Psicologia dei Gruppi e delle Relazioni Sociali

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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*
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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*
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30- *Constructing the Self in a Digital World*
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Lesson: 6 - (1/4)
Title: Cohesion and Development

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Lesson 6 Outline

- ***The Nature of Cohesion***
  - *Components of Cohesion*
  - *Antecedents of Cohesion*
  - *Indicators of Cohesion*

- ***Cohesion and Commitment over Time***
  - *Stages of Group Development*
  - *Cycles of Group Development*

- ***Consequences of Cohesion***
  - *Group Productivity*

Groups, like all living things, develop over time. The group may begin as a collection of strangers, but uncertainty gives way to cohesion as members become bound to their group by strong social forces. Cohesion, though, is not just group unity or the friendliness of members, but a multifaceted process that influences a wide range of interpersonal and intragroup processes. As cohesion and commitment ebb and flow with time, the group's influence over its members rises and falls.

Joining Groups
The Nature of Cohesion

Cohesion can lay claim to being group dynamics' most theoretically important concept. A diversity of meanings and interpretations reflects the complexity inherent in the concept itself.
Cohesion is not a simple, unitary process but a multicomponent process with a variety of indicators.

T A B L E 5.1   A Sampling of Definitions of Cohesion

Core Concept	Definition and Source
Attraction among the members of a group	The cohesiveness of small groups is defined in terms of intermember attraction . . . that group property which is inferred from the number and strength of mutual positive attitudes among the members of a group. (Lott & Lott, 1965, p. 259)
Attraction of the members to the group as a whole	Cohesiveness refers to attraction of members to a group as a whole . . . a kind of synthetic or aggregative property of the sum of the feelings of attraction to the group of each of the individual group members. (Nixon, 1979, p. 76)
	Relational cohesion [is] the sense of coming together, of something larger that unifies actors and actions. (Thye, Yoon, & Lawler, 2002, p. 146)
Belonging and morale	Perceived cohesion encompasses an individual's sense of belonging to a particular group and his or her feelings of morale associated with membership in the group. (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990, p. 482)
Strength of the social forces that keep an individual from leaving a group	Cohesiveness of a group is here deemed as the result of all the forces acting on the members to remain in the group. These forces may depend on the attractiveness or unattractiveness of either the prestige of the group, members in the group, or the activities in which the group engages. (Festinger, 1950, p. 274)
Tendency to stick together (cohere)	Social cohesion should also be understood as a state of affairs concerning how well people in a society "cohere" or "stick" to each other. (Chan, To, & Chan, 2006, p. 298)
	Cohesion is now generally described as group members' inclinations to forge social bonds, resulting in members sticking together and remaining united. (Casey-Campbell & Martens, 2008, p. 2)
Trust and teamwork	The essence of strong primary group cohesion, which I believe to be generally agreed on, is trust among group members (e.g., to watch each other's back) together with the capacity for teamwork (e.g., pulling together to get the task or job done). (Siebold, 2007, p. 288)

Joining Groups
The Nature of Cohesion: Social Cohesion

Kurt Lewin and Leon Festinger conducted some of the earliest studies of cohesion. As early as 1943, Lewin used the term cohesion to describe the forces that keep groups intact by pushing members together as well as the countering forces that push them apart.

- Festinger and his colleagues also stressed social forces that bind individuals to groups, in their studies they defined group cohesion as "***the total field of forces which act on members to remain in the group***" (Festinger, Schachter, & Back, 1950, p. 164).

- ***But when they measured cohesion, they focused on one force more than all others: attraction***. They asked the group members to identify all their good friends and calculated the ratio of ingroup choices to outgroup choices. The greater the ratio, the greater was the cohesiveness of the group (Dion, 2000).

- ***Cohesion is a multi level process as well as a multi component one***, so group members may be bonded to their groups in a number of ways. These various levels of attraction usually covary; for example, friendship among the members of a group tends to generate liking for and pride in the group as a whole (Carless & De Paola, 2000).

- ***When cohesion is based on group-level attraction, people remain members even when specific members leave the group*** (Ehrhart & Naumann, 2004; Mobley et al., 1979).

