Key Concept

2

ORGANISATION

He who would learn to fly one day
must first learn to stand and walk
and run and climb and dance:
one cannot fly into flying.
Friedrich Nietzsche

Groups are dynamic social systems, constantly adjusting in response to internal as well as external influences. Organising is the process of establishing the structures needed to perform the group task: roles, rules, communication channels, work procedures, and so forth. These make possible the complex activities that members must undertake in order to achieve the group goals. Through this dynamic process, an aggregate becomes a group, a group becomes a team: in short, a socio-technical system is created and developed. (An introduction to systems terminology is given in Appendix A.)

From time to time, the process of organising may be artificially frozen in order to see the organisation as if it were static: a pattern of interwoven structural elements such as membership, roles, norms, and status hierarchy. An organisation chart is a familiar example of such a frozen picture, but small groups seldom need such a formal device—rather, their concern is with the on-going processes themselves.

This section is concerned then, first with the elements that comprise the *structure* of the group, then with the dynamic aspects of *process*. These two concepts are interdependent in practice and each can cause changes in the other. Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in the case of the formation of subgroups, a clear relationship-building process. Conversely, an established subgroup or clique will affect the rest of the group by the process of further social interaction and influence. For ease of

analysis and understanding however, structure and process can be analysed as if separate, providing that it is remembered that they are primary and inseparable aspects of group organisation and development. As groups always exist in an environment, this section concludes with an overview of the environmental influences on structure and process.

Group Structure

The structure of a group refers to its size, the characteristics of its members and the relationships between them, and the roles, norms and channels of communication as established at a given point in time. While the structural components are subject to variations that can sometimes be quite sudden, they tend to be relatively stable over time; together they make each group an entity distinct from all others. Parts of the structure are highly visible: the formal positions committees, working parties etc. Other parts are relatively invisible, such as the power and status relationships, the means of control and influence, the friendship cliques, the grapevine and so on.

The various structural elements are interlocked one with the others, and emerge out of the group formation/group development process. In the description of each that follows, their dynamic and interdependent properties must be borne in mind. The most important variables are:

Membership variables	**Behavioural variables**	**Relationship variables**
Group size Boundaries Personal characteristics	Roles Norms Communication patterns Culture	Status Power Sociometry Subgroups Cohesion

Group Size

There is unfortunately no simple answer to the two questions 'What is the optimum size of a work group?' and 'Are small groups better or worse than large groups?' Group size depends on many factors, including the group's purpose and the degree of interaction desired; the nature of the task; the time, place and resources available. The question of optimum size can best be dealt with by examining what happens as group size increases, then by reviewing some of the characteristics of small versus large groups. Generally speaking, as groups increase in size, the following tend to occur:

(i) an increasing number of members feel threatened and inhibited, resulting in decreased participation;

(ii) communication difficulties increase as information-sharing becomes more mechanical, the time each member has to talk decreases, decision-making beomes more autocratic and a more elaborate or bureaucratic structure begins to arise;
(iii) the number of potential relationships increases, with the results that the leader is under greater pressure to co-ordinate the group activities; achieving agreement and consensus is made more difficult; and subgroups begin to form;
(iv) when members fall silent, have difficulty being heard, or feel they have little influence in the group, they may create a dissident subgroup which may sabotage progress towards the group's goals;
(v) frustration, absenteeism, accidents, disputes and turnover all increase.

On the other hand, as group size increases,

(i) the range of available resources, ideas, skills and abilities becomes greater;
(ii) the work may get done more quickly or more efficiently as tasks are delegated;
(iii) there is a greater use of checks and balances;
(iv) with the more elaborate or bureaucratic structure that ensues, certain individuals achieve a greater sense of belonging or security albeit at the cost of becoming more anonymous.

Hare (1976) shows that the number of potential relationships in a group is $\frac{1}{2}(n^2 - n)$, where n = the number of members in the group. The addition of one member to a group of four increases the number of potential relationships from 6 to 10; a group of eight has 28, a group of sixteen, 120! If subgroups (coalitions) are taken into account in the first example, the group of five can be seen to have 85 relationships instead of 10! Even-numbered groups can always be stalemated by an even division of opinion or vote. Groups of less than 5 have special characteristics (e.g. a group of 2 can only form a majority by agreeing; a group of 3 can form a coalition of two against one). Groups of more than 10 usually start to exhibit most of the disadvantages listed above.

For detailed reading on group size, see Shaw, 1981, pp. 168–73; Steiner, 1972, Chap. 4.

Boundaries

The size of a group determines and is determined by its boundary, which might be conceived as a demarcation line drawn around the group to distinguish it as a unique social system set in an environment. The boundary may or may not separate full-time members from part-time, marginal or aspiring members, and may be relatively open or closed, fixed

or changeable. Boundaries may be established physically (by buildings, barricades, etc.) or symbolically (by membership lists, uniforms, jargon, etc.).

To describe a group's structure properly, the depiction of some sort of changeable boundary is unavoidable, but attempts to do this often open up disputes about membership, status, power and influence. Such conflicts should be confronted and dealt with in the early stages of the group's life-cycle. Uncertainties about who's in and who's out is a common source of anxiety that may interfere with the effective work of the group.

For detailed reading on boundaries and membership, see Katz and Kahn, 1978; Napier and Gershenfeld, 1985.

Personal characteristics

There are many background influences on group structure that originate in the personal characteristics of the members although the complexity of group situations and the paucity of research data means that only general rather than precise conclusions can be drawn about such variables as age, gender, race, personality and skills.

Age affects behaviour, standards, perceptions and physical abilities, while a long life may be the source either of great wisdom or of dysfunctional cynicism. Members who are homogeneous in terms of chronological age can become united and forceful, or competitive and tunnel-visioned. A group with mixed ages may benefit from the variety of life experiences and perceptions, or may disintegrate from lack of common interest or values. A member whose age is well above or below those of the rest of the group runs the risk of becoming an isolate or a scapegoat. There is no formula for the 'best' mix of ages in a group, as so many other variables are equally important ingredients.

Gender research is aimed at theorising about the differences in behaviour between males and females, and has produced inconsistent results, again probably due to the importance of the totality of situational factors as the prime influence on behaviour. Claims that men are more aggressive than women or that women are more concerned with relationships have not been satisfactorily substantiated. Certainly the gender composition — all-male, all-female, males predominating, females predominating, equal mix — will have a marked effect on behaviour at the interpersonal level, but precise predictions are virtually impossible.

Racially mixed groups have been found, not surprisingly, to experience more tension and conflict than racially homogeneous groups. Race certainly affects communication, status perception, power, conformity and cohesiveness, but it is not clear whether or how it affects productivity or group development.

Temperament, maturity, cognitive style, attitudes (to the world, society, authority figures, the opposite sex), self-concept, sociability,

emotional stability — all of these personality traits will influence a person's interactions with others. In particular, personality variables affect group mood, cohesiveness, patterns of communication, power and leadership, learning, creativity and productivity.

