

A Dissection of Shamwow Using The Study of Group Dynamics: An Individual's Effect
on Group Formation, Conflict and Leadership

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Group dynamics is an emerging field in Psychology. It is the study of the interactions and events that take place within a group. Individuals are constantly interacting in groups consciously or subconsciously. These interactions heavily influence the behaviour and actions of individuals. The purpose of this research assignment is to analyze the various events and encounters that occur in a group and its members. It will look at group development and structure and try to establish a relationship between members and group cohesion. Additionally, it will address the conflict that arises in any given group by understanding the social dilemmas at play, different ways conflict can be managed and the effect of gender on conflict resolution techniques. Lastly, a group's success is partially due to the leader and various leadership styles that can be used. This paper will help grasp the impact that leadership styles may have, the qualities that increase a leader's success and the key gender differences in leadership.

The research for this assignment was completed by observing a group of three males and 4 females; who collectively agreed to name the group Shamwow. Their slogan was 'Keeping it Fresh'. All the members in this group are Psychology majors, except for the author, who is a Kinesiology major. The author is male, 21 years of age and comes from a South Asian background. Group member A is male, 21 years of age and has a South Asian background. Group member B is male, 24 years of age and has a South Asian background. Group member C is female, 23 years of age and has a South Asian background. Group member D is female, 20 years of age and has a Greek background. Group member E is female, 21 years of age and has a Middle-Eastern background. Lastly, group member F is female, 19 years of age and has a South Asian background. Shamwow: Keeping it fresh was observed in understanding the broad topics of group formation & structure, conflict and leadership.

Group Formation & Structure

Norm Development

Livingstone et al. (2011) conducted a study to examine the reversible relationship between in-group identification and norm acquisition. They hypothesized that in-group identification will increase with norm acquisition and vice versa. To test their hypothesis, they used two groups of undergraduate psychology students. The first group consisted of 32 members and the second group had 39 members. The first group completed the questionnaire before beginning group activities whereas; the second group completed the questionnaire after the activities. The results yielded that the second group showed higher in-group identification than the first. These findings allowed the researchers to conclude that the degree to which a member adapts to the norms of the group is dependent on the members feeling of inclusion with the in-group (Livingstone et al., 2011).

The conclusions of the study can be seen in Shamwow. The members of Shamwow had agreed that each member will help with group activities and notify the group if they will be missing a group meeting. Member C acquired the norm excellently, as she constantly notified the group her reason of absence. Contrarily, the author did not maintain this norm, as he did not notify the group of his absences, as a result of weak in-group identification. Additionally, everyone in the group assisted in group activities except for member F.

The author may have demonstrated the least in-group identification due to the nature of the group. The author may have perceived the group as an academic obligation, in which only he was to suffer the consequences if he did not participate, and not a social, collective obligation. The author may not have notified other group members of absences, because it would not affect the group's chances of receiving bonus marks. Likewise, member F also demonstrated weak in-

group identification as a result of her timid nature. Member F was very shy and submissive to other people's opinions. Furthermore, her suggestions and opinions were highly criticized. Shamwow could have been more successful if the author and member F felt a stronger connection to the in-group which would result in better norm acceptance (Livingstone et al., 2011).

Group Development

Once a group has met (forming) and their interaction increases (storming), the nature and behaviour of individuals can change (Tuckman, 1965; Forsyth, 2010). This may lead to the group becoming further cohesive and productive (performing) or lead to disbanding of the group (adjourning) (Chidambaram & Bostrom, 1996; Forsyth, 2010). Chidambaram and Bostrom (1996) studied the various cycles that group development can occur. After conducting research they were able to narrow it down to sequential and non-sequential. Sequential models demonstrate the group cycle from beginning to end accounting of all group behaviours, whereas, non-sequential models focus on understanding the determinants that cause shifts in group development.

Within Shamwow, the group experienced the forming and storming stages the first day they met. During the first group activity and ice breakers, members were developing bonds amongst one another. During the next two group interactions, norming was established when the group members decided to not include the people in group assignments when absent. This changed the tone of the group to more from a social interaction to an academic interaction. As the course progressed, members were more inconsistent with their attendance and group cohesion began to weaken. Ultimately, group members stopped doing group activities due to a lack of interest and commitment from other members.

To understand Shamwow's life cycle, it is important to assume that the group was following a time based model (Chidambaram & Bostrom, 1996). This model focuses on temporary issues, time scarcity and duration of group history. The research study by Chidambaram and Bostrom (1996) did not calculate the effect of personal factors in a group's life cycle. The author of this research essay along with member C was unable to engage in group activities due to personal reasons. Furthermore, Shamwow consisted of students that are employed part-time or full time. As members experienced more and more interactions, it is possible they did not weigh the importance of the group as high as financial compensation, as seen by members D and E. If Shamwow was allowed to mature and develop on a schedule developed by the members, the group could have been more successful.

