Psicologia dei Gruppi e delle Relazioni Sociali

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Course Outline

Theoretical Lessons (Part 1):

1- An introduction to the group dynamics (1)
2- An introduction to the group dynamics (2)
3- Studying Groups
4- Inclusion and Identity
5- Formation
6- Cohesion and Development
7- Structure
8- Influence
9- Power
10- Leadership
11- Performance
12- Decision Making
13- Teams
14- Conflict
15- Intergroup Relations
16- Groups in Context
17- Groups and Change

Experimental activity (Part 2):

18- From cognition to social simulation
19- Research in group dynamics
20- Community detection
21- Epidemic Modeling
22- The virtual settings
23- Reputation dynamics
24- Collective Intelligence
25- Group reasoning
26- Crowd dynamics
27- Social influence: new perspectives
28- Personality, Self and Identity (I)
29- Personality, Self and Identity (II)
30- Constructing the Self in a Digital World
31- Self Disclosure, Privacy and the Internet
32- Understanding the On-line behaviour

Lesson: 3 - (1/4)
Title: Studying Groups

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Lesson 3 Outline

- ***Measurement in Group Dynamics***
  - *Observation*
  - *Self-Report Measures*

- ***Research Methods in Group Dynamics***
  - *Case Studies*
  - *Experimental Studies*
  - *Correlational Studies*
  - *Selecting a Research Method*

- ***Theoretical Perspectives in Group Dynamics***
  - *Motivational and Emotional Perspectives*
  - *Behavioral Perspectives*
  - *Systems Theory Perspectives*
  - *Cognitive Perspectives*

Measurement in group dynamics

Science often begins with measurement. Researchers' success in studying groups was tied, in large part, to their progress in measuring group members' interpersonal actions and psychological reactions.
Here, we trace the growth and impact of two important measurement methods—observing groups and questioning group members that gave group dynamics a foothold in the scientific tradition.

Observation: Researchers take various approaches to observation, but the essence of the method remains: watch and record the actions taken by group members. (William Foote Whyte, 1943; McGrath & Altermatt, 2001) .

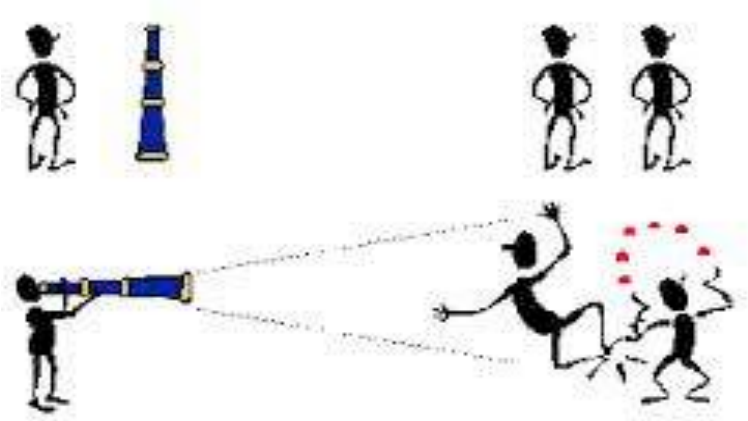
Covert and Overt Observation. *Overt observation* consists of openly watching and recording group behavior with no attempt to conceal one's research purposes. Other researchers, in contrast, prefer to use *covert observation*, whereby they record the group's activities without the group's knowledge. Researchers interested in how groups organize themselves by race and sex in schools sit quietly in the corner of the lunchroom and watch as students choose their seats.

