

Students form, norm, storm and
perform? What if they don't -
exploring the realities of student
project groups

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Why worry?

Students increasingly involved in groupwork and projects

Limited evidence on what student project groups actually do

- Do we know how student groups really work and develop?
- Is the dominant model of forming, storming, norming and performing an accurate description of many or most student groups

How do staff best intervene to support student project groups?

- Can we trust the dominant model?

The dominant model

The stage	What happens	Tutors should ..
Form	Members are confused and hesitant; state of dependence	Support social blending
Storm	Conflict over 'what' and 'how'	Make sure it stays in control
Norm	Norms and roles develop	Check it develops ok
Perform	Group performs to capacity	Provide expert advice

Alternative Models

Alternative models	What happens	Tutors should ...
Punctuated equilibrium	Start straight away Mid-point crisis	Check first few days/week Halfway review
Alternating stages, e.g. Sparks	Groups flip between stages in no set order	Monitor continuously Intervene relative to state of the group

The Exercise

Week 2

- Level 3 students are randomly formed into groups and assigned a topic. Briefed as to the exercise and instructed that there should be a minimum of at least 3 group meetings and minutes of each meeting should be taken.

Week 7

- A formative meeting is held with one of the two members of staff who will mark their poster. Student have to produce an action plan to demonstrate how they will incorporate the formative feedback.

Week 12

- Poster assessed by two members of staff

Group communication facilitated by the formation of Blackboard E-Mail groups for the students and the tutor.

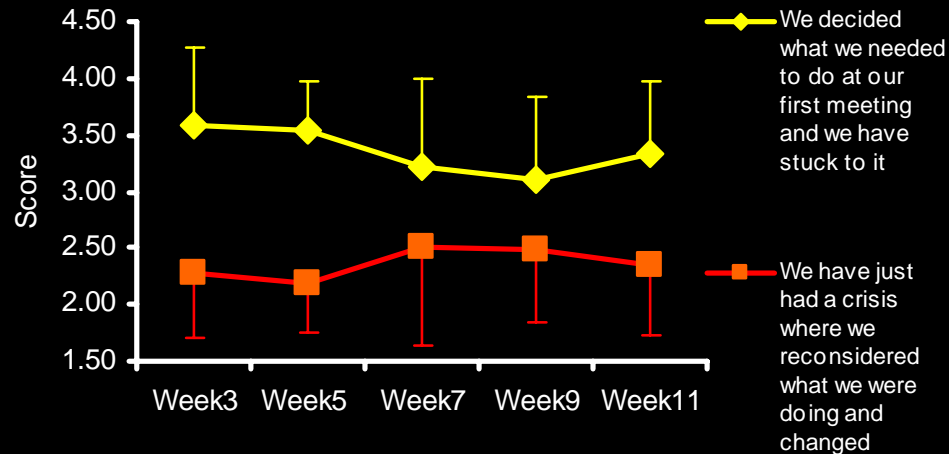
The Study

30 question questionnaire given to all student which they were asked to fill in at two week intervals. Responses were for from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1).

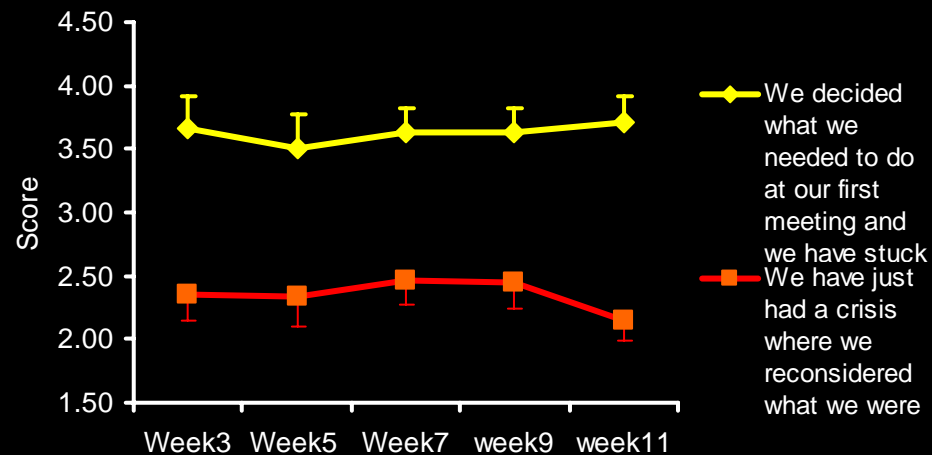
High level of response (all groups) facilitated by regular E-Mail reminders.