Social Support

Muirhead and Locker (2008) studied the relationship between school stress and social support mechanisms utilized. The study used dental school students from Canada. The participants completed a questionnaire of stress items according to the Dental Environmental Scale (Muirhead & Locker, 2008). The results showed the participants using teachers, parents, friends and intimate relationships for social support. From the results, the researchers observed that students who used teachers and students inside and outside of the school environment reported lower stress levels. The authors concluded that an extensive social support system is a key determinant when studying mental health, particularly for stress (Muirhead & Locker, 2008).

The group collectively decided to create a Facebook page for Shamwow members, in order to better communicate and support one another. Member C received a lot of social support from Shamwow. This member had to miss many classes due to medical and personal reasons. The member asked the other members to help with note-taking during lecture and delivering

important messages. Similarly, the author too missed several classes and was informed by group members A and B. The members of Shamwow also began to meet on their own time.

Due to the 21st century, technology plays an important role in group communication. Shamwow dedicated a Facebook group page to stay connected, share information and provide support to one another. This group slowly began meeting outside the confines of the classroom to help study for tests and understand course material. It can be assumed that the members provided extensive support to be able to receive the same support if required. Additionally, social support may have been so supportive in order to maintain social norms. An individual's actions can be drastically change in order to be accepted. Shamwow demonstrated excellent support systems because of a common understanding between all members.

Conflict

Social Dilemmas

Social dilemma is a result between individuality and collective rationality (Kollock, 1998). A study by Poppe (2005) tested the influence of context or content in junction with decision structures. In this study, ninety-nine business administration and economic students (41 male, 20female, 8 unspecified) were chosen. The study consisted of two parts: participants responded to 21 questions regarding everyday social dilemmas by indicating how frequently they would behave cooperatively or non-cooperatively: and, participants made decisions in an experimental social dilemma. The results of the study indicate low levels of social dilemma when the chances of being caught were low for noncooperation. Additionally, high social dilemma occurred when cooperation was present due to environment and monetary factors (Poppe, 2005).

Social dilemmas were low in frequency in Shamwow. The members of the group all shared the same individualistic and collective thinking. Each member wanted bonus marks but would not be available unless the activity was completed as a group. Furthermore, the group members tried to get by with the bare minimum effort. It was noticed in every group activity and especially evident when the task was too complicated to time consuming. Members D and F adopted this approach in every activity.

Shamwow experienced group success because of the shared rationality amongst all of its members. In reference to the study by Poppe (2005), there was low social dilemma because the chance of being caught of not engaging in group activity was low. The main purpose of the activities in Shamwow was to obtain the bonus mark. To do so, members only had to be present during group discussion; their input did not determine if they got a mark. This ties closely with the minimax principle, which states that an individual will attempt to minimize cost to maximize rewards (Forsyth, 2010).

Managing Conflict

Somech (2008) studied the relationship between task interdependence & goal interdependence and its effect on team conflict management style (integrating vs. dominating). The researcher used a questionnaire to collect data from 149 elementary school teams. The participants included team members and coordinators. The results demonstrated a positive correlation of conflict management of integrating and team performance and a negative correlation between dominating and team performance. Additionally, Somech (2008) observed the highest integration levels were a result of high task interdependence and high goal interdependence, whereas, highest domination levels were a result of high task interdependence and low goal interdependence. These findings lead the author to conclude that conflict

management is a team phenomenon, teams should embrace conflict and handle it constructively, and the effect group structure can have on an individual's conflict management skills. Optimizing these areas, in group conflict management can lead to increased team success (Somech, 2008).

The author and group member A were very integrating in nature. During the robbery activity, it was evident that they were trying to accommodate the other member's opinions to reach a collective agreement. Group member B and E showed high signs of dominance as they were very persistent on their view and not easily influenced by the opinions of others. Additionally, all members of Shamwow demonstrated dominance during the first group interaction.

Research by Somech (2008) reports that team performance and dominance are negatively correlated; and high domination levels were due to high task interdependence and low goal interdependence. Shamwow experienced success in group activities, even though domination was high. This may have occurred, as several group members may have been indifferent to having an integral part in group activities. This allows other members to be dominant and complete the task. Furthermore, group members were more concerned with their personal gain (receiving a bonus mark) rather than the group collective success. Shamwow could have been more effective in conflict management if members felt like they have more of an integral role in group success.

Gender Differences in Dealing & Resolving Conflict

During human interaction, conflict is inevitable (Brahnam et al., 2005). Keener, Strough and DiDonato (2012) studied the effect of gender differences on conflict-management strategies in same-sex friendships and romantic relationships. The study utilized two groups of undergraduate students. Group A consisted of 131 men, and group B consisted of 203 women.