Each member brings certain abilities (skills, intelligence, perception for example) to the group, and is able to provide at least some additional resources such as information, contacts, or past experiences. The quality and quantity of contributions from the members will be largely determined by their skills and resources, particularly in regard to the roles they take on and the relationships they develop with other members.This in turn affects how others will respond and relate to them, and ultimately whether and how the group develops and achieves its goals.

For detailed reading on personal characteristics, see Shaw, 1981, pp. 177–209 and 238–61.

Roles

A role is a pattern of behaviour (thinking, feeling, doing) enacted by a person occupying a particular position in the organisation. The role structure is the total pattern of different roles identifiable in the group, and the relationships between them. When a group meets for the first time, the role structure may consist only of a leader and a number of members. In formal settings, executive roles described by such titles as President, Treasurer, or Secretary may be established, or responsibilities may be described by less impressive titles such as spokesman, safety officer, quality controller. Before considering how informal role structures develop, some definitions, applying primarily to formal roles, are called for.

Expected role: the behaviours which others think appropriate for the position or office; may be prescribed formally, as in a job description.

Sent role: the expected behaviours as conveyed by others to the role actor.

Perceived role: the way the occupant of the position or office thinks he or she should behave.

Enacted role: the way the occupant actually does behave.

Role differentiation: the development of a constellation of different roles in the group as it attends to task and maintenance, that is, the development of its role structure.

Role relationships: the way the roles complement each other (or fail to do so), and the vertical difference in rank (superiors, peers, subordinates).

Role cluster: the collection of roles a particular person plays in life, or in the group setting. Peripheral to the cluster are the *emerging* and *fading* roles: the ones the person is beginning to take on or relinquish.

Role set: the 'web' of all the other roles with which an individual interacts as a result of performing his or her own role.

Boundary role: a person in a boundary role interacts both within the group and with other persons external to it, e.g. spokesman, representative, ambassador, etc.

Role ambiguity: confusion about how a role should be performed, or the existence of indeterminate or conflicting expectations.

Role conflict: the experience of distress or uncertainty caused by different or irreconcilable expectations or demands of the role.

Role hunger: an unsatiated yearning to perform a particular role.

Role overload/underload: the degree to which the demands of the role (or the number of roles) exceed or fall short of the amount of time and resources available to the individual.

Role stress: stress due to problems in a role (ambiguity, conflict, overload, etc). This can be reduced if (i) the role structure includes clearly prescribed role expectations (job profiles), (ii) the abilities, motivations and resources of the individual are carefully matched to the demands of the role, (iii) new roles are created or existing ones modified, and (iv) attention is given to stress management, staff development and team-building.

Within a short time and often commencing in the forming stage, other more informal roles will begin to emerge as the group begins to develop a structure appropriate to the work to be undertaken. If a group is to be effective, it must develop an appropriate mix of formal and informal roles. One such mix is described in a classification system by Belbin (1981). His conclusions were based on findings from management research in the U.K. carried out by the Industrial Training Research Unit, Cambridge, and the Administrative Staff College, Henley. The findings indicated that management groups are characterised by eight fairly distinctive types of roles, certain combinations of which make for an effective team structure. The eight roles are:

Chairman: team leadership, co-ordinating style.

Shaper: team leadership, directive style.

Innovator: advances new ideas; creative thinking.

Monitor-Evaluator: critical thinking, cautious, perceptive, objective.

Resource investigator: explores resources, ideas, and contacts outside the team.

Company worker: buckles down to the task; practical, works within the rules and constraints.

Team worker: helps to promote team spirit, shows concern for others' needs and feelings.
Completer-Finisher: keeps work up to schedule, gets work done to a high standard in good time.

The researchers concluded that an ideal management team would have:

- *either* a chairman *or* a shaper (the two styles tend to clash);
- one innovator;
- one monitor-evaluator
- one or more company and team workers, resource investigators and completer- finishers.

Belbin's findings are mainly useful in two ways: as a basis for selecting the members of a work team prior to its formation., or in the diagnosis of interpersonal problems in an ailing group. In the latter instance, the group may be found to have an imbalance of roles, or to lack some important one.

Where Belbin's classification gives one perspective on the sort of role structure that contributes to effective group development, another may be found in the much earlier and now classic study by Benne and Sheats (1948). Complementary to Belbin's classification, this gives a more behaviour-specific understanding of the informal roles that inevitably begin to emerge once any group starts to work. The lists below commence with the '*task* and *maintenance* roles', and are based on the Benne and Sheats study. They are acts of leadership that may be performed by any group member.

Task roles are directed to the work being done by the group, maintenance roles to improving group cohesion and fostering good relationships. Group leaders in particular need to be adept at these, although it would be unrealistic to expect any one person to excel in all of them. The responsibility of the leader then, is to encourage an appropriate and balanced use of the following task and maintenance roles among all the group members.

The task roles are:

Starter: initiates action by proposing ways of working, new ways of viewing the problem or organising material.
Information and opinion seeker: asks for information facts, clarification, and feelings from other members.
Information and opinion giver: offers information and facts, clarifies and expresses feelings and opinions.
Co-ordinator: draws together the various ideas being expressed; co-ordinates the activities of various members or subgroups.

Summariser: provides resumes and restates major points discussed, bringing the group together in its thinking.
Energiser: stimulates the group to action and a higher quality of work.
Diagnoser: determines sources of difficulties, analyses barriers to progress.
Reality tester: examines the practicality of ideas, applies them to real-life situations to deduce or pretest their effect.
Consensus tester: asks for a 'straw vote' to determine if the group is nearing consensus on a decision; suggests 'trial balloons'.
Critical evaluator: subjects group decisions or accomplishments to a comparison with group standards and goals.
Technician: helps the group by distributing materials, operating equipment, arranging seating, etc.
Scribe/Recorder: writes down and displays ideas, suggestions and decisions; keeps notes, minutes, records of discussions; acts as the 'group memory'.
Spokesperson: speaks on behalf of the group as announcer, reporter, delegate, ambassador, etc.

The maintenance roles are:

Encourager: is warm and understanding, gives recognition and praise for contributions.
Gatekeeper: creates openings for quieter members to have their say; restrains over-vocal members so that everyone has a chance to contribute.
Communication helper: makes sure people hear and understand each other; is receptive, listens and reflects back clearly.
Mediator/Harmoniser: acts as third party to try to resolve conflicts; pours oil on troubled waters; puts tense situations in their wider context.
Trust builder: accepts and respects others' openness; acknowledges risk-taking and encourages individuality; values others.
Process observer: helps examine the group's effectiveness by offering observations on group process; points out examples of constructive behaviours and effective procedures.

In contrast to these facilitating roles, there are others that are less than helpful, and some that can be quite destructive. These are the *defensive* and the *dysfunctional* roles. The former are intended to protect the group against anxiety induced by tension, conflict or low self-esteem, or against shame induced by incompetence or failure to make progress. The dysfunctional roles are those which inhibit progress or siphon off the energy of the group towards selfish needs or hidden agendas.