Questions designed to reflect three separate descriptions of group behaviour.

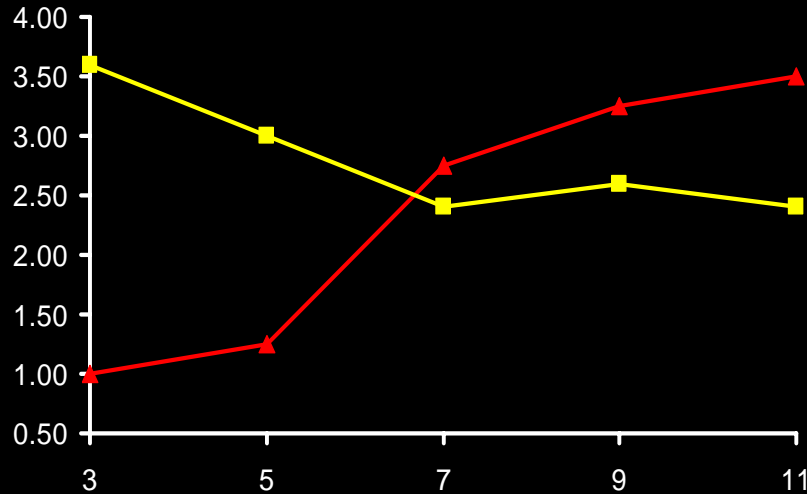
Punctuated equilibrium overall?



Pooled data suggests a slight tendency towards this model for the first year of study but weaker trend this year.

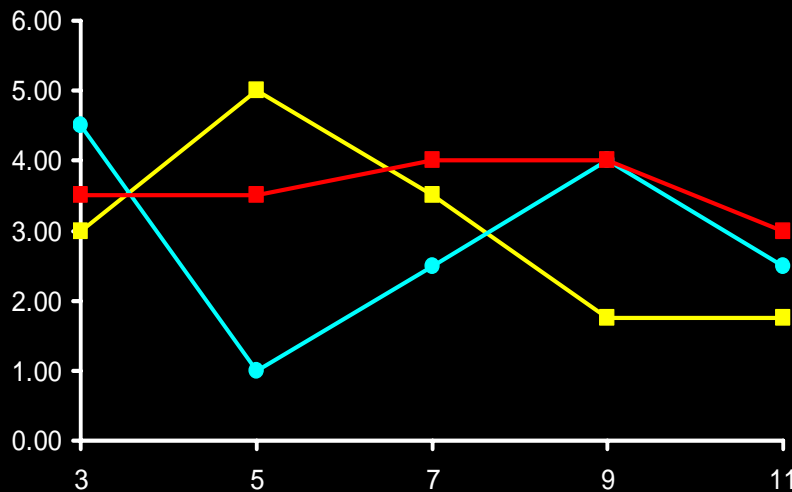


Any punctuation?