Group B yielded that they employ communal strategies for dealing with conflict involving same gender, and agentic strategies when dealing with romantic partners. On the contrary, group A preferred communal strategies when dealing with a romantic partner, and agentic strategies when interacting with same gender friend (Keener, Strough & DiDonato, 2012). As a result, it is evident that the nature of the relationship heavily influences what strategy will be used by both sexes. Secondly, a study by Brahnham et al. (2005) supports the notion that gender has an impact when choosing conflict resolution styles. The researchers of the study concluded that males are likely to avoid conflict, whereas, women utilize a collaborative style.

The group activity regarding the best type of analysis demonstrated the various conflict resolution techniques used by the members of Shamwow. This activity created a lot of conflict as group members had their opinion about the right answer. Members C, E, A shared the same answer, the author plus members B and D shared the same answer, and member F did not have an opinion. The members that shared collective agreements tried to persuade the fellow group members why their answer was correct. This generated a lot of tension and disagreement. The female members avoided conflict with members of the opposite sex, but utilized agentic methods when dealing with fellow female members. On the contrary, male members did not avoid conflict with fellow male members, and dealt with female members using a communal style.

According to the study by Keener, Strough and DiDonato (2012), women reported using communal strategies with same gender members and agentic methods when dealing with opposite sex. This was not observed by the author. The female members used an agentic approach when dealing with same gender members, and completely avoided conflict with opposite sex members. This may have occurred as they may be trying to assert their dominance over the other female members. However, between opposite gender conflict, females avoided

conflict; yet, Brahnham et al. (2005) reported that males prefer to avoid conflict. Female members may have avoided conflict with male members to protect their impression and not come across as over-bearing, stubborn etc...Likewise, the notion that males reportedly try to avoid conflict was not observed in Shamwow. In this particular activity, male members argued amongst each other why they think they are right. It may be connected to protecting the ego, demonstrating masculinity amongst females or establishing a position of dominance. Lastly, male members approached conflict with the opposite gender with an open mind, emotion and understanding so they do not come across as jerks or bullies.

Leadership

Leadership Styles

Huber et al. (2000) defined leadership styles as the tasks and transaction behaviours between individuals that influence people to achieve their goals. Deluge (1990) tested the influence of subordinate behaviour on leadership styles. The study utilized two groups of business undergraduate students. The first group consisted of 228 males and the second group consisted of 223 females. Both groups were asked to read a scenario provided to them and answer the ensuing questions on a 5-point Likert Scale. The results of the study lead the author to the following results; dealing with laissez-faire leaders, the participants chose a hard influence approach; dealing with transactional leaders, participants utilized a rational approach and when dealing with transformational leaders, participants adopted a soft approach. The study lead the author to conclude that the influence of the followers affects the leaders leadership style but, it may not always be the case if the subordinates personal concerns are already addressed by the leader (Deluga, 1990). Additionally, the study conducted by Vesterien, Isola and Paasivaara (2009) studied the leadership styles employed by nurse managers and the determining factors. A

group of 13 female nurse managers were used for this study. The results of the study lead the authors to conclude that managers preferred a resonant style of leadership as it encourages the employees willingness to develop (Vesterien, Isola & Paasivaara, 2009). This conclusion is accurate because resonant leaders are more satisfied with their employees compared to dissonant leaders (Cummings et al., 2005)

These studies are relevant when understanding the leadership styles adopted by member B. He was unanimously determined as the leader of Shamwow. His leadership style was very similar to transactional leadership because he led with active management and decided to be responsible for the group's bonus mark assignments. For instance, in the first group activity where the group was determining a group name and answering ice-breaker questions, group member B insisted on doing all the group assignments. Also, it was determined that the group will only meet to complete the activity. Not only have that, the remainder of the group members approached the leader using a rational approach. Group members would provide their input in group activities so they would be eligible to receive the bonus mark.

According to the study of Deluga (1990), member B was leading with a transactional style because the group had determined an explicit or implicit purpose of the group; to collect bonus marks. The group could have had better group cohesion and interaction if member B had employed a transformational or resonant leadership style. Research reports that group members are more responsive to those leadership styles (Deluga, 1990; Vesterien, Isola & Paasivaara, 2009). However, these leadership styles may not have been used by group member C due to the purpose of the group. The group existed because the members had a collective agreement to try to get bonus marks to fulfill their personal needs. This drastically reduces the chance of forming

an emotional bond between a leader and the followers (as seen in transformational/resonant leadership style).

