The Influence of The Military Posting Cycle on Group Formation and Team Development in the Australian Defence Force

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Introduction[1]

There can be fewer, more compelling environments in which teamwork is required than the defence force, (with the possible exception of the emergency services). Consider the circumstances of soldiers on operations confronting the ubiquitous threat presented by insurgent placement of improvised explosive devices; the sailors of a submarine on an extended, covert patrol under hostile seas; or the crew of an aircraft on a mission with the potential for detection and interdiction. Obviously, defence members do not work perpetually in such heightened states of alert, there are extended periods where the minutia of daily routine dominates; when even mundane tasks are required to be performed by all regardless of rank or role. Military organisations are based on teams, from the lowest hierarchical level in a unit to the most senior commander's headquarters staff, groups and teams are essential structural elements required for task achievement. Another feature which distinguishes defence from most other team-based enterprises, is the systemic imposition of regular change to group membership effected via a device known as the posting cycle. A posting is a process by which an ADF member is notified of their appointment to a new position, promotion or role and may be associated with the requirement to relocate from one location to another. The posting cycle is a routine extension of the posting process which occurs on an annual basis usually taking effect during December and January, which results in a significant number of uniformed personnel receiving postings.

The central question addressed by this paper is how systematic movement of personnel in the Australian Defence Force (ADF), associated the 'posting cycle', effect group formation and team development. I declare a particular position in relation to the question in that I am a reserve officer with the Australian Army with 24 years of service, commencing as a private soldier and continuing as a commissioned officer with field rank.

The military posting cycle, by intent and function, imposes substantial change to membership on groups and teams. The structural elements retain their formal identity and role within the organisation, and some of their constituent membership, while a significant proportion of the group members leave the group, sometimes remaining within the same geographic location but in different positions, and are replaced by new members. Postings also occur for compassionate and a variety of other reasons, in conjunction with individual promotions, and when personnel are deployed on operations. In latter case, entire units often relocate into another geographic location. A period of intense preparation in terms of medical, technical skill and general readiness, Mission Specific Training, is conducted in preparation for rotation through an operational area, culminating in Mission Readiness Exercise, the final certification of capability required prior to deployment. In these circumstances, the preparatory period may result in closer bonds being formed between group members through an intense, task focused process, of team development. Access to potential interviewees directly participating in these intense periods of activity, is virtually impossible due to the nature and tempo of work being performed and the demands imposed on personnel in this situation. For the purposes of this paper then, deployments on operations are out of the scope of consideration instead, the focus will be on a comparison of group formation and team development processes in a training environment, where membership remains relatively

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stable for the duration of the course, with the experience of members in their regular positions performing their routine duties.

This study includes both full-time and part-time serving members of the three services of the Australian Defence Force: the Royal Australian Navy (RAN), the Australian Army (Army), and Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF); in order to identify and attempt to explain the impact, if any, of the service cultures on members and their respective service's use of in and out of cycle postings.

As a necessary first step, the validity of chosen theoretical framework, Tuckman's 1965 'forming, storming, norming and performing' model and later 1977, 'adjourning' revision, (with Jensen) will be tested by application to a military context, in which group members have recently participated in periods of training. Interview and other data from each service, including Officer Cadets from the Australian Defence Force Academy, is examined to establish the adequacy of Tuckman's theory as a descriptor of group emergence and development in environments characterised by relatively stable group membership.

Just as military terms such as 'strategy' and tactics', have enriched the lexicon of organisations generally, this paper advances the application of a theoretical framework, derived in organisational psychology, to a military context. The broader community of management scholars and academics will be provided with an additional insight within which group formation and team development is revealed. The ADF specifically, stands to benefit from a deeper understanding of the impact of postings, transfers and deployments on both individuals and the groups they subsequently join, in terms of effectiveness of task performance and the successful development of functionally interdependent team relationships.

Theoretical background

As is widely recognised, the published literature on groups and teams has a rich and diverse heritage.

Tuckman's model of group development.