We decided what we needed to do at our first meeting and we have stuck to it

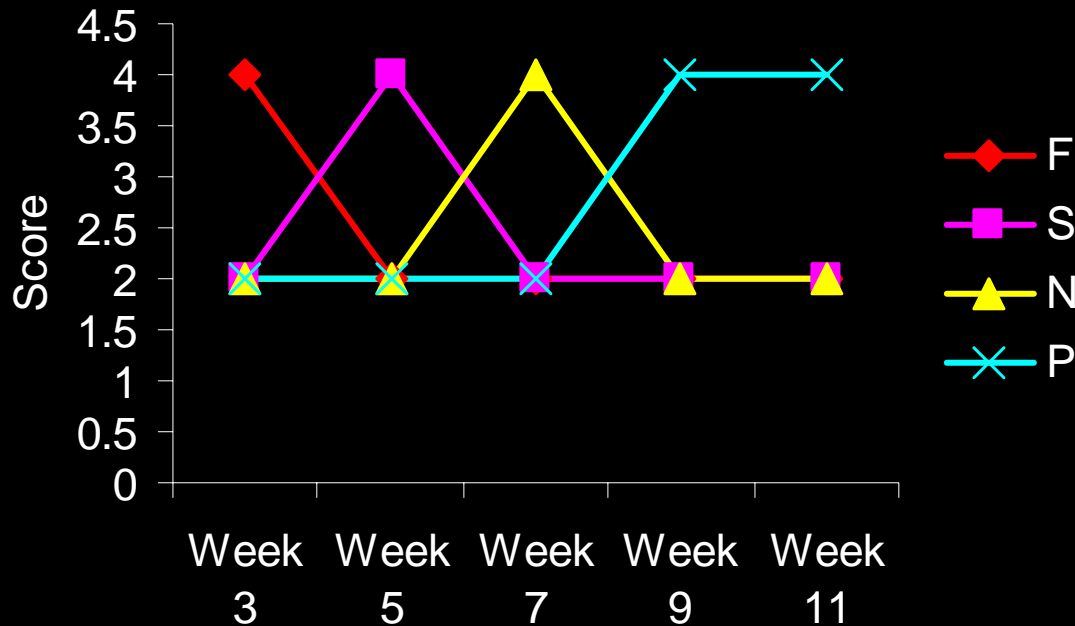
The groups respond in various ways to the questions suggesting strong individual variation in the group dynamic



We have just had a crisis where we reconsidered what we were doing and changed direction

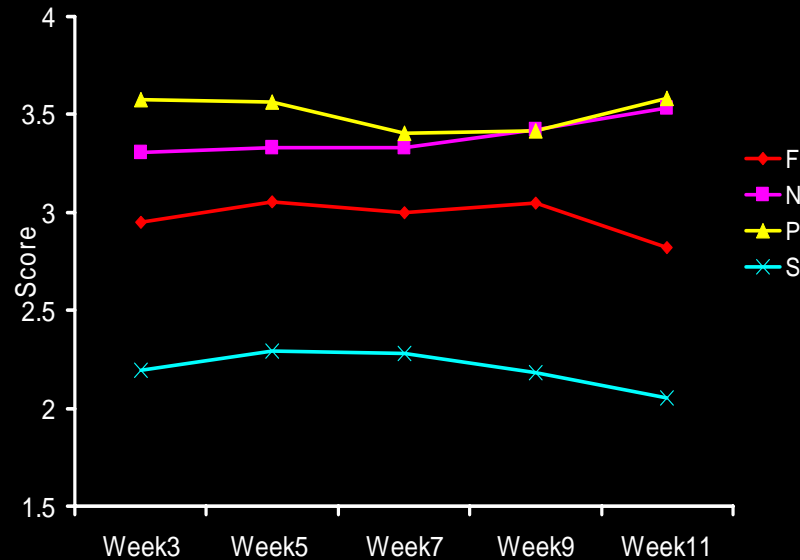
What if Tuckman were true?