The defensive roles are:

Tension reliever: provides distractions, fills long silences, suggests breaks whenever a difficulty arises. This role may sometimes be more of a facilitating role, or it can be dysfunctional, particularly if the intention is to suppress or avoid an emerging conflict situation that the group may need to confront.
Court jester: helps the group to survive unpleasant situations and difficult problems and crises by clowning, telling jokes, or seeing the funny side of things. The jester gives the group a shared positive experience in the midst of anxiety, thereby providing an opportunity for recovery.
Scapegoat: takes on the group's projections of its own bad feelings. Incompetence, failure, guilt, and thoughts that the group does not want to acknowledge within itself are projected onto whichever individual is susceptible to playing the scapegoat; he or she is then isolated and scorned for possessing those attributes. In this way, the group is able to gain relief from anxiety. If the group does not mature or work through the difficult situation, the bad feelings will persist. Some scapegoats react by becoming withdrawn, servile or aggressive, or by denying the role. Others use it as a way of attracting attention or satisfying their masochistic impulses.

The dysfunctional roles are:

Lobbyist: uses the group setting to introduce suggestions aimed at achieving personal goals or focusing attention on personal hobby-horses; committed to self at the group's expense.
Playboy: creates a nuisance by horseplay, whispering, writing notes, ostentatiously doing things unrelated to the task.
Recognition seeker: calls attention to self by loud talking, extreme ideas, unusual behaviour; seeks sympathy by playing 'poor me', or seeks praise by boasting.
Blocker: interferes with progress by raising irrelevancies, going off at tangents, arguing too long on a point, being stubbornly resistant.
Pessimist: expresses thoughts and feelings of doom; discourages and disillusions others; harps on past failures; disapproves or is cynical of all attempts to succeed.
Aggressor: criticises, blames, deflates or disapproves of others in a hostile manner.
Rebel: attacks authority, breaks group norms for the hell of it, refuses to co-operate.

The roles a person enacts are determined by a number of factors other than an appointment to a position: self-image and natural predispositions in the personality; the perceived rewards; the impressions the person

hopes to make on others; the prestige or power that might accrue; stereotypes and so on. One factor almost totally ignored, except by J. L. Moreno (1964), is the concept of the *psychodramatic* role. The individual's mother and father have a profound effect throughout childhood and beyond on the roles played or avoided in daily life. The behaviour we bring to the enactment of organisational roles (as well as such social roles as parent, musician, nurse, etc.) is also significantly influenced by our internalised images of admired or feared heroes and heroines. A person develops his or her group roles as a response to reality, at the same time retaining these internalised fantasy and archetypal roles as developed throughout the childhood years. These are the ones that individuals desire to have even when they are outside those they are permitted in their daily life. They are the models that cause us to become a particular type of president, joker or comforter, bringing to the role vestiges of a John Kennedy, a Danny Kaye, or a Florence Nightingale. Together, the complex of psychodramatic roles form the individual's internal role structure, and are far more extensive and driving than the public roles. As such, they have been greatly underestimated and under-researched as influences on motivation, behaviour and the performance of organisational roles.

Another role virtually ignored in the literature is that played by the group itself acting as an entity. This might be termed the *sociodramatic* role of the group. It begins to manifest whenever a critical number of similar psychodramatic roles exist in the group. If these reinforce each other sufficiently, one result could be a collective identity and culture: the group might come to behave or to be regarded by others as if they were anything from the Knights of the Round Table or the U.S. Cavalry, to Charlie's Angels or The Untouchables. Each, quite clearly, has its own unique structure and processes in terms of all the variables being explored in this section.

The playing out of the psychodramatic and sociodramatic roles involves processes that are largely unconscious. Bringing these to conscious awareness increases the possibility of enhancing the positive ones or reducing the effects of the destructive ones.

For detailed reading on roles, see Heap, 1977, pp. 139–63; Katz and Kahn, 1978, pp. 187–219; Mullins, 1985, pp. 202–13.

Norms

As a group begins to develop, members begin to have shared and predictable responses to particular issues or situations, and a strong 'group position' emerges. Certain behaviours come to be acceptable, others not; certain beliefs are valued and shared, others not. As this value system develops, members experience rewards for conformity, punishments for deviance. From this emerge the group norms: '*those attitudes, values and*

forms of behavior that the group as a whole requires or expects of its members' (Fessler, 1976, p. 91).

Rules that a group makes deliberately to regulate behaviours or procedures could be regarded as explicit norms, but in the true sense of the term, norms are implicit rather than explicit: that is, they only become known when tested. They are the ways of doing things that have come to be regarded as appropriate or proper behaviour, and are specific to each group.

Because norms refer to the expected behaviour rewarded or punished by the group, there is a strong 'ought' or 'should' quality to them. The potential rewards and punishments may be overt or covert, but members are at least subconsciously aware of their existence and may modify their behaviour significantly because of hope of approval or fear of censure by the group as a whole.

Some norms require more strict observance than others, with a corresponding variation in the degree of reward or punishment handed out. The more adherents there are to a group norm, the greater will be the pressure to conform to it. Conformity may be rewarded by acceptance, praise, approval, pay rises, promotion. Deviance or refusal to conform may be punished by rejection, criticism, hostility, ridicule, fines, ostracism or expulsion.

Norms, formed as they are during the course of group interaction as individuals learn to 'fit in', are also influenced by the culture of the society in which the group exists. Luthans (1985, p. 375) says that group norms will be strongly enforced if they

- ensure group success or survival;
- reflect the preferences of the leader or other powerful members;
- simplify or make predictable what behaviours are expected of members;
- reinforce specific individual roles;
- help the group avoid embarassing interpersonal conflict.

As Alexander (1977) points out, norms can be classified as basically positive or negative; he gives the following examples:

Positive norms:
viewing self and group with pride;
wanting to improve on past performance;
sharing information and working co-operatively;
leaders as helpers and developers of subordinates;
saving money to reduce costs;

maximising customer satisfaction;
supporting and encouraging innovation and change;
training and development seen as essential;
trust and openness of communication.

Negative norms:
negative view of organisational goals;
'near enough is good enough';
'every man for himself';
secrecy;
leaders as policemen;
lack of concern for cost effectiveness;
customers as obstacles, to be avoided;
support the status quo;
discourage experimentation;
training and development a non-essential luxury;
closed and defensive interpersonal communication.

For detailed reading on norms, see Bierstedt, 1970, pp. 208–41; Napier and Gershenfeld, 1985, pp. 116–61.

Communication patterns

The way a group is structured in terms of channels of communication affects the ease and efficiency with which members can exchange accurate information, perform their tasks, and develop relationships and group cohesion. Channels may be one-way or two-way, and flows may be assisted or impeded by various types of barriers. Co-existing with the formal pattern are informal networks such as the 'grapevine', or those resulting from the chatting, gossip and rumour of interpersonal friendships.

The most common formal pattern is the hierarchy, where power and status are closely linked to position, and invested in the top ranks. Military, public service, industrial and commercial institutions are almost exclusively of this type, as exemplified in the typical pyramid of the organisational chart shown in Figure 2.1 overleaf.

Groups and organisations set up communication structures other than hierarchies based on responsibilities, power or status. Some other common formal or informal patterns are shown in Figure 2.2, and they have markedly different effects on process as well as productivity.