Tuckman's (1965) four stages, (*forming, storming, norming* and *performing*); are the most widely recognised and accepted model of group development in the undergraduate tertiary, vocational education and professional/organisational training environments[2]. It is a model which explains team development as a process of evolution, from the moment group members meet for the first time, until they reach a state of task proficiency and interdependence that they are classified as *performing*, at which point, little further development occurs. His model is widely accepted by authors of text books in management, organisational behaviour and group dynamics. As a consequence, Tuckman's four stage model is almost universally used as a focal reference in business/management courses at undergraduate university level, in vocational education and in the training realm.

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[2] A representative, but by no means exhaustive sample of references to Tuckman's model can be found in undergraduate texts in the discipline fields of management, communication and organisational behaviour : (Clegg, Kornberger, & Ptsis, 2008; Daft, 2012; Dwyer, 2009; Eunson, 2012; Guffey & Lowey, 2011; Lehman & Dufrene, 2011; Robbins, Bergman, Stagg, & Coulter, 2009; Schermerhorn et al., 2011).

When revisiting the model in 1977, with the intent of of examining the acceptance of the four stage model by other authors, Tuckman and Jensen noted that 'of the twenty-two studies reviewed, only one set out to directly test this hypothesis, although many of the others could be related to it. (1977, p. 419) They did however, conclude that an additional stage of group development, often discussed in the published work they reviewed, was a necessary addition to the original model. They consequently modified the four stage model to include a fifth and final, *adjourning* stage. Interestingly, his model of group development was not based on primary data or empirical evidence, instead it consolidated the products of research published in fifty articles which considered the stages of group development in psycho-therapy, training, social or professional and laboratory groups. (Tuckman, 2001)

Of equal significance, Tuckman introduced two additional 'realms' into his analysis which served as a uniting theme connecting the research in each of the different settings he reviewed. He emphasised the importance of a 'task' and an 'interpersonal' aspect to group activity. These elements of group activity are probably a more significant feature of behaviour than the stages of group evolution Tuckman described in his model, identifying as they do, the separate foci which compete for the attention and energy of the group. The 'task activity' and 'interpersonal relationship' aspects of group life, although not as 'famous' as the stages of group development, have subsequently become accepted by other authors as the 'task' and 'relationship' or 'maintenance' dimensions of group behaviour.

Tuckman's model has had its critics though. For instance, Cissna, in discussing the negative evidence against the phases of group development, notes that:

> Tuckman's excellent and well-known review of available research to that point is now dated, and directed solely toward determining how well the literature fit his hypothesized four-phase model. His subsequent effort (Tuckman and Jensen, 1977) assesses how well the model has fared and adds a fifth phase, but neither article provides a critique or evaluation of the research in the area. (Cissna, 1984, p. 4)

Levine and Moreland acknowledge criticisms of the model. 'Although Tuckman's model is widely cited, it has several weaknesses... (in that) neither the psychological mechanisms underlying shifts between developmental stages nor the determinants of the rate of movement through these stages are well specified.' (Moreland, 1985, p. 447) Tuckman recognised that the model he proposed in 1965 contained these limitations and suggested that 'the articles reviewed do not deal with rate of temporal change nor do they give sufficiently complete and detailed time data associated with each stage to make calculations possible.' (Tuckman, 1965, p. 398) and also that 'further study of temporal change as a dependent variable' be conducted. (Tuckman, 1965, p. 384)

Keyton recognised that the end of a project, and the 'termination' of a work group, may not necessarily mean that the attitudes and values formed during the period of association are dissolved as well, it in fact may be a significant influence on members when they reform to take on another task in the future. (Keyton, 1993)

> When an organizational work group concludes its business, its members do not go away. Rather, group members fold back into the organizational context to eventually become members in other groups. (Keyton, 1993, p. 85)

Keyton's observation is particularly relevant to this study as interviewees often commented that, on taking up a new posting, they experienced a sense of reconnecting with group members they had previously served with rather than forming a new group.

