity. On the other hand, "task-oriented" leaders tend to suppress socio-emotional satisfaction and emphasize the tasks that face the group.

In sum, Stogdill concludes that the existence of the interaction between the style of leadership (the type of leader) and the basic constitution of the group (socio-emotional or instrumental) is indubitable. This conclusion is further strengthened by Hare (1976) as well as by Katz and Kahn (1966). The theoretical contributions, supported by empirical observation, form a master model which presents the concept of "group" as a dynamic entity both in terms of the constitutional aspect (essentially interpersonal interaction, communication flow, and typical leadership patterns) and of internal goals which change frequently in response to contextual-environment stimuli to adapt to new situations (for further evidence see also Lipshitz and Sherwood, 1978). However, we cannot ignore Homans' (1950) article, which emphasizes that there are also group behaviors that emerge in response to activity, interactions or sentiments in the internal group structure rather than to processes or stimuli originating in the external environment.

In sum, our discussion until now crystallizes in conceptualization of the group as a dynamic entity. Within this context, Shaw's (1976) conclusive remarks deserve attention, as he supports the view of group constitutions as dynamic: "Group formation does not stop with the affiliation of members. The group develops over a moderately long period and probably never reaches a completely stable state." (Shaw, 1976:97) - We will now attempt to examine the contribution of the dynamic approach in the context of two different types of cohesiveness. In accordance with factors at the basis of their formation, the groups can be distinguished by (a) cohesiveness on a socio-emotional basis, that is, groups in which affiliation is focused on the central aspiration to derive emotional satisfaction from participation in the group, or (b) instrumental cohesiveness, that is, groups in which affiliation is based on task-goal orientation. Moreover, it can be argued that the latter type of groups generally crystallize as a result of mutual dependency between individuals who group together for the purpose of attaining goals which cannot be attained effectively outside of the group context. (For a detailed discussion of the attributes and behavioral consequences of these types of cohesiveness, see Tziner, 1982).

Let us assert that each type of cohesiveness can be measured on a continuum, since different levels of cohesiveness prevail in different groups. Now, focusing on the continuum of instrumental cohesiveness, we can typify it at one extreme as a group entity with no formed structure. The common structure for the affiliated individuals is a certain interest, a common orientation. Mayer (1966) posits that this type of group is ego-centered, and that, moreover, this ego is not necessarily a real person but may rather be a general orientation or interest which motivates the individuals to operate together for the attainment of goals. In such a situation, existence of the group is dependent on the relevant task orientations. The interactions between the individuals are carried out on a level relevant to activities directed towards attainment of the goals. The leadership patterns and communicative structure are determined in accordance with the requirements of the goals. Taken to the extreme, this type of group can be viewed as constituted of exclusively situational characteristics, such as the ideal types of bureaucratic organizations according to the Weberian model. In these organizations, the reciprocal relations are completely formal and alienation is almost absolute; the relationships between individuals are impersonal, on a completely rational and instrumental basis, determined by the nature of the tasks and goals performed.

At the other extreme of the continuum we locate a collection of individuals which, as stated by Wolfe (1970) grouped together initially around a purely economic, social, or political orientation (an egocentric network) and, in time, through instrumental interactions, developed interpersonal lateral relations as well. However, it must not be overlooked that the dominant basis still remains the instrumental orientation (for a further support see Terborg *et al.*, 1976).

The conceptualization may be also exemplified by the Society of Jesus, which, characterized by minimization of connections with the outside world, exhibits expressive relations between the monks within the group, and was former under the control and regulation of the father - monk according to the model of *gemeinschaft*. However, the Society of Jesus is involved primarily in instrumental activities; all personal resources and interests are devoted to attainment of the group goals - success in religious missionaryism. This claim can be reinforced by the citation from Coser (1974): "The Jesuit was an obedient soldier linked to comrades in arms owing total obedience to his hierarchical superiors and totally engaged in apostolic and missionary crusade to save souls in the service to the Church Militant." (p. 125)

It seems that, even when lateral ties of an expressive nature are created between individuals, the dominant component is still instrumental. In this case the group constitution is dependent on situational tasks and motives frequently altered by the external environment. The dependence is not absolute, because mutual relations are also created beyond those required by the task-goal orientation.

The expressive (socio-emotional) continuum is similar - or even parallel - to the instrumental continuum. At one extreme, we distinguish groups characterized by a mixture of expressive and instrumental relations in which the expressive element is dominant. We can take as an example a group of people organized for playing bridge on a set day of the week who, in the course of developing activities, develop close and friendly relationships. The intimate relations become focal, while the bridge game becomes a secondary goal, although it is *not* completely eliminated.

At the other extreme of the continuum is the type of group such as the Society of Jesus, for example, which is completely cut off from the external environment, but which initially crystallized on the basis of exclusively expressive relations. The ideal of this type would be a group whose goals are not influenced by the external environment, and the existence of which is not dependent on time or environments (for example, the Society of Friends - Quakers, as in Vann, 1969).

In summary, the theoretical model proposed in the present article as a basis for thorough study of the subject of group cohesiveness assumes that expressive and instrumental cohesiveness should not be treated in static terms, that is, as extremes of one continuum including the entire range of types of groups, characterized

by varying levels of instrumental and expressive components. (Some recent cues to that contention may be found elsewhere, O'Connor, 1980.)

From the dynamic aspect, these are differential and orthogonal continua. On each continuum we can see ceaseless dynamic processes caused by situational changes in the environment or within the system.

This changing is followed by changes in the intensiveness and the essence of the basic components of the group constitution - interactions between the individuals, communication patterns and channels, leadership structure, and goals. Accordingly, it can be expected that individuals will join a certain group, others will leave it; interactive and communicative relations between individuals will develop and others will be discontinued; the leadership system effective in a given situation will become dysfunctional in a new one, and be replaced by an alternative system, with alternative goals.

Therefore, adapting this approach to the context of group cohesiveness, it can be hypothesized that in a diachronic view changes in group constitution will be identified along the continuum of expressiveness or instrumentalism, two-directionally. (From the perspective of an overview, a certain group might initially be located at one end of the continuum, especially if a type of group is designed to be located at one extreme, and gradually change, until it is characteristic of the other extreme.)

Moreover, it is hypothesized that there may be transitions between the two continua; for instance, a group of the socio-emotional type, affected by situational circumstances, may undergo metamorphosis until it is eventually characterized primarily by elements associated with the instrumental type. This may occur in the opposite direction as well. If socio-emotional links between individuals are limited to task-oriented events, and the individuals' values do not oppose achievement, relationships will develop between these individuals that are basically instrumental (task-oriented).

Similarly, if the individuals in a certain group were brought together on the basis of a common goal - that is, dominantly on an instrumental basis - but the group is open and the tasks are successfully performed, lateral ties will develop which will endure even in the absence of goals; that is, they will become socioemotional ties.

Diachronic observation of groups' members' verbal and behavioral interactions, as well as of group's related internal and external processes may be the most suitable tools for identification of the forediscussed metamorphic transformations.

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