

Chapter 02 Groups as Structured Open Systems

Multiple Choice Questions

1. (p. 28) Something that helps us navigate new territory and make decisions is called a/an
 - A. idea.
 - B. hypothetical.
 - C.** theory.
 - D. GPS.
 - E. internal understanding.

2. (p. 29) Systems theory is useful as a perspective for understanding small groups because this theory
 - A. reminds us that small groups are simpler than they appear.
 - B.** provides a framework for thinking about the complex processes of groups of human beings.
 - C. helps us describe how individual elements of a whole can operate autonomously.
 - D. can help a student identify the single most important reason why something occurs in a group.
 - E. provides a group comparison to the "fight or flight" response of an individual.

3. (p. 30) This connects the relevant parts of a system in a small group
 - A. understanding.
 - B.** communication.
 - C. perception.
 - D. all of these.
 - E. none of these.

4. (p. 30) A system consists of elements that function in this way:

- A. simultaneously.
- B.** interdependently.
- C. autonomously.
- D. exclusively.
- E. none of these.

5. (p. 31) An example of a small group "input" is the

- A. report a committee produces.
- B. way group members resolve conflicts.
- C. type of informal leadership provided by various members.
- D. satisfaction members feel when they have completed their assignment.
- E.** critical thinking skills of the members used while solving a problem.

6. (p. 32) The clearest example of a small group throughput variable is

- A. physical setting in which the group meets.
- B. the cohesiveness members experience.
- C. decisions the group makes.
- D.** how members express and resolve disagreements.
- E. information members have about their task.

7. (p. 28) The scholar who created General Systems Theory was

- A.** Ludwig von Bertalanffy.
- B. Alfred Einstein.
- C. Carl Rogers.
- D. Eric Schlieman.
- E. John Dewey.

8. (p. 35) The idea that a group and its environment mutually influence each other is suggested by which perspective?

- A. idyllic.
- B. symbolic.
- C. systemic.
- D.** bona fide group.
- E. carter's understanding.

9. (p. 37) Groups that do not meet face-to-face are called this

- A. non-seeing.
- B. fun.
- C. co-existent.
- D. interdependent.
- E.** virtual.

10. (p. 43) "Multiple paths" is used in systems theory to indicate that

- A. there are numerous ways to improve on a system's functioning.
- B. a group can obtain needed inputs from many different sources.
- C.** there is usually more than one appropriate way to reach an objective.
- D. several members can do a task needed by the group.
- E. information is exchanged among members via a variety of means and media.

11. (p. 39) Which of the following is the best example of a closed system?

- A.** a sequestered jury.
- B. a hockey team.
- C. an advertising team.
- D. a person in an interview.
- E. a learning group.

12. (p. 34) Which is *not* an example of a small group output?
- A. a report produced by the group.
 - B. the satisfaction members experience from a completed job.
 - C.** the knowledge and experience of the members.
 - D. a building assembled by a construction crew.
 - E. communication of members with their environment.
13. (p. 39) Which of the following is the most *open* system?
- A.** a committee which invites non-members to meetings and makes records available to Anyone.
 - B. a club with specific requirements for membership.
 - C. shuttle astronauts on a week-long voyage.
 - D. a jury deliberating about what penalty to give a convict.
 - E. an advertising group debating how to promote a new computer game system.
14. (p. 39) These group members manage the group's interaction with its environment
- A. negotiators.
 - B. go-betweens.
 - C.** boundary spanners.
 - D. locaters.
 - E. any of these.
15. (p. 40) Which is the best example of an interdependent group goal?
- A. every member of a study group hoping to get the highest test score.
 - B. a group of sales representatives competing for a bonus.
 - C. completed cars coming off an assembly line.
 - D. four acquaintances playing bridge for a cash prize.
 - E.** a basketball team trying to win the state championship.

16. (p. 41-42) Which is the best example of feedback to a system?

- A. the members' knowledge of powerpoint.
- B. the way the group handles complaints.
- C. the way the group members address each other.
- D.** customer comment cards.
- E. none of these.

17. (p. 42) The best way to give critical feedback is to do which of the following?

- A. be straight, don't worry about feelings.
- B. load up on everything the group did wrong at the beginning of your comments.
- C. critical feedback should never be given.
- D.** sandwich between positive feedback.
- E. none of these.

18. (p. 42) A hockey team's high morale may be due to the fact that the team has won most of its games, fans cheered lustily, the captain is respected by all players, and the players enjoy being together. Which systems principle does this example illustrate?

- A. interdependence
- B.** multiple causes
- C. feedback
- D. openness
- E. multiple paths

19. (p. 42) Two college basketball teams are ranked within the Top 5 at the beginning of the season, but by the end of the season team A is ranked within the Top 5 and team B is not even ranked, what system characteristic does this most closely represent?