Several variations to the four stage process of group development have been identified. The model posited by Morgan, and Glickman (1993), suggest a number of distinctive stages as additions to Tuckman's (1965) model to become more open model, in tune with the recognition of the 'life span' of the group. The additional stages of *pre-forming*, *reforming*, *conforming* and *de-forming* were considered. *Pre-forming* occurs when 'the forces from the environment (environmental demands and constraints) that call for, and contribute to, the establishment of the team; that is, forces external to the team (before it comes into existence) that cause the team to be formed.' *Reforming* is a transitional stage centred on re-evaluation; and *conforming* is the stage arrived at when team assignments are completed and there is a closer alignment between task and relationship foci in the group. The final stage, *de-forming* recognises that the team has served its purpose and will be disbanded with a concomitant divergence of interest and activity for members between group and team relationships. (Morgan, Salas and Glickman, 1993, p. 280) The TEAM model has been termed a 'non-phasic, hybrid' model, (Smith, 2001, p. 17) as it is 'primarily derived from Tuckman's (1965) linear progressive model ideas and Gersick's (1988) punctuated equilibrium ideas.' (Smith, 2001, p. 34)

Alternative models of group development

A number of alternative models of group development contend with Tuckman's model of group development, which has been variously identified as a 'staged', (J.M. Levine & Moreland, 1998) and 'linear-progressive', (Mennecke, Hoffer, & Wynne, 1992; Perislin & Christensen, 2002) model. For instance several authors (Arrow, 1997; Arrow & McGrath, 1993; McGrath, Arrow, Gruenfeld, Hollingshead, & O'Connor, 1993; Schopler & Galinsky, 1990) posit an 'ecological model of membership', envisaging an open-ended group with permeable boundaries through which new members pass when joining a group and which enable others to depart for periods of short to long term duration.

Another perspective can be acquired from the 'cyclic' models of group development (Arrow, 1997; McGrew, Bilotta, & Deeney, 1999; Mennecke, et al., 1992; Schopler & Galinsky, 1990) where groups return to address issues which may have arisen during group formation. In this respect, although an oversimplification, there is some similarity between the cyclic models of group development and the linear-progression models. It has been suggested that groups tend to revisit previous stages of development in response to new events or changed conditions. (Keyton, 1993; Morgan, Salas, & Glickman, 1993; Perislin & Christensen, 2002; Worchel, 1994) The principle

underpinning these models is that members involved in the cycle may reverse their positions. (Keyton, 1993; Perislin & Christensen, 2002; Worchel, 1994)

McGrath and his associates have observed that research into group related topics experienced a resurgence of interest during the 1980s and 1990s. (McGrath, Arrow, & Berdahl, 2000) Moreland and Levine have considered the influence of changes to group membership in various contexts, principally inspired by social categorisation theory, minority/majority influence and social cognition approaches to group development. (J.M. Levine & Moreland, 1990; John M. Levine & Moreland, 1991; J.M. Levine & Moreland, 1998; Moreland, 1985; Paulus, 1989) In terms of group socialisation and commitment to a group, Levine and Moreland have constructed a complex model of five linear phases of integration of new members into a group.

The 'punctuated equilibrium' model of group development was first devised in 1988. (C.J.G. Gersick, 1988) The model, based on observation of eight groups of project and student teams working to a set timeline, produced little activity from the time of their first meeting until the approximate halfway point in the group's timeframe when behaviour abruptly changes from inactivity to concentrated bursts of effort which result in the completion of the project. (Arrow, 1997; Mennecke, et al., 1992)

In a similar fashion to Tuckman, the 'integrative model' (Mennecke, et al., 1992) of group development, was so termed, as it 'is based on an integration of group development research over the last four decades'. (Chang, Bordia, & Duck, 2003, p. 107) This article also explores the alignment between the five stage integrative model, based on similar stages to the Tuckman and Jensen derivative of 1977, and the two broad phases identified in the punctuated equilibrium model, although it also accepts that there are differences between the approaches which need to be acknowledged.

The approach taken almost exclusively in these models is based on research conducted in laboratory groups, (Arrow, 1997; Arrow & McGrath, 1993; Chang, et al., 2003; C.J.G. Gersick, 1988; Insko et al., 1982; John M. Levine & Moreland, 1991; McGrath, 1993; McGrath, et al., 1993; Moreland, 1985; Paulus, 1989; Perislin & Christensen, 2002; Simonetta, 1995) or on data derived from the study of therapy groups.(Jones & Crandall, 1985)

Exceptions to this are the works of Spink and Carron (1994), who consider the effects of changes to membership of groups in exercise classes; and McGrew and colleagues who discussed the formation and decay of software development groups. (McGrew, et al., 1999)

Finally, none of the models discussed above have achieved the broad-based recognition of Tuckman's four stage model.