Joining Groups
The Nature of Cohesion: Task Cohesion

> ### *Teamwork*
> *The combined activities of two or more individuals who coordinate their efforts to make or do something. In many cases, each individual performs a portion of the task, which, when combined with others' work, yields a total group product.*
>
> ### *Collective Efficacy*
> *The belief, shared among a substantial portion of the group members, that the group is capable of organizing and executing the actions required to attain the group's goals and successfully complete its tasks.*

- Studies of sports teams, for example, find that most players, when asked to describe their team's cohesiveness, stress the quality of their teamwork (Carron, 1982; Yukelson, Weinberg, & Jackson, 1984).

- Task-oriented groups, such as military squads or flight crews, are unified by members' shared drive to accomplish their goals (Siebold, 2007).

- Collective Efficacy is "a group's shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainment" (Bandura, 1997, p. 476).

Joining Groups
The Nature of Cohesion: Perceived Cohesion

Cohesion applies to both physical objects as well as social groups. A cohesive object, such as a molecule, a compound, or even a planet, forms a single, unified entity that resists disintegration. Similarly, cohesive groups are perceived to be highly unified and integrated—individuals fused together to form a whole. Group members often reveal their perceptions of their group's unity in the words that they use to describe their connection to it.

- When asked, they agree *that there is a "a feeling of unity and cohesion in this group"* (Moos, Insel, & Humphrey, 1974);
- *That members tend to spend much of their time together*, even when they do not need to (Chang & Bordia, 2001).
- When members talk about themselves and their group, they *use more plural pronouns than personal pronouns*. (Cialdini et al., 1976).
- Members,when asked to comment directly on their sense of belonging to the group, are more likely to say "*I feel a sense of belonging to my group*" (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990), "*I think of this group as a part of who I am*" (Henry, Arrow, & Carini, 1999), and "*I see myself as a member of the group*" (Smith, Seger, & Mackie, 2007).

Joining Groups
The Nature of Cohesion: Emotional Cohesion

A variety of terms is used to describe group-level emotional states, including élan, morale, esprit de corps, and positive affective tone, but no matter what its label, this shared positive emotion is one of the most obvious features of many cohesive groups. Emotional cohesion, like the other components of cohesion, is a multi level process. Emotions, although traditionally thought to be personal reactions rather an interpersonal ones, can be collective.

- A group with high levels of collective efficacy may expect to succeed, but a group with esprit de corps has emotional vitality, passion, vim, and vigor. ***Esprit de corps, or positive affective tone, predicts a number of positive behaviors in the group, including helping teammates, protecting the organization, making constructive suggestions, improving one's personal performance, spreading goodwill, and even enhancing survival*** (Spoor & Kelly, 2004; Zhou & George, 2001).

- ***Collective emotions are also socially shared, in the sense that all the group members experience the same emotional reaction***, as if they had reached consensus on the feelings they should be experiencing. These group-level emotions also become more intense when individuals strongly identify with their group—although this tendency is stronger for positive emotions than for negative ones (Smith, Seger, & Mackie, 2007).

Lesson: 6 - (2/4)
Title: Cohesion and Development

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Joining Groups

The Nature of Cohesion: Antecedents of Cohesion

The strength of the bonds linking members to one another and their group depends on a number of components, including attraction relations (social cohesion), the degree to which the group members coordinate their efforts to achieve goals (task cohesion), the sense of belonging and unity in group (perceived cohesion), and the intensity of the members' communal emotions (emotional cohesion).

T A B L E 5.2   A Multicomponent Conception of Cohesion in Groups

Component	Description	Examples
Social cohesion	Attraction of members to one another and to the group as a whole	I have many friends in this group. I love this group. This group is the best.
Task cohesion	Capacity to perform successfully as a coordinated unit and as part of the group	This group is effective. This group is the best at what it does. I do my best for this group.
Perceived cohesion	The construed coherence of the group; sense of belonging to the group; unity	United we stand. This is a unified group. I am one with this group.
Emotional cohesion	Emotional intensity of the group and individuals when in the group	This group has tremendous energy. This group has team spirit. I get excited just being in this group.

Joining Groups
Antecedents of Cohesion: Stability of Membership

As Brooks surmised, cohesiveness tends to increase the longer members remain in the group.