Expected Tuckman Values

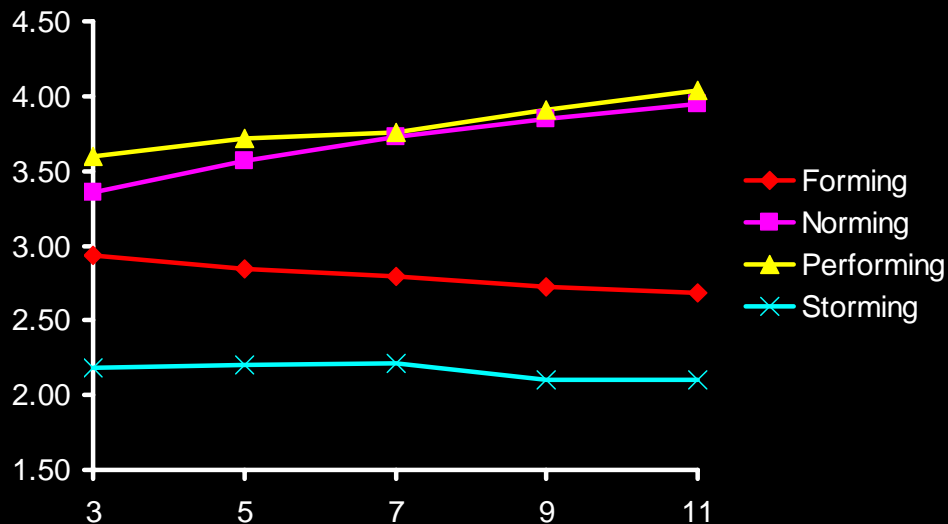


Expect an sequential peaking of the various group attributes

Tuckman overall

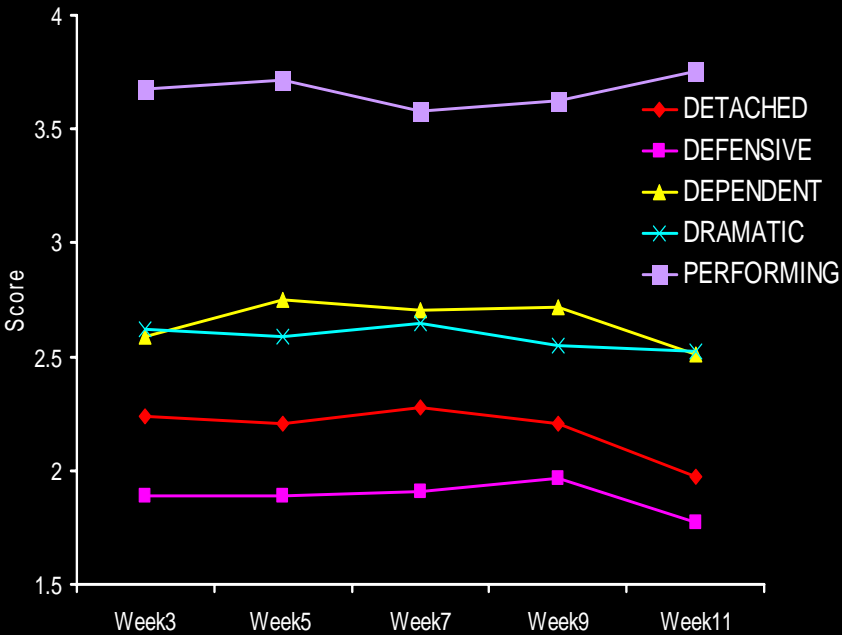


No evidence of peaking of the self-perception of any of the group behaviour traits