Participant Observation Some researchers observe groups from a vantage point outside the group. A researcher may examine carefully videotapes of therapy groups during a treatment session. Another researcher, seated behind a special one-way mirror, may observe groups discussing issues. But some researchers use participant observation: they watch and record the group's activities and interactions while taking part in the group's social process. (Whyte, Greenwood, & Lazes, 1991)

Measurement in group dynamics

The Hawthorne Effect

A change in behavior that occurs when individuals know they are being studied by researchers. Usually trying to (unconsciously) confirm the (supposed by the subject) researcher expectations



Reviews of the Hawthorne studies suggested that other factors besides the scrutiny of the researchers contributed to the increased productivity of the groups. The Hawthorne groups worked in smaller teams, members could talk easily among themselves, and their managers were usually less autocratic than those who worked the main floor of the factory, and all these variables—and not observation alone—may have contributed to the performance gains. Nonetheless, the term Hawthorne effect continues to be used to describe any change in behavior that occurs when people feel they are being observed by others (see Bramel & Friend, 1981; Franke & Kaul, 1978; Olson et al., 2004).

Measurement in group dynamics

Structuring Observations: The structured observational method A research procedure that classifies (codes) group members' actions into defined categories.

Qualitative study represent a research procedure used to collect and analyze nonnumeric, unquantified types of data, such as text, images, or objects.

Quantitative study represent a research procedure used to collect and analyze data in a numeric form, such as frequencies, proportions, or amounts.

Measurement in group dynamics

Qualitative methods generate data, but the data describe general qualities and characteristics rather than precise quantities and amounts. Such data are often textual rather than numeric, and may include verbal descriptions of group interactions developed by multiple observers, interviews, responses to open-ended surveys questions, notes from conversations with group members, or in-depth case descriptions of one or more groups. Such qualitative observational methods require an impartial researcher who is a keen observer of groups. If researchers are not careful to remain objective, they may let initial, implicit expectations shape their records (Dollar & Merrigan, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Structured observational methods offer researchers a way to increase the objectivity of their observations.

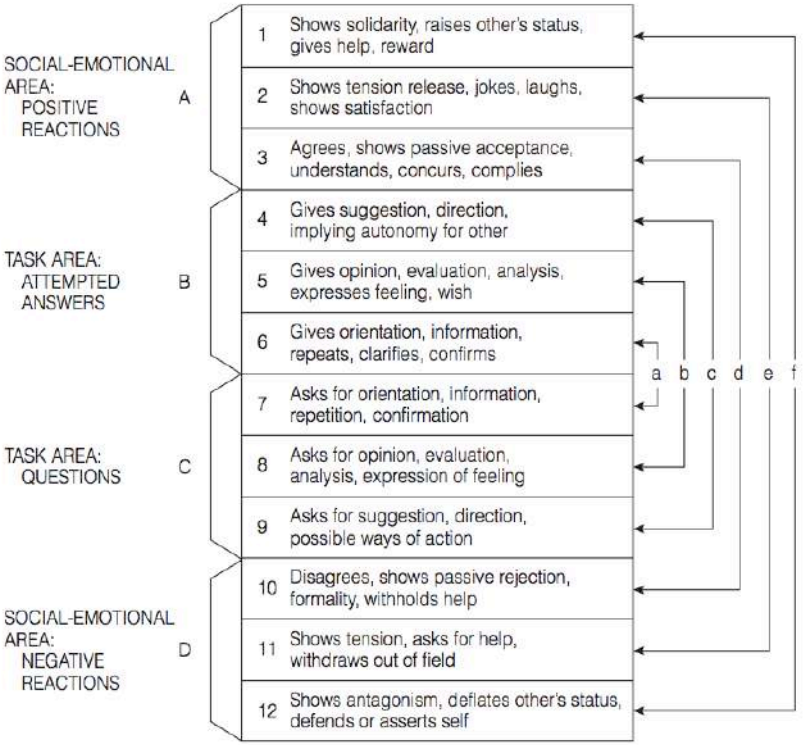
Like biologists who classify living organisms under such categories as phylum, subphylum, class, and order, or psychologists who classify people into various personality types, researchers who use a structured observational method classify each group behavior into an objectively definable category. First, they decide which behaviors to track. Then they develop unambiguous descriptions of each type of behavior they will code. Next, using these behavioral definitions as a guide, they note the occurrence and frequency of these targeted behaviors as they watch the group.