> Although other models are available... and although some investigators have challenged the validity of the stage model (Cissna, 1984), it is still the original four-stage model that is most commonly referenced. (McGrew, et al., 1999, p. 210)

Rickards et.al., adds emphasis the view of the enduring value of Tuckman's model.

> The stages today are regarded as idealized… that is to say, the stages may have considerable face validity as a general sequence. However, empirical observations of specific teams reveal complexities that cannot be explained as a simple stage sequence… Nevertheless, the model retains its value as a simple means of discussing and exploring group dynamics. (Rickards & Manchester, 2000, p. 276)

Tuckman's (1965) Sequential model of group development, is used as the theoretical lens through which the data in this study will be examined. Normal practice within organisations though suggests a less predictable path of group development than Tuckman's sequential progression, with interaction between the stages of development possible. The influence of the posting cycle in a military setting establishes the case for the application of a variation to Tuckman's model to accommodate changes to group membership.

Groups and teams in a military context

Although less extensive in scope than the general literature on groups and teams, there is a rich legacy of historical, organisational behaviour and psychological sources available to scholars. Some of the more relevant literature which contributes to the understanding of group formation and team development will be included here. A cursory study of published military works disclosed a review of recent literature on teams conducted under the sponsorship of the Canadian Forces (CF) (Sartori, Waldherr, & Adams, 2006) which recognised the paucity of direct research into teams in the military context.

> As our review has shown, the majority of team research to date involves university undergraduates. Although this research has clearly made important contributions to understanding the basic processes that influence team performance, research that will be most relevant to the CF should involve the highest possible level of fidelity in empirical research with actual military team members. Of course, this has the potential to be very challenging as military participants can be difficult to access. Furthermore, studying intact teams may be even more difficult due to high levels of turnover and changes in tasking. In this sense, it may be helpful to take an approach that allows for research with undergraduates (and ad hoc teams) at the early stages of research, moving progressively to military participants after more basic principles are established. (Sartori, et al., 2006, p. 122)

The Canadian Defence Forces have commissioned reports into various aspects of teamwork and leadership during a period of significant structural change and discussion of role redefinition. One of these examines leadership in the context of military teamwork (Nadjiwon-Foster, Smithers, & Livingston, 2002) and a second considers work team strategies (Waruszynski, 2004) with a view to improving the performance of capability engineering teams. The latter report takes a linear perspective of group development based on Tuckman and Jensen's (1977) five stage model of group development which is particularly suited to the project teams which are its main focus. Interestingly for the time, especially considering the military focus, within the compass of the report is specific consideration of virtual work teams.

A review of the literature on groups in the military should include Morgan, Salas and Glickman's (1993) analysis of team evolution as it was based on several studies conducted in a US Naval training establishment.(Glickman et al., 1987; Guerette, Miller, Glickman, Morgan Jr., & Salas, 1987; Morgan, Glickman, Woodard, Blaiwes, & Salas, 1987) The model Morgan et. al., posited draws on various 'phased' models of group development, including Tuckman's 1965 and 1977 variation with Jensen, in order to consider the impact of task and membership interdependence on military groups. Morgan also engaged in analysis of the impact of workload, team structure and communication in teams, partially in response to the incident in which sailors aboard the USS VINCENNES shot sown an Iranian airliner, which identified poor teamwork as a contributing factor, (Urban, Bowers, Monday, & Morgan Jr., 1995) although the subjects for the research were groups of undergraduate university students paid to participate in the experiment. Another example of a study conducted in a military training environment is that of Leedon and Simon who focus on extracting improvements in team performance in military aviation training. (Leedon & Simon, 1995) A further work in military psychology attends to the task realm of decision making and examines the impact of temporal urgency, a condition which affects many work groups in a military context by virtue of the nature of the activities they undertake. (Zaccaro, Gualtieri, & Minionis, 1995)

There are two Australian-based reports conducted by the Defence Science and Technology Organisation (Lenne, 2003; Swain & Mills, 2003), although neither of these make specific reference to the influence of membership changes in groups within the ADF, academic research into imposed changes due to scheduled, routine transfer of personnel was not revealed in this review. As group formation, and the development teams, are key performance indicators of capability for military organisations, the measurement of effectiveness in these areas are worth considering in order to establish if improvements are possible.