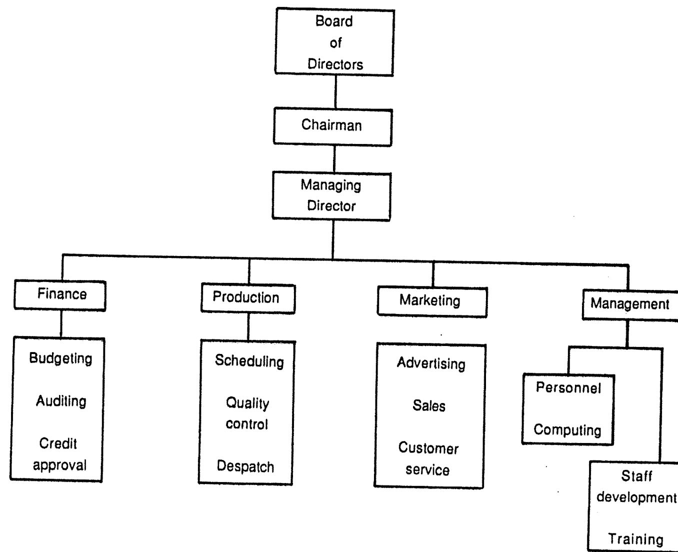


Fig. 2.1 An organisational chart.

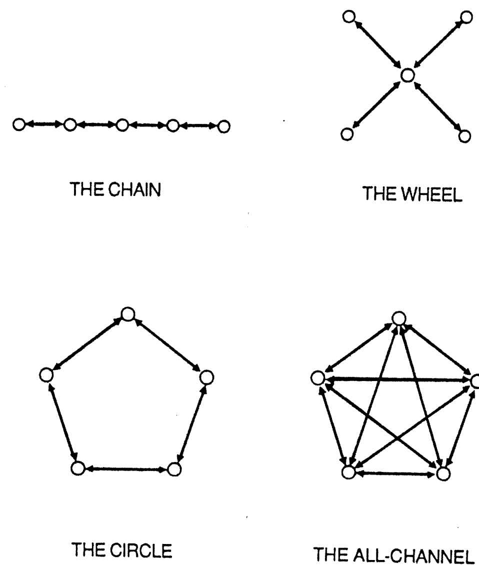


Fig. 2.2 Typical communication patterns.

The Chain: represents direct-line relating with no by-passing; vertically this would be authoritarian-hierarchical; horizontally it would be an 'assembly-line' pattern. Pro-task, anti-maintenance.
The Wheel: usually a central person (or star) surrounded by subordinates (or admirers) who do not communicate with each other, and may feel isolated. An advantage is speed in making decisions. Central persons have a high probability of emerging as a leader if they are not already holding that office.
The Circle: is nearly always bad, co-ordination is difficult, flow of ideas and information is slow.
The All-channel: is the most likely to produce the best solution to complex problems; facilitates relationships. A disadvantage is that it can be slow, or may break down under pressures of time or competition.

The above patterns are rather stylised, and in reality many variations and partial versions will be found. No single one will be appropriate for all tasks, and the structure used should reflect the goals and purpose of the group. The arrangement of seating and work stations may dictate to a large extent the pattern of communication, as may the nature of the task itself or its related technology. Seating at group meetings has other ramifications for interpersonal communication, and these are summarised in Appendix B.

For detailed reading on communication patterns, see Johnson and Johnson, 1987; Shaw, 1964.

Culture

The culture of a group arises from the long-term values, beliefs and customs adhered to by its members. Culture includes, in addition to rules and norms, long-established conventions and standards of protocol and etiquette; rituals and ceremonies; mores, ethics and taboos. All of these make up the total pattern of familiar and expected ways of thinking and doing that are part of the structure of a particular society, organisation or group.

Moving into a group with unfamiliar patterns can result in mild or severe 'culture shock'. Newcomers are subject to a socialisation process that helps (or forces) them to 'fit in' — some groups hold initiation rites for this purpose, others use less dramatic degrees of social influence such as incentives, rewards or punishments.

The culture of a small group will be strongly influenced by the prevailing culture of the larger organisation or society of which it is a part. Other influences may stem from the growp's own history of successful or unsuccessful patterns of work, communication, and leadership.

Groups with different cultures (for example co-operative, entrepreneurial, compassionate, combative) provide quite different experiences for their members, and as a corollary require quite different understandings and actions from leaders and followers alike.

For detailed reading on culture, see Bierstedt, 1970, pp. 120–204.

Status

> In spite of the fact that most of us are quick to declare how unimportant status is, most of us are greatly concerned with acquiring status symbols. Fortunately, or unfortunately, depending on your predilections, we live in a class-structured society. In spite of attempts to make our world more egalitarian, we have made little movement toward a classless society. As far back as scientists have been able to trace human groupings, we have had chiefs and Indians, noblemen and peasants, the haves and the have-nots. This continues to live with us today. Even the smallest group will develop roles, rights and rituals to differentiate its members. Status is an important factor in understanding behavior because it is a significant motivator and has major behavioral consequences when individuals perceive a disparity between what they perceive their status to be and what others perceive it to be.

With these words, Stephen Robbins (1979, p. 184) introduces his definition of status as '*a prestige grading, position or rank within a group*'. Status is conferred by others, and is therefore a matter of perception based on personal and group values and, to a lesser extent, on personal idiosyncracies. It can be ascribed on the basis of *inherited attributes* (family background, age, sex, physical characteristics, religion or charisma) or on the basis of *achieved attributes* (education, income, skill, contributions, visibility, privileges earned, title, position held). A person who is a member of several groups may enjoy a different status in each, while his/her status in any one group may change over time, sometimes — as politicians often discover — quite rapidly.

Status is closely related to the role, office or position held in the group, and directly determines the hierarchical and 'pecking order' aspects of group structure. However, to regard status differences as a linear distribution from low to high is to over-simplify reality: groups tend to sort out the highest and the lowest early on in the life-cycle, but further status differentials are defined more slowly and with frequent fluctuations thereafter.

It is possible for two status hierarchies to co-exist in a group, one formal and based on organisational roles (position, office or title), the other informal and derived from the idiosyncratic perceptions of the group members, who may prefer to confer status as a result of valuing such personal characteristics as leadership style, friendliness, trustworthiness or charisma. Usually, the latter is the stronger and more significant of the

two hierarchies. Conflicts occur whenever there is status incongruence: for example, when a person with prestige in the informal hierarchy is not rewarded with status in the formal hierarchy or vice versa; or when a person with low status enjoys privileges which the other group members perceive as appropriate only to people of high status. Interpersonal conflict or stress can result when an individual's own perception of his or her status is not at one with the perceptions held by others, particularly others whose opinions are important.

A member's status has extensive consequences for behaviour and communication by influencing the amount and kind of interactions, privileges, power and responsibility he or she has relative to others in the group. In brief, research findings are (i) that more communications are initiated and received by high status members than by low status members; (ii) that high status members usually conform to group norms more than low status members do, although the group is usually more ready to permit high status members to deviate from group norms; (iii) the higher the status, the higher the power, with a frequent tendency on the part of high status members to consolidate and legitimise their power and deter low status members from trying to usurp it; and (iv) high status members take the initiative or lead more than low status members do.