This type of research would be a ***Quantitative study***, because it yields numeric results (Weingart, 1997).

Measurement in group dynamics

Structured observational methods offer researchers a way to increase the objectivity of their observations.

Interaction Process Analysis (IPA) A structured coding system developed by Robert Bales used to classify group behavior into task-oriented and relationship-oriented categories. Researchers who use the IPA classify each behavior performed by a group member into one of the 12 categories



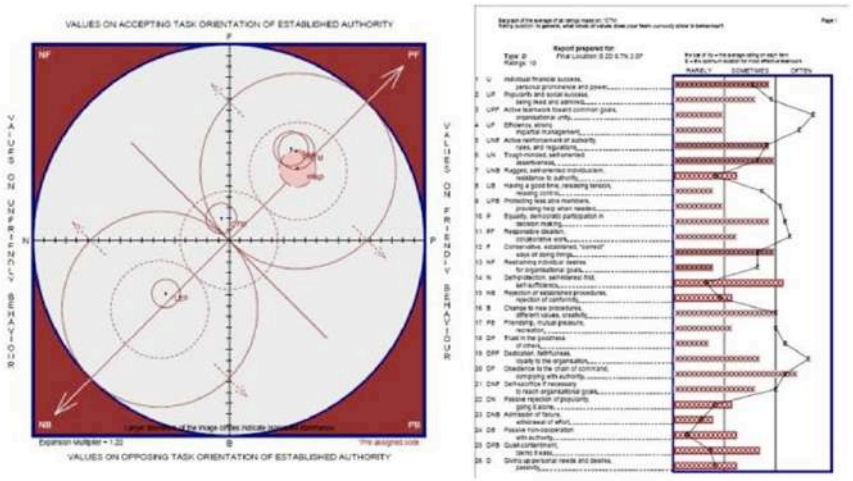
- Six of these categories (1–3 and 10–12) pertain to socioemotional, relationship interaction. These types of actions sustain or weaken interpersonal ties within the group.
- The other six catego- ries (4–9) pertain to instrumental, task interaction, such as giving and asking for information, opinions, and suggestions related to the problem the group faces.

Observers who use the IPA must be able to listen to a group discussion, break the content down into behavioral units, and then classify each unit into one of the 12 categories

Measurement in group dynamics

Structured observational methods offer researchers a way to increase the objectivity of their observations.

Systematic Multiple Level Observation of Groups (SYMLOG) A theoretical and structured coding system developed by Robert Bales which assumes that group activities can be classified along three dimensions: dominance versus submissiveness, friendliness versus unfriendliness, and acceptance of versus opposition to authority.



Bales improved the system over the years. His newer version, which generates more global summaries of group behavior, is called the Systematic Multiple Level Observation of Groups, or SYMLOG. SYMLOG coders use 26 different categories instead of only 12, with these categories signaling members' dominance–submissiveness, friendliness–unfriendliness, and accepting–opposing the task orientation of established authority (Hare, 2005).

Lesson: 3 - (2/4)
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Reliability and Validity of Observations

Structured observation systems, because they can be used to record the number of times a particular type of behavior has occurred, make possible com- parison across categories, group members, and even different groups. Moreover, if observers are carefully trained, structured coding system such as IPA and SYMLOG will yield data that are both reliable and valid. Reliability is determined by a measure's consistency across time, components, and raters.

Reliability

The degree to which a measurement tech- nique consistently yields the same conclusion at different times. For measurement techniques with two or more components, reliablility is also the degree to which these various components all yield similar conclusions.

The measure has ***interrater reliability*** if different raters, working independently, all think that the statement belongs in the same category.

