

ECE 493 Prelab 1

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January 13, 2021

1

1.1

I find that most of the criticisms the paper makes about existing organizations are still true. For example, I have noticed from personal experience that switching the group that I am working in to work on a different project has more friction than working on a different project with the same group of people. I find that the paper's remarks that organizations in their current state tend to emphasize "achievement motivation" to be true as well, with most people working towards themselves getting a promotion, as opposed to the focus being on a group of people rising the ranks in the company together. Even in the workplace today, in my recent co-op experience, while efforts are being made to work in groups, (like having multiple Agile teams work in their groups) it feels like it is still largely an afterthought, and the organizations were not designed from the ground up with groups being the smallest unit. As a result, most organizations today seem to be missing out on the seven benefits outlined in the paper which argue in favour of "groupy" organizations.

1.2

I would consider school in general to mostly be a "highly individualistic" organization, which has been a part of my life. A lot of the time, I feel that "groupy" organizations are more effective for accomplishing goals such as actually understanding the content. For example, team members can

work on tasks in parallel to reach their goals faster. Also, people often have knowledge gaps in different parts of the content. Those working in a group can get a better understanding of the content by sharing the parts they know well, helping to fill in the gaps for other group members. Often times this may save time for an instructor as well, since group mates can answer each others' questions as opposed to having many individuals ask the instructor questions that they might have, usually with multiple duplicates.

1.3

In my life, there have been times when school projects were set up as “groupy” organizations. Most of the time, they work out great, however, there are some cases where a “highly individualistic” organization might have worked better for finishing the project. There are times when work cannot be done in parallel due to the nature of the project, and team members end up waiting on each other for dependencies to be completed. Furthermore, once a portion of the project is done, knowledge must be transferred from one group member to the other, which is a good opportunity for error to be introduced (Like the telephone game where a sentence is said to one person, and the message is passed around. At the end of the activity, the participants usually find that the message has changed from what it originally was). In situations like these, I would argue that an individualistic organization would be more ideal, because one person can keep track of what needs to be done, and can always be working on something, as opposed to a group where one person is working on a particular task while the rest of the members have to wait.

1.4

I think that in general, the gender effects mentioned in the paper probably still hold true today in Canadian society. While one may not need to look far to find an exception (i.e. a woman who socialized into a competitive attitude), I would speculate that the ratio of men to women likely changed in recent times such that fewer women socialize into affiliative and relational attitudes and more women socialize into more competitive attitudes compared to the past. However, I think that men are still overall more likely to socialize into competitive attitudes than women at this time of writing.

This trend may be true in my social circle. When choosing a socially distanced activity to do on-line, people who identify as female in our group

seem to prefer games that are co-operative and require working together as a team to accomplish a goal (e.g. Overcooked, Among Us), while most who identify as male seem to prefer more competitive games with a highly individualistic ranking system (e.g. Counter-Strike: Global Offensive, Call of Duty Modern Warfare). It should be noted however, that the number of women in the social circle may not be statistically significant enough compared to the number of men for drawing conclusions such as this.

2

2.1

The difference seems to be that for small group research, social psychology has an emphasis on people and their interactions with other people within the groups, while organizational psychology has more focus on how the group as a whole accomplishes tasks, and the technologies used to solve the task. Personally, I do not have any experience of my own in doing any sort of psychology research but an example of the social type might be studying how the language used to communicate between group members evolves over time as they get to know each other, while an example of the organizational type might be studying what tools are being used for communication (like phone calls, or video web conferencing).

2.2

- “context” in the context of the paper appears to refer to the environment in which an individual or group is performing a task in. The paper mentions how context can influence how a group functions, or in other words, how a team might work differently in a work environment where there is pressure to deliver an outcome that might affect someone’s career, versus a low risk research environment with made-up tasks.
- “workflow” in the context of the paper appears to refer to the processes a group might set up to handle tasks, and how they get the tasks completed as a group. i.e. how tasks go from a state of being incomplete, to a completed state.

- “levels” in the context of the paper appears to refer to where an individual is located within a nested organizational structure. Examples of levels include the individual level, the team level, and higher order levels above. The paper talks about how there are different emergent properties that appear at these different levels, even if each individual has their own, distinct thoughts and behaviours
- “time” in the context of the paper has exactly the same meaning as the ordinary meaning of the word. The paper talks about how time plays an important role in the evolution of a team, and how this effect cannot be observed in research studies which generally observe teams in a short time span where there is not enough time for teams to mature.

2.3

First, a group size of three is a small group. I have found in my personal experience that working in a small group is much less complicated than working in a larger group. I would guess that the instructor sees this trend too. There are less interpersonal conflicts, and developing a consensus is much easier. It is also quicker to get to know your group mates, since remembering two new names is easier than remembering ten, for example. It is also common in larger groups to form smaller groups within, and this might be a situation that has not worked well in the past for the capstone project. Larger groups are also expected to complete more work yet when they fail, it is much harder to recover from. Another reason to prefer a smaller group over a larger one is that it is easier to hold everyone accountable in a smaller group, and make sure everyone is doing their fair share. Additionally, with a lower number of people, there are bound to be fewer silos, where one person might be working hard on a specific thing, yet the rest of the team has no idea what they are doing. Everyone should have a general idea of what their mates are doing, because there are only two other group mates. Knowledge transfers also happen much quicker with the decreased complexity. Three is also an odd number, which helps with decision-making because there are no ties.