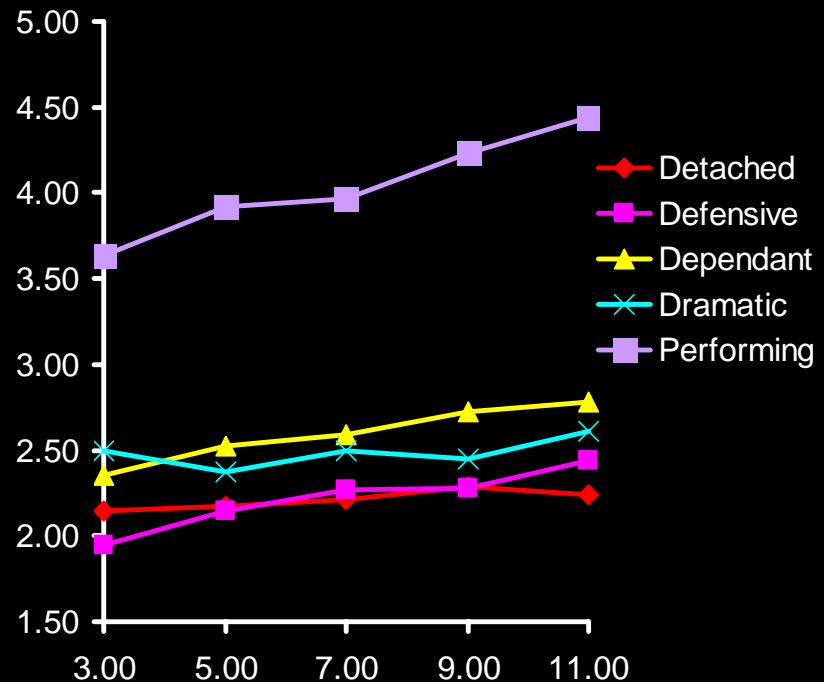


Any Sparks?

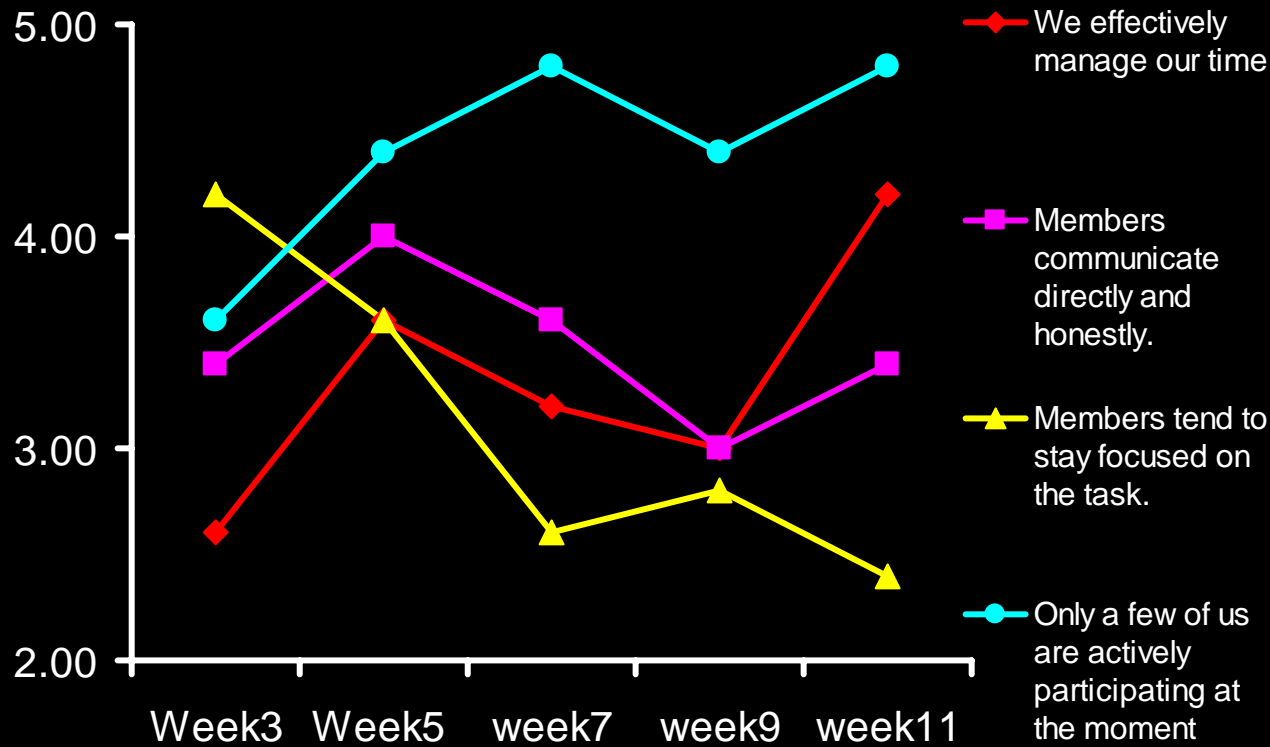
Mean Sparks Scoring for all groups



High performing scores and low score for the characteristics of dysfunctional groups.