Validity describes the extent to which the technique measures what it is supposed to measure. The IPA, for example, is valid only if observers' ratings actually measure the amount of relationship and task interaction in the group

Self-Report measure

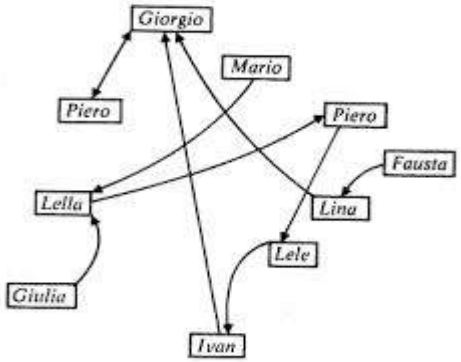
Self-report measure: An assessment method, such as a questionnaire, test, or interview, that ask respondents to describe their feelings, attitudes, or beliefs.

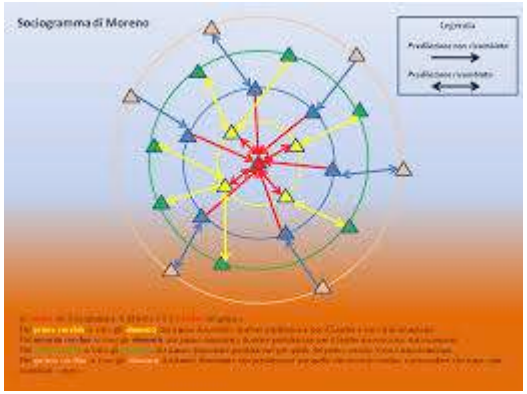
Self-report measures, despite their variations, are all based on a simple premise: if you want to know what a group member is thinking, feeling, or planning, then just ask him or her to report that information to you directly. In interviews the researcher records the respondent's answer to various questions, but questionnaires ask respondents to record their answers themselves. Some variables, such as members' beliefs about their group's cohesiveness or their perceptions of the group's leader, may be so complex that researchers need to ask a series of in- terrelated questions.

When the items are selected and pretested for accuracy, a multi-item measure is usually termed a test or a scale.

Sociometry

Sociometry Jacob Moreno (1934), a pioneer in the field of group dynamics, used self-report methods to study the social organization of groups of young women living in adjacent cottages at an instiution.





Sociometry A research technique developed by Jacob Moreno that graphically and mathematically summarizes patterns of intermember relations.

Sociogram A graphic representation of the patterns of intermember relations created through sociometry. In most cases each member of the group is depicted by a symbol, such as a lettered circle or square, and the types of relations among members (e.g., communication links, friendship pairings) are depicted with capped lines.

Sociometric data can also be examined using more elaborate statistical methods, such as path diagrams, factor plots, and cluster analysis (Brandes et al., 1999; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Computer programs such as Netdraw (Borgatti, 2002b), Sociometrics (Walsh, 2003), and KrackPlot (Krackhardt, 2003) can generate mathematically accurate sociograms.

Sociometry

A sociogram yields information about individual members, relationships between pairs of members, and the group's overall structure. Depending on their place in the group's sociogram, and the number of times they are chosen by others, members can be compared and contrasted:

- ***populars***, or stars, are well-liked, very popular group members with a high choice status: they are picked by many other group members
- ***unpopulars***, or rejected members, are identified as disliked by many members and so their choice status is low
- ***isolates***, or loners, are infrequently chosen by any group members
- ***positives***, or sociables, select many others as their friends
- ***negatives*** select few others as their friends
- ***pairs*** are two people who choose each other, and so have reciprocal bonds
- ***clusters*** are individuals within the group who make up a subgroup, or clique