- The groups with more unstable membership faced influxes of new members each year and during the year itself (Darley, Gross, & Martin, 1951).

- These findings are consistent with Robert Ziller's (1965) distinction between **open groups** and **closed groups**. Ziller maintained that groups differ in the extent to which their boundaries and membership rosters are open and fluctuating versus closed and fixed.

Joining Groups
Antecedents of Cohesion: Stability of Membership

As Brooks surmised, cohesiveness tends to increase the longer members remain in the group.

In **open groups**, members are voted out of the group, quit the group for personal reasons, or join other groups. Regardless of the reasons for these changes in membership, open groups are especially unlikely to reach a state of equilibrium, since members recognize that they may lose or relinquish their place within the group at any time.

In contrast, **closed groups** are often more cohesive, because competition for membership is irrelevant and group members anticipate future collaborations. Thus, in closed groups, individuals tend to focus on the collective nature of the group and are more likely to identify with their group as they work together to accomplish a collective goal. Ziller's theory suggests that open groups, by their very nature, are less cohesive (Burnette & Forsyth, 2008).

OPEN
FOR
BUSINESS

CLOSED
FOR
BUSINESS

VIRTHULAB

Joining Groups
Antecedents of Cohesion: Group Size

The impact of group size on cohesion is, in part, a consequence of the sheer number of interpersonal demands that larger networks make of their members. As a group increases in size the number of possible relations among individuals increases so rapidly that members can no longer maintain strong, positive ties with all group members.

- Studies of classes, for example, find that **students learn more in small classes, in part because these groups are higher in social engagement as well as academic engagement** (Finn, Pannozzo, & Achilles, 2003).
- Investigations of neighborhoods indicate that **size determines sense of community** (Vela-McConnell, 1999).
- **As groups increase in size, a larger proportion of the members no longer takes part in all the group activities** (Bales & Borgatta, 1955).
- The variety of persons, interests, events becomes too large to be regulated by the center" (Simmel, 1950, pp. 397–398).

… but of course this is just a very partial vision of such a factor!

Joining Groups

Antecedents of Cohesion: Structural Features and Initiation

Cohesion is related to group structure in two basic ways. First, cohesive groups tend to be relatively more structured ones. Second, certain types of group structures are associated with higher levels of cohesion than others

- *The higher the proportion of ties to nongroup members relative to ties to group members, the lower the overall cohesiveness of the group* (McPherson & Smith-Loving, 2002).
- *Many groups require prospective members to pass an initiation test before they join the group*. Initiates in biker gangs, for example, must earn the right to wear the letters and emblems of their gang—their "colors"—by performing a variety of distasteful behaviors (Davis, 1982).
- *Groups with strict membership policies*, including initiations, avoid this problem by *screening and monitoring members closely and dismissing those individuals who do not demonstrate their worth* (Iannaccone, 1994).
- *People who join emotionally involving groups* such as fraternities, social movements, or cults may also *become more committed to the group as a result of cognitive dissonance*.

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Joining Groups
Indicators of Cohesion

Cohesion is the strength of the bonds linking individuals to and in the group, but a variety of factors influence the group's social, task, perceptual, and emotional unity. These components have multiple causes, and they also cut across levels of analysis, with some pertaining to relations among individuals and others connecting individuals to the group itself.

- *Given the complexity of this process, what unifies the members of a work group may not unify the members of a religious congregation, a classroom, or a military squad (Ridgeway, 1983).*

Some tools:

Group Environment Scale (Moos et al., 1974),
Group Attitude Scale (Evans & Jarvis, 1986),
Group Environment Questionnaire (Widmeyer, Brawley, & Carron, 1992),
Perceived Cohesion Scale (Bollen &Hoyle, 1990),
Group Identification Scale (Henry et al., 1999),
Sports Cohesiveness Questionnaire (Martens, Landers, & Loy, 1972),
Gross Cohesion Questionnaire (Stokes, 1983),
Group Cohesion Scale-Revised (Treadwell et al., 2001),
Questionnaire sur l'Ambiance du Groupe (Buton et al., 2007).