The *circularity* of all the aspects of status is emphasised by many writers: for example, as the possession of power increases status, so high status in turn increases personal power; persons performing roles at the bottom of the hierarchy, if classified as low status or if denied privileges, may be actively prevented from rising higher.

For detailed reading on status, see Heap, 1977, pp. 163–69; Robbins, 1979, pp. 184–91.

Power

Power is the ability to influence others to change their thoughts, feelings or behaviour in some way. While power is a *potential*, influencing is a *process* of affecting the behaviour of others. The relevant action verbs connected with influence include persuade, encourage, inspire, reward, direct, control, manipulate, distract, convert, mould, bribe, deceive, hinder, threaten, punish. Control is an extreme form of influence in which one person or group influences another's behaviour and enforces limits to that behaviour. Authority is the right to influence others, and is legitimate power vested in a person either by virtue of his or her position or rank in an organisation, or by tradition. Compliance (or conformity) refers to the yielding of one person or group to another's influence, a 'going along with' the other's wishes or pressures.

All members of a group are in relationship with each other, and therefore exercise some degree of influence and are themselves open to being influenced. The degree of power that members possess varies

greatly, as does the degree to which different ones may value or seek power. It is this pattern, and the ratio of high-power to lower-power members that is the power structure of the group.

In their now classic study, French and Raven (1959) described five types of power involved in the ways an agent *A* influences a target *T*:

Reward power: *A* has the ability to reward *T*, *T* needs or values the reward (e.g. the power of a manager to promote a subordinate).

Coercive power: *A* has the ability to punish *T*, *T* wishes to avert punishment (e.g. the power of an employer to sack a worker).

Referent power: *A* is admired by *T*, who wishes to be like *A* (e.g. the power of a pop star to set a fashion).

Expert power: *A* is perceived by *T* to have specialised or superior knowledge or skills (e.g. the power of a doctor to persuade a person to undergo surgery).

Legitimate power: *A* has social permission (originating in society's norms) to influence *T*, who believes that *A* has the right to do so (e.g. the power of a policeman to halt traffic).

The above types of power are not mutually exclusive, and a person may possess several concurrently. Of all the five types, coercive power is the least likely to lead to group effectiveness, and the most likely to produce fear, alienation, frustration, or desire for revenge. Expert and referent power are most positively correlated with effective performance.

Once the power structure has become differentiated, the high-power members entrench themselves by attempting to legitimise their power. They may do this by reinforcing norms and procedures that make it difficult or threatening for low-power members to reduce the power differences between them. They also may establish severe penalties for low-power members who attempt to 'rock the boat', rewarding those who fit in or refrain from being rebellious.

Powerful group members are treated with deference, attract a disproportionately large share of interpersonal communications, and have their wishes complied with more often than do other members. In turn, powerful members are more attracted to the group, have more control over it, and derive greater satisfaction from their position in it.

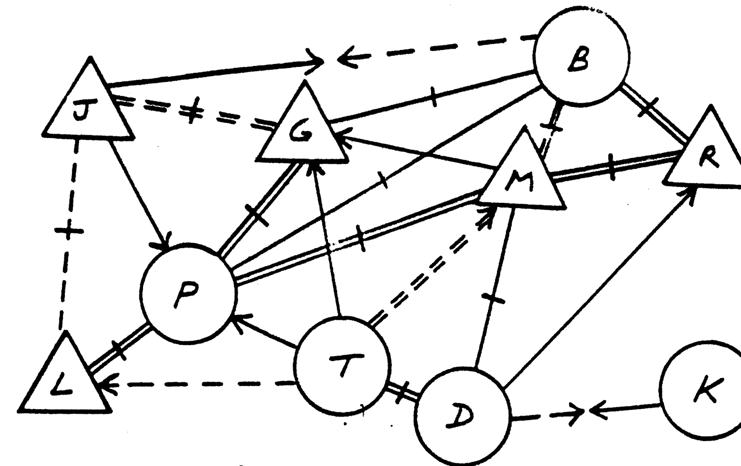
Group effectiveness is diminished when power is not distributed fairly evenly. Co-operation takes place through the exercise of mutual influence; unequal power hinders the building of the trust and open communication levels so essential for dealing with group conflicts and for working in the collaborative mode.

For detailed reading on power, see Cartwright and Zander, 1968, pp. 215–97; Pfeffer, 1981; Robbins, 1979, pp. 262–78.

Sociometry

An important aspect of the structure of the group is the pattern of interpersonal relationships that develop based on feelings of attraction and rejection among members. The existence of isolates, pairs, cliques, clusters and 'stars' results from this pattern of likes and dislikes among members and are features of all established human groups.

Sociometry is a way of measuring relationship patterns, and was originally developed in the 1920s by J. L. Moreno. The results of a sociometric measure can be drawn as a *sociogram*, or the measure can be



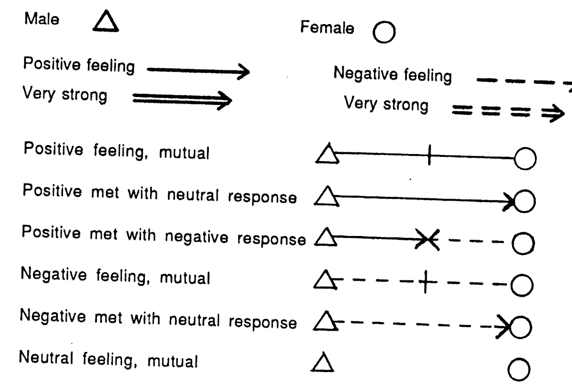


Fig. 2.3 A small-group sociogram.

carried out in action by asking members to position and group themselves in a way that reflects some aspect of their interpersonal relationships (*action sociogram*). Figure 2.3 illustrates a hypothetical but typical sociogram depicting the relationships between members of an established group of ten.

Constructing a full sociometric measure is tedious for large groups, and may be threatening unless trust levels are well-developed, as it requires members to reveal their preferences for each other (the work of Moreno,1956, and Hale,1981, show how a full sociometric exploration can be carried out). Simpler techniques often suffice, and sometimes a sociogram can be constructed from personal observation without recourse to collecting data from the members.

For detailed reading on sociometry, see Hale, 1981; Moreno, 1956.

Subgroups

One important aspect of the sociometric structure of a group that is usually self-evident, and will certainly be revealed in even a casual sociogram, is the existence of subgroups (cliques, coalitions, clusters, alliances). They are neither necessarily good nor bad and arise as a normal part of organisation and development, or as an inevitable result of a group increasing in size. According to Fisher (1980), subgroups typically arise because of some conflict within the larger group, and often command greater loyalty from their members than does the main group. They may also arise out of common interests held by a few members or when a number of admirers gather around a sociometric 'star' or a high status member. Other functions which subgroups may serve are managerial (leadership, liaison) or production (work tasks, support services). Once established, a subgroup may be fostered because it offers its members support, fellowship and activities that the larger group might deny them.

