

Tuckman B W. Developmental sequence in small groups.

Psychol. Bull. 63:384-99, 1965.

[Naval Medical Research Institute, Bethesda, MD]

Based on a review of 50 articles describing stages of development in therapy, T-, natural, and laboratory groups, a model of small group development is proposed. Four stages, covering both group interpersonal and task activities are described and labeled 'forming,' 'storming,' 'norming,' and 'performing.' [The Science Citation Index® (SCI®) and the Social Sciences Citation Index® (SSCI®) indicate that this paper has been cited in over 165 publications since 1965.]

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"My first professional job was as part of a small group of social psychologists in a think tank setting studying small group behavior as the US Navy prepared for a future of small crew vessels and stations. Nine of us at the Naval Medical Research Institute were busy studying small groups from all perspectives and under all conditions. I was fortunate to have an experienced and talented boss by the name of Irwin Altman, who had been collecting every article he could find on group development. He turned his collection over to me and suggested that I look it over and see if I could make anything out of it.

"The collection contained 50 articles, many of which were psychoanalytic studies of therapy or T-groups. The task of organizing and integrating them was challenging. After separating out two realms of group functioning, namely, the interpersonal or group structure realm and the task activity realm, I began to look for a developmental sequence that would fit the findings of a majority of the studies. I hit on four stages going from (1) orientation/testing/dependence,

to (2) conflict, to (3) group cohesion, to (4) functional role-relatedness. For these I coined the terms: 'forming,' 'storming,' 'norming,' and 'performing'—terms that would come to be used to describe developing groups for the next 20 years and which probably account for the paper's popularity.

"There still remained the task of getting the paper published and that was no mean feat. Lloyd Humphreys, then editor of the *Psychological Bulletin*, turned it down, offering me constructive editorial criticism but concluding that the reviewed studies themselves were not of sufficient quality to merit publication. I was persistent, though, and rewrote the manuscript per his recommendations and sent it back to him despite his initial outright rejection. I pointed out that I was not trying to justify the collected articles but to draw inferences from them. Humphreys did a complete about-face and accepted my argument and my manuscript and, in short order, it appeared in print.

"I ordered, thanks to the Navy, 450 reprints and used them all to fill requests within the first three or four years after the article appeared. Requests came from all over the world and from a wide range of disciplines and I have saved some of the more exotic ones. Almost yearly, I receive a request from someone to use parts of the article or at least the terms 'forming,' 'storming,' 'norming,' and 'performing' in print. Again, quotability may be the key to success.

"In 1977, I published, by invitation, an update of the model in a journal called *Group & Organization Studies*—in collaboration with Mary Ann Jensen.¹ We reviewed 22 studies that had appeared since the original publication of the model and which we located by means of the *Social Sciences Citation Index*. These articles, one of which dubbed the stages 'Tuckman's hypothesis,'² tended to support the existence of the four stages but also suggested a fifth stage for which a perfect rhyme could not be found. We called it 'adjourning.'"

1. Tuckman B W & Jensen M A. Stages of small-group development revisited. *Group Org. Studies* 2:419-27, 1977. (Cited 5 times.)

2. Runkel P J, Lawrence M, Oldfield S, Riker M & Clark C. Stages of group development—an empirical test of Tuckman's hypothesis. *J. Appl. Behav. Sci.* 7:180-93, 1971.