Joining Groups
Group Productivity
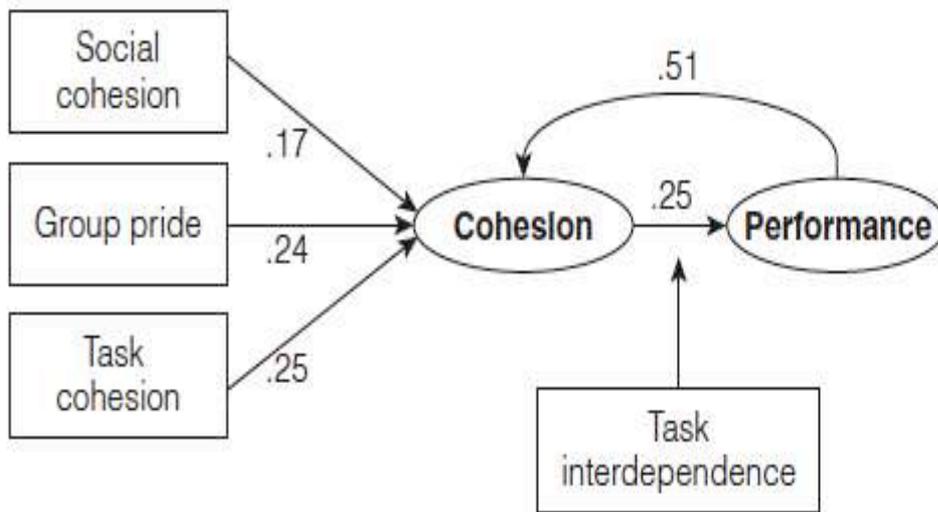
FIGURE 5.2 The relationship between three components of cohesion (social and task cohesion, and group pride), cohesion, and performance. Meta-analyses suggest that cohesion influences performance (and task cohesion is strongest predictor of cohesion), but that the impact of performance on cohesion is stronger than the impact of cohesion on performance.

Joining Groups
Group Productivity
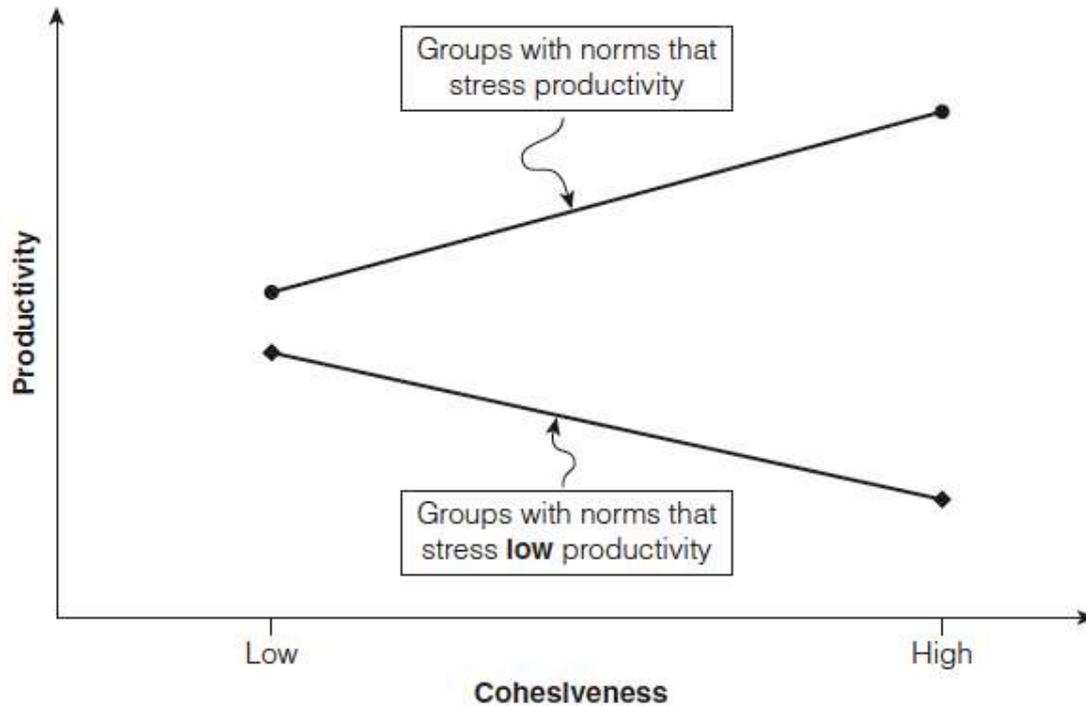
F I G U R E 5.3   The relationship between cohesion and productivity when norms stress high and low productivity. If the group's norms encourage productivity, cohesiveness and productivity will be positively correlated. If the group standards for performance are low, however, cohesiveness will actually undermine productivity.