Subgroups can be a potent force if their energy is mobilised towards achieving benefits for the whole group. Equally, they can be potentially destructive if they become nuclei for obstructive or frustrated minorities. Northen (1969) points out that in evaluating these subsystems, the basic concern is how they relate to the group as a whole, whether there is harmony or conflict between different ones, and whether or not they are functional for the work being undertaken by the group at a given time. When subgroup boundaries become strengthened or threaten to become closed, or when competition and discord between subgroups increase, then it is time to stem the fragmentation of the whole group by dealing with the issues around which these two processes are occuring. Heap (1977, p. 210) suggests the following interventions to re-stabilise the group structure at such a time:

- keep alive the identity and cohesion of the group-as-a-whole by reflective observation;
- stimulate interaction across subgroup boundaries;
- focus on 'superordinate' goals (goals which are important to all members and which require their co-operation);
- recall satisfactions derived from earlier co-operative whole-group tasks.

One subgroup in particular, which Kotter (1978, p. 20) calls 'the dominant coalition', is the one that — legitimately or otherwise — oversees the group as a whole and controls its basic functioning. In an organisation this would perhaps be the Board of Directors; in a club the President, Vice-President and Secretary; in a committee the Chairperson and his or her closest lieutenants. By definition, the dominant coalition occupies the top power position in the group, and with that goes the ability to exert maximum influence, for better or worse. Hopefully, that coalition will be in good shape, for as McDonald (1972) said: *'If the power centre at the top is in chaos, what hope is there for the rest of the organisation?'*.

For detailed reading on subgroups, see Balgopal and Vasssil, 1983, pp. 156–62.

Cohesion

Group cohesion is variously defined as:

- the degree to which the group is united, or 'hangs together';
- the sum of all the forces which bind the members to each other;
- the forces acting on the members to remain in the group rather than leave it.

Cohesion results from the process of interaction in the group: it builds gradually as the group matures, with fluctuations due to single incidents or situations that might have a more sudden (but usually only temporary) effect.

As cohesion increases, members become more committed to group goals, and accept roles and norms; absenteeism and lateness decline; participation increases and more resources become available; members tend to create group symbols such as a group name or logo, a constitution or manifesto, nicknames for members; induction rituals for newcomers etc; members communicate more effectively, with better listening and greater acceptance and valuing of each other; the group persists longer in working on difficult or frustrating tasks.

While cohesion and productivity (output) are not necessarily positively correlated, high cohesion is likely to result in improved productivity

provided that members accept and value the group goals. High cohesion also leads to greater social influence: greater pressure on members to conform to the group norms and standards. This may have positive outcomes (for example: when a group encourages open expression of differences and even hostile feelings in an effort to confront and work through conflict), or negative outcomes (for example: when excessive conformity results in the group falling victim to 'groupthink'). Highly cohesive groups, if fortunate, function effectively with an 'esprit-de-corps' that provides members with a sense of security by reducing anxiety levels and raising morale

Cohesion is *more likely* to occur if:

- group members like each other;
- group members enjoy or are satisfied with the group experience, and trust levels are high;
- group members agree on the group goals;
- the group is homogeneous in terms of common values, interests and backgrounds of its members;
- the group is small: larger groups have less frequent interaction between members, and a greater tendency to split into subgroups that may compete with each other or cause friction;
- the group membership is stable and not often disturbed or rearranged, i.e. has a low turnover;
- the group is isolated from other groups;
- the leadership is effective and well balanced between task and maintenance functions;
- the task requires physical proximity of members rather than separation from each other;
- the group experiences successful completion of tasks or achievement of goals;
- the group exists in a facilitating (i.e. comfortable, convenient, well-equipped) environment.

Cohesion will be *less likely* to occur if:

- membership of the group is not voluntary;
- goals or tasks are imposed from outside;
- no progress is made on the task;

- tasks are approached in a competitive win/lose manner;
- conflicts do not get resolved;
- a few people dominate;
- the group is negatively evaluated.

Group leaders can foster cohesion by taking steps to establish or enhance the conditions listed above. Temporary or reactive cohesion can occur if a group is faced with an external threat or danger, e.g. appointment of a new leader, an attempt to destabilise or disband the group, conflict or competition with other groups, etc.

For detailed reading on cohesion, see Hartford, 1972, pp. 245–56; Kellerman, 1981, pp. 225–329; Shaw, 1981, pp. 213–26.

Group Process

Process and Group Dynamics

Group process is what the group is doing from moment to moment, the sequence of activities, interactions, and movements of the members as they go about their work and relate to each other. It is nicely defined by Steiner (1972, p. 176) as '*a series of behaviours, one following after another, each to some degree determined by those which have gone before and each in turn, influencing those that will come later*'. Process is dynamic, continuous and ever-changing. It must not be confused with progress: it cannot be 'interrupted' or 'spoilt', and doesn't 'stop' or 'go backwards'. Understanding it is essential for effective group membership, particularly for leadership and team-building. Directly observable process variables include arriving, talking, arguing, withdrawal, silence; sharing and assembling information, giving feedback, asking questions, recording; modifying the physical environment; disintegrating, re-organising, disbanding, departing. Processes which can be deduced from an analysis of content (what people are talking about, or the materials and objects being used) include goal setting and clarification; information processing and evaluation; role differentiation, power struggles and scapegoating; norm development; planning and problem-solving; reviewing and team-building. A 'process checklist' is useful for understanding and practising process observation:

Arrival	are members chatting, milling around, getting seated?
	are some members forming cliques or subgroups?

	are members close or far apart? are some members being shunned or shut out?
Organisation	how is the group getting started ? what roles and procedures are being established? what is the interest level ? is the group being railroaded or dominated by a few ? what is the tempo: slow, hurried ? what is the climate: warm, chaotic, hostile ?
Task	is attention focused or scattered ? are the members competing or co-operating ? are goals being set or clarified ? are resources being assessed ? what decision-making methods are being used ? what problem-solving techniques are being used ? is the group staying on track ? bogged down ? going round in circles ? are alternatives being assessed ? are records being kept ? is information being collected ? shared ? processed ? evaluated ?
Maintenance	are any members dropping out, becoming tired or disillusioned ? is anyone being ridiculed, punished, ignored, scapegoated or ratpacked ? are members supporting and valuing each other ? are dissenters or minorities being listened to ? are less vocal members being invited in ? is the group moving towards crisis, returning to stability ?
Leadership	how is the leader behaving ? is a power struggle under way ? are indigenous leaders emerging ? is leadership being distributed ? is progress being made ?

Team-building	is group process and progress being reviewed ? are questions being asked or statements being made about the group's effectiveness ?
Environment	is a change to the physical setting being made ? are materials and equipment being assembled or used ? is the seating being rearranged ? is the group moving to a different location ? are there interruptions originating outside the group ?
Departure	is attention being withdrawn ? are members beginning to pack up ? are some members attempting to keep the session going ? is a ritual or ceremony taking place ? are members leaving ?

Most of the above processes may also be referred to as group dynamics, a term coined by Kurt Lewin in the 1940s, and still in use in a universal rather than a specific sense. It is more useful however to reserve the term for the specific purpose of referring to the moment-to-moment shifting patterns of energy in the group as the members move and interact. The changes in mood, noise and vitality, the ebb and flow of activity and inactivity: all these are the dynamics of the group as it goes about its task. As an orchestra plays loud or soft, fast or slow, with patterns of light, shade, harmony and discord, so does the group manifest similar dynamic changes. These energy shifts are fuelled by underlying forces which include motivation (a driving force) and anxiety (a restraining force) and all are part of, affect and in turn are affected by the on-going sequences of behaviours we call process.

