

Group Formation and Development

After its formation, a group goes through predictable stages of development. If successful, it emerges as a mature group. One logical group development model proposes four stages following the group's formation:¹⁹ mutual acceptance, decision making, motivation and commitment, and control and sanctions. To become mature, a group must negotiate each of the stages in development.

According to this group development model, a group addresses three issues: interpersonal issues, task issues, and authority issues.²⁰ The interpersonal issues include matters of trust, personal comfort, and security. The task issues include the mission or purpose of the group, the methods the group employs, and the outcomes expected of the group. The authority issues include decisions about who is in charge, how power and influence are managed, and who has the right to tell whom to do what. This section addresses group formation, each stage of group development, and the characteristics of a mature group.

Group Formation

Formal and informal groups form in organizations for different reasons. Formal groups are sometimes called official or assigned groups, and informal groups may be called unofficial or emergent groups. Formal groups gather to perform various tasks and include an executive and staff, standing committees of the board of directors, project task forces, and temporary committees. An example of a formal group was the task force at The University of Texas at Arlington, whose mission was to design the Goolsby Leadership Academy, which bridges academics and practice. Chaired by the associate dean of business, the task force was composed of seven members with diverse academic expertise and business experience. The task force envisioned a five-year developmental plan to create a national center of excellence in preparing Goolsby Scholars for authentic leadership in the twenty-first century.

Diversity is an important consideration in the formation of groups. For example, Monsanto Agricultural Company, now simply Monsanto Company, created a task force titled "Valuing Diversity" to address subtle discrimination resulting from workforce diversity.²¹ The original task force was titled "Eliminating Subtle Discrimination (ESD)" and was composed of fifteen women, minorities, and white males. Subtle discrimination might include the use of gender-specific or culture-specific language. Monsanto and the task force's intent was to build on individual differences—whether in terms of gender, race, or culture—in developing a dominant heterogeneous culture. Diversity can enhance group performance. One study of gender diversity among U.S. workers found that men and women in gender-balanced groups had higher job satisfaction than those in homogeneous groups.²²

Ethnic diversity has characterized many industrial work groups in the United States since the 1800s. This was especially true during the early years of the 1900s, when waves of immigrant workers arrived from Germany, Yugoslavia, Italy, Poland, Scotland, the Scandinavian countries, and many other nations. Organizations were challenged to blend these culturally and linguistically diverse peoples into effective work groups.

In addition to ethnic, gender, and cultural diversity, there is interpersonal diversity. Highly effective work groups achieve compatibility through interpersonal diversity. Successful interpersonal relationships are the basis of group effort, a key foundation for business success. Effective, productive work groups often differ in their needs for inclusion in activities, control of people and events, and interpersonal

- 3 Describe group formation, the stages of group development, and the characteristics of a mature group.