Sociometry

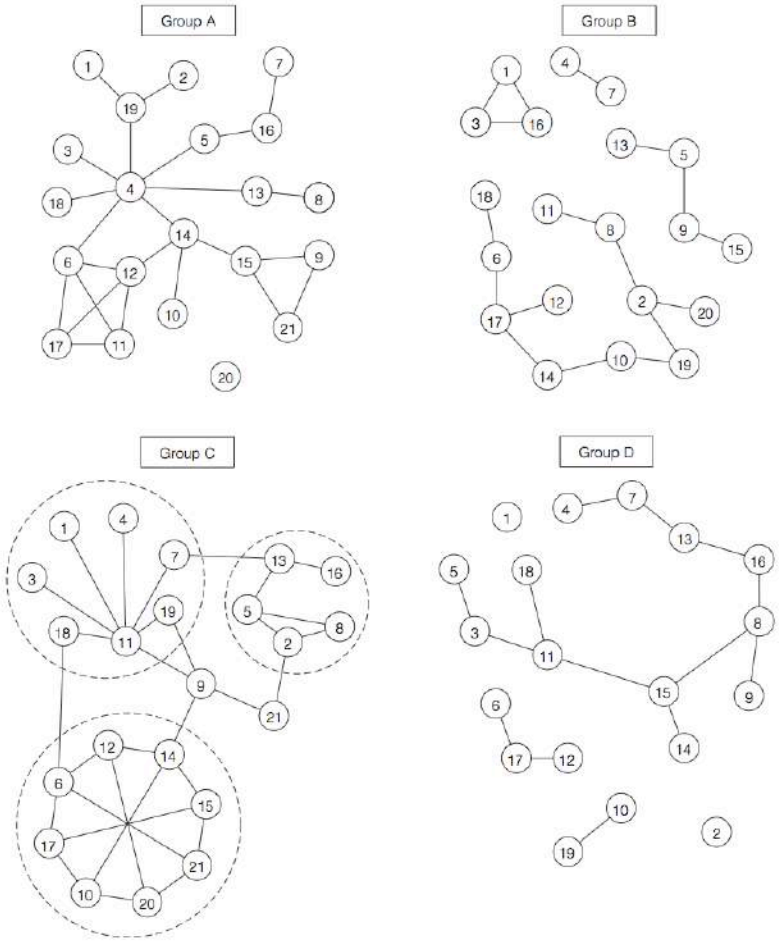
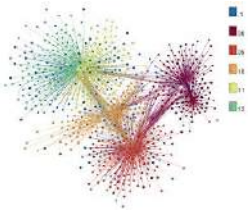
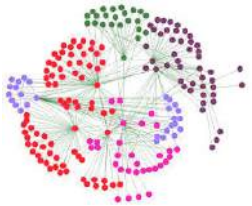


FIGURE 2.3 Examples of sociograms. Sociograms chart group structure by identifying relationships among the members. Group A is a centralized group, but B is relatively decentralized. Group C has a number of subgroups that are not well-linked, and Group D is relatively disorganized.

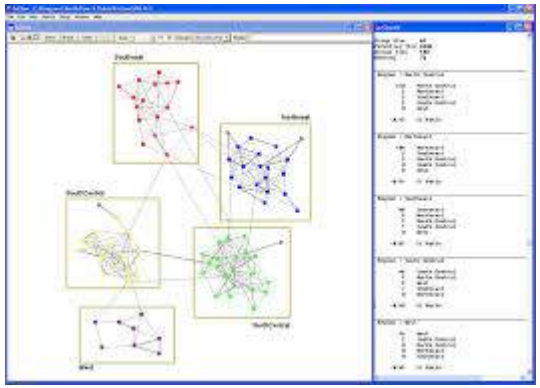


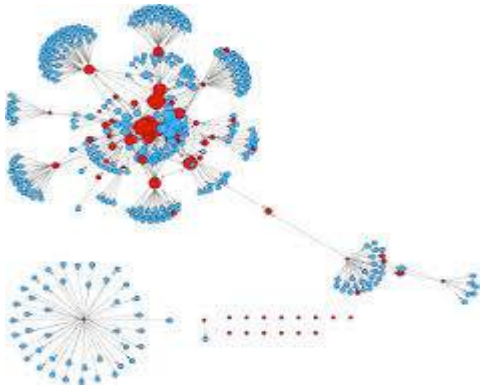
Social Network Analysis

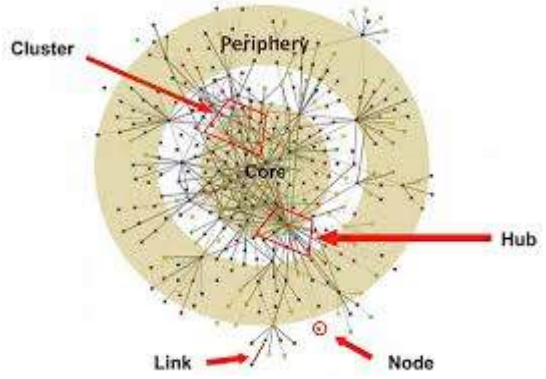


A too much brief note ...