A way of measuring the flow of interactional events in group discussions was devised by social interaction theorist R. F. Bales (1950, 1952). His Interaction Process Analysis (IPA) classified the events as follows:

Social-emotional or maintenance realm, positive acts:

- Shows solidarity, raises other's status, gives help, rewards.
- Shows tension release, jokes, laughs, shows satisfaction.
- Agrees, shows passive acceptance, understands, concurs, complies.

Social-emotional realm, negative acts:

- Disagrees, shows passive rejection, formality, withholds help.
- Shows tension, asks for help, withdraws out of field.
- Shows antagonism, deflates others, defends or asserts self.

Task realm, asking questions:

- Asks for orientation, information, repetition, confirmation.
- Asks for opinions, evaluation, analysis, expression of feeling.
- Asks for suggestions, direction, possible ways of action.

Task realm, giving answers and information:

- Gives suggestions, direction, implies autonomy for other.
- Gives opinion, evaluation, analysis, expresses feelings, wishes.
- Gives orientation, information, repeats, clarifies, confirms.

Bales' research findings were that the interactions in the four categories above display a fairly stable content of 25% positive and 11% negative contributions in the social-emotional (maintenance) realm, and 7% questions and 57% attempted answers in the task realm. This was one of the earliest attempts to analyse process in discussion groups.

Field Theory (Lewin, 1951; Deutsch, 1954), further assisted the study of group process by viewing it as the result of behaviour of the individual members in the context of their total here-and-now situation, which is called the individual's 'field' or 'life-space'. Lewin saw the 'field' as composed of driving forces that strongly support action and change, and restraining forces which act as obstacles to prevent action and change. Individuals communicating and relating to each other behave as systems seeking to maintain a state of equilibrium in the face of these opposing influences. Some years later, Whitaker and Lieberman (1964) developed a theory of group process with its roots in Lewin's work, and applied it specifically to the field of group psychotherapy. They referred to the two opposing forces as the 'disturbing motive' and the 'reactive motive' which together create focal conflicts for which individuals and the group continually seek resolutions. Group process and group dynamics are largely the outcome of these 'driven-to-act versus fear-of-consequences' dilemmas.

Another useful aid to the understanding of group process is the work of W. Bion (1961). His theory has its roots in Freudian psychoanalysis and was developed through his career as a group therapist working with the armed forces. It underlies the modern approach to management

consultancy exemplified by the action research teams at the Tavistock Institute in London and the Australian Institute of Social Analysis (AISA). (Action research seeks to bring about planned change in organisations by re-designing work roles and organisational structure with the consultant and client working together as co-researchers 'on the job'). Bion's description of the way groups tend to behave is not one of linear progression through stages of development (although it can certainly be taken as compatible with such theories), rather it is one that differentiates between what he calls the Work Group (i.e. the group when it is being effective, working competently on its task) and the Basic Assumption Group (i.e. the group when it is working on hidden agendas and being apparently irrational, or allowing itself to be diverted from its work). Bion describes three types of Basic Assumption Groups:

> **The Basic Assumption (Dependency) Group:** members collude to act as if they know nothing, are inadequate or immature. Their behaviour implies that the leader is all-powerful, loving and wise, and is supposed to lead them to success with little or no effort on their part. Certainly they do not need to give out adequate information about their concerns and difficulties, for the leader knows everything. The leader's process observations are transformed either into reprimands or immutable rules about how they must behave.
>
> **The Basic Assumption (Fight/Flight) Group:** members collude either to quarrel, rebel or brawl or to withdraw into silence, diversions, daydreams or apathy as if they have met in order to resist some dire threat by standing together to fight it, or by fleeing from it.
>
> **The Basic Assumption (Pairing) Group:** members collude with each other to focus on any two (regardless of gender) who might seem to have formed an attachment to each other. There is an air of hopeful expectancy — never fulfilled — that some 'messiah' might be born from the union to create a new order.

All four states identified by Bion (work, dependency, fight/flight and pairing) are potential in all groups. Careful attention to process and content will reveal which state is in the ascendency at a particular moment. The leader's responsibility is to co-operate with the Work Group only, confronting and exposing the Basic Assumption Groups whenever one of them is clearly manifested. Whenever a group is in the grip of a Basic Assumption, the members all think they are behaving rationally, and it is this that makes it difficult for a leader to confront them and move them back to being a Work Group. The group may resist any such leadership attempts, particularly if the task is threatening or difficult to work on, and

will seek indigenous leaders to mobilise their aggressive forces or encourage their flight.

For detailed reading on group process, See Balgopal and Vassil, 1983; Bion, 1961; Lewin, 1951; Whitaker and Lieberman, 1964.

Hidden Agendas

Group process works on two levels: the level of the open or surface agenda (the advertised purpose of the group, and its real task) and the level of the hidden agenda (the undisclosed needs and motives of individuals or subgroups). Hidden agendas often siphon off energy that could be available for work on the task, and an ability to recognise and deal with them will help a group to perform more effectively.

Members of work groups are often inhibited from disclosing even their most basic personal needs for security, belonging, acceptance, recognition, self-expression and creativity, all of which are legitimate reasons why people seek to join groups in the first place. Other, less innocent needs (such as the desire for power or prestige, the need to control others, the desire for revenge etc.) are unlikely to be aired at all, yet they are often present and can result in manipulative behaviour that seriously impedes the group's progress. Lack of progress on a group task during any part of the life-cycle may mean that hidden agendas are being worked on covertly. A subsequent sudden spurt of progress on the open agenda may mean that a hidden agenda has just been worked through and cleared out of the way.

Hidden agendas often surface when the group runs into a crisis, or when continued thwarting of the hidden agenda reaches an intolerable level. The final solution for some individuals is to sabotage the group or leave it. Although hidden agendas are covert, they are very much the concern of the group: it is unfortunate that, for a variety of reasons, they cannot just be laid 'on the table'. For that to happen the trust level in the group must be high, and it is only in the later phases of the group's life-cycle that hidden agendas are usually aired or reduced. Burying them or pretending they are not related to the group is ineffective, although it must be recognised that not all of them can be successfully resolved, and times will occur when potentially dangerous one are best left 'under the table'.

Hidden agendas operate in the following areas:

- between members
- between a member and the group
- between a member and the leader
- between the leader and the group
- between groups or subgroups

The signs of hidden agendas are:

- emotions overtaking logical thinking;
- coalitions and cliques forming;
- personal attacks, scapegoating, complaining, grumbling;
- interruptions and over-talking;
- ambivalance of opinion or commitment;
- scattered, fragmented work procedures;
- withdrawal into silence;
- backing away from decisions at the last minute.