Research methodology

The military context in which this study was conducted had a significant influence on shaping how the research for this paper was conceived, planned and executed.

The Australian Defence Force maintains rigorous scrutiny of research proposals through the Australian Defence Human Research Ethics Committee (ADHREC) which approves and oversees the conduct of all primary data collection involving ADF members. This body is very conservative in outlook. Comprised of senior officers from the three services predominately, but not exclusively, from medical/psychology disciplines it approaches research applications cautiously, requiring six-monthly, written progress reports to be submitted for committee consideration. ADHREC imposes requirements for sponsorship and organisational endorsement of work at multiple levels that would make the kind of inquiry pursued in this paper almost impossible for a non-military researcher to undertake. This is particularly evident at the Unit Commander level, where permission must be obtained in writing, in advance of any approach to potential candidates. It would be fair to say that most of the Unit Commanders approached for this study regarded it with a degree of 'healthy scepticism' if not outright suspicion. A number of the precursory approaches made by the researcher were rejected outright with the main reason cited being 'operational tempo' leading to unavailability of staff. I was fortunate in that the first Commander I was successful in approaching, the Captain of a RAN ship knew me from a brief period as a member of embarked forces on his vessel and consented to the research following a personal approach to him. I was then able to use his approval as leverage to advance the consent winning activity to the next unit and so on. In all, permission was obtained from Unit Commanders at eight

unit along the eastern states of Australia, from Townsville in the north of Queensland to the Mornington Peninsular south of Melbourne.

The difficulty presented by the sensitive negotiations undertaken during this stage of preparation for data collection cannot be properly expressed here, nor should they be underestimated, for without access to subjects, there would be no data. Following ADHREC approval after a number of protocol iterations, it was necessary to then obtain university ethics committee approval.

It should also be noted that I identified myself by rank and name in all contact with Unit Commanders, their staff, and potential candidates. This approach was deliberately chosen in order to reduce the inevitable suspicion with which many ADF members regard this type of activity. Careful consideration was given to the potential impact that my rank would have in terms of achieving a balance between a perceived power differential in interactions with candidates for interview in a visibly hierarchical organisation, and the assurance that familiarity and cultural expectations that accrue from service experience provide to offset negative perceptions of a 'civilian' researcher. I was in uniform whenever present on a military base or ship and during the conduct of all interviewees and each focus group. I was identified by rank as well as name on all survey questionnaires. There was no attempt made to conceal the researcher's military identity or interest in the study. On balance, it is considered that it would have been impossible to conduct this research as an outsider to the ADF.

The methodology used in this research is predominantly qualitative in nature. The study also uses a questionnaire to provide basic quantitative data which was used to identify potential interview candidates. The combination of techniques provides a degree of triangulation of the data through the use of multiple devices, (survey questionnaire, semi-structured interview and focus groups). Questionnaires were employed as an initial device to identify potential candidates for extended, semi-structured interview. The survey's secondary purpose was to collect data for basic quantitative analysis. Surveys were made available to the population of the unit on duty during the period the questionnaire was made available for response, (typically two weeks). Responses were provided on an entirely voluntary basis. Interviewees were selected and invited to participate in the interview stage on the basis of their response to the questionnaire with reference to data provided about their career history and relevance of the subject's experience to the study. Availability for interviewee was determined by three main factors: their voluntary consent to the interview, the availability of the interviewer, and duty or leave commitments of the candidate.

Interviews generated the bulk of the data for qualitative analysis. The data was collected from individuals. There was no opportunity to interview an entire group about their experience. Therefore, the findings represent individuals' perspectives of how groups form and develop into teams. While this limitation, a consequence of availability of participants, and reflecting the voluntary participation of subjects in all aspects of data collection for this study. It was possible, however to include a number of members of the same group within the interview cohort. In the instance of one training group, all interviewees were members of the same course.

A sample size of between twelve and fifteen candidates at each site participated in in-depth, semi-structured interviews in order to achieve data saturation and provide a robust data pool. Focus Groups, comprising no more than five members drawn from the pool of interviewees,

were subsequently convened for the purpose of broad confirmation of themes emerging from the data.