- A.** multifinality.
- B. interdependence.
- C. feedback.
- D. nonsummativity.
- E. open system.

20. (p. 42) Group A consists of the top performing students in the class, while Group B consists of the bottom performing students in the class. At the end of the semester, Group B outdoes Group A on their presentation - what characteristic of the system does this most closely represent?
- A. equifinality.
 - B. feedback.
 - C. multifinality.
 - D.** negative synergy.
 - E. closed system.

Fill in the Blank Questions

21. (p. 28) Em Griffin describes _____ as a "map of reality."
theory
22. (p. 30) A system consists of a set of elements that function _____ with each other.
interdependently
23. (p. 31) The three broad categories of elements in a small group's life are called input, _____, and output variables.
throughput
24. (p. 31) _____ are all of the factors that are brought into the group from the outside.
Inputs
25. (p. 32) Activities or behaviors of a functioning system are referred to as _____ processes.
throughput

26. (p. 34) Feelings among members are an example of _____, an intangible outcome.

output

27. (p. 34) Everything outside a group, which affects the group is referred to as the group's _____.

environment

28. (p. 35) _____ emphasizes that groups not only are influenced by their environments but also help shape those same environments.

Bona fide group perspective

29. (p. 37) Groups in which members complete most or all of their work without meeting are called _____.

virtual groups

30. (p. 38) "Open-closed" refers to the amount of interaction a group has with its _____.

environment

31. (p. 40) When elements of a system mutually influence each other, they are said to be _____.

interdependent

32. (p. 41) That part of a group's output which is recycled as input to help the group stay "on track" is called _____.

feedback

33. (p. 43) Having a number of different ways to plan a fun party represents _____, a characteristic of systems theory.

multiple paths

34. (p. 43) _____ means that when group members come together, they create an entirely unique entity that is something other than just a collection of individual parts.

Synergy

35. (p. 43) Groups experiencing _____, were expected to perform well, but did not.

process loss, or negative synergy

True / False Questions

36. (p. 28) General Systems Theory was created by a theoretical physicist.

FALSE

37. (p. 32) Group members' attitudes toward the project are an example of a small group input variable.

TRUE

38. (p. 33) Style of leadership practiced within a group is an example of a small group input variable.

FALSE

39. (p. 34) To create an even larger system, a small group must interact with its environment.

TRUE

40. (p. 34) A group's outputs may include changes in its processes and procedures.

TRUE

41. (p. 35) Members of groups often belong to other groups, thereby creating more room for mutual influence between the group and the environment.

TRUE

42. (p. 37) Describing an organization as a system of small groups is an invalid use of system theory.

FALSE

43. (p. 39) Open systems have no disadvantages - it is the most superior system.

FALSE

44. (p. 39) Within small groups the introduction of a new member can change the functioning of the entire group.

TRUE

45. (p. 40) Members of the group must rely on each other to achieve their goal.

TRUE

46. (p. 41) The source of feedback is not taken into consideration by the group.

FALSE

47. (p. 42) The best way to give critical feedback in a group is to not give it.

FALSE

48. (p. 42) Multifinality suggests that two successful, experienced sports teams can end up in entirely different spots come playoffs.

TRUE

49. (p. 39) Boundary spanners allow the group to expand its resources.

TRUE

50. (p. 40) If not handled effectively, interaction with the group's environment can decrease cohesiveness.

TRUE

Essay Questions

51. (p. 28-30) Explain the many ways in which the systems perspective is useful to the study of small groups.

Answers will vary

52. (p. 30) Use two or more examples to explain how the various elements of a small group are interdependent. Can you think of anything that would affect only one part of a group and not the other parts?

Answers will vary

53. (p. 31-34) Give at least three examples each of small group inputs, throughput processes, and outputs.

Answers will vary

54. (p. 37) Explain how technology is changing the way we understand the interaction of group within their environment.

Answers will vary

55. (p. 38-39) How is an "open" system different from a "closed" system? List as many ways as you can think of by which a small group might reveal how open or closed it is.

Answers will vary

56. (p. 41-42) What is "feedback" in a system, and how is it useful to a group?

Answers will vary

57. (p. 41-42) Give some examples of feedback that a classroom project group might receive. How should the critical feedback be given to be most useful to the group?

Answers will vary

58. (p. 42-44) Explain the idea that outcomes of group effort are the result of multiple causes, multiple paths and synergy.

Answers will vary

59. (p. 28-44) Think of a group you know that developed an outstanding solution to a pressing problem. What are some of the main factors that contributed to the group's good work?

Answers will vary

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60. (p. 28-44) What kinds of subsystems exist within your college or place of employment? How do these groups interact with each other? What, if anything, seems to be missing in such an interaction? How does interaction, or lack of it, seem to affect the organization?

Answers will vary