What happens if this go wrong?



Group Participation and Mark

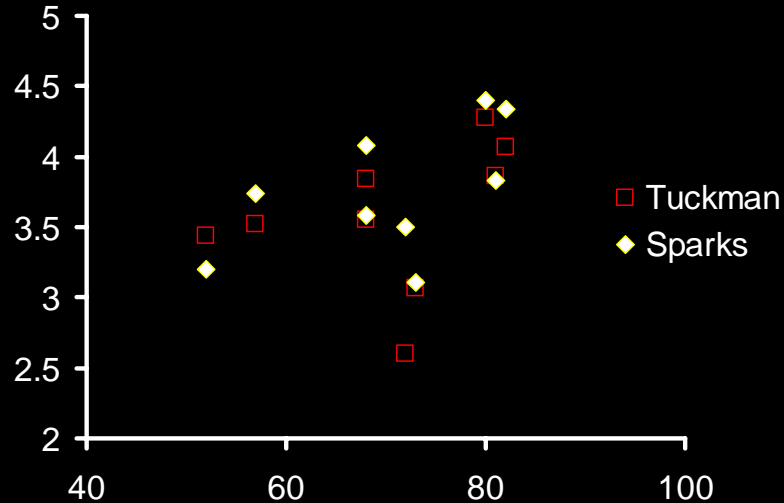
If the mean score is greater than 3 and has a downward trajectory of more than one there is a significantly ($p < 0.01$) lower mark than if the score is above 4 and there is an upward trajectory of greater than 1.

Consistent view of performing

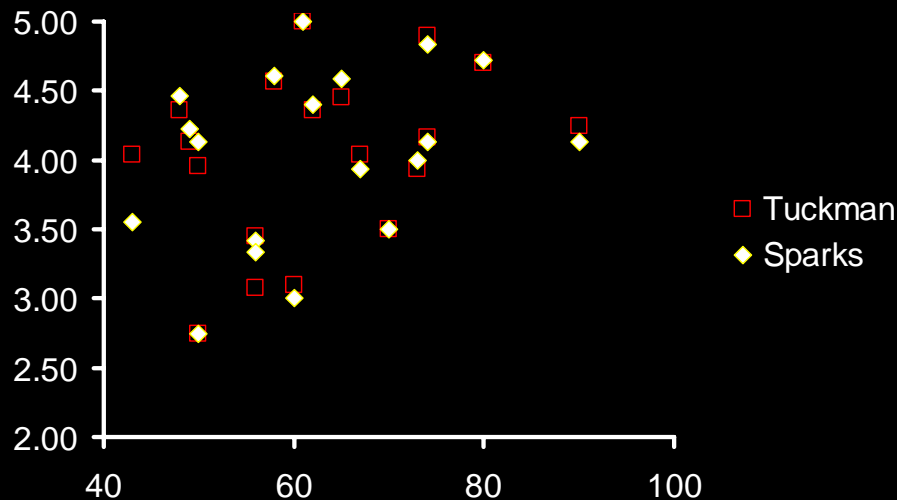
	Sparks	Tuckman
1 st Year	55%	11%
2 nd Year	73%	26%

The number of groups that show a consistent score for performing that is higher than any other group characteristic

Does self-perception of performance correlate with mark



Higher performing scores appears to correlate with increased mark.



Conclusions

Theoretical:

- The dominant models of group development do not look very robust when applied to student groups
- But we must be wary of the limitations of self-report (an area for future research)
- Student have a very positive view of their performance

Practical: Best to 'play safe' so:

- Early monitoring essential
- Halfway review can change the group behaviour
- Intervention based on diagnosis