Personal Qualities Relevant to Leadership

Mandell and Pherwani (2003) studied the relationship between transformational leadership and emotional intelligence. The researchers also sought out find any gender differences amongst the two. To test their theory, the study used 32 male and female managers from large corporations. A multi-factor leadership questionnaire was used to determine leadership scores and a bar-on emotional quotient inventory to gauge emotional intelligence. The results suggested that individuals that scored high on emotional intelligence adopted a transformational leadership style. They also found a large variance between male and female emotional intelligence scores. They also deduced that motivation is a key factor in becoming a good leader.

In Shamwow, leaders of the activities usually were member B and the author. The author was very charismatic in leadership, highly motivating and receptive to people's emotions and moods. Member B was very direct, task oriented, and unreceptive to people's emotions. It was also observed, that the female members: C, D, E and F displayed the most relevant qualities to compassion and friendship. Members within the group felt more closely attached to opposite sex members and more receptive to their leadership.

As supported by the study of Mandell and Pherwani (2003), leaders with high emotional intelligence found the most success. Shamwow, however, found success with the combination of a high emotionally intelligent leader, and a transactional leader that is task-oriented. This allows members to feel comfortable in the group while being reassured the task will be done. Furthermore, personal relationships developed better in opposite gender relationships. This is

due in part because women are emotionally more intelligent than men; making them better friends (Mandell & Pherwani, 2003).

Gender Differences in Leadership

Yukl (2010) found an interesting relationship between power and leadership. Second, the influence of social structure along with evolution can help explain the differences in power motivation between men and women (Diekmann & Eagly, 2008; Tooby & Cosmides, 1992). Schuh et al. (2014) used two groups of business students; group A consisted of 125 women and group B consisted of 115 men; to test if the power levels of motivation differ between men and women along with the effect of gender differences in explaining the uneven distribution of leadership roles by both men and women. Group A scored lower than group B on power motivation leading the authors to conclude that there are fewer females in a leadership role compared to males because females scored lower on power motivation (Schuh et al., 2014). Additionally, a study conducted by Lips and Keener (2007) explored the influence of an incentive on leadership emergence in mix-gendered groups. The study paired male and female university students together. Each pair was instructed to appoint a leader, making the other person the follower. The incentive group was informed the leader would receive \$25; where as the non-incentive group was not provided this information. The researchers found that pairs under the no-incentive scenario resulted in a higher frequency of male leadership. On the contrary, pairs in the incentive scenario saw a higher likelihood of females assuming leadership roles over less dominant men. These findings lead the authors to conclude that incentives can affect the willingness of males and females to emerge as leaders (Lips & Keener, 2007).

In Shamwow, the group consisted of three males and four females. Although the group met after every class, the group did not always partake in bonus mark opportunities. In the case,

when the group decided to not attempt the activity, the interest levels of members C, D, E and F were low. When assigned the scavenger hunt activity, the members tried to figure out a way to complete it although it seemed unlikely. The female members showed no signs of leadership or initiative to attempt. Whereas, the activity regarding group level analysis, those members took it upon themselves that the group finished the activity on time. The author along with members B and C generally assumed leadership roles consistently through all activities. It is to be noted, that when male members showed low dominance or interest in a particular activity, the female members assumed control of group activities, as observed by the activity on July 2, 2014.

The observations made by the author are coherent with the results of the studies. It is seen that in a group of three males and 4 females, the males generally assumed leadership roles more often. As explained by the effect of power motivation, females tend to be less aggressive in obtaining a leadership role. This is a result of low power motivation in females which is partially influenced via society, societal norms and evolution (Schuh et al., 2014). It is evident when noticing that the female members of Shamwow took little initiative in assuming leadership and deferring to the leadership of male members. However, similar to the study of Lips and Keener (2007), Shamwow was presented with an incentive. At the end of each group activity, the group members would be eligible for bonus marks. Although, leadership roles were generally held by the males, the incentive provided the females extra motivation to seek leadership and responsibility. The author's observations also stand true to both studies as males on average have a higher power motivation which combined with the presence of an incentive increase their likelihood to assume a leadership role (Lips & Keener, 2007; Schuh et al., 2014).

Conclusion

The recent emergence of study in group dynamics is monumental in understanding how group interactions can affect individual behaviour. Individuals associate themselves with groups knowingly or unknowingly, because we constantly seek acceptance, relationships and social support. A group does however, have a life cycle of its own. People will join together to form a group, set rules or norms under which the group will operate and determine a purpose of the group. Because a group is made up of individual members, conflict is inevitable due to self-serving bias versus group serving bias. Although group interaction can teach conflict management techniques, different techniques may be utilized by different genders. A group's success is also highly dependent on the leader. There are many leadership styles that can be adopted but it is important to know which one works best for the situation. Also males and females differ drastically in emotional intelligence and power motivation which may determine the chances of an individual coming forward as a leader. All in all, group dynamics observes and analyzes how individual accomplishments or setbacks affect their impact on the group, and how the group can impact them individually.

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