For the questionnaire, interview and focus group stages of the data collection process, prospective participants were advised in writing and verbally informed of the purpose of the research and the role of the investigator in the process of data collection. While this may not have completely removed the perception of differential power states by virtue of the investigator's rank, and positional authority, particularly in the minds of junior members in a basic training environment, it was emphasised that their participation and involvement in the data collection process was voluntary.

Findings

There are two categories of initial findings resulting from this work. The first points to the validity of Tuckman's model as an accurate descriptor of behaviour in environments where groups are subject to stable membership, where team development is deliberately integrated into the daily routine of the group over a prolonged period. These conditions manifest themselves in the various training environments investigated in this study. The second relates to ADF members serving with units to which they had been posted on duty, (not as course members), which exposes significant limitations to the ability of Tuckman's sequential model of group development to adequately describe group formation and team development.

 A consistent view emerged from all three services of individuals' experience in a training setting where interviewees experienced group formation over finite periods with relatively little change to membership of their syndicate group during the course. Course groups exist in an environment of structured routine based on progressive achievement of training objectives which also provides the task focus for trainees. A visible hierarchy is evident; from trainees to instructors and Directing Staff (DS), through to the course Senior Instructor (SI) and Chief Instructor (CI) who is the paramount course authority.

During training, participants are exposed by their DS to a deliberate process of team building activities implemented in order to develop bonds between group members and assist the process of group formation and development. Trainees are also assigned peer leadership roles, such as duty student, which allocates various administrative responsibilities and is intended to provide trainees with an opportunity to support their peers in performance of their duties.

On one occasion, the negative impact of unresolved conflict resulted in a protracted extension of Tuckman's storming stage was reported by interviewee directly involved, and anecdotally by the observations of a member of another syndicate group in the same course cohort. This conflict prevented the full development of the group into a team which relies on interdependence of members in the performance of tasks. As a consequence, individuals in the group affected by conflict of this nature, were subject to increased levels of leadership intervention compared to other groups in the course cohort, in an attempt to moderate the dysfunctional impact of the conflict on the syndicate. It was reported that this was achieved by: reinforcement of behavioural expectations; reinforcement of the requirement for task completion; reference to external codes of conduct and disciplinary processes, rules and procedures; and by direct intervention of the syndicate's DS. Rather than contradict Tuckman, the nature of conflict within groups was recognised as a condition which prevents evolution to the subsequent stages of norming and performing. Smith notes:

> *'... that in some groups this* (norming) *phase may not even occur since the group may have become so splintered and divided that it is unable to bridge existing differences and develop a group identity and normative systems.'* (Smith, 2001, p. 22)

The trainee in the dysfunctional group reported an alignment of members with dominant, personality-based factions, or a deliberate stance of neutrality chosen by achievement oriented members. In this syndicate, unresolved dysfunctional conflict led to sub-optimal goal outcomes for the group.

In contrast, the experience of members in instances where groups functioned effectively, abundant testimony was provided to support the notion of linear progression through formation, conflict and resolution, development of group norms to the performing stage where members united accepted and confronted the challenges experienced during training in accordance with Tuckman's (1965)forming, storming, norming and performing sequential model. It was also clear that ceremonies at the conclusion of courses played an important part in marking the transition from trainee to graduate and accorded with Tuckman and Jensen's (1977) fifth, 'adjourning' stage of group development.

Having established the applicability of Tuckman's sequential model of group development to training groups in a military context, the model's fit can now be considered in settings where change of membership is an expected feature, due to the influence of the military posting cycle for instance. There are distinct cultural differences between operational units in the three services and the experience of trainees participating in extended training regimes. Here the use of postings by each of the services bears both similarities and distinct differences. The navy tend to post members for shorter periods than the other two services, sometimes for a matter of weeks to fill skills deficits in a ship's company, or for the conduct of a particular mission or task, with members sometimes subject to several postings in one year. At the opposite end of the frequency spectrum, the Army tends to use postings for the bi-annual rotation of personnel between positions, and often, geographic locations. The exception to this is where members are posted to meet operational commitments where whole units are deployed following an intense period of development. The air force lies more towards the army side of centre of the spectrum in its use of postings as an instrument for staff movement, demonstrating features of a stable rotational cycle tempered with tactical use of postings to address service needs, but on a lesser scale than the navy. In the army, the annual application of the posting cycle results in almost half of the members of an existing group leaving at the end of one year and new arrivals to replace the departed members arriving the following year. In the instance of the navy, the impact of an annual 'migration' of group members is less pronounced. Rather postings are used more selectively to move personnel to positions where their experience, skill set or leadership responsibilities are needed in a short to medium term. For naval personnel, the groups to which they belong are subject to more frequent changes in membership than the other two services, and the changes are typically of smaller scale, of perhaps one or two people, resulting in less disruption to the fabric of the group and leading to a situation where a strong task focus, and often strong interpersonal relationships and group subculture, place newcomers in a position of 'conforming' with an existing group's norms and expectations.