Social network analysis (SNA) refers to a set of procedures for studying the relational structure of groups and networks mathematically and graphycally. Using information about the relationship (ties, edges) linking members (nodes, vertexes), the method yields member-level indexes (e.g. centrality, betweenness), group level indicators (e.g. density, cohesiveness, diameter), and a mathamatic representation of the unit.







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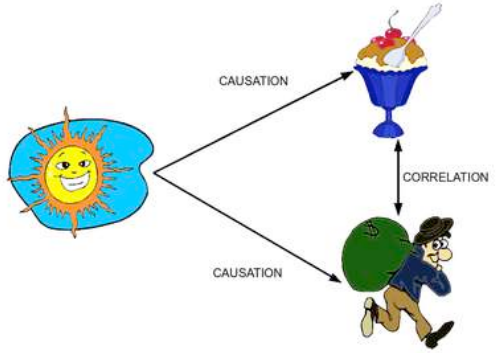
Research method in group dynamics

Good measurement alone does not guarantee good science. Once researchers have collected their data, they must use that information to test hypotheses about group phenomena. They use many techniques to check the adequacy of their suppositions about groups, but the three most common approaches are

1. ***case studies***,
2. ***experimental studies*** that manipulate one or more aspects of the group situation,
3. ***correlational studies*** of the naturally occurring relationships between various aspects of groups.



Research method in group dynamics
Case studies,

A research technique that involves examining, in as much detail as possible, the dynamics of a single group or individual.

Researchers have conducted case studies of all sorts of groups:

adolescent peer groups (Adler & Adler, 1995), ***artist circles*** (Farrell, 2001), ***crisis intervention teams in psychiatric hospitals*** (Murphy & Keating, 1995), ***cults*** (Festinger, Riecken, & Schachter, 1956), ***drug-dealing gangs*** (Venkatesh, 2008), ***families coping with an alcoholic member*** (Carvalho & Brito, 1995), ***focus groups*** (Seal, Bogart, & Ehrhardt, 1998), ***government leaders at international summits*** (Hare & Naveh, 1986), ***industrialists and inventors*** (Uglow, 2002), ***Little League baseball teams*** (Fine, 1987), ***mountain climbers*** (Kayes, 2006), ***naval personnel living in an undersea habitat*** (Radloff & Helmreich, 1968), ***presidential advisors*** (Goodwin, 2005), ***religious communes*** (Stones, 1982), ***rock-and-roll bands*** (Bennett, 1980), ***fans of rock-and-roll bands*** (Adams, 1998), ***search-and- rescue squads*** (Lois, 2003), ***sororities*** (Robbins, 2004), ***sports fans*** (St. John, 2004), ***support groups*** (Turner, 2000), ***the Supreme Court*** (Toobin, 2007), ***and, of course***, ***advisory groups making critically important decisions pertaining to national policy and defense*** (Allison & Zelikow, 1999; Janis, 1972).