2.4

The paper mentions that various studies have found wildly different results on whether or not diversity in teams is beneficial. Other factors matter too, like the nature of the tasks, and if the tasks are menial, or if they require creativity, or if many different skills are required to do the task versus doing simple, mostly similar tasks.

According to https://saylordotorg.github.io/text_organizational-behavior-v1.1/s06-02-demographic-diversity.html, benefits of demographic diversity in teams include higher creativity in decision-making, which results in better decisions to be made overall, due to more outcomes being considered. More ideas are generated, but also because peoples' backgrounds differ, they also raise more potential issues, which leads to better choices being made overall. This page makes some bold claims that diversity may result in higher stock prices, lower litigation expenses, and higher overall performance as a company. It also mentions a few drawbacks, such as "fault-lines", where people may divide themselves into subgroups with similar backgrounds, and issues that may arise with different ages, religion, and sexual orientations. The following page https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Team_diversity#Demographic_diversity mentions that " individuals who are different from their work team in demographic characteristics are less psychologically committed to their organizations, less satisfied and are therefore more absent from work". However, it also mentions that age diversity may not be ideal, since studies have shown that people are more likely to part from the group. Gender and different ethnic backgrounds tend to have more conflict at the beginning, but these problems also tend to go away once the team matures, and perform better than a homogeneous team over time. It also mentions that while there are these specific benefits and drawbacks, the impacts of demographic diversity as a whole are still contested, due to research not keeping up, and also synthetic tests likely not being representative of an actual workplace, which is an issue mentioned in the original paper.

2.5

The Big Five personality factors according to https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Team_diversity#Demographic_diversity are:

1. openness to experience: people in this category tend to be more willing to try out something new, and also tend to value experiences such as

an adventure, art, or a particularly moving film. Compared to someone who is less open, they might be more creative, but also more curious and more willing to take risks.

2. conscientiousness: people in this category are very deliberate in their actions. They usually have a great work ethic self-discipline, and strive to exceed their goals. These people have a high attention to detail, and tend to prefer their activities to have a concrete plan over spontaneity
3. extraversion: extraverts tend to enjoy being around with other people, and dislike being alone with their thoughts. They usually are the ones to initiate conversations with others, and enjoy the attention of others. Usually, within a group, extraverts are the most visible members, and can appear assertive.
4. agreeableness: agreeable people tend to appear friendly, kind, and generous. They value getting along with other people, and are usually willing to compromise, even if something goes against their values. They usually have concern for the general well-being of others, and are usually willing to set some time aside to help someone out. They also tend to see the good side in people and believe that humans are generally good in nature instead of evil.
5. neuroticism: people in this category tend to experience bad feelings often, and appear to be emotionally unstable. “Bad” feelings include things like anger, anxiety, and depression. These people tend to have a low tolerance for stress, and it does not take much to get stressed out, irritated, sad, or to ruin their day in some other way. Inconveniences that may appear minor to some might actually become a huge hurdle to overcome for a person with neuroticism.

2.6

Interviews today are highly based on the individual, which does not take into account at all how well the individual will work in a team. Organizations might want to switch their current tactics for constructing teams. It could be that the future of talent acquisition is organizations evaluating their candidates while they are interacting in a group, instead of doing a classic one-on-one style of interview. Whether the person is being formally assigned

to a group or not, informal groups are bound to be formed in the organization, and the individual will eventually have to interact with others, and complete tasks in groups. More research might be done so that we can find out what characteristics are required to make a better team, and once identified, these could be used to select good candidates, and get a good team together from the start, methodically, instead of by trial and error.

2.7

The four stages are:

1. forming: in the forming stage, the group meets for the first time as the group is formed. They discuss what needs to be done, but they also discuss the challenges they may face. The main focus is on defining team norms, and what is expected from each member. Team members might begin their tasks, but the work tends to be done independently.
2. storming: in the storming phase, people who might have been too anxious to share a controversial opinion or concern might feel ready to voice their concerns. Disagreements may happen, hence the “storming” name. The team may have to revisit their original goals and tweak them, or break down their tasks into more digestible chunks. This is about getting back on track, and sorting out interpersonal conflicts.
3. norming: after the storming phase, things tend to settle down in the norming phase. Team members start to get to know each other better, and they should trust each other more. People should start to feel more comfortable with working in the group. Team members start to become more cooperative with each other, and conflict is generally avoided yet there is still tolerance for constructive criticism. Team members might want to work on tasks together. There is a focus on productivity at this stage
4. performing: in the performing stage, team members should be mostly autonomous, and the group as a whole should be performing at its peak. At this point, everyone is mostly comfortable with each other, and everyone knows what needs to be done to reach their goals. The co-operative spirit is continued from the previous stage. Most of the progress is made here, or the project done to completion. It is possible

to regress to an earlier stage. A new scrum master for example may revert the team to the storming phase as they adjust to their new expectations, and potential conflicts arise.

reference: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuckman%27s_stages_of_group_development