The impact of changes to group membership on members and teams is shaped by the structuring of the ADF into a distinct, rank-based hierarchy, and further influenced by the nature of the relationship between an individual's 'trade' background and employment background. Prior posting history, partly determined by qualification and experience, often means that more senior members, (in terms of length of ADF service rather than rank level),

have prior association with members of groups which they join on posting. In this respect, a change to group membership imposed by the posting cycle, represents a re-formation rather than formation, of a group, which in the best of circumstances, results in accelerated progression through the storming and norming stages of Tuckman's model, and culminates in a performing team in a timeframe that can be abbreviated by virtue of prior, personal association. Although no interview data was collected on a situation where dysfunctional conflict previously existed between participants, reunited through the posting cycle, the potential for a recommencement of storming stage which may or may not, impact on the ability of the 'new' group to develop into a team. A sufficient number of interviewees in all three services, echoed Keyton's (1993) view that being posted into groups in which they previously worked with a member or members during a previous posting, for this condition to reflect a 'reforming' rather than 'forming'.

In terms of alternative explanations of the movement of members into existing groups, Morgan, Seles and Glickman's Team Evolution And Maturation, (TEAM), model (Morgan, et al., 1993) offers some insight as it is based on a body of research with US navy teams. (Glickman, et al., 1987; Guerette, et al., 1987; Morgan Jr., Glickman, Woodard, Blaiwes, & Salas, 1987) The TEAM model includes elements familiar to Tuckman's (1965)model, (stages of development and the task and relationship dimensions), and extends this both prior to and following these stages. The routine provided in a military unit, structures work patterns in a different way to projects and militates against periods of reduced tempo and peak activity which characterise Gersick's (1988) punctuated equilibrium model of group development however, an explanation of the role that externally imposed routine leading to internal habits by group members is offered by Gersick and Hackman (1990). Smith advises that '... prior experiences, "teamwork schemas" and "mental models" affect group development and the phases or paths groups follow in reaching maturity', (Smith, 2001, p. 41) as a further explanation of how members with prior experience in groups with other group members import this background knowledge into a new group on posting. Additional cultural influences identified by Smith, strongly relevant to the posting cycle, exist '... at the organizational, national and individual levels... being brought to groups and teams by the members.' (Smith, 2001, p. 41)

Conclusions

The critical role that teamwork plays on operations in the mission success of soldiers on patrol, an aircraft crew completing a sortie, or a ship's company engaging a hostile target are extreme examples of how effective interdependence of members is vital to achievement of essential goals. For most defence force personnel, form battle hardened veterans, to those performing more benign, non-warlike functions, (and often, a mixture of both human elements), group formation and team development is of more than academic interest.

This paper has considered the adequacy of Tuckman's (1965)sequential model of group development and its subsequent revision, (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977) in two divergent categories of group experience within a military context: the group participating training with stable membership; and groups where membership has changed due to the influence of the posting cycle. In the first instance, the linear nature of the model has proved to be relevant and an accurate descriptor of group formation and evolution. In the second category of group experience however, it has been found wanting principally because the posting cycle serves as a mechanism which imposes change to the membership of groups, a condition outside the scope of Tuckman's (1965) widely recognised and acknowledged, model of group development. This study recognises that, while the sequential model of group development

describes the process experienced by trainees while progressing through courses conducted in an environment with little change to group membership, a significant extension of Tuckman's (1965) theory into a context of membership change is required. While there are strong connections between models of group development, not the least due to the semantics and terminology involved.

In the military context, this paper will add to the understanding of group formation and team development subject to the influence of the posting cycle, which has implications for recruitment, training, job performance, member satisfaction and their quality of life.

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