Research method in group dynamics
Experimental Studies

key features of an experiment

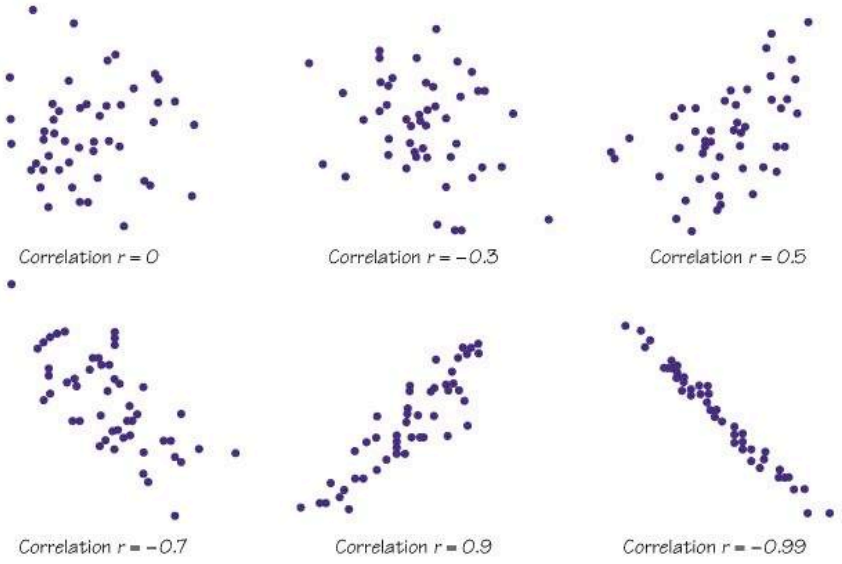
1. The researchers identify a variable that they believed is worth of interest, and then systematically manipulated it.
2. They manipulate this independent variable by giving subjects/groups/etc.. different types of treatment/ condition
3. The researchers assesse the effects of the independent variable by measuring some variable of interests (i.e. productivity, stress, anxiety, etc). The variables that researchers measure are called dependent variables, because their magnitude depends on the strength and nature of the independent variable.
4. The experimenters trie to maintain control over other variables.
5. The researchers use random assignment of groups to even out potential initial inequalities. Thus, they hope that any differences found on the dependent measure would be due to the independent variable rather than to uncontrolled differences among the participating groups.

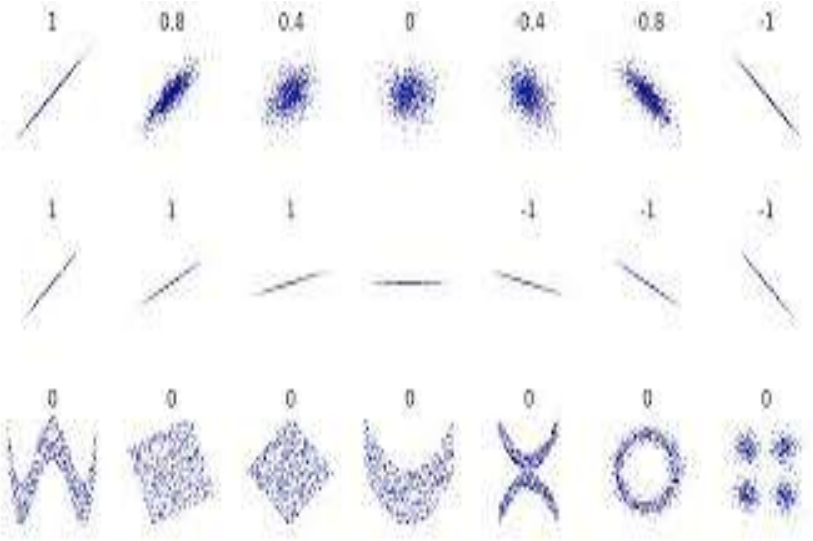
In sum, when researchers conduct experiments they manipulate one or more independent variables, assess systematically one or more dependent variables, and control other possible contaminating variables. When the experiment is properly designed and conducted, researchers can assume that any differences among the conditions on the dependent variables are produced by the independent variable that is manipulated, and not by some other variable outside their control.

Research method in group dynamics
Correlational studies,

Correlational study
A research design in which the investigator measures (but does not manipulate) at least two variables and then uses statistical procedures to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between these variables.

Correlation Coefficient
A statistic that measures the strength and direction of a relationship between two variables. Often symbolized by r, correlations can range from –1 to +1.





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Theoretical Perspectives in Group Dynamics

Successful researchers do not just develop ingenious methods for measuring and studying group processes. They also develop compelling theoretical explanations for group phenomena.