Lesson: 6 - (4/4)
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Joining Groups

Cohesion and committment over time: Stages of Group Development
The Tuckman Model

Theoreticians are at variance on many points, but most agree that groups pass through several phases, or stages, as they develop. Just as humans mature from infancy to childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age, stage models of group development theorize that groups move from one stage to the next in a predictable, sequential fashion. most models include the basic stages shown here:

T A B L E 5.3   Stages of Group Development

Stage	Major Processes	Characteristics
Orientation: *Forming*	Members become familiar with each other and the group; dependency and inclusion issues; acceptance of leader and group consensus	Communications are tentative, polite; concern for ambiguity, group's goals; leader is active; members are compliant
Conflict: *Storming*	Disagreement over procedures; expression of dissatisfaction; tension among members; antagonism toward leader	Criticism of ideas; poor attendance; hostility; polarization and coalition formation
Structure: *Norming*	Growth of cohesiveness and unity; establishment of roles, standards, and relationships; increased trust, communication	Agreement on procedures; reduction in role ambiguity; increased "we-feeling"
Work: *Performing*	Goal achievement; high task-orientation; emphasis on performance and production	Decision making; problem solving; mutual cooperation
Dissolution: *Adjourning*	Termination of roles; completion of tasks; reduction of dependency	Disintegration and withdrawal; increased independence and emotionality; regret

Joining Groups

Cohesion and committment over time: Stages of Group Development

Forming: The Orientation Stage The first few minutes, hours, days, or even weeks of a newly formed group's life are often marked by tension, guarded interchanges, and relatively low levels of interaction. During this initial forming stage, members monitor their behavior. This gradual, and in some cases tactical, communication of personal information is termed self-disclosure. (Jourard, 1971).

Storming: The storming stage is marked by personal conflicts between individual members who discover that they just do not get along, procedural conflict over the group's goals and procedures, and competition between individual members for authority, and prestigious roles. Members may oscillate between fight and flight. Some may openly challenge the leader's policies and decisions (fight), whereas others may respond by minimizing contact with the leader (flight). (Bennis & Shepard, 1956; Wheelan & McKeage, 1993).

Norming: With each crisis overcome, the group become more stable, more organized, and more cohesive. Groups in the third stage of group development, the norming stage, become both unified and organized.
Whereas groups in the orientation and conflict stages are characterized by low levels of intimacy, friendship, and unity, the group becomes a unified whole when it reaches the structure-development

Performing: Few groups are productive immediately; instead, productivity must usually wait until the group matures. Various types of groups, become more efficient and productive later in their
group's life cycle (Hare, 1967, 1982; Hare & Naveh, 1984). Conflict and uncertainty also decrease over time as work-focused comments increase. Groups that have been together longer talk more about work-related matters, whereas younger groups are more likely to express conflict or uncertainty and make requests for guidance (Wheelan, Davidson, & Tilin, 2003).

Joining Groups
Cohesion and committment over time: Stages of Group Development

Adjourning: A group's entry into the dissolution stage can be either planned or spontaneous. Planned dissolution takes place when the group accomplishes its goals or exhausts its time and resources. Spontaneous dissolution, in contrast, occurs when the group's end is not scheduled.

Joining Groups

Cohesion and committment over time: Stages of Group Development

Many theorists believe that groups repeatedly cycle through stages during their lifetime, rather than just moving through each stage once (e.g., Arrow, 1997). These cyclical models agree that certain issues tend to dominate group interaction during the various phases of a group's development, but they add that these issues can recur later in the life of the group.

Equilibrium Model
A conceptual analysis of group development, proposed by Robert Bales, that assumes the focus of a group shifts back and forth between the group's tasks and the interpersonal relationships among group members.

Punctuated Equilibrium Model
A group development theory that assumes groups change gradually over time but that the periods of slow growth are punctuated by brief periods of relatively rapid change.