Models of Small Group Development
Chapter 5

Group Development
Life span approach
Groups have a beginning, a growing stage, and an ending

Group Development
The exploration of events
Groups experience multiple events (some of which happen simultaneously) that impact their developmental process
Group Development

Factors influence group development

History
Members build a group history of working together

Group Development

Group maturity
The ability and willingness a group possesses as it moves through the developmental process

Ability
Describes a group's collective knowledge, skills, and experience

Willingness
Refers to a group's collective motivation and confidence

Developmental Models

Three approaches: Tuckman, Gersick, & Poole
Tuckman’s Five Phase Model

Definition
A linear model of group development that covers group structure (i.e., relationship patterns) and task behavior (i.e., what the group is working on)

Forming phase
Occurs when members come to the group concerned about individual goals

Storming phase
Occurs when members develop relationships and the group process begins. Small amounts of conflict may occur

Norming phase
Occurs when members work together on the task and attempt to get along
Tuckman’s Five Phase Model

Performing phase
Occurs when members ready task for output and evaluation by an external audience

Adjourning phase
Occurs when members reach the end of their involvement together and/or has finished its task

Gersick’s Punctuated Equilibrium Model

Based on the belief that not all groups develop in a sequential manner

Gersick’s Punctuated Equilibrium Model

Definition
Groups progress through a period of inertia which is punctuated by a period of concentrated change and time is the defining characteristic around which group development occurs
Gersick's Punctuated Equilibrium Model

Phase one
During this meeting, members set the precedent for how the group will approach task accomplishment and little work is accomplished.

Transition (midpoint)
The group members realize they have used or wasted half of their time and now must determine how to accomplish the task.

Phase Two
Much more work is accomplished than in Phase one, although group members do not possess the urgency to finish their task.

Completion
During the final meeting, members realize the group must absolutely finish the task.
Poole’s Multiple Sequence Model

Definition

Considers that groups do not always follow a rigid, phase-like approach but rather, groups engage in three types of activity tracks that do not necessarily follow in a logical sequence.

First activity track is task process

Occurs when members analyze the task by using various decision-making and problem-solving procedures.

Second activity track is relational

Occurs when members engage in behaviors that promote member relationships.
Poole’s Multiple Sequence Model

Third activity track is topical focus

Occurs when members concern themselves with the major issues or themes that emerge at any given point in the group’s work that become agenda items.

Poole’s Multiple Sequence Model

At any point, a group will alternate among the three activity tracks. A switch from one activity track to another activity track is known as a **breakpoint**.

Three types of breakpoints:

1. Normal breakpoint: shift in focus
2. Delay breakpoint: reexamine a position
3. Disruption breakpoint: conflict arise

Characteristics of Group Development
Characteristics of Group Development

Five characteristics reflect group development

1. How cohesive is the group?
2. Does the group engage in depersonalizing conflict?
3. How does the group balance its task and socioemotional needs?
4. How does the group communicate?
5. What is the level of group efficacy?

A Final Note

Rather than focusing on which model of group development is the more superior model, consider that each model explains, to some degree, the way any group develops.