What to do about them:

- minimise the likelihood of hidden agendas becoming obstacles by creating opportunities for airing opinions, doubts and complaints about work and relationship concerns;
- learn how to recognise the inevitable signs and carefully bring them to the notice of the group and the member(s) concerned — this must be done in a way that is appropriate to the existing trust level in the group;
- avoid reprimands, criticism, punishment and ridicule — recognise agendas as a legitimate part of group life, to be dealt with just as open agendas have to be dealt with;
- use problem-solving techniques to define and resolve them, inviting information and feedback from all members concerned;
- recognise those that are potentially too dangerous to an individual or to the group as a whole, and leave them 'under the table'.

For detailed reading on hidden agendas, see Bradford, 1978, pp. 84–94; Napier and Gershenfeld, 1985, pp. 197–201.

Motivation

Mullins (1985, p. 251) defines motivation as '*a driving force within individuals by which they attempt to achieve some goal in order to satisfy some need or expectation*'. There are many ways to look at motivation, a word derived from the Latin *movere*, to move. The concept is built on the observation that an individual with an unsatisfied need will engage in self-serving (but not necessarily selfish) behaviour with the aim of satis-

fying that need. Feeling thirsty, buying a drink and drinking it is an example that obviously fits the simple process model which is shown in Figure 2.4.

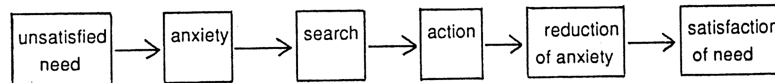


Fig. 2.4 The need-satisfaction process.

In the belief that the motivating force originates with need, Maslow (1954) put forward a theoretical 'hierarchy of needs' in a classification system which has become widely popular (Figure 2.5).

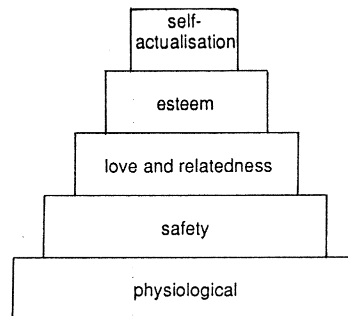


Fig.2.5 Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

The basic need, physiological, is for food, air, water, shelter and other bodily needs. When this need is at least partly satisfied, its importance as a motivator decreases, and the next higher one begins to emerge: the safety need. This includes security, stability, and freedom from pain, illness and threat. Again, as this need becomes substantially satisfied, the need for love and relationship comes into prominence, and so on up the hierarchy. Esteem includes self-esteem as well as status and recognition or respect from significant others. The highest need is for self-actualisation: fulfillment and realisation of one's potential.

Critics of Maslow's theory, arguing that there is little research evidence to support the idea that the fulfillment of one need automatically activates the next higher one, have produced other classifications. Alderfer (1969) separated the core needs into three clusters — existence, relatedness, and growth — that he saw as interdependent rather than sequential sources of motivated behaviour. McClelland (1961) classified needs in terms obviously significant to work-group settings:

- the individual need for achievement: to excel;
- the interpersonal need for power: to influence others;
- the interpersonal need for affiliation: to be close.

McClelland focused particularly on the need to achieve; Herzberg (1974) on the other hand focused on the presence or absence of certain factors in the work organisation. One cluster, the ones he termed 'hygiene' or 'maintenance' factors, prevent dissatisfaction but do not act as motivators:

- company policy and administration
- quality of supervision
- working conditions
- job security
- fringe benefits
- salary

A second cluster, which he termed 'motivators', relates to the higher-order needs of the individual:

- responsibility
- recognition
- meaningful work
- achievement
- advancement
- personal development

In small work groups, the intensity and direction of what Mullins calls the 'driving force' manifests in each member's choice of role, style of behaviour, and level of commitment to the task. Past experience, current mental sets and future projection combine with here-and-now situational elements in ways which are complex and difficult to identify. Certainly, motivation is not a phenomenon that triggers isolated acts, rather it is a continuous orientation that affects the on-going interaction between the individual and the group (Nuttin, 1984, p. 75). An individual will at any moment be internally influenced by his or her idiosyncratic perception, psychodramatic role hunger, emotional state and hidden agendas. At the same time, he or she will be contending with the task and the relationship dimensions of the group. Attempts to understand motivation must there-

fore be set in this total context, the 'field' or 'life-space' of the individual and of the group itself.

For detailed reading on motivation, see Herzberg, 1974; Klein, 1982; Maslow, 1987; McClelland, 1961; Vroom and Deci, 1979.

Structure, process and environment

The reciprocal dynamic interplay between the group and its environment is all too frequently ignored by groups overly concerned with their internal structure and dynamics. Environmental influences originate from sources that range from immediate to distant, and are of two main types: physical or social. They produce effects that may be momentary or prolonged, slight or profound, depending on the multiplicity of forces that pertain within and outside the system at a given time. Douglas (1983, p. 155) distinguishes between environments already in existence and 'designed environments', the latter being carefully planned to achieve predictable influences or effects. He further uses the terms 'facilitating' and 'diminishing' environments to distinguish between those sets of conditions and influences that are respectively good or bad for groups and their work and well-being.

Physical environmental influencors that are immediate include the room (size, aesthetics and comfort); furnishings (particularly seating), equipment and tools; light and lighting; temperature, air quality and noise. Steele (1973) gives a useful overview of the relationships between immediate physical setting, job satisfaction, and organisational development. More distant influencors might include the nearby buildings, the weather conditions, the natural landscape, and the geographical location.

Influencors originating in the immediate social environment include nearby individuals, other groups, and the parent organisation. By demonstrating their own values, norms, expectations and demands through external roles such as supplier, client, customer, competitor, observer or critic, they can bring powerful influences to bear on the group, often supported by incentives, rewards or punishments. Social influence, if part of a 'diminishing' environment, can result in fatigue, boredom, reduced motivation and performance, loss of concentration, accidents and a host of other stress-related outcomes A perceived hostile threat from an out-group can result in an immediate increase in group cohesion; a compliment can raise flagging morale; a harsh indictment could result in disintegration or dramatic restructuring of the group. More distant social influencors stem from the wider political and socio-economic milieu: policies, technology, incentive programs, financial support, and markets; more distant still, the cultural values, norms, ethics, attitudes and taboos of society in general.

The work group, embedded in a complex of environments, is impinged upon in complex ways, although there are some predictable outcomes for

certain given circumstances. Discussing environmental effects on structure in particular, Mintzberg (1979) classifies environments on four dimensions: stable to turbulent; simple to complex; integrated to diversified; munificent to hostile. He hypothesises that, in general:

- stable environments favour formal, standardised organisations;
- dynamic or turbulent environments tend to produce organic, flexible, less formalised organisations;
- the more complex the environment, the more decentralised will be the organisational structure;
- the more hostile the environment, the more the organisation will centralise its structure, at least temporarily.

Katz and Kahn (1978, p. 532) point out the importance of the group leader as a manager of the relationships between the system and its environment. In this 'boundary role', the leader has a special responsiblity to see that the group responds appropriately to the demands of the environment for change, as well as ensuring that a 'facilitating' immediate environment is created or maintained so that the group can work and mature with a minimum of hindrance.

For detailed reading on environment, see Steele, 1973; Mintzberg, 1979.

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