- Theories provide the means of organizing known facts about groups and so create orderly knowledge out of discrete bits of information. Theories also yield suggestions for future research.
- When researchers extend existing theories into new areas, they discover new information about groups, while simultaneously testing the strength of their theories.
- Researchers have developed hundreds of theories about groups and their dynamics. These theories, despite their variations, often share certain basic assumptions about what processes are more important than others, the types of outcomes they explain, and the variables that are most influential.

Theoretical Perspectives in Group Dynamics
Motivational and Emotional perspectives

Why do some people fight for leadership in their groups, whereas others remain content with less prominent roles? Why do some groups struggle against adversity, whereas others give up after the first setback? Why do some people shy away from groups, whereas others join dozens of them? The answers to these "why" questions often lie in people's motivations and emotions.

Emotion

A subjective state of positive or negative affect often accompanied by a degree of arousal or activation. group affective tone The collective emotional mood of a group.

Motivations

Psychological mechanisms that give purpose and direction to behavior. Psychological processes that energize behavior and thereby determine its form, intensity, and duration.

Psychologist Abraham Maslow's (1943) well known Hierarchy of Needs, describes a ranked series of basic human motives, including physiological and safety needs, belongingness needs, and the need for esteem and respect. So "GROUPS" answer to any needs?

Theoretical Perspectives in Group Dynamics
Behavioural Perspectives

Many theories about groups draw on the seminal work of psychologist B. F. Skinner (1953, 1971). Skinner's behaviorism was based on two key assumptions.

- ***Skinner believed that psychological processes, such as motives and drives, may shape people's reactions in groups, but he also believed that such psychological processes are too difficult to index accurately. He therefore recommended measuring and analyzing how people actually behave in a specific context rather than speculating about the psychological or interpersonal processes that may have instigated their actions.***

- ***Skinner believed that most behavior was consistent with the law of effect—that is, behaviors that are followed by positive consequences, such as rewards, will occur more frequently, whereas behaviors that are followed by negative consequences will become rarer.***

John Thibaut and Harold Kelley's (1959) social exchange theory extended Skinner's behaviorism to groups.

Behaviorism

A theoretical explanation of the way organisms acquire new responses to environmental stimuli through such conditioning processes as stimulus–response associations and reinforcement.

Theoretical Perspectives in Group Dynamics
System Theory perspectives

Systems Theory

A general theoretical approach which assumes that groups are systems—collections of individual units that combine to form an integrated, complex whole.

A systems theory approach assumes groups are complex, adaptive, dynamic systems of interacting individuals. The members are the units of the system, who are coupled one to another by relationships.

Just as systems can be deliberately designed to function in a particular way. Groups can be self-creating and self-organizing systems, for they may develop spontaneously as individuals begin to act in coordinated, synchronized ways.

Just as a system receives inputs from the environment, processes this information internally, and then outputs its products, groups gather information, review that information, and generate products. Groups are also responsive to information concerning the context in which they operate and their impact on that context, and will adapt in response to feedback about the efficacy of their actions (Ilgen et al.,2005; Littlepage et al., 1995).

Theoretical Perspectives in Group Dynamics
Cognitive perspectives

Cognitive Process

Mental processes that acquire, organize, and integrate information. Cognitive processes include memory systems that store data and the psychological mechanisms that process this information.

A group's dynamics, in many cases, become understandable only by studying the cognitive processes that allow members to gather information, make sense of it, and then act on the results of their mental appraisals.

When people join a group for the first time,

- ***they immediately begin to form an impression of the group. This perceptual work prompts them to search for information about the other group members, rapidly identifying those who are outgoing, shy, and intelligent.***
- ***Group members also search their memories for stored information about the group and the tasks it must face, and they must retrieve that information before they can use it.***

John Turner's (1991, 1999) self-categorization theory, or SCT, offers a cognitive explanation for a range for group processes, including intergroup perception and stereotyping.