The power of group model building

A micro level analysis of social interaction during group model building

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The method of Group Model Building

- Participatory intervention method
- Structuring complex problems
- Involving stakeholders & experts

- GMB starting point: equivalence between stakeholders
- Literature: power affects communication
- Focus on legitimate power and GMB process
- How do interaction activities differ between actors in GMB sessions, particularly between actors varying in legitimate power?
Methodology

• Real GMB intervention on gender equality at Science faculty of Dutch university (2014)
• 2 sessions of 4 hours each
• 11 participants (6 men and 5 women)
• Audiotapes fully transcribed and coded according to Bales’ Interaction Process Analysis

I. Task directed answers
II. Task directed questions
III. Positive social emotional reactions
IV. Negative social emotional reactions
Results: group behavior over time

Three phases: divergence, convergence and implementation
Results: (in)formal roles

- **facilitator**
  - much clarification & restating
  - many questions
  - little negative soc-em

- **content oriented**
  - Strong focus on providing information
  - Less involved in group process

- **process oriented**
  - strongly oriented towards social process
  - relatively many questions

- **goal oriented**
  - evenly strong focus on content (information) & group coherence (positive soc-em)

- **group oriented**
  - focus on position in group
  - few questions and answers
Results: power differences

Mann-Whitney test:

no significant differences between high and low legitimate power for any type of social interaction
Conclusions & Discussion

- GMB process involves more social-emotional behavior than overall group interaction
- Confirmation GMB theory: facilitator has attitude of inquiry, helping attitude, is neutral and has skills to build consensus and commitment
- GMB scripts allow participants room for variation in their contribution to the group interaction, as shown by typology of informal roles
- Confirmation of equalizing effect of group model building
- Scripts influence social interaction and